

THE STRAIGHT SKINNY

a One-Act Play

by Frank Cerabino

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STORY OF THE PLAY

What happens when a sympathetic teacher slips an advance copy of the algebra midterm exam to a struggling student and warns him not to share it with the rest of the class? In two words: cheating scandal!

Come sort out the vagaries of honor, friendship and the straight skinny with the 18 members of Mr. Bolton's fourth-period algebra class. Join them as they reconvene in class to sort out the value of truthfulness, morality and higher math in a way that is at times hilarious, touching, and provocative. The one-act play is chockful of vividly drawn characters, generously explored ethical questions, and a surprising resolution in the hunt for the class snitch.

Running Time:

45 minutes

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(9 m, 9 w)

FELIX: Sensible; narrator.

FOSTER: Class politician who gets little respect.

PATRICK: Budding entrepreneur.

BRIAN: "Dude!" is his all-purpose vocabulary.

SAL: Wiseguy jock, taunts Corrina.

OZZIE: Secretly likes Madeleine.

JUSTIN: Star soccer goalie, always wears a Walkman.

THELONIUS: Math wiz.

RAOUL: Strives to be cool.

LINDSEY: Introverted, bares her soul in her diary.

CORRINA: Goth girl.

HEATHER: Airhead.

ROMAINE: Ruthless valedictorian.

MIA: Lots of attitude.

MADELEINE: Popular.

ANGELA: Madeleine's friend.

STEPHANIE: Sensitive.

JENNIFER: Heather's friend.

TIME: The present.

PLACE: A classroom.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The play can be staged with a simple set of 18 school desks set up in rows to look like a classroom.

Lindsey's diary monologues are not heard by the rest of her classmates. The internal nature of these "soliloquies" should be made obvious during the production, either by lighting or by having the other actors freeze on stage.

Justin should spend most of the play with his headphones on, listening to music that makes him blissfully unaware of the dialogue on stage.

The costumes are teen contemporary.

Props

Books
Notebooks
Video camera
Diary
Pen
Walkman
Gum

Papers

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(AT RISE: A classroom. FELIX walks in, carrying books. He speaks to the audience.)

FELIX: I know why you're here. You're not the first to come by. The TV news crews were first. "Honor students snagged in cheating scam. Film at 11." That was pretty embarrassing. Why is it that you're called an "honor student" only when something goes wrong? Have you noticed that? Nothing good ever happens to an honor student. "Honor student killed in tragic car crash." "Honor student struck by lightning while mowing lawn." "Honor students snagged in cheating scam." *(Pause, looks around.)* It happened right here. Algebra. Fourth period. Don't ask me to explain all the details. I only know a piece of the story. But if you stick around, we might finally get the whole story, because the bell is about ... *(Class BELL RINGS.)* to ring.

(As FELIX talks, other STUDENTS start arriving. The first is LINDSEY, who takes a seat near the front of the room, and begins writing in her notebook.)

FELIX: My name is Felix. My parents said the cheating scandal should have taught me a valuable lesson. But, they didn't explain what that lesson was – and I didn't ask.

(Enter PATRICK and BRIAN, who sneak up behind FELIX. Patrick has a video camera, which he operates as Brian pushes the books out of Felix's hands. Felix bends down to pick them up, without acting perturbed or surprised by this. Patrick and Brian high-five each other, then take their seats.)

FELIX: As you can see, I'm a real popular guy in class. *(While picking up books.)* My mom says I'm mature for my age. And that I'll get even more mature once I get a summer job at Taco Bell like my big brother.

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FELIX: *(Continued.)* Although, I'm not sure how asking strangers, "Would you like to try a chalupa?" is supposed to make a person more mature.

(The rest of the class files in, and then another BELL RINGS. EVERYONE takes his or her seat. There's a long beat of silence before ANGELA speaks.)

ANGELA: Hey, where is Mr. Bolton?

FELIX: *(To audience.)* We took the midterm right here. Two days ago. This is the first time we've been back in this classroom.

PATRICK: *(Walking around and narrating, as HE tapes HIS CLASSMATES with his video camera.)* An eerie calm has settled over the class. They look like ordinary students, but underneath their tense smiles and fidgety hands is a deep, dark secret that ...

MADELEINE: Knock it off, Patrick. This isn't funny.

PATRICK: *(Turns camera on MADELEINE.)* Funny? No. But historic? Yes. I predict that we'll be on the national news in a few days. You'll see. And I'll have the exclusive video. *(HE starts singing the "Entertainment Tonight" theme song.)* Dah-nah-dah-nah-dah-daah! Dah-nah-dah-nah-dah-daah! *(In affected TV newscaster voice.)* You've all heard about them cheating, but what are they really like? Come with us for a closer look at America's most notorious algebra class, in a segment we call ...

ANGELA: Madeleine is right, Patrick. It's not funny.

STEPHANIE: We're all going to be in a lot of trouble. Including you, Patrick.

PATRICK: You call it trouble. I call it notoriety. And being notorious is the fast track to getting rich. Monica Lewinsky. Dennis Rodman. Howard Stern. Where would they be if they didn't get themselves in big trouble? Now, they're all rich. Being in trouble isn't so bad, as long as you can be in enough trouble to be notorious.

BRIAN: Dude!

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FELIX: *(To audience.)* We've already made the local news. My mom was so embarrassed. She refused to watch on the living room TV set. She went into the bedroom, closed the door and watched it there with the sound turned really low – as if nobody else would know about it if she watched quietly.

PATRICK: *(Still with camera, pointing toward classroom door.)* I'm going to get Mr. Bolton's first expression when he walks in the door.

LINDSEY: *(Talks while writing in HER diary.)* Dear Diary: Last night I looked up Mr. Bolton's number in the phone book. I dialed six of the seven numbers and then hung up. Five minutes later, I got the nerve up to dial again. This time I dialed all seven numbers. "This is Lindsey, from algebra," I said. "I'm sorry for the way things happened." There was a pause. "Who is Lindsey from algebra?" the voice on the line said. Wrong number. I didn't try dialing again.

MIA: Well, I'm tired of talking about it. I'm not saying another word.

ANGELA: You ought to be tired, Mia. Let's see, I saw you on three TV channels, and I hear you even did an interview for the Spanish-language station.

MIA: I had foreign language as an elective. Is it my fault I tried to put it to good use?

OZZIE: Hey, Mia. Take it from me. That wasn't Spanish you were speaking.

THELONIUS: Let's not fight. Mr. Bolton will be here any second now.

JENNIFER: I hear he's history.

HEATHER: Who?

JENNIFER: Mr. Bolton. He's history.

HEATHER: History? Why is he switching to history?

JENNIFER: No, Heather. I don't mean history as in "Columbus 1492" history. I mean like "you're toast" history. "See ya later" history. "Don't let the door hit you on your way out" history. I saw him packing boxes in his car yesterday afternoon.

BRIAN: Dude!

End of Freeview

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