

# INSANE WITH POWER

By Scott Haan

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*Dedication: For Rhonda, my real-life super-hero.*

### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Lois Lancaster is a big-city journalist writing a story about the current state of modern mental health facilities. Her research takes her to a hospital populated with a unique group of quirky inmates who imagine themselves to be crime-fighting superheroes. At first Lois finds their elaborate superhero fantasies to be an entertaining diversion, the wild delusions of unstable minds, until something *unusual* happens that makes her wonder ....

### ***Premiere Production***

"Insane With Power" was first presented on October 25, 2007 by the Clinton County Civic Theatre in Frankfort, IN. The roles were originated by the following cast (in order of appearance):

SPEED FREAK: ..... Andy Best  
LOIS LANCASTER..... Pamela Adams  
DR. GAIL EISNER..... Jean Warren  
DIM BULB ..... Eric Adams  
MENTAL..... Julie Miller  
KEVIN BENDIS ..... Scott Haan  
LARRY ROSS\* ..... Jerry Thompson  
*(\*A character cut from the published script for length)*

#### **Production staff:**

Director ..... Scott Haan  
Assistant Director ..... Rhonda Haan  
Stage Manager..... Deb Smith  
Costumes ..... Charolette Henry  
Head of Crew ..... Stacey Martin  
Crew ..... Adriane Ayers  
Crew ..... Nancy Martin  
Lights and Sound ..... Larry Price  
Set Design & Construction ..... Jerry Thompson

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(3 m, 3 w)*

- LOIS LANCASTER:** A young, attractive female reporter. She has a natural charm and likeability, which puts her interview subjects at ease. Her slightly cynical and jaded traits come with the territory for a seasoned big-city journalist, but she's very good at hiding them.
- SPEED FREAK:** Real name: Charlie Raimi. He's a patient who thinks he's a superhero who can run at incredible speeds. A sarcastic wise guy on the surface, but underneath, it's all good-natured, playful banter.
- DIM BULB:** Real name: Alexander O'Neil. A childlike patient who thinks he's a superhero with the ability to turn off lights with his brain. He is the happiest, most enthusiastic person on the face of the earth. Unfortunately, he's not exactly the brightest bulb in the box.
- MENTAL:** Real name: Susan Whedon. She thinks she's a superheroine with the ability to read minds. Despite being prone to sudden outbursts of bizarre non-sequiturs, she is good-hearted and likable, and very maternal towards her fellow inmates.
- KEVIN BENDIS:** A male patient who also thinks he has superpowers, but is much less quirky and flamboyant than the other inmates. Unlike them, Kevin doesn't embarrass himself with a ridiculous code name or costume...at least, not at first. He is also more shy and reserved.
- DR. GAIL EISNER:** The kindly hospital administrator, a professional-looking woman in her 50s or 60s. She is just the type of rational, educated, steady influence needed to effectively run a madhouse like this one.

## **SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

### ACT I

Scene 1: The hospital; June 1st, just before noon.

Scene 2: The hospital; June 8th, a week later, same time.

### ACT II

Scene 1: A city street; 3 years ago, a December evening.\*

Scene 2: The hospital; June 8th, a few hours after Act I.

## **SETTING**

*(See diagram page 68.)*

Our story takes place in a community room at the Stanley J. Kirby Psychiatric Hospital, in the present. The atmosphere is friendly and bright, not gloomy. There are comic books scattered on the tables. There is only one visible exit.

\*ACT II, Scene 1 is a flashback set on a city street. Because it is a memory, this set could be as simple or as complex as you want. See suggestions in the note pages at the end of the script.

***See additional notes on Costumes, Props, SFX and Curtain Calls at end of script.***

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: An empty community room at the psychiatric hospital. A pair of flying arms appears in the doorway, and the voice behind them dramatically hums a "Superman" movie theme type song.)*

SPEED FREAK: Da da-da-da-da, da-DA-da-da...Da da-da-da-da, DA-da-da...

*(SPEED FREAK enters wearing a red superhero outfit. He is wearing a motorcycle helmet, but his hands and feet are bare. Arms out in front like he is flying, he runs a lap around the stage, still humming. He stops at a table with a stack of comic books on it, leafs through the stack, then chooses one. Soon, LOIS LANCASTER appears in the door behind him. She is smartly dressed in a professional-looking suit that does nothing to disguise her femininity. She watches as he flips through the comic, scratching his rear end vigorously. He builds the music to an enthusiastic crescendo before she announces her presence.)*

LOIS: Excuse me...

