

TRYOUTS

by Jack L. Nuzum

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Tryouts consists of four related one-acts. In “Mom’s Boyfriend,” Susan is bringing home a serious boyfriend for the first time, and her teenage daughter feels like she’s trying out a new dad. “Audition” has Megan figuring the lead in the school play is hers as a senior drama student until Tasha, a hotshot sophomore, shows up for tryouts. In “Interview,” Brandon really wants a job at the burger joint where his best friend works, but is he ready for the rigors of a job interview? His friend Erik doesn’t think so and tries to help him prepare. Finally, in “Close Call,” Ann is upset about not making the varsity soccer squad, but is having trouble getting sympathy from her big sister Julie, who is nervously waiting to hear if she made homecoming court.

Competition, stress, excitement and jealousy are but a few of the emotions these characters share as they all undergo the pressure of “trying out.” Filled with humor and pathos, these four one-act gems connect thematically into a beautiful full-length production.

Running Time:

60 minutes

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Mom's Boyfriend

SUSAN: Mature single parent who is trying to balance her daughter's anxiety with her own desire for a new life.

BETH: Teenage daughter with a mouth on her; close to her widowed mother, but anxious about the new man in Mom's life.

BILL: Mature male, who tries too hard to make a good impression on the daughter of his new girlfriend.

Audition

MEGAN: Senior in high school; very academic, but not a great actress.

LIZ: Senior, too, but easy going; prone to overacting.

TASHA: Sophomore who tries out on a lark and proves very talented.

JASON: Complete nerd, no acting ability.

2 GIRLS: Friends of Megan.

VOICE: Drama teacher, mature female.

Interview

ERIK: Upperclassman, torn between loyalty to friend and fear of being embarrassed by that friend.

BRANDON: Hyperactive, lovable, but not terribly bright.

Close Call

JULIE: Senior cheerleader, vain.

ANN: Her down-to-earth younger sister.

PRODUCTION NOTES

This play consists of four different interlocked plots. They may be produced as written or separately as four one-act plays.

Set

When produced together, each section should have its own place on stage: kitchen scene SR, drama auditions and job interview CS; and bedroom scene SL.

The kitchen set, SR, occupies about one-third of the stage. Cupboards above and below a counter with a sink angle US from the SR entrance. US is a stove and refrigerator, with more cupboards and counters angling DL. There is a circular dining table in the middle of the set with three chairs.

The bedroom scene takes up the SL third of the stage. There is a flat with teen posters all around. The bed is US against the flat with a desk and chair angled DSL of the bed. SR is a small vanity table with a mirror frame and seat.

Props

Vegetables, knife (Mom)
Drinking glasses
Playbooks (for tryouts)
Soft drink cups with Burger Blast name and logo
Stuffed animal, telephone (Ann, Julie)
Table set for dinner, vegetables and salad preset on plates
Soccer "stuff" – ball, cones, poster
Tiny meat loaf in a big glass dish

ACT I

Scene 1: Mom's Boyfriend

(AT RISE: Kitchen set, SR. SUSAN, the mother, is fixing dinner. She's not a good cook and is trying something beyond her abilities. She's also distracted by the conversation with her teenaged daughter, BETH, who is setting the table for dinner. As LIGHTS come up, Susan is bent over the oven and burns her finger. She yells something, turns around sucking her finger, and runs cold water over it from sink SR.)

BETH: *(Bringing place mats from SL cupboards and setting three places.)* I don't understand, Mom. If you want to impress this guy, why are you cooking for him?! Our usual company dinner is Chinese takeout plus my dessert.

SUSAN: *(During this scene, SHE is fixing a salad, cutting up soft vegetables like mushrooms and tomatoes so the knife doesn't click.)* Very funny. I'm not that bad a cook; just out of practice.

BETH: *(To drawer to get silverware.)* So, you met him at a conference two months ago, is that the story?

SUSAN: Uh huh. I mentioned him then, didn't I?

BETH: *(Setting table with silverware.)* No, you didn't mention him until ONE month ago when you met again, apparently, at a "corporate strategy session."

SUSAN: Oh.

