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## **NOBODY'S LISTENING**

**By Ed Shockley**

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

MR. CARP, hard-nosed Hollywood obsessed director who is constantly on his cell phone.

BERNIE, assistant director. Noted for his efficiency and professionalism.

HOPE, attractive, talented, young actress.

BOBBY CLOY/HOODY, young Sylvester Stallone clone. Chain smoker.

CELESTE/SNAKE, classically mis-educated young actress.

LOUIS/MECH-BOY, urban middle school student.

First performed at Children's Theatre of Charlotte. Directed by Scott Miller with the following cast:

MR. CARP	Kevin Campbell
LOUIS/MECH-BOY	Jeffrey Cousar
HOPE	Marta King
CELESTE/SNAKE	Darlene Parker Black
BOBBY CLOY/HOODY	Tim Grant

*(The performance space is divided into three areas. Center-stage is the portable set of the television show, The Adventures of Mech-Boy. There are two remote-controlled cameras directed at the cafeteria table that dominates this space. Stage right there is a director's chair. Stage left is a costume rack. BERNIE, the assistant director, straightens up the stage and does a light check while the audience is being seated. He then leaves until after the school business is completed. Enter Bernie wearing headset.)*

**BERNIE:** Hallo? Hallo? Somebody get on the headset, please. Hallo? Wooh! Turn the volume down! Yeah, very funny, but I don't want any horsing around out there. We're gonna have our hands full with these new-fangled remote-controlled cameras. And that's only the half of it. You ever work with Carp before? Well, take my word for it, you do not want to get on the wrong side of this fish.

*(Enter MR. CARP.)*

**CARP:** Cameras ready to roll?

**BERNIE:** Yes, Mr. Carp.

**CARP:** Good. Good. So, do these kids know what's going on?

**BERNIE:** I assumed that you'd want to be the one to instruct them.

**CARP:** *(To Audience:)* Okay... Listen up, people. We're here on location at... Where are we, Bernie?

*(Bernie says the name of the school.)*

Yeah. We're here to broadcast the pilot of a new TV series that focuses on youth violence called *The Adventures of Mech-Boy*. What better place to do a show on teen violence, right? You guys are my studio audience. We'll be sending a signal out live to a remote truck and going straight into about a quarter of a million homes so I need everybody to mind their p's and q's, especially when we're on the air. Bernie there will signal us into and out of segments so pay attention to him. It's a fun show, you're gonna have a good time, so go ahead and laugh but when Bernie does this... Bernie?

*(Bernie signals.)*

Then you've got to clam up quick cause we're riding a clock to get to each commercial break. Okay, that's about it... Let's do a light check.

**BERNIE:** It's already been done.

**CARP:** We get one shot at this and I don't plan to be working out of middle-school auditoriums for the rest of my career. So humor me, Bernie, and check everything, twice.

**BERNIE:** *(Into headset:)* Sarah, standby light check. I know we did but we're going to check them again.

**CARP:** Where are my actors?

**BERNIE:** *(Into headset:)* Give me first electric, please?

**CARP:** Why aren't the actors here?

**BERNIE:** *(Into headset:)* Hold on, Sarah. *(To Carp:)* I set up a place over there so they could relax and stay out of our way. Would you like for me to assemble the cast?

**CARP:** You finish my light check, I'll handle the divas.

**BERNIE:** *(Into headset:)* Where were we, Sarah? Okay. Second electric.

**CARP:** *(Calling offstage:)* Come on, kiddies, it's showtime.

*(Enter BOBBY, HOPE and CELESTE.)*

**CELESTE:** Did my watch stop?

**CARP:** Move, people, move!

**HOPE:** *(To fellow actors:)* Don't you just hate it when he says that?

**CARP:** We're on the clock.

**SNAKE:** *(To Hope:)* What?

**HOPE:** "Move people, move." It makes me feel like a cow being herded to slaughter.

**BERNIE:** *(Into headset:)* We might as well run the mike check again too. Mike one. Testing one, two, three...

**BOBBY:** *(To actors:)* I don't care what he calls me so long as he films my good side.

**CARP:** Mech-Boy? Mech-Boy?

**HOPE:** *(To Bobby:)* I hadn't noticed that you had a good side.

**BERNIE:** *(Into headset:)* Mike two, testing one, two, three...

**CARP:** Has anybody seen my Mech-Boy?

**CELESTE:** He went back to his dressing-room.

**CARP:** Why would he go there when we're minutes away from airing?

**CELESTE:** He ate eleven of the breakfast cakes before he realized they were prune Danish.

**BOBBY:** Serves him right for taking all the good stuff off the snack table.

**BERNIE:** Mike three testing one, two...

**CARP:** Go get Mech-Boy.

**BERNIE:** We're right in the middle of...

**CARP:** I didn't ask what you were doing, Bernie; I asked you to go get Calvin's overlarge behind out on the set, please.

