



Sample Pages from **The Art of Rejection: Two One Act Plays**

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THE ART OF REJECTION

THE ART OF REJECTION
CHAIRED

BY
Christian Kiley



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The Art of Rejection

Two One Act Plays by Christian Kiley

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The Art of Rejection

Characters

One: Ensemble, Team Captain, Beggar.

Two: Ensemble, Team Captain, Anti-Odd Leader.

Three: Ensemble, Cast List Spotter, Awards Host.

Four: Ensemble, Actor, Therapist.

Five: Ensemble, Actor, Nosey Relative.

Six: Ensemble, Actor, "Yep" Relative.

Seven: Ensemble, Actor.

Eight: Ensemble, Actor.

Nine: Ensemble, Actor.

Ten: Ensemble, Actor.

Eleven: Ensemble, Intense Actor.

Twelve: Ensemble, R's Ex.

Thirteen: Ensemble, Twelve's New Flame.

Fourteen: Ensemble, R's Sibling, ATM.

Fifteen: Ensemble, Boss.

R: The only letter. Constantly ridiculed.

All the characters are gender neutral. In the first production, R was a male character and thus is marked as such in the script. Feel free to change the pronouns to reflect the gender of the actors.

Setting

Here.

Time

Now.

CHRISTIAN KILEY

The Art of Rejection was produced by the Etiwanda High School (Etiwanda, CA) Theatre Arts Department and premiered on December 8, 2007 at the Rancho Cucamonga High School One-Act Festival where it was awarded First Place. Cameron Brown was awarded Best Actor for his portrayal of R, and Kenny Gonzalez, Jr. was awarded Outstanding Performer for his portrayal of Five. The playwright would like to sincerely thank the cast for their talent and creative input during the rehearsal process.

One: Raven Takahashi

Two: Kayleigh McDaniel

Three: Tiara Brooks

Four: Reanna Cadena

Five: Kenny Gonzalez, Jr.

Six: Christina Pagel

Seven: Tiffany Gail

Eight: Christopher Butler

Nine: Eric Olney

Ten: Alyssa Alexander

Eleven: Alexandria Smith

Twelve: Brianne Kadlec

Thirteen: Paul An

Fourteen: Karisa Quick

Fifteen: Ashley Harwich

R: Cameron Brown

Light Design: Justin Gardner

Sound Design: Elliot Buckner

Fifteen actors stand facing downstage. They each wear a black shirt numbered one through fifteen. Another character, R, stands on a chair behind the group in a hooded sweatshirt with the letter “R” on it.

ONE: ...When I was six...

TWO: ...I had a nightmare that...

THREE: ...I fell off my bike...

FOUR: ...and onto a conveyor belt...

FIVE: ...lined with titanium spikes...

SIX: ...but none of my major organs were punctured...

SEVEN: ...so, although the pain was excruciating...

EIGHT: ...I lived... but in the worst kind of pain imaginable.

NINE: ...But at least it was sterile.

TEN: ...It was a pure and untainted kind of agony.

ELEVEN: ...Until the conveyor belt dropped me into a vat...

TWELVE: ...of fresh-squeezed lemonade.

THIRTEEN: ...And I think we all know how dirty that can be.

FOURTEEN: ...All those hands squeezing the lemons.

FIFTEEN: ...Because you know one person wearing latex gloves...

ONE: ...did not squeeze the whole thing.

TWO: ...And the odds are...

THREE: ...that at least one of the squeezers...

FOUR: ...did some unsanitary action during the squeezing...

FIVE: ...and the result is a massive infection to all...

SIX: ...my now open wounds.

SEVEN: ...To compound the situation...

EIGHT: ...I was dried off with high grit cayenne chili sandpaper...

NINE: ...and left to suffer the humiliation of being...

TEN: ...made into the world's largest single piece of jerky...

ELEVEN: ...while a pack of acid-tongued hyenas ridiculed and cackled at me...

TWELVE: ...and invited my former junior high best friend to hit me repeatedly...

THIRTEEN: ...with a freakishly large and grossly expired candy cane...

FOURTEEN: ...coated with giant fire ants who had just finished...

FIFTEEN: ...fasting for a decade.

ONE: And when I woke up I realized that I would rather my plight be exponentially more grotesque and painful than this if I didn't have to suffer one more single moment of...

ALL: Rejection.

The ensemble stands in a line with two captains, ONE and TWO, picking teams. As the numbers are selected they move next to the captain that has selected them, until only R remains.

ONE: I pick... Three.

TWO: Four.

