



**Sample Pages from
Chaired**

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THE ART OF REJECTION

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CHAired

BY
Christian Kiley



The Art of Rejection

Two One Act Plays by Christian Kiley

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Chaired

Characters

Potential: Afraid to stand up.

Older Sibling: Bossy and controlling.

Teacher: Never gives Potential a chance.

Perfect: Can do no wrong.

Coach: Doesn't trust Potential.

Friend: Wants to help if it is convenient.

Critic: Disagrees with everything.

Panicked Person: Scared of everything.

Offstage Monster: The monster's voice.

Offstage Voice: Reactions to the monster.

Rival: A bully with a short attention span.

Person in Need: Needs to make a "critical" phone call.

Motivator: A mediocre motivator.

Thought: The compassionate supporter.

All characters are gender neutral. Please change pronouns to reflect the gender of the actor.

Setting

Here.

Time

Now.

Author's Note

Chaired was developed with the generous help of members of the Etiwanda High School (Etiwanda, CA) Advanced Acting class. The playwright would like to acknowledge: Alexandria Smith, Kenny Gonzalez, Jr., Karisa Quick, Eric Olney, and Cameron Brown for their contributions to this project.

POTENTIAL: But why would someone do this to a 47-year-old man who lives with his mother and whose most valuable possession is a collection of dismembered G.I. Joe dolls?

OLDER SIBLING: Ah, the skepticism of youth.

POTENTIAL: You are fifteen months older than I am.

OLDER SIBLING: Precisely. It took Wiley Post only seven days to fly around the world. And that was 1933. Fifteen months equates to many, many trips around the world by today's standards. You can't possibly understand.

POTENTIAL: I don't want to fly around the world, but everyone eventually has to go out into the world.

OLDER SIBLING: Yeah, I guess you're right.

POTENTIAL starts to get up and OLDER SIBLING pushes POTENTIAL down.

OLDER SIBLING: Just not yet.

POTENTIAL lets out a deep sigh as OLDER SIBLING exits. Enter PERFECT who sits in the other chair and TEACHER who is in front of the class.

TEACHER: Class, today we are going to talk about the greatest love story ever told. Who knows the title of this great work?

POTENTIAL's hand shoots up first as does PERFECT's hand but clearly after POTENTIAL's hand.

TEACHER: Yes, Perfect.

PERFECT: Medea is the greatest love story ever told.

TEACHER: Intriguing answer, stimulating, unconventional, and... brilliant. Absolutely correct.

PERFECT: Thank you maestro.

POTENTIAL: Okay, you have Romeo and Juliet without question at the top of the list and you say Medea, a woman who uses her own children as pawns in a power struggle that eventually leads to their premature and untimely murder. Yeah, my heart is jumping all over the place.

TEACHER: You seem upset, Potential. Perhaps you would like to step outside and get some air.

COACH: Will someone please defend number twenty-four? Hey, that wasn't really a question you oafs. Do it! Twenty-four is like Godzilla, only with mad skills.

POTENTIAL: It's interesting that the name Godzilla is actually a combination of the Japanese words gorilla and whale. He is also known as The King of the Monsters, or Gigantis, and is aquatic, which many people don't realize because he is often depicted crushing buildings and other structures.

COACH blows the whistle at POTENTIAL.

COACH: Freak it down a notch Dr. Frankenfreak! I need someone to stop number twenty-four. You up for that?

POTENTIAL looks up and down the bench which is of course empty.

POTENTIAL: Well, I guess I'm it.

POTENTIAL starts to get up and just as he is about to stand up completely COACH blows the whistle and POTENTIAL sits down.

POTENTIAL: I can guard twenty-four. I can do this!

COACH blows the whistle again.

COACH: What you gonna do? Electrocute him?

POTENTIAL: No, no. That would be a bad idea. Godzilla actually draws strength from electricity.

COACH: Then what? What you got there in that little melon that you call a brain?

POTENTIAL: Godzilla has a soft spot under each armpit. Though no one has dared exploit it until... today!

COACH laughs while the whistle is in her mouth making a wheezing sound.

COACH: Armpit. That is classic. You could apply deodorant to number twenty-four's armpits until she submits. Armpit, soft spot. I got a soft spot for you, Potential. I'm gonna keep you on this team, right here on the bench, so you can entertain me with your quirky cornucopia of stories. I like you, Potential. Even though I wouldn't trust you to put my laundry in the dirty clothesbasket, I like you.

COACH continues blowing the whistle in bursts of laughter while exiting. Enter FRIEND looking into the audience.

FRIEND: There she is. This is your chance. Go on. (*POTENTIAL doesn't move*) What are you doing? This is the perfect opportunity.

POTENTIAL: I'm not good with first impressions.

FRIEND: That's fine. You've been in Calculus with her for over four months now. How are you with one-hundred and twenty-second impressions?

POTENTIAL: Maybe I could text her?

