



**Sample Pages from
Censorbleep**

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CENSORBLEEP

AN ISSUE PLAY IN ONE ACT BY
Lindsay Price



Censorbleep

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Characters

1M+5W+5 Either, plus optional extras

The Bleep Bleep Girls

Tandy
Sandy
Mandy
Candy
Randy

Justin, the one who is bullied

The Garbage

The Poet
The School Paper Reporter
The Teacher
The Smart Mouth
The One with an Opinion

The Garbage can have Additional Members

Setting

For the most part the stage is bare. Stage right there is a huge pile: stuffed boxes, garbage bags, garbage cans, maybe a big bin, crumpled papers, piles of paper, boxes of newspapers, piles of books, boxes of old videotapes, CDs, anything that is commonly associated with censorship. There is no food, clothing, or anything smelly in the garbage. It's all paper and like products.

This pile has to be big enough so Justin can dive into, or hide behind something without disturbing the Poet or the Reporter who also have to 'emerge' from the garbage. The garbage piles run offstage to give the illusion of size.

Original Cast

The original production of *Censorbleep* was presented by St. Cloud High School in December, 2008 with the following cast:

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| Tandy | Alexis Castellanos |
| Sandy | Alyssa Johnson |
| Candy | Jessica Longson |
| Randy..... | Hillary Dufty |
| Mandy..... | Amanda Lane |
| Justin..... | Jonathan Rasmussen |
| The Opinion | Michelle Santiago |
| Smart Mouth | Andrew Habibzadegan |
| The Reporter..... | Nick Simmons |
| The Teacher | Joe Williams |

Directed by Karen Loftus

Happy music plays. Five clean and shiny girls enter. They are sparkly, wear bright clothes, and look like perfect dolls. They chatter among themselves and carry white garbage bags. TANDY pushes a large broom.

TANDY: *(to the audience)* Hello!

SANDY: Hello!

CANDY: Hello!

THE GIRLS: Hello!

TANDY: Welcome to our school and welcome to our skit! We're so happy you're here, aren't we girls?

THE GIRLS all hold up a hand. The hand forms a mouth (as if their hand was a puppet) and when they say 'bleep bleep' they open the 'mouth.' Whenever they make the 'Bleep Bleep' noise throughout the play, they always repeat this gesture. It's purposefully cutesy.

THE GIRLS: Bleep, Bleep!

THE GIRLS laugh and put down their garbage bags.

SANDY: We are the Bleep Bleep Girls. We represent a very special program...

CANDY: And play a very important role in our school. We say...

THE GIRLS: *(with gesture)* Bleep, Bleep!

RANDY: And everything is happy, clean and new.

THE GIRLS: We're not frowning meanies. *(wagging their fingers)* Telling you what to do. *(tapping their chests)* We know what's best, *(gesturing out)* because we are you!

MANDY sneaks a peak at the garbage pile.

TANDY: Exactly! We're all Bleep Bleep Girls and Boys. *(demonstrating)* Hands up, everyone. Come on now... *(to the audience)* Repeat after us,

THE GIRLS: *(also demonstrating)* Bleep, Bleep!

TANDY: Nicely done. Today you're going to see all the great things a little 'bleep bleep' can do. Every school should have Bleep Bleep Girls.

THE GIRLS: (*pointing out*) Are YOU a Bleep Bleep Girl?

MANDY sneaks another peak at the garbage pile.

TANDY: Tell them about the skit Sandy.

SANDY: This play is one hundred percent bleeped!

RANDY: Clean from beginning to end!

THE GIRLS: (*throwing their hands in the air*) Hooray!

CANDY: Just the way we like it.

RANDY: That's the way we like our school.

CANDY: We take out the trash.

RANDY: We sweep up the dirt.

SANDY: We put a shine on this school like nobody's business.

MANDY: (*serious, not cheery at all*) Can I ask a question?

This brings the happy shiny fun to a halt. MANDY, while a member of the Bleep Bleep GIRLS has not been as happy or enthusiastic as the others. She's been going through the motions, just a hair off the others.

TANDY: (*with a full wattage smile*) Of course. We believe in questions. If we kids don't ask questions, we'll never get ahead in life, will we girls?

THE GIRLS: (*shaking their heads*) No way!

MANDY: I just... (*whispering*) Why do we have to do this here?

TANDY: Ah ha. It's a surprise!

She hands off the broom to SANDY, who places it upstage, and gestures to the garbage pile.

TANDY: My girl Mandy is right. Usually our presentations are in the theatre but I've decided we need to be a little more hands-on. A little more environmental. Pretty funny huh? I'll bet you've never seen a play by a pile of garbage before.

THE GIRLS giggle.

TANDY: But this isn't any ordinary garbage.

