



Sample Pages from The Perils of Modern Education

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THE PERILS OF MODERN EDUCATION

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT BY
Matt Webster



The Perils of Modern Education

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Casting

3M+19 Either, Doubling Possible

The characters in this play have been written as gender-neutral whenever possible. For example, when a character's name is "Jess" it can be considered as a shortened version of Jessica or Jessie. "Donna" can easily be "Donald", "Don" can be "Dawn", "Seth" can be "Beth" and "Mrs. Wakalowski" can be "Mr. Wakalowski". Even the "Silent Student" is not inherently female.

For historical and traditional (testing) purposes, the characters playing Romeo in *Standardized* are male, as is William Shakespeare in *The Tragic Writings of William Shakespeare*, but it is the author's intent that the genders of the rest of the characters can shift as dictated by your pool of performers.

Free to double or triple cast as desired. The play can be performed with a cast as small as 6 or as large as 22.

Scenic note

When this play was originally performed, it was done so with blocks, benches and chairs that were shifted around to make a variety of simple settings that could evoke general locations around a typical school.

Directors are certainly welcome to create more elaborate settings for these scenes, but they are not required as envisioned in the original concept for this play.

Scenes may be shortened for competition purposes.

Original Production

The Perils of Modern Education was originally performed at Rocky River High School in Mint Hill North Carolina with the following cast:

Megan Moore

Ashante' White

Haleigh Deaton

Taylor Kroh

Jordan Fe-Acher

Malachi Laguerre

The production was directed by Matt Webster.

**Morning Person Part I:
1st Bell/First Rush**

The stage is empty except for a couple of stage boxes or other simple furniture. There is a single student (SILENT STUDENT) sitting by herself upstage right, face down in her phone over the course of the scene. As the other students come staggering out one and two at a time, half asleep, groggy and grumpy, they do not notice or acknowledge her. They congregate downstage. The first bell is about to ring.

WENDY: Ugg...I am sooo tired.

BRADLEY: Who are you telling? I didn't go to bed until two.

HOLLY: You went to bed at two?! You're lucky. At two I was just getting started.

CHIP: I know, right? I was on that thing all night. I maybe got two hours of sleep last night.

WENDY: And the worst part is I didn't even finish it. I still have to organize the cards.

HOLLY: Aw, crap! The cards...!

CHIP: Cards?

BRADLEY: Yeah. You have to present a minimum of 15 cards.

CHIP: Oh. No worries. I have a whole box of cards.

WENDY: Box of cards...?

CHIP: Yep. I got the expansion pack.

HOLLY: Expansion pack...? What are you talking about?

CHIP: Super-smash Poképets online world tournament. Isn't that why you guys were up all night?

BRADLEY: No! We were up all night because of that stupid project in Ms. Jenkins' class.

CHIP: That AP history project is due today?

WENDY: Yes. Why else would we all stay up all night?

CHIP: See. This is why I don't do homework.

EMMA enters full of energy and sunshine. She is a “morning person.” She has a cardboard tri-fold presentation board all filled in with the history assignment. It is neat, organized and professional looking. A stack of cards is clipped to the top. She also has a backpack, handbag and a large “to go” cup of coffee. (Note: The other characters genuinely like EMMA and are truly her friends. Their dialogue should be presented with that in mind.)

EMMA: Good morning guys!

Various grumpy grunts and acknowledgements from the others.

EMMA: *(crossing to each character and giving them a hug)* Wow! What a night! Even though I’ve been working on Ms. Jenkins’ project for weeks I can’t believe I got it all done in time. That assignment was a beast! Especially when you build in the extra credit and 3D model. Whew! I mean, I barely had time to play in that online tournament...

HOLLY: What?!

EMMA: Oh yeah. I loves me some Super-Smash Poképets! Last night was the 46th time I made it to the finals.

CHIP: You made it to the finals?!

EMMA: Yep. I made it all the way to the Forest of Indescribable Peril, but I got beat by “PokéPlayer!” He’s really good.

CHIP: Good?! He created the game!

EMMA: Well, he does beat me about every fifth time we meet in the finals, so he was due. Oh, and Chip, you did some nice work last night too, by the way! You came really close to breaking out of the Petting Zoo of Unbelievable Cuteness this time. Good job!

WENDY: You’ve never made it out of the petting zoo...?!

CHIP: It’s harder than it sounds.

HOLLY: Geez, Emma! What time did YOU go to bed...?!

EMMA: Oh, I didn’t go to bed.

BRADLEY: What?

EMMA: Truth be told, I’ve been up since Tuesday.

CHIP: Tuesday...?!

WENDY: Then why in the world are you so dang perky?

Over the next few lines EMMA becomes more and more manic, building to a caffeine-induced wild-eyed frenzy...

EMMA: Because I'm a MORNING person!

CHIP: Ugh.

EMMA: I LOVE morning!

HOLLY: So. Much. Hate.

BRADLEY: Don't hate too much. I'm sure the large coffee has something to do with it as well.

EMMA: Oh, it's not a coffee.

WENDY: It's not?

EMMA: Nope! It's a Trenta, triple espresso. Double tall. Red eye...

