A Girl's Guide to Science.

CHELSEA is a slightly nerdy looking girl in 12th grade. She is wearing goggles.

KATIE is in a tanktop and has no sajety equipment. She is also in 12^{th} grade.

(The play begins with a science safety demonstration already in progress. Katie and Chelsea stand in front of the class; with a lab bench in front of them that's covered in various apparati. And yes, it is "apparati," not "apparatuses.")

KATIE. Ok, and here's how to deal with a deep flesh wound without staining your jeans.

CHELSEA. Hey, that cut looks bad. Do you need medical attention?

KATIE. Not unless the doctor is really cute.

CHELSEA. This is a safety demonstration. I don't think that attitude's very safe.

KATIE. Oh, a cute doctor is always a safe bet in my book.

CHELSEA. Well, I'm going to stick with reading the lab manual. And it says to seek medical attention for any cut that bleeds more than one minute.

KATIE. This brings me to another important lesson in the Girls Guide to Science: ignore downers with their losing attitude, like this nerd. If you dream you can achieve, you'll reach for the stars.

CHELSEA. (flipping through the book) What are you talking about? Where are you getting this from?

KATIE. Girl power!

CHELSEA. (pulling Katie aside) How did you get assigned to do the freshman science orientation, anyway?

KATIE. I worked a little something out. If I do this, I don't have to serve my 29 detentions that I got for wearing revealing outfits.

CHELSEA. So you're working off skank time.

KATIE. Uh huh.

CHELSEA. I take this seriously, so... just don't do anything too stupid.

KATIE. (seems to agree) Fine.

CHELSEA. (begins again)Ok, now, if you're going to do a combustion reaction, then you need a safety bib, goggles, and a protective hood.

KATIE. And a fiery new lip gloss! Yowza.

CHELSEA. I thought we agreed on no stupidity. Besides, make-up is a tool of the oppressors.

KATIE. Geek.

CHELSEA. What was that?

KATIF. (sing-song) Geek patrol.

CHELSEA. Pardon me while I try not to burst into flames.

KATIE (shakes head) You will never have to worry about being too hot.

CHELSEA. Hey. I have a boyfriend.

KATIE. What's his name? Chester?

CHELSEA. CyberStud82. He's my... online boyfriend.

KATIE. (shocked by the lameness of this) Wow. If I was capable of feeling pity, you would be getting so much right now.

CHELSEA. Thanks.

KATIE. But instead, you get the big Whatever, freak! (She does the hand signal to accompany this.) Now ladies, let's burn something. (She looks through her equipment.) Compressed hydrogen. Do not expose to flame. Oh, this'll be swell. (She begins to light it.) Now, remember, point the canister away from your face when you're lighting (She obviously points it towards Chelsea).

CHELSEA. For a forced participant, you're pretty into this... hey, wait, what are you doing? Compressed Hy- Oh my god (scrambles for goggles)

KATIE Liftoff!

CHELSEA. Ow! That was my face!

KATIE. Don't worry. Computer geeks don't need faces anyway.

CHELSEA. That really stings.

KATIE. The truth hurts, babe.

CHELSEA. No, I mean my wound, on my face.

KATIE. I guess you should have been wearing your nerd bib.

CHELSEA. The lab bib doesn't cover my face.

KATIE I guess it should, then.

CHELSEA. I guess you should have not shot a giant column of flame at my eye!

KATIE. But I missed, didn't I.

CHELSEA. Your ditziness isn't just annoying anymore. You're becoming one dangerous skank.

KATIE. You're fimny when you're self-righteous. Do you smell that?

CHELSEA. Smell what?

KATIE Like burning hair

CHELSEA. (pause) My hair is on fire, isn't it.

KATIE. (completely unaffected) Uh huh.

CHELSEA. (sighs) I'll go soak it in the toilet.

KATIE. You might say you're learned to a crisp!

CHELSEA. Thate you.

KATIE. Remember girls, always wear your goggles! Get one with different colored bands, so they'll match your designer lab apron

CHELSEA. (disgruntled growl) Ugh.

(While Chelsea is gone, Katie tries to set up an experiment herself, but ends up causing trouble.)

KATIE. Welcome back, brainy half!

CHELSEA. Shut it, syphilitic half.

KATIE. Rarrr.