**BERNIE:** *(Into headphones:)* Just do the best you can, Sarah. Duty calls. *(To cast:)* Six minutes everybody.

*(Exit Bernie.)*

**BOBBY:** *(To Actors:)* Do you think McDanish is going to make it?

**CELESTE:** I don't think. That's what he gets paid for.

**CARP:** Nobody go wandering off and getting lost on me, you hear?

**HOPE:** *(To Bobby:)* Would you mind not smoking?

**BOBBY:** It helps me relax.

**HOPE:** And it gives the rest of us lung cancer.

**BOBBY:** Hold your breath.

*(Bernie enters. Hope quietly steals Bobby's lighter.)*

**BERNIE:** We have a big problem.

**CARP:** There are no problems in live television, only situations to be resolved before the commercial break ends.

**BERNIE:** Well, the situation is that Mech-Boy tried to use the john in his trailer without first removing his costume.

**CARP:** And?

**BOBBY:** Has anybody seen my lighter?

**BERNIE:** He's stuck.

**CARP:** *(To Actors:)* Do a final check, people, make sure you're ready to go in...

**BERNIE:** Five minutes.

**CARP:** We go in five minutes. *(To Bernie:)* What'dya mean, he's stuck?

**BERNIE:** Which word didn't you understand?

**BOBBY:** It was right here a minute ago.

**CELESTE:** Shhh!

**CARP:** He can't be stuck!

**BERNIE:** Tell him that.

**BOBBY:** *(To Celeste:)* You want me to be quiet then you find me a light for my cigarette.

**CELESTE:** *(To Carp:)* Calvin's stuck?

**CARP:** Mind your business! *(To Bernie:)* And you go get my Mech-Boy!

**BOBBY:** Check if you see my lighter while you're back there.

**BERNIE:** It's hopeless.

**BOBBY:** Maybe I left it in the trailer.

**CARP:** Will you go have your nicotine fix someplace else!

**HOPE:** *(To Celeste:)* What's going on?

**CARP:** *(To Bernie:)* It's never hopeless, only bleak.

**CELESTE:** Calvin's locked himself in the bathroom.

**BERNIE:** *(To Carp:)* Very bleak.

**HOPE:** *(To Celeste:)* Why?

**BOBBY:** Probably a contract thing. I wish I had thought of it.

**CARP:** Break the wall. Pry him out with a crowbar. I don't care what you do but get that fat fool on this set immediately!

**BERNIE:** The wall is solid steel. They've tried tying a rope around him, soaked him in Wesson Oil. He is not going to move.

**HOPE:** *(To Carp:)* What's up with Calvin?

**CARP:** You don't worry your pretty little head, Sweetie. Just get ready for the cafeteria scene. We air in...

**BERNIE:** Four minutes.

*(Hope rejoins the others.)*

**CARP:** Think! I'm going live in four minutes and I've got no Mech-Boy.

**BERNIE:** You also have no understudy since you opted to spend the money on that beautiful stretch limo parked outside.

**CARP:** There's a way out of this thing.

**BERNIE:** Is suicide an option?

**CARP:** Okay, okay! Do we still have a spare costume?

**BERNIE:** Yes.

**CARP:** Get it.

**BERNIE:** Why?

**CARP:** Because I'm the one who decides if you still have a job tomorrow.

*(Bernie crosses to the clothes rack.)*

**BOBBY:** I've waited years for a break like this and now the show's gonna get canceled because some greedy creep gets caught in the crapper.

