

Cast of Characters

(In order of appearance.)

MELIZA

ASTON-MARTINIQUE

HUMBLE

BLITHERY

HUCK

JILL SHOESTRING

FRAN FESTERTESTER

GEE!

A PLAY ABOUT A HIGH SCHOOL GLEE CLUB
WITHOUT ANY OF THAT ANNOYING SINGING

by Dean O'Carroll

(A rehearsal room in a Midwestern high school. MELIZA enters. She is about 16, dresses in a way she considers classy, and carries herself like the star she is sure she will soon be. She addresses the audience.)

MELIZA. Hello. I'm Meliza. That's Meh-LIE-za with a Z, not Melissa with two S's. You don't know who I am yet. But you will. You see, I've always known I would be a star some day. When I was a little baby, I just loved how everyone told me I was adorable and they waited on me hand and foot, taking care of my every need. When I grew up, I realized the only way I could get back to that was if I became a big, huge star ... or the dictator of a small country. But since I also happen to be blessed with the most beautiful singing voice in all of West Central Ohio, I decided to become a star. And this is where it all starts. The rehearsal room for my high school's Glee Club. We're called Bare Essence. That's "Essence"! E-S-S-E-N-C-E, so save all the jokes. We've heard them. People, we're really something special. We're a cinch to win Regionals, then Sectionals, the States, then Nationals, then the World Championship of Glee Clubs. That won't be easy. Those Uzbekistani Glee Clubs are really good at singing Journey songs. But, still, my teammates and I are going to win it all, then I can get discovered and get out of this hick town forever and leave them all behind! Oh, look, here come two of my backup singers now!

(ASTON-MARTINIQUE and HUMBLE enter. ASTON-MARTINIQUE is a student in the club, brassy and tough. HUMBLE, a young man their age, is openly gay, but there is nothing stereotypically "gay" about his speech, dress, or bearing.)

MELIZA. *(To audience:)* That's Humble. He's gay. Isn't that cool? Oh, and that's Aston-Martinique. We always have her belt out a high note at the end of every song. Last week she held one for so long we had to bring in paramedics.

ASTON-MARTINIQUE. Come on, Humble. I spent all this money on this new outfit and you can't at least tell me I look fabulous or fierce, or something like that?

HUMBLE. Sorry. You look great. But I don't really know anything about women's clothes.

ASTON-MARTINIQUE. What kind of gay guy are you?

HUMBLE. I'm sorry Aston-Martinique, but just being gay doesn't automatically make me some kind of Project Runway fashionista.

MELIZA. Humble! Have you heard the latest?

HUMBLE. Probably not.

MELIZA. Can you believe they're really going to cast some has-been ex-sitcom star in the lead for the new Broadway revival of *Pippin*?

HUMBLE. Meliza, I've told you a million times, I don't know anything about Broadway. Some gay men do. I don't. Look, both of you, I'm sorry that I'm not the type of gay guy you seem to want me to be. But I'm not, so please stop trying to force the issue.

MELIZA. He's so sassy! Isn't he sassy?

ASTON-MARTINIQUE. You know it, girlfriend!

HUMBLE. Sometimes I think I'd like it better if they just threw drinks in my face.

(BLITHERY enters, a not-so-bright cheerleader.)

BLITHERY. Hi guys. Am I late?

MELIZA. *(To audience:)* This is Blithery. She's ... well, you'll see.

(To BLITHERY:)

No, Blithery, you're not late.

BLITHERY. Oh, good. I got into an argument with a squirrel that lasted longer than I thought it would. He made some good points, though.

(HUCK enters, a handsome high school jock.)

MELIZA. *(To audience:)* Oh! Look! It's my boyfriend, Huck!

(Runs to him.)

Oh, Huck! I missed you since first period!

HUCK. Wait, are we still dating this week?

MELIZA. Um ... I think so.

ASTON-MARTINIQUE. Didn't you break up after that time we all thought Huck got the head cheerleader pregnant?

HUMBLE. No, they got together again after they sang that medley of Maroon 5 songs and realized how much they meant to each other.

ASTON-MARTINIQUE. Oh, right, but then they broke up again after Meliza hooked up with Huck's best friend Robin Badhaircut.

HUCK. I'm so confused.

BLITHERY. Me too. If there's two Olsen twins, how come they have three names?

MELIZA. Okay, let's try to figure this out.

(HUCK and MELIZA come together to figure this out, unheard by the audience.)

(JILL SHOESTRING enters, their teacher. Late 20s, earnest to a fault.)

JILL. Hi everybody!

(Ad-lib greetings from the others.)

MELIZA. *(Briefly interrupting her talk with HUCK:)* This is Jill Shoestring. She's our teacher, our director, our mentor. I'll definitely thank her when I win my first Tony. Well, maybe not on stage, but at least in a trade ad.