CHIP: Dear God!

EMMA: Two pumps syrup. Two shots caffeine booster...

HOLLY: You're not human.

EMMA: And extra whipped cream!

WENDY: Geez Emma, I can hear your heart racing from here...

BRADLEY: Told ya...

Bell rings.

EMMA: I LOVE MORNING!!!!!!

EMMA runs off screaming like a mad woman, past SILENT STUDENT sitting upstage. The girl nearly jumps out of her skin in surprise and fright. She looks questioningly at the others onstage...

HOLLY: (with a shrug) Morning person.

Blackout.

The Tragic Writings of William Shakespeare

At rise SETH, MORGAN and JESS, dressed in modern clothes, are sitting in a common area of a school. They each have a backpack with one of WILLIAM's manuscripts in them. NOTE: Their interactions with SHAKESPEARE are genuinely intended to be helpful. They are not mocking him or trying to fool him.

SETH: No. No way. That was not nachos! You cannot just pour orange slop over toast triangles and eggs and call it breakfast nachos.

MORGAN: Well they have it call it something.

JESS: Mexi-vomit? Chicken snot...?

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE enters. He is a bit nerdy and nervous. If at all possible, he should be dressed in Elizabethan garb, but if that cannot be arranged, his clothes need to look foreign.

SHAKESPEARE: Greetings my co-mates and brothers in education.

MORGAN: Will!

JESS: Willy!

SETH: William! William Shakespeare. Great to see you, Willster. How's our favorite exchange student?

SHAKESPEARE: Verily, I am well. I thank thee for thy inquiry.

MORGAN: I just love your accent!

SHAKESPEARE: And I yours. Perchance now I might inquire: Did'st thou receive the writings for admission to university, which I sent along henceforth?

SETH: Did we? They're all we've been reading for the past two days. We can't put them down.

The three pull the manuscripts out of their backpacks over the next few lines.

SHAKESPEARE: They are to your liking?

JESS: Like 'em? We love 'em!

SHAKESPEARE: Oh, praise be to our larken. So relieved am I to hear such welcome tidings.

MORGAN: Yeah, they're really...interesting. What made you want to write scripts for your college essay anyway?

SHAKESPEARE: Lady Franklin of the Office of Guidance made plain to me that success best lay in works where my strengths do lie. Therefore, I thought it best to tailor my writings to a scripted form.

SETH: Well they sure are different...

SHAKESPEARE: Marvelous! So worried was I that my writing would not be...

SETH: ...just a couple of small changes and these things will be dynamite!

SHAKESPEARE: Pardon me?

JESS: Oh, yeah. There is some real potential here. We're talking classics of Western Literature. You just need to spice them up a bit.

SHAKESPEARE: Spice?

SETH: Yeah. Spice. Pop. Zazz. You know, give the admissions board something to talk about.

MORGAN: Take this one here (*she picks up her script – reads...*) *Romeo and Juliet*. Great story. Just great. Very *High School Musical* - only dark. Like *High School Musical* meets *Twilight*. Love it! Just a couple of minor changes and this thing will be the key to unlock your college dreams.

SHAKESPEARE: Changes? What changes can't thou mean?

SETH: Well let's start with the names for starters. *Romeo and Juliet*?

JESS: Really? Could you be more "This is my parents' tragedy?"

SETH: Yeah. No one is going to believe *Romeo and Juliet*. You need better names. Newer names.

MORGAN: How about "Troy and Stacy" or "Brad and Paris." Wow! I mean that right there just got you into 10 more colleges.

SHAKESPEARE: By my troth, I know not what to say...

SETH: And another thing, do they have to die at the end?

JESS: I mean, two things: One – There's dark and there's depressing, and you are leaning over that line.

MORGAN: You make it dark and you are tapping into the kind of emotional vulnerability that admission directors just love.

SETH: You go depressing and you have two councilors, a minister and a uniformed police officer coming over to your house at ten o'clock at night to "check on you."

JESS/SETH/MORGAN: Ouch.

JESS: Right, and two – Dead title characters have been done to death. In a matter of speaking. So...

MORGAN: Oh! What if they go into hiding? Or hibernation! "*Their love is frozen until passion and science sets them free...*" WOW! I just got chills there. Did you guys get chills?

SHAKESPEARE: I feel not cold...

SETH: And what's with the sex scene!?

JESS: Awkward...

SHAKESPEARE: Thou cans't not grieve over such trifles. The lovers are of a proper age for wooing.

MORGAN: They're fourteen!

JESS: That's fine for wooing, but you have them doing something that rhymes with "wooing."

SHAKESPEARE: ...Rhymes with...?

MORGAN: Look that may be how things are done where you are from, but there are laws here! And school boards and church groups and...

SETH: Right. Right. Okay, so you make them eighteen and... Hold on! As long as we are making them older, what if we set this thing in the future?

SHAKESPEARE: ...future?

MORGAN: I think I see where you are going with this. It can be a long distance text romance!

JESS: Everything is Face-timed and Snap-Chatted! (*Feel free to substitute these apps with any current social/video app and adjust the following line accordingly*)

SHAKESPEARE: Face-snapped...?

