

AMUSE BOUCHE

(PRONOUNCED AAH-MYUZ BOOSH)

7 SHORT PLAYS FOR ACTING IN EVERYDAY LIFE

By Greg Cummings

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ISBN: 978-1-61588-384-4

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AMUSE-BOUCHE
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7 SHORT PLAYS FOR ACTING IN EVERYDAY LIFE
By Greg Cummings

SYNOPSIS: High school students will surprise you. They just will, and the best we can do is accept the surprises and roll with the twists, turns, foreign cultures, ball sports, and throbbing hearts. This is an entire series of short plays all about teens transforming themselves into *anything* but themselves. The surprises keep rolling one after another in this wonderful series of seven short plays all about teens "wowing" the world with their highly-creative awesomeness. (*Awesomeness is the only word we could think of to describe these young adults.*)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2-11 females, 2-10 males, 3-8 either, doubling possible, gender flexible)

CYRANO IN THE CAFETERIA

DYLAN (m)
RUTHIE (f)
KURT (m)

AURORA BOREALIS

AURORA (f)
MISS DUDLEY (f)

AMUSE BOUCHE

DAVID (m)
ELISE (f)
JOYCE (f)

ZEN IN THE ART OF BASKETBALL

ANNOUNCER (f/m)
PATRICK (m)
REF (f/m)
NADINE (f)
LARRY (m)
DOUG (m)
DOTTIE (f)
ELYSIUM (f/m)

SHAKESPEARE, AND ZOE, IN LOVE

ZOE (f)
DEREK (m)

GARY'S METAMORPHOSIS

GARY (m)
FATHER (m)
MOTHER (f)
SISTER (f)

BETTY WHITE'S GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE BALLROOM DANCING

SETH (m)
JEAN (f)
SPIRIT (m)

PRODUCTION HISTORY

This series has been produced at two high schools under the title, *Speaking in Tongues*: La Jolla Country Day School and Cambridge School of Weston.

AWARDS

Betty White's Guide to Effective Ballroom Dancing was voted "People's Choice" at the Lucky Penny Theatre Festival in Napa, CA.

DEDICATION

The cast and crew of the premiere production at
La Jolla Country Day School

Joyce Sparling, Production Assistant Extraordinaire

DO NOT COPY

CYRANO IN THE CAFETERIA

SYNOPSIS: Dylan plays a modern-day Cyrano to help a thick-witted senior impress his senior girlfriend Ruthie. In doing so, Dylan secretly hopes to win Ruthie for himself, but it doesn't quite work out that way.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 2 males)

DYLAN (m).....Poetic. *(15 lines)*

RUTHIE (f).....Pragmatic. *(28 lines)*

KURT (m).....Thick. *(16 lines)*

SCENE: A high school cafeteria.

TIME: Study hall. Present.

COSTUMES

Everyday school attire

PROPS

- Three-ring notebook
- Vase with rose
- Two cans of Mountain Dew
- Napkins
- Straws
- AP English book
- The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* book
- Microphone and earpiece (*listening device*)
- Red and white checkered tablecloth



SETTING: *A high school cafeteria. Up right, a table with chairs. Center, a table with chairs and a box of straws.*

AT RISE: *RUTHIE sits at the table, center, studying assiduously for her upcoming AP English Lit. exam. DYLAN sits at the table up right. He hides behind his three-ring notebook propped in front of him.*

RUTHIE doesn't notice him.

Unnoticed, KURT enters down left. He looks at Ruthie. He stops, listens to a voice in his head, nods, smiles, and exits down left. Pause. Unnoticed, KURT enters down left with a red and white checkered tablecloth. He crosses to RUTHIE'S table and spreads the tablecloth in front of her.

RUTHIE, still studying, doesn't notice him.

KURT stops, listens to the voice in his head, nods, smiles, then exits down left. Pause.

Unnoticed, KURT enters DL with a single rose in a small vase. He crosses to RUTHIE'S table and places it on the tablecloth. RUTHIE, studying, still doesn't notice. KURT stops, listens to the voice in his head, nods, smiles, then exits down left. Pause. Unnoticed, KURT enters down left with two cans of Mountain Dew. He stops, listens to the voice in his head, nods, smiles, then crosses to RUTHIE'S table. He sits and places both cans on the table. RUTHIE remains focused on her studies. KURT listens to the voice in his head: He opens one of the cans, which sprays RUTHIE'S book, which finally gets her attention.

RUTHIE: Kurt!

KURT: Oops! Sorry, Ruthie.

RUTHIE: *(Startled.)* Kurt! What are you doing? What is this? *(Wiping the Mountain Dew from her book.)* Get me a napkin!

KURT: Huh?

RUTHIE: You drenched my AP English book! Get me something! Now!

KURT: *(Listens to the voice in his head.)* Oh! OK, Ruthie!

