Superhero Sanitarium

By
Scott Haan

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Dedication: For Rhonda, my real-life superhero.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Lois Lancaster is a big-city journalist writing a story about the current state of modern mental health facilities. Her research takes her to a hospital populated with a unique group of quirky inmates who imagine themselves to be crime-fighting superheroes. At first Lois finds their elaborate superhero fantasies to be an entertaining diversion, the wild delusions of unstable minds, until something ... *unusual* happens that makes her wonder.

(Also available as a full-length play, *Superfreaks*.)

Premiere Production

Originally a full-length play entitled *Insane With Power*, it was first presented on October 25, 2007 by the Clinton County Civic Theatre in Frankfort, IN. The roles were originated by the following cast (in order of appearance):

SPEED FREAK: ..... Andy Best
LOIS LANCASTER..... Pamela Adams
DR. GAIL EISNER..... Jean Warren
DIM BULB ..... Eric Adams
MENTAL.....Julie Miller
KEVIN BENDIS ..... Scott Haan
LARRY ROSS*.....Jerry Thompson
*(*A character cut from the published script for length)*

Production staff:
Director.....Scott Haan
Assistant Director .....Rhonda Haan
Stage Manager.....Deb Smith
Costumes .....Charolette Henry
Head of Crew .....Stacey Martin
Crew ..... Adriane Ayers
Crew .....Nancy Martin
Lights and Sound ..... Larry Price
Set Design & Construction .....Jerry Thompson

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(3 M, 3 W)

LOIS LANCASTER: A young, attractive female reporter. She has a natural charm and likeability, which puts her interview subjects at ease. A little cynical and jaded, traits which come with the territory for a seasoned big-city journalist, but she's very good at hiding them.

SPEED FREAK: Real name: Charlie Raimi. A male patient who thinks he's a superhero who can run at incredible speeds. A sarcastic wise guy on the surface, but underneath, it's all good-natured, playful banter.

DIM BULB: Real name: Alexander O'Neil. A childlike male patient who thinks he's a superhero with the ability to turn off lights with his brain. He is the happiest, most enthusiastic person on the face of the earth. Unfortunately, he's not exactly the brightest bulb in the box.

MENTAL: Real name: Susan Whedon. A female patient who thinks she's a superhero with the ability to read minds. Despite being prone to sudden outbursts of bizarre non-sequiturs, she is a good-hearted and likable person, and very maternal towards her fellow inmates.

KEVIN BENDIS: A male patient who also thinks he has superpowers, but is much less quirky and flamboyant than the other inmates. Unlike them, Kevin doesn't embarrass himself with a ridiculous code name or costume ... at least, not at first. He is also more shy and reserved.

DR. GAIL EISNER: The kindly hospital administrator, a professional-looking woman in her 50s or 60s. She is just the type of rational, educated, steady influence needed to effectively run a madhouse like this one.

SCENES

Scene 1: The hospital June 1st, just before noon.
Scene 2: The hospital June 8th, a week later.
Scene 3: The hospital June 8th, a few hours later.

SETTING

Our story takes place in a community room at the Stanley J. Kirby Psychiatric Hospital, in the present. The atmosphere is friendly and bright, not gloomy. There are comic books scattered on the tables. There is only one visible exit. See diagram at end of script.

PROPS

At least 5 identical folding chairs
Comic books on the tables
CD player with a remote control
Purse for Lois
Cell phone for Lois
Two identical handheld tape recorders
Wooden clipboard for Eisner
Bundle of sticks and twigs
Small gun
Hawaiian lei necklace
Papaya
Fan (offstage)

SOUND EFFECTS

Ringing phone or cell phone ring tone
2 different songs played on the CD player
WHOOOSH sound to signify Speed Freak's super-speed
Loud rumble and a thunderclap
Car alarm

See additional notes on Costumes and Curtain Calls at end of script.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: An empty community room at the psychiatric hospital. A pair of flying arms appears in the doorway, and the voice behind them dramatically hums the "Superman" movie theme by John Williams.)

SPEED FREAK: Da da-da-da-da, da-DA-da-da ... Da da-dada-da, DA-da-da ...

(SPEED FREAK enters wearing a red superhero outfit. He is wearing a motorcycle helmet, but his hands and feet are bare. Arms out in front like he is flying, he runs a lap around the stage, still humming. He stops at a table with a stack of comic books on it, leafs through the stack, then chooses one. Soon, LOIS LANCASTER appears in the door behind him. She is smartly dressed in a professional-looking suit that does nothing to disguise her femininity. She watches as he flips through the comic, scratching his rear end vigorously. He builds the music to an enthusiastic crescendo before she announces her presence.)

LOIS: Excuse me ...
SPEED FREAK: *(Startled, he jumps a mile and a half, then spins to face her in a defensive karate pose. At first, his voice will be muffled by the helmet.)* Kee-yiiii!!!
LOIS: I'm sorry, I didn't mean to scare you. I have an appointment with Dr. Eisner?
SPEED FREAK: *(Relaxing.)* Oh! Well, then, greetings, citizen. I'm Speed Freak.

(HE extends his hand – the one that he was just using to scratch himself. SHE grimaces for a moment, then politely smiles and shakes it anyway.)

LOIS: I'm sorry, I didn't catch that. You have a – *(SHE points to his helmet.)*

(HE removes it, and sets the helmet and the comic on a table. He speaks at an unusually loud volume and over-enunciates, as if talking to a deaf person. Doing so causes him to spit, and with every "P" sound, LOIS subtly winces as spit hits her in the face.)

SPEED FREAK: *(Loud.)* Sorry. Speed Freak. You're the reporter, right? Well, it's a pleasure. I'm a big supporter of the power of the press.

LOIS: *(Trying to discreetly wipe her face.)* Thank you. Would you mind if I asked you a few questions?

SPEED FREAK: *(Still loud.)* Not at all.

LOIS: *(Wincing at the volume.)* Um ... If you don't mind my asking, why are you talking so loud?

SPEED FREAK: *(Still loud.)* Sorry, I didn't catch that. Those 600-mile-an-hour winds really take a toll on my eardrums, as you can imagine. Am I talking too loud?

LOIS: Just a bit.

SPEED FREAK: *(Regulates his volume and talks normally from now on.)* Ahem. Is this better?

LOIS: Much better, thank you. *(Into her tape recorder.)* Monday, June 1st, 10:50 a.m., the Stanley J. Kirby Psychiatric Hospital. I am speaking with ... uh ... "Speed Freak," was it? *(HE nods in response.)* So ... you mentioned 600-mile-an-hour winds. Are you telling me you can move that fast?

SPEED FREAK: Absolutely. I can circle the globe in 23 seconds.

LOIS: That is impressive.

SPEED FREAK: *(Dismissive.)* Eh. I bet I could do it in 22. If I missed all the lights and had a tailwind.

LOIS: I can see how that would make a difference.

SPEED FREAK: Unfortunately, there's a little catch. I can only run fast if I'm running backwards.

LOIS: Backwards.

SPEED FREAK: That's right.

LOIS: THAT can't be easy.

SPEED FREAK: It's not, but I'm getting better at it.

End of Freeview

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