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Cast of Characters

After Math is designed to be an ensemble piece, and it consists of a small number of specifically named characters and an ensemble that can range from a minimum of approximately 6 actors to an almost unlimited number. The ensemble members populate the classroom, deliver all of the monologues (except for “Air”) and become the chorus in “Greek Tragedy.” They are critical to the success of the play. The following specifically named characters exist in the play:

EMMETT, a teen Everyman, or the forgotten man

MRS. PARKS, a teacher with a reputation for being tough as nails

SUIT-WEARING MAN, anonymous, mysterious and intimidating

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN, like the Suit-Wearing Man

ALICE, a teen girl and Emmett’s love interest, in one version of his disappearance

ALMOST EMMETT, male or female, similarly invisible and on the same path toward disappearance

TERRY, a blind student who sees

The actors playing Alice and Terry should be part of the ensemble during the rest of the play. Almost Emmett should be part of the ensemble, but if possible, the actor should not double as another character. It’s also possible, if necessary, for the Suit-Wearing Man and Woman and Mrs. Parks to play ensemble roles. The actor playing Emmett should NEVER be part of the ensemble.

Other than Emmett and the Suit-Wearing Man and Woman (and probably Alice), all characters may be cast with either male or female actors. Stage directions may refer to characters as one gender or the other, but this is only for convenience.

While Emmett should be played by the same actor throughout, his persona (and even his attire) could change substantially from scene to scene, to match others’ perceptions of him.

Settings

The play takes place primarily in a classroom, but the settings and production design can be as suggested or non-realistic as desired.

Author's Note

In “The Walrus” (Scene 3), you’ll see that part of the monologue has two possible texts. In “Disappear” (Scene 5), there are two alternate word selections. In each case, select whichever you feel is most appropriate for your production.

Acknowledgments

After Math was first produced by Edwin Parr High School in Athabasca, Alberta, Canada.

AFTER MATH

by Jonathan Dorf

Scene 1: Shaking

(A STUDENT, mid-teens, stands in a spotlight. Frozen behind him or her in a dimly lit classroom are STUDENTS sitting at their desks and MRS. PARKS, a teacher. One desk is prominently empty.)

SHAKING STUDENT. Mrs. Parks has this thing about tests. Well, she has this thing about everything, but when it comes to tests... If she's giving a test, you don't knock on the door, you don't stand by the door, you don't call the room, you don't even look in the window. And not just the students—the other teachers, even Mr. Bobell, the principal.

(Beat.)

One time, he knocks and comes in during a quiz—not even a test—a quiz on solving simple equations. You know, like x squared equals nine, or three x plus x equals eight. That's algebra. You should see how she looks at him. Her eyes get all narrow, and I'm not crazy so I know I'm not really seeing it, but I swear there's these flames shooting from her eyes. Or maybe it's lasers. I think it's flames, though, 'cause if I didn't know better, I'd say there's smoke comin' from her ears. And Mr. Bobell starts to say something, only nothing comes out. His jaw flaps in slow-mo, then flaps again. He takes one step back, two steps back—and he's gone.

(Beat.)

But today, we're in the middle of a major test—not just some quiz. This is an all-out unit test. Points, lines, slopes—we're graphing 'til we can't graph no more.

(Like a rapper:)

Graph those lines in the air—graph 'em like you just don't care.

(Beat.)

Anyway, this man in a dark gray suit walks in, and there's a woman—also wearing a dark gray suit—at the door, and I watch

Mrs. Parks's eyes start to ignite, only the man doesn't flinch—and her eyes, they sink back into her head, like they're in retreat.

(Beat.)

He says something to her real quiet, and her eyes...her eyes totally wash out, and her face wipes blank. "Emmett," she says, "bring your books." And Emmett packs his books into his backpack and goes with the suits—the man inside and the woman at the door.

(Beat.)

And when the door closes and Emmett is gone and the suits are gone, it's "back to your tests. Ten minutes." But I don't believe her. Yeah, I believe we've got ten minutes of class. I can see the clock, but I don't believe Mrs. Parks cares if we finish, and as she picks up Emmett's test, her hands—I'm not crazy, so I know my head's just making it up—I swear her hands are shaking.

(The SHAKING STUDENT sits at a desk, joining the others in the frozen scene. The lights come up. From their scrunched over the desk postures and pained expressions, it's obvious the students are in the middle of a test. A math test, in this case.)

Scene 2: Aliens

(ALICE, a student, stands and becomes a narrator/storyteller figure.)