KURT exits down left, then quickly returns with some napkins. He starts to blot the Mountain Dew from the book. He worsens the situation.

RUTHIE: Give me those! *(She takes the napkins from him and begins to blot her book.)* Oh Kurt, you're here, you might as well sit down for a minute!

KURT: *(Listens to the voice in his head.)* Oh! *(Smiling.)* OK, Ruthie! *(Sits.)*

She finally notices the rose and the tablecloth.

RUTHIE: *(Blotting her book.)* Whoa! Kurt, what are you doing?

KURT: *(Distracted by the voice in his head.)* Huh?

RUTHIE: *(Blotting her book.)* What is all this? You know I've got the AP English exam tomorrow!

KURT: *(Distracted by the voice in his head.)* I...

RUTHIE: *(Blotting her book.)* And you know I always sign out from Study Hall to the cafeteria to study! By myself! Alone! In silence!

KURT: Right. *(Trying to copy the voice in his head.)* "If music be the food of love, play on!

RUTHIE: Excuse me?

KURT struggles mightily to repeat what the voice in his head is saying.

KURT: *(Nearly incomprehensible.)* "If music be the food of love, play on! Give me excess of it; that surfeiting, The appetite may sicken, and so die."

RUTHIE: *(Beat.)* Are you ill?

KURT: *(Distracted by the voice in his head.)* I...

RUTHIE: Never mind! *(Returns to her studying.)* Stay if you like.

DYLAN peeks over his notebook.

KURT: *(Copying the voice in his head.)* "The course of true love never did run smooth."

RUTHIE: *(Loudly, to KURT.)* Kurt! I don't know what you're up to, but I'm trying to stu...

Suddenly, DYLAN'S notebook falls, revealing him speaking into a microphone. Next to him, an open book, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. RUTHIE looks at DYLAN.

RUTHIE: What the...?

DYLAN: Oops.

KURT: (*Copying DYLAN.*) Oops.

DYLAN quickly props the book in front of him and hides behind it. RUTHIE reaches into KURT's ear and extracts a listening device.

RUTHIE: (*Incensed, to KURT.*) An earpiece? An earpiece? (*No response.*) Unbelievable! (*No response.*) Kurt, stay.

RUTHIE, upset, crosses up right and slaps the listening device on the table in front of a nervous DYLAN. KURT is distracted by a box of straws on the table. He begins to play with them.

RUTHIE: (*To DYLAN.*) Hey you! (*DYLAN is too scared to respond.*) Yeah, you! What are you doing? (*No response.*) I said, "Explain yourself, Cyrano de Bergerac!"

DYLAN: (*Struggling to find humor.*) That's... funny.

RUTHIE: (*Angry.*) You think this is funny?

DYLAN: (*Struggling to smile.*) No. Well... maybe: "Cyrano de Bergerac." It's a... perfect literary reference. (*Beat.*) Actually, my name's Dylan.

RUTHIE: I know who you are, Dylan!! I used to babysit you!

DYLAN: I knew you'd remember! Ruthie, that's when it first started!

RUTHIE: That's when what first started?

DYLAN: (*Signifying his attraction for her.*) This!

RUTHIE: This? What this?

DYLAN: (*More boldly signifying his attraction.*) This! You know, (*Winks.*) ...this!

RUTHIE: "This?" Are you kidding me? I'm a senior! You're in middle school!

DYLAN: The course of true love never did run smooth!

RUTHIE: I'm with Kurt!

DYLAN: But you don't love him!

RUTHIE: He's captain of the football team!

DYLAN: But you don't love him!

RUTHIE: (*Somewhat admiringly.*) Look at him! He's cute!

DYLAN: (*Looking at him.*) He's playing with a box of straws! (*Beat.*)

Listen, Ruthie, OK, I get it! He's the same age as you, he plays football, and maybe he looks like somebody's idea of a stereotypical teen heartthrob, but you need more! Ruthie! You're AP English Literature! Your poetry has been in the school literary magazine! And you don't love him! I know you don't!

Pause. RUTHIE sits next to him.

RUTHIE: (*Calmly reasoning with him.*) You're right, Dylan. I don't love him. (*Realizing.*) I don't really love anybody right now. I'm just a senior trying to pass my exams and graduate, you know. (*Beat.*) Listen, Dylan, I'm flattered. Really, I am. (*Smiling.*) And hey, I'm not stupid. I know Kurt's no "Bard of Avon," but he's OK, for me, for right now. And look what he did for me today: the rose, the Shakespeare, (*Smiling.*) the Mountain Dew. Oh, I know you did most of the work, and I know that you were probably hoping I would somehow notice you in the process, or something, but KURT went along with it. He just wants to make me smile, Dylan. And, I don't know, maybe that's all I really need right now. Try to understand. (*Gently.*) You do have a real poetic soul, Dylan, I can see that. And that's wonderful. But I really don't need that right now. OK?

