

HOTEL for Hollywood Has-Beens

By Regina Ballard

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Did you ever wonder what happened to your favorite TV actors from the 60's and 70's? In this hilarious parody, young Taylor Williams, an aspiring actress, has just been hired by Mr. Has-Been to work as the front desk clerk at a rather strange hotel. The hotel decor is outdated, her new boss talks like a game show host, and his nephew Jeffrey talks in rhyming monotone.

Taylor soon realizes that the hotel caters to a very different clientele when Berney Life, the Bradley Bunch, Gulligan, Jenja and the Honz check in. When Taylor thinks she has finally seen it all, things get even crazier when she finds out that the hotel is in deep debt. The owners, the three Bubbas, have come to collect the overdue mortgage with plans to turn the hotel into a country music palace if Mr. Has-Been doesn't pay up.

In a desperate attempt to raise the money, Taylor stages a show using the talents of the hotel guests. There's romance in the air and what happens next is crazier than you can ever imagine.

NOTE: Actors can learn the mannerisms and characteristics of their characters by watching TV reruns of "The Brady Bunch," "Gilligan's Island," "The Andy Griffith Show," "Happy Days," and "Bonanza." Fun homework! An optional idea: arrange to have other actors dressed as recognizable television characters in the lobby before and after your production. They and Mr. and Mrs. Howl might even make an entrance into your theatre right before Scene 3 as though they are part of the hotel's audience.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(12 m, 8 w)

TAYLOR WILLIAMS: A 90's woman in a 70's hotel.

MR. HAS-BEEN: Owner of the almost-broke hotel.

JEFFREY: Has-Been's strange nephew.

BERNEY LIFE: Nervous, self-important deputy.

GULLIGAN: Clumsy, not a good sailor.

JENJA: Hollywood star and real flirt.

JANE BRADLEY: One of three Bradley sisters.

MARLA BRADLEY: Another.

WENDY BRADLEY: Another.

GRIG BRADLEY: One of three Bradley brothers.

PEDRO BRADLEY: Another.

BUDDY BRADLEY: Another.

THE HONZ: Ultimate cool dude.

BUBBA BOSS CUTTHROAT: A bully, one of three brothers.

BUBBA BILLY: Another.

BUBBA LITTLE JOE: Another.

BELLHOP GIRL 1: Adores the Honz.

BELLHOP GIRL 2: Another.

MR. HOWL: Rich man to the rescue.

MRS. HOWL: His high-brow wife.

Playing Time: About an hour.

SYNOPSIS

Scene 1: Current day. Friday, 10 AM.

Scene 2: Later that afternoon.

Scene 3: The next week, Saturday evening.

COSTUMES

Because the hotel and all its guests are throwbacks to the 70's, all decor and clothing should reflect that time period. Taylor first enters in current day fashions, then changes to 70's clothes like those worn by the Bradleys, the more outrageous the better. Mr. Has-Been first wears a leisure suit, wide tie, and white shoes, then changes into a ruffled tux for the talent show.

Jeffrey wears typical nerd clothes until the show when he looks like the Honz with black leather jacket, white T-shirt, and black pants.

Jenja wears glamorous, Hollywood starlet clothes with lots of sequins. Gulligan wears a wild shirt, white sailor hat, and white, bell-bottom pants.

All the Bubbas wear western style clothes and cowboy hats.

Bellhop Girls dress alike in short jackets, black shorts, and red, square hats.

Mr. Howl wears a dark suit with several rings on his fingers and Mrs. Howl wears a rich-looking ladies suit and hat with matching handbag and shoes and lots of jewels. She also carries hand-held glasses.

SET DESIGN

All action takes place at the Has-Been Hotel which is not rundown, just stuck in a timewarp! The colors, furniture, fixtures, everything down to the shag carpeting, should reflect the 70's.