FRIEND: Okay stalker. Why don't you send her a ring with your severed finger attached to it?

POTENTIAL: That's certainly not what I was saying.

FRIEND: You're right. When I translate it into chicken all I hear is (*making chicken sounds*).

POTENTIAL starts text messaging very slowly.

FRIEND: What are you doing? By the time you finish the text she will be married and have two kids.

POTENTIAL: Everything in its due course.

FRIEND: That is ridiculous. Do you even know what that means?

POTENTIAL: There is a time and a place for everything.

FRIEND: The time of surrender is 12:17 and the place is here. Should we build a stone monument to commemorate the occasion? The nice thing is that I'm certain you could hold still long enough for the sculptor to complete it.

POTENTIAL: I am not a historical site on the outskirts of some ghost town that people reluctantly stop at, when all they really have to do is pee, so that they can feel like they are eating their intellectual vegetables. I am a person... a person who has been confined and thwarted and uninspired by those with the stewardship to mentor and guide me. So I elect to stay seated; I make the choice not to pursue every gazelle in the reserve like a deranged romantic lion, and I have decided that it is okay for me to stand when I am ready and not one second before. Got it?

FRIEND has lost interest and noticing someone downstage talks to the person and follows him/her offstage.

FRIEND: I would lick the bottom of your shoes because your feet never touch the ground. I would sleep forever if I could just have one continuous nightmare about you. No, no. It's meant to be a compliment. You're not a nightmare.

POTENTIAL starts to get up but is stopped by CRITIC.

CRITIC: What exactly is going on here?

POTENTIAL: Hello.

CRITIC: Please dispense with the pleasantries. Shouldn't you be somewhere? Somewhere important?

POTENTIAL: No. I really don't think so.

CRITIC: Sure you do.

POTENTIAL: No I don't.

CRITIC: Of course.

POTENTIAL: Not really.

CRITIC: Yes.

POTENTIAL: No.

CRITIC makes a disapproving sound and POTENTIAL responds with a more upbeat one. CRITIC makes a disapproving gesture, POTENTIAL does the opposite. CRITIC sighs with disappointment and POTENTIAL responds with a giggle or other upbeat sound.

CRITIC: Well, I can see that you are heading for a life of...

CRITIC starts to walk off.

POTENTIAL: A life of... of... what? What is it a life of? A life. A life.

PANICKED PERSON enters in a fit of anxious fury. Throughout the scene PANICKED PERSON tries to get POTENTIAL to get up and exit.

PANICKED PERSON: Run, run for your life. It's coming.

POTENTIAL: *(calmly)* What? What is coming?

PANICKED PERSON: Did you ever read Jabberwocky?

POTENTIAL: Yes.

PANICKED PERSON: Well, it's far worse than that.

POTENTIAL: This is utter nonsense.

PANICKED PERSON: Perhaps, but will you risk it?

POTENTIAL: Sitting here is not a risk. Trust me. Listening to some poem that a giant egg recites and trying to make sense of it, now that is risky. And I know about risk. I have been dodging it all of my life.

Offstage a member of the cast makes an overly-dramatic and corny monster sound.

PANICKED PERSON: Did you hear it? It's closing in... its fangs are like rusty daggers and its jaw is like an industrial trash compactor.

The offstage cast members start to make noises, including more monster-growling. The response lines offstage can be delivered by one or more cast members.

OFFSTAGE VOICE: It is the most horrific thing I have ever seen but I can't look away. *(A loud noise indicating that someone has fallen)* I knew it. I just knew it. I knew my lack of shoelace-tying ability would lead to my untimely demise. If only I could have properly tied a double knot I would have survived. Ironic that most of life is spent untying knots and solving problems, and what I really need right now is a big, fat, knot.

The OFFSTAGE VOICE screams and we hear chewing and eating sounds.

PANICKED PERSON: *(starting to exit)* Please, for the love of everything sweet and innocent in the world, take my hand and we will flee from this beast.

POTENTIAL: I used to be terrified of the monsters in my closet, so much so that I couldn't sleep. Until I realized that they were my only true friends, and that the real monsters were out there.

PANICKED PERSON: *(running off)* I wish I could stay. I imagine I could learn a lot from you. Goodbye.

POTENTIAL: Bye.

The OFFSTAGE MONSTER noise builds and POTENTIAL continues to sit.

POTENTIAL: *(to the MONSTER)* This is my chair, and you're not taking it with your over-the-top-predictable-monster character acting.

The OFFSTAGE MONSTER lets out a perplexed grunt and disappears. RIVAL skulks in behind POTENTIAL.

RIVAL: So I see you've been keeping my chair warm for me.

POTENTIAL: My chair.

RIVAL: You know how this works. Give it up and everything will be copasetic.

POTENTIAL: No. And not to overstate the extremely obvious, but there is another chair right there.

RIVAL: I want your chair.

POTENTIAL: No.

RIVAL: Then I guess I'll wait you out.