CHELSEA. Don't. I'm allowed to be disgruntled because I just had to stick my face into a toilet that had several tasteful limericks on the wall about "the sound and the fury" of the stall's previous patrons.

KATIE. The next stall over has some great nursery rhymes in it.

CHELSEA. I'd like it if we didn't discuss the bathroom the bathroom. In fact, don't say anything to me, period. Me and my singed follicles are just not in the mood. For you or your charming ignorance.

KATIE. Yo, take a chill pill.

CHELSEA. The only pill I'll be taking is my birth control... which is just for my complexion.

KATIE. Duh.

CHELSEA. I'm sure you're not taking that particular medication.

KATIE. Right... because I'm not a ho.

CHELSEA. Yeah, ok. You're a ho.

KATIE. That's nice. I guess because I'm not Mrs. Wizard, I must be spreading my dumb little legs for every jock that has his own car.

CHELSEA. Or if his dad has a cool car.

KATIE. Whatever. Just stop impregnating me with your mind.

CHELSEA. (pause) That is the strangest thing a person has ever said to me.

(They both pause, and look at the "audience" of freshmen.)

KATIE. We should stay on track.

CHELSEA. Yes. Yes we should.

KATIE. (clears throat) Remember, never mix a low pH acid with a high pH base. I have a little saying to remember it: if you're fat with an f, then boys won't like you, but if you're flat with the pH, then you're phat with a ph!

CHEI SFA That just made my brain die.

KATIE. I know, isn't it so deep?

CHELSEA. Deeply disturbing, yes.

KATIE. Mmmm, right. Let's mix stuff. *

CHELSEA. You can check your formulas with the periodic table.

KATIE. Mine's laminated!

CHELSEA. My heart overflows with cestasy at the thought of your plastic coated periodic table. Oh may I touch it? Please? May I be blessed with the brilliance of your laminated warmth?

KATIE. Nope.

CHELSEA. I would have just torn it in half anyway.

KATIE. You can't - that's why it's laminated. Ok, so the periodic table. It's like a wardrobe, very coordinated. This side of the periodic table is like the blues, the transition metals are your fall colors, and non-metals and metalloids are your blacks and whites. Anyway, the periodic table is just like your closet at home.

CHELSEA. If at home you happen to have a closet of death.

KATIE. That's right! Imagine reaching for your favorite miniskirt and watching as it dissolves straight through to your bones. How fashionable you'll be in chemistry class when you know about your periods!

CHELSEA. I think you just jumped over to a health class lesson.

KATIE. Ewww gross. We're talking about science here.

CHELSEA. I wonder... have you ever read a book?

KATIE. Like... the whole thing?

CHELSEA. Like, yeah.

KATIE. Does War & Peace count?

CHELSEA. ... I suppose it does.

KATIE: It was either read that or go out with this totally disgusting guy Kevin. He had acne all down his back and his hair was parted right in the middle of his head. We went to one concert, like Hoobastank or something, and then he tried to feel me up in the mosh pit. I had to get rid of him somehow, so I just pretended to read some Tolstoy... and I ended up actually reading it. What do you think of the Baron's motives in book two? Were they sincere? I'm not sure.

CHELSEA. Actually... Thaven't read it.

KATIE. Oh. It's good!

CHELSEA. Are you ready to try fractional distillation?

KATIE. (sighs) Do I have a choice? (cell phone rings) Oh, I do! Excuse me. (she flips open the phone and answers it.)

CHELSEA. Alright, you need a source of power, a source of water,

KATIE. Oh my god he did not say that! They did what? I didn't know you could do that with a pumpkin.

CHELSEA. And a vacuum. Then, you adjust the boiler,

KATIE. Of course I'll be there tonight, I'll be checking out of loserville any second now,

CHELSEA. Acquire your acid from the teacher, and be very careful with it.

KATIE. Yeah totally. I'm just, like, waiting for her to burn her face off or whatever so I have a chance to dash.

CHELSEA. Hey

KATIE. (to Chelsea) You heard me, Clarissa. (to phone) Yeah, an 80's joke. You gotta give these dorks something to reference. So did you find a Twister board for tonight yet? Uh huh. What about the Jello? Ugh, I hate green. Whatever, we'll deal. Just keep the pumpkins out of sight.

CHELSEA. This requires total concentration.

