



## TAKE THAT, SUCKER!

BY

JOEL TRINIDAD

**WHY I LIKE IT:** *Drama Editor EZRA NEIGHBORS writes... Kids just say the darnedest of things, don't they? From imaginary friends to epic battles of the playground, a child's ability to*

*super-impose reality is a trait lost upon us as we age. Life is fickle, ruthless, and beats the crap out of us to the point we call out “Uncle” and hang up our imagination caps. Finding connections back to that innate inner-childlike sense of wonder, I believe, is at the core of any great art. Joel Trinidad, uses the wonder of “what if?” to craft a delightfully funny scene of two kids being scolded in the principal’s office. As discovery unravels from the interrogation of the principal, a sublime scene of humor ensues. Take That, Sucker! will make you want to take a second bite.*

*Five Stars*

## **Take That, Sucker!**

### Cast of Characters

**THE PRINCIPAL**, a stern, middle-aged man

**HERBIE**, a goody two-shoes

**CHARLIE**, a hotheaded eighth-grader

**MAX**, Charlie’s conscientious best friend

*The PRINCIPAL sits at his desk with HERBIE standing smugly beside him. There is a knock on the door.*

PRINCIPAL: Come in.

*CHARLIE and MAX enter, looking very guilty.*

CHARLIE: Sir.

PRINCIPAL: So. Charlie. Max. Do you know why you’re here?

CHARLIE: Yes, sir.

MAX: Yes, sir.

PRINCIPAL: Professor Kostova could have been seriously hurt.

HERBIE: Or worse.

PRINCIPAL: That’s right. Allergies can be very deadly. You’re lucky Herbie here saw what you did and reported it to me before any damage could be done.

HERBIE:           Just happy to help, sir.

PRINCIPAL:      Now I want to know... why. Why would you, why would *anyone*, do something like that?

*A beat. CHARLIE and MAX look at each other.*

PRINCIPAL:      Listen to me. Whether or not you knew about Professor Kostova's allergies, you are both in a lot of trouble. But I'm telling you, it's going to be worse for both of you if you say nothing. I'm giving you the chance, right now, to tell me your side of the story. Tell me why you did it.

*CHARLIE shakes her head almost imperceptibly, warning MAX not to speak.*

MAX:             Principal Flynn, we did it because we believe Professor Kostova—

CHARLIE:        It was just a prank, sir. A stupid prank.

MAX:             No, sir. We had a very good reason for—

CHARLIE:        Max!

MAX:             [NO BREAK] — doing what we did.

CHARLIE:        Shut up, Max!

MAX:             No! He has to know!

CHARLIE:        He'll never believe us!

*MAX and CHARLIE begin talking at the same time.*

MAX:             Charlie, we're already in trouble! We should just tell him the truth!

CHARLIE:        What makes you think he'll believe us? We're just going to sound crazy!

PRINCIPAL:      [INTERRUPTING] That's enough. Both of you. Now. One of you was about to tell me something.

Herbie:          [HELPFULLY] It was Max, Principal Flynn.

PRINCIPAL:      Yes. Max. Do you have anything to tell me?

CHARLIE:        Sir, I can explain everything.

PRINCIPAL: Be quiet, Charlie. I'll deal with you in a moment. Now, Max...

MAX: [NERVOUSLY] Yes, sir?

PRINCIPAL: Please tell me why. Why did you two steal Professor Kostova's sandwich and stuff it with half a pound of raw, chopped garlic?

*A beat. MAX looks at CHARLIE, who shakes her head again, warningly.*

MAX: Because we believe... Because we *know* that Vladimir Kostova is...

PRINCIPAL: Yes?

MAX: A... [MUMBLED] vmper.

PRINCIPAL: I'm sorry, what was that?

MAX: [SOFTLY] A vampire.

PRINCIPAL: A what?

CHARLIE: A vampire, all right? Professor Kostova is a vampire!

*A long beat.*

HERBIE: [WITH GLEEFUL MALICE] Are you two in trouble...

PRINCIPAL: A vampire?

M + C: Yes, sir.

PRINCIPAL: A vampire.

M + C: Yes, sir.

PRINCIPAL: A... [MAKES A VAMPIRE FACE] vampire.

HERBIE: I think they're mocking you, sir.

MAX: Principal Flynn, please. I know it sounds crazy, but it's true.

CHARLIE: We have proof!

PRINCIPAL: Oh, you have proof? You have proof that your history teacher, Professor Vladimir Kostova, is a monstrous, bloodsucking fiend from hell?

MAX: Not from hell. From Central Europe.

PRINCIPAL: Look, I'm not going to stand here and—

CHARLIE: Sir, please listen to us. Please. You asked us why we did what we did. Please give us a chance to answer.

*A beat. The PRINCIPAL takes a deep breath.*

PRINCIPAL: All right. Fine. I did say I would let you tell your side of the story. You have five minutes.

CHARLIE: First of all, he wears dark glasses all the time.

PRINCIPAL: So?

CHARLIE: Vampires can't stand sunlight!

MAX: You see, most people don't realize that vampires can actually go around in the daytime, but not at full power. The dark glasses make things more bearable.

*A beat.*

PRINCIPAL: You'd better have a lot more than that.

CHARLIE: Okay. You know that time last month, when those two third graders disappeared?

PRINCIPAL: That is a very serious matter. You shouldn't be making fun of—

CHARLIE: Professor Kostova joined the faculty last month.

MAX: He's the only one among the staff and the students who has no alibi for that day.

CHARLIE: No alibi. Nothing. Not even for the rats.

PRINCIPAL: Rats? What rats?

