

## **Grit versus Greed in Laguna Hills' "Radium Girls"**

written by Akemi Nishida, a junior, at University High School

At the peak of the American Industrial Revolution, business is booming in female employed radium dial factories. The factory workers, known as Radium Girls, are relatively satisfied with their work; decent wages and good company are enough to distract from the strangely persistent ache in their jaws. But as women begin dying of mysterious causes and their employers continue to stay silent, the Radium Girls have no choice but to fight for justice. Spilling with superb acting and skillful tech, Laguna Hills High School delivers an emotionally explosive performance of "Radium Girls".

Emma van Heeringen brings intense passion to the role of Grace Fryer. She opens the show with optimism, widened eyes and energetic stage presence displaying the character's innocence. Van Heeringen effortlessly transforms her performance as Grace's health gradually deteriorates. Staggering steps and shaky inhales effectively display her slow surrender to the sickness spreading throughout her body.

Delightfully deceptive is J.P. Van Dam as Edward Markley. With crisp enunciation and a snooty saunter, Van Dam effectively embodies a callous corporate businessman. Alongside him is Nicolas Fuller as Arthur Roeder, whose calculatingly clasped hands and nervous pacing suggest his character's moral duality.

Tiny brushes make their way from desktops to radium dials to lips, demonstrating the shocking practices of the radium factories. Wallpaper swatches sprinkle a kitchen table, accomplishing a cozy atmosphere. Paper stacks and briefcases are donned by nearly every businessman, unifying them as one cohesive group. Sarah Hall, Bridger Allen, and Anderson Wurth's props are instrumental and impressive pieces of the storyline.

Hair and makeup, led by Kimi Bartels and Grace Bissonette, ingeniously communicates key plot points. The fun-loving Radium Girls wear their hair in youthful curly bobs, directly contrasting with the sleek low bun of their no-nonsense supervisor Mrs. McNeil. Additionally, special effects makeup is masterfully executed to illustrate the Radium Girls' declining health. Exposed lesions along the jawline indicate a more serious stage of sickness, and are cleverly arranged in constant visibility around the actors' masks.

Overflowing with technical talent and acting expertise, Laguna Hills' "Radium Girls" is a glowing production.