

JOHNNY B. DEAD

by Butch Maxwell and Bert Furioli

The time: 1957 – The place: A high school near Area 69

CHARACTERS

Johnny Armstrong	An all-American student at the local high school
Joanie Chachi	Another all-American teenager at the high school
Bongo	Johnny's best friend
Popov Smirnov	An exchange student
Jack Storm	A government investigator

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANTS

Miss Gumpy	The teacher
Mr. Victoria	The principal

FUN FACTS

Joanie Chachi is saving herself for marriage, so she is chaste, although she wouldn't mind being chased.

Joanie Chachi has a poodle skirt made from a live poodle.

Johnny Armstrong once scored three touchdowns in one game. Unfortunately that game was baseball.

Popov Smirnoff can't decide if he wants to be a chemist or a male model.

Bongo once belonged to a folk trio called Peter, Paul and Bongo. He played the pennywhistle.

Jack Storm went undercover in East Germany as a bratwurst.

ACT ONE

*BONGO, JACK, JOANIE, JOHNNY and POPOV enter.
Bongo carries a Silly Putty egg.*

SFX: Music – Why Do Fools Fall in Love?

BONGO

[Singing.]
Mm-bah, mm-bah, mm-bah, mm-bah

JACK, JOANIE, JOHNNY, POPOV AND BONGO

[Singing.]
Ooooo wah, ooooo wah,
Ooooo wah, ooooo wah,
Ooooo wah, ooooo wah,
Why do fools go to school?

JOHNNY

[Singing.]
Why do I go – to class?
Study so hard – I have to pass
Why do we have to go to school?

JOANIE

[Singing.]
Why – are teachers so uncool?
Why do fools go to school?
Why do they go to school?

JOHNNY

[Singing.]
High school is so lame.

JOANIE

[Singing.]
And teen love is such a pain

JACK

[Singing.]
I know of a fool, you see –

BONGO

[Singing.]
For that fool is me!

JOANIE

[Singing.]

Tell me why – why – why – tell me why

[Dance break]

JOHNNY

[Singing.]

Why do I go to class?

BONGO

[Singing.]

Study late and bust my –

JOANIE

[Singing.]

Why are there so many stupid rules?

JOHNNY

[Singing.]

Why – so are teachers so uncool?

Why do fools go to school?

Why do they go to school?

POPOV

[Singing.]

Why does everyone – mock my strange accent?

Don't they know – I'm an exchange student!

JOANIE

[Singing.]

Tell me why – why – why – tell me why

BONGO, JACK, JOHNNY, POPOV AND JOANIE

[Singing.]

Why do fools go to school?

Jack, Joanie and Popov exit.

JOHNNY

Come on, Bongo, we gotta go! If I'm late for homeroom, Miss Grumpy will make me wear a dunce cap and that will mess up my perfect hair.

BONGO

Your hair is definitely hep.

JOHNNY

That's good, right?

BONGO

You are on the stick, slick.

JOHNNY

[Aside.]

I need a beatnik to English translator. *[To Bongo.]* Since I'm an All-American boy, I need All-American hair. My dad is always complaining 'cause I spend so much time on my hair, but he's just jealous 'cause he's bald. Thank goodness I won't end up like him.

BONGO

You haven't been paying attention in biology class, have you? Man, I can't go to class now – I'm digging this crazy putty stuff. It comes in an egg and it bounces and it copies pictures off the newspaper. Scope this. *[Presses putty on newspaper and then stretches it out.]* Look! I made Eisenhower's nose grow.

JOHNNY

I don't think that's his nose, Bongo. Look, you can't miss class again, or you won't graduate.

BONGO

I'm not digging the whole graduation scene. If I graduate, I'll have to, like, get a job and, like, wear a suit and tie and, like, get married and, like, have two point three kids, like, I'm not liking that.

JOHNNY

But you're thirty seven years old. You're older than most of the teachers. You're older than my dad. You're older than... than... someone who's not as old as you.

BONGO

I don't have to graduate from high school. I can be just like my Uncle Peter. He got a great job – even though he has only one eye.

JOHNNY

One eye?

BONGO

In the middle of his head. And he only has one ear, too.

JOHNNY

Is that in the middle of his head, too?

BONGO

No, that's just silly. Anyway, I think he has a job. Of course, he lies a lot.

JOHNNY

So what's his job?

BONGO

He's a meter reader.

JOHNNY

A meter reader named Peter?

BONGO

Sure! Let me tell you about him!