MORGAN: And the Friar and Nurse are both advice apps with coding flaws!

JESS: Hello technology angle! This is the stuff Cal-Tech and MIT dream about...

SHAKESPEARE: But the play is a tragedy!

SETH: You bet it is. It's a tragedy we didn't think of this before. And speaking of tragic, let's look at this one (*picks up his script*) *King Lear*. Remind these two what this one's about again?

SHAKESPEARE: Lear portends the heartrending story of a king racked with age and infirmity, who is thus duped by his eldest daughters Goneril and Regan to disclaim his youngest child Cordelia.

SETH: Man, what is it with you and names?

JESS: Yeah. It sounds like a social disease and politician trashing a debutante.

MORGAN: Okay, from now on you call them Cathy, Debbie and Trixie.

SHAKESPEARE: Stay thy flawed advice friends. I must dispute thy chosen monikers. None shall believe such provincial names for royal blood.

SETH: Sure they will.

JESS: It's only a name.

MORGAN: I mean, what's in a name? That which we call a girl by any other name would still lie and cheat.

SETH: Hey, that's good.

MORGAN: Thanks!

JESS: (*to SHAKESPEARE*) You should write that down.

SETH: Okay. Back to *Lear*. Cut to the chase, how does it all end?

SHAKESPEARE: King Lear succumbs to madness, the sisters betray each other, and the good king too late realizes his youngest daughter has to him been true all along.

JESS: Yeesh. Needs work.

MORGAN: Yeah. I just saw on Reddit that the cutting edge essays are the ones that get noticed.

SETH: Let's try this – Lear's old, but he doesn't know he's old. In his mind he's young. He's hip.

MORGAN: I'm seeing a Denzel or a Clooney.

SETH: And it's not the old that makes him crazy, it's the medication.

JESS: Ben Gay. Ensure. Viagra. The works!

SETH: And he's still a king, but not the king of some withered old European kingdom, not our guy, no, he's the king of Hollywood! You with me so far?

SHAKESPEARE: Wait. No. What? Pray tell, what is a Denzel?

MORGAN: Now let's fix the sisters. The older ones are super popular. I'm talking *Mean Girls*.

SHAKESPEARE: This sounds nonsense! How can't they be both mean and yet popular still? They are traitorous!

JESS: Wow. You really AREN'T from around here are you...?

MORGAN: Never mind that. Listen Will, you will never get away with telling a story where the bad guys win. Colleges want applicants to have a "good moral compass." I think, what's her name, Cordelia? Yeah. Cordelia should end up marrying a stockbroker and getting her own talk show.

SETH: And the other two end up as losing contestants on *The Bachelor*!

JESS: Oh snap!

SHAKESPEARE: Forsooth! All this mad amending of my writings surely cannot be necessary?

SETH: It's not just necessary, it's mandatory. I'm telling you, make the changes we're suggesting and you will have your pick of the best American colleges out there.

JESS: We're talking top tier, Ivy League, your-mama-can't-afford-to-send-you, schools.

SETH: You keep this stuff the way it is and at best you end up at some obscure state school like "Tumbleweed Tech" or "East Podunk U."

MORGAN: Or worse still, (*insert local college name*).

SHAKESPEARE: Well what thinks thou of *Hamlet*? Surely the text of *Hamlet* does not warrant any amendment?

SETH: Amendment...?

MORGAN: SAT word.

JESS: Means change.

SETH: Change? Change!? More like spray with cat urine and light on fire.

JESS: (*Takes script*) What a convoluted, boring piece of claptrap this thing was.

SETH: Could you have crammed a few more insignificant characters in this thing?

MORGAN: And ghosts!

JESS: You actually wrote a ghost story as a college application submission?

SETH: I can hear the interview question now: "Who was your literary influence, *Scooby-Doo*?"

JESS: I don't even know where to start with this thing.

SHAKESPEARE: But surely you must find esteem in the humors of these characters. Their human foibles are portrayed diligently. They are at the same time rich, layered and moody.

SETH: So's a Dove Bar, but I'm pretty sure the College Board doesn't want it shoved down their throat...

SHAKESPEARE: But, my fellows...

JESS: Listen William, you've got talent, you really do, but these are American colleges you are applying to.

SHAKESPEARE: So?

SETH: So? American colleges aren't looking for the next great literary genius. They are looking for students who meet minimum standards and fit in the right boxes.

MORGAN: Haven't you heard of Equal Opportunity Programs? Level playing fields? Unified School Districts? Standardized Tests?

JESS: They have a formula.

SETH: And it's pretty obvious these things don't fit in that formula.

SHAKESPEARE: Alas. The subtle intricacies of a university education eludes me...

MORGAN: Don't sweat it, Willie. It's even tough for American kids.

JESS: Yeah, and we grew up with this mess!

SHAKESPEARE: For your candid estimation of my writings, I give you thanks friends.

MORGAN: That's all right. It's why we're here.

SETH: Yeah. We got your back.

SHAKESPEARE exits sadly...

JESS: Poor guy. He's really not college material.

