

Reality Frights

A One-Act Comedy

By
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DEDICATION

To Monte, who discovered on our honeymoon that his wife thinks it is hilarious to scare the wits out of him; and to Sam and Joey, who love to try to scare their daddy, too.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Sequestered in an old theatre, nine prospective contestants must battle wits--and the witless!--to become the chosen few for the latest, greatest reality show, *Reality Frights*. As soon as the diverse contestants turn in their cell phones and introduce themselves, it's discovered that all the exits are locked. Even Maureen, the professionally perky producer, starts to panic when suddenly there's a blackout. When the lights come back up, one of the contestants is on the floor, bloodied and lifeless, while some monster in a mask threatens everyone. Or is this some "joke"? Then one of the contestants reveals she's really a reporter working on a story—or is she? Madness, mayhem and hilarity ensue as things go horrifically wrong. How much is staged and how much is actually real? If you love to scream with laughter and laugh till you scream, you won't want to miss *Reality Frights*!

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

Reality Frights opened October 28, 2010 in the Kitzmiller Auditorium at Wray High School in Wray, Colorado. It was directed by the playwright and the stage manager was Julia Campfield. The cast was as follows:

HAROLD: Shane Helling; CLYDE: Zachary Jackson; DAN: Jacob Sitorius; NORMAN: Matt Sullivan; FINN: Broderick Highberger; LIGHTING GUY: John Cardenas; MAUREEN: Paige Helling/ Kristen Hasty; BETTY: Melissa Johnson/ Sara Peterson; LYDIA: Brizay Gomez; KATE: Emily Schaffner/ Melissa Anderson; EUNICE: Kendra Schaffner/ Taylor Janik; ASHLEIGH: Charity Wright/ Kasse Swisher; DENISE: Yuviana Burrola/ Valeria Arambula.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Flexible cast of 13; approx. 2-6 males, 7-11 females)

MAUREEN TAGGERT: Executive Producer of *Reality Frights*. She is very efficient, wired but upbeat, determined to be an optimist even in the face of disaster. She would be considered perky but her professional manner turns it into a managing technique. Late 20s - early 30s.

HAROLD GATLIN: A good old boy from Texas, married to Betty. Owns a chain of furniture stores. Confident and a bit blunt but friendly, quick to laugh, even at himself. Mid-50s.

BETTY GATLIN: Wife of Harold, the consummate hostess of the party, she has a heart the size of Texas. She wants to make sure everyone feels right at home. Mid-50s.

LYDIA COWAN: The actress “wannabe,” very emotional and unstable but more by design—for the camera—than in actuality. She’s 21 years old.

KATE ANDREWS: Very driven, competitive, intelligent and elitist. She sees herself as superior to just about everyone and isn’t worried about stepping on toes or feelings. Early to mid-20s. *(If male: KEVIN.)*

FINN MATTHEWS: The “surfer dude.” Not the brightest bulb in the box but he is a nice guy. Totally without ambition, just looking for a good time. Could be anywhere from 18 - late 30s. *(If female: same name.)*

DAN MURRAY: Scientist who is definitely more interested in data than people. Eats, sleeps, and breaths the study of the paranormal. Age 25 - 35. *(If female: DANIELLE.)*

EUNICE WENTWORTH: A very wealthy widow who has no interests or hobbies. Bored by life. Late 60s.

NORMAN KRAKOWSKI: The kind of guy who thinks he is the life of the party but in reality is annoying to everyone. Early 20s.

CAST OF CHARACTERS *Continued*

ASHLEIGH PETERSON: Quiet and unobtrusive, she watches and observes the others and spends most of the show unnoticed. But when the cards are down she is confident, intelligent and articulate. Mid - late 30s

CLYDE JOHANSEN: The stage manager for the theatre, he cuts an intimidating figure. Old and crotchety, he is a personality to be reckoned with. Hard of hearing and easily annoyed. Mid-60s. (*If female: CORA.*)

DENISE GILBERT: The "girl next door" 18 – 25. (*If male: DENNY.*)

LIGHTING GUY: Seems totally normal but...? Age...? (*Or GAL.*)

NOTE: Please see end of script for dialogue notes regarding gender switches.