SANDY: It's garbage of the worst sort.

CANDY: And you'd be surprised how much there is!

TANDY: Yes. You'd be surprised how 'tricky' garbage can be. It's something you should know.

THE GIRLS pose. MANDY continues to participate but she's no longer smiling, nor is she enthusiastic with her gestures.

NOTE: From here on in MANDY doesn't chime in with the GIRLS.

THE GIRLS: *(with big sunny gestures)* Taking out the trash. We truly love to do. 'Cause when the world is a sunny day, YOU feel like a sunny day. If the world –

TANDY: *(cutting them off)* Hold on a minute girls. Something's not quite right. *(to the audience)* We want to be perfect for you. *(to MANDY)* Mandy. You're not smiling.

MANDY: *(quietly)* Sorry.

TANDY: It's our trademark.

SANDY: We present a positive image.

CANDY: *(as if quoting a manual)* A Bleep Bleep Girl is positive at all times.

MANDY: Sorry. I'm trying.

TANDY: Well! That's all we can ask of anyone. *(to audience)* We must always try our best.

MANDY: *(very confused)* It's the – *(she looks at the garbage)* and the – I just – *(She turns away. She's verbalizing her doubts for the first time.)* Maybe I shouldn't do the presentation.

THE GIRLS gasp. They look from MANDY to TANDY.

TANDY: Bleep Bleep Girls stick together.

MANDY: *(a bit stronger)* I really don't want to do the presentation.

TANDY: But you will. Won't you. *(she claps her hands)* Time to begin!

TANDY turns away. MANDY blurts out –

MANDY: It was better before!

TANDY stops dead. THE GIRLS gasp.

TANDY: Excuse me?

MANDY: The skit, the play. It was better. Before we bleeped it.

TANDY: (*smiling, to the audience*) Excuse us. Mandy has a terrible case of stage fright! We need a moment.

TANDY lightly drags MANDY to a corner of the stage. THE GIRLS follow.

TANDY: Mandy.

SANDY: I told you she was too young.

TANDY: Sandy, please.

MANDY: I'm sorry Tandy. I am.

TANDY: Bleep Bleep Girls stick together. We are one voice. One idea.

THE GIRLS: (*reverently, not cute*) Bleep Bleep Girls believe in what's good and what's right.

TANDY: Are you a Bleep Bleep Girl?

MANDY: Yes! I think so – I don't know what to say.

SANDY: I told you she was too young...

TANDY: Sandy.

SANDY: Candy, what should Mandy say?

CANDY: (*proudly*) I like the play. The bleeped version.

RANDY: A hundred percent bleeped!

MANDY: (*blurting*) But there was nothing wrong with –

TANDY: (*focusing on MANDY*) Sandy. The Script.

SANDY: (*pulling the script out of her purse*) Right here Tandy.

TANDY: (*still focusing on MANDY*) What happens on page seventeen?

SANDY: (*flipping pages*) Page Seventeen. Jane calls Charley –

THE GIRLS: (*with gesture*) Bleep, Bleep!

TANDY: And page thirty-two?

SANDY: (*flipping pages*) Sarah acts in a –

THE GIRLS: (*with gesture*) Bleep, Bleep!

SANDY: ...manner.

TANDY: (*focusing on MANDY*) The list goes on.

MANDY: There's nothing wrong with those things! People do them every day.

TANDY: We are not people. We are students. (*firm*) We need to be shielded. Don't you agree?

From offstage there is the sound of a door slam. JUSTIN runs on stage. He skids and slides around and eventually hides under a garbage bag. JUSTIN looks frazzled, his shirt is ripped at the shoulder – as if someone was gripping him and he got away.

There is a moment of silence as the GIRLS look at each other, at JUSTIN, and back at each other.

TANDY: What... was that?

MANDY: (*confused*) Justin Reedy.

TANDY: And what's he doing in the middle of our presentation? (*she gestures*) Girls.

TANDY and the GIRLS cross the stage to JUSTIN. MANDY follows.

THE GIRLS: (*as they cross*) Bleep, Bleep, Bleep, Bleep, Bleep!

TANDY: (*tapping JUSTIN*) Excuse me. (*tapping JUSTIN*) Excuse me. (*a little irritated*) We know you're there, we can see you.

MANDY: (*stage whisper*) Justin! What are you doing?

TANDY: (*right back to sweet*) You can't stay there. We have guests.

THE GIRLS: (*waving at the audience*) Bleep, Bleep!

This loud Bleep Bleep startles JUSTIN and he sits up in the garbage.

JUSTIN: Yeah, you go ahead, don't mind me.

*JUSTIN buries himself deeper under the garbage.
TANDY grabs him and pulls him out.*

TANDY: No, no, no.

