

CHEATER CHEATER, PUMPKIN EATER!

A Pennydog Puppet Production © 2013

Book: Ryan Roe and Staci Rosen

Music & Lyrics: Staci Rosen

SCENE 1

SONG: "THEME SONG"

ALL We're the puppet pals from Pennydog Lane
Sit back and relax, folks, while we entertain!

MADDIE We've got lessons to learn

LOGAN We've got problems to fix

GINA & FRED We've got singing and dancing to throw in the mix

ALL We've got jokes
We've got tricks
We've got you's
We've got me's

MACKENZIE We've even got chimpanzees!

ALL We're the puppet pals from Pennydog Lane
We found an excuse to repeat this refrain

BOYS We've got so much to say

GIRLS We've got so much to do

MACKENZIE But we might still have time to go visit the zoo!

ALL We could sing this to you 'til forever although
It's time to begin the show
Can't wait 'til we start the show
You'll love when we start the show
We promise to start the show
So watch as we start the show

MACKENZIE But first watch me--

KIDS MacKenzie!

MACKENZIE Okay, fine, I know!

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 2

MacKenzie speaks to the audience.

MACKENZIE Good morning [*afternoon/evening*], ladies and germs! Welcome to the show! My name is MacKenzie, and it is your pleasure to meet me! Ha ha. Now, I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, "Hey, it's a talking monkey!" But that is where you are wrong, my friend, because, *I* am a chimpanzee. Say... Are there any other chimpanzees here in the audience today? (*He peers into the audience.*) I guess not. Oh well, I won't hold it against you.

NOTE: When MacKenzie addresses a question directly to the audience, he should be prepared to react appropriately to their replies.

MACKENZIE So today we're going to see a little story about my friend Maddie and a problem she had. Maddie is a cool kid, even if she's not a chimpanzee. Now, I'm sure most of you know what *cheating* is. Cheating is when you get something in a dishonest way -- when you get something by lying. There are different ways that people cheat. You can cheat in a game of baseball. You can cheat at Texas Hold'em. I once knew a spider monkey who got caught cheating on his taxes! This is a story about a time when Maddie thought about cheating on her tests at school.

Now, maybe I don't have to tell you this, but cheating is wrong. So you may be wondering why my friend even thought about cheating in the first place. Well, it just so happens that's what our whole story today is about! So without further ado, let's go to the halls of Pennydog Lane Elementary School...

SCENE 3

In the hallway before class. MADDIE and LOGAN meet outside their classroom.

MADDIE Hey, Logan!

LOGAN Hi, Maddie! How was your weekend?

MADDIE I had an awesome weekend! I jumped rope *fifty-eight times* without messing up! That's a new record for me! If I can just do twelve more, I'll be the champion of the whole playground!

LOGAN Whoa! Congratulations! My weekend was great too! My parents took me to the library, and I checked out *two* chapter books!

FRED enters. He overhears their conversation and jumps in.

FRED Hi, Maddie! Hi, Logan! You'll never guess what I did this weekend! I built a robot out of Legos -- it's almost as big as me! I haven't decided on a name for him yet, but I'm thinking either "Super-Electro-Bot 5000," or "Gary." I'm really hoping he gets struck by lightning, so he can come to life!

MADDIE You're funny, Fred! It's too bad you're not in our class this year.

The bell RINGS.

MADDIE Time for class, Logan! See you later, Fred!

FRED Bye, guys!

Maddie and Logan enter the classroom and sit down adjacent to each other. Ms. Stroopwaffel enters.

MS. S Good morning, kids! Welcome to another fun-filled day of education! To kick things off today, I'll be handing back your social studies tests from last week.

Ms. Stroopwaffel begins making her way around the room, handing back tests.

MADDIE *(with trepidation)* Oh... we're getting those tests back today?

LOGAN We sure are! I can't wait! How do you think you did?

MADDIE Well... the tests have been getting a lot harder lately. Some of those multiple choice questions were really tricky... but I think I got most of the true-or-false.

LOGAN Is that true... or false? HAHAHAHAAAAHA HAHA HA... *(Realizes Maddie's not laughing)* Ha.

MADDIE You're weird, Logan. So how do you think you did?

LOGAN Oh, I know I did well. I was using my LUCKY PENCIL!

Logan hoists up his Lucky Pencil.

MADDIE Whoa, a Lucky Pencil? I could use one of those! How do you know it's lucky?

LOGAN Because it says right here: "Lucky Pencil." See?

MADDIE Cool!

LOGAN Yeah! I hope it worked, because we only have a couple months of school left, and you know what that means!

MADDIE Sure -- the teachers start smiling a lot!

LOGAN Well, yeah. But it also means it's almost time for the school to announce the Student of the Year!

Logan strikes a pose. FANFARE plays.