DYLAN: (*Sad, but accepting.*) OK...

DYLAN faces her. They regard each other. KURT has put two straws in his upper lip to simulate tusks.

KURT: (*Dancing, laughing.*) Sweetie! Look at me! I'm a giraffe!

KURT imitates a walrus, and laughs.

RUTHIE: (*Correcting him, resigned to her fate.*) Walrus?

KURT: (*Laughing, dancing his walrus dance.*) Huh?

RUTHIE: You said "giraffe". I think you meant to say "walrus", Kurt.

KURT: *(Laughing, dancing, not fully understanding.)* Giraffe, walrus, whatever! Look at me!

KURT continues his walrus dance.

DYLAN: *(With gentle sarcasm.)* Gee, I don't know, Ruthie, maybe Kurt is "The Bard of Avon."

RUTHIE: *(Sincerely returning DYLAN'S smile.)* Funny.

KURT continues his walrus dance. RUTHIE, resigned, picks up the listening device from the table.

RUTHIE: *(To DYLAN.)* Would you mind?

DYLAN: *(Smiles, resigned.)* T' would be my pleasure, my lady.

RUTHIE crosses to KURT, center. RUTHIE sighs. She places the listening device back in KURT'S ear. She picks up her AP English Lit. book. KURT continues his walrus dance.

RUTHIE: *(Softly, smiling to DYLAN.)* Let's try Sonnet 18, shall we, Cyrano?

DYLAN smiles and flips to Sonnet 18 in his book. RUTHIE takes KURT'S arm, and starts to exit down left with him. As RUTHIE and KURT exit, DYLAN reads Sonnet 18. KURT tries to copy DYLAN'S voice in his ear, but he struggles: The straw "tusks" in his mouth, his walrus dance, and his laughing all impede his concentration.

DYLAN and KURT: *(DYLAN gracefully; KURT struggling.)*

"Sonnet 18: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Thou art more lovely, and more temperate..."

As RUTHIE exits with the still-dancing KURT, she looks over her shoulder at DYLAN. DYLAN looks at RUTHIE; they share a smile.

DYLAN and KURT: *(DYLAN gracefully; KURT struggling.)*

"Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date."

RUTHIE: (*Mouthing these words to DYLAN.*) Thank you.

Fade to black.

THE END

DO NOT COPY

AURORA BOREALIS

SYNOPSIS: Late to class, a beleaguered new student tries to distract her English teacher by acting out scenes from various plays and movies, but first, she needs to take the vocab quiz she missed earlier that day.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 females)

AURORA (f)..... Teen. Lost. Dramatic. *(29 lines)*

MISS DUDLEY (f)..... Teacher. Former actress. *(30 lines)*

SCENE: Miss Dudley's English classroom.

TIME: The present. Block C.

COSTUMES

Everyday clothes

PROPS

- Large tote bag
- Stack of papers to grade



SETTING: *A high school English classroom. [Optional] posters of famous literary figures on the walls.*

Empty chairs in rows. The teacher's desk is down right. In darkness, the first school passing bell. Loud noises of students changing rooms between classes.

AT RISE: *MISS DUDLEY, the English teacher, sits behind her desk, down right. She grades papers.*

The second school passing bell. Pause.

Enter AURORA up left with a flourish. She stops just inside the classroom and poses. AURORA is a theatre girl, she doesn't necessarily act to affect others, she IS theatre. She totes a large bag, and may wear a scarf.

AURORA: *(Posing.)* Oh, that this too, solid flesh should melt!

MISS DUDLEY: *(Not looking up from her papers.)* Have a seat, Aurora.

AURORA: *(Suddenly reserved.)* Yes, Miss Dudley.

AURORA begins to cross from up left to her seat, center.

AURORA: *(Stopping.)* Did you see the fight by the water fountain? It was like Jason Bourne versus Jason Statham!

AURORA acts out the fight, playing both parts.

MISS DUDLEY: *(Not looking up from her papers.)* Aurora.

AURORA: Yes, Miss Dudley.

AURORA continues her cross to her desk, center.

AURORA: *(Crossing.)* I depend so heavily on the kindness of strangers... my candle burns bright at both ends! *(Responding to MISS DUDLEY'S silent admonition.)* Yes, Miss Dudley.

AURORA finally arrives center at her own desk and chair.

AURORA: *(To her imaginary dog.)* Oh, Toto! There's no place like home! There's no place like home!

AURORA clicks her heels three times, then flops into her chair.

AURORA: *(Looking around.)* Where is everybody?

MISS DUDLEY: *(Not looking up from her papers.)* I imagine that, by now, everybody is in his or her Block C class.

AURORA: *(As a medieval tavern owner.)* Block C? But why, my good woman? For this is Block B.

MISS DUDLEY: *(Not looking up from her papers.)* This is Block C, Aurora. You just missed my Block B class. *(Looks directly at AURORA.)* Again.