The main focus of the room is the check-in desk located USC. A phone is on the desk, room keys hang behind it. SR is a door to outside while USR and USL are hallways to back offices. SL is to the guest rooms. Various chairs and sofas are grouped DSC. They are moved to the sides of the stage for the talent show.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Enter TAYLOR, SR with briefcase in hand. She walks in slowly, looking around in amazement at the hotel's outlandish and outdated decor. Finally, she approaches the front desk. She looks around and finding no one, rings bell on desk.)

JEFFREY: (Jumps up from behind counter, in rhyming, monotone voice.) Welcome to Hotel Has-Been. Can I help you check in?

TAYLOR: (Jumps in surprise.) Oh, you scared me. (Regaining composure.) My name is Taylor Williams and I have a 10:00 appointment with Mr. Has-Been.

JEFFREY: (Still talking monotone in rhyme.) Just a minute, that's my plea, I will see if he is free. (Picks up phone.) Hello, Uncle Has-Been, the clock says it is ten. Your appointment is here without a doubt, shall I tell her you'll be right out? (Nods, then replaces phone receiver.) Please have a seat, take a load off of your feet. Uncle Has-Been said to say, that he will soon be on his way. (Disappears again under counter.)

TAYLOR: Th ... anks (Takes a seat on couch.)

(Enter MR. HAS-BEEN from USL.)

MR. HAS-BEEN: (Speaks in a game show host voice and uses extravagant hand gestures.) Welcome to ... Hotel Has-Been! The Hollywood Hotel with a special clientele. You must be Taylor Williams! (Extends hand to welcome HER.)

TAYLOR: (Standing.) It's nice to meet you, sir.

MR. HAS-BEEN: I'm glad you could come on such short notice. The employment office said you really needed a job and I really need a new desk clerk. Did you meet my nephew, Jeffrey? (Motions behind HIM towards the front desk.)

TAYLOR: Well, sort of.

MR. HAS-BEEN: Then I'm sure you noticed he's not exactly Mr. Personality. (*Whispers.*) He is a little strange the way he rhymes everything, thinks he's Dr. Seuss or something. (*Raises voice.*) But, I had to have him fill in until I could find a replacement. My regular desk clerk walked out on me this morning and a big group of my regular guests will be checking in soon. They are going to expect to have someone with personality and flair greet them. That's why I wanted to interview you. The employment office said you were an actress.

TAYLOR: (*Brightens.*) I am, or at least I'm trying to be. It isn't as easy as I thought to break into show business.

MR. HAS-BEEN: (*Nodding head.*) It never is. (*Singsong.*) There's no business like show business except when you are unemployed. That's why this hotel is so important to its guests. We treat all our guests like they are stars! (*TV Game Show voice.*) Taylor Williams, in the next fifteen seconds, show me how you would greet my guests.

TAYLOR: (*Moves a step DS and puts on big smile.*) Welcome to Hotel Has-Been! We hope you will enjoy your stay with us!

MR. HAS-BEEN: Ding ding ding. Good answer. Yes Taylor, I think you'll do fine. Can you start right away?

TAYLOR: (*Nods head.*) Yes and thank you so much for the opportunity, Mr. Has-Been. I really need a job.

MR. HAS-BEEN: (*Looks at watch.*) You won't have much time to learn, the first group of guests are due to arrive within the hour. Just remember, treat them like stars! I'll have Jeffrey show you the ropes. I'm sure you'll catch on fast. (*Calls.*) Jeffrey!

JEFFREY: (*Rises from behind desk.*) Yes Uncle Has-Been, I am here. You don't have to shout, when I am so near.

MR. HAS-BEEN: (*Johnny Carson style.*) Here's ... Taylor, our new desk clerk. I want you to show her how to check the guests in and operate the switchboard.

JEFFREY: Come on over, let's get started. Hope you don't smell, where I just farted. (*Looks at TAYLOR who giggles.*)

Hotel For Hollywood Has-Beens

- 7 -

MR. HAS-BEEN: Oh brother. Just try to tolerate him for a little while. I've got a few things to take care of. I'll check back with you later to see how things are going. *(Hums "No Business Like Show Business" as HE exits USL.)*

(TAYLOR joins JEFFREY behind counter.)