*(Carp climbs down into the audience.)*

**HOPE:** How long till broadcast?

**CELESTE:** About three minutes.

**BOBBY:** What broadcast, ding-bat? We've got no Mech-Boy.

**CARP:** Is there an acting program at your school? Never mind, at this point who cares? You, stand up. Come on, time is money! Wrong type, sit down. You. Wait a minute, are you a girl? What are you wasting my time for; I'm looking for Mech-Boy!

*(Bernie is standing directly behind Carp with the costume.)*

What's taking that idiot so long with that...uh, thanks, Bernie.

**HOPE:** How long?

**CARP:** Buy a watch, doll; we're busy.

*(Carp measures the suit against several students.)*

**CELESTE:** I know he's not planning to put me on camera live with some untrained amateur.

**CARP:** *(To LOUIS:)* Can you read?

**LOUIS:** Of course I can read.

**BOBBY:** As long as I get a close-up for my monologue I don't care what he does.

**CARP:** Bernie, find the cue cards for the big speech from the last scene.

*(Bernie leafs through the cue cards.)*

Okay, kid, here's the deal. I've got a live show about a robot boy and I've got no robot boy. If you can read the lines on the cue cards and not trip over your own feet, then in twenty-seven minutes you'll be five hundred dollars richer.

**LOUIS:** Five hundred dollars?

**CARP:** You could go for that, couldn't you?

**LOUIS:** I could go for that.

**CARP:** Time, Bernie?

**BERNIE:** Sixty seconds.

*(Carp takes the cue card from Bernie.)*

**CARP:** Okay, kid, save my bacon.

**LOUIS:** *(Reading:)* I wasn't born, I was built. I had to spend years on a laboratory bench because I had...

**CARP:** You're hired. Slap the suit on him.

*(Bernie starts to help Louis with the pants.)*

Forget the pants, just do the chest-piece and headgear.

*(Louis tries to help with the costume.)*

That's what he gets paid for. Eyes on me. Now, you're playing Mech-Boy. That's short for mechanical Boy. You're a teenage robot, respectful, nonviolent, smart. The perfect kid. This is the first episode. Scene one is in the cafeteria of a new school.

*(Carp snaps his finger at Hope. She crosses to them.)*

Stick close to this dame. She plays your best friend and she'll keep you in the right place.

**HOPE:** Good luck, kid.

**LOUIS:** Thanks.

**CARP:** *(To Louis:)* You could do worse. Bobby! Front and center.

*(Bobby crosses to them.)*

This lowlife plays the local thug. You and him get into a thing over a cafeteria chair but you come out on top because you've got smarts. Time?

**BERNIE:** Thirty seconds.

**CARP:** Get him ready... Huddle people...and find me an aspirin.

**BOBBY:** You just got to remember one thing, kid.

**LOUIS:** What's that?

**BOBBY:** Don't ever stand on this side of me.

**BERNIE:** Get out of here, Bobby. Look, kid, I wish there was time to talk you through the whole show but there isn't so you just keep your eyes glued to these cards and read any lines that say "Mech-Boy." If you get stuck then remember you're the perfect kid and do something because we're broadcasting live. Places.

**CARP:** And despite everything, let's try to have some fun out there.

**CELESTE:** Fun? I'm a conservatory trained thespian and I am being asked to perform with an unschooled adolescent.

**CARP:** Move it, people, move it. You have my aspirin, Bernie?

**BERNIE:** Mech-Boy pilot live broadcast scene one...

**CELESTE:** Wait; I haven't prepared properly.

*(Celeste assumes a yoga stance.)*

**BERNIE:** ...in six, five, four...

*(Bernie continues the count with his fingers, then signals, "Action." Celeste snaps into character as "Snake." Enter Mech-Boy and Hope.)*

**CELESTE/SNAKE:** Woooooh! What's that?

**HOPE:** This is my science fair project.

**CELESTE/SNAKE:** Let me guess, a remote controlled vacuum cleaner.

**HOPE:** It's a prototype of NASA's Mobile Mechanical Being with Expanding Artificial Intelligence.

**CELESTE/SNAKE:** Come again?

**HOPE:** It's a robot that can learn.

**CELESTE/SNAKE:** Learn what?

**HOPE:** Anything we choose to teach it.

**CELESTE/SNAKE:** Can you teach it to say, "I'll be bok."

**LOUIS/MECH-BOY:** I'll be bok.

**CELESTE/SNAKE:** Cool.

**HOPE:** I petitioned NASA and they agreed to let us participate in a socialization experiment for the rest of the school year.