AURORA: *(Nervously.)* But... *(Protesting, as Juliet.)* "The clock struck nine when I did send the nurse..."

MISS DUDLEY: *(Gently.)* It's the second time this week, Aurora.

AURORA: *(Nervously.)* But I... *(As Dorothy, to an imaginary dog.)* Toto? I don't think we're in Kansas anymore.

MISS DUDLEY: *(Still gently.)* And it's still only the first week of school.

AURORA: *(Nervously.)* But I didn't mean to... *(Rubbing her hands together.)* Is this a dagger I see before me?

AURORA enacts an elaborate death scene, ending on the floor, center. Pause.

MISS DUDLEY: *(Calming her.)* Aurora, please stand. *(No response. Smiles.)* Aurora, you're not in any trouble.

AURORA slowly stands, sheepishly.

MISS DUDLEY: *(Gently.)* You missed my Block B English class. So, I called the Dean, and he said you were on stage during all of Block B. *(Beat.)* Again. *(Smiles.)* Aurora, you're not in any trouble. But, this is a very big school. And, we have to know where you are at all times, all right?

AURORA: *(Relieved.)* Toto, we're home! *(Barks and acts like a happy Toto.)*

MISS DUDLEY: *(Loudly, just to get her attention.)* Aurora!

AURORA stops.

MISS DUDLEY: You've got to focus, Aurora. Please...

MISS DUDLEY motions for AURORA to sit down right, at a desk next to her own. MISS DUDLEY and AURORA sit down right.

MISS DUDLEY: Aurora. I read your transfer file. This is a much bigger school in a much bigger city than your last school. Trust me, I know that can be very difficult. *(Gently.)* But you've got to try, OK?

AURORA: *(As herself, crestfallen.)* Sorry, Miss Dudley. I will. I promise.

AURORA picks up her bag and starts to exit up left.

AURORA: *(Sincerely, very quietly.)* I honestly do like your class, Miss Dudley...

MISS DUDLEY: *(Gently.)* Aurora? Where are you going?

AURORA: *(Lost.)* I don't know. Block C. Wherever that is.

AURORA continues her exit.

MISS DUDLEY: *(Looking at a schedule.)* Aurora? *(No response.)* It's OK.

AURORA stops, lost, facing away from MISS DUDLEY. MISS DUDLEY tries to get through to her.

MISS DUDLEY: *(Checking a schedule.)* You have a Study Hall Block C, Aurora. *(Beat.)* And I clearly have this block free. So, you could stay here if you like. *(No response.)* I already texted your Study Hall teacher and told him that you'd be taking a make up a quiz for me, here. *(No response.)* So, really. You might as well stay.

MISS DUDLEY stands and motions for AURORA to take her DR seat again.

MISS DUDLEY: Please.

AURORA, lost, can't even look at her. Pause. MISS DUDLEY gets an idea: she crosses to center, and acts a monologue from Shaw's play, Saint Joan. She's a good actress.

As MISS DUDLEY acts, AURORA turns and looks at her. AURORA starts to smile.

MISS DUDLEY: "...if only I could still hear the wind in the trees, the larks in the sunshine, the young lambs crying through the healthy frost, and the blessed blessed church bells that send my angel voices floating to me on the wind."

MISS DUDLEY looks to AURORA. Very slowly, AURORA joins MISS DUDLEY, center. MISS DUDLEY nods. They complete the monologue together.

AURORA and MISS DUDLEY: "But without these things I cannot live; and by your wanting to take them away from me, or from any human creature, I know that your counsel is of the devil, and mine is of God!"

AURORA: *(Elated.)* That's Shaw's *Saint Joan*! We did that last year at my old school!

MISS DUDLEY: *(Smiling.)* I know.

AURORA: *(Elated.)* I was *Saint Joan*!

MISS DUDLEY: *(Smiling.)* I know! Me, too.

AURORA: *(Joyous.)* No! When?

MISS DUDLEY: College. Oh, and once at Seattle Rep.

AURORA: *(So impressed.)* Wait. You acted professionally?

MISS DUDLEY: *(Smiles.)* In another life. *(Motions.)* Join me?

MISS DUDLEY sits at her desk. AURORA, smiling, sits at a down right desk.

MISS DUDLEY: Here's the story, Aurora, I direct the school drama program here,

AURORA: (*Elated.*) Ahh!

MISS DUDLEY: (*Calming her.*) ...and I was thinking...auditions for *The Crucible* are next week,

AURORA: (*Elated.*) You're kidding! I love *The Crucible*!

MISS DUDLEY: (*Calming her.*) I thought you might. (*Beat.*) And...if you'd like to do a little audition prep I do have this block free, and we could start....

AURORA: (*Ecstatic.*) Are you kidding! Of course! Yes! Yes! Of course!