JEFFREY: *(Picks up phone.)* When the phone rings, answer like this. *(Demonstrates.)* "Has-been's Hotel," then you check the guest list. When someone wants to check in and get their room key, just look behind you, *(Points to row of keys behind desk.)* and collect their room fees.

TAYLOR: OK, what else.

JEFFREY: That's all there is, there's not much to it. Anyone with half a brain could probably do it.

TAYLOR: *(Nervous laugh.)* Well, it sounds easy enough.

JEFFREY: I have done my part. See you later, I have to get ready, to double as a waiter.

TAYLOR: Wait a minute. Don't you think you should stay here to make sure I check in the first couple of guests correctly?

JEFFREY: You said it sounded easy enough. What's wrong? Aren't you show business tough?

TAYLOR: B-but ...

JEFFREY: It was nice to meet you. You'll do just fine, but when in doubt, make up a rhyme. *(Exits USR.)*

TAYLOR: *(Sighs aloud to HERSELF.)* Well, I guess I'll just wing it.

(Turns with HER back to audience to straighten keys. Does not hear BERNEY LIFE enter from SR. Berney approaches counter.)

BERNEY: *(Calls.)* Young woman, hello. *(TAYLOR turns around. BERNEY smiles nervously and waves.)* Uh, hi there. I'd like to check in please.

TAYLOR: *(Energetically.)* Oh, hello! I didn't hear you come in. What is your name please?

Hotel For Hollywood Has-Beens

- 8 -

BERNEY: Name's Berney Life. *(Shows badge pinned to chest.)* I'm a deputy, or *(Saddens.)* I was supposed to be one.

TAYLOR: *(Looks up from guest book.)* Hey, weren't you on that show "May -

BERNEY: *(Interrupting.)* Now why did ya have to go and mention that for? I've been trying to forget about that for years.

TAYLOR: *(Looks confused.)* B-ut ... I'm sorry, I'm new here.

BERNEY: Oh, well that explains it. *(Looks around and leans forward conspiratorially and whispers.)* I was up for the part of deputy on that television show, but that other guy beat me out of it. That part was made for me, but now I'm just a has-been. That's what all of us are, you know. Every guest in this hotel is somebody that should have been famous in the 60s and 70s, but was beat out by somebody else for the part. We come here almost every weekend to forget. *(Sighs.)*

TAYLOR: Is that why the decor is so tacky and outdated?

BERNEY: *(Sternly.)* It may be outdated to you, young lady, but to us it is tastefully decorated. It makes us feel right at home.

TAYLOR: So ... uh, Berney, tell me more about the guests. Mr. Has-Been didn't tell me much, and I'm afraid I might offend somebody. *(Flatters.)* I bet a smart guy like you has all the answers.

BERNEY: *(Confident, points thumbs to HIMSELF.)* Well, you've come to the right source. The man with the plan. Yep, everybody eventually comes to ol' Berney when they need advice. *(Whispers.)* I know everything about everybody. *(Pats badge.)* Investigative deputy work, you know. It's all in the line of duty.

TAYLOR: *(Plays along, acting surprised and impressed.)* Really? Oh wow! So tell me, who else comes to this hotel?

BERNEY: Well, at some time or another you're likely to see just about any television personality from the 60s and 70s. *(HE nods his head as if he has just let her in on a big secret. TAYLOR looks amazed.)*

BERNEY: *(Cont'd.)* Yup, that's right. You never know who you might see here. Why last week I saw Jenny, you know that girl who lives in a bottle. She and her master were here celebrating some anniversary of theirs. Strange relationship, if you ask me. *(Straightens, looks at watch.)* Well, it's about time for some of the others to start checking in now. See if you can figure out who they are. *(Whispers.)* Just be careful what you say, you don't want to accidentally remind them they are a has-been. *(SR door opens.)* In fact, here comes some more of the bunch now.