**BOBBY/HOODY:** (*Off camera:*) And just what does that mean in country English?

**CARP:** (*Into headset:*) Standby sinister music.

**HOPE:** Mech-Boy will be joining our school to learn how to act.

(*Enter Bobby as Hoody.*)

**CELESTE/SNAKE:** There goes the neighborhood.

**BOBBY/HOODY:** I'm happy to see you too, Snake. Who's your friend?

**HOPE:** This is my science project. We're supposed to treat it the same as we would any other student.

**BOBBY/HOODY:** Give me your lunch money, Dork.

**CELESTE/SNAKE:** You're not funny.

**BOBBY/HOODY:** I can't say the same for you because I laugh every time I see your face.

**CELESTE/SNAKE:** With lines like that I bet you'll be on TV in no time; the six o'clock news doing like this.

(*Celeste pulls her sweater up over her head like a suspect.*)

**BOBBY/HOODY:** I'll be on there for beating down a little smart-mouthed girl.

**HOPE:** You two are setting a really bad example for the robot.

**BOBBY/HOODY:** Ugly as he is, he ought to be glad we let him in the lunchroom at all.

**CELESTE/SNAKE:** He dissed you, Iron Man, you gonna take that?

**HOPE:** Guys, now we don't want to teach him every bad habit we've learned over the years.

**BOBBY/HOODY:** Why not?

**CELESTE/SNAKE:** Because he might turn out like you and your momma.

**HOPE:** Have a seat, Mech-Boy.

**CELESTE/SNAKE:** Isn't that where you usually sit, Hoody?

**BOBBY/HOODY:** I'm going to teach him about pain if he don't get his transistorized butt out of my chair.

*(Louis tries to rise; Bobby pushes him back into the seat.)*

**HOPE:** There's plenty of room.

**BOBBY/HOODY:** Yo, you're in my seat, flathead.

*(Pause. Louis is trying to see the cue card behind Bobby.)*

I said, you're in my seat, flathead.

*(Louis tries to move Bobby out of the way. Bobby slaps his hand.)*

**BOBBY:** What do you think you're doing?

**CELESTE:** I knew something like this was going to happen.

**HOPE:** Let's remember where we are, folks.

**CELESTE:** I can't say my line unless he gives the cue.

**BOBBY:** Look, Bozo, you need to move your bones.

*(Carp gets Bobby's attention and makes him aware that he's blocking the cards.)*

**LOUIS/MECH-BOY:** I am like rubber, you are glue; names bounce off of me and stick to you.

**CELESTE/SNAKE:** Okay... He's calling you flathead right back at you.

*(Bobby tries to get Louis to rise. Again he is blocking the cue cards.)*

**HOPE:** Leave him alone, Hoody.

*(Bobby grabs Louis's shirt.)*

That's not necessary.

**BOBBY:** He should've moved.

*(Louis grabs Bobby in a wrist lock and moves him out of the way.)*

**LOUIS:** *(Reading the cue card to himself:)* Options: A) Attack, B) Ignore, C) Negotiate, D) Report to authorities.

**CELESTE:** What's going on?

**BOBBY:** Get off of me.

**CARP:** What am I seeing?

*(Bobby struggles and falls to the floor.)*

**CELESTE:** Are you alright?

**HOPE:** What in the world were you thinking?

**CARP:** Keep it together, People, we're live.

**BOBBY:** Not for long cause I'm gonna kill that kid.

**CARP:** Somebody get me out of this.

**CELESTE:** We're completely off text.



**HOPE:** He's not a kid, he's a robot.

**BOBBY:** He's gonna be autoparts when I get through with him.

**CELESTE:** I don't know what they're saying...

**CARP:** Sit down and shut up, Celeste!

*(Celeste meditates.)*

**BERNIE:** Twenty seconds till commercial.

**HOPE:** He's a non-violent robot.

**BOBBY:** He nearly broke my wrist.

**HOPE:** It must be a glitch in his programming; we'll get it fixed.

**BOBBY:** I'm gonna fix him myself, with a Fungo upside his bongo head.

**BERNIE:** Ten seconds...

**BOBBY:** *(To Louis:)* You listen and you listen good!

**HOPE:** You need to stop and think before you go too far.

**BOBBY:** The only thing I've got to do is put this scene-stealing chump in his place cause I'm from the old school...

**CARP:** Cut!!! Roll commercial.

**BOBBY:** ...so there ain't no way this creep is gonna come in here steppin' on my lines and making me look bad because I will go to war!