AURORA starts to clear an area in the center of the room. MISS DUDLEY remains seated. She places a sheet of paper on the DR student desk.

MISS DUDLEY: (*Smiling.*) Aurora?

AURORA stops.

AURORA: (*Beaming.*) Yes, Miss Dudley?

MISS DUDLEY: (*Smiling.*) What are you doing?

AURORA: (*Proudly.*) Making our performing space! For our audition prep! (*Re: the paper on the DR desk.*) What's that?

MISS DUDLEY: (*Smiling.*) What, that? Oh, that's just your English quiz.

AURORA: My what?

MISS DUDLEY: (*Smiling.*) Your English quiz? The one you missed? Because you spent Block B on stage today instead of in my English class? Taking my quiz?

AURORA: (*Sheepishly.*) Oh.

MISS DUDLEY: (*Re: the quiz.*) It's just weekly vocab. It shouldn't take you more than five minutes.

AURORA: (*Smiling.*) Right.

Without hesitation, AURORA, smiling, crosses to the down right desk and sits. She takes a pen from her bag and begins the quiz.

MISS DUDLEY: (*Gently mocking/chiding.*) What? No more “acting out”? No more monologues from the history of world dramatic literature?

AURORA, not looking up from her quiz, plays along.

AURORA: (*Smiling.*) Miss Dudley. Please. Sh. And, why, I’m sure I don’t know what you could be talking about, Miss Dudley. It seems pretty clear to me that the only role I truly care about right now is...English Honor Student.

MISS DUDLEY: (*Smiling.*) Well, good. I’m glad.

AURORA continues taking the quiz. MISS DUDLEY stands, crosses to center and continues the process of clearing the chairs which Aurora had begun.

AURORA looks up from her quiz and regards MISS DUDLEY moving the chairs. AURORA smiles and returns to her quiz.

MISS DUDLEY smiles and continues to clear the chairs to make a performing space. Fade to black.

THE END

AMUSE BOUCHE

SYNOPSIS: David has a huge crush on his new muse, Elise, but he can't tell her. (*He actually can't: Elise is a foreign exchange student and doesn't understand English.*) Joyce understands Elise's language, so David asks her to translate for him but Joyce has a huge crush on David so in the end, Elise and Joyce bond leaving David clueless and heartbroken.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 females, 1 male)

DAVID (m).....A self-centered art student desperately seeking inspiration. (26 lines)
 ELISE (f).....Foreign exchange student. Volatile on the surface. (18 lines)
 JOYCE (f).....Meek. Loves David. (18 lines)

SCENE: A high school art classroom with easels.

TIME: Lunch time.

COSTUMES

DAVID wears all black, and a scarf. ELISE wears boots.

PROPS

- Portfolio case
- Bag
- Sketchpads (2)
- Headphones

SOUND EFFECT

School passing bell

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

ELISE is a foreign exchange student who, for most of the play, doesn't speak English, but rather her "foreign language." The audience can understand everything she says, though, because her "foreign language" is actually just English with a foreign accent. (*Think Martin Short's FRANK in "Father of the Bride," but maybe a little clearer.*)

DAVID doesn't understand ELISE'S "foreign language." JOYCE does.



SETTING: *A high school art classroom with easels, tables and chairs. On a table, down center, a bowl of fruit.*

A school passing bell. DAVID runs on from downstage left. He is the self-proclaimed school artist. He carries his portfolio case and bag. HE has his sketchpad under his arm.

DAVID: (*Dramatically proclaiming.*) Today is the day! (*To the bowl of fruit.*) Today, bowl of fruit, you are mine!

He sits at one of the upstage tables, and begins wildly sketching the bowl of fruit. Soon spent, he collapses. He recovers and regards his sketch. He slowly undergoes a series of sad realizations.

DAVID: (*Dramatically.*) No! I've... lost it. I've lost it. I... can't draw. I just... can't draw any more. (*Looks at the bowl of fruit, then at his sketch.*) My bowl of fruit looks like a pile of kittens dancing the samba. How can that be? Where... did my gift go? (*Beat.*) This is my senior year! My portfolio is everything! What college will accept this trash? This garbage? (*Closes his eyes.*) I'm visualizing my future! That's me! Living at home? Working part-time at the mall! Drawing caricatures of five-year-olds at Chuck E. Cheese's! (*Opens his eyes.*) Nooo! (*Falls to his knees.*) I've lost my gift! I need to get it back! (*To the heavens.*) I need inspiration! I need a sign! Help me! Please! Show me a sign!

From offstage, ELISE hums a pop tune.

DAVID: *(Dramatically yelling.)* Shut up! *(ELISE'S humming becomes louder; she is getting closer. Dramatically yelling.)* Will you please! The studio is occupied! *(Sarcastically.)* Hey! It's still lunch time! I'm sure, if you hurry, you can still make it to Taco Tuesday!

ELISE'S humming becomes louder; she is getting closer.