MORGAN: *(looking at her phone)* Whoops! Hey guys, we have to get to Mr. Walker's class. We were supposed to help Einstein with his math homework five minutes ago!

SETH: Let's go. That guy needs all the help he can get...

Characters exit. Blackout.

Morning Person Part 2: 2nd Bell/Headache Hell

ANNE and DON are waiting in a common area.

ANNE: Come on! Where is she? We only have five minutes between classes...

DON: She has got to bring us those cards! I need time to go over them in second period.

ANNE: I know! Jenkins will eat you alive if you are "not prepared." I mean, I heard she made Tony Wilkins cry...!

DON: Wait. Tony Wilkins? Isn't he that guy who was born without tear ducts?

ANNE: Yep. They call him "Dry Eye Tony" and she had him bawling like a baby. Only without the tears. Dry crying. Horrible...

DON: Look, all I know is that I cannot get another bad grade in her class or my mom will kill me!

ANNE: Me too! That's why I fought so hard to be in Emma's group. She is always such a bundle of energy.

DON: Who are you telling? She's like sunshine in a dress.

ANNE: (*looking offstage*) Is that her?

DON: Yes. Oh, thank goodness! Here she comes...

EMMA staggers in. She is the opposite of sunshine. Her face is squinty and distorted. She is suffering from a giant caffeine headache. She has the trifold, backpack and purse but not the coffee cup. She is dragging the trifold behind her like it weighs 1,000 pounds. ANNE and DON rush towards her. Talking excitedly at the same time.

ANNE and DON: (*overlapping*) There you are! Where are the cards? Where have you been? The bell's gonna ring...

EMMA: Shhhhhh...!!!! (*EMMA should play her lines with exaggerated, barely controlled, gestures for maximum effect*)

ANNE: Where have you been? We've...

EMMA: (*gestures to make them stop talking and speaks gibberish*) Hab-bab...!

DON: We really need those...

EMMA: (*gestures and gibberish*) Hab-bab-bab...!

ANNE: Can you just give us the...

EMMA: (*gestures*) No talk...! No talk. Headache...

DON: Emma, we need...

EMMA: Need coffee...

ANNE: They don't have coffee at school, sweetie.

EMMA: Need caffeine...

DON: Maybe you can find a Red Bull at lunch. Look, Emma, we really need the cards for Jenkins' class.

EMMA: Need Advil...

ANNE: (*gently*) Emma, focus...

EMMA: STOP SCREAMING AT ME!!

DON has noticed the cards attached to the trifold.

DON: Hold on... I think I found them. (*pulls the cards off the trifold*) Emma, are these the cards?

EMMA: Why is an elephant stabbing my brain with an electric eel...?

ANNE: (*looking at cards*) Yep, that's them. Let's go while we still have a little time before class.

DON: Okay. Bye Emma. See you in fourth.

ANNE: Hope you feel better.

DON and ANNE exit. EMMA sits, squinting and miserable. Upstage, the SILENT STUDENT from the first EMMA scene walks across the stage texting into her phone without making a sound.

EMMA: (*not turning around*) STOP TEXTING SO LOUD...!!!

STUDENT jumps in surprise, looks around to see who is being yelled at, realizes she is the only person on stage besides EMMA and slowly walks offstage staring at EMMA. EMMA is alone on stage when...

Bell Rings.

EMMA screams in pain.

Fast Blackout.

Team Green

In the cafeteria. KATELYN and DONNA walk up to the food service line. At the end of the line running the register is MRS. WAKALOWSKI, the overenthusiastic lunch lady. She is a complete fan girl over KATELYN. Her fawning is done without a hint of sarcasm.

DONNA: Wow. I can't believe it! There's almost nobody here!

KATELYN: What did I tell you?

DONNA: I don't think I have ever walked right up to the food before. It usually takes 10 minutes just to order.

KATELYN: Preferential lunch times. Like I was saying, it's just one of the many perks of being on "Team Green."

DONNA: It's so exciting!

KATELYN: Well don't get too excited. Even though you are my last interview, the club still needs to take its final vote on new members and not everyone who applies gets in.

DONNA: Don't remind me, I'm already so nervous. *(to the lunch lady)*
Good morning Mrs. Wakalowski!

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: *(preoccupied with her paperwork)* Good morning. We aren't quite open yet so... *(finally looking up)* Oh. My. Goodness. Is that? Oh, my. Yes it is. Yes it is!! It's the esteemed president of the Green Team. In MY line! I have waited so long for this. To what do I owe this most joyous of occasions?

KATELYN: Today is the big day.

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: *(gasps)* THE big day?!? Ohh...! Okay, now I'm all a-titter. Wow. The big day. And I am watching it happen. *(takes a selfie with the girls)* Wow. *(pause)* What big day?

KATELYN: Team Green is choosing its new members and I am showing Donna what it takes to make the team.

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: And so you brought her to my cafeteria? And came to MY line. I am honored. I might cry. Well, you still have a couple of minutes before the food is served so please, relax, enjoy. I will be over here marking the occasion in my diary.

MRS. WAKALOWSKI goes to her register, pulls out a journal and frantically starts to write.

DONNA: What was that?

KATELYN: Don't worry about her. She loves me.