SFX: Music – “One Eye, One Horn Flyin’ Purple People Eater”

[Singing.]

When I heard him talk, it was always a lie
He had the one big ear, and one big eye
I commenced to shakin' and I said “ooh-eee”
He looks like a meter reader to me
He was a one-eyed, one-eared, lyin' Peter meter reader

JOHNNY

[Singing.]

One-eyed, one-eared, lyin' Peter meter reader

BONGO

[Singing.]

A one-eyed, one-eared, lyin' Peter meter reader
Sure looks strange to me (One eye?)
He was a one-eyed, one-eared, lyin' Peter meter reader

JOHNNY

[Singing.]

One-eyed, one-eared, lyin' Peter meter reader

BONGO

[Singing.]

A one-eyed, one-eared, lyin' Peter meter reader – Sure looks strange to me!

JOHNNY

Bongo, stop! Whatever you do, don't get a job as a singer.
[Looking offstage.] Oh, no, here comes Joanie. I don't want to talk to her right now.

BONGO

But, man, I thought you were warm for the form of Joanie's classy chassis.

JOHNNY

That's just the point, Bongo. I don't want to be distracted by her chassis. I have to keep my eyes on the prize – graduating from high school and getting a job as a crime investigator, like my idols – J. Edgar Hoover – Elliot Ness – Miss Marple.

BONGO

You skate, mate and I'll chat with your kitty cat.

JOHNNY

Uh, okey-dokey, smoky.

BONGO

Man, that's lame. Leave the hip rap to the experts. Now agitate the gravel.

JOHNNY

[Aside.]
I may be lame, but I've got great hair. Don't hate me because I'm beautiful.
[Exits.]

BONGO

I see a comb-over in his future.

JOHNNY

[Offstage.]
At least I'm not the one wearing a wig.

JOANIE

[Enter.]
Hi, Bongo. Have you seen Johnny?

BONGO

Johnny is strictly splitsville.

JOANIE

Banana?

BONGO

No thanks, I just ate.

JOANIE

Bongo, may I ask you a question? Does Johnny like me?

BONGO

Sure. Johnny Armstrong likes everyone. He's the all-American boy!

JOANIE

But I want to be special to him. I mean, I went to the drive-in with him once and he didn't even try to kiss me! I had to take his hands and put them on second base. You know, he could score a home run if he'd just choke up on the bat. I'm a senior, Bongo. We're about to graduate – and while I've taken it pretty lightly up until now – I'm not kidding anymore.

SFX: Music – “Bobby’s Girl”

BONGO

[Singing.]

You're not kidding anymore. You're not kidding anymore.

JOANIE

[Singing.]

When people ask of me
What you would like to be
Now that you're not kidding anymore
(You're not kidding anymore)
I know just what to say
I answer right away
There's just one thing I've been wishing for –

I want to be Johnny's girl

[With malice.]

I'd kill to be Johnny's girl
That's the most important thing to me.
And if I'm not Johnny's girl
And if I'm not Johnny's girl

[Threateningly.]

What a vengeful, spiteful girl I'd be!

SFX: Bell rings.

Johnny and Popov enter.

BONGO

Saved by the bell!

MISS GRUMPY

[An audience member.]

All right, class. I am your homeroom teacher, Miss Grumpy.

JOHNNY

We know who you are, Miss Grumpy.

MISS GRUMPY

Yes, but the audience doesn't. Now listen up: it's time for roll call. Okay, Lotta Butts. Lotta Butts? *[To Johnny.]* Do you see Lotta Butts?

JOHNNY

[Snickering.]

Only when you turn around.

MISS GRUMPY

I'll mark absent. Next – I. P. Freely. I. P. Freely? *[To Joanie.]* Do you know I. P. Freely?

JOANIE

Too bad they haven't invented Depends yet.

MISS GRUMPY

Now, class, this is our new exchange student. *[To Popov.]* Introduce yourself to the class.

POPOV

[With heavy Russian accent.]

I am Popov Smirnoff. I am from – Ireland. Would you like to see my shillelagh?

JOANIE

Are you really from Ireland? Say something in Leprechaun.

POPOV

[With heavy Russian accent.]

Faith and begorrah. Pink hearts and green clovers. *[Pause, looking around nervously.]* I am attending your American high school because I wish to become typical American teenager. Twenty-three skidoo.

BONGO

Then, man, you need to get some new threads, 'cause right now, you're the nerdiest nerd that ever spazzed.

POPOV

I am thanking you for your compliment. Soon I hope to appear as typical American teenager with typical American acne from your burgers and fries and whatever else is on tonight's menu.