DAVID: *(Dramatically wiping away a tear.)* Whoever you are, you admire me too much to see me like this!

He dries his tears on his scarf, then dramatically tosses his scarf about his neck and hides behind an easel, upstage.

Enter ELISE, stage left, loudly humming the pop tune she hears on her headphones. She is wild. She carries her sketchpad. She doesn't yet notice DAVID. She stops down center, and dances and hums the pop tune.

DAVID: *(Slowly realizing.)* I am... inspired. She... is my muse. *(To the heavens.)* You've sent me... my muse. *(Beaming.)* Thank you.

She continues to hum as she places her sketchpad on the down center table. She sits at the table, opens her sketchpad, and looks at the bowl of fruit.

ELISE: Bowl... of... fruit.*

**Reminder: ELISE speaks in her "foreign language." The audience understands her because she speaks English with a foreign accent. DAVID can't understand her.*

DAVID: *(Confused, but beaming.)* I'm sorry, what was that?

ELISE: *(To the bowl of fruit.)* I... will... capture your essence, you bowl of fruit!

DAVID: *(Still beaming, still not understanding.)* Excuse me?

Suddenly, wildly, she starts to sketch the bowl of fruit.

ELISE: *(Sketching, screaming.)* Aghhh!!!!!!

DAVID: *(Hugging himself with joy.)* Aghhh!!!!!!

ELISE and DAVID: *(ELISE is inspired; DAVID is ecstatic.)* Arghhh!!!

ELISE: I'll show them a bowl of fruit! I'll show them all a bowl of fruit!

She sketches, humming, dancing while sitting.

DAVID: *(Slowly figuring it out.)* I don't understand a word she says, but... that's because... muses don't speak English... instead... they speak... the universal language of... art! The universal language of art!

He dashes down center and dramatically kneels to her.

DAVID: Teach me, o' muse, the universal language of art!

She sees him, quickly stands and removes her headphones.

ELISE: *(Startled.)* Who are you? What are you doing? Where did you come from?

DAVID: Yes! Those sounds coming from you! That strange language you speak! What does it all mean?! *(Bends to kiss her foot.)*

ELISE: *(Horrified.)* Idiot!

With her boot, she pushes him left.

DAVID: *(On the floor, nursing a bruise.)* Such passion! *(Sincerely.)* Thank you, o' muse!

ELISE: *(Menacingly.)* I'll teach you to interrupt my work, you baby!

ELISE advances menacingly towards him.

DAVID: *(On the floor, beaming.)* Yes, oh yes, my muse! Come to me! *(Closes his eyes and waits for her.)*

JOYCE enters down left, nearly tripping over DAVID.

JOYCE: David?

DAVID: Joyce!

JOYCE: Elise?

ELISE growls as she continues to approach DAVID.

JOYCE: *(In Elise's "foreign language.")* No! Please! Stop!

ELISE stops.

JOYCE: *(In Elise's "foreign language.")* Return to your work. Please! I've got this. I promise.

Grudgingly, ELISE replaces her headphones on her ears and returns to her art, down center. JOYCE helps DAVID to his feet. ELISE growls.

JOYCE: *(In Elise's "foreign language.")* Don't be angry. We'll be on our way. Didn't mean to disturb. *(To DAVID.)* We need to go.

JOYCE guides DAVID to the down left door.

DAVID: *(Confused.)* Wait. Joyce. You know her?

JOYCE: Elise? Yes. David, I've told you this like a million times already. Elise is the foreign exchange student staying with my family.

DAVID: *(To himself, trying to figure it out.)* Foreign exchange student? So... she's actually just speaking another language? So... that's why I couldn't understand her...

JOYCE: Oh, I don't think anybody can understand her. Elise comes from a very small country where they speak a very obscure language. I wanted her to feel comfortable, so I studied her language all summer. And I did get pretty good at it, though, if I must say so myself. *(Beat.)* How do you know her?

DAVID: *(Slowly figuring it out.)* Elise? She is... my muse!

JOYCE: Your what?

DAVID: *(Slowly figuring it out.)* I don't care where she's from! Elise is my muse! *(Realization.)* Tell her!

JOYCE: What? No!

DAVID: Tell her I love her! *(To the world.)* Yes, I love my muse! Tell her!

JOYCE: *(Hurt.)* No!

DAVID: *(Whining.)* Please! You've always been there for me! Ever since elementary school! You speak her language! I don't! Joyce, you're my only hope!

ELISE boldly stands and removes her headphones.

ELISE: Stop it! *(To JOYCE, loudly.)* Don't you dare!

DAVID: *(To JOYCE.)* You've got her attention! Now's your chance! Tell her now!

JOYCE: *(In ELISE'S "foreign language.")* Wait. Elise... you understood what he said?

DAVID: *(To JOYCE.)* Good!