LOGAN I came so close to getting it last year, but I lost to that kid [*INSERT NAME HERE*]. But he moved to Albuquerque! So this year? I really think I could get it!

MADDIE Yeah, I'm sure you'll get it! You're really smart, Logan.

LOGAN Thanks! You're smart too! Ooh! Here comes Ms. Stroopwaffel with our tests!

MS. S ...and here is a test for Miss Maddie Madison... and one for Mr. Logan Berry!

Maddie and Logan get their tests back. Logan does a funny victory dance, as Maddie crumples defeatedly.

LOGAN All right! I got an A+! What grade did you get, Maddie? ...Maddie?

MADDIE I... got an F.

Logan stops dancing and looks at Maddie's test incredulously.

LOGAN An F?! Are you sure?

MADDIE Yes, I'm sure! That's what it says right here in red pen. (*Dramatically*) F! ~~F!~~ F as in "fail!" F as in "flunk!" F as in "I'm a big PHONY!"

Logan starts to say something, looks at the audience, shrugs it off.

MADDIE Ugh, I'm going to have to tell my parents about this. What are they gonna say?

LOGAN (*Trying to be helpful*) I don't know. It was only one test...

MADDIE Yeah, but I got a D on the last one! And now I got an F! (*Maddie sticks her face right up against Logan's.*) An F, Logan! What if they're mad at me? Or what if my mom does that thing where she says, "I'm not mad, I'm *disappointed.*" That's like the worst thing

ever! (*Gasp!*) Or what if they don't let me go to jump rope camp this summer?!

LOGAN Aww, I'm sorry you got a bad grade. I know you feel bad. But you know, we have another test next week. That'll be a whole new chance to get a good grade!

MADDIE Another... test?

LOGAN Yeah, and I'm going to make sure I study really, really, really, really, super-duper-looper-mooper hard for it! I bet we both do great!

MADDIE Yeah... Great.

Lights change and "Be a Star" intro starts.

MADDIE I just HAVE to do well on the test next week -- but look what happened this time!

SONG: "BE A STAR"

MADDIE I really tried
Still flunked my test
I did my best just like I should
Working that hard
Sure didn't do me any good
Another shot
Another chance
I could advance my grade in class
But I could try again and maybe still not pass
Our teachers tell us we should touch the sky
But what if my arms can't reach that high?

I want to shine
I want to soar
I want to be more than I have been
I want to cruise
I want to climb
I want my someday to begin
I want to cut the cords that anchor me and sail
I want to be a star...but what if I fail?

My dad's a cook
My mom's a clerk
They have to work for what they earn
All that they ask is that we work hard in return
What if I give it my best for them
But it's still less than the rest of them?

I want to shine
I want to soar
I want to be more than I have been
I want to cruise
I want to climb
I want my someday to begin
I want to cut the cords that anchor me and sail
I want to be a star...but what if I fail?

Sometimes a sparkle that sits on your hand is only a speck of sand
But sometimes that twinkle you see from afar is really a shooting star

The bell RINGS, bringing Maddie back to reality.

MS. S All right, kiddos, I'll see you tomorrow morning, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed! Don't forget we have a special guest coming – Kayla's dad is going to tell us all about his job as a dentist for the hippopotamuses at the zoo!

MacKenzie pops in from the back of the classroom.

MACKENZIE Did somebody say zoo?

MS. S Where did you come from?! There are no monkeys in this class!

She pulls MacKenzie off the puppeteer's hand and carries him offstage.

MACKENZIE I'm a chimpanzee...!

Logan and Maddie watch MacKenzie leave. Logan chuckles to himself, but Maddie is still lost in thought. Logan stands up and starts to leave the classroom, not realizing that Maddie is still sitting at her desk.

LOGAN Well, I gotta go! My mom will be picking me up soon. What are you doing after school today?

Logan turns around and sees Maddie.

LOGAN Maddie... What's wrong? Are you still feeling bad about that test?

MADDIE I just don't get it! It seems like I used to be able to just remember everything we learned in class, but now... now it's not so easy.

LOGAN Yeah, it's definitely harder than those tests we used to have in kindergarten where we just had to circle words that start with R. But hey, I'm going to start studying tomorrow for next week's test. You could join me!

MADDIE (without much enthusiasm) Yeah. Yeah, sure.

LOGAN Anyway, I'll see you tomorrow. Don't let that bad grade bother you too much!

MADDIE Right. Thanks, Logan.

Logan exits. Maddie stays behind, lost in thought.

"BE A STAR" continues.

MADDIE I want to shine
I want to soar
I want to be more than I have been
I want to cruise
I want to climb
I want my someday to begin
I want to cut the cords that anchor me and sail
I want to be a star...I need to be a star...Won't somebody help me be a star...so I will not fail?

FADEOUT.

SCENE 4

After school. Maddie is sitting in the park with a textbook and a water bottle.