DONNA: I guess...!

KATELYN: Let's have a seat.

DONNA: Okay.

The girls move to a table downstage.

KATELYN: What were we talking about?

DONNA: So you were telling me why Team Green is so valuable on college applications...?

KATELYN: Oh, yes! It's all very exciting, really. We go around on different missions each weekend and target a neighborhood or a business that could be greener. Then we take actions that persuade people to make changes that can help the environment. It is the kind of leadership and community service that colleges lose their minds over.

DONNA: I bet!

KATELYN: In fact, last weekend we were in (*insert local city or neighborhood here*) knocking on doors making sure people sort their recycling.

DONNA: You're kidding.

KATELYN: What?

DONNA: That's really hardcore. I don't know if I can do that...

KATELYN: Sure you can. I mean you're probably doing it already. Do you sort your bottles from your cans and your plastics from your papers?

DONNA: Of course!

KATELYN: Well there you go! If you can, they can. There's nothing to worry about. Just help people stick with the basics: Recycle the recyclables and don't buy products that harm the environment.

DONNA: Well how do I know what those are?

KATELYN: It takes some research. If you want to be on the team, you've got to make an effort, otherwise you're just another out of touch hypocrite.

DONNA: I don't want to be a hypocrite.

KATELYN: And I don't want you to miss the team! But it doesn't look like that's going to be a problem.

DONNA: You mean...?

KATELYN: Well, nothing is official until we vote, but I have a good feeling about you. Hey! It looks like they are ready to open the lunch line. Let's get lunch and I will let the rest of the team know that you are good to go as soon just as we are finished eating.

DONNA: Great! I'm starving...

The girls walk back to the lunch line. MRS. WAKALOWSKI gets up and walks behind the counter to serve the girls. Throughout the following scene MRS. WAKALOWSKI can either scratch down (and scratch out) the constant orders on a little pad, or if you have a register (or something that represents a register) that you can use, she can punch in and then delete each item.

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: Oh good, you came back. I was so worried! So, what'll it be today madam president?

KATELYN: What is the Team Green freebie today?

DONNA: Freebie?

KATELYN: Another perk of Team Green. We always get a free side.

DONNA: Shut up...!

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: It's fries. Golden delicious french fries. Nectar of the gods...

DONNA: All right! I'll take those, please Mrs. W...

KATELYN: Hold on.

DONNA: What?

KATELYN: Are those fries from the district supplier?

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: (*confused*) No. They're from the freezer.

KATELYN: Well I'm afraid we'll have to take a pass then.

DONNA: What? Why?!

KATELYN: Sulfides. Those fries contain sulfides.

DONNA: So?

KATELYN: So?? That stuff is poison.

DONNA: But they're free!

KATELYN: I appreciate that, but if you are allergic that stuff can kill you. How would you like to fall over dead before "B" lunch even starts? Imagine how that would make Mrs. Wakalowski feel!

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: You're right. It would be the death of me. I don't know how I would go on. Thank you for looking out for me.

DONNA: Seriously...?

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: She's like a guardian angel...

DONNA: But they are free!

KATELYN: Forget about it, Donna. Free or not, at the very least that stuff would give you a mean headache. You'll thank me later when you are on the team. Remember...?

DONNA: You're right. You're right. Thanks. (*looking at the choices*) Hmmmm... Okay, I think I'll have the roast beef sandwich and the spinach salad.

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: An excellent choice. And for the queen of green?

KATELYN: Hold on. Are you seriously going to have a spinach salad?

DONNA: What's wrong with a spinach salad?

KATELYN: Do you know how many E. coli outbreaks have been traced to raw spinach?

DONNA: Ew! What?

KATELYN: That stuff is practically swimming in fecal coliform!

DONNA: Katelyn!

KATELYN: It's true!

DONNA: You're insulting Mrs. Wakalowski.

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: She's not insulting me. I never trusted spinach. Too green and leafy...

KATELYN: Trust me on this one, Donna.

DONNA: A regular salad then.

KATELYN: They all come from the same processing plant. It's all cross-contaminated: lettuce, green onions, broccoli...

DONNA: Fine. What's the soup of the day? Soup's okay isn't it? Boiling kills it, right?

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: Chicken with rice.

DONNA: Sounds good.

KATELYN: Wait.

DONNA: What?

KATELYN: White rice or brown?

DONNA: What difference does it make?

KATELYN: Brown rice is full of fiber and nutrients. White rice is a starch bomb ready to go off in your lower intestine.

DONNA: Mrs. Wakalowski?

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: Boom.

DONNA: Okay! Know what? Forget the soup, just give me the sandwich.

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: Of course. No soup, just sandwich...

KATELYN: Hang on a second. Who supplies your meat?

DONNA: Now what?

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: Where does our meat come from? Ooo. Good question...

DONNA: What's the problem now?

KATELYN: No meat from South American Amazon farms. Ten acres are destroyed every second in the name of cheap commercial beef, so by the time you finished your sandwich you will have eaten three square miles of pristine rainforest.

DONNA: But she doesn't even know who supplies...

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: Oh dear.

DONNA: What?