ONE: Five.

TWO: Oh, let me see. Six.

ONE: Tough. That was going to be my pick. Seven.

TWO: I guess... Eight.

ONE: Nine.

TWO: Ten.

ONE: Alright, Eleven.

TWO: Twelve.

ONE: Thirteen... I suppose.

TWO: How about... Fourteen.

ONE: Fifteen.

TWO: Do I have to?

ONE: You have to take him (*referring to R who is now standing alone*).

TWO: We're better off playing one short.

ONE: That might be true, but...

R: This is kick ball. Kick ball. There isn't even a professional league or anything for this. It's not like the proficient ones will be able to get a doctorate in this and write books about it and make money or achieve any kind of success. This is the only place I have ever seen a kick ball field, and to be honest I think it was intended for softball.

ONE: We'll pick you first if we ever play speech and debate at recess.

THREE: The cast list is up!

The ensemble rushes downstage center to look at the cast list. We see reactions as people try to see what roles they got.

FOUR: Ophelia, yes!

FIVE: I can't believe I got the lead... Hamlet baby! Narcissistic Nirvana!

SIX: The Queen... death by poison. That's the Mercedes of deaths.

SEVEN: Lady in Waiting. I love lines.

EIGHT: An apparition! The most recognized ghost in the history of Denmark. Shakespeare himself played this role!

NINE: Claudius! I would poison my babysitter for an extra cookie. This is for me.

TEN: This must be some kind of mistake... Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Both of them? I'll divide my face in half and play them both brilliantly.

The numbers are celebrating and giving each other high-fives as they exit. They clear out and R steps forward. Looks at the list and clearly does not see his name. While thumbing through the script, ELEVEN stands next to R.

ELEVEN: What'd you get?

R shakes his head and starts to walk off.

ELEVEN: You can always help with the concessions. Oh, wait, the culinary club has that covered. You could twirl a sign outside the theatre to help advertise. A little underground PR. Because it

wouldn't be school sanctioned or endorsed. So you might have to haul butt if the cops come by.

R: This is fifth grade. Why are we doing Hamlet anyway?

ELEVEN: It's Hamlet Jr. actually. Gertrude drinks from a poisoned juice box instead of a chalice. The big sword fight is actually a thumb war, and instead of a poisoned-dipped rapier, Laertes puts liquid paper on his thumb nail. There's a lot of cool symbolism. Like instead of Yorick's skull, it is his funny bone that Hamlet pulls out of his grave. Get it, jester, funny bone?

As R laments his not being cast, TWELVE and THIRTEEN enter. One is male and one is female. The female is throwing rose petals as she blissfully skips on stage. The male moves downstage with a dumbbell and starts doing curls.

R: Hey, Twelve. Do you have a minute to talk?

TWELVE: A whole minute. I don't know. The average person only gets 38,460,642 minutes.

R: Well, you're far from average.

TWELVE: Still, I don't know.

R: Let me cut right to the chase then. You, me, the dance.

TWELVE: You got two-thirds of it right. Me, the dance, and... Thirteen.

THIRTEEN: Did you call my little dozen?

R: Her name is Twelve.

TWELVE: I like dozen, reminds me of roses.

R: You've changed.

TWELVE: It's not me, it's you.

R: Aren't you supposed to say it the other way around to throw me a figurative bone of sympathy?

TWELVE: Those birds you thought you saw were not love birds, but vultures. And they're going to pick that bone clean.

THIRTEEN: (to R) Loser.

TWELVE and THIRTEEN exit arm in arm. FOURTEEN enters and approaches R with a letter.

FOURTEEN: This came in the mail for you today.

R: Alright! It's from State University.

FOURTEEN: Aren't you scared?

R: I've been working for this my entire life. The late nights, the AP classes, the college courses, the extra curricular activities and it all comes down to this.

FOURTEEN: Good luck.

R opens the envelope and scans the letter.

R: How could this happen to me?

R rips up the letter. FOURTEEN frantically picks up the pieces of the letter.

FOURTEEN: I still get your room, right? I mean, I know this is not the best time. But Mom and Dad promised, and I didn't think it was contingent upon your acceptance.

FOURTEEN exits. FIFTEEN enters and moves the chair/stool center.

FIFTEEN: R, could I talk to you for a minute?

R: Well, I only have about 38,460,642 of those. But who's counting. I mean, besides my ex-girlfriend. Am I right?

FIFTEEN: I just wanted to let you know about the promotion first, before word got around.

FIFTEEN seems to offer the chair to R but then abruptly sits in it.