JILL. All right, gang, are we ready to help me live out my unfulfilled teenage ambitions? I mean, are we ready to rehearse?

(Cheers from all.)

HUCK. Wait! Wait! Now I remember! We got back together after that very special, very dramatic episode...of our lives...when my uncle had a heart attack and we sang Celine Dion songs in his hospital room!

MELIZA. Oh, so we are still dating! Hooray!

JILL. Very good guys, but remember we have to practice a lot if we want to beat our arch rivals, Truman High's Throat Bran, at Regionals. Blithery, are you ready to dance like your hair is on fire?

BLITHERY. It was just a few minutes ago.

JILL. Humble, are you ready to be fabulous?

HUMBLE. That's really what you all expect from me, isn't it?

JILL. Aston-Martinique, are you ready to belt out one note so long people forget what year it is?

ASTON-MARTINIQUE. You bet your Sweet Valley High I am!

JILL. Huck, are you ready to smile charmingly so people don't notice you're at best a B+ singer and a C- dancer?

HUCK. Yeah, I guess.

JILL. Meliza, are you ready...well, you're always ready, aren't you.

MELIZA. I was born this way! Hey, that's a song!

JILL. Okay, everybody! 2-3-4!

(Everyone is ready to sing, but nothing happens.)

HUCK. Um, shouldn't something be happening now?

MELIZA. Yes, I feel strangely unsupported now, like an Elphaba without a Glinda.

HUMBLE. Guys, it's the musicians. Our band, the kids who play the music we sing along to. They aren't here.

MELIZA. What are you talking about?

ASTON-MARTINIQUE. You mean you never noticed our band?

MELIZA. Does an eagle notice every molecule of air beneath her wings?

JILL. This is embarrassing. How did we not see the band was missing?

BLITHERY. I noticed, but I thought maybe I had just been imagining them all along, like when I thought Tony the Tiger was sitting next to me in Social Studies.

HUCK. So where do you think they are, Ms. Shoestring?

(FRAN FESTERTESTER enters. She is another teacher at the school, tough, sarcastic, perhaps slightly sadistic.)

FRAN. So, you finally noticed, eh, Shoestring?

JILL. Hello, Fran.

MELIZA. *(To audience:)* That's Fran Festertester. She's the coach of the cheerleading team and she hates the Glee Club, though her reasons for hating us and the intensity of her hatred sort of vary from week to week.

FRAN. Not so flashy without instrumentation, are you, Shoestring? This is just like when Wings broke up and Paul McCartney was never heard from again.

JILL. What have you done to my band, Fran?

FRAN. Nothing really. I just reminded them that they were the real talent in this little outfit. They're teenagers who seem to be able play any song, in any genre, at the drop of a hat, perfectly, without sheet music or rehearsal. On top of that, none of them ever talks or demands any attention or praise. I just let them know that talent like that could get them a job at any nightclub, cruise ship, or pit orchestra in town. At the moment, they're all in a recording studio, laying down backing tracks for whatever desperate 70s pop star is cutting an album of standards this week.

JILL. Fran, we need those kids! We need them to play music for us at Regionals!

FRAN. That's right, and, as you'll recall, the deal you made with Principal Newton was that you would only get your funding renewed if you won Regionals.

JILL. But without our funding, how can we stage elaborate numbers with full sets, lights, and costumes that we never actually perform for an audience? We were barely scraping by on our budget of four hundred thousand dollars a year as it was!

FRAN. And if you don't get that money, it all goes to my squad, Cheer Pressure, the winner of the coveted "Mickey You're So Fine" Award for Pep Excellence six years running.

JILL. You haven't beaten us, Fran. We'll find a way out of this. We always do.

FRAN. That is exactly what I was hoping you would say.

(FRAN walks to the side of the stage to get some props. As she speaks, she brings in a folding chair and some popcorn.)

FRAN. So I am just going to sit here with my chair and my popcorn and watch you all flounder for answers.

JILL. You're a sadist.

FRAN. Well, I work in public schools, so technically I'm a sado-masochist, but yeah, you're pretty much right.

JILL. Don't you know how much these kids need this? These are the kids who don't fit in anywhere else, the kids who feel picked on and abused. This is the one safe place for them, the one outlet they have to express themselves. This is the—

FRAN. Let me stop you there. You know you make a variation on this speech every single week, right? You'd save a lot of time if you just printed up a flyer.

JILL. Fine. But we will find a way out of this.

(Turns to the students.)

Okay, guys, who here can play an instrument?

BLITHERY. I can play Chopsticks.

HUMBLE. On the piano?

BLITHERY. No, I don't even take them out of that paper sleeve.