ALICE. "Emmett and the Aliens": three different views of Emmett's ascension.

(Beat.)

Part One: They're Coming.

(EMMETT, teen Everyman—or is he the forgotten man?—enters and sits in the empty desk. MRS. PARKS and his CLASSMATES unfreeze. Enter a SUIT-WEARING MAN and a SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. They make unintelligible alien sounds.)

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. Nanu nanu.

SUIT-WEARING MAN. Do not be alarmed, little humans.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. We come in peace.

SUIT-WEARING MAN. Have no fear, Oom Chaka Laka Boom Boom Gnu Who—

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. And Who Gnu Boom Boom Laka Chaka Oom—

SUIT-WEARING MAN. Are here.

ALICE. Of course, I'm the only one who understands them: I've been studying alien languages on the internet. I piece them together from intercepted radio waves.

(Beat.)

I only speak three well enough to have a conversation. But I can get along in Venusian, and I'm learning Alpha Centauran and Sirian—the solar system, not the country. They have these CDs you can listen to while you're jogging or on the bus or in your car if you've got one, or put it on infinite repeat and play it while you sleep. I hear it seeps right in that way.

(The SUIT-WEARING MAN pokes and prods EMMETT.)

SUIT-WEARING MAN. Is this the specimen?

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. *(Nods.)* Check for space fleas.

(The SUIT-WEARING MAN does so. It looks like a lice exam.)

EMMETT. What are you—

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. Silence, specimen.

SUIT-WEARING MAN. Space fleas are a very serious problem on Piddly Widdly Sis Boom Bah.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. You start out with a flea the size of a...

SUIT-WEARING MAN. A flea.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. Yes, the size of a flea. And before you know it, it's the size of a building.

SUIT-WEARING MAN. It's a warp thing.

(He finishes examining EMMETT.)

He's clean.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. Of space fleas, maybe.

SUIT-WEARING MAN. Of course. Not in general.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. Dirty little human.

SUIT-WEARING MAN. He'll be fine once we remove his first few layers.

EMMETT. Once you what?!

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. Silence!

EMMETT. You can't remove my first few layers.

(They start to drag him out of the classroom and offstage.)

I need my first few—help! Help!

(They drag EMMETT offstage. Just as he reaches the classroom door—or whatever signifies the door—all freeze. EMMETT “rewinds” to his seat, and the SUIT-WEARING MAN AND WOMAN exit. Beat.)

ALICE. “Emmett and the Aliens, Part Two”: They've Been Here All Along.

(Enter the SUIT-WEARING MAN AND WOMAN exactly like before.)

SUIT-WEARING MAN. Greetings, earthlings.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. We come in peace.

(To the SUIT-WEARING MAN:)

I always wanted to say that.

EMMETT. What are you doing here?

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. We come...in...peace.

EMMETT. Could you possibly embarrass me any more?

SUIT-WEARING MAN. I got the call.

EMMETT. I'm in the middle of a math test.

SUIT-WEARING MAN. (*Picks up EMMETT's paper.*) You call this math? This gurgle plurgin—

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. Forget the math test. We're going home!

ALICE. Gurgle plurge is definitely a dialect from one of the (*Pronounced RIE-JULL.*) Rigel systems.

SUIT-WEARING MAN. I told you we should have home-schooled.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. Then how would he have socialized with any humans?

SUIT-WEARING MAN. We'll talk about this on the ship.

EMMETT. I don't wanna go.

MRS. PARKS. Excuse me—

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. Silence, human.

(*To EMMETT.*)

Ung Gun Goonie, sweetie, Daddy's been transferred. We all like Earth—it's quaint—but he gets his own office.

SUIT-WEARING MAN. Finally.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. No more sharing space with those nasty little Grond Pond Um Blurgles.

ALICE. That Urgle sound is so Rigel, but I don't know if they're from Rigel Three or Rigel Nine. I'd go look it up, but Rigellians don't like sudden movements when they fight over vacation plans, which I'm 98% sure is what we're seeing here.

EMMETT. I might as well just rum tum tigger from embarrassment.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. Rum tum—don't even say a thing like that.

ALICE. The occasional musical theatre reference is a dead giveaway for Rigel. In fact, some people say Andrew Lloyd Webber is just on an extended vacation from his home world.

SUIT-WEARING MAN. Stop being such a *(Pronounced KRUP-KEE:)* krupke.

EMMETT. I'll be a krupke if I want!

