

Music Video Blues

This is the first 'Bonnie and Darren' short story I've written in a long time. With only two months of school left, how much trouble can I get into?

All people mentioned in this story are fictional, and bear no resemblance to any person who has ever been in this school, ever.

It seemed like a good idea at the time.

Bonnie found this contest on-line where schools could make their own music video and submit it. She told me all about it.

"Bill, it's fantastic! The first prize is a new car! Just for making a music video!"

"Well, that sounds interesting ...". I was a little hesitant. OK, more than a little. The last contest Bonnie had entered us in had been very embarrassing. Although we did all agree that Mindy had looked spectacular in her bathing suit.

"If we win, who gets the car?"

"Well, uh ..." Bonnie was looking evasive. "What does it matter? We should do it just because we can!"

"Well, all right. It could be fun. A music video? Do we have to sing? Play our own music?"

That could be a problem. Our only musical staff member was Kathleen ... although Darren had told me that Kate was pretty good at making funny sounds with her armpits ...

"No, no. We can use pre-recorded music and lip-synch it ... although we can have people sing if they want to. And everyone can be in it! Students too!"

"Well, that's OK, then. Tell Darren the details and get him to approve it, and ..."

"Uh ..."

"Bonnie? Is there a problem?"

"Well, Darren and I aren't exactly ... getting along too well, right now ..."

Bonnie looked embarrassed.

"What did you do this time?"

"Well ... you know that nice little fireplace that Darren has in his office?"

We'd all been wondering about that. We figured he was using it to have cozy fireside chats with some of our grade nine boys ... sort of making them feel good. Just before he yelled at them.

“I was just trying to help! I thought I’d put a little music player inside, and some speakers, so it would make crackling noises like a real fire ...”

“Did it work?”

“Too well! The next time he turned it on, Darren thought it was really on fire, and he doused it with a bucket of water. Shorted everything out ...”

I remembered. The power had been off for an hour and a half.

“Well ... don’t worry about it. I’ll tell him. Go ahead and plan your video. It sounds like fun!”

Bonnie left the office happy. I decided that was a good thing. When Bonnie isn’t happy, people tend to hide a lot.

Over the next few weeks, Bonnie came to me often to help her solve various problems. The theme of her music video was some sort of futuristic setting ... I didn’t understand it ... and she had taken over the stage, with a group of students helping her to make props. She called me in one day to look at something.

“Bill, do you think this looks like a robot?”

She called Koryssa over. Koryssa was covered head to toe in cardboard boxes that were painted silver. Her head seemed to be inside some sort of ...

“Bonnie, is that a ...”

“Cat litter box. Don’t worry, it’s never been used. I’m pretty sure. And the little flap on front is such a nice touch. Koryssa, open the flap and say something.”

Koryssa managed to get the flap open. “It’s hot in here!”

“Well, just hold on a few more minutes, honey. We have to glue a few things on your legs. Paige, bring that glue gun over here, will you?”

“Noooo!” That was from Koryssa.

“What’s the matter? Are you all right?”

The flap opened again. “Don’t let Paige anywhere near me with that glue gun! I still have burn marks all over my arms from when she was attaching these gloves!” She waved her arms around. “And I think she glued my socks to my shoes!”

“Well, maybe if Naomi helps ...”

“Nooo! That’s worse! She did the painting, and my legs are going to be silver for the rest of my life! Just leave me alone!”

Koryssa stormed off. Well, actually, she sort of clunked off. And her legs did look a little ...

“It doesn’t matter”. Bonnie was nonplussed. “Come on over here and I’ll show you some of the scenes we’ve filmed so far”.

She opened her laptop and clicked on a file. “There’s no music yet; we took out the sound, and we’ll add the music tracks later”.

I watched several minutes of students moving their lips and dancing. Breanna looked like she was enjoying herself, although she was singing with her eyes closed. It was impressive.

“Well ... that looks pretty ... impressive!” I didn’t know what else to say. I was trying to sound enthusiastic. “How long will the video be?”

“We’re aiming for four minutes. It will need a lot of editing”

“Wait a minute! Isn’t that ...”

On the screen, Darren was lip-synching to some unknown song, and dancing down the hallway. He was ... good!”

“How did you ever convince Darren to ...”

“Oh, it was easy. Once I promised him a starring role, he couldn’t contain himself! He wants to be in every scene!”

I hadn’t known that about Darren. But of course, I hadn’t known about his fascination with Country music, either, until I’d spotted the life-size cutout of Faith Hill standing in the corner of his office. Kae still wasn’t speaking to him.

“Why don’t you come with me? We’re doing some more filming now, down in the elementary wing”.

How could I say no? I followed her as she grabbed a camera and headed down the hall. I’d noticed kids spontaneously bursting into song all week long.

“Bonnie ... that segment I did ... how did it turn out?”

Bonnie had asked me to be in the video too. I’d moved my lips randomly for a minute or so while a song played in the background.

“Well, uh ... all right, I guess ...”

“What do you mean, you ‘guess’? Did it turn out, or didn’t it?”

“Well ...” Bonnie was procrastinating. I knew the signs. Whenever she doesn’t want to tell me something, she always says ‘Well...’, and then waits, hoping I’ll go away.

“Well ...”

I stood there waiting.

“I think there must have been something wrong with the white balance on the camera ... there was too much glare.”

“Glare?”

“You know ... off your head. The part where there used to be hair ...”

I looked at her. She looked at me. And then she burst out laughing. “I’m just teasing. Your scene turned out fine!”

We kept walking. I didn’t say much. I was wondering what sort of revenge I could come up with. Maybe that fart machine again, under her chair, the next time she had a meeting with the Skills Coordinator. That would work.

But Bonnie was oblivious.