(Enter the BRADLEY BUNCH including MARLA, JANE, WENDY, GRIG, PEDRO, and BUDDY. THEY carry several suitcases.)

BUDDY: Quit pushing, Wendy!

WENDY: I'm not pushing, you're the one pushing.

MARLA: Buddy, Wendy, you two stop it this instant or I'm going to tell Berney to put the two of you in jail.

BERNEY: *(Puffs out chest importantly.)* That's right, and I have a pair of handcuffs right here. *(Pats pocket, then realizes it's empty by turning it inside out. Straightens self and laughs nervously.)* They must be in my car. *(Voice becomes authoritative again.)* But I can go get them! *(BUDDY and WENDY stop fighting and pout.)*

BUDDY: Boy, I hate being a kid. There's always somebody who takes the fun out of it.

WENDY: Yeah!

BERNEY: *(Feeling proud.)* Kids, all they need is a little discipline. I used to tell little Dopie all the time that fighting would get him in trouble. He listened to ol' Berney and turned out all right. He grew up, changed his name to Itchy, and moved in with a good All-American family. The Bunninghams or something.

TAYLOR: *(Plays along.)* Oh, you must mean Mr. B.

BERNEY: It seems like I remember someone calling him that. I know he runs a hardware store.

GRIG: *(Approaches front desk.)* Hi, we'd like to check in.

TAYLOR: *(Looking at guest register.)* Sure, you must be the Bradley Bunch.

MARLA: Yes we are. Have you heard of us?

TAYLOR: Well ... *(Looks at BERNEY.)* Sort of. *(Hands THEM keys from the wall.)* Here are your keys. You are in rooms 5 and 6. I hope you enjoy your stay.

PEDRO: *(Grabs keys.)* Guys get first dibs on the rooms!

JANE: No fair, the guys did last time, too! It's the girls' turn!

PEDRO: *(Dangles keys in front of HER.)* You can't get them, na na nee boo boo. *(Races toward SL with BUDDY beside HIM. JANE and WENDY take off after them.)*

BUDDY: *(Calling behind HIM.)* Girls have cooties!

WENDY: Do not!

BUDDY: Do too!

MARLA: *(Shakes HER head.)* Children.

GRIG: *(To TAYLOR.)* Say, I haven't seen you here before. *(Flirting.)* I'm sure I would have remembered you. What's your name?

TAYLOR: My name is Taylor and today is my first day.

MARLA: Oh, that must explain your clothes. No offense, Taylor, but they are so, so different.

GRIG: *(Nodding head.)* Really out of it, man.

TAYLOR: *(Looking down at HER 90s clothes in surprise.)* Uh, well, I guess I just haven't had time to go shopping. I've been out of work for awhile.

MARLA: Well, don't worry about it. You look like you are about the same size as I am, so I'll lend you a few things.

TAYLOR: *(Uncertain.)* Groovy, I think.

GRIG: Hey, maybe later we can all do something together. What time do you get off work?

TAYLOR: I don't know yet. Mr. Has-Been didn't tell me. *(Looks at BERNEY meaningfully.)* He didn't tell me a lot of things.

GRIG: Well, we'll check with you later and see if you've found out. We're all going swimming this afternoon.

MARLA: I have an extra bathing suit. *(Looks at GRIG.)* Should I let Taylor wear my bikini that has the big orange and red flowers?

GRIG: Oooo yeah, I like that one!

TAYLOR: OK, that sounds like fun.

BERNEY: *(Sighs.)* Well, while you kids play, Berney Life will be on the job. *(Looks at watch.)* I guess I will go patrol the parking lot. See you later, Sheriff Taylor.

TAYLOR: Who?

BERNEY: *(Laughs self-consciously.)* I don't know what made me say that. It just seemed so natural.

(BERNEY whistles theme song to "Andy Griffith Show" as he walks SR.)

GRIG, MARLA, and TAYLOR: *(Ad-libbing.)* See you later Berney, Bye, etc.

(At SR door, BERNEY stops whistling and pauses at window.)

