THE RUBBER ROOM

By Pat Cook

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PUBLISHED BY

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STORY OF THE PLAY

You ever wonder what goes on in a teacher's lounge? Here's your chance to snoop on a gang of educators who'll do anything to relieve the boredom. Whether it be planning ambushes for the principal or dressing up as Vikings, this particular group is beyond compare. That is, until they find out one of them has written a book and used the rest of the staff as examples! Then it's every man (and woman) for himself (and herself)! Accusations fly like spitwads. "Didn't you used to dance under the name of Bubbles Akimbo?", Jack asks Gracie. Bebe dreams of going to France while Coach Sanders wants to shoot his own movie. But who's really in the book? Who has a crush on who else? Who thinks himself an Adonis? And who keeps playing the stinking harmonica?! Hand-to-hand combat breaks out just when Superintendent Brooks shows up, ready to fire Principal Carp and minutes ahead of newspaper reporter DeLay. "Don't you want to hear what the Governor said about all this?" she asks the panicking principal. All this during the first week of school. Is it any wonder they refer to the teacher's lounge as "The Rubber Room"?

SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

ACT I
Scene l: First day of school
Scene 2: The next day
Scene 3: The next morning

ACT II
Scene 1: Two days later

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(5 M, 6 W)

JACK BEDDOES - A slightly cynical History teacher, who tries to keep everything on sane.
LILLIAN CRAULICK - A level headed teacher, who spends most of her time keeping everybody in line.
ROY SANDERS - A harmonica playing coach, ready to go along with anything.
GRACIE MOORE - An aggressive teacher, who thinks the whole world's going soft.
MARY ANN TATUM - A meek home ec teacher, who's not ready for the new school year.
BEBE McDANIELS - A rather romantic teacher, who dreams of living in France.
ART MUNCIE - A vocational agricultural teacher, who fancies himself something of a catch.
PRINCIPAL CARP - A very meek administrator, who'd rather be left alone.
SUPT. BROOKS - A bombastic take-charge type.
CARSON DeLAY- A woman newscaster, who's ready to make-up the news if she has to.
CANDACE OSTERMANN - A first year teacher who just might survive the experience...maybe.

Time: The present, the first day of school.
Place: The teacher's lounge.

SETTING

The setting for this little epic is the teacher's lounge at Jackson MacElhenny High School. The room, like the school, has seen better days. Its walls, painted a stale vanilla, provide support for its faded pictures and scruff marks where an occasional chair back scraped them. There is a large bulletin board, UPS, with several notices, and the words "THE RUBBER ROOM" at the top in large, colorful letters. There are three doors out of the room. The first, SR, leads out into the hall and the rest of the school. The second, USC, exits into the cafeteria. On this door is a sign that reads: "CAFETERIA - THIS WAY LIES MADNESS." The third door, SL, leads outside.

The furniture in the room consists mainly of a large couch, located DSR, and a long table and chairs, SL. Along the back wall runs a long counter with a set of floor cabinets, on which rests a coffee maker and various condiments. There are several doors and compartments to these cabinets which house untold personal items for the teachers. A wall phone resides on the SR wall. The rest of the room holds assorted, but mismatched chairs, end tables, etc.

PROPS

Jack - coffee mug
Gracie - coffee mug, copy of the book, turkey or beef jerky
Lillian - watch, newspaper
Roy - harmonica, nailfile, beret, $5 bill, megaphone, whistle
MaryAnn - schoolbooks, coffee cup
Art - load of books, copy of the book, tennis racket
Bebe - copy of the book
Carp - pen and pad, fake mustache
Delay - notepad
Set Props - coffee pot, brown paper bag

SOUND EFFECTS

Harmonica music, Loud raucous noises, car careening and screeching to a halt, school bell rings

ACT I
Scene 1

(Before the LIGHTS come up, a WOMAN'S voice is heard reading passages from a book.)

VOICE: Chapter One. A Journey Of A Thousand Miles. "Only a fool speaks for certain, but a wise man always questions." How often have we heard this? Yet, when one makes a start, some basis for fact must remain steadfast and act as a springboard from which all other ideas or inspirations emerge. Which brings us to that philosophical verity, "I think, therefore I am." If your reply is "I am a teacher," then we shall all observe a moment of silence...

(AT RISE: The first day of school. JACK is straddling a chair and holding his coffee in front of him as he stares wild-eyed at nothing in particular. GRACIE is making a cup of coffee and is in no hurry about it as she looks over at LILLIAN who is looking at her watch. A deafening silence holds the room hostage. ROY enters through the SR door. He stops and looks at the others. Everyone shrugs in reluctant submission. Roy starts to speak but thinks better of it and moves over to the coffee maker. MARY ANN enters through the SL door and looks at the others as they crane to look at her.)

MARY ANN: There's something about the first day of school that makes me want to shoot my guidance counselor.
JACK: I think there's a law against that.
MARY ANN: Let me know when you're sure. I got Bobby Burdock this year.

(EVERYONE in the room moans condolences.)

GRACIE: Where are we now?

LILLIAN: We still got fifteen minutes. Why, you taking medicine?
GRACIE: You got any?
LILLIAN: Anybody else want to talk to her? *(SHE moves away from GRACIE.)*
JACK: How is it we're always in here so early?
GRACIE: Because we love our profession, we are dedicated teachers and basically have no social life.
JACK: Do you count coupon day at the 7-11?
GRACIE: Next year.
ROY: I almost quit! *(EVERYONE looks at HIM.)*
GRACIE: Really?
JACK: That's great. I once knew a guy who quit.
ROY: *(Rushes over to JACK.)* No kidding, what was he like? *(HE sits on the couch.)*
JACK: Well, he's very happy today.

(GRACIE, LILLIAN and MARY ANN move over to THEM as JACK warms to his subject.)

GRACIE: I bet.
LILLIAN: Tell us about him.
JACK: I...I see him every so often. He runs a roadside stand and sells lawn storks.
LILLIAN: Lawn storks? What's that?
JACK: Storks that go on your lawn.
LILLIAN: People do that on purpose? *(SHE moves to the UPS door.)*
GRACIE: I've seen that guy, I think. Is he the one who's always laughing?
JACK: Yeah, but only at other teachers. *(ROY takes a harmonica out of his jacket, and cupping it, plays a haunting tune.)* He's quite a guy. Never looked back, they said. Just took his contract one year and tore it up. Walked out the door and...never looked back.

End of Freeview

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