**CELESTE:** I told you something like this was going to happen.

**CARP:** Bobby, just what was all that?

**BOBBY:** This ham here ruined the scene.

**HOPE:** If that ain't the hot-dog calling the bacon pork.

**BOBBY:** *(To Louis:)* Man, I ought to knock you out.

**CARP:** I will handle this.

**BOBBY:** Hoody's the gangster. Mech-Boy's the nerd. How do you think it looks for him to lay me out in the cafeteria?

**CARP:** I know; I will handle this.

**BERNIE:** Don't forget to hang up your old costumes.

**BOBBY:** *(To Louis:)* You better clean up your act, Bud.

**CARP:** Bobby, I am the director, I will handle this.

**BOBBY:** I need a smoke.

**CARP:** *(To Louis:)* Just what is it that you call yourself doing?

**LOUIS:** What do you mean?

**CARP:** Mech-Boy can't pound a kid over a cafeteria chair.

**BERNIE:** He just did, and a quarter of a million people saw it.

**CELESTE:** That's what happens when you work with amateurs.

**CARP:** *(To Celeste:)* Go find something to do.

**BERNIE:** Three minutes.

**CARP:** *(To Louis:)* Why didn't you read the cue cards?

**LOUIS:** I did, except for when "Mr. Good Side" kept standing right in front of them.

**CARP:** Mech-Boy wasn't supposed to beat up on anybody.

**LOUIS:** I saw four choices and picked the one that made the most sense.

**CARP:** That's not a menu; it's your line. Mech-Boy gets attacked and says, "Options: A) attack, B) ignore, C) negotiate, D) report to authorities." Then on the next card he says, "We will let the authorized school representative arbitrate the conflict."

**LOUIS:** I'm supposed to go to the lunch monitor because some jerk wants my chair?

**CARP:** Exactly.

**LOUIS:** Why would I possibly do that?

**CARP:** Because that's what parents want to see him do and the sponsors want the parents to watch my show because they have jobs and can afford to buy the garbage that we sell them every seven minutes.

**LOUIS:** Yeah, but parents aren't the one's getting killed so unless your show deals with real ways to get out of a scuffle then it ain't about nothing.

**CARP:** You let me worry about the show; I'm paying you five hundred smackers to read exactly what's on the cue cards and act like a non-violent robot. Do you think you can do that? If not then tell me now so I can find somebody who can... Okay, that's settled. Time?

**BERNIE:** Two and a quarter.

**LOUIS:** *(To Hope:)* Is the whole show going to be corny like this?

**HOPE:** It's probably better for him to report to somebody than for him to start breaking wrists.

**LOUIS:** Sometimes, and sometimes telling somebody starts more trouble than it ends so you ignore the whole thing or maybe try to joke your way out of it. The choices aren't simple.

**HOPE:** They are on TV.

**CELESTE:** Say your lines and don't bump into the furniture. As an untrained actor, that's about the best you can hope for.

**BOBBY:** You want simple, I'll give you simple. Step on my line and I step on you.

**HOPE:** He's just a kid.

**BOBBY:** I don't care if he's the Golden Child, get in my way again and he's history.

**HOPE:** Is that your Nicholas Cage impression or Homer Simpson?

**BOBBY:** Just don't try me.

**CARP:** *(To Bernie:)* Why aren't we set up for scene two?

**HOPE:** *(To Louis:)* Don't pay him any mind.

**BERNIE:** *(To Carp:)* I thought that you might want to make some changes considering that the kid acted more like Hulk Hogan than like Mech-Boy.

**CARP:** You don't think. You just do whatever I told you to do until I tell you to stop doing it and do something else. Is that clear?

**BERNIE:** Crystal.

*(Bernie begins dressing the set to look like a school hallway.)*

**CELESTE:** *(To Bernie:)* I hope we aren't planning on making any changes.

**BERNIE:** I just work here.

**CELESTE:** I'm not trying to be difficult but you see I was raised in a large military family and I became accustomed to order and so I'm perhaps not as spontaneous as the other actors...