MANDY: How'd your shirt get ripped?

JUSTIN: (*scrambling away from TANDY*) I won't get in your way.

TANDY: We don't want you here at all.

MANDY: (*leaning forward*) Was it Rico?

CANDY: (*pulling her back*) Mandy!

JUSTIN: What do you care?

MANDY: You should tell someone.

JUSTIN: Like you? HA!

JUSTIN dives back into the garbage.

TANDY: So rude.

SANDY: Rude is crude.

GIRLS: Where'd you get that attitude!

TANDY: Mandy. Please introduce us to your friend.

MANDY: Uh, this is Justin Reedy. We live on the same street.

TANDY: (*to the audience*) This is Justin everyone. Justin, please say hello to our guests.

JUSTIN sticks a hand up and waves.

TANDY: And who, Mandy, is Rico?

MANDY: (*quickly*) Nobody.

TANDY: He's somebody to Justin, isn't he?

MANDY: I guess.

TANDY: Well, then.

*JUSTIN peaks his head up, he wants to hear what
MANDY will say.*

MANDY: I – uh – he's a... you know... (*MANDY gestures vaguely*)

TANDY: I don't speak vague gesture.

MANDY: (*knowing the response that's coming*) He's a bully.

THE GIRLS gasp and clap their hands over their ears.

TANDY: Mandy.

MANDY: You asked!

GIRLS: Bleep, Bleep!

TANDY: Bleep Bleep Girls don't use that word.

MANDY: I know...

TANDY: 'That' doesn't exist.

JUSTIN: (*muttering*) I'm pretty sure it does.

TANDY: Did you say something, Mr. Reedy?

JUSTIN rustles in the garbage.

SANDY: We've no need for those words.

JUSTIN: Neither does Rico. He's the strong silent shoving type.

MANDY: (*hissing stage whisper*) Justin!

SANDY: We are happy students without a problem in the world.

CANDY & RANDY: Bleep Bleep Girls smile and wear a happy face,
because we are truly happy!

JUSTIN: Rico's a real happy shover.

MANDY: Justin!

TANDY: Girls, I think someone wants to visit the principal's office.

JUSTIN displaces garbage as he scrambles off stage.

MANDY: (*crossing to watch his exit*) Justin! Wait!

SANDY: Should I call the office?

TANDY: Later. We have guests. Ready girls?

GIRLS: Ready!

MANDY: (*with her back to the GIRLS*) No.

SANDY: What?

TANDY: Mandy?

MANDY: (*turning to face the GIRLS*) He was just trying to – why can't he talk about what happened without being threatened with the principal's office?

TANDY: (*with a laugh*) No one was threatening anyone.

SANDY: Someone hasn't been reading her manual.

TANDY: Candy, why should Mr. Reedy go to the principal's office?

CANDY: Because he's wrong.

TANDY: Randy?

RANDY: It was an accident. Boys will be boys. This is a safe and happy environment.

RANDY & CANDY: Nothing bad happens here.

MANDY: His shirt was ripped. He gets bullied –

GIRLS: Bleep, Bleep Mandy!

MANDY: I've seen it! He gets shoved every day.

TANDY: We have guests.

MANDY: (*fast*) What's going to happen? Someone'll hear the word 'shove' and say, "That's a good idea, I'm gonna go shove someone?"

There is a pause. No one can believe what MANDY has said. MANDY claps a hand over her own mouth. TANDY stares at her.

MANDY: I'm sorry, Tandy. I'm sorry. Really. (*pause*) Tandy?

TANDY: (*swiftly turning to the audience*) Our girl Mandy is not having a good day. She's been attacked by a terrible disease. Independent thought.

MANDY: Wait a second –

TANDY: It's a poison –

MANDY: That's not –

TANDY: – and Mandy's not strong enough to fight it alone. It's fine. It happens to the best of us.

THE GIRLS stand on either side of MANDY. They put their arms around her shoulders, appearing friendly, but really boxing her in.

CANDY: We love you, Mandy.

RANDY: We really do.

MANDY: Wait a second!

TANDY: *(still addressing the audience)* We're simply too young to think for ourselves. Right girls?

GIRLS: Right!

MANDY: *(trying to get free)* Let go.

TANDY: *(to the audience)* When we think, bad things happen. We don't know how to properly use our minds so we must let others do it for us. It's the only way. We're going to get Mandy a nice cool cloth for her forehead and she'll be right as rain.

MANDY breaks free and away from the GIRLS.

MANDY: I don't want a cloth! I don't want to be right as rain – I want – I want – I don't know what I want! I don't, I – *(coming a realization)* I – I don't want to be a Bleep Bleep Girl anymore.

THE GIRLS gasp.

SANDY: Mandy.

