

The Formulaic Soul

By Brent Holland

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DEDICATION

I have already taught four of the Van Slyke kids at Laney High School (Hyrum, Ella, Miriam and David) with another coming up next year. Their mom, Anne, is my perma-chaperone going on trip after trip with us. A big "thank you" to both Anne and her husband Roger for trusting their children with me.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Portrayed in a fantasy world, six teens were suddenly collected and taken to a secret government laboratory. Their parents didn't react to their abrupt departure, and they had no choice on the matter. When the doctor arrives, he immediately begins the experiment. Seemingly simple tests are done to challenge their minds and bodies. Soon the tests really amp up and challenge their entire way of thinking. The teens, both in the dark and suspicious, are then told the truth about their existence. Can they live up to their planned futures? This show requires very little set, few costumes, and is entirely gender flexible. It is perfect for one-act competitions. About 25 - 30 minutes.

Set in the same exciting universe as "An Experiment," "The Applicant," and "The Four Teams," "The Formulaic Soul" asks an important morality question when Dr. Runnels discovers the key to human cloning. Excited at the endless possibilities, Dr. Runnels knows that he now has the capability to recreate exact duplicates lost friends and colleagues but never stops to think whether or not he should.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 w, 6 flexible)

DR. RUNNELS: (Flexible) The lead scientist in this program.

AGENT JENNINGS: (Flexible) A member of the agency who works security.

The 16-year-old unknowing participants of this experiment:

GRACE: More outspoken and aggressive.

DANA: A genuinely nice person.

AUSTIN: (Flexible) Intelligent and quick witted.

CALEB: (Flexible) Cunning and quick-thinking.

NATE: (Flexible) Friendly and outgoing.

EDWARD: (Flexible) Reserved and well-rounded person.

*Feel free to substitute names to better fit your cast.

The Formulaic Soul

(AT RISE: LIGHTS up, on GRACE, DANA, AUSTIN, CALEB and NATE who are spread out in a room. There are six desks in a semicircle. Each desk has a laptop or tablet on it, and a set of earphones. A door opens and EDWARD enters)

NATE: *(Greeting EDWARD.)* Hey, new guy! What's your story?

EDWARD: What?

NATE: Welcome to the mystery room.

EDWARD: Mystery room?

DANA: Nate thinks he's funny. What's your name?

EDWARD: I'm Edward.

DANA: I'm Dana. Where are you from?

EDWARD: Kansas. Do any of you know why I'm here? This morning, a couple of men in suits came to my house and told me I had to come with them. My parents seemed to know what was up but wouldn't tell me.

DANA: That's the same story for each of us; except I'm from Connecticut.

AUSTIN: Texas for me.

CALEB: I'm from Oregon. I got here first, and I've been here since early this morning. I'm Caleb.

(HE shakes hands with EDWARD.)

AUSTIN: Sorry. I'm Austin. I forgot to say that.

EDWARD: *(Processing.)* The men who came to get me didn't really make it an option as to whether I was going to go with them or not. Was it the same with you?

(They ALL nod.)

GRACE: I refused to go with them so they tazed me. I woke up handcuffed in the back of their car. My dad didn't do anything but watch.

EDWARD: Really?

GRACE: He's not exactly father of the year material.

NATE: I'm Nate, by the way. Also, if you try to leave, the suits aren't going to let you. Grace found that out the hard way too.

GRACE: (*Grimly.*) The tall one better not let his guard down.

EDWARD: Have they told any of you why we're here?

AUSTIN: Not a word. We've all asked in one way or another, but so far it seems to be a big secret.

CALEB: They did bring in lunch a bit ago, so at least they aren't planning to starve us.

DANA: I did overhear them say they were waiting for one more to arrive. So, maybe whatever is going to happen will happen soon.

(A door opens, and DR. RUNNELS enters. He wears an earpiece and is carrying a box that contains six collars.)

AUSTIN: From your mouth to God's ears.

DR. RUNNELS: Good afternoon. I'm Jamison Runnels.

DANA: (*Surprised to see him.*) Uncle Jamie! (*SHE runs to hug HIM.*) Why are you here?

CALEB: You know him?

DANA: He's like my totally favorite uncle. What are you doing here?

DR. RUNNELS: It's a work thing, Dana. I'm about to tell you all about it. Just give me a moment, please. As I was saying, I am Dr. Jamison Runnels. Thank you for your willingness to be my guests this afternoon.

(GRACE makes a scoffing noise)

DR. RUNNELS: (*Cont'd.*) I'm sorry about your treatment, Grace. I thought I had sufficiently warned my men that you may or may not be... difficult.

GRACE: I was literally kidnapped from my home.

DR. RUNNELS: That's not entirely true. Your father is well aware of where you are.

GRACE: I was tazed and handcuffed!

DR. RUNNELS: *(Laughing to himself, and then calmly.)* We can argue over this, or you can just accept your situation and understand that I mean you no further harm.

GRACE: Let the big guy by the door know that I'll be getting mine back.

DR. RUNNELS: I'll be sure to let him know. *(A beat.)* Now, I am sure you have all been wondering why you are here today.

AUSTIN: You think?

DR. RUNNELS: What if I told you that each of you have been participating in a highly secretive government program?

DANA: What do you mean?

DR. RUNNELS: I have debated how I would explain this to each of you, and I had thought initially to separate you and tell you individually, but in the end, I think this way is best.

EDWARD: What's going on here?

DR. RUNNELS: But, before we get to all of that, I am going to need you to do something for me. *(HE opens the box and pulls out six collars.)* I need each of you to put on one of these collars.

CALEB: What for?

DR. RUNNELS: These collars are simply going to help us measure your vital signs through this process.

EDWARD: What process?

DR. RUNNELS: The one I will tell you about just as soon as each of you place these around your necks.

(A moment passes.)

GRACE: No.

DR. RUNNELS: What?

GRACE: I'm not putting it on. Not until I know what's going on.

DR. RUNNELS: Understood. *(Looking at an unseen camera.)*
Agent Jennings?

(The door opens and AGENT JENNINGS enters.)

End of Freeview

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