NEXT!

By Rand Higbee

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STORY OF PLAY

Here's a 1-act for anyone who has ever discovered that putting on a play is not as easy as first thought. As the title implies, NEXT! is about a series of college freshmen who are auditioning for a play … and an odder group of would-be actors you'll never meet. From the girl who has the ultimate case of stage fright to the basketball star who's just doing it on a dare, this witty comedy is destined to be a success on any stage.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3m, 4 w, 1 flexible role)

THE DIRECTOR: College theater director *(either gender).*

JENNY TAYLOR: Watches her language on stage.

AMY MULLENS: Too nervous to speak.

RICK JONES: Basketball player out on a dare.

HENRY SIMS: An aspiring stand-up comedian.

MIKE: Henry's partner.

SUZIE PARKER: Likes heavy metal music.

BECKY DAVIS: Confused about Broadway shows.

SETTING: A college theater.
TIME: The time is the present.

PROPS

Notebook and pen for Director, piece of paper for Amy; drum and stool for Mike; guitar for Suzie; make-up kit containing a fake nose for Becky.

COSTUMES/MAKE-UP

Becky wears a leotard and tights under a sweat suit with elbow and knee pads. She wears a crash helmet and roller skates. Henry sports a black eye at the end.

N E X T !

(AT RISE: The CURTAIN opens to find a bare stage. The DIRECTOR is seated out front with the audience and never actually gets up on the stage until the very end of the play. However, he/she may occasionally wander down by the stage to interact with the other characters.)

DIRECTOR: Next!

(JENNY hesitantly enters from SR and crosses DC.)

JENNY: That's me, I guess.
DIRECTOR: Name, please?
JENNY: Taylor, Jenny.
DIRECTOR: Do you have an audition piece, Miss Jenny?
JENNY: Uh … it's Miss Taylor.
DIRECTOR: What?
JENNY: I'm sorry; it's Miss Taylor. Jenny Taylor. I thought you wanted our last name first so I said "Taylor, Jenny." I'm sorry.
DIRECTOR: That's quite all right, Miss Taylor. Do you have an audition piece?
JENNY: Yes. It's from "Hamlet."
DIRECTOR: Very good. You may proceed.
JENNY: Oh … only there's one thing.
DIRECTOR: What's that?
JENNY: Only it's not from "Hamlet." It's from "MacBeth."
DIRECTOR: Oh?
JENNY: I'm sorry. You see, I was going to do something from "Hamlet." You know that "To be or not to be" deal? But then I found out that it's supposed to be a guy who says that.
DIRECTOR: That's true.
JENNY: So as the last minute I picked out something from "Macbeth." A character named Lady Macbeth? I assume that's a female role?
DIRECTOR: Yes. It is.

JENNY: So, anyway, that's what I'm going to do.
DIRECTOR: Very good. Proceed.
JENNY: *(In character.)* "Out darned spot --" *(SHE breaks, then looks out to the director.)* Uh … it's not really "darned" spot, you know?
DIRECTOR: Yes, I know.
JENNY: Is it all right if I use the real word? I mean, that won't offend you?
DIRECTOR: I've heard the word before, Miss Jenny.
JENNY: Miss Taylor.
DIRECTOR: Yes, Miss Taylor. Go ahead.
JENNY: *(In character.)* "Out --" *(SHE breaks again.)* Excuse me. Could I just skip the expletive? I feel uncomfortable swearing in front of strangers.
DIRECTOR: Whatever you're comfortable with, Miss Jenny.
JENNY: Miss Taylor.
DIRECTOR: Miss Taylor, yes. Whatever you're comfortable with.
JENNY: Thank you. *(In character.)* "Out nasty spot! Out, I say! One: two: why, then 'tis time to do't: - Hell" - *(SHE breaks.)* I'm sorry. *(Back in character)* "Hades is murky! Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier and afeard? What need we fear who know it, when none can call our power to account? -Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him? "Here's the smell of blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!" *(JENNY bows politely.)*
DIRECTOR: *(Clapping.)* Very good, Miss …
JENNY: Taylor.
DIRECTOR: Miss Taylor, yes. I see from your tryout sheet that you were in quite a few plays in high school.
JENNY: Yes, I was.
DIRECTOR: The lead in "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf"?
JENNY: Elizabeth Taylor's part, yes. Uh … no relation.
DIRECTOR: That's a rather ambitious play for a high school. Especially for as small a high school as you came from.
JENNY: Yes. Well, we had to cut out some of the more objectionable parts.

DIRECTOR: I suppose.
JENNY: In fact, when we were done cutting out the objectionable parts, the play was only 15 minutes long. But I think the audience caught the gist of it. Which is the main thing.
DIRECTOR: Yes. Well, Miss Jenny -
JENNY: Miss Taylor.
DIRECTOR: Miss Taylor, yes. I will post a callback list on the bulletin board by the speech office tomorrow. Callbacks, then, are tomorrow night. Now if you're not on the callback list that doesn't mean I'm not casting you, okay? Callbacks will be just for a few people who I need to see again. For whatever reason. Then the cast list will be posted by noon on Wednesday.
JENNY: Then that's all you need from me?
DIRECTOR: Yes, thank you. You did just fine, Miss Jenny.
JENNY: Miss Taylor. Thank you. *(SHE exits SL.)*
DIRECTOR: Next! *(Several moments go by with nobody entering.)* Next! *(Still nobody enters. The DIRECTOR consults his/her notes.)* Amy Mullens? You're up next!

(AMY enters and crosses DC rather slowly. She appears to be quite nervous.)

DIRECTOR: Are you Amy Mullens? *(AMY nods yes.)* Do you have an audition piece, Amy?

(AMY nods yes and takes a piece of paper out of her pocket. She simply stares at the paper and makes no effort to say anything.)

DIRECTOR: Well? Are you going to do it? *(AMY nods again but continues to simply stare at the paper.)* Well? Are you going to do something?
AMY: I think I already did. *(SHE quickly runs off stage.)*
DIRECTOR: Next!

(RICK enters, strutting, from SR and crosses DC.)

RICK: That's me.
DIRECTOR: Name, please?
RICK: Rick "Awesome" Jones.
DIRECTOR: What's that?
RICK: Rick "Awesome" Jones. I just wrote down Rick Jones on my tryout sheet there, but all my fans call me "Awesome."
DIRECTOR: Your fans?
RICK: Yeah, my fans. I'm a basketball player, you know? I play basketball.
DIRECTOR: Are you a freshman here, Rick?
RICK: Yeah. I'm a basketball player. Full ride, you know?
DIRECTOR: You don't have any theater experience listed on your tryout sheet. Didn't you do any plays in high school?
RICK: Of course not. Do I look like a wimp to you?
DIRECTOR: Mr. Jones, may I ask you a question?
RICK: Go ahead.
DIRECTOR: Why are you trying out for this play?
RICK: Why not? There some rules against basketball players trying out for the plays around here?
DIRECTOR: No. I just find it a little strange that a full ride basketball player, who thinks only "wimps" do theater, is suddenly trying out for one of my plays.
RICK: Well, I'm going to be honest with you, all right?
DIRECTOR: Please do.
RICK: This is more or less a dare. You know what I mean?
DIRECTOR: A dare?
RICK: Yeah. You see, me and George "The Dude" Stevens ... do you know "The Dude" Stevens?
DIRECTOR: No.
RICK: You're kidding me!
DIRECTOR: Should I know him?
RICK: Well, I guess! He's only going to be our starting point guard this season!
DIRECTOR: Pardon my ignorance.

End of Freeview

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