MANDY: I quit.

RANDY: Mandy?

MANDY: *(she turns to go)* I have to go.

TANDY: Girls.

RANDY and CANDY block MANDY's way. Firmly.

GIRLS: Bleep, Bleep!

TANDY walks over to MANDY.

MANDY: Tandy. I can't. I'm sorry. Justin... and the garbage.... And...

TANDY: You came to us. You chose us.

MANDY: I know. I wanted –

SANDY: She's too young.

TANDY: I can still see you. There you are standing before me, looking down at your shoes, with our poster in your hand. 'Are you a Bleep Bleep Girl?' You wanted part of something special. The right thing.

CANDY: The Bleep Bleep Girls are always right.

MANDY: It's not what I thought it would be.

TANDY: This is not for the faint of heart. But the right thing rarely is.

MANDY: I have to quit.

TANDY: You can't let thinking get in the way of doing what's right.

MANDY: But –

TANDY: Take a moment. Get a drink of water.

MANDY: I –

TANDY: Go on.

RANDY and CANDY move out of the way and give MANDY a gentle shove. She exits, looking back a final time with confusion.

TANDY: Go on.

MANDY exits. THE GIRLS come together.

SANDY: Candy should go with her.

TANDY: Where's she going to run to? She'll just wander around till we collect her. We have to go to Principal Brown about this and the boy.

SANDY: Too young.

TANDY: *(with a sigh)* Too young.

SANDY: *(referring to the audience)* What about them?

TANDY: They're not going anywhere. *(to audience)* I suggest you use this time to reflect. Think about how important it is to be happy, get good grades, and always do the right thing. Think about your favourite fairy tale. Mine's Cinderella. *(she starts to exit and then stops)* And don't talk to the garbage. It's not good for you. Bleep Bleep girls.

THE GIRLS exit. There is a pause and then a rustle from the garbage. THE POET stands. THE POET

is grubby and wears rags. THE POET pulls out a crumpled piece of paper and smoothes it out.

THE POET: This is the word gun on the page.

Made of ink and paper.

No metal. No bullets.

I say the word gun, it's not a gun.

I point my finger, it's not a gun.

I go to a store and point my finger and say gun.

What happens?

In the real world a gun is a gun.

A finger is a finger.

Not here.

Who sees an imaginary gun and buys a real one?

Who fears the word gun on the page?

Bang.

THE POET sinks back into the garbage. JUSTIN cautiously, carefully and slowly pokes his head on stage. He creeps across the stage.

JUSTIN: *(with a sigh)* Good. *(to the audience)* I forgot my backpack. I don't usually return to the 'scene' but I saw the Girls heading toward the office. It's hard to miss that *(mocking)* 'Bleep, Bleep, Bleep, Bleep' going down the hall. My mother will kill me if I lose another backpack. I keep telling her they slow down my getaway. She doesn't believe me, but what does she know? They'll never get me. Keep running, keep moving; they'll never catch you. If they can't pin you down, they can't take you to the principal's office or slam your head into a locker.

JUSTIN whips his head to the side, he hears someone coming.

JUSTIN: Oh crap. *(he turns to go out the way he first came in and skids to a stop)* No, no Rico, *(he turns back and speaks to the audience with panic)* You never saw me, you never saw me!

JUSTIN dives under the garbage as MANDY enters, cautiously, carefully and slowly.

MANDY: *(with a sigh)* Good. *(to the audience)* I don't need a drink of water and I don't need a moment. I don't have much time so we'll have to do this together before 'they' get back. *(she takes a deep breath)* I need to talk to the garbage.

JUSTIN: *(confused)* What? *(he claps a hand over his mouth)*

MANDY: (*she looks around*) Did you hear something? (*looks down and sees JUSTIN's backpack*) Justin left his backpack. I better hide it so the Girls don't get their hands on it.

MANDY kneels to push the backpack into the garbage and sees JUSTIN.

MANDY: Justin?

JUSTIN: (*hiding*) No Justin here!

MANDY: I can see you.

JUSTIN: No you don't!

MANDY: (*trying to pull him out*) Come out of there!

JUSTIN scrambles back. He gets tangled up in the garbage, so it's not a graceful retreat.

JUSTIN: Don't touch me!

MANDY: I'm not going to, I want to –

JUSTIN: (*lunging forward, grabbing his pack*) Gimme my backpack. And don't touch me! Stay back!

MANDY: (*overtop the end of JUSTIN's line*) Justin I quit, I quit the Bleep Bleep Girls!

JUSTIN has finally freed his feet. He is all set to scramble away when MANDY's line stops him cold. He turns to stare at her.

MANDY: I quit.

JUSTIN: You didn't look so quit five minutes ago.