ELISE: *(Shy, grinning.)* Oh, everybody in my country understands a little English. Our favorite television program is *Friends*.

DAVID: *(To JOYCE.)* What did she say?

JOYCE: *(In ELISE'S "foreign language," smiling.)* *Friends? I love Friends!*

DAVID: *(To JOYCE.)* What did she say?

ELISE: *(Angrily, to DAVID.)* Stop! Your! Babbling!

DAVID: *(Delusional.)* I understand! *(He doesn't.)* You want to be my muse! And... you love me, too!

DAVID, in love, reeling, tosses his scarf about him and drops to the ground, dramatically. Inspired, he crawls up center and starts sketching on his sketchpad. ELISE takes JOYCE by the shoulders.

ELISE: He's an idiot.

JOYCE: *(In ELISE'S "foreign language." Embarrassed.)* I know.

ELISE: Then why the crush? Since elementary school?

They watch DAVID. Newly inspired, he swoons and giggles, engrossed in his sketching.

JOYCE: *(In ELISE'S "foreign language." Embarrassed.)* At this point... I honestly don't know...

ELISE: *(Laughing.)* Don't worry about it! We've all been there! Forget about him! Let's go to lunch!

JOYCE: *(In ELISE'S "foreign language." Grudgingly.)* I don't know...

ELISE: Oh come on... it's Taco Tuesday.

JOYCE: *(In ELISE'S "foreign language.")* Taco Tuesday? *(Starting to smile.)* I don't know. I do love Taco Tuesdays...

ELISE: Well, come on, then! *(Checking the time.)* The cafeteria closes in ten minutes! We'll have to hurry! *(No response.)* Come on... Monica!

JOYCE: *(In ELISE'S "foreign language." Smiling broadly.)* I always wanted to be a Monica!

ELISE: *(Taking JOYCE by the arm.)* Me, too! Come on!

JOYCE and ELISE, arm-in-arm, start to exit down left. JOYCE stops, and turns back to face DAVID, up center.

JOYCE: *(In ELISE'S "foreign language.")* What about David?

Both regard DAVID. DAVID, still inspired, still swooning, still giggling, and sketching. He doesn't notice them.

ELISE: *(In English, for the first time.)* He should be fine. *(Smiling.)* He has his art.

JOYCE and ELISE smile and exit down left, together. Fade to black.

THE END

ZEN IN THE ART OF BASKETBALL

SYNOPSIS: The entire basketball team has been ravaged by the flu except Patrick who stands at the foul line, after the final buzzer. An annoying game announcer, an obtuse referee, his parents, his ditzy girlfriend, and his ditzy girlfriend's new boyfriend, all wreak havoc with his concentration. His only hope is the new Zen-oriented school nurse, who convinces him to "become the ball."

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 females, 3 males, 3 either)

ANNOUNCER (f/m)	His name is Mr. Dean Schaffer. Voice-over announcer. Authoritative. <i>Note: If technically possible, the Announcer's role should be offstage. (14 lines)</i>
PATRICK (m).....	Nervous teen. <i>(46 lines)</i>
REF (f/m).....	Referee. (Mr. Brooks if played by a male; Mrs. Brooks if played by a female.) <i>(8 lines)</i>
NADINE (f).....	Teen. Patrick's soon-to-be-ex-girlfriend. <i>(5 lines)</i>
LARRY (m).....	Teen. Nadine's new boyfriend. <i>(3 lines)</i>
DOUG (m).....	Patrick's dad. Embarrassed. <i>(3 lines)</i>
DOTTY (f).....	Patrick's mom. Embarrassed. <i>(3 lines)</i>
ELYSIUM (f/m).....	The new school nurse. Recent convert to a more Zen approach to life. (Killian if played by a male.) <i>(17 lines)</i>

SCENE: A high school gymnasium.

TIME: The present. After the final buzzer at a high school basketball game.

COSTUMES

PATRICK wears an ill-fitting basketball uniform. REF needs a referee costume. ELYSIUM wears a white lab coat over her batik/tie-dyed outfit. The other characters wear everyday clothes.

PROPS

- Basketball
- Stethoscope
- Crystal that fits in a pocket



SETTING: *A high school gym. The foul line is center.*

AT RISE: *In darkness, we hear the hushed tones of DEAN SCHAFFER, the announcer.*

ANNOUNCER: *(Voice over.)* This once-oversized crowd has reached an eerie silence. The game for the basketball championship for Bartholomew County, Indiana has come down to this.

Both the Southern Bartholomew and Northern Bartholomew benches are empty. Both teams are in their respective locker rooms, all victims of that odd new strain of flu that keeps you close to your indoor plumbing.

Likewise, the spectators are also beginning to thin out. Spectators, please, if you see a neighbor running to leave the gymnasium: don't stand in their way. We don't want to create too much of a mop-up nightmare for our custodians tonight.

