

*“T.O.T. for A.Y.P.
Or
The Certifiable Teacher”*

A Comedy in One-Act

By

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CAST

Rose Rongbochs

High school drama teacher, early 40's

Lucky (Voice)

Drama department colleague, mid-40's

SETTING

Time: End of third quarter (March) in a recent school year

Place: An urban high school in the South

Synopsis

Drama teacher fights to save her sanity in the battle with educational bureaucracy.

(Two walls covered with photos, posters, fliers, calendars, and memos create the corner of a cramped teachers' office. Behind the upstage wall is an adjoining office nook; this space is a haven off the hallway. The office includes a cluttered desk, rolling chair, a couple of file cabinets, and, connected to the desk and hugging the wall, a credenza that houses shelves and more file drawers, "in kind" donations from a business "partner-in-education." A computer sits angled on the desk's corner, the screen saver slowly pulsating. The bell rings, prompting the hallway din of whoops, foot traffic, loud voices and clanging lockers.)

ROSE, Off

Darren. Stop Darren! The mask. Security will take you down! Yeah, yeah. Thanks.

(Rose enters carrying an overflowing canvas tote and juggling a camera and white neutral mask; her entry mutes the noise, as though a door closed. Dropping her things on the desk, she hooks the mask around her neck, and sits. A mechanical sound blast: HonkHonkHonk.)

INTERCOM

The following students please report to attendance now—

(She gets camera cable from a drawer and connects the camera to the computer.)

The following students—please report to attendance now:

(She downloads drama class photos, examining images as they appear.)

Jason Hightower, Keisha Stone, and Marcus Lee; that's: Jason Hightower, Keisha Stone,

(She pulls mask onto her face and mimes waking up.)

and Marcus Lee, report to attendance, please.

(HonkHonkHonk—sound of intercom's exit. Her phone rings. She strikes an escape pose, then removes the mask dangling around her neck and answers.)

ROSE

Rose Rongbochs. Hello, Ms. Badgett. Annelle? She's in, uh, 4B—yes, she was in class yesterday. A call? Oh.

(Searching for paper and pen.)

No, I haven't met her mother. Certainly—through E-mail group—we're computer pals. Yesterday, well, I did report Annelle as absent, but—

(Tardy bell rings. Muted hall noise ceases. She finds pencil over her ear and speaks at hyperspeed.)

ROSE (Cont'd)

she was out of her seat when I checked roll—yes, a seating chart—Zipped the report off—We started class and like magic I looked again there she was in her seat—So of course I re-sent the report. Quickly.

(Sitting, she pulls sticky notepad from drawer.)

Her mother got the automated absentee report. I understand she was upset. I'm sorry. A mother who doesn't play. Yes, M'am. I know you don't play either. I don't play myself—Right: on the same page. Yes, I'll explain. 'Bye.

(She hangs up receiver, removes mask, holds it out, mirrors its expression.)

ROSE (Cont'd)

I don't play myself.

(Writing a note.)

Annelle's mom – 4B NOT ABSENT.

(Sticking note to computer screen.)

Annelle played. Door: locked—but, poof! There she sits.

(She tosses mask onto pile of papers and opens email window on computer. Incoming messages fill the screen.)

ROSE (Cont'd)

Wait, wait, wait! E-mail mom, before you lose the reminder—and the remainder of your mind.

(As she opens the message to Annelle's mother, the intercom sounds: HonkHonkHonk.)

INTERCOM

Teachers, please excuse the interruption. Please excuse the interruption. Copies of the schedule change and assembly seating for this afternoon are in your boxes now.

ROSE

What?

INTERCOM

Please send a student to pick up your schedule before lunch. Thank you.

(Intercom sounds the exit: HonkHonkHonk. She speaks to colleague in rear office.)

ROSE

Hey, Lucky.

LUCKY, Off

Yo.

ROSE

Assembly today?

LUCKY, Off

Yeah. Motivational speaker. BOWHAHS, remember?

ROSE

No. B, O, E? Like in “TOE,” HAH I stumped it!

LUCKY, Off

Uh-uh. Best-Of the-World’s-High-Achieving-High-Schools. BOWHAHS!

ROSE

Oh, B, O, W, like hair bow. School destroys language. Can’t even remember the damn program.

LUCKY, Off

Not just hair. Bow like blue ribbon. Like bow and arrow, hitting the bull’s eye. Winning.

ROSE

Oh. Target practice assembly?

LUCKY, Off

Ha Ha. Actually, it’s a speaker on abstinence.

ROSE

An antimotivational sex speaker.

LUCKY, Off

“All Sins Left Behind;” sex, drugs, bullying, skipping, cussing,

ROSE

(Laughing, she types E-mail greeting.)

Hello Ms. Fulenwider. Fulenwider—Fullofcider—Gettingtighter! Oh, shit.

LUCKY, Off

cheating, chat rooms, instant messaging, video games, anorexia, overeating.

ROSE

(To Lucky.)

So, we have 45-minutes, half the block?

LUCKY, Off

Right-o. Southside goes first, during 3A.

ROSE

OK. Thanks.

ROSE (Cont'd)

(Continuing typed message.)

Hello Ms. Fulenwider. Sorry you received an absence call for Annelle. I corrected the 4B class report when I saw her present. She was—out of her seat—momentarily. Thanks for checking—it always helps students to know that parents and teachers are on the same page! R. Rongbochs

(Rose clicks “send,” and diminishes E-mail screen.)

ROSE (Cont'd)

45 minutes. Short review, drop quiz bowl; still, test.

(Stretching arms and back.)

BOWHAHS, God!

LUCKY, Off

Praying, or dying?

ROSE

(Finding file of papers.)

Groaning, before paper grading.

LUCKY, Off

Grading? Gotcha. Just sent interim reports myself.

ROSE

Show off.

(Computer jingle tone announces Rose’s new E-mail message.)

LUCKY, Off

See the memo on sorting by special modification needs?

ROSE

No.

(Opening new message from principal.)

“Urgent!” So what freakin’ isn’t? “Send proof of your 3 TPC hours to Human Resources by this afternoon. Don’t Dawdle!” What the hell? “Downtown will publicize district- wide figures.”

LUCKY, Off

You add the code to the interim—

(The intercom sounds: HonkHonkHonk.)

INTERCOM

Teachers,

ROSE

NO!

INTERCOM

please excuse the interruption.

ROSE

I have no choice.

INTERCOM

We are testing the intercom. Please respond if you don't hear this message. This is a test. Call if you can't hear us in your room.

(The intercom sounds to exit: HonkHonkHonk.)

ROSE

Lucky, did you catch that?

LUCKY, Off

Stop listening. And for God's sake quit thinking about anything you hear.

(Computer jingle tone announces new E-mail. She opens it.)

ROSE

Hello.

(Reading.)

“Do it now! 3 for TPC! GO TEAM! ☺”

How civil, signed: “smiley face.” GO SCREAM! No.

(She inhales deeply and exhales.)

ROSE (Cont'd)

Be calm and TCB. Elvis—wish I were at Graceland, jungle room. TCB!

(To Lucky.)

Lucky, TPC. Teaching Political Correctness?

LUCKY, Off

The Parent Connection. Didn't you report those in-service hours?

ROSE

No, but thanks and shut up. After you tell me where the “proof” would be that I was subjected to the session.

INTERCOM

(Clicking on with scratchy static, not honks, to call a single room.)

Ms. Rongbochs? Ms. Rongbochs?