MADDIE Why start studying tomorrow when I can get a head start today?
I'm going to concentrate on this book, and I will not leave this picnic table until I know everything I need to know for the test.

FRED enters and spots Maddie.

FRED Maddie!

MADDIE Can't talk. Studying.

FRED Oh, but Maddie, you have to hear what happened to me today!

MADDIE (lost in the book, ignoring Fred) Okay...

Fred goes on, mistaking Maddie's "Okay" as a sign that she wants him to continue. Throughout the following scene, Maddie is talking to herself while Fred misconstrues her remarks as responses to his story.

FRED Check this out -- My class went on a field trip today to the aquarium!

MADDIE Now where is that...?

FRED I dunno, but we had to take a bus to get there. But on the way there, the bus got a flat tire. No, wait – *two flat tires!*

Maddie spills her water.

MADDIE Oh no!

FRED I KNOW, right? And we were stuck on the expressway for an hour! There were cars ZOOMING by on this side, and cars ZOOMING by on that side, and we were trapped! So they ended up sending another bus... No, no, no, no, no -- I mean, an *airplane* to pick us up!

MADDIE Is that right...?

FRED Yes! A big double-decker one! And then when we got to the aquarium, there was a... a real shark! I think it was a Great White!

MADDIE (*concentrating*) Okay... okay...

FRED It was more than okay! It was awesome! And it was feeding time, so I asked if I could help feed it, and they let me! I even got to pet it! And they said next time I could go swimming with it!

MADDIE All right, I understand that part now...

FRED Great! But then...then... uh... one of the penguins stole a key from one of the workers! Yeah! And all the penguins escaped! So they asked me to help get them back! So I rounded up all the penguins and marched them back to their home. In case you ever need to talk to a penguin, this is how you say hello: "AWWWWW-WA! AWWWWW-WA!"

MADDIE I definitely have to remember that...

FRED How could you forget?! So then it turned out the mayor heard about it, so he showed up, and gave me a key to the city for being such a hero!

MADDIE (*checking the back of the book*) Is this the answer key...?

FRED No, just a regular kind of key. And then they sent a different bus to take us back to school, but then that bus got TWO MORE flat tires!

Maddie spills again.

MADDIE Aww, not again!

FRED I KNOW! It was a crazy day, all right. So what did your class do today, Maddie? (*No response.*) Maddie?

MADDIE What? Oh, hi, Fred! When did you get here?

Fred does a "Can you believe this?" take to the audience. The piano plays a musical sting.

FRED Oh hey, there's José. Hey, José! You gotta hear about what happened to me today! I fought a shark! And I met Obama!

Fred runs out.

GINA enters and spots Maddie.

GINA Hey, Maddie! What's up?

MADDIE (*without much enthusiasm*) Oh, hi, Gina. What's up?

GINA Well, I just came from taekwondo class, and now I'm on my way to soccer practice, and then I have glockenspiel lessons, and horseback riding, and after that I'm going over to my friend Jasmine's house to play video games, and then I'm going to go home for dinner, except my mom is making tuna casserole and I *hate* tuna casserole so I'm going to feed it to the dog when my mom's not looking. Her name is Strawberry.

MADDIE Your mom's name is Strawberry?

GINA No, silly! My dog.

MADDIE Oh. Right.

GINA So what are you doing here?

MADDIE Oh, I'm studying for the test next week.

GINA Ha ha ha! Good one, Maddie. No, seriously – what are you doing?

MADDIE I am serious. (*pause*) Hey Gina, what grade did you get on the test we got back today?

GINA (*making a big production out of it*) I... got... an... Aaaaaaa minus!

MADDIE Wow. You're really good at taking tests, huh?

GINA (*coyly*) You could say that...

MADDIE Gosh, Gina, I don't know how you have time to study when you're so busy with all that other stuff. Soccer, glockenspiel, Qui-Gon Jinn...

GINA Taekwondo.

MADDIE Whatever. So have you already started studying for the test next week?

GINA Nope.

MADDIE Oh. Will you start studying over the weekend?

GINA Double-nope!

MADDIE So you must start studying the night before and try to cram it all in!

GINA Nope-ity nope nope nope!

MADDIE Then how do you do it? How do you get good grades?

GINA I do it the easy way! I use one of these!

Gina flashes Maddie her cheat sheet. It's labeled "CHEAT SHEET" in large letters at the top.

MADDIE Gina, is that a cheat sheet?!

GINA *(To the audience)* Gee, you can't get anything past this one, can you?

MADDIE What are you doing with a *CHEAT SHEET?!?*

GINA Shhhh! Keep it quiet, will ya? I think they heard you all the way over in New Jersey! Yes, this is my little helper that I'm going to use on the test next week. See, I wrote down all the stuff we've been learning in class on this little piece of paper, and I just bring it in and peek at it during the test!