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: I'm afraid I've seen Hispanic markings on the sides of beef we receive...

KATELYN: See?

DONNA: (to MRS. WAKALOWSKI) Is it like this every day?

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: You bet it is. It's a *lifestyle*...!

KATELYN: Donna! Do you want to make a difference or not?

DONNA: Yes. Of course. Sorry.

KATELYN: Well?

DONNA: All right. What would *you* recommend?

KATELYN: To begin with, stop supporting the cruel and inhumane slaughter of cows and just order something light.

DONNA: Okay. You're right. Something light... Umm... Can I have the tuna salad sandwich on white...

KATELYN: Starch.

DONNA: Wheat! No lettuce!

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: Are you sure...?

DONNA: I don't know. (to KATELYN) Am I?

KATELYN: Dolphins.

DONNA: Oh, for the love of...

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: Of course! The *dolphins*...

KATELYN: Beautiful, majestic dolphins.

DONNA: All right.

KATELYN: Highly intelligent dolphins being stuffed into tiny cans...

DONNA: All right.

KATELYN: ...with this impossibly thin mermaid with huge boobs on the label.

DONNA: I get it.

KATELYN: I mean who looks like that? It's a total male, corporate-world fantasy. Don't even get me started on what that does to a young girl's self-image: anorexia, bulimia, bingeing and purging, explosive diarrhea...

DONNA: I GOT IT!! Thank you.

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: Oh, dear. You two need to hurry. The lunch rush is about to begin. Is there *anything* I can get you?

DONNA: A Coke.

KATELYN: Why don't you just YANK your teeth out?

DONNA: A Diet Coke.

KATELYN: Artificial sweeteners are proven carcinogens.

DONNA: Some juice.

KATELYN: Nothing but refined sugar and food coloring.

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: This is so exciting...!

DONNA: A GLASS OF WATER!

KATELYN: Pharmaceutical wastes.

DONNA: Purified! And a fruit salad.

KATELYN: Picked by exploited immigrants with no rights or dignity.

DONNA: Pizza! (*KATELYN starts to object*) No bread. Or cheese! Just the tomato sauce!

KATELYN: From genetically altered and irradiated tomatoes. You would get more nutrition eating a picture of a tomato.

DONNA: A carrot!

KATELYN: Better.

DONNA: Lightly rinsed.

KATELYN: Sending all the vitamins right down the drain.

DONNA: Dirty!!

KATELYN: Yuck.

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: Are you done? Wow. That was amazing. I mean...just...WOW! (*to DONNA*) Now, just to be clear let me read your order back to you.

DONNA: Fine.

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: (*reading from her pad/screen*) A glass of water and a dirty carrot.

DONNA: Yes.

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: And would you like an Advil to go with that?

DONNA: Sure.

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: I'll see what the chef can whip up. And for you, Madam President?

KATELYN: Can I get the usual?

MRS. WAKALOWSKI: The roast beef sandwich and the house salad, extra dressing, coming up.

DONNA: What!?!?

KATELYN: Well, duh! The point is to get you to change YOUR lifestyle. I couldn't live like that, I'd starve.

Blackout.

Morning Person Part 3: 3rd Bell/Prelude to the Crash

The SILENT STUDENT from the previous scenes is standing in the hallway outside of Ms. Jenkins' class looking at her phone. She is waiting to go into the class across the hallway from Jenkins.

EMMA enters, disoriented. She has the trifold, but doesn't really know why.

EMMA: Hey.

SILENT STUDENT glances up, notices EMMA, and does a panicked double take.

EMMA: Can you help me?

SILENT STUDENT looks around to see whom EMMA is talking to and is horrified to realize she is the only other person there. EMMA does not notice.

EMMA: Great. Look, I've got this cardboard thingy here and I'm not sure why.

SILENT STUDENT desperately looks for someone, anyone, to save her from what she considers to be the greatest threat to her personal safety.

EMMA: I think there were some cards with it. Some kind of cards... Have you seen some cards?

SILENT STUDENT nervously shrugs and shakes her head "I don't know."

EMMA: I like cards. All kinds of cards; Playing cards, note cards, Super-smash Poképet cards...

SILENT STUDENT nervously smiles and nods still feeling trapped in a nightmare and trying to get the bell to ring faster.

EMMA: I also had a presentation board. A great big giant three-fold job. I don't know where THAT'S gone... *(she is literally holding it in her hands)*

SILENT STUDENT stares at EMMA. She is confused.

EMMA: I think I put a lot of work into that thing. I'm gonna be really bummed if I lost it...

SILENT STUDENT slowly points to the board in EMMA's hands. EMMA looks to where the girl is pointing and sees the board in her hands.

EMMA: Hey! You found it! Thanks! You're really nice.

SILENT STUDENT smiles an "Aw it was nothing" smile and relaxes a bit.

EMMA: Now maybe you can help me find my presidential taco truck...

SILENT STUDENT's eyes go wide and she is back to wondering if she trapped with a crazy person.

EMMA: No. Wait. Not taco truck. What's that thing that sounds like taco truck?

SILENT STUDENT gives a nervous shrug and looks around again for help.

