

Reader's Theater for *Operation Clean Sweep*

Cast of Characters:

Narrator

Corn

Otis

Mom

Dad

Daisy

Birdine

Narrator: The year is 1916 in Umatilla, Oregon. Cornelius Sanwick has more problems than he knows what to do with. First of all, his mother is secretly running for mayor. That's right, Mom for Mayor! This fact alone is quite a problem, but it is especially hard for Corn to deal with because his father *is* the mayor and he's running for reelection. Should Corn tell his father that his mother and her sister suffragists are planning to give the town a clean sweep? Or should he keep his mouth shut and let history take its course? And to make matters worse, Corn has a crush on pretty Birdine Bain, the cute little red head with a face full of freckles.

Corn: (on the telephone) "Hello, Birdine?"

Birdine: "Yes?"

Corn: "This is me, Corn."

Birdine: "Oh, hi! I can't believe your phoning."

Corn: "Me neither. I mean, I *can* believe it, 'cause here I am, but I *can't* believe it, 'cause I never thought I would!"

Narrator: As you can see, his first phone call to a girl is going nowhere fast. An awful silence fills the phone and Corn isn't sure how to break it. He wishes he could think of something to say, something to let Birdine know he kinda halfway likes her.

Corn: "Birdine?"

Birdine: "Yeah? Did you say something?"

Corn: "Birdine? I, uh . . . think you have pretty greenish-brown eyes."

Birdine: (Batting her eyes) "I do?"

Corn: "Yeah. They're the same color as seaweed."

Birdine: "Seaweed? You think my eyes look like seaweed?"

Corn: "Well . . . um, pretty seaweed."

Birdine: "Gee, thanks, I guess."

Corn: "Bye!"

Narrator: Corn pounds his forehead on the kitchen wall. Seaweed. Seaweed! How could he say a stupid thing like seaweed? The next morning, the smells of bacon and coffee fill his nose, making Corn run downstairs for breakfast. At the table is his baby sister, Daisy, pounding the tray on her highchair and smearing cottage cheese on her head.

Corn: "Hey, Daisy Maisy girl!"

Daisy: "Coo-Coo!"

Corn: "Corn. Corn. Say Corn."

Daisy: "Coo-Coo!"

Dad: "Mornin' Tiger!"

Mom: "Corn, do you want two pancakes or three?"

Corn: "Three."

Narrator: Corn watches his parents. They look normal enough. Not like the kind of people who would run against each other in a political election. Daisy flips a curd of cottage cheese on Corn's plate. She must like the look on Corn's face because she does it again.

Corn: "Hey, Daisy! Watch what you're doin'."

Mom: "That's enough, you two. No food fights."

Corn: "But--"

Dad: "No buts."

Narrator: Another curd of cottage cheese comes flying from Daisy's tray but this time it hits Dad, smack dab in the forehead... Later that morning, as Corn and Otis are walking to school, Corn has something on his mind.

Otis: "So, did you call Birdine last night on the phone?"

Corn: "Are you kidding?"

Otis: "No, did you phone her?"

Corn: "Now why would I want to do a thing like that? She's--She's--a girl!"

Otis: "No fooling. Did you call her?"

Corn: (Nodding) "I called her. There, are you happy now?"

Otis: (Smiling) "I knew you would."

Corn: "Otis? Can I tell you something?"

Otis: "Sure."

Corn: "Well, I, um . . . kinda like Birdine."

Otis: "I can tell. You get all jittery when she's around."

Corn: "That's what I wanted to talk to you about."

Otis: "Okay, I'm all ears."

Narrator: Corn sits down on Elmer's tombstone, which happens to be planted right in the middle of Main Street. He gets out his measuring tape and starts measuring his ears.

Corn: "Well, um, pretty girls make me nervous. I get all loopy and my brain goes blank and before I know it, my knees turn weak and my words come out all stupid-sounding."

Otis: "just do what I do."

Corn: "What?"

Otis: "I picture all pretty girls with boogers hanging out of their noses."

Corn: "You do not!"

Otis: "Do too!"

Corn: "Why?"

Otis: "Because then they seem more normal."

Corn: "let me get this straight--You picture pretty girls with boogers hanging out their noses because then they seem more *normal*?"

Otis: "Yup. When you see a pretty girl, just think boogers. Hundreds of boogers. Thousands of boogers."

Corn: "Hundreds? Thousands? Why not just a few?"

Narrator: Otis rolls his eyes as if he is trying to teach Corn something as elementary as the ABCs. He taps Corn with his tape measure.

Otis: "Because a pretty girl with just a few boogers hanging out her nose is still kinda pretty and hard to talk to. But--a pretty girl with a thousand, maybe a million boogers, isn't nearly as pretty and a heck of a lot easier to talk to."

Narrator: Corn nods. In his own strange way, Otis makes good sense.

All characters: If you'd like to find out if Mom becomes Mayor and what happens with Birdine's boogers, then run, don't walk to the nearest library and check out this really cool book, Operation Clean Sweep, by Darleen Bailey Beard. And remember: Mom for Mayor!

The End