MADDIE You mean *that's* how you got an A this time?

GINA You bet your sparkly pink lip gloss it is! And that's how I got an A last time, and the time before that, and the time before that! But not the time before that, because I left it in my other pants. But I used one the time before that, and the time before that, and—

MADDIE I get it, Gina.

GINA Oh. You know, Maddie, I always make a backup copy in case Strawberry eats one... I'd be happy to let you have this one, 'cause you're my friend.

MADDIE I don't know, Gina. I don't think I should cheat. I should really get back to studying now.

GINA But Maddie, you're at the park! You got the monkey bars over there, the slide over there – this is a place to play, not to work!

MADDIE Yeah, but...

GINA Answer me this -- Which is more fun: Studying for a test or playing with your toys?

MADDIE Well... playing with my toys.

GINA Uh-huh. And which is more fun: Studying for a test or... jumping rope?

MADDIE Um... Jumping rope.

GINA And which is more fun: Studying for a test or going over to the playground there and going on the swings and swinging really high and going "WHEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!"

MADDIE Going on the swings is more fun.

GINA And going "WHEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!"

MADDIE And going "whee."

GINA No, no -- "WHEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!" Like that.

MADDIE "WHEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!"

GINA That's better. So here – take it!

Gina holds out the cheat sheet. Maddie eyes it suspiciously.

MADDIE No thanks, Gina. All that does sound fun. But there are some things that are more important than other things.

GINA You bet your grape-flavored toothpaste there are!

SONG: "WHY WORK HARD WHEN YOU CAN HARDLY WORK"

GINA There are lights flashing
Cars zooming

Fountains splashing
Business booming
I love the way my senses go berserk
It would be such a pity for you to miss out on this city
So, why work hard, when you could hardly work?

*There's more than just the busy, buzzing streets, Maddie--don't forget
the parks!*

There are boats rowing
Climbers hiking
Streams flowing
Bikers biking
Discover nooks where nature tends to lurk
It would be such a crime to be cooped up all that time
So, why work hard, when you could hardly work?

Come on, Maddie...chin up!

Life's too short for sadness
There is just one you, one me
So, let's set you up for gladness
To see all you can see
Explore each of life's pleasures—every quirk
Why work hard, when you could hardly work?

Stick with me, Maddie, and the world's your oyster!

MADDIE

But I don't even like oysters!

GINA

There are kites soaring
Jump ropes swinging
Teams scoring
Slingshots slinging
When you're not working playtime is a perk
It would be such a shame if you missed out on a game
So, why work hard, when you could hardly work?

MADDIE

It would be the greatest prize
If I can fake it just a smidge
There'll be twinkles in my eyes
When my work makes it on the fridge!
(That's right!) The freezer or the fridge!

GINA

It will turn that frown around into a smirk
So, instead of trying to figure out what all this is, please
Close the books and go outside and throw some Frisbees

GINA Why work hard, when you--

Gina has a brief tap-dancing interlude.

GINA&MADDIE Could hardly work!
Could hardly work!
Could hardly work!

GINA Why work hard?

MADDIE When you could hardly work!

Lights go down on Maddie and Gina as MacKenzie enters and speaks to the audience.

MACKENZIE Hmm... Gina sure made all that stuff sound good, didn't she? Games and toys and playgrounds -- why, it all sounds like more fun than a barrel of people! But I'm not too sure about all that cheat sheet stuff. I'm proud to say I got my degree in Advanced Banana-Peeling from American Ape Academy & University... We called it "A-A-A-U!" for short. But would it have counted if I had passed all my classes by cheating? What do you think? Is it okay to use a cheat sheet during a test? Let's check back in with Maddie...

SCENE 5

At an outdoor location. Maddie is jumping rope with Gina and Fred holding the jump rope. Maddie's puppeteer should jump the rope with Maddie on one hand, while the other puppeteers swing the rope with one hand with the characters on their other hand.

MADDIE Cinderella, dressed in yella, went upstairs to kiss her fella. By mistake she kissed a snake, how many doctors did it take? One, two, three, four, five, six...

Logan enters.

LOGAN Hi, Maddie!

MADDIE Hi, Logan! Um... Nine... I mean, eight... oh, nevermind, you made me lose count!

Maddie stops jumping rope.

LOGAN Oops. Sorry.

MADDIE That's okay.

GINA Hey, guys, I have to go to tricycle repair class. I'll see you later.

MADDIE/FRED Bye!

Gina exits.

LOGAN Huh. I thought she had tricycle repair class on Thursdays.

MADDIE No, she has clog dancing on Thursdays.

FRED No, no, no – Clog dancing is on Mondays. Pig Latin Club is on Thursdays!

LOGAN I don't know how that girl does all those after-school activities and *still* manages to get good grades in school.

MADDIE Yeah... I... I... don't know.