MANDY: It's new. (*she throws up her hands*) I don't know. (*she starts to look through the garbage*)

JUSTIN: So you're not quit?

MANDY: (*looking through the garbage*) I don't know what I'm doing.

JUSTIN: (*watching her*) What ARE you doing?

MANDY: I need to talk to the garbage. (*she shoves her hand inside a large pile*)

JUSTIN: Uh, garbage doesn't – what the!

MANDY pulls back and has someone by the hand. MANDY drags THE OPINION out of the garbage, displacing garbage left and right.

JUSTIN: (*scrambling stage right*) Whoa!

THE OPINION: (*scrambling to get away*) Let me go!

MANDY: (*not letting go*) I need to talk to you.

THE OPINION: No you don't! (*she breaks free and scrambles back into the pile of garbage*)

MANDY: Come back, please!

JUSTIN: What is she doing in the garbage?!

MANDY: She's not in the garbage, (*she sighs*) she is garbage.

THE REPORTER leaps up, right beside JUSTIN.

THE REPORTER: Don't call her garbage!

JUSTIN screams and scrambles stage left.

JUSTIN: AHHHHH!

THE SMART MOUTH rises, right beside JUSTIN's new spot.

THE SMART MOUTH: Awwwww. We scared the little fellow.

JUSTIN backs away from THE SMART MOUTH.

JUSTIN: (*obviously scared*) I'm not scared!

THE POET rises, right behind JUSTIN.

THE POET: Boo!

JUSTIN screams again and runs down centre stage, sitting in a ball.

JUSTIN: AHHHHH!

MANDY: (*hissing*) Justin! Be quiet. Someone will hear you.

THE SMART MOUTH: (*moving forward*) No one hears us sweetie.

JUSTIN: (*curled in a ball*) I don't see people in the garbage. I don't see people in the garbage.

THE REPORTER: (*moving forward*) He's half right.

THE SMART MOUTH: (*closing in on JUSTIN*) Look, he's shaking.

JUSTIN: (*clamping on to his legs to stop shaking*) I'm not!

THE SMART MOUTH: (*closing in on JUSTIN*) Afraid of a little garbage?

THE POET: (*closing in on JUSTIN*) Garbage is contagious. Garbage is catching.

JUSTIN looks up to stare at THE POET.

JUSTIN: What are you doing here? With them? You were just in English.

THE REPORTER: He's half right.

JUSTIN: You wrote that poem about ducks. You were there!

THE REPORTER: I think Mandy should explain. (*THE REPORTER grabs MANDY and drags her centre*) Go ahead, Mandy. (*pushes her down beside JUSTIN*) How can someone be in two places at once? Tell him about the split.

THE GARBAGE: The split, the split, you're gonna get it.

MANDY: I... I don't know –

THE SMART MOUTH: (*finishing MANDY's sentence*) Anything.

MANDY: Hey!

THE REPORTER: Bleep Bleep Girls know what Tandy tells them.

MANDY: That's not true. Well, it's sort of – I'm just – new.

THE REPORTER: Not that new.

THE OPINION: I saw you.

They turn to see THE OPINION stand. THE REPORTER, THE POET and THE SMART MOUTH move to the side as she moves forward. As soon as THE GARBAGE isn't around him, JUSTIN backs upstage.

THE OPINION: I saw you. You were there. You smiled at me.

MANDY: I –

THE OPINION: You knew I was getting the split.

THE POET, THE REPORTER, THE SMART MOUTH: (*whispering*) The split.

MANDY: (*trying to grab THE OPINION by the shoulders*) NO! No. I never saw it – you have to believe me. I don't know anything about it.

THE OPINION shakes her off and stands with the rest of THE GARBAGE.

THE POET: Mandy, Mandy, doesn't know squat. Bleep Bleep Girl with empty thoughts. Mandy's never seen the split.

THE SMART MOUTH: I think Mandy don't know –

THE REPORTER groans, topples to the side. He falls to the floor, almost on JUSTIN. JUSTIN screams and scrambles away.

THE OPINION: Oh no. (*she kneels beside him*)

THE SMART MOUTH: (*watching JUSTIN*) Backpack Boy, you need a hobby. You're too tense.

THE OPINION: It's happening.

THE REPORTER: It's not.

MANDY: What?

THE SMART MOUTH: Don't you know?

THE OPINION: He's disappearing.

JUSTIN: People don't disappear.

THE SMART MOUTH: He's not a person.

JUSTIN: What is he, a toothbrush?

THE POET: Tell the story. Tell it fast. Tell it quick to make it last.

The lights change. The Bleep Bleep GIRLS enter downstage left.

THE GIRLS: (*as they enter*) Bleep, Bleep, Bleep, Bleep!