EMMA: Cards. My presidential cards...

SILENT STUDENT gives her a look that says: "Seriously?!"

EMMA: I think I need those for something in 4th period. Something big...

SILENT STUDENT points at the presentation board again suggesting wordlessly "That?"

EMMA: (looks at the board) Hey! That's right! I have that big presentation right now in Jenkins' class. Wow. You're a lifesaver...

SILENT STUDENT shrugs "Well, you know..."

EMMA: Okay. Wish me luck...! (EMMA falls dead asleep on her feet)

SILENT STUDENT smiles at EMMA, takes a beat, then realizes EMMA is asleep. EMMA snores loudly. The girl looks around to see if anyone else saw what just happened. No one else is there. She waves her hand in front of EMMA. Nothing. She snaps at EMMA. Nothing. She cautiously pokes EMMA in the shoulder. EMMA is instantly wide-awake.

EMMA: Okay. Wish me luck...! (exits stage right)

As EMMA leaves, SILENT STUDENT snaps a surreptitious picture of her. When EMMA has left the stage SILENT STUDENT frantically texts into her

phone and posts the picture. She shakes her head in disbelief and exits stage left.

Bell rings.

Blackout.

Standardized

Drama classroom in a typical American high school. Students are sitting around the space talking and looking at their phones. MS. WHITE enters carrying a large manila envelope. The SILENT STUDENT from the “Morning Person” scenes follows MS. WHITE around with a clipboard. Even though she still does not speak, in THIS classroom she is “That” student. The teacher’s pet/stage manager/know-it-all student who is in her element and in her glory as MS. WHITE’s “right hand man.” Throughout this scene she will pantomime much of what MS. WHITE says as a visual punctuation to MS. WHITE’s lines. The other students simply accept her for who/what she is, and deal with the testing challenges as they are presented.

MS. WHITE: Good morning guys. Hey! Where’s everybody else?

JULES: Mr. Hind took them out back to work on the set. The paint finally came in. He said he talked to you about it?

MS. WHITE: Oh, thank goodness. We were supposed to start that last week.

MEGAN: Yeah. He was pretty excited.

MS. WHITE: Well I’m glad he’s got something to keep the tech kids busy, because I finally got the practice packet for the new state exam for Theatre. (*SILENT STUDENT holds up manila envelope*) This will give me a chance to go over it with you guys.

TIFF: The what?

MS. WHITE: The standardized test that you guys are going to have to pass this year.

PERRY: But this is Theatre!

MS. WHITE: I know. But the state has put new assessments in place in order for teachers to prove they are competent and the ONLY way to do that is for you guys to take a standardized test.

SILENT STUDENT hands over the envelope.

MEGAN: Wait. WE have to take a test to prove YOU are competent?

JULES: How does THAT work?

MS. WHITE: I guess that's what we are about to find out. (*opens envelope*) Okay, let's see... (*SILENT STUDENT points to testing paper*) Ah! Looks like we are going to be tested on *Romeo and Juliet*.

TIFF: All right! That was our spring show last year. We got this.

PERRY: So what kind of test is it? Essay? Multiple choice?

MS. WHITE: (*SILENT STUDENT points again*) It's a performance-based test!

*General enthusiasm from the class "We got this!"
"Easy." "Finally!" "Are you kidding?!?"*

MEGAN: So what do we need to do?

MS. WHITE: You guys will perform a scene from the play and I will record you. Then I will upload the video and it will be assessed.

JULES: No problem, Ms. White. You are as good as tenured!

MS. WHITE: Tenure doesn't exist any more, sweetie. It's long gone. Just like Mr. White. (*SILENT STUDENT hands her a paper from the envelope*) Oh! And here is the practice test.

PERRY: Bring it on, Ms. W.

MS. WHITE: Okay. Step one: Memorize.

TIFF: Done.

MS. WHITE: Well that's 35 points right there!

MEGAN: Easiest. Test. Ever.

JULES: What's next?

MS. WHITE: Step two: Perform the following scene using the attached rubric. And that scene is... (*SILENT STUDENT confidently hands her the sides/scripts*) *The Balcony Scene*.

TIFF: Okay Jules, that's us. Let's light this candle Romeo!

JULES: Way ahead of you, Juliet. I'm back from the dead and ready for testing!

MS. WHITE: Go ahead and set up the scene like we staged it for the show and let's see how we did. (MS. WHITE moves to the edge of the stage. SILENT STUDENT is a step ahead of her with a chair in place, ready for MS. WHITE.) Oh, thank you...

SILENT STUDENT responds with a respectful nod and stands just behind MS. WHITE looking over her shoulder. JULES and TIFF move to another part of the stage. TIFF climbs on a stage box. They perform the scene quite well. As they perform it, MS. WHITE continues to look through the paperwork overseen by the SILENT STUDENT.

JULES: (as ROMEO)

**But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief...**

**See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand!
O, that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch that cheek!**

TIFF: (as JULIET) **Ay me!**

JULES: (as ROMEO) **She speaks:
O, speak again, bright angel!**

TIFF: (as JULIET)
**O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.**

JULES: (as ROMEO)
(aside) **Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?**

TIFF: (as JULIET)
**'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet...**

SILENT STUDENT has noticed something on the paperwork and urgently points it out to MS. WHITE.