FRED Hey, guys, I should get going too. I'm teaching my cat to talk! He can *almost* say, "Please pass the toilet paper!"

LOGAN Wow, your cat can use the toilet?

FRED Are you crazy?! Of course not! He's a cat!

Fred exits, shaking his head incredulously.

LOGAN So Maddie, are you all ready for that test next week?

MADDIE Uh... yeah! Oh, yeah! I'll be so ready that Ms. Stroopwaffel will not even believe how ready I am!

Maddie wanders over to the hopscotch court and begins playing. The puppeteer, naturally, is doing the hopping.

LOGAN Do you need any help studying? I thought maybe you could come over and we could study together...

MADDIE You know what? I'm all set. But I could come over and play!

LOGAN Oh. Okay... I just thought because you were so worried about that bad grade that you would be spending more time—

MADDIE Nah. I am as cool as a moose in a red caboose!

LOGAN Oh. Well, that's great. Say, Maddie, do you have any more of that tater tot-flavored bubble gum you gave me last week?

MADDIE Sorry, I gave Fred the last of that to hold his book report together. But I have some taco-flavored in my backpack if you want it!

LOGAN Even better!

MADDIE Yeah, it's in the front pocket... Help yourself!

Logan goes to look for the gum in Maddie's backpack. As he rummages around, MacKenzie enters and looks on.

MACKENZIE Uh-oh! I don't know about you, but I have a bad feeling about this! I think Logan's going to find something in Maddie's backpack... but it won't be taco-flavored! Do you know what I'm talking about?

Logan finds the cheat sheet. He hides it behind his back and walks back over to Maddie.

LOGAN Hey, Maddie, what's your middle name?

MADDIE Lillian. Why?

LOGAN 'Cause I'm gonna call you by all three names like my parents do when I'm in trouble.

MADDIE What?

LOGAN MADDIE LILLIAN MADISON! Is this a cheat sheet?

MADDIE Oh! That. That's a... I mean, it's not a... well, it *is*, but you weren't supposed to... I mean, I didn't mean... but then you... 'cause I... (*Gulp.*) Yeah. It's a cheat sheet.

LOGAN Are you going to cheat on the test?

MADDIE No! I don't know. Maybe? It's just that it's going to be a hard test, and I did so bad last time!

LOGAN So you're going to cheat?

MADDIE I... really wanted to get a good grade.

LOGAN Come on, Maddie. Look at it this way: If you use a cheat sheet, you may get the right answers, but it's not because you really know them. *You're* not getting a good grade. The cheat sheet is getting the good grade.

MADDIE But studying is so much work! And why work hard when you could hardly work?

LOGAN Because cheating is the same as lying. That's not the way to take a test. Look, I know it's hard, but hey, you're not in this alone.

MADDIE I'm not?

LOGAN Of course not! Did you forget? You have a friend who is really good at studying. And he just might be willing to help you out.

MADDIE You mean you.

Intro to "Let's Figure It Out Together" begins.

LOGAN Well, I don't mean George Washington! Just listen, Maddie...

SONG: "LET'S FIGURE IT OUT TOGETHER"

LOGAN Sometimes you feel like your foot is stuck
In a piece of bubble gum
Sometimes you want to do great things
But feel smaller than a crumb

When your problems are seeming
Too heavy to handle
You're lost in a cave and you don't have a candle
And trying to work it all out on your own
Remember, you're not alone

We can figure it out together
Two heads are better than one
In sunny or cloudy gray weather
We won't stop until we are done
The answer to problems is never lying
But finding brand new ways of trying
So, let's figure it out together
It'll be fun!

Sometimes you feel like you need to scream
But you can't even hear your voice
Sometimes it seems like you're swimming upstream
And you don't even have a choice

When you feel like you're walking around in a daze
You're going in circles inside of a maze
And worried your troubles will not ever end
Remember that you have a friend

We can figure it out together
You're gonna get through it I know
You'll find yourself on dry land whether or not
You are certain of which way to go
Don't be deceitful; hold onto your pride!
Be honest--and feel so much better inside

Let's figure it out together
We'll take it slow

The moment that you've dared to let yourself cheat
You have really declared you've accepted defeat
So throw out this sheet
'Cause I'm here 'til your battle's complete

During the bridge, Logan hands the cheat sheet to Maddie, who crumples it up and tosses it aside near her backpack.

MADDIE We can figure it out together

LOGAN We'll fix it, I guarantee
We'll be just like birds of a feather

MADDIE Flying towards the same great big tree

LOGAN Flush out those fears you've been frettin' about
Take one deep breath in, and another one out
We can figure it out together

MADDIE We can figure it out together

LOGAN&MADDIE So, let's figure it out together
You and me!

End of song.

MADDIE I guess you're right, Logan – I should do it the honest way. Can you really help me?