So far, your plucky announcer is feeling fine. I'll keep you posted.

And so, it's come to this: all eyes on one young man from Southern Bartholomew County at the foul line, the recipient of a technical foul before the final buzzer. And only he can break this hard-fought tie between these long-time feuding rivals. *(Beat.)* I forgot his name. He's not on the official team roster... let me see if I can find some... info on him...

Lights up slowly reveal PATRICK at the foul line, center. He wears an ill-fitting basketball uniform. He faces the audience, and nervously bounces a basketball. He becomes increasingly beleaguered.

ANNOUNCER: *(Continued voice over.)* Here we go. The young man at the line is one Patrick Davis. It seems that as late as last week he was merely the Team Manager cutting orange slices for the team. And President of the Audio Visual Club. And Co-Chair of the Math League. And one of our much maligned and often-ridiculed hall monitors. And now this. In the glare of the harshest spotlight of his young life.

He was bumped up to varsity late this afternoon as a result of all the real players getting sick, and falling like flies. And now, there he stands, the only remaining member of his team. The only one who can bring home the championship trophy to Southern Bartholomew County. The only member of either team not puking his guts out in the locker room right now.

What can he be thinking? What's going through his head? *(Pause.)* "I'm one foul shot away from total victory. Or total, ignominious defeat." *(Pause.)* "Will I finally be the cool kid at school or the one who'll have to take my cousin to the prom, again?"

"Will I be the pride of my school, and my county? Or will I be the kid forced to spend the second semester of my senior year skulking around the halls alone and beleaguered, hoping against hope for even the slightest hint of a friendly smile?"

"Or will I be..."

PATRICK: I can hear you, you know!

ANNOUNCER: What? Oh. Sorry, Patrick.

PATRICK: No, no, I'm sorry, Mr. Schaffer. I know you have a job to do. I'm just a little...

ANNOUNCER: That's OK, Patrick. I understand. You need to concentrate.

PATRICK: Thanks.

PATRICK bounces the ball, trying to get into a rhythm.

ANNOUNCER: *(Forgets the mic is on.)* This is just so sad, I can't watch it any more.

PATRICK: *(Calling.)* Mr. Schaffer?

ANNOUNCER: Patrick?

PATRICK: *(Calling.)* Your mic is still on.

ANNOUNCER: Oh! *(Beat.)* Sorry.

We hear the microphone click off. Pause. PATRICK refocuses, and bounces the ball, again trying to get into a rhythm. REF enters down left. He looks a little green from the flu.

REF: Hi, Patrick.

PATRICK: *(Startled.)* Oh, hi, Mr. Brooks! *(Correcting himself.)* I mean, hi, ref.

REF crosses to PATRICK.

REF: You doing OK, Patrick?

PATRICK: *(Looking around nervously.)* Well, yeah, considering, I guess... am I taking too much time?

REF: That's the thing, Patrick, we don't really know. We've been looking, but the rulebook's a bit fuzzy on this particular situation.

PATRICK: So...

REF: Do what you need to do. We'll keep you posted.

PATRICK: OK... thanks, Ref.

REF: We're all behind you on this one.

PATRICK: *(Looking around.)* Not the folks from Northern Bartholomew County.

REF: *(Looking around.)* Well, they all hate you, of course. What do you expect? Exciting game though, right? Folks are on the edges of their seats!

PATRICK: (*Looking around.*) Not all the folks leaving for the rest rooms.

REF: (*Looking at them.*) Well, not those folks, of course. Flu's an ugly business, Patrick. You can't please everybody.

PATRICK: Right. (*Beat.*) Ref? (*No response.*) Do you mind? (*No response.*) Mr. Brooks?

REF: (*Finally understanding.*) What? Oh! Right. Well, I'll leave you to it.

PATRICK: Thanks, Mr. Brooks. (*Correcting himself.*) Ref.

REF exits down left, holding his head and stomach. PATRICK bounces the ball, again trying to get into a rhythm.

ANNOUNCER: (*Forgets the mic is on.*) Oh! This tension is killing me! Can I get another soda? Diet?

PATRICK: (*Startled.*) Hot mic, Mr. Schaffer!

ANNOUNCER: Sorry.

We hear the microphone click off. Pause. PATRICK bounces the ball, trying to get into rhythm. NADINE, trying to sneak out, trips and stumbles.

PATRICK: (*Startled, then smiling.*) Nadine?

NADINE: (*A little embarrassed.*) Oh. Hi, Patrick.

PATRICK: (*Beaming, whispering.*) Always supporting me! Always in my corner! But you really shouldn't be on the court, you know, sweetie. (*Beaming.*) Everybody can see us!

NADINE: Right. About that...

She takes a step back.

PATRICK: (*Whispering.*) Good idea. You go home and rest. Can't have my girl getting the flu! I'll text you later!

NADINE: OK...

Enter LARRY, next to NADINE.

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