**BERNIE:** Excuse me, Celeste, but I don't quite have enough time to hear your entire life story, again.

**CARP:** *(To Hope:)* Between us, Luv, you're the only one out of this bunch who I can count on.

**HOPE:** Just doing my job.

**CARP:** If this series gets picked up, a lot of good things are going to happen for me and for you too, if you play your cards right. Now, what I need is for you and Mech-bonehead to improv a tiny bit at the top of this next scene where you tell him to keep away from Hoody and if he gets cornered then he can't lose his head. I'll give you about thirty seconds then we'll get back on text with the kid's line about life being too long...yadda yadda yadda. Do you think you can do that, Hon?

**HOPE:** Sure I can, Hon.

**CARP:** Super.

**HOPE:** But go easy on the kid. He's new at this.

**BERNIE:** Thirty seconds.

**CARP:** Whatever. Places people. Move it. Move it...Mech-Boy. Mech-Boy. Yo, kid! Goldilocks is gonna make up a few lines at the top of the next scene to get us back on track. You don't say nothing, you hear? You watch me and you do what I do. Got it?

**LOUIS:** Got it.

**CARP:** Not one word until I get you back on the cue cards. And try to move a little more like a machine out there. Here we go!

**BERNIE:** Scene two in six, five, four...

**HOPE:** I'm not trying to tell you what to do, okay?

*(Carp nods, "Yes." Louis nods, "Yes.")*

But there are rules out here, unwritten rules and one way or another everybody has to deal with them. Do you understand?

*(Carp shakes his head, "No." Louis shakes his head, "No.")*

Take for instance that guy they call Hoody. You pushed him in the lunchroom last week, remember?

*(Carp nods, "Yes." Louis nods, "Yes.")*

So what do you think will happen now?

*(Carp shrugs his shoulders. Louis shrugs his shoulders.)*

He'll want revenge. You embarrassed him in front of everybody. He'll get laughed at and teased until he'll think that he has to do something. And then what will you do?

*(Carp indicates for Louis to read the cue card, but Louis simply repeats the gesture.)*

If you're smart you'll let him run his mouth until he runs down.

**CARP:** Read the cue card!

**LOUIS/MECH-BOY:** Oh. Life is too long to make enemies and too short to lose friends.

**HOPE:** I couldn't agree more.

*(They hug. Enter Bobby as Hoody.)*

**BOBBY/HOODY:** Aw. Isn't that sweet. The girl and the Go-bot.

**HOPE:** Why don't you grow up?

**BOBBY/HOODY:** Because then I couldn't play with toys like my little metal buddy here.

**HOPE:** Just leave him alone.

**BOBBY/HOODY:** If I was to let this geek get away with dissing me then every no-dressing fool in the whole school would try to step to me.

**HOPE:** Give it a rest, Hoody, before it gets out of hand.

**BOBBY/HOODY:** Aw, go brush your teeth or something. This is between me and the junkman.

**LOUIS/MECH-BOY:** Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me.

**BOBBY/HOODY:** So if I was to say that your breath smells like motor oil that wouldn't bother you.

**LOUIS/MECH-BOY:** No.

**HOPE:** Good for you.

**BOBBY/HOODY:** And if I was to say that your head looks like something off of "Tales from the Crypt," what would you say?

**LOUIS/MECH-BOY:** Thank you.

**BOBBY/HOODY:** Thank you?

**LOUIS/MECH-BOY:** You are welcome.

**BOBBY/HOODY:** Is he buggin' or what?

**HOPE:** Mech-Boy's smart enough to know that you're trying to get a rise out of him and so he beats you if he doesn't respond.

**BOBBY/HOODY:** Either that or his daddy had the I.Q. of a toaster so he doesn't know how...

**LOUIS:** Yo, we're not gonna go there.

**CARP:** That's not the line, is it?

**BERNIE:** No it's not.

**BOBBY/HOODY:** Don't get cute.

**CARP:** Stick to the script.

**LOUIS:** My pop's dead, man.

**BOBBY:** Unless you want to join him, then you'd better get yourself together.

**CARP:** This is not the way this is supposed to go.

**BERNIE:** Thirty seconds.

**HOPE:** Remember, sticks and stones...

**LOUIS:** That's all well and good but there ain't no way I'm gonna let some Johnny Depp wannabe put his mouth on my dead father.