LOGAN Sure! And you know what? Here... I want you to have this.

Logan hands Maddie his lucky pencil.

MADDIE Wow, really? But this is *your* Lucky Pencil!

LOGAN Yeah, well... You know what they say – Sharing Is Caring! At least, that's what it says on that poster in Ms. Stroopwaffel's class with the astronauts sharing the freeze-dried beef jerky.

MADDIE Yeah. Thanks, buddy! Okay, Logan. You talked me into it! I'm not going to cheat! I'm going to study with my pal Logan, and I'm going to get a good grade on that test! Let's go to your house right now!

Maddie starts to exit stage right.

LOGAN Uh, Maddie? My house is this way!

MADDIE Oh yeah.

LOGAN And you're forgetting your backpack!

MADDIE I knew that. All right! Why don't I get my stuff together, and I'll catch up with you in a minute?

LOGAN Okay! I'll go on ahead -- and crack open a bottle of Kool-Aid!

MADDIE Okay, I'm right behind ya!

Logan exits stage left. Maddie goes over to her backpack to put things away. She spots the cheat sheet where Logan left it. She looks at the lucky pencil in her hand, then glances back at the cheat sheet, shakes her head, and walks away from the cheat sheet. After several steps, she turns to look back at it, but shakes her head again and exits the stage. A moment later, she returns and walks back to the cheat sheet. She looks offstage in the direction Logan went, then picks up the cheat sheet and stares at it. Music swells.

MADDIE (sings) I want to be a star... but what if I fail?

BLACKOUT.

END OF ACT 1.

ACT 2

SCENE 6

MacKenzie comes out to talk to the audience again.

MACKENZIE So as you can see, Maddie has a dilemma on her hands. Personally, I'd much rather have that orange cheesy powder from a bag of Cheetos on *my* hands! Man, I love that stuff. It's finger-lickin' good! Of course, it's kind of gross when you have furry fingers like me, but anyway. So Maddie has a choice to make – should she use the Cheeto sheet—I mean cheat sheet—to get a good grade without working for it, or should she follow Logan's advice, study really hard, and try to get a good grade on her own? What do you think? What would YOU do?

Of course, I can think of another reason cheating is not a good idea. Let's say you don't know all the answers on your test, so you decide to look at the person sitting next to you. But hold on there just one flea-pickin' minute! You have no idea how well they're going to do on the test! For example, take Maddie's friend Fred. His class is having a test today too... but I don't think you want to copy his paper!

FRED I'm not worried about this test. It's gonna be mad easy!

SONG: "ISN'T THAT RIGHT?"

FRED The moon is made of string cheese, isn't that right?!
Spaghetti grows on apple trees, isn't that right?!
A plane flies in slow motion, all the birds live in the ocean,
You can cure a cold with suntan lotion, isn't that right?!

Twelve comes before zero, isn't that right?!
A plumber is a superhero, isn't that right?!
Snow White is a baseball player, Goldilocks—a dragon slayer,
SpongeBob is this city's mayor, isn't that right?!

If you need a tutor, just call and get in touch
This brain's like a computer 'cause I know so much
This test is feeling breezy; you can see I've got great knowledge
These questions are so easy they should skip me straight to...
high school

A puppy dog goes "neiiiiigh," isn't that right?!
Cat starts with the letter K, isn't that right?!
Ketchup is a great shampoo, a squirrel's a baby kangaroo
And two plus two is twenty-two, isn't that right?!

If you're not as clever, please don't take it to heart
I don't think there has ever been a kid this smart
And when you check this paper, I'm confident that you'll
See that I am qualified to run...this school!

MACKENZIE See what I mean? So I think we can all agree that cheating is a bad idea, no matter how you do it. But what about Maddie? What did she do? We'll get back to her in just two shakes of a baboon's tail. But right now, folks, I'd like to give you a special treat – I'm gonna show you all my stand-up comedy act! You're gonna love it! I tell knock-knock jokes, I do impressions—

MADDIE *(from offstage)* MACKENZIE!

MACKENZIE Aw, come on! It'll only take five or ten... or thirty or forty minutes!

A large vaudeville-style cane pulls MacKenzie off stage.

SCENE 7

In the classroom on the day of the test. Maddie glances nervously around.

LOGAN How's it going, Maddie?

MADDIE *(too loudly, voice cracking)* GREAT! Ahem. Great. I'm great.

LOGAN Good! Did you use those study tips we talked about?

MADDIE Oh yeah... Sure. Sure, they really helped.

LOGAN Yeah? Which one helped the most?

MADDIE Umm... The one about... memorizing?

LOGAN Yeah, that one has really helped me too! Well, I'm all ready to get an A-plus! Boy, if I could get Student of the Year...

FANFARE again.

MS. S Okay, kiddoes, I hope you brought your thinking caps, your thinking socks, and your thinking underpants, because it's test time! Get out your pencils and put your books away.