KATIE. This tramp is giving me so much bull. I gotta go. TTYL! (To Chelsea) What's up?

CHELSEA. Ok, now you have to hold the acid very steadily, and get ready to flip it into the solution... have the distillation apparatus set up precisely, and then... hey, can you give me a hand here?

KATIE. No.

(There is an exchange of looks, and Katie finally accepts a beaker that Chelsea gives her)

CHELSEA. Just hold the beaker carefully, like this (she puts her hand on Katie's)

KATIE. Please don't touch me.

CHELSEA. Ok, uh, now, while watching the temperature and pressure, slowly manipulate the acid so that it is directly above the boiling solvent.

KATIF. Girls, make sure you have at least one geeky hang-on who will do all this for you. It saves so much trouble.

CHELSEA. (The experiment collapses) Ack!

KATIE. And gives you someone to blame.

CHELSEA. I'm covered in acid! Are you happy? This demonstration really sucks.

KATIE. That's not a winning attitude.

CHELSEA. You have the attitude of a mentally handicapped lemur!

KATIE. I'm just going to move along and forget your little tantrum.

CHELSEA. Yeah. I wish you would move along. But you won't. (She grumbles a bit and waits for Katie to keep going)

KATIE. Now, in most of these situations, its easier to just ask a guy for a help. They're much better at science anyway. Tests have proven it!

CHELSFA What are you talking about? Don't tell them that!

KATIE.

CHELSEA. Hold on. This is demeaning to women. You've gone too far.

KATIE. (In a suddenly intellectual tone) Please. Your feminist nay saying is so 1980's. Isn't it clear I'm the postmodern rejection of all gender models, representing my disdain for all archetypes by replicating them in a pastiche of kitsch and consumerism?

CHELSEA. (long pause) Skank, you did not just go there.

KATIF. Oh yeah, Nancy Reagan, I went there.

CHELSEA. That's it! You're about to get the business end of this pipette straight in your eye.

KATIE. Oh no you didn't...

CHELSEA. Then I'm going to titrate your brain!

KATIE. Suck my big long beaker, baby.

CHELSEA. Make me.

KATIE. You... wait We have to finish this demonstration.

CHELSEA. (trying to smile) Ok. Fine.

KATIE. Now. How bout you show the ladies how we prepare a solution of a metal in hydrochloric acid.

CHELSEA. I don't think you want to give me any acid just vet.

KATIE. Well then, Mrs. Happypants, mix whatever concoction you'd like.

CHELSEA. Ok. This is how you safely put together a solution of Sodium Prostitutide. It's my partner's favorite compound.

KATIE. Oh I have got to hear this.

CHELSEA. Take your beaker with distilled airhead.

KATIE. (grumbles under her breath)

CHFI SEA I ct's just mix a little skank in

KATIE. Look who's labeling women now

CHELSEA. A dash of smartass...

KATIE. Careful, you don't want to get the solution too hypocritical.

CHELSEA. If you don't already have the appropriate spaghetti tops and frilly shirts, have your mom and dad go buy you some at Target.

KATIE. Hey, I don't have a dad. Are you trying to make me feel bad for that too?

CHELSEA. Wait -

KATIE. I mean, first you criticize my postcolonial work of feminist protest art, then you try and drag my family down too?

CHELSEA. That's not -

KATIE. My mom worked hard to raise me, it was hard on both of us.

CHELSEA. It doesn't surprise me.

KATIE. Yeah, well.

CHELSEA. I mean, it doesn't surprise me that your Mom was too much of a hussie to keep a man around!

KATIE. You troll! My Dad died in the line duty!

CHELSEA. Really...?

KATIE. Yes. It was terrible. A helicopter crash.

CHELSEA. Oh my god.

KATIE. Yeah, God... I don't really do the whole God thing anymore either.

CHELSEA. So that's why you got into science, huh? For your dad?

KATIE. That's part of it. I mean, there are cute doctors too.

CHELSEA. I guess they are a nice bonus.

KATIE. Yeah. Hey, what's your name? I'm Katie.

CHELSEA. My name is Chelsea.

KATIE. Really? Because I thought it was "Gullible" for believing all that crap about my dad.

CHELSEA. You skank! You evil, evil skank! (she snaps, lunges at Katie)

KATIE. Hold your horses! Get back, I am not getting in a cat fight in front of 84 freshmen girls!