MS. WHITE: Hold on...

TIFF: What's the matter?

MS. WHITE: (*SILENT STUDENT pantomimes this information*) According to the testing rubric Juliet is supposed to be on a balcony 6 feet high by 8 feet wide.

MEGAN: What?

MS. WHITE: (*SILENT STUDENT continues to pantomime*) With a three and a half foot railing, escape stairs and 4 inch wide planks. Plus it's supposed to be painted pink. Well, coral really. They included blueprints. And a paint chip. (*SILENT STUDENT hold up a paint chip*)

PERRY: But our set didn't look like that. And besides, when we struck it we threw half that stuff away.

MS. WHITE: If the balcony isn't standard it's minus 20 points. It looks like we can use a block if our space won't support a balcony, but that is minus 35 points, and we only get one block.

MEGAN: Then I guess we have to ask Mr. Hind to build another balcony.

PERRY: Did they give us any money for this?

MS. WHITE: Oh, you are adorable! It says we should use "Standard stock."

MEGAN: But we don't have that stuff in stock. Can't we use what we have and make it work?

MS. WHITE: I'm afraid not. It says, quote: "For purposes of assessment, all scenic elements must be standardized. 20 points."

JULES: Well there's nothing we can do about that right now. Let's just play out the scene and see what kind of points we can recover.

TIFF: How high does that thing need to be?

MS. WHITE: (*SILENT STUDENT gestures*) Six feet.

TIFF: Okay, that's going to be a problem.

MS. WHITE: What?

TIFF: I'm afraid of heights, remember. Anything over 3 feet and I have a panic attack.

PERRY: You have got to be kidding.

TIFF: And my nose bleeds.

MEGAN: So THAT'S why our set was so short...!

JULES: Well then someone else is going to have to play Juliet.

MEGAN: Can we do that?

MS. WHITE: Let me see what the rubric says. (*SILENT STUDENT points to rubric/clipboard and shakes head*) Oops. Hold on.

TIFF: What? Can't someone else play Juliet?

MS. WHITE: Not quite, Tiff.

JULES: Wait. Don't tell me. There can only be one Juliet, right?

MS. WHITE: Nope. Just the opposite actually. EVERYONE has to play Juliet. Well, at least all the girls...

TIFF: What?!

MS. WHITE: Yep, it's right here. Quote "All girls must play Juliet, all boys must play Romeo."

PERRY: But I'm not the Romeo type!

MEGAN: Tell me about it...

PERRY: Yeah! I'm not good at...what...? (*to MEGAN*) Hey!

JULES: Well at least we'll be playing different scenes, right Ms. W?

MS. WHITE: I'm afraid not. Everyone needs to play the exact same scene.

TIFF: You've got to be kidding! We are all going to do the exact same scene?

MS. WHITE: It looks like a different rubric for each class level, but... (*SILENT STUDENT shows her the paperwork*) yes. The same scene for each class. Standardized.

JULES: So you are going to have to watch the same scene, like, what? 20 times?

MS. WHITE: More like 50 when you add all my classes. So I have that to look forward to. Just like my upcoming colonoscopy...

TIFF: What about your beginning theatre class? Doesn't it only have, like, 5 guys in it? What are the rest of the girls going to do?

MEGAN: I guess they are gonna have to have some girl Romeos.

JULES: Nope. That's not gonna happen.

MEGAN: Why not?

PERRY: Because that's not standardized.

MS. WHITE: Bingo! Perry for the win.

TIFF: Then they won't be able to take the test.

MS. WHITE: Everybody has to take it or I fail the assessment.

TIFF: What?! That's completely unfair!

MS. WHITE: Not to worry Tiff, according to the state (*SILENT STUDENT holds up clipboard with paperwork on it for MS. WHITE to read*) "In the event of gender disparity in the population of your classroom, scenes may be performed by a single student multiple times with multiple partners."

JULES: That sounds dirty. And boring.

MEGAN: Well imagine how boring it is going to be for Ms. White! She is going to have to direct the same scene over and over again.

MS. WHITE: Oh, I'm not directing, I'm just administering.

TIFF: But you're not an administrator, you're a DIRECTOR!

MS. WHITE: Look guys, I'm not thrilled about this either, but there is nothing we can do about it. It's a standardized test: I am required to give it. You are required to take it. And I am required to be assessed from the results. Let's just do our best and get on with our lives, all right? (*general agreement from the group*) Okay, since Tiff can't be on a balcony without bleeding out, let's give Perry and Megan a chance to play the scene and see what we can do to score the most points possible.

PERRY: Come on, Megan.

MEGAN: Right behind you, Romeo.

MS. WHITE: Here are your sides. (*SILENT STUDENT hands them some papers*) Okay, for the moment, let's pretend you are standing on the standard Shakespearian balcony Juliet.

MEGAN: I can get on a block. It's less points, but it's better than nothing.

MS. WHITE: Sure. Go ahead. Be careful. Don't bleed.

TIFF: Hey...!



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