HO HUM HIGH

By Rob Frankel

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DEDICATION

To my wonderful brother Hal and his lovely new bride Joyce.
The Playwright, Rob Frankel

SYNOPSIS

If you think your school is weird, then you've never been to Hollister Hummelforth High, better known as Ho Hum High! The geeky trigonometry teacher carries around a rubber chicken, the science teacher talks to her pet shrimp, and the principal is straight from Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood. No wonder the kids walk around like zombies! They only show signs of life when they're placing bets on who will fall asleep first.

Pete, a bright new student, can't believe it. So when Hal, the slowest, most naive student in school, assumes Pete's flat 7-UP is really "smart juice," Pete plays along with the joke, over the objections of his older sister, Chris.

When the principal sees the "effects" of the juice on Hal and other students, he thinks the spark of learning has been lit and enters HHH in the national high school wits competition. This does not fit in with the plans of the overly ambitious assistant principal. She wants Ho Hum High to look as bad as possible so it can be named the neediest school in America and get $5 million from Princess Acranium visiting from Mongootia.

Laughs come faster than answers in an explosively funny ending as the kids from HHH finally match wits on TV against teams from Lackless High and ABCD High. Easy classroom sets with a widely flexible cast of quirky teachers and crazy students, make HO HUM HIGH one school you'll want to check into.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Flexible cast of 22, approx. 9M, 13W.)

DR. VIRGIL NUMMINS: Crazy, enthusiastic trigonometry professor who has pet rubber chicken named Chester.

PETE: Wisecracking new boy at school, Chris' smart younger brother who is a couple of grades ahead of his age.

CHRIS: New girl at school, Pete's mothering older sister.

HAL: HHH team captain, tries hard but is a slow student; is funny without trying to be.

PRINCIPAL EASIBON: Placating principal of HHH, straight from Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood.

JOYCE: Member of HHH team, bored student with artistic talents.

ABBEY: Member of HHH team, bored student with musical talents.

CHARLIE: An easy-going student.

LORI: A bored student.

SUZANNE: Another.

SHIRLEY WINDSOR: Enthusiastic biology teacher who talks to pet shrimp Sophie.

FRIEDA FISCHKE: Stern English teacher.

ASST. PRINCIPAL PRITCHARD: Ambitious, two-faced, would-be ruler of the school.

PRINCESS ACRANIUM: From Moogootia, gaudy dresser, intelligent, looking to donate $5 million to the neediest school.

J.D.KANE: Television game-show host, chauvinistic.

HUGH: Camera person, pessimistic.

SUE: Camera person, tough as nails.

SALLY: Make-up artist/scoreboard changer, sarcastic, efficient.

LACKLESS HIGH TEAM:

JETER: Team captain, speaks in a monotone.

PAUL: A Lackless teammate.

MARY: A Lackless teammate.

ABCD HIGH TEAM:

JULIE: Only team member to show up, a smug chemistry major.

SFX

School passing bell, TV game show music, buzzers for game show.

SET DESIGN

ACT I, Scene 1: Trigonometry classroom. It is angled DS, so that the front of the classroom is DSL, it's back USR. There is a teacher's table DSL, with a chalkboard behind it, covered with mathematical equations. Several rows of chairs compose the rest of the classroom CS and SR. Door to the hallway USR.

ACT I, Scene 2 and ACT II, Scenes 1 & 2:

The desks and tables for Scene 1 classroom have been moved around and separated into several groupings facing the audience. A variety of beakers containing colored liquids, Bunsen burners, test tubes, and other chemistry equipment is laid out at each grouping.

ACT II, Scene 3: The bowl game. Just left of CS, three tables in a wide semicircle face the audience behind which are chairs for members of each of the three teams - HO HUM HIGH is CS, with LACKLESS SR and ABCD SL. There is a "buzzer" on each table, and behind each of the SR and SL tables is a tall standing lamp, ala a TV studio, to light the stage. There is a podium DSR facing the audience from which questions are read. There is a large cardboard sign resting on a music stand DSL with each team listed and a place to hang point totals below. An "APPLAUSE" sign is also resting DSL on the floor. Another fun effect is to have all of the AUDIENCE MEMBERS sitting with the <u>real</u> audience and have spotlights on them when THEY speak. Two on-the-shoulder, portable "TV cameras" with wires trailing offstage move in and out of the CS area to view the contestants. A TV on a stand in back SR, back to audience, is another nice effect to help the feeling of a real TV show.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I

Scene 1: Math class, one school day.
Scene 2: Chemistry class, later that same day.