TANDY: All right girls, we're on a deadline. We have to read all the editorials by Wednesday.

THE REPORTER: (*crossing to TANDY*) I demand to see Mr. Shemlit!

SANDY: Hey!

RANDY: You can't push your way in here.

THE REPORTER: Get out of my way, Barbie.

RANDY: That's not nice.

CANDY: Stop pushing!

TANDY: Now, now. There's no need for this behaviour. It's simply not necessary, are we not more civilized?

RANDY & CANDY: The Bleep Bleep Girls are calm in chaos.

TANDY: So true girls.

THE REPORTER: I want to talk to Mr. Shemlit (*shoving a crumpled piece of paper at TANDY*) about my article.

TANDY: I'm the editor. You can talk to me. (*gingerly handing the page to SANDY*) Do you remember this article, Sandy?

SANDY: I do. It was really good. (*she gingerly hands the page to THE REPORTER*)

TANDY: You should be proud of yourself.

THE REPORTER: (*crumpling the paper*) THIS is not my writing. THIS has been cut to shreds.

TANDY: (*simply*) Yes. It has.

THE REPORTER: The quarterback was getting his homework done for him. We proved it, we proved he was cheating and everyone looked the other way. You made him look like a hero.

TANDY: Yes.

THE REPORTER: Why?

TANDY: (*sweetly*) We fear riots.

THE REPORTER: What?

TANDY: Graham is not just the quarterback. He's very popular. If you write about him in a poor light, that will make the other students feel sad.

SANDY: We can't have that.

CANDY: (*quoting from the manual*) The Bleep Bleep Girls promote good will.

CANDY & RANDY: And prevent ill will!

TANDY: This is not bad bleeping, it's the best possible kind. Don't you agree?

THE REPORTER: This is censorship. You can't –

THE GIRLS: (*interrupting*) Bleep, Bleep!

TANDY: (*shaking her head*) Such a harsh word. So unnecessary.

THE REPORTER: I'm still going to talk to Mr. Shemlit. (*walks away*)

TANDY: If there's anything we can do to help, let us know.

The lights change. THE GIRLS exit.

JUSTIN: But you write for the paper. I've seen you in the halls. You wrote that stupid article about being nice to bus drivers.

THE REPORTER: Did I? Are you sure?

THE POET: Nice is right.

THE SMART MOUTH: Right, Mandy?

THE REPORTER: Nice is nice. That's all.

There is the sound of laughing from the garbage. The garbage rustles. There is a giggle.

THE SMART MOUTH: (*elbowing THE REPORTER*) Somebody's awake...

JUSTIN: (*backing away*) I'm asleep. I have to be. This is my worst nightmare and I'm asleep.

There is louder laughing from the garbage.

MANDY: (*aside to THE OPINION*) Can I please talk to you?

THE OPINION: No. (*she moves away from MANDY*)

THE TEACHER rises from the garbage.

THE TEACHER: You guys crack me. 'Nice is nice.' You're all a scream. You make my day. Wheee!

THE OPINION: Shut up!

THE TEACHER: (*still laughing*) You never give up. You're here, I mean, you're HERE (*he gestures wildly*) and you're not giving up. That is a scream. Seriously. I love it.

THE OPINION: (*turning away*) I can't listen.

MANDY: (*she's never heard of this guy*) Who is he?

THE OPINION: Don't talk to me.

THE TEACHER: You'll never learn. You come, you go, you think you make a difference...

THE SMART MOUTH: You need a new speech, teacher, this one's getting stale.

THE TEACHER: (*giggling*) And every day, another one of you disappears. Gone. Poof!

THE OPINION: Don't say that.

THE TEACHER: I'll outlast you all. Every single one. Don't you get it? Don't you see? Give in and stay forever! (*straightens up and clears his throat*) Repeat after me class. Rock the boat.

THE GARBAGE: Rock the boat.

THE TEACHER: Parents get upset.

THE GARBAGE: Rock the boat.

THE TEACHER: Lose your job.

THE GARBAGE: Rock the boat.

THE TEACHER: Get split. Get thrown out with the trash! Disappear! Poof! (*he giggles and throws some trash in the air*) Whee! (*he runs around and stops right in front of MANDY*) I don't know you.

THE OPINION: She's a Bleep Bleep Girl.

THE TEACHER: (*bowing crazily*) Charmed.

MANDY: (*quickly*) I'm not. I quit.

THE TEACHER: What a stupid thing to do. (*he stomps away*) Just like that stupid book!

THE OPINION: Books are not stupid.

THE TEACHER: They're soooooo stupid, my dear. Ridiculously stupid! It was a stupid little banned book that did me in. And I don't even remember why I let my class read it. (*he sighs and sits*) I don't remember. How can the cause be so great if I can't remember? You're all better off giving up. (*he scrambles toward JUSTIN*) Do you hear me kid? Never Rock The Boat! Give up!