JILL. Humble, what about your boyfriend who's in that a cappella group? Maybe they could sing backup for us.

HUMBLE. Sorry, Ms. Shoestring, he's working with them on a musical version of *Harry Potter*. They think it could be a big hit online.

MELIZA. Yeah, like that's gonna work.

FRAN. Hey, I've got an instrument I can play for you. It's the world's smallest violin.

(Mimes playing a tiny violin with thumb and forefinger.)

JILL. This is not over, Fran. Okay, guys, if we can't sing, we can work on our choreography. Everyone get in places.

(As JILL describes their moves, the kids start dancing, looking very silly without any music.)

JILL. Humble you stand there, tapping your hand against your thigh. Blithery, you dance just sexy enough to be cute, but not so much that we get letters. Aston-Martini-que, you start with your hands down low and then raise them up over your head with jazz hands. And Meliza and Huck, you walk around each other in a circle and look at each other over your shoulders. Good. Good.

FRAN. The last time I saw choreography this bad, I was watching *Starlight Express* performed by actual trains.

HUCK. I think she might be right Ms. Shoestring. This is kind of silly.

JILL. Okay, okay, okay... here's what we're going to do...

FRAN. No, let me tell you what you're going to do. You're going to keep trying for a while and then, little by little, all of your "you can do it if you believe" and "work hard and hold on to your dreams" stuff is going to fade away. Soon you're going to start doubting. You're going to start asking questions about the fundamental things you always took for granted.

JILL. I don't know what you're talking about.

ASTON-MARTINIQUE. Hey, Ms. Shoestring, if we're supposed to be the outsider, unpopular kids, how come the songs we sing are always mainstream Top 40 hits?

MELIZA. Yeah, and if we're so unpopular, how are we all so good-looking?

HUCK. And how do I have time to be captain of the football team, captain of the basketball team, and sing lead in every song we do? Does this school not have any homework?

BLITHERY. And if the kids in *Mary Poppins* are supposed to be so bad that they make all their old nannies quit, how come they always seem so nice and well-behaved?

FRAN. See, it's happening already. Now, suddenly you're all going to have realizations that chill you to your very core.

HUMBLE. Hey, I just realized something. The "It Gets Better" campaign is great and everything, but, still, my life is never going to be as good as the lives of famous celebrities who record "It Gets Better" videos.

MELIZA. And I just realized the plot of *Spring Awakening* is almost completely irrelevant to 21st Century life!

HUCK. And I just realized that Kiss isn't actually a very good rock band and it's completely ridiculous for men in their sixties to be wearing that makeup!

BLITHERY. And I just realized that Yoda sounds just like Grover!

JILL. Stop! Stop! Fran, you're shattering all their illusions! That's not supposed to happen until college!

FRAN. It's too late, Shoestring. It's all over for your little glee club. All your dreams are dead, just like the proverbial Salesman.

ASTON-MARTINIQUE. The what salesman?

JILL. She's alluding to the play *Death Of A Salesman* by Arthur Miller.

MELIZA. I've never heard of that play. Who wrote the music for it?

JILL. It's not a musical. It's a straight play.

HUCK. Wait, there are plays that aren't musicals?

JILL. Sure. Thousands of them. Most plays aren't musicals, actually.

MELIZA. I've never heard of such a thing.

JILL. Sure. They're called straight plays. They're for actors who can't sing.

HUMBLE. So, wait, we could be performing plays where we don't need an orchestra, where we don't need to learn songs and dances, just lines of dialogue?

HUCK. That sounds amazing! We could do one of those!

ASTON-MARTINIQUE. Why aren't we doing one right now?

FRAN. No! No! If there's one thing I hate more than high school glee clubs, it's high school drama clubs!

JILL. Sure, guys, we could find a play with parts for all of you, order some scripts. We could start rehearsals in just a few days.

FRAN. No! No! This cannot be happening!

JILL. Oh, it's happening! Why, we could do *Arsenic and Old Lace*, or *You Can't Take It With You* or even...

FRAN. No! No, don't say it!

JILL. *Our Town.*

FRAN. Oh! Curse you Jill Shoestring! Curse you!

(FRAN exits, furious.)

JILL. Well, gang, what have we learned today?

BLITHERY. I learned that "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players; they have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts." I think that's from *Pokemon*.

JILL. All right. I think we have our work cut out for us. Let's start staging a play without any of that annoying singing!

(All cheer, then pantomime excited talking as MELIZA comes forward.)

MELIZA. Just another typical day in Glee Club. Well, like they say, there's no business like show business. And some people have no business in show business. But I can't talk now. I have rehearsal. Bye.

(MELIZA rejoins the group as the lights fade.)

End of Play

HAPPY NO-LIDAYS

by Keythe Farley