BERNEY: I'd keep an eye on this guy. I've never trusted those leather jacket types.

(The HONZ enters SR.)

HONZ: *(Pauses inside of door, looks around and does thumbs up sign.)* Hey ... *(Sees BERNEY.)* Deputy Life, Itchy said to tell you hello.

BERNEY: *(Startled.)* Little Dope, I mean Itchy is YOUR friend?

HONZ: *(Touches heart.)* Like the brother I never had. Except of course, fortunately, The Honz doesn't have red hair.

(Takes out comb and combs hair.)

BERNEY: *(Getting nervous.)* Now, he isn't in any kind of trouble, is he?

HONZ: Nah, Mr. B. keeps him in line and his nose clean. Itchy's a good kid. A little too straight-laced sometimes.

BERNEY: *(Relieved.)* That's good. So does Itchy have a girlfriend?

HONZ: Yeah. In fact, the last time he was at this hotel, he met some chick. A real farm girl type. What was her name ...? *(Snaps fingers.)* Uh, Nellie Fay or something like that. I think she reminds him of the country town he grew up in, but her Pa is loaded. Strange thing is she lives in Beverly Hills.

BERNEY: They grow up so fast. *(Sighs and wipes eyes.)*
Well, back to work. *(Exits SR.)*

HONZ: *(Walks toward front desk. Stops by MARLA and chucks HER under the chin.)* Hey, cupcake. *(Turns to GRIG and indicates with thumb towards TAYLOR.)*
Who's the new chick?

TAYLOR: *(SHE has been watching the exchange with amazement and reacts as nineties woman.)* My name is Taylor and I am NOT a chick.

HONZ: Don't get your feathers in an uproar. I was just making a friendly remark.

TAYLOR: Sorry. I'm just not used to being talked to like that.

HONZ: *(Poetic.)* Then the other boys must be blind not to notice your immense charm and beauty.

TAYLOR: *(Grits teeth.)* No, I mean that it's demeaning for a woman living in the nineties ... oh, never mind. You must be The Honz. Let me give you your room key.

HONZ: Don't bother. I'll have the bellhops escort me to my room. *(Snaps fingers.)* Oh, girls.

TAYLOR: But I'm the only one ... here

(Fades off as two GIRLS dressed as bellhops run to HONZ from USL and USR. Each grabs one of his arms.)

HONZ: Did you miss me, girls?

BELLHOP 1: Oh yes, Honz!

BELLHOP 2: We got your room all ready for you.

HONZ: Then, take the king to his castle.

(HONZ and BELLHOPS exit SL.)

TAYLOR: (*Open-mouthed in surprise.*) Where did those girls come from? We don't have bellhops.
GRIG: Who knows, after all, he is The Honz!
MARLA: Isn't he dreamy?
TAYLOR: He's something, all right.
GRIG: (*Hesitantly.*) I gather he isn't your type of guy?
TAYLOR: No way. He's a male chauvinist pig.
GRIG: Did I mention to you that I'm for ERA? (*Chants.*)
ERA, all the way!
TAYLOR: (*Laughs.*) I'll remember that.

Blackout

Scene 2

(AT RISE: The BRADLEYS' suitcases have been removed and the Bradleys themselves are scattered around the hotel lobby playing cards, etc. The HONZ is getting a manicure from the two adoring BELLHOP GIRLS sitting on each side of him.)

GRIG: (*To MARLA.*) Hey Marla, where did Taylor go?
MARLA: She went to change into the clothes I gave her.
(Nudges JANE with elbow.) So Grig, what's with all the interest in Taylor?
WENDY: (*Dancing around chanting.*) Grig likes Taylor, Grig likes Taylor.
BUDDY: Are you going to kiss her? (*Makes kissing faces and sounds.*) Oh baby, baby.
PEDRO: Knock it off, Buddy. You are so immature. (*To GRIG, grinning.*) So, are you!?
GRIG: Guys, I just met her.
JANE: That's never stopped you before. (*ALL giggle but GRIG.*)
WENDY: (*Chanting.*) Grig is a ladies man, Grig is a ladies man!