R: Thanks, Ms. Fifteen. Thanks a lot.

FIFTEEN: I'm giving it to One.

R: One...really. One.

FIFTEEN: Sorry, kiddo I... this is the way things go sometimes. You'll bounce back.

R: Thanks, Ms. F. I'd better get back to work.

FIFTEEN: Actually, corporate is asking us to cut back and... this is hard for me, but I'm going to have to let you go.

R: I... I'm not sure what to do, or say, or...

FIFTEEN: We'll mail you your last check.

R: Yeah.

FIFTEEN exits. R goes to sit down on a bench or chair and just as he does, a member of the ensemble rushes on with a sign that reads "WET PAINT."

R: Even paint thwarts me. I at least hope it's semi-gloss.

ONE enters and holds out a cup and is asking for change.

ONE: Could you spare a dollar for someone who is down on their luck?

R: Here you go friend. (*putting a bill into the cup*)

ONE: No thanks. Not from you.

R: Why? My money spends just like any other.

ONE: Yes, but you are trying to change your luck. I won't be a catalyst for your metamorphosis. I can't risk being pulled into your spiraling free fall into the mire.

R: It's more like a mud bath in here, really. And you said that you were down on your luck.

ONE: Down, but not that far down.

TWO enters and begins to make an important announcement. As the announcement is being delivered, the other numbers enter to hear the news.

TWO: May I have your attention please. All the odd numbers please vacate the premises immediately.

THREE: That seems rather arbitrary.

FIVE: It certainly does. I've lived in this community since I was a little integer.

TWO: It's nothing personal. You're not divisible by me, and that's it.

SEVEN: I'm prime, I have rights.

TWO: You're not divisible by anything.

NINE: I am. By three.

TWO: Look, we can do this smoothly and easily, or...

R: What? What are you going to do to them?

TWO: You are a rabble-rouser. You need to leave also.

R: Fine. We'll leave, but we'll be back.

ELEVEN: Look, don't heap us into a group with you.

R: This is an injustice.

ELEVEN: Things like this happen all the time. They'll let us back... eventually.

R: But you don't need to leave at all.

THIRTEEN: Just do yourself a favor and go away.

All the numbers exit except for FOURTEEN.

R: Alright.

R approaches FOURTEEN who is representing an ATM.

R: I'll just get a little cash and get away for a while. A nice trip, that's what I need.

R slides his card into the ATM.

FOURTEEN: Enter your PIN number please.

R enters the PIN number.

FOURTEEN: Invalid.

R: Probably just punched it in wrong.

R enters it again.

FOURTEEN: Invalid.

R: Come on! (*R motions to strike the ATM.*)

FOURTEEN: Surveillance cameras from several angles are capturing your every move.

Two members of the ensemble enter holding cameras. They move around R as if "capturing his every move."

R: Alright, I'll try again. After all, I am the person, you the machine.

FOURTEEN: Warning. Your PIN number must be entered correctly this time or your card will be confiscated and chopped up into

pieces and those pieces placed in a time capsule and launched into the future where they will be fused together with sophisticated lasers the likes of which your puny brain could not comprehend, and your account balance at the time will be sent to every communications device available, and there will be many, many of these, and the entire universe will see that you have only twelve dollars and thirty-seven cents in your account. And with the inflation of centuries, this will be an even more Lilliputian figure than it is today.

R: No pressure. Just enter the numbers.

R enters the numbers again.

FOURTEEN: I am sorry for the inconvenience, but that was not the correct PIN.

R: No!

FOURTEEN: Have a great day.

FOURTEEN exits. R pulls a coin out of his pocket.

R: I'll flip this coin. My last coin. Heads I persevere, tails I wait for a moving truck or falling church organ or something to take me out.

R flips the coin.

R: Tails. (again) Tails. (again) Tails. (A few times in a row.) Tails, tails, tails... tails, tails. (*He turns and throws the coin offstage. A coin is immediately thrown back at him.*) With my luck it will sprout into a grove of money trees that someone will harvest for millions of dollars.

THREE enters and moves downstage ignoring R.

THREE: Ladies and gentlemen it is my pleasure to announce the “Best Person of All Time Award.” (*The other numbers enter to hear the news.*) This award is given out only once and comes with unlimited funding to do whatever you want. Heck, just keep doing what you were doing, you’re the best person of all time, who am I to tell you what to do? And the winner is everyone on the planet earth except those individuals on death row, unless you can honestly look me in the eyes and tell me without your fingers crossed that you did not do it, and then what the heck, you can have a share too. Congratulations to the over six billion winners!

