

# Just Checking

by Lavinia Roberts

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**GENRE:** Comedy/Light Drama

**SYNOPSIS:** Two estranged friends decorating for a Homecoming game are able to resolve their issues and restore their friendship by discussing their feelings and forgiving each other.

**TIME:** 6 minutes

**CAST BREAKDOWN:** 2F

**THEME:** Reconciliation, Forgiveness, Communication

**SCRIPTURE REFERENCE:** Ephesians 4:25-32; Proverbs 17:17

**CHURCH YEAR SEASON:** Any

**SUGGESTED USE:** Youth Ministry and Outreach

**CHARACTERS:**

LAURA—a teenager

ALYSSA—a teenager

**PROPS:** One step ladder, a packet of silver balloons, a large silver cardboard star, book bag, jacket, watch

**COSTUMES:** Casual, school clothes

**SOUND:** Two wireless microphone

**LIGHTING:** General stage

**SETTING:** A high school gymnasium

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## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

### Walk The Line

Some adults doubtless crave the 'major catastrophes' of high school, when it seemed the biggest problem was keeping up with the latest fashion or staying ahead of the rumor mill. It's easy to forget, though, that the trials of adolescence were serious indeed at the time, and the stress caused by gossip and broken friendships was very real and very painful. We tend to view our past through rose-colored lenses and downplay old anxieties simply because we now know that we ultimately survived them. Don't let this older perspective jade your approach to the issues and challenges faced by modern teens.

*Just Checking* is lighthearted and there's plenty of room to smile at the plight of Laura and Alyssa, but avoid making the scene into a parody of teenagers that not only misses the point, but can be hurtful and alienating to the very audience you're trying to reach. Though Laura's anger and sense of betrayal ultimately prove groundless, the fact is that she's truly hurt, so encourage your actress to play it genuinely. Comedy need not be overblown and silly to be effective, and in fact, the most amusing material is often that which most closely resembles real life. Laura and Alyssa's showdown can be funny without turning into mockery, so try playing it naturally and see what happens.

### Easy Does It

I once heard an interview with a Hollywood stuntman, and he said the most dangerous stunts are the ones that seem the simplest. He said he's much more likely to get hurt falling off a bar stool than crashing a car, because he'll check all of the equipment on the stunt car a thousand times before the cameras roll, but he tends to take the 'simple' stunts for granted. We should perhaps all borrow a page from his book.

*Just Checking* calls for a step ladder to be used as the two girls decorate the gym, and while this is a pretty simple piece of onstage equipment, take nothing for granted. Even very seasoned actors tend to get a rush of adrenaline when they're in front of an audience, and that can complicate some otherwise very simple behaviors. Add to that the fact that they're simultaneously trying to remember lines and blocking in bright lighting (and often wearing someone else's clothes), and the margin for error can grow alarmingly.

Does this mean no ladders (or bar stools) for scenes? Not necessarily. But weigh the risks before you proceed with any potentially dangerous prop or set piece on stage, and if you decide it's important, make sure the actor gets plenty of rehearsal time with the actual prop, in the actual lighting, wearing the actual shoes...well, you get the idea.

### And... Scene

A scene doesn't necessarily end with the last line of dialogue, so be sure your actors know when the scene is truly "over", and act accordingly. Alyssa's cryptic last line is "just checking", and there may need to be a quick moment to let the implications of that begin to sink in for Laura before lights go down.

This dynamic is further complicated if your performance space doesn't actually allow for a true 'black-out', as audience members may become confused as to when the scene really does end. If this is the case, even a simple change in lighting can help communicate that the story's over, but failing that, make sure your actors give a beat of silent stillness before dropping character and exiting.