

## Scene 1

*The Gallindred Preparatory School for Dilatory Children.  
The STUDENTS trudge in.*

HEADMASTER: Good morning, urchins! Just one announcement this morning: The freshman field trip to the sewage treatment plant has been cancelled. I know you all had your hearts set on that, but due to a massive blockage that occurred yesterday, it's better that we just postpone it for now, yes? Thanks for your understanding. Have a wonderful day.

STUDENTS: **Start the morning, try to rise and shine!  
Class by nine! Try not to think how  
life is inching to a slow decline,  
or how it can be so cruel.**

**Dreary lessons and a nasty lunch.**

STUDENT: **Just my hunch, but that's not salami!**

STUDENTS: **Back to classes and the hallway crunch,  
at the Gallindred Preparatory School.**

**It's foul and base, and not the kind of place  
you should leave your son or daughter.  
I swear one day, I'll up and run away  
to a much more respectable alma mater!**

HEADMASTER: Don't you be lollygagging!

STUDENTS: Yes, Headmaster!

*MITZIE drops in on ADA, who is using calipers and  
scribbling in a notebook.*

MITZIE: Hey Ada! Whatcha doing?

ADA: Trying to solve this proof. I'm so close!

MITZIE: You're always either doing math or reading. I bet you've read the entire library.

ADA: I have. All 86 books.

MITZIE: Wow, I wish I were as smart as you!

ADA: Well, study hard and someday you'll come close.

MITZIE: I'll let you do your math stuff. Bye Ada!

ADA: Bye Mitzie!

*MITZIE leaves.*

And now for the *coup de grace*— . . . Wait—Where are my calipers? Mitzie!

*ADA goes after MITZIE.*

STUDENTS: **Reading, writing, and arithmetic . . .**

TEACHER: **My, you're thick!**

STUDENTS: **Do the question over!  
Study hard until you're sad and sick  
and you feel your wits unspool!  
But that's just life at the Gallindred Preparatory School!**

*MITZIE drops in on LACEY working on her steambike.*

MITZIE: Hey Lacey, I got the calipers for you!

LACEY: Perfect. This'll make things a lot easier.

MITZIE: I can't wait to see this thing run!

LACEY: Yeah, someday I'm gonna ride this thing clear outta here.

*ADA enters.*

ADA: Lacey! I knew it. Give me back my calipers!

LACEY: Come on, sis, just let me use them for a few minutes.

ADA: No, every time you do they get covered in oil! Give them back!

LACEY: **But I'm so close—Look, it's nearly done,  
and there's just the tank to fill!  
And I'll ditch this place when it starts to run—**

ADA: **There's a snowball's chance it will!  
You're so entrenched in all of your inventions  
Why can't you just go to class instead?**

LACEY: **'Cuz always having your nose in a book just shows that you can't live a life outside your head.**

ADA: **All those books help me see the world in a million different ways.**

MITZIE: **That's true.**

LACEY: **But my gadgets are works of art that astonish and amaze!**

MITZIE: **That too!**

ADA: **Your gadgets are ugly and you're nothing but a hack!**

LACEY: **You just wish you could build one but you haven't got the knack! And you never will admit that you can't!**

ADA: **That's it! I'm taking my calipers back!**

LACEY: No you won't!—

STUDENTS: **With endless chores  
like mopping all the floors,  
it's a crime how much they work us!  
We scrape and tear,  
there's bedlam in the air—  
It's a lot like living in a three-ring circus!**

HEADMASTER: Keep scrubbing, urchins!

STUDENTS: **Yes, Headmaster!**

*LACEY runs on, chased by ADA. They almost topple the HEADMASTER.*

HEADMASTER: What on earth—! Why aren't you doing chores? What's this?

*He takes the calipers.*

I fail to see the use of this.

ADA: Actually, the Vernier Caliper can be used to measure the distance between—

HEADMASTER: For cleaning, Miss Ada! You LaForge sisters are nothing but trouble. To your quarters, now!

LACEY: But sir—

HEADMASTER: I said now! And the rest of you, keep working!

STUDENTS: **Do your duties and without debate,  
don't tempt fate rocking the boat,  
'cuz we all live in a relentless state  
of chaos and misrule!  
But that's just life at the Gallindred Preparatory—  
Wickedness in all its glory—  
Fall in line or you'll be sorry—  
So begins our story at the Gallindred Preparatory School!—  
(Odds of getting out are miniscule at)  
The Gallindred Preparatory School!**

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## Scene 2

*Ada and Lacey's dorm. The HEADMASTER drags ADA and LACEY in.*

HEADMASTER: Now you're going to stay in here till I figure out what to do with you. And no supper!