CHELSEA. I don't want to fight.

KATIE. What else could you be doing?

CHELSEA. I was going to put you on the scale. You know, I was gonna find out how much your ass weighed.

KATIE. Why'd you wanna know?

CHELSEA. So I could see how much force it'd take to kick it.

KATIE. I'm sorry, ok? Can you back off, please?

CHELSEA. You don't get to boss me around. Just because you took Pete Peterson to the junior prom when he said he'd go with me first because he was the cool hot nerd and I was the queen of the nerds so of course I should go with him and then we'd make sweet love in the back of his Honda Prelude with the weezer sticker and our babies would grow up and go to harvard, yale, and maybe amherst if they were artsy drifters. But no. He had to be the nerd who got the hot girl. And while you were making Pete feel like the king of all dorkdom, do you know who I went to prom with?

KATIE. No...

CHELSEA. I went with a 10th grader from the chess team! He wore shorts to the dance.

KATIE. Dress shorts?

CHELSEA. No. Cut offs.

KATIE. I'm sorry. But, uh, I didn't go there until this year. I've never met Pete.

CHELSEA. You might as well have. How is Pete these days. Does he still have the Prelude.

KATIE. I guess...

CHELSEA. How would you know! You meant nothing to him. Oh Pete, I'd do anything to be nuzzling in the hairy jungle of your chest again, your apelike arms squeezing me so tightly.

KATIE. Did you watch a lot of nature videos as a child?

CHELSEA. (sighing out of love) I once gave an informational talk at the zoo about orangutans. I showed it to Pete... he loved it. I think he identified with the monkeys.

KATIE. Well, most men do.

CHELSEA. They're pigs! That's why the girls have to take over science so we can rule the earth.

KATIE. I like your style. Maybe we can be friends.

CHFI SFA Really? I usually don't make friends outside of the astronomy club.

KATIE. Sure... there's just one thing I need you to do...

CHELSEA. What's that?

KATIE. (suddenly throwing flask at Chelsea) Eat this, you psycho!!

CHELSEA. Ow! Owwww! (Pauses) Ooh. Oooooh. (She starts licking her hands.) This is kinda good. Kinda real good.

KATIE What the - (she reads the flask) N,3-dimethyl-nitro-1,3,5-cyclohexene. Huh.

(Chelsea starts gnawing on arm.)

KATIE. (Realizes she has to read the other side, does so.) Methamphetamine. Uh oh.

CHELSEA. (offering gnawed arm) You have got to try some.

KATIE. No thanks... too many carbs.

CHELSEA. Did you know you were so shiny?

KATIE. What?

CHELSEA. You're like... a laminated me.

KATIE. Well, I do use conditioner.

CHELSEA. Ooohhhh... I feel so., sensual.

KATIE. Great.

CHELSEA. Who wants a body massage?

KATIE. What did you just say?

CHELSEA. Body massage!

KATIE. I don't know... that would be nice...

CHELSEA. (Preparing bib, utensils) Just lay down right here.

KATIE. Wait a minute.... are you gonna eat me?

CHELSEA. No, no, no at all.

KATIE. Then why did you just get out all that sodium?

CHELSEA. (pauses) Body massage!

KATIE. Maybe this is a bad idea. (She gets up.)

CHELSEA. (holds her) No... I've gotta eat you before this wears off.

KATIE. Still hallucinating, eh?

CHELSEA. Sure.

KATIE. Then don't do it! You'll regret it, I'm very fatty. (She sneaks out of Chelsea's grip.)

CHELSEA. We both know that's crap. Time to dine on school's most popular dish.

KATIE: Thinks of the carbs! The carbs! (She is about to be eaten when Chelsea suddenly reacts to something.)

CHELSEA. (completely freaking out) Ahhhhh! Get them off of me! Oh jesus, they're everywhere, get them off!

KATIE. What, what?

CHELSEA. The badgers! The evil badgers! (tearing at her clothes) how did they get into the back of my shirt?!

KATIE. I don't know? What should I do!

CHELSEA. I figured it out! They're coming out of my nose! That's where their secret lair is, in my skull! (She begins to try prying the badgers out of her nose, eyes, etc.)

KATIE. Wow. Just, uh, just shake your head real hard and maybe they'll fly out.