JOHNNY

[Confidentially, to Joanie.]

You know, he talks kind of foreign.

JOANIE

Well, he is from Ireland.

JOHNNY

That's not foreign! It's near Michigan, right?

JOANIE

You haven't been paying attention in geography class, have you?

JOHNNY

Look, Joanie. It's Principal Victoria.

JOANIE

I heard he's got a secret.

PRINCIPAL

[An audience member.]

All right, students. We have a special guest in the school today.

Jack enters. He carries with him a file folder filled with papers, which he places somewhere on the set.

I want you to treat him with all the kindness and courtesy you don't show the teachers.

JOHNNY, JOANIE, BONGO AND POPOV
[Sing-songy.]
Good morning, special guest.

PRINCIPAL
This is Special Agent Jack Storm and he's here to investigate...

Jack coughs loudly and shakes his head "No."

Okay, he's here...

Jack coughs loudly again and shakes his head "No."

Okay, he's not here.

JACK
That's right. I'm not here to not ask you some questions.

BONGO
Like, he's got me tied up in "nots."

JOHNNY
Oh, darn! Is this a test?

JACK
[Getting in Johnny's face.]
Do you have a problem with the hard questions, son?

JOHNNY
No, I have a problem with the hard answers.

JACK
Now, boys and girls, there's no reason to be nervous. I'm with the federal government and I'm here to protect you. Unless you're a subversive... or a union organizer... or an actor. *[Looking around.]* Luckily there aren't any of those around.

JOANIE
Gee, who are you with, Mr. Storm? The F.B.I.? The C.I.A.?

JACK
I am with the P.M.S.

JOHNNY
The P.M.S.? What does that stand for?

JACK

Nothing. We just needed a cheap laugh here. Now, I have it on good authority that some top secret government information has leaked out to the Soviets and we've traced the source to this school.

JOANIE

What kind of government secrets could high school students possibly leak?

JACK

That's a secret! So I'll be interrogating each of you until I find that commie-loving spy. I am authorized to use any means necessary to get answers. Torture. Intimidation. Lawrence Welk.

POPOV

[Raising hand.]

Excuse me. I am late for chemistry lab. I have unstable chemicals I must combine to determine explosive properties.

JACK

Ah, a scientist, eh? I respect good old American scientific know-how. Know-how that keeps America peaceful and safe, like the atomic bomb and the atomic power plant and the atomic toaster. Well, go ahead then, Einstein. Just remember – I know where to find you. I have eyes in the back of my head.

POPOV

This would explain bald spot.

[Exits.]

JOHNNY

Golly, Mr. Storm, I always wanted to be a G-Man.

JACK

You need to be a man first.

JOHNNY

[Squeaking.]

I am a man! *[Coughs, then in deep voice.]* I am a man!

JOANIE

[Aside.]

Could have fooled me.

JACK

So, you want to be a G-Man, do you? You think you've got what it takes to be a G-Man? A G-Man must be tough. A G-man must be smart. A G-Man must be able to carry a tune.

SFX: Music – “Walk Like a Man”

BONGO, JOANIE AND JOHNNY

[Singing.]

Oo woo-oo-oo oo woo-oo-oo
Wop wop wop wop
Oo woo-oo-oo oo woo-oo-oo
Walk like G-Man.

JACK

[Singing.]

Oh how they tried
To make it so I died
By selling dirty secrets to friends.
But J. Edgar Hoover
Said don't fall for that maneuver
The world isn't coming to an end.

[Singing.]

He said walk like G-Man
Shoot like G-Man
Walk like G-Man with guns.
No commies worth
Blowing up the earth
So walk like G-man with guns.

BONGO, JOANIE, JOHNNY AND JACK

[Singing.]

Oo woo-oo-oo oo woo-oo-oo
Wop wop wop wop
Oo woo-oo-oo oo woo-oo-oo
Walk like G-Man.

JACK

[Speaking.]

Now, listen up. I've been a G-man for a long time. I was even injured in the line of duty – protecting this great nation from traitors and spies. I was behind the Iron Curtain to steal Stalin's top secret formula for potato salad. I met with a double agent but he double crossed me and he caused double trouble and I ended up with double vision. And a plate in my

head. It gives me a little trouble now and then. But only when somebody mentions the name of a dance – I start dancing uncontrollably.

But don't think for a moment that this metal plate in my head will stop me. I'm here to weed out the commie spy who would sell our secrets to the Godless reds. And don't think I can't catch him. I can. I can.