JUSTIN: (*scrambling away*) Get away from me!

THE TEACHER: (*advancing on MANDY*) And you. Bleep Bleep Girl. Power. You have it all. (*he throws his arms up*) Everything! And you want to throw it away? Why? Why are you here?

THE SMART MOUTH sways as if he can no longer hold his weight.

THE SMART MOUTH: Whoa, whoa, Oh crap. *(he crashes to the ground)*

THE OPINION: *(running over to him)* Not you too.

THE SMART MOUTH: I just got a little dizzy. Backpack boy has the worst B.O.

JUSTIN: I do not!

THE POET: Tell the story. Tell it fast. Tell it quick to make it last.

The lights change and TANDY enters. She motions THE SMART MOUTH toward her.

TANDY: Come in, come in. *(THE SMART MOUTH crosses to her)* Thank you for coming to see us.

THE SMART MOUTH: No sweat. *(looking around)* Do I get to sit?

TANDY: Of course. *(calling off)* Candy? Can you bring a chair in for our guest?

CANDY enters carrying a small stool.

TANDY: There's been a complaint, you see. About your language.

THE SMART MOUTH: My what? *(to CANDY)* Thanks a bunch, sweetie. Who's complaining?

CANDY sniffs in disgust and stands behind TANDY.

TANDY: We are. It's your swearing, you see.

THE SMART MOUTH: So. I swear. I'm not swearing at anyone. It's just joking around.

CANDY: *(tapping TANDY on the shoulder)* Don't forget his jokes, Tandy.

TANDY: And it's about your jokes.

THE SMART MOUTH: You don't like my jokes either?

CANDY: They're filthy.

THE SMART MOUTH: I know. That's what makes them funny.

CANDY: They're not nice.

TANDY: Candy, share with our friend an appropriate joke.

CANDY: Why did the rooster cross the road? Because the chicken was on vacation! (*she giggles*)

THE SMART MOUTH: That is the worst joke I ever heard.

TANDY: We want you to clean up your mouth.

THE SMART MOUTH: (*standing*) Forget it!

TANDY firmly pushes THE SMART MOUTH back onto the stool. The rest of the GIRLS enter and stand behind THE SMART MOUTH.

TANDY: (*sweetly*) Please sit down, Mr. Smart Mouth. We're not through.

THE SMART MOUTH: You got some more words you don't want me to say?

TANDY: Yes.

THE SMART MOUTH: Like what? Antidisestablishmentarianism?

TANDY: We're not here to play games.

THE SMART MOUTH: How about fart?

TANDY: Yes. We would prefer –

THE SMART MOUTH: (*interrupting*) It's not a swear word.

TANDY: It's indecent.

THE SMART MOUTH: To you. I think it's really funny. Fart, fart, fart, fart – (*continuing*)

TANDY: Now you're being ridiculous.

THE SMART MOUTH: (*continuing from above*) Fart, fart, fart, fart –

TANDY: (*cutting him off*) Be quiet!

THE SMART MOUTH: Quiet huh? Where's my free speech?

TANDY: We're not against free speech. We're for protection.

THE SMART MOUTH: Why do I need to be protected from a fart?

TANDY: This is ridiculous –

THE SMART MOUTH: (*overtop TANDY's previous line*) Why not go all the way and decide what I'm supposed to eat for breakfast or wear to school?

TANDY: Completely over-dramatic. This has nothing to do with free speech. It's about being a polite young man. Being a good person.

THE SMART MOUTH: (*standing*) My mother is the best person in the whole world. She's a doctor, and she helps people every day and she swears like a truck driver. And she likes me. Farts and all. So don't you tell me how to be a good person.

THE SMART MOUTH stalks off.

TANDY: (*calling after*) Thank you for coming in!

The lights change. TANDY and the GIRLS exit. THE SMART MOUTH is back on the ground by the garbage.

THE TEACHER: (*in his own world*) Disappear. Poof. Whee.

THE POET: Words. The power. Words. Just words. Who knew.

MANDY: What did you do?

THE REPORTER: His poetry doesn't rhyme.

THE POET: Nice poetry rhymes.

JUSTIN: But you did. You do. In English class. That stupid poem about the ducks.

THE POET: Wasn't me friend.

JUSTIN: Shaking your feathers in all kinds of weather, Quack, quack, quack, rain rolls off his back...

THE SMART MOUTH: Now that's catchy.

THE REPORTER: And it rhymes.

JUSTIN: You wrote it!

THE SMART MOUTH: Backpack boy is not getting the concept of what happens here.