CHELSEA. Ok! (She does this) Whoa! Look how many of them there are!

KAIIE. Yeah, uh, that's a lot of badgers.

CHELSEA. I think I got them all... NO WAIT! (She tears at her leg for a few moments, then stops) Oh, that's not a badger. That's my leg.

KATIE. Well. You should be coming down now. Try and stay calm. Maybe I can get you some water, or like, whatever you give to total freaks when they go psycho.

CHELSEA. Oooooooh, you know what would be nice. Some figs. Some big old figs.

KATIE. You really think that figs are what you need?

CHELSEA. Baby, I need figs. I need them.

KATIE. Let me see what I can do.

(Katie leaves. Chelsea sees something and starts clawing at the air.)

KATIE. (returning) I actually found this, like, Ziploc with some old fig newtons under the air conditioner, I guess - what are you doing?

CHELSEA. Trying to rip a hole in space and time.

KATIE. Why?

CHELSEA. I think I'm supposed to be a roman goddess. Ow! That axe was pointy. Stupid Middle Ages. Ooh, there's Charlemagne. Hey Chaz!

KATIE. (Leaning over to look) Did you really ...?

CHELSEA. (Grabs Chelsea's head) Gotcha! Noogies!

KATIE. You fiendish slut! (They struggle, and knock over a large container)

CHELSEA. Oh no! The ether!

KATIE. (sniffing) Hamman... I think I might go to sleep now ...

CHELSEA. No, you can't... uh, crap, what to do in this situation... crappity-crap-carp. Uh, Caffeine! Drink this cold pot of coffee

KATIE. Dude, like whatever. (she drinks it.) Whoa. Totally an-mellow. (she starts to shake.)

CHELSEA. Too much! Uh... have some codine!

KATIE. Where do all these drugs come from.

CHELSEA. The school district's out of money, so they sold the chemistry department to Walmart. They give us all their extra stuff.

KATIE. Your eyes look kind of bloodshot.

CHELSEA. I actually can't feel my arms or legs.

KATIE. Maybe you should have some codine too.

CHELSEA. Yeah, and some caffeine! (She takes both.)

(Both girls are feeling the effects of the drugs)

KATIE. I feel like a hamster in the dishwasher.

CHELSEA. I know how you feel. Just how you feel.

KATIE. ... Yeah?

CHELSEA. I just keep thinking about all the things that are different between us, and I feel like they shouldn't be different, like we can make them the same if we just work hard and do it, you know We can just do it! See, like take my hand, and your hand, and put them together, and its like we're one person. Do you feel it? Our oneness?

KATIE. Sure!

CHELSEA. Oh! Oh you do, Katie, I'm happy! Maybe we can be friends on this special day of oneness.

KATIE. Uh..

CHELSEA. And I think it all comes from when I didn't really have a good male role model growing up, that I thought I was very female, and everything was female, so I've always just tried to, you know, be a good female, as opposed to a bad male, and I've never wanted to be a good person. But now I want to be a good person. (she is nervously moving something back and forth, flicking a pen, doing many sorts of random little events.)

KATIE. Good, good. I'm glad for your... goodness.

CHELSEA. Now, if I could just get this pen to click in time to this other pen. (She tries to click them together, but her shakiness and jumpiness make this very difficult.) ACK! Caffeine headache... must find more...

(Chelsea reaches up and drinks some random bottle)

KATIE. No, wait! Ah, screw it. (She drinks it as well, and becomes quite delusional) You.

CHELSEA. Me?

KATIE. You're the one.

CHELSEA. The one?

KATIE. The one who put my hamster in the dishwasher.

CHELSEA. I don't think that actually happened.

KATIE. Whatever. I'll slap you silly with this trout. (from here on, all fish are imagined, although the fighting is real.)

CHEI SEA. Hey! You stole that trout from my collection.

KATIE. Yes, that's right, I'm wailing on you with your own trout. Feel the pain!

CHELSEA. It burns! It burns with the power of fish! How far I've fallen.... except, I fight back with a red snapper! Weren't expecting that, were you? Your face is looking a bit... red, Katie!

KATIE. As you slip on a barracuda that I've slyly placed underneath your feet.