CHARLIE: Two weeks after the incident, Mr. Mercado reported that all the rats in the science lab just suddenly disappeared. There were dozens of them in there. And the night before, Professor Kostova was seen leaving the science lab... *chewing* something.

PRINCIPAL: So?

MAX: He ate them. He ate the rats.

PRINCIPAL: What?!

CHARLIE: Don't you see? There were dozens of policemen and reporters all over the place, so he had to lie low. He couldn't snatch another kid just yet. He had to make do with what he could find.

MAX: Well, it's also possible that he just likes rats.

CHARLIE: And not just rats. Stray cats, a goldfish from the library. Teddy Sison's pet hamster.

MAX: We've seen the bones.

*A beat.*

PRINCIPAL: This is it? This is your case? It's ridiculous. Professor Kostova was seen chewing, so he's a vampire? So what if he was chewing? It proves nothing. Vampires, rats! I can't believe I let you waste my time like this.

HERBIE: Well, I think it's just outrageous, sir.

CHARLIE: Of course you'd say that! You're his familiar!

PRINCIPAL: You be quiet! I will not listen to any more of this— [BEAT] What?

CHARLIE: Herbie is Professor Kostova's familiar.

PRINCIPAL: His what?

MAX: [HELPFULLY] His familiar. His spirit bodyguard, sent to do his master's bidding. Bring him food, protect him from harm, that sort of thing.

CHARLIE: That's why he ratted us out! He was protecting his master!

PRINCIPAL: I can't believe this.

CHARLIE: You rat!

***CHARLIE lunges at HERBIE. MAX holds her back, with difficulty. HERBIE scampers away and hides behind the dumbstruck PRINCIPAL. It is sheer chaos, everyone speaking at once.***

MAX: No, Charlie! Stop! You'll only make it worse for us!

CHARLIE: You rat! We almost had him! You dirty, stinking rat!

HERBIE: You stay away from me! Keep him away from me!

PRINCIPAL: ENOUGH! ENOUGH, ENOUGH, ENOUGH!

*Everyone freezes.*

PRINCIPAL: [SEETHING; TO CHARLIE AND MAX] You. And you. I no longer wish to deal with you two idio—with you two *students* at the moment. What I want to do at the moment is forget that this... *meeting* ever took place. In the meantime, you are to go home. Right. Now.

*CHARLIE and MAX look at each other.*

PRINCIPAL: NOW!!!

*CHARLIE and MAX rush out. A long beat as the PRINCIPAL composes himself.*

HERBIE: Principal Flynn? Are you all right?

PRINCIPAL: Yes, Herbie. I'm fine.

HERBIE: I can't believe they would make up a story like that. It's disgraceful.

PRINCIPAL: Yes, it is.

HERBIE: Disgraceful.

PRINCIPAL: Herbie, you've been very helpful.

HERBIE: Thank you, Principal Flynn.

PRINCIPAL: I hope Charlie and Max didn't upset you.

HERBIE: Let them call me a rat. It doesn't matter. I know I did the right thing.

PRINCIPAL: Yes, you did.

HERBIE: Just doing my part for the school community.

PRINCIPAL: Why don't you run along home? It's late. Everyone's gone. I'm sure your parents will be worried.

HERBIE: Oh, don't worry. They're out of town.

PRINCIPAL: Out of town?

HERBIE: Visiting my grandparents. Won't be back for weeks.

PRINCIPAL: Hmm.

*The PRINCIPAL picks up his phone and dials it, walking to the door.*

PRINCIPAL: Hello? Yes, it's me. I have a present for you. Yes, Master. I know how much you like... rats.

*He slowly locks the door. HERBIE is speechless. BLACKOUT.*

**THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS:** *Some writers want to right wrongs, or reveal injustice, or explain the unexplainable. Some writers want to expose their trauma, or share their pain, or wrestle with their demons. Me? I just want to make people happy. I want to make them laugh and cry (but mostly laugh); I want to amuse them, excite them, inspire them. I want them to see themselves in the characters; I want them to nudge their dates knowingly; I want them to hum my songs as they leave the theater. I want them to feel that specific rush you get when you catch a smile from your crush at school, or experience your first kiss, or hear that special song. (We Filipinos call that feeling "kilig.") I don't do angst, I don't do issues, I don't do "depressing." Those things have their place in drama, of course, but let's face it: Sometimes life can be depressing enough.*

**AUTHOR BIO:** A 30-year veteran of English-language theater in the Philippines, Joel Trinidad has recently moved to New York City as a Permanent Resident. Although he started his career as an actor, he has lately shifted his focus to writing for the stage. His first script was the libretto for *BREAKUPS & BREAKDOWNS*, a new and updated version of which was a critical and commercial success in his home country earlier this year. His next two pieces were the monologue plays *UNSPEAKABLY YOURS* (a comedy about women's underarms, co-written with Cathy Azanza-Dy) and *BREAKING THE SILENCE* (a monologue play about women's reproductive rights). Next came the teen fantasy play *ATTACK OF THE SHAKESPEARE FAIRY* (soon to be a musical); *CLOSE ENCKANTOS OF THE CHRISTMAS KIND* (music by Regie Tan); and *FAIRY TALE RESCUE* (music by Onyl Torres and Regie Tan). His more recent librettos include *MY SUITE PRINCESS* (music by Rony Fortich); *GUADALUPE: THE MUSICAL* (music by Ejay Yatco); *NIGHT SHIFT* (music by Rony Fortich); and *AFTER EVER AFTER* (story by Nicky Triviño, music by Jon Vera Perez), among many others. Joel has also written more than a hundred short plays, some of which have been successfully produced by independent theater companies in New York City. His short play "Food Fight" will be presented in May 2024 as part of the New York Theater Festival.