

# How I Learned to Stop Being Afraid of My Gym Teacher

*A One-Act Comedy*

By Bobby Keniston

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### **DEDICATION**

*This play is dedicated to Tracy Sue  
for always building me up. Thanks, Tracy.*

### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Have you ever felt anxiety in gym class? If so, this is the play for you! Will, an average high school freshman, used to love going to school...until he stumbled upon the terror of gym class under the formidable Mr. Breakwater's rule. Will's coddling mother and nervous wreck of a father (who hides out in the bathtub) are worried. Will's friends, who call themselves the Geek Squad, want to devise a plan to take Mr. Breakwater down. Can Will find a way to stop being afraid of his gym teacher? With a romance novel-obsessed principal, a nasty bully, and a very unorthodox child psychologist, "How I Learned to Stop Being Afraid of My Gym Teacher" is a hilarious comedy with a touching and poignant ending.

### **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(5 m, 7 w, 4 flexible. Some doubling possible.)*

**WILL:** A high school freshman, somewhat on the geeky side, highly nervous, and easily prone to panic. He is afraid of his gym teacher.

**MOM:** Will's mother. She is sweet and caring, though often misguided and clueless.

**DAD:** Will's father. Even geekier than his son. Tries his best to be supportive, but he himself is prone to overreaction.

**MR. BREAKWATER:** Will's gym teacher. Scary, strong, not easily approachable, and does not appreciate weakness. He is also nearing retirement.

**ALEXIS:** A girl that Will has a crush on. She is in his gym class, and he often feels humiliated in front of her.

**MARCO:** A strong, athletic type who torments Will, especially in gym class.

**RILEY:** A kind, understanding young lady in Will's gym class. She stands up for him, and even picks him for teams.

**MRS. PUFFIN:** Principal of Will's school. Chances are, she's a bit enamored of Mr. Breakwater and does not like to hear anything negative about him.

**ELLARD:** Will's best friend and part of the Geek Squad who attempt to take down Mr. Breakwater with Will.

**MARGIE:** Friend of Will's, and the third member of the Geek Squad.

**DR. BRATTIGAN:** Female psychologist that Will's parents send him to. She seems highly unorthodox, but nice.

**LINDA:** Will's older sister and recent graduate of the same high school. She is now in college, and may hold the secret to finding Mr. Breakwater's Achilles heel.

**JOCK CHORUS:** A chorus of 4 students, followers of Breakwater and Marco. They can be male or female. They speak in unison a great deal.

*DOUBLING OPTIONS: Mom and Alexis may double as Margie, Linda, or Dr. Brattigan. Dad may double as Ellard or a member of the Jock Chorus.*

### **SCENE SYNOPSIS**

**Scene 1:** Dining room of Will's home

**Scene 2:** Gym class

**Scene 3:** Mrs. Puffin's office

**Scene 4:** Gym class

**Scene 5:** School lunchroom

**Scene 6:** Dr. Brattigan's office

**Scene 7:** A bench on a college campus

**Scene 8:** Mr. Breakwater's office

**Scene 9:** Empty gym

*(The dining room, all three offices, and lunchroom can be created with a small rectangular table and three chairs.)*

### **PROPERTIES LIST**

Newspaper	Several breakfast dishes
Whistle	Pocket mirror
Cell phone	Volleyball
Paper note	Ice pack
Lunch bags	Napkin
Pen	Cell phone
Tape recorder	Textbook
Sports magazine	Old photograph

## Scene 1

*(AT RISE: A dining room, represented by a table and three chairs. WILL sits at the table with MOM and DAD. Dad reads a newspaper. Mom hums a little ditty to herself. Will is agitated, shaking his leg and tapping his fingers. He's not eating his breakfast.)*

**MOM:** Sweetie, are you all right? It feels like an earthquake.

**WILL:** I'm fine. Why wouldn't I be fine?

**DAD:** Then you'll have no problem complying with your mother's wishes, and put a stop to the shaking. I mean, you're not late...you don't need to...shake a leg! *(HE laughs, and MOM joins him.)* Get it? Shake a leg? Like hurrying up and so forth?

**MOM:** My husband the comedian!

**DAD:** You're a lucky woman!

*(THEY laugh again, and then sigh together. DAD goes back to his paper. WILL does his best to stop shaking his leg.)*

**MOM:** Will, honey, you seem upset. Do you need your inhaler?

**WILL:** I'm fine.

**MOM:** Do you need your special snuggly-blankie?

**WILL:** I said I'm fine.

**DAD:** There's that word again....Can you be a bit more descriptive?

**WILL:** I'm just not looking forward to school today, okay?

**MOM:** Oh no! Are you in trouble?

**DAD:** Is it school work?

**MOM:** Are you getting into fights?

**DAD:** Is it a girl?

**MOM:** Are you being bullied?

**DAD:** Is it drugs?

**MOM:** Not my boy!

**DAD AND MOM:** What is it, son?!

**WILL:** It's nothing.

**MOM:** It can't be nothing.

**DAD:** You don't live in a black hole.

**MOM:** It has to be something.

**DAD:** Something, yes. It must be. You love school.

**MOM:** Adore it.

**DAD:** Can't get enough of it.

**WILL:** All right. I'm not looking forward to school today because I have gym class. All right?!

*(There is a pause. DAD puts down the paper. He regards his son a moment.)*

**DAD:** It's Breakwater, isn't it? No, believe me, I know. He was my gym teacher, too. I understand. Believe me, I understand. *(HE takes a deep breath.)* Wow. All of a sudden, I feel my heart beating faster. Just thinking about him. Maybe I should lie down.

**MOM:** Who's this Breakwater, honey? You've never mentioned him before.

**DAD:** *(Becoming emotional.)* I've tried not to speak of him. I've tried to put him out of my mind. I look at my time in his gym class as some of the worst memories I have. I just wanted to put it all behind me. I don't want to relive those days! I can't! I just can't!

*(DAD gets up from the table and runs off, upset. There is a pause as WILL and MOM watch him go. Then Mom addresses Will as though nothing had happened.)*

**MOM:** So is this teacher mean to you, honey?

**WILL:** I guess.

**MOM:** Have you tried talking to him about it?

**WILL:** He's not what I would call approachable.

**MOM:** Well, he works for a public school, so he needs to answer to taxpayers. Do you need me to set up a meeting with him?

**WILL:** No. Definitely not. Please.

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**MOM:** Well, you can't go to school upset every day that you have gym class. So you need to find a way to deal with the situation. All right?

**WILL:** I'll try.

**MOM:** In the meantime, I'm going to set up an appointment with a very respected youth psychologist. To help you deal with your anxiety.

**WILL:** What?

**MOM:** No arguments, mister. Do you want to end up like your father?

**WILL:** What do you mean?

*(SHE sighs. She rises from her chair and calls offstage.)*

**MOM:** Honey!?! Are you coming back to the table?!

**DAD:** (OS.) In a minute.

**MOM:** Are you hiding in the bathtub again?

**DAD:** (OS. *Weakly.*) Yes.

**MOM:** Well, you better not be sucking your thumb, like always! You know that's not good for the shape of your mouth.

**DAD:** (OS. *After a beat.*) I'm not.

*(MOM returns to her seat and addresses WILL.)*

**MOM:** So I'll make that appointment, then?

**WILL:** Yes, thank you.

*(BLACKOUT.)*

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