LOGAN Good luck, Maddie!

MADDIE Yeah... Good luck.

The kids get their tests. Logan becomes engrossed in his. Maddie checks to make sure no one can see, then pulls out her cheat sheet.

MacKenzie enters, covering his eyes. He uncovers them as he addresses the audience.

MACKENZIE Oh, dear. Oh, golly. Oh, jeeppers. I couldn't bear to look! Did Maddie use the cheat sheet? She did? That's what I was afraid of! Well, what do you think is going to happen? Let's find out!

FADEOUT.

SCENE 8

MONTAGE: A series of oversized test papers bearing A grades float across the stage. MacKenzie reacts as they pass by. Maddie may be visible onstage with a cheat sheet.

MACKENZIE Hey, that's an A. Maddie got an A by cheating?! Well, I just hope she doesn't do it again... Uh-oh, she did it again! And again! Say it ain't so, Maddie! Say it ain't so!

MacKenzie exits.

One month later. In the hallway after class. Logan is hanging around. Maddie and Gina enter.

LOGAN Hi, Maddie!

MADDIE Hi, Logan!

LOGAN Hey, I saw you got another A today.

GINA You bet your glow-in-the-dark retainer she did!

LOGAN So you've been getting a lot of really good grades the past few weeks, huh?

MADDIE Yeah. Yeah, I guess I have.

LOGAN That's great! And we haven't even been studying together. See? All you needed was a little bit of help to give you a jump start!

MADDIE Yeah... yeah, right.

GINA Well, that and her little helper.

LOGAN What little helper?

MADDIE NOTHING! I mean... you know... a complete breakfast before school! It's the most important meal of the day! Right, Gina?

GINA If you say so...

MADDIE But hey – you've been getting good grades too!

LOGAN Yeah! I really think I have a shot at getting Student of the Year.

FANFARE again.

LOGAN Hey, isn't today the day they announce that?

PRINCIPAL *(offstage voice from the PA system)* Attention, students. Today is the day we announce Student of the Year.

LOGAN *(looking up at a loudspeaker)* When?

PRINCIPAL Right now. (Ahem) Teachers, students, school staff, and lunch ladies, I am extremely proud to announce that this year's Student of the Year...

The principal takes a long pause.

PRINCIPAL ...is...

Another long pause.

KIDS Who? WHO?!

PRINCIPAL ...Maddie Madison!

Maddie and Logan react accordingly.

PRINCIPAL Maddie has made tremendous improvements in her academic endeavors in the last several weeks of this school year, and we are immensely pleased with her progress. Ms. Madison will be presented with an award at the end-of-year festivities next week. Congratulations to Ms. Madison! (*pause*) Okay, that's that. Now how do I turn this thing off? Is it still on? Hello? (*Click*)

GINA Hey, that's great! Congratulations, Maddie!

MADDIE (*not sure how to respond*) Thanks...

GINA Well, I have to split. I'm on my way to ventriloquism class. (*without moving her lips*) I'm getting really good at it!

Gina exits.

LOGAN Wow. Congratulations, Maddie!

MADDIE Thanks, Logan. I'm... sorry you didn't get it. I know you wanted it.

LOGAN Oh, that's okay. There's always next year, right? And anyway, you deserve it. A lot more than [*INSERT NAME HERE*] from Albuquerque, anyway! You've been working really hard! So... I'll see you around, huh?

MADDIE Yeah. See ya.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 9

Maddie's house. The day of the awards ceremony.

MADDIE Gee, I'm really tired. Maybe I'll just take a little nap for a few minutes before the awards ceremony... just... a little... nap...

Maddie falls asleep, snoring comically. And now we begin the NIGHTMARE SEQUENCE. Haunting music plays. Maddie floats out of her bed.

CRAZY LIGHTING happens.

PRINCIPAL (offstage) And now presenting, this year's Student of the Year: Our very own... Ms. Maddie Madison!

Logan enters.

MADDIE Logan?!

LOGAN Cheater cheater, pumpkin eater!

MADDIE But I didn't want to cheat! I just wanted a good grade!

LOGAN Cheater cheater, pumpkin eater!

MADDIE I didn't mean to hurt anyone! I'm sorry!

Gina enters.

MADDIE Gina?!

GINA Why work hard when you could hardly work? Hardly work?

Fred enters.

FRED Maddie's good at testing, isn't that right? (etc.)

All the characters repeat their lines over each other. Maddie freaks out. She wakes up with a shout, and Fred, Gina, and Logan immediately exit.

MADDIE What a nightmare! It's true – I *am* a cheater! What am I going to do? Mom and Dad will be taking me to the awards ceremony any minute!