CHELSEA. Crafty. But what you don't know is that I replaced all your barracuda with pseudo traction-enhanced barracudas... or tracto-barrapseudas, for short.

KATIE. Damn you! Foiled again. But this bass behind my back will knock you to the ground.

CHELSEA. I'll see your bass and raise you a flying octopus - flying at your face, that is!

KATIE. Octopi are no match for me - I'm too little and quick for them to stop me.

KATIE. Plus, I have this electric eel that I use as a stun gun.

CHELSEA. Ha-ha, you forget - I'm already quite stunning!

KATIE. Touché, my friend

CHELSEA. ...eh, I forgive you. And I'm out of fish.

KATIE. Hey, wait. You just said you were stunning. That is not the Chelsea I knew five minute ago.

CHELSEA. Wow... it's strange, this "self-confidence."

KATIE. Feels good, doesn't it?

CHELSEA. Yeah.

KATIE. Think it could perhaps stop you from going psycho the next time you see a "popular" girl like me?

CHELSEA. (doubtfully) I've been trying to prove that women are just as good as men at science... everything I've done, to get ahead... it's all neutralized by you. Titrated by your airheaded ways. No... it's gone. I feel so pathetically inadequate... part of the system. Up and down again. The stupid equilibrium of the fair and unfair. (She weeps dramatically)

KATIE. Hmm. Maybe, uh. Hmm. Tissue?

CHELSEA. No, no, in the state I'm in, I'll probably think its attacking my face or something.

KATIE. Yeah. Do you think. nevermind

CHELSEA. What

KATIE. Do you really think I'm that bad?

CHELSEA. ... Yeah.

KATIE. Come on, there are guys like me.

CHELSEA. Well, I guess.

KATIE. I think that's your problem.

CHELSEA. Stupid guys? No, they don't even speak to me.

KATIE. No, no. There's no difference between girls and boys -

CHELSEA. Uh...

KATIE. The difference is only between smart and dumb people!

CHELSEA. What?

KATIE. Think about it... who do you get less - me, or the guy on the chess team?

CHELSEA. Well... I did once skip a funeral so I could practice for the Mathlete Olympics.

KATIE. There you go. You're more nerd than girls.

CHELSEA. Hah. Is that an insult?

KATIE. No, just a fact. This silliness of boys and girls is just made up. People are just people...

CHELSEA. Smart or dumb people.

KATIE. Yeah, or fat or short or whatever.

CHELSEA. You shouldn't make fun of fat people either.

KATIE. Hey, but neither of us is fat. We have that.

CHELSEA. Well... true. (She sighs.) One stereotype at a time, I guess.

KATIE. Sure.

CHELSEA. I guess if I worried more about being me, and less about being a girl...

KATIE. You might find yourself enjoying being both.

CHELSEA. You must be really high.

KATIE. Why?

CHELSEA. You're actually acting intelligent.

KATIE. I dunno. I kinda have this urge to scratch my ear really hard and bite my tail.

CHELSEA. I admit, I've been paying a lot of attention to your growing coat of fur.

KATIE. Then I am becoming a cool, glowing, rainbow colored dog!

CHELSEA. Well... Unless the meth, ex, and casseine in my system is lying - yes, yes you are. But can I be a doggie too?

KATIE. Sure! (While petting Chelsea) Nice doggie. Ooch, your hair is so crispy from when mommy burned you. Yes it is. You're a crispy little hot dog. My little wiener dog.

CHELSEA. (Barks enthusiastically)

KATIE. My cutie-patootie wagamuffin. Give your mummy some kisses.

(Katie makes kissy noises. Chelsea begins to lick her face enthusiastically, like a puppy would)

KATIE. I love you Nancy Reagan.

CHELSEA. I love you laminated girl!

KATIE. Mwah mwah. Mwah mwah... (suddenly wakes up and stares. Chelsea stops and stares as well. There is silence for a long while.)

CHELSEA. (reaching for Katie's face) Let me get that...

KATIF. (slaps her hand away) Get what. I'm fine. There's nothing there. Nothing happened

CHELSEA. Right.

KATIE. Right.

(Go back into science demonstation routine)

CHELSEA. Science is fun!

KATIE. Remember girls, just keep your head in the game, and you can really lick this subject! Oh god.

CHELSFA. And whatever field of science you might choose, you can't lose... unless the badgers get you.

FIN.