SPEED FREAK: *(Startled, he jumps a mile and a half, then spins to face her in a defensive karate pose. At first, his voice will be muffled by the helmet.)* Kee-yiiii!!!

LOIS: I'm sorry, I didn't mean to scare you. I have an appointment with Dr. Eisner?

SPEED FREAK: *(Relaxing.)* Oh! Well, then, greetings, citizen. I'm Speed Freak. *(HE extends his hand -- the one that he was just using to scratch himself. She grimaces for a moment, then politely smiles and shakes it anyway.)*

LOIS: I'm sorry, I didn't catch that. You have a --

*(SHE points to his helmet. HE removes it, and sets the helmet and the comic on a table. He speaks at an unusually loud volume and over-enunciates, as if talking to a deaf*

*person. Doing so causes him to spit, and with every "P" sound, LOIS subtly winces as spit hits her in the face.)*

SPEED FREAK: *(Loud.)* Sorry. Speed Freak. You're the reporter, right? Well, it's a pleasure. I'm a big supporter of the power of the press.

LOIS: *(Trying to discreetly wipe her face.)* Thank you. I hope I'm not intruding.

SPEED FREAK: *(Still loud.)* Nah. "Comfortable yourself make."

LOIS: Excuse me?

SPEED FREAK: *(Twitches briefly, almost as if he was shocked.)* I mean "Make yourself comfortable." Sorry about that!

LOIS: Uh...no problem. Actually, while I'm waiting, I DID get permission to speak with a few patients. Would you mind if I asked you a few questions?

SPEED FREAK: *(Still loud.)* Not at all. *(Pause. HE glances around, then gestures for her to lean in closer. SHE does, expecting him to whisper a secret, but he stays just as loud, shouting in her ear.)* I'm a superhero. We always have time for the public.

LOIS: *(Winced at the volume.)* Um...If you don't mind my asking, why are you talking so loud?

SPEED FREAK: *(Still loud.)* Sorry, I didn't catch that. Those 600-mile-an-hour winds really take a toll on my eardrums, as you can imagine. Am I talking too loud?

LOIS: Just a bit.

SPEED FREAK: *(Regulates his volume and talks normally from now on.)* Ahem. Is this better?

LOIS: Much better, thank you. *(Pulls a tape recorder from her purse.)* All right if I record this?

SPEED FREAK: I don't mind, ma'am, but it won't do you any good. My voice transmits at a frequency that can't be recorded by conventional technology. But you have my permission to try.

LOIS: Okay, well, thank you for that. *(Into the recorder.)* Monday, June 1st, 10:50 a.m., the Stanley J. Kirby Psychiatric Hospital.

LOIS: *(Cont'd.)* I am speaking with...uh..."Speed Freak," was it? *(HE nods in response.)* So...you mentioned 600-mile-an-hour winds. Are you telling me you can move that fast?

SPEED FREAK: Absolutely. I can circle the globe in 23 seconds.

LOIS: That is impressive.

SPEED FREAK: *(Dismissive.)* Eh. I bet I could do it in 22. If I missed all the lights and had a tailwind.

LOIS: I can see how that would make a difference.

SPEED FREAK: Unfortunately, there's a little catch. I can only run fast if I'm running backwards.

LOIS: Backwards.

SPEED FREAK: That's right.

LOIS: THAT can't be easy.

SPEED FREAK: It's not, but I'm getting better at it.

LOIS: Can you show me? Do something at superspeed?

SPEED FREAK: I wish I could, but it kicks up an awful wind. Takes 'em hours to clean up the mess. Doctor E. gets pretty mad.

LOIS: I see.

SPEED FREAK: Speaking of the Doc, I'm surprised she's taking so long. Does she know you're here?

LOIS: I told the guard by the front entrance. An older gentleman?

SPEED FREAK: Oh, geez. Delmer? He's pretty much deaf. You're better off checking in with the coffeemaker. I'd better go get the Doc for you.

LOIS: Only if it's no trouble...

SPEED FREAK: No trouble at all. She'll be here in a flash.

*(SPEED FREAK exits. LOIS waits until he is out of earshot, rewinds the tape for a moment, then plays it back. She listens for his voice on the tape. {It doesn't matter what dialog she replays, as long as his voice can be clearly heard.} Then she stops it again.)*

LOIS: What do you know. UN-conventional technology.

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