Boyfriend by Blackmail

By Tony Howell

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Tom Howell and Connie Oren Howell, who grew up, fell in love and got married in the real Farmland, Indiana. Then they had to spend the next fifty years listening to my stories, over and over and over. I'm lucky to have them.

STORY OF THE PLAY

When Cassidy Tyler heads back to her hometown of Farmland, Indiana, she is determined to tell the truth about the boyfriend she has been writing about in her blog and magazine column. But before she can confess to her family, her editor arranges for a suspended sports writer, Jason, to play the part of this fictional boyfriend. She is determined to throw him out, but her family loves him, her old boyfriend hates him, and she finds herself more attracted to him than she wants to admit. But at her sister's graduation party, the fake romance is exposed in front of everyone they know, and Cassidy's perfect life is an embarrassing disaster. Can she come out of this mess with the only thing that suddenly matters to her?

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

Central Noble High School in Albion, Indiana in March 2014.

Original cast: Eric Reidenbach, Jessica Bennett, Sierra Marsh, Anthony Stevens, Kati Lee, Rachel Flory, Ethan Cavanaugh, Mitch Comparet, Colton Conrad, Tricia Van Gessel, Nyla Merriman, Morgaine French, Libby Stayner, Katie Hatch, Sarah Denton, and Ashlyn Fields.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 m, 11 w, 7 flexible, 4 kids, some doubling is possible.)

MEN:

Jason Stone: Sports writer, very smart and very male
Ben Tyler: Great father, husband, hard worker at the bank
Noah Tyler: High school junior, tons of energy, always hungry
Van Carter: Opposite of a woman's dream, can be played a variety of ways including washed-up jock or nerd
Kyle Weber: Husband to Karen, feels sorry for himself

WOMEN:

Cassidy Tyler: Writer for a magazine, a good person who is looking for a way out of the mess she accidentally caused
Diana Masters: Tough-talking editor at the magazine
Chloe Foster: Hometown friend to Cassidy, a real worrier
Violet Anderson Tyler: Kind mother with apron, high heels, and perfect hair; she could be straight from a TV sitcom
Kenzie Tyler: High school senior, easily annoyed
Karen Tyler Weber: Oldest child, tells everyone what to do
Riley Thompson: Kenzie's friend, secretly in love with Noah
Felicia Simon: Has hated Cassidy since high school, a real snob
Allison Connors: Local banker, fast-talking, nervous wreck
Jasmine Bailey: Cute but snotty girlfriend of Noah
Delia Simon: Bank president, vengeful but very stylish

FLEXIBLE:

Kennedy Wyler: Cosmetics CEO and magazine advertiser
Lyndon Turner: Local police officer
Uncle Aaron/Aunt Erin: Relative who attends Kenzie's party
Uncle Alex/Aunt Alex: Relative who attends Kenzie's party
Mason, Madison, Morgan, Martin: Kyle and Karen's spoiled kids
Other party-goers: Ad-libbed lines near end of play
Waiter/Waitress: Nonspeaking
Shoe Salesperson: Nonspeaking
Valet: Nonspeaking

PRODUCTION NOTES

The set is a standard living room in Farmland, Indiana. It is important to have the couch/chair/living area on one side of the stage and the dining room table on the other, as both are equally important. Use the opening of Act II to create variety in lighting. Subdued lighting, such as moonlight through the patio doors, helps set the mood for both Noah and Jason's brotherly scene, and the almost kiss between Jason and Cassie.

The opening phone sequences take place in Chicago. Props and actors set the scenes of a store, the street, and a restaurant. The original production used spotlights on either side of the stage with the curtain open but the stage dark, although the curtain could be closed and not open until it is time to go to Farmland.

Props are outlined in the script, but the original production had great success keeping food in Noah's hands nearly every time he entered. Sandwiches, apples, cookies, cheese, chips were all used so that he was constantly eating throughout the show.

Yes. There is a real Farmland, Indiana. It is a standard small town with a closed-down grain elevator, two blocks of small stores downtown, the Chocolate Moose diner, railroad tracks, and two stoplights. All the people, however, are fictional.

ACT I

(AT RISE: DIANA and CASSIDY are in front of the curtain on opposite sides of the stage. If no curtain is used, they should be in separate pools of light. They are in Chicago on cell phones and talking to each other. Diana is trying on shoes with a harried SHOE SALESPERSON while Cassidy is waiting on a VALET to get her car and load up her suitcases.)

DIANA: Cassidy, darling! Where are you? I've been trying to reach you all morning.
CASSIDY: I told you, Diana. I'm headed home to Farmland for my sister's graduation.
DIANA: But you were supposed to meet Kennedy Wyler, sweetheart. One of your biggest fans and one of our biggest advertisers.

(DIANA shakes her head no to SALESPERSON who takes off the shoes and heads backstage for another pair.)

CASSIDY: Diana! I've told you for a month that I couldn't be there this weekend. I'll be back first thing Monday morning. Can't we do it then?

(VALET enters on the opposite side. CASSIDY hands over her car keys as she continues to talk to Diana. S/he exits with the keys.)

DIANA: Well, I'll try, kiddo, but it won't be easy. Wyler always gets his/her way. And you're going to have to accept the fact that your personal life is very public now. You can't just go traipsing off to Farmville whenever you want.
CASSIDY: Farmland.
DIANA: Yeah, whatever. Just face the facts, darling. Your "Small Town Girl" column is not only the number one feature in the magazine, but your online followers are growing at a glorious rate.

(SALESPERSON returns. DIANA takes one look at the shoes

and waves them off. S/he disappears backstage again.)

CASSIDY: I can't believe it. For a year we were barely hanging on, and all of sudden, they can't get enough of it.
DIANA: It's the Tanner Fox storyline. You were a genius to start dating him.
CASSIDY: You said it needed more hope and more drama.
DIANA: Well, it worked. I just hope you can keep stringing Tanner along. Don't let him get away from you, Cassidy, sweetheart.
CASSIDY: Diana? Tanner is fictional, remember?
DIANA: Oh, I know that, and you know that, but none of your fans can ever know that.
CASSIDY: Well, actually…I'm going to tell my family this weekend. They all think he's real, too.
DIANA: Cassidy Tyler! You can't do that! You tell one person and it will be out in a day. Tanner will be dead, and so will your column. And my magazine. NO!

(SALESPERSON has returned during Diana's last line. As Diana yells "no" at Cassidy, Salesperson sighs and turns around with the shoes to go find another pair.)

DIANA: *(Cont'd.)* I am 100 percent right in this case, and no one must know that Tanner is a fake.
CASSIDY: But—
DIANA: NO BUTS! I'm telling you, Cassidy, if you so much as let one hint of Tanner being imaginary escape your lips, you might as well stay back in Farmville, Indiana.
CASSIDY: Farmland.

(VALET returns and picks up the suitcases around Cassidy's feet. S/he goes off stage with them.)

DIANA: Yeah, whatever. Now, are we clear on this subject once and for all?
CASSIDY: But what do I tell them when they all want to know why Tanner didn't come with me? Again.
DIANA: Work commitments. He has a show at the art gallery.

End of Freeview

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