SONG: "BETTER WAY TO SHINE"

MADDIE I could hold that trophy high
And leave things just as they are
I could swallow does this lie
And finally be a star
But I know it won't be fair
For them to watch me stand up there
I can't bear the shame and guilt as they combine
Is there a better way to shine?

I could take all of the glory
And stay planted in the spotlight
Be the hero of their story
Even though I know it's not right

Should I just put on this show?
Keep on going with the flow--
Even though all this regret could be a sign
That there's a better way to shine?

This cheating is eating away at my dreams
The lying's untying the threads from their seams
If I hold it together I'll soon fall apart
It's time for a brand new start

And maybe my path will not be a straight line
But when I succeed, that success will be mine
I believe I'll achieve every part of my design
I'll find a better way to...shine

I'll be fine!

FADEOUT.

SCENE 10

The awards ceremony. There's a spotlight on the stage.

SOUND EFFECT: APPLAUSE

PRINCIPAL *(offstage)* Thank you, Jake, for that wonderful acceptance speech, and again, congratulations for earning the award for Best Haircut. And now it is with great pleasure that I present the most prestigious award of the evening to a very special young lady. Ladies and gentlemen, this year's Student of the Year, Maddie Madison!

SOUND EFFECT: APPLAUSE

Maddie enters the spotlight.

MADDIE Hi. So, I'm the Student of the Year. I should say thank you for this great honor... but I can't. Because the truth is... I don't deserve it. I'm not the Student of the Year. I didn't pass all those tests by working and studying and learning what I was supposed to learn. I did it by cheating. I didn't think I should at first, but then everybody was so proud of me... but I was cheating, which is the same as lying to all of you. And my friend Logan really, really wanted to be Student of the Year, but he didn't get it because of me! And now I feel all icky about it. I'm sorry, everyone. I really want to get all my grades the right way – by earning them. I guess I can't do it alone. Mom? Dad? Ms. Stroopwaffel? Logan? Can you help me?

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 11

In the hall at school, the following afternoon. Gina approaches Maddie.

GINA Hi, Maddie.

MADDIE Hi, Gina.

GINA I saw you give that little speech at the award ceremony last night. That was really brave of you, to say all that in front of all those people.

MADDIE Thanks. I'm just glad they gave Student of the Year to Logan. He's the one who *really* deserved it.

GINA But I thought you wanted to be a star?

MADDIE I still do! But I realized I had to do it the right way. I talked to Ms. Stroopwaffel, and she was proud of me for telling the truth.

GINA Really?

MADDIE Really! She said it takes courage to do the right thing, to try to fix your mistakes.

GINA Wow. So you're not even going to get a punishment?

MADDIE Not exactly. I have to come in for summer school to make up for it.

GINA Isn't that going to mess up your whole summer?

MADDIE Well, I have to miss jump rope camp. I really wanted to go, too. But at least I'll still have plenty of time to play. After all, I'm a kid – it's not like I have to pay the bills, or rotate my tires, or any of that grown-up stuff!

GINA I guess you're right. But didn't the cheat sheet make everything easier?

MADDIE Easier? Sure. But using the cheat sheet made me feel so bad about myself! I knew it was wrong, but I kept doing it, and I kept feeling worse! I feel so much better now that I'm going to be *earning* my good grades!

GINA But does it really feel better than the easy way?

MADDIE You bet your Pig Latin Club embership-may it does! And Logan said we can be study-buddies next year, so I can make sure I'm ready to take all my tests the right way!

GINA Good for you. Too bad that would *never* work for me.

MADDIE Are you kidding? Sure it would!

GINA But I'm no good at studying! I could never get those good grades on my own!

MADDIE But Gina... you don't have to do it on your own!

SONG: "WE CAN FIGURE IT OUT TOGETHER (REPRISE)"

Other characters enter as their lines of the song come up.

MADDIE We can figure it out together
Your friends all believe in you

LOGAN You've got passion that no one can tether

FRED There's no limit to what you can do

MADDIE It's never too late to make a change
Just lay out your options and rearrange
We can figure it out together

GINA We can figure it out together

MADDIE So let's figure it out together...

LOGAN
FRED

MADDIE I did

MADDIE So can you

LOGAN
FRED

Maddie hands Gina the Lucky Pencil.

Lights go down. Everyone takes their places for...

SCENE 12

SONG: "CLOSING SONG"

ALL We're the puppet pals from Pennydog Lane

MADDIE Our problems are gone—

LOGAN --but our friendships remain

GINA If you have troubles too, use your heart, use your mind

FRED Use your words and your wisdom and soon you will find

ALL That the pals are behind you to help you to grow
But now it is time to go
Too bad that we have to go
So sad that we have to go
We promise that we will go
So watch us as we all go

MACKENZIE But first watch me--!

ALL MacKenzie!?

MACKENZIE Come on—I stole the show!

MacKenzie holds up a sign reading "THE END."

BLACKOUT.