SETTING

The show can be done with very little in the way of a set. A couch, some folding chairs, a table for the snacks, and locked voting box are visible. There is also a large makeshift private "booth" constructed somewhat haphazardly out of plywood in which the contestants can record their comments.

The furniture can be rehearsal furniture, mismatched and unattractive, what most theatres have around to use for rehearsals. If desired, an interior home set can be in the process of being constructed: a partial wall erected, another flat leaning against the back wall, etc. The main purpose of this "set in progress" is to provide a place that Kate can hide behind to more effectively surprise the audience and also provide a place from which the Lighting Guy can mysteriously appear. It can also add some visual interest to the show but otherwise it isn't really necessary.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: House and stage lights are out. A GHOST LIGHT is on dimly illuminating the stage. MAUREEN TAGGERT enters from off right.)

MAUREEN: *(Yelling backstage over her shoulder as she enters.)* Just a minute.... Wait there while I get some lights on.

(SHE has pulled out her cell phone and is punching in a number while she is walking across the stage. Her head is down and she doesn't see the LIGHTING GUY who has quietly appeared from behind the wall flat in back of the couch. She almost runs into him center stage.)

MAUREEN: *(Cont'd.)* Sorry! You startled me. I didn't see you there. I thought I left the lights on.

LIGHTING GUY: You did. I'm running the lights for the theatre and I still had a few I needed to aim. I'll bring back up the house. I've got a couple more cues to set and then I'll be out of your way.

(HE fades back behind the window flat or exits down stage and walks up the aisle to the light booth through the audience. MAUREEN starts to ask him a question but the person on the other end of the phone picks up.)

MAUREEN: Derrick—hey! Yes, we're here. The place is fine. No. No problems. Yes, Derrick, I know. You told me. It's handled. I've been in this business for four years now; I know what I'm doing. We're just getting started. Everyone's checked in and they look great. Totally excited. Fantabulous. Uh huh. *(The LIGHTS come on.)* Oh—hang on a minute. *(SHE crosses right and hollers off stage.)* You all can come on in now, the lights are on.

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(At that cue, ALL THE PARTICIPANTS except for BETTY GATLIN should enter and begin milling about. They can start in on various activities dictated by personality: snacking, texting, sizing up the competition, mingling, checking makeup, reading a magazine, etc. MAUREEN immediately goes back to her phone call.)

MAUREEN: *(Cont'd.)* Right. OK. I'm going to go through the buzz and get it going. I'll call you if I need you but you should have the tapes by 3:00 tomorrow to review. Alrighty. Kiss, kiss. *(Flipping the phone closed she quickly takes the ghost light offstage and reenters. She takes a quick look at her clipboard and addresses the participants.)* OK, everyone, I think we are ready to get this show on the road so if you would just come on over here where you can hear me, I'll fill you in on how this is going to work. Is everyone here?

HAROLD: I'm sorry, Ms. Taggart, my wife went to the little girls room and...oh, there she is! Betty, honey, get your buns on over here. The show's startin'.

BETTY: *(Entering from stage right.)* Oh! I'm so sorry! I hope y'all weren't waiting on me. You know that saying, "A watched pot never boils?" Well, that may be true, but honey, you can bet when you have to go sit on the pot, that's when things will start happening! Never fails!

MAUREEN: No problem, Mrs. Gatlin, we were just getting started. First of all, congratulations, everyone. I personally have reviewed over 475 tapes, sat through 153 call backs and 57 interviews. You are all now finalists to compete in the most exciting reality show to hit TV since *Survivor*.

LYDIA: *(Squealing with excitement.)* OOOH! This is so exciting! I just can't believe it! I can't believe you chose ME out of all those thousands of people who wanted to be on your show.

KATE: You haven't made it yet. You're only a finalist. The real competition starts right here. Right now.

LYDIA: It's just an honor to be nominated.

KATE: That's what all the losers say.

End of Freeview

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