*The HEADMASTER leaves.*

LACEY: Thank goodness.

*They slump onto their beds.*

I wonder what it would have been tonight. Brown slop or green slop? Anything would be better than that orange slop we had last night, right?

*ADA shoots her a look.*

I'm sorry I took your calipers. I should have asked.

*ADA stares at the pendant of her necklace.*

Why are you always fiddling with that thing?

ADA: It helps me relax.

LACEY: How does it help you relax? When I look at mine I just get confused. Then angry. Then I throw it across the room.

ADA: It doesn't look like jewelry. It looks almost like the component of a machine.

LACEY: It doesn't look like part of any machine I know. And I know a lot of machines.

ADA: I tried every kind of mathematical analysis I know. Nothing makes sense.

LACEY: Maybe they're just random scraps of metal our parents sent us to mess with our heads.

ADA: You don't believe that.

LACEY: Well, between the two of us we haven't figured out what they are, and we're pretty smart. So what else could they be?

*LACEY hugs her stomach.*

ADA: What's wrong.

LACEY: I'm actually hungry.

*Pause.*

ADA: Lacey . . . What's going to happen to us?

LACEY: Beats me. We'll find out what the Headmaster has in store tomorrow.

ADA: No, I mean . . . When we get out of here.

LACEY: I don't know. I assume we'll find jobs.

ADA: What kind of jobs?

LACEY: . . . **I can see you as a governess.**

ADA: As a what?

LACEY: **In frilly clothes and jaunty hats.**

ADA: I beg your pardon!

LACEY: **In some rich widower's employ,  
fetching every little toy  
for his ankle-biting brats!**

ADA: I would rather eat nails.

LACEY: **You'll teach them French, long division,  
deportment and grace—  
"Heads high! Pinkies out! Backs straight!"  
And then one day you'll make the decision  
to finally embrace  
your life, your employer, and a wedding date!**

**You'll snuggle by the hearth  
as you watch the fires burn.  
On your guitar you'll play a tune—**

ADA: I don't play guitar.

LACEY: **But soon you're gonna take it up and learn!  
You'll be the picture of domestic bliss!  
Hate to tell you, sis,  
but odds are it's true.  
And that's what the future has in store for you!**

ADA: I will not be a governess!

LACEY: I don't think you have a say in the matter.

ADA: **Well I can see you as a seamstress!**

LACEY: . . . What did you say?—

ADA: **Hold on, just let me set the scene:  
You'll work your fingers to the bone,  
not a moment to your own,  
hunching over some machine.**

LACEY: You take that back.

ADA: **Your dull, sad life will be devoted  
to irons and presses,  
and hems that need repair.  
But someday you'll be finally promoted  
to waistcoats and dresses—  
It beats being eyeball-deep in underwear!**

**They'll work you night and day;  
you won't have time for being bored.  
Luscious fabrics by the ream,  
sewing garments of your dreams  
that you never can afford!  
Right there's the long and short of your career,  
and that, sister dear,  
is what will ensue.  
Yes, that's what the future has in store for you!**

LACEY: **How could you say that?  
I couldn't stand to live my life in some tedious grind.**

ADA: **I can't imagine that life either!  
'Cause it would be the saddest waste of a brilliant mind!  
I'm so much better than that!—**

LACEY: **I'm so much better than that!—**

ADA: **I'm tired of the same filthy rooms and halls!**

ADA/LACEY: **But it's hard to see what lies ahead from behind these walls.**

**I want to make a mark  
like I know I could,  
but they don't give a second glance.**

LACEY: **I can build—**

ADA: **I can solve—**

ADA/LACEY: **I can do some good!  
Just give me the chance!  
Give us the chance . . .**

*Long pause.*

ADA: **Let's make ourselves a promise.  
I think that we can both agree  
to commit right now to say  
we won't let each other stray  
from what we were meant to be.**

LACEY: **Okay, sis, you've got yourself a deal.  
'cause I can't help but feel—**

ADA/LACEY: **We're meant for something more.  
Now let's wait and see what the future has . . .**

ADA: . . . We should get to bed.

*ADA moves to her bed. LACEY hugs her stomach.*

You all right?

LACEY: I'm still hungry.