THE REPORTER: Sometimes what you see isn't the truth.

JUSTIN: (*finally standing*) This is stupid.

THE TEACHER: Just like the book...

JUSTIN: I'm leaving and no one better stop me.

MANDY: (*stepping forward*) You can't.

JUSTIN: Why not?

MANDY: Someone has to speak for them.

JUSTIN: For them? Why? They're doing fine.

THE OPINION: You don't understand.

JUSTIN: Yeah, well maybe I don't want to.

MANDY: They need a voice. They need someone to stand up for—

JUSTIN: (*interrupting*) No one stood up for me. No one. I know what happens when you stand up. Someone finds a way to beat you down. All I want is to do my time and get out of school. That's good enough for me.

JUSTIN pushes through THE GARBAGE and leaves.

MANDY: (*running after JUSTIN*) Justin. Justin!

THE OPINION: (*pushing MANDY*) What makes you think you could ever speak for us?

MANDY: (*turning to face THE OPINION*) I – I've just... I've been thinking,

THE SMART MOUTH: (*he snorts*) Don't tell Tandy.

THE OPINION: (*pushing MANDY*) I saw you. You smiled at me. In Tandy's office, before I went in.

THE POET: Tell the story. Tell it fast. Tell it quick to make it last.

The lights change. TANDY and the GIRLS enter. TANDY is reading some papers – she's flipping through an essay. CANDY holds a stool. THE OPINION walks slowly over as TANDY reads. MANDY is completely focused on the scene.

TANDY: (*not looking up*) Thank you for coming in to see us.

CANDY plunks down the stool and the GIRLS almost force THE OPINION to sit.

TANDY: (*sweetly*) Wow. You have a lot to say, don't you.

THE OPINION: (*confused*) I don't know.

TANDY: A lot, a lot to say. You have a lot of... opinions.

THE OPINION: It's just my homework.

TANDY: Yes. You always do your homework.

THE OPINION: I'm supposed to.

TANDY: Exactly. You're a good girl. *(she flips a page in the essay)* Do you always fill your homework with so many... opinions?

THE OPINION: *(looking around)* Am I in trouble?

TANDY: *(with a laugh)* No! Of course not. We want to know what you think. We want to know about your... opinions.

THE OPINION: *(still confused)* OK...

TANDY: They're so fascinating. *(she turns to a specific page)* Especially this one. 'I don't like war.' *(holding out the page)* You said that.

THE OPINION: Sure.

TANDY: Sure? That's a casual attitude for such a large thought.

THE OPINION: It's an opinion.

TANDY: What war don't you like?

THE OPINION: War in general.

TANDY: There has to be more than that.

THE OPINION: Well, I guess, the violence. The death. The means to the end. *(looking up at the GIRLS)* Do they have to stand so close?

TANDY: You do realize your opinions are incredibly insulting.

THE OPINION: How?

TANDY: Don't you care about your school? Your country?

THE OPINION: I didn't do anything!

TANDY: This could get your suspended.

THE OPINION: They're just words! I didn't even say them out loud.

TANDY: Negative thoughts are of no use to anyone. Positive thoughts mean we live better lives. Don't you agree?

THE OPINION: *(trying to stand, she gets shoved down)* No!

TANDY: Tsk, tsk. Someone disagrees with us, girls.

THE GIRLS: The Bleep Bleep Girls are always right.

THE OPINION: (*tries to stand again is forced down*) If I have something to say, I thought I was allowed to say it. Everybody has thoughts and opinions you know.

TANDY: Don't you worry about everybody. We students have two and only two priorities: do good in school, do good in life. That's it. Keep our noses out of trouble.

THE OPINION: But if I don't know what trouble looks like –

TANDY: Are you planning to run the world any time soon? What do you need to know? You're only a child. (*she claps her hands together*) Let's play a game. (*leaning in*) Say something about the principal.

THE OPINION: I don't want to.

TANDY: Say, 'I hate the principal.' (*coxing*) Come on, say it.

THE OPINION: I hate the principal.

THE GIRLS push THE OPINION to the ground and pounce on her. They hold THE OPINION's face in a grip and pull her arm behind her back.

MANDY bursts forward.

MANDY: Stop it, stop it!

SANDY: Get out of here Mandy!

RANDY: You're not supposed to be in here!

MANDY: You're hurting her!

SANDY: I said get out!

MANDY backs off. She turns her back and sinks to the ground.

TANDY: All right girls. (*crouching down*) In some places, some countries, those four little words would have you looking at the inside of a jail cell. Or dead. You could be dead. Right now. (*she stands*) And you whine about your precious thoughts. You have it so good.

THE OPINION: You want me to censor myself.

TANDY: Who am I? Just another student. Am I a monster?



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