THREE starts handing out trophies or similar awards.

R: I finally won something! I did it! I-

THREE: Pardon me everyone. I don't mean to interrupt the celebration here, but also someone named R... you are with those guilty death row people.

R: I am... I am... not a winner. I'm not...

If a trophy has been given to R, it is abruptly taken back. All the numbers exit laughing. R should reveal a medal around his/her neck. FOUR enters and places a chair downstage as if it is for R but puts a dead plant on it when R tries to sit down.

FOUR: So what you're saying is that you're a loser?

R: That's a little harsh.

FOUR: What's that around your neck?

R: Oh... a medal that I won in the second grade spelling bee.

FOUR: You won. Good that's something to build on.

R: Actually, I came in sixth place.

FOUR: Still an accomplishment nonetheless.

R: There were seven students in the competition and Gretchen locked her knees and passed out. She's the only one I beat. And honestly she would have beaten me.

FOUR: Why do you wear it then?

R: Don't know, just do.

FOUR: Listen, Mr. R, I don't normally deal with self-esteem issues.

R: Please, I just... give me a chance to show you. I could be one of those come-back-story case studies that you write a book about.

FOUR: Actually I've got a kleptomaniac-pyromaniac who steals items and then lights them on fire. Now that's someone who is a defeatist-perfectionist. You can't wallow on the fringe of this thing. If you're going to be a loser, be the best loser you can be. Anyway, that's all I've got for you. You better go. My next patient thinks he is the rock that Arthur pulled Excalibur out of.

FOUR exits. R follows FOUR and is intercepted by FIVE and SIX.

FIVE: R is that you? Oh, you look terrible. Just terrible. Doesn't he?

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CHRISTIAN KILEY

SIX: Yep.

R: I just... just a little down on my luck.

FIVE: Oh, nonsense. We just need to find you a nice vowel to marry.
Isn't that right?

SIX: Yep.

FIVE: A vowel. An O. You would love an O. Just say it.

R: No I'd rather-

FIVE: Say it!

R: O!

FIVE: How was that?

R: Fine, fine.

FIVE: More than fine! Am I right?

SIX: Yep.

FIVE: Fine, don't marry an O. Turn your back on your family. See if I care. But I am going to tell your mother.

R: She might as well know.

FIVE: And I shouldn't tell you this, but you are an ungrateful little consonant.

SIX: Yep.

FIVE: You were adopted! And your mother wanted to let you keep your real name. But I told her, give him a number I said. Look at all the possibilities for numbers. Addresses, phone numbers... I mean, could you imagine being a social security number?

SIX: Yep.

FIVE: We're leaving. But do yourself a favor and find yourself a vowel to settle down with. This swinging lifestyle has got to stop! Look at you with that bling. Is that what they call it?

SIX: Yep.

FIVE and SIX exit.

R: Actually, it's my second grade... forget it.

Each number crosses from one side of the stage to the other. R stands in the middle getting bumped and pushed. As each number passes R they should make him feel excluded, picked on, and unloved. Certainly ad libs can be used here at the discretion of the director.

ONE: I pick... anyone but you.

TWO: Even odd numbers have more rights than... you.

THREE: (gives R a prize) Winner. (takes it back) Sorry, not you.

FOUR: Sixth place. What a shame.

FIVE: Ungrateful little consonant.

SIX: Yep.

SEVEN: (makes a sneezing sound) Loser.

EIGHT: R for reject.

NINE: Welcome to Loserville, population, you.

TEN: Better you than me.

ELEVEN: Why even bother trying?

TWELVE: I love Thirteen, I hate R, I love Thirteen, I hate R, I love Thirteen...

THIRTEEN: I got the girl... you got... nothing.

FOURTEEN: I got your room.

FIFTEEN: Didn't I fire you?

R: I've had it! You and you and you and you, all of you have made me feel so low and unable to do anything special that I just want to crawl back into the womb. But my mother would never go for it, for a number of reasons. Chief among them that I am too big and would need a garden hose for an umbilical cord. Then I thought I would invent an adult napping chamber called "The Womb", but I couldn't handle the possibility of failure, and could never find an artificial material that realistically felt like a womb. Regardless of the fact that even inanimate objects seem to take joy in my demise, I will make this pledge that I will transform like the great figures of literature... Odysseus, Edgar, you may not know him but he had to disguise himself in King Lear, that Little Mermaid with the whole tail to legs thing, pretty impressive, and those robots that literally transform into cars. They're actually called

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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