BONGO

You can can?

SFX: Music – “The Can Can”

Jack begins dancing the Can-Can. Jack slaps the side of his head, recoils comically and stops dancing.

JACK

Sorry. That's the reflex from the metal plate in my head I told you about. Don't anybody mention any dances while I'm here! Got it?

BONGO

Got 'cha. [Pause.] Cha.

SFX: Music – “Cha Cha”

Jack begins dancing the Cha-Cha. He dances to exit.

JOHNNY

Gee. I hope he comes back. I could learn a lot from that guy.

JOANIE

You mean you could finally learn how to dance?

JOHNNY

Heck, no. He could tell me how to break into the spy business. I've wanted to be a G-Man ever since that time we saw that flying saucer land.

BONGO

Man, that was a weather balloon.

JOHNNY

I'm telling you – that was a flying saucer! And I'm going to prove it!

JOANIE

It had written on the side of it – the word “Goodyear.”

JOHNNY

Yeah, well, maybe that’s the name of the aliens’ home planet!

JOANIE

You really believe in little green men from Mars?

JOHNNY

No! That’s ridiculous! Some of them are little blue men.

BONGO

You’re color blind.

JOHNNY

Being ethnically diverse is no laughing matter, Bongo.

JOANIE

But, Johnny, wouldn’t your dad know it it were true? He works at Area 69, doesn’t he?

JOHNNY

He won’t talk about it, but I’m going to find out all about it!

SFX: Music – “Chantilly Lace”

BONGO

Oh, no! I can feel a song coming on. I think he’s going to sing.

JOANIE

Well, we survived your song, Bongo. I suppose we can get through this one, too.

JOHNNY

[Singing.]

A chilly place for a long cold case
And a UFO touching down
A little green nut
A probe up the butt
Makes the world breakdown
There ain’t nothing in the world
That makes us come unfurled
Like a Martian saucer

[Singing.]

A space double-crosser
Makes us unprepared
'Cause we feel real scared
Oh, baby that's what I like!

BONGO

That's, like, crazy, daddy-o!

JOHNNY

Gee, thanks, Bongo.

BONGO

No, I mean like literally crazy! *[Aside.]* Yikes! I hope you
can't catch crazy!

[Exit.]

JOANIE

So, Johnny, are you going to go to the sock hop?

JOHNNY

You bet I am! I can hardly wait to try out the new dance I
that invented. *[Dancing.]* I call it the Hustle.

JOANIE

You look like you should be wearing polyester. So, tell me,
who are you going to take to the sock hop?

JOHNNY

I hadn't really thought about it.

JOANIE

You know, Johnny, I was thinking of going to the sock hop
with Eddie.

JOHNNY

Eddie? He's a – a greaser! His hair is so greasy, he combs it
with a dipstick.

JOANIE

Yeah, but he's got a hot rod – and a car, too.

JOHNNY

You know, Joanie... *[Resigned.]* I could drive you to the sock
hop.

JOANIE

[Jumping in his arms.]

I thought you'd never ask!

JOHNNY

I'll pick you up at seven. My dad said I could borrow his Studebaker.

JOANIE

Your dad's letting you drive his car after what happened at the drive-in?

JOHNNY

I didn't mean to drive through the concession stand! I was distracted by the dancing hot dogs!

SFX: Explosion

JOANIE

[Screaming and opportunistically jumping into Johnny's arms]

Ahh! Help!

JOHNNY

Holy moley! That sounded like an explosion sound effect!

*Jack enters, dragging Popov by the scruff of his neck.
Popov's face is covered in soot and his clothing is disheveled.*

JACK

Are you all right, son? Good thing I dragged you safely out of that chemical lab. What happened?

POPOV

It was glycerin problem. Too little nitro; too much boom.

JACK

What were you doing in there? You weren't putting Mentos in Coke bottles, were you?

POPOV

I work on senior project – Electron Bomb.

JOHNNY

Gee, my senior project is a birdhouse made out of popsicle sticks.

JACK

Do you mean to tell me you're making a bomb in your high school chemistry lab? In my day, we made bombs in Home Ec.

POPOV

Sure. I wish to someday work for American Imperialist Military Industrial Complex. As American citizen, I hope to contribute to capitalist oppression of working people worldwide.

JACK

Well, I can see your heart's in the right place.

POPOV

Heart is in chest. I will explain.

SFX: Music – “Sh-Boom”

[Singing.]