**BOBBY:** You need to watch your mouth.

**CARP:** Somebody read a cue card.

**HOPE:** It's only words.

**BOBBY:** A whole lot of people have let their mouths run their behinds into the cemetery.

**HOPE:** But we're smarter than that, right?

**BOBBY:** What are you trying to say?

**HOPE:** I'm saying that we have better things to do than stand around trying to insult each other.

**CARP:** Are they on text?

*(Bernie nods, "Yes.")*

**BOBBY/HOODY:** The only thing I've got to do is make sure this chump doesn't get in my grill again.

**BERNIE:** Five seconds.

**HOPE:** What about trying to get an education?

**BOBBY/HOODY:** Don't worry, I'm gonna school your friend before long.

**LOUIS/MECH-BOY:** I'm not looking for trouble.

**BOBBY/HOODY:** But you've got it.

**CARP:** Cut. Roll commercial.

**BOBBY:** What do you mean, "cut"? I didn't do my big speech.

**BERNIE:** With the addition at the beginning and the screw up in the middle, we were running late.

**BOBBY:** But that's my best monologue in the whole show.

**BERNIE:** Welcome to live TV. Costumes on the rack, please!

**BOBBY:** *(To Louis:)* Alright, punk, you listen good...

**BERNIE:** Hey, now.

**HOPE:** Who you calling a punk, punk?

**BOBBY:** What are you, his fairy godmother?

**CELESTE:** All of this dissension between scenes is making it impossible for me to prepare properly.

**BOBBY:** Well you know what you can do with your preparation.

**CARP:** Quiet! I've had it up to here with the nonsense on this set. Everybody is going to close their mouths, change their costumes and set up to roll the next scene.

**BERNIE:** Three minutes.

**CELESTE:** This has got to be the most unprofessional project I have ever worked.

**LOUIS:** Look, I'm sorry I messed up; I'm not used to this acting stuff.

**HOPE:** *(To Bobby:)* What's your excuse?

**BOBBY:** Didn't nothing ever come easy for Bobby Cloy so don't expect me to give ground to some no-talent scene-stealing kid who gets the lead role handed to him on a silver platter.

**HOPE:** If I didn't know better, I'd think you were jealous.

**BOBBY:** Go smoke a cigarette.

*(Bobby walks away.)*

**HOPE:** You okay?

**LOUIS:** Yeah, it's just that some words hurt even if you know they aren't real.

**CARP:** Listen up, people. We had a few problems again in scene two but we still can run three exactly as planned.

**CELESTE:** Yesss!!

*(Everyone looks at her.)*

I'm terrible at improv.

**CARP:** Mech-bungle, you come in left and meet Snake.

**LOUIS:** That sounds easy enough.

**CARP:** Don't get cocky, you haven't done anything right yet today.

**HOPE:** Give the kid a break; he never even had a chance to read the script through.

**BOBBY:** Let him upstage me again and I'll give him a break.

**CELESTE:** *(To Louis:)* You need to build an imaginary history for your character. Who were your parents, childhood friends, what is your favorite flavor ice cream...

**CARP:** Don't worry about that crap. I want you to remember one thing and one thing only; you take the gun then give it back.

**LOUIS:** What gun?

**CELESTE:** In this next scene I'm going to try to convince you to take a gun.

**CARP:** Do you mind?

**LOUIS:** Why would I need a gun?

**CARP:** Exactly! You don't need a gun; so you look at it, think better of it then give it back.

**BERNIE:** Ninety seconds.

**LOUIS:** But I don't get it, why would Snake offer me a gun?

**CELESTE:** Because Snake wants to see a good fight.

**LOUIS:** There are a whole lot of little steps between a tussle in the lunchroom and borrowing a gun.

**BERNIE:** Not in a half hour show there aren't.

**LOUIS:** But it would never happen like this. Most kids aren't thinking about getting a gun. I mean, for every one time a piece gets flashed, there are one hundred times when folks have a fair fight over in the park; better still, they talk it out or walk away or go to a counselor, their parents, whoever, and are best friends next week.

**CARP:** We go in less than a minute. I don't have time for this.

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