GRIG: Knock it off, Wendy.

WENDY: *(Pouts.)* Boy, are you a poor sport. *(Teasing.)*
Even if you are a ladies man. *(Runs out of GRIG'S reach.)*

PEDRO: Yeah, remember that time Mom and Dad wouldn't let Buddy go see that scary movie at the drive-in so he stowed away in the back of the station-wagon when he heard that Grig was going to take Sarah Smith. Things were getting pretty cozy when Buddy got scared and crawled out.

BUDDY: *(Defensive.)* I wasn't scared, I was just tired of listening to them make kissing noises. *(Imitates SARAH.)*
Oh Grig, kiss, kiss, kiss. *(Proudly.)* I really scared you and Sarah, didn't I? She threw her popcorn everywhere and nearly jumped through the roof of the car.

GRIG: Yeah and thanks to you she was so embarrassed she wouldn't go out with me again.

BUDDY: *(Teasing.)* So are you going to take Taylor to a movie?

PEDRO: Better not tell Buddy where you parked the car!

GRIG: Ha ha, very funny. I'm just trying to be her friend because she is new here and doesn't know anybody else.
That's all. *(ALL look at each other knowingly.)*

JANE: Sure, Grig.

HONZ: Hey, give the guy a break. It's tough being a hunk.
I should know. Chicks dig me.

GRIG: Thanks, Honz.

HONZ: *(Thumbs up.)* Hey, don't mention it.

(Enter TAYLOR in wild looking 60's attire and platform shoes with JEFFREY following.)

GRIG: *(Standing to meet HER.)* Wow, you look great!

PEDRO and BUDDY: *(Looking goggle-eyed.)* Wow!

(MARLA, JANE, and WENDY giggle.)

MARLA: *(Nudges JANE.)* Just trying to be friendly, huh?
(BOTH snicker.)

TAYLOR: Thanks, but are you sure that I don't look strange?

GRIG: No really, you look terrific. Don't you think so, gang?

HONZ: Very nice. *(Gives thumbs-up sign. BELLHOP GIRLS look jealous.)*

BUDDY: *(Takes TAYLOR'S arm and looks up pleadingly.)*
Will you marry me?

PEDRO: *(Pushing BUDDY aside.)* Or me?

TAYLOR: *(Laughing.)* Sure, I will.

BUDDY: Ha ha, beat you to it, Grig! *(GRIG and TAYLOR look embarrassed.)*

TAYLOR: *(Suddenly remembering JEFFREY.)* Oh, everybody, I want you to meet Jeffrey. He's Mr. Has-Been's nephew.

JEFFREY: Hello everybody, how are you? Anybody want to tell me, what is new? *(OTHERS exchange greeting with JEFFREY, but look at him oddly. He approaches MARLA and in monotone says:)* Excuse me, uh, hi there. Don't mind me, but I like your hair.

MARLA: *(Looks up in surprise.)* Oh, hi. It's Jeffrey, right?

JEFFREY: Uh, yeah, that is right. Would you go out with me on Saturday night?

(MARLA and JANE giggle at HIS robotic-sounding voice.)

MARLA: I appreciate the offer, but you really aren't my type. Sorry. *(MARLA turns to JANE and they play cards, ignoring JEFFREY.)*

PEDRO: Hey, Jeffrey, what's with the weird rhyming voice?

GRIG: It's nerdy, man.

JEFFREY: What can I say? I have always talked this way.

BUDDY: You sound like a robot. *(Mimics JEFFREY.)* Hello, would you like to date me?

GRIG: And dig those clothes. Square, really square.

HONZ: You need help, man. Very uncool.

JEFFREY: What makes you say that? I am fine. Do you think I'm weird, because I talk in rhyme?

GRIG: *(Mimics JEFFREY.)* Well ... yes, it's what you feared. Talking in rhyme is really weird.

End of Freeview

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