Hey nonny ding dong, aling aling alang
Boom ba-dah, ba-doo ba-doo ba-day

Oh, I could make you scream

JACK, JOANIE AND JOHNNY

[Singing.]

Dee doo dee doo – ka-boom ka-boom *[Et cetera, repeat throughout]*

POPOV

[Singing.]

If I could make a bomb and blow up everyone
If you would tell me that there's nowhere left to run
I could make you scream, my friends

Hello hello again, ka-boom and hopin' we'll meet again

Oh, I could make you scream
If only all my precious plans would come true
To mix my chemicals into volatile stew
I could make you scream, my friends

Every time I mix a brew
Destruction on my mind
If I do what I want to do

Baby, I'd change mankind

Oh, I could make you scream
If I could make a bomb and blow up everyone
If you would tell me that there's nowhere left to run
I could make you scream, comrades – I mean – my friends

JACK, JOANIE, JOHNNY AND POPOV

[Singing.]

Ka-boom da da da da da da da da
Ka-boom da da da da da da da da
Ka-boom da da da da da da da da
Ka-boom!

JACK

Young man, you are going to make a fine, upstanding
American.

POPOV

Sure, Popov stand up, sit down, lie down – all American. I
am Yankee Noodle Dandy.

[Exit.]

JACK

All right, it's time for me to begin my interrogat – I mean –
my interviews. And I'm going to start with –*[Indicating
Johnny.]* – this one!

JOHNNY

Me? Why me? I don't know anything!

JOANIE

I think all his teachers would agree.

JACK

You think I'm fooled by this wholesome All American boy
exterior? Those Godless Reds try to fool us with their apple
pie eyes and red white and blue complexions –

JOHNNY

It's just a little acne!

JOANIE

[Protecting Johnny.]

Mr. Storm, what makes you think you can just come in and
take over this school? What makes you think you can just
come waltzing in –

SFX: Music – A waltz.

Jack begins dancing a waltz.

JOHNNY

Oh no! Now he's going to be really mad! *[Pushing Joanie toward exit.]* You better get out of here.

JOANIE

Be careful, Johnny. Mr. Storm may trick you into doing something dangerous – like thinking!
[Exit.]

Jack slaps the metal plate in his head, recoils and stops dancing.

JACK

Where was I? Oh yes. *[Grabbing file folder, to Johnny.]* And now, I'm going to squeeze some information out of you, like the Commie Pinko sponge that you may or may not be. I've been waiting a long time for this. Too long! Next time I want to wait around for two hours doing nothing I'll call in an order to DiCarlo's pizza.

JOHNNY

What are you going to do, Mr. Storm? Are you going to torture me? Put bamboo shoots under my fingernails? Make me listen to Pat Boone?

JACK

No, we have more modern ways of getting information.

JOHNNY

Like what?

JACK

Like what?

JOHNNY

Hey, knock it off!

JACK

Hey, knock it off!

JOHNNY

I mean it! Quit that!

JACK

I mean it! Quit that!

JOHNNY

[Whining.]

Stop it!

JACK

[Whining.]

Stop it!

JOHNNY

All right, all right! I'll talk! What do you want to know? I know how to make a birdhouse out of popsicle sticks.

JACK

Don't tell me you've never heard of our brand new top secret weapon – the photo bomb!

JOHNNY

I never heard of that!

JACK

I told you not to tell me that. Now, let me get to the point. Isn't it true that your father works at the top secret government research zone known as Area 69?

JOHNNIE

Yeah, but Dad said to never ask him about his job. And to never go into his office. And to never get a tattoo of a hula girl saying "Hubba hubba."

JACK

Are you telling me you never snooped around in your Dad's desk or his file cabinets or his top dresser drawer where he keeps all his private things?

JOHNNIE

All I ever found in there were some strange balloons made by Trojan.

JACK

You think I'm buying that story? Ha! I wouldn't put a dime in that alibi. If I wanted to pour money down the drain, I'd go to Wheeling Island racetrack.

JOHNNIE

But Mr. Storm! I can help you find your spy! I want to be just like you when I grow up.

JACK

Don't try to butter me up, kid. That's one of the oldest tricks in the Kremlin's book. Right after the "Russian gymnast disguised as a pole dancer who seduces you, steals your wallet and turns out to be a man" trick. Now get outa here, and send in that beatnik!

JOHNNY

[Aside.]

I'm going to prove to Mr. Storm that I have what it takes to be a special agent! I'm already in Special Ed.

[Exit.]

JACK

I never should have gotten that tattoo of a pole dancer saying "Hubba hubba."

END OF EXCERPT