Act II

Scene 1: Classroom, the following week.
Scene 2: Classroom, Friday afternoon.
Scene 3: High School Bowl Contest, Saturday.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: It is DR. NUMMINS' trigonometry class. He is a geek-ish man with glasses and a zany crop of red hair. He is very passionate about his subject, but also, quite crazy. He carries a rubber chicken in his hand throughout his classes and uses it as one would a ruler or pointer. He is in mid-speech, imploring his class to learn the glories of trigonometry.)

NUMMINS: *(Pacing about wearing his patented wide-eyed smile as he "stalks his prey.")* Come on now, repeat it with me.

(HAL and a FEW STUDENTS join in, OTHERS roll their eyes and slump further into their seats, while others tug at their chewing gum and glance at the clock.)

NUMMINS: *(Slowly, aloud.)*
"The hypotenuse is not a moose.
It's opposite angle's acute or obtuse!" *(Giggling, pleased with himself.)*

HAL: *(A very sincere, slower STUDENT, who wants to learn. His humor is unintentional and deadpan.)* Funny, Dr. Nummins.

NUMMINS: *(Pleased.)* Thank you, Hal.

HAL: Even the part about the moose, Dr. Nummins.

NUMMINS: Thank you, Hal. *(Speaking half to the class and half to the rubber chicken HE holds up in his hand.)* See? Poetic? Fun, even? Yes! *(Walking up to CHARLIE who's sleeping. Talking loudly to his face.)* Right, Charlie?

CHARLIE: *(Waking suddenly, blurts.)* A cute moose *(The CLASS snickers as HE looks around, trying to orient himself as he awakens.)* I mean is that the right answer, Dr. Numbhead? *(Now CLASS is in hysterics as NUMMINS wears a startled expression. CHARLIE is clearly in pain.)* NUMMINS! Dr. NUMMINS!

NUMMINS: *(Overly forgiving, anxious to return to the subject.)* It's okay, it's okay. *(To class.)* Let's try it again, hmm? *(CLASS utters quiet groan.)* "The hypotenuse is not a -" *(Interrupting himself.)* You know I made that up myself?! Yes! When I was six! Yes! *(Falls into momentary reminiscence. To HIMSELF.)* Ah, when I was six, so smart, such curly hair, so...*(Snaps out of it suddenly.)* So! *(HE bangs chicken into hand.)* An obtuse angle is greater than what? Anyone? Anyone? ... *(HE stuffs the chicken in the face of a surprised STUDENT.)* Suzanne? Chester Chicken wants to know! *(HE makes a soft clucking noise. Then he coaxes her quietly with clues, like a game show host.)* Obtuse angle...greater than... *(Encouraging her with imploring gestures and smiles.)* greater than Chester Chicken wants to know! *(To CLASS.)* Together class *(HAL and some OTHERS join half-heartedly.)* Chester chicken wants to know! Chester chicken wants to know! Chester—

SUZANNE: *(Succumbing begrudgingly.)* A hundred?

NUMMINS: A hundred? A hundred what?

SUZANNE: Feet?

NUMMINS: *(Bursts out giggling.)* A HUNDRED? FEET??!! Ha, ha! No! IN-correct! *(Ceases laughing suddenly, not wanting to alienate anyone. HE placates SUZANNE.)* Close though, so close. Very close. Ninety. Ninety degrees if you please! *(HE chuckles at this.)* Class, everybody Ninety degrees, if you please. Ninety degrees.

(NUMMINS continues teaching in pantomime. If possible, LIGHTS lower on him and front half of classroom, and rise on back half of classroom - the last two rows - where FOUR STUDENTS sit. None are paying the slightest attention to the class. They speak in stage whispers.)

LORI: Abbey? Your turn! *(SHE pushes ABBEY.)*

End of Freeview

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