Both POTENTIAL and RIVAL stare straight out "waiting each other out." It lasts only about two seconds and RIVAL quickly moves offstage.

RIVAL: You're pretty tough. But I'll be back with reinforcements.

RIVAL exits. Enter PERSON IN NEED in a distraught state.

PERSON IN NEED: I can't get it. I just can't.

POTENTIAL: *(leaning forward)* Do you need help?

PERSON IN NEED: I can't... I just can't.

POTENTIAL: Maybe I might be able to help.

PERSON IN NEED: I... am trying... to get cell... service... to vote for Fabriolla Featherduster as America's Next Flash-in-the-Pan Pseudo Shooting Star destined to crash into anonymity before anyone can even pronounce her name.

POTENTIAL: Here, you can have my phone.

PERSON IN NEED: Thanks.

PERSON IN NEED stands motionless and POTENTIAL remains seated.

POTENTIAL: Aren't you going to come and get it?

PERSON IN NEED: Certainly you were intending to complete your act of generosity.

POTENTIAL: Listen, here it is. If you want it you can have it. And I mean you can have it. It can be one of your prized material possessions.

PERSON IN NEED: Do you know who really suffers because of your selfishness? Fabriolla.

PERSON IN NEED starts to exit.

POTENTIAL: Here. Take it. You can have the phone. (*PERSON IN NEED exits and POTENTIAL continues to call after PERSON IN NEED*) I have unlimited... minutes. Minutes!

Enter MOTIVATOR with a sweeping cross.

MOTIVATOR: Minutes. What are you doing with your minutes? Tick, tick, tick.

POTENTIAL: I'm sitting, alright? Just sitting.

MOTIVATOR: Is this what you want from your life?

POTENTIAL: I am storing energy.

MOTIVATOR: You should live in the moment. Don't save anything. All energy can be recycled.

POTENTIAL: I am imagining a clandestine power plant somewhere in the Himalayas where my energy is swirling around on puree in some nuclear blender.

MOTIVATOR: Whatever image helps you take the plunge, the risk, the jump, the chance, that thing that will separate you from the others. So what about it?

POTENTIAL: Your little motivational commercial may work on most of the people all of the time. But it won't work on me.

MOTIVATOR: Just scoot forward in your chair. Start with that.

POTENTIAL: No.

MOTIVATOR: Think about your favorite fruit.

POTENTIAL: Rutabaga.

MOTIVATOR: Isn't that a vegetable?

POTENTIAL: But there is rutabaga pie. Don't pies have fruit in them?

MOTIVATOR: There is also pumpkin pie.

POTENTIAL: And chicken pot pie.

MOTIVATOR: And mincemeat pie. What is that anyway?

POTENTIAL: I believe it is spiced meat and dried fruit, usually served in sweet puff pastry. Or as a tart, which does not have the top layer of pastry.

MOTIVATOR sits down in the other chair.

MOTIVATOR: That's remarkable.

POTENTIAL: Not really, my Great Aunt was a pastry chef in Gloucester.

MOTIVATOR: I'm hungry.

POTENTIAL: There is a doughnut place just around the corner.

MOTIVATOR: I love the holes. But why don't they call them plugs? The word "holes" seems so pessimistic.

POTENTIAL: True. Do you like the chair?

MOTIVATOR: Yes. I stand too much.

POTENTIAL: Take it then.

MOTIVATOR: Really? Thanks.

MOTIVATOR exits with a chair. POTENTIAL stares straight out. A voice, THOUGHT, speaks. THOUGHT should be sitting in the audience dressed as other audience members might be dressed.

THOUGHT: Hey.

POTENTIAL: Yes?

THOUGHT: Take a risk.

Without getting out of it, POTENTIAL scoots the chair downstage a little. Music can be used in this final scene to underscore and can build as the scene progresses.

THOUGHT: How did that feel?

POTENTIAL: Alright.

POTENTIAL moves the chair downstage even further.

THOUGHT: More.

POTENTIAL: Really?

POTENTIAL moves the chair even further downstage.

THOUGHT: Do you want to stop there?

POTENTIAL moves the chair even further downstage.

THOUGHT: Progress?

POTENTIAL: I don't want to call it anything.

THOUGHT: Good enough.

POTENTIAL: Will you laugh?

THOUGHT: Certainly not.

POTENTIAL sits frozen.

THOUGHT: I will not laugh.

POTENTIAL: Promise?

THOUGHT: I do. I do promise.

POTENTIAL slowly and with some trepidation begins to stand up on the chair until POTENTIAL is standing confidently on the chair, arms outstretched in a full body celebration.

POTENTIAL: I think I've found it. My velocity.

A smile begins to form on POTENTIAL's face as the music rises and the lights fade to black.

— THE END —

Production Notes

Chaired can be performed with two chairs and the following props:

Teacher's edition textbook (used by Teacher)

Whistle (used by Coach)

Cell Phone (used by Potential)



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