BETH: And since then you've been e-mailing back and forth at least two times a day, is that correct?

SUSAN: Yes, Miss District Attorney.

BETH: Haven't you heard about how dangerous it is to fall for someone on the net?

SUSAN: It's not just on the net. You've just mentioned how we have met twice, both for several days, in the flesh.

BETH: *(Moves SL; SHE knows she's crossing a line here.)* Speaking of flesh, have you slept with him yet?

SUSAN: *(Stops what SHE'S doing.)* That is none of your business, young lady. But the answer anyway is no.

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SUSAN: *(Continued.)* If it's wrong for you to sleep around before you're married, it's wrong for me.

BETH: That's a switch – the same rules apply for adults that apply for teenagers.

SUSAN: It's not just a rule; it's a way of life – sex in its proper place. *(Back to work.)* And don't get snippy; your "catch the hypocrite adult" game won't work here. I haven't slept with anyone since your father died.

BETH: You haven't even DATED anyone since Daddy died! *(SUSAN gives HER a look. Beth sits in SL chair at table.)* Oh, unless you mean that time you went out for coffee with Mr. Baker after open house at school. My mother on a date with my English teacher. I almost died!

SUSAN: That's one reason we didn't go out again, plus the fact that he was wearing that same threadbare blue sweater and gravy-stained tie that you always described.

BETH: See, I told you so! You didn't believe me 'til you saw it with your own two eyes. James actually asked him in class once what flavor his tie was! But wait. Is this a judgment from the woman who always says, "Don't judge on appearances"?!

SUSAN: Generally I try not to, but there are always exceptions, like when appearances indicate something deeper, such as lack of personal hygiene.

BETH: He's just got bad TASTE in ties! *(THEY share a laugh. Beth breaks the jolly mood by getting up and heading UL for the glasses.)* So, are you bringing what's-his-name home to meet the kid?

SUSAN: Bill. And yes, partly. And for him to see where I live; my "space."

BETH: *(Putting the glasses on the table.)* What if I don't approve? Would you tell him "bye-bye"?!

SUSAN: What if he doesn't approve?! Would I tell you "bye-bye"?! *(BETH is appalled SHE could even say this.)* Of course, if you two couldn't get along, that would be a factor.

BETH: A factor?! Not THE factor?

SUSAN: Maybe THE factor. If you don't like him, maybe it means you see something that I don't.

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SUSAN: *(Continued.)* But bottom line, it's my life. You'll be gone and on your own in a few years.

BETH: *(Pacing back and forth in front of the table, agitated.)* Mom! I'm only a freshman in high school. I'll be at home at least three more years, maybe more if I go to the university here. And then I'll get married and have kids and need you to baby sit. So, you'd torture me with a stepfather I hate for the rest of my days, who'll hate your grandchildren because they aren't his DNA?!

SUSAN: Let's see, was it only last week that you had sworn off men forever and were never going to have children? And now I'm a grandmother?! Look, Bill and I haven't even talked marriage let alone step-fathering, where we'd live, or anything. *(Back to work.)* Let's let this thing happen gradually.

BETH: Where you'll live?! Oh, Mom, no! *(Goes up to HER.)* You wouldn't move, would you? *(Turns back DS, ending up DL of table.)* Of course, you'd move to his house and I'd have to transfer for the last years of high school! Oh, Mom, you couldn't!! You'd ruin my life!

SUSAN: Beth, don't get hysterical. You're jumping the gun. We'll just take one step at a time. He's coming for dinner; let's just try and make a good impression.

BETH: *(Sits in SL chair.)* Oh, I have to impress him, huh? It's not good enough just to be myself.

SUSAN: *(Trying hard to keep cool.)* Being yourself will impress him. I've told him about your soccer and music and how you helped me nurse Daddy through his cancer. *(Back to work.)* He's already impressed.

BETH: *(Complaining, but basically pleased her mom has been bragging about her.)* Oh, great. Now I have an image to live up to. What else did you tell him – my brand of deodorant?

SUSAN: No, just the basics, like how you record "General Hospital" every day to watch after school and how you still sleep with your Grover muppet.

BETH: MOM!!

End of Freeview

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