“Mindy’s class is next. They’ve already started rehearsing. Let’s watch!”

We poked our heads in the doorway. The kids were all seated at their desks, and some sort of weird music was playing loudly from the back of the room. The kids were singing along, but looking pretty bored by the whole experience.

“Where’s ...” I was about to ask where Mindy was, but then I saw her. She was standing on a desk and ... dancing. “Come on, kids ... show some enthusiasm! Sing! Smile! Have fun!”. She was also cutting out clipart as she was dancing. Mindy can multi-task with the best of them!

It looked like she was trying to get the kids involved in the singing. But they weren’t having any of it. In fact, I suspected that Braxton was looking a little embarrassed.

“It’s not the kids’ fault” Mindy hastened to explain, still dancing. “They don’t know the words yet. Once they know the words, they’ll be more into it!”

We walked across the hall to Kate’s room, and looked in. Kate wasn’t there ... I suspected she was hiding somewhere. But Melanie was there, practicing a lesson we’d planned together this morning. There weren’t any kids in the room; she was talking to herself, pacing back and forth, and asking imaginary kids imaginary questions. Every once in a while she’d stop, point at an imaginary kid, and say “Hey! Lose the attitude!”.

OK, no more Jr. High classes for her!

She finally noticed us in the doorway.

“Hi Bonnie. Hi Bill. Did you edit my song yet?”

Bonnie replied. “Uh, yeah ... it came out just great! We’re adding it to the video this afternoon!”

As we left, I noticed Melanie getting out the jelly beans. Apparently she had a math lesson planned. I’d have to talk to her about that ...

"I'm not sure we can use Melanie's segment" Bonnie told me. "She's one of the people I chose to actually sing in the video, instead of lip-synching. You know, because she was in the GPRC choir and everything ..."

"Oh? Well, that should have turned out well ..."

"Uh, actually it didn't". She explained. "Melanie wanted to sing a Country song. It didn't really fit with our theme, but I thought we could add some special effects or something afterwards ..."

"OK. Well...?"

"Melanie sings through her nose really well, when she wants to. Almost as good as Tammy Wynette used to."

"Tammy who?" I've been around for a while, but I'm not that old. Colleen would probably know.

"A famous Country singer. Anyway, Melanie sang Tammy's song 'D-I-V-O-R-C-E'. You remember it?"

"Uh ... vaguely". I did, actually. It had been a very popular song. Jane used to play it every time I forgot to take out the garbage.

"She did a good job, too! Sounded just like Tammy. Except she spelled it wrong".

"What?"

"She sang 'D-O-R-C-I-V-E'"

"Dorcive? Is that a word?"

"I don't know. Why? Do you think we should leave it in?"

"Sang through her nose, huh?"

"Yup!"

"I'll let you decide". OK, I'm a coward. "How about we ..."

Just then there was a loud boom. It seemed to have come from somewhere in the vicinity of ...

"The stage! Oh, no! I told them to wait until I got back!"

Bonnie set off at a run, with me following closely behind. Bonnie can run really fast when she needs to. We found that out last year when she was trying to avoid our Principal ...

When we reached the stage, smoke was billowing out the door.

"I told them not to touch it! It wasn't ready yet!"

“Bonnie? What ...”

But just then Val stumbled down the stairs. Her face was black with soot, and her hair was sticking straight up. Her glasses were hanging off the side of her nose.

“Val! Are you all right?”

She managed a tearful reply. “I was just getting a cup of coffee! I noticed the coffee machine in there, and I poured a cup, but it was green, and it bubbled, and I dropped it, and, and ...” She burst into tears.

“It works!” That was Bonnie. “I wasn’t sure if it would! And you’ll be all right, Val ... it was just harmless household chemicals ...”

“Harmless?? They exploded! How’d you learn to do that? And why ...”

“It’s the special effects explosion for our finale. I was using the coffee maker to titrate the final solution, after mixing the chemicals over a low heat ...”

“But ... but” I was speechless. “How’d you learn to ...”

“Michelle showed me”.

“What??”

“She learned it in one of her agricultural courses this year. I think she said it was ‘Agricultural Explosives 1407’, or something like that. For removing beaver dams efficiently. I cut the recipe down to 1%. Maybe I should have used less bacon fat”.

I was trying to imagine how to make bacon fat explode. I figured that if anyone would know how to, Michelle would. But Val interrupted my thoughts.

“Bacon fat? I have bacon fat in my hair??”

“Well ...”. Bonnie didn’t look happy. “It was just a *little* bit of bacon fat. The final mixture was mostly vinegar and hand sanitizer”. She brightened. “But at least the hand sanitizer will make your hair smell ...”

But Val wasn’t listening. In fact, she was saying some things that I couldn’t quite make out, things that sounded a little unpleasant. She headed back to her office. We decided to leave her alone for a while.

Bonnie spoke up. “Well, I guess we’ll forget the finale. I have a better idea, anyway. We’ll have all the staff gather together and sing the final chorus!”

“What ... you mean actually sing?”

“Of course. What’s wrong with that?”

“Uh, nothing, I guess”. I knew how to lip-synch.

“And the costumes should be ready by tomorrow afternoon”.

“Costumes? I don’t think ...”

And things sort of went downhill from there. The costumes turned out to be fairly attractive, actually, although I’ve never really looked good in sequins. And Darren has an amazing voice. Who’d have guessed?

Our music video, after editing, ended up being twenty-seven minutes long. Melanie, who was only here on Thursdays, never found out that we edited her song down to three seconds ... just enough time to get out a ‘D’ ... We also discovered that Bonnie is a wizard at video special effects, and managed to make an explosion in the last scene that looked almost real. We tried to get Val to watch it, but she wouldn’t.

And Bonnie didn’t get her car.