

(RONA)

And I need to speak with Miss Olive Ostrovsky.

(OLIVE crosses to RONA as the volunteers are coming on stage.)

OLIVE

I'm Olive.

RONA

(pulls her gently aside)

Miss Ostrovsky. It seems we haven't received your entrance fee.

OLIVE

Entrance fee?

RONA

Did the school not tell you about the twenty-five dollar entrance fee? Is your mom here maybe? Or your dad?

OLIVE

My dad had to go into work. He's gonna try to come later.

RONA

Who brought you to the bee, dear?

OLIVE

The bus.

RONA

All right. We'll talk about the entrance fee later. Take your seat.

(indicates that she should sit back down)

~~CHIP~~

~~(to the "new girl," taking her under his wing)~~

~~Hey, Marcy? Don't be nervous. Just watch what I do.~~

~~MARCY~~

~~Don't worry, I'm not nervous.~~

~~SCHWARZY~~

~~(to Coneybear)~~

~~Have you ever been in an underground gymnasium before?~~

~~(line changes with theater configuration - eg: Have you ever been in a gymnasium with chandeliers before?)~~

~~CONEYBEAR~~

~~(delighted at all that's new to him today)~~

~~I've never been in a gymnasium before!~~

~~OLIVE~~

~~(to Barfee)~~

~~What school do you go to?~~

~~BARFEE~~

~~Shot up.~~

RONA

[Optional ad-libs as spellers get seated "Take your seats, please. Put your things away" only if additional time needed for everyone to settle in. The object is to keep things moving.]

Ladies and Gentleman, all the children you see on stage are here because of their extraordinary ability and love of language—but only one of them can go on to compete in the National Spelling Bee! And this year, to celebrate our silver anniversary, our local sponsors, the Putnam Optometrists, are offering today's winner a two hundred dollar savings bond toward his or her future education.

(KIDS respond.)

RONA

But remember, to get here each child had to win—

CONEYBEAR

Oh but I —

RONA

or place — in their own district bee — so each of them is already a winner.

BARFEE

(may have echolalia problem)

Already a winner.

END

RONA

Hello, I'm Rona Lisa Peretti, and I'm pleased to be back for my 9th consecutive year as your host. Unfortunately, our usual word pronouncer, Superintendent Spriggs has [fallen ill]*, so please join me in welcoming back Vice Principal Douglas Panch from Lake Hemingway-Dos Passos Junior High. Vice Principal Panch is returning to us after a five-year hiatus — so thank you Douglas for stepping in on such short notice.

*[Ad lib note: "fallen ill" = occasional ad lib space. Illness is sometimes replaced with a topical or local reference. For example, when Dick Cheney's hunting accident was in the news — "has been injured in a hunting accident"; in an area of heavy traffic — "is stuck in traffic on Route x"; but the default is also fine.]