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. Ung Gun Goonie, how can Mommy make it up to you?

EMMETT. My name is *Emmett*.

(The SUIT-WEARING MAN AND WOMAN gasp.)

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. Ung Gun was your grandsonheim's name.

SUIT-WEARING MAN. We'll talk about it on the ship. I have to be in first thing in the morning.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. Ung Gun—

EMMETT. *Emmett*.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. *(Beat.)* It was so much easier when you were a blurg toodle. We'd just give you a new toy or an extra helping of smoona duna, and you'd curl up on my lap and coo and purr like a gwummy.

ALICE. A gwummy is like a large furry hippo.

EMMETT. I'm not a gwummy.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. You'll always be my little gwummy.

EMMETT. The humans are watching.

SUIT-WEARING MAN. They don't understand a word we're saying.

EMMETT. Not Alice. She's listening.

(They all look at ALICE.)

ALICE. Here's the thing: if three aliens from Rigel Three look at you all together—like they're doing now—they're trying to decide if

you can understand what they're saying. But if three aliens from Rigel *Nine* look at you all together, they're trying to decide whether to eat you. It's a big difference.

(Beat.)

When in doubt...run!

(ALICE exits running.)

SUIT-WEARING MAN. You stud you. That little earthling girl had the oompa-loompas for you.

EMMETT. The oompa-loompas? Dang, you're old, Dad. Oompa-loompas is like so over.

SUIT-WEARING MAN. Sorry the old man isn't all snacky-snackity.

EMMETT. And she's not into me. She thought we were going to eat her.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. Well. That's a little off-putting.

(To the SUIT-WEARING MAN:)

Honey, we really should "bust a move." It's a long trip and you know you're going to want to purify and have a nap before work.

EMMETT. I didn't say I was going.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. Fine. We'll talk about it on the ship.

EMMETT. But if we talk—

SUIT-WEARING MAN. When your mother's mind is made up, there's no arguing with her.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. *(Tussles EMMETT's hair:)* My little gwummy.

EMMETT. Mom.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. *(Tickling EMMETT:)* Gwummy wummy.

EMMETT. *(Softening:)* Mom, you know I hate it when you do that.

SUIT-WEARING MAN. She's a hard woman to resist, your mother.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. *(To the SUIT-WEARING MAN as she eases EMMETT toward the door:)* Pack a few humans for the trip, in case we get hungry.

EMMETT. Ugh! No way!

SUIT-WEARING MAN. Did you really think anyone ate that much chicken?

(They exit.)

ALICE. "Emmett and the Aliens, Part Three": I'm in Love with a Teenage Alien.

(EMMETT rewinds himself to his seat. The SUIT-WEARING MAN AND WOMAN enter.)

SUIT-WEARING MAN. Ung Gun, it's time.

EMMETT. No—it can't be.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. It is.

EMMETT. But it's only been...it's been two and a half oodle doodles already?

ALICE. Emmett, what's wrong?

EMMETT. Mom, Dad, this is Alice.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. Nice to finally meet you, Alice. You should hear Ung Gun—*Emmett* talk about you. Alice this. Alice that.

SUIT-WEARING MAN. *(To the SUIT-WEARING WOMAN:)* Honey, we have to go. *(To ALICE:)* The...uh...

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. Cruise ship.

SUIT-WEARING MAN. Yes, the cruise ship—

EMMETT. It's OK. She knows we're from out of town.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. You told her?!

EMMETT. She's my yummy scrumbugly.

ALICE. And he's my rugly bunbugly. He taught me a few words.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. That's wonderful. Ung Gun—

EMMETT. Can Alice come with us?

SUIT-WEARING MAN. Ung Gun...

EMMETT. Dad, don't you remember what it's like to be a wang chung anymore?

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. Ungie, even if we wanted to, she'd be crushed by our atmosphere.

EMMETT. I could keep her in a bubble.

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. She could never leave her bubble...

SUIT-WEARING MAN. Ung Gun, the mother ship is waiting.

EMMETT. *(Beat.)* Alice, I'd buggle if anything ever happened to you.

ALICE. I lauper you so much.

EMMETT. I lauper you too, but I have to go now. I'll never forget you. Not in a duran duran dandy.

ALICE. Goodbye, my rugly bunbugly. When I look out at the stars at night, I'll know you're out there. Our two hearts—

EMMETT. Three.

ALICE. Oh right—I forgot you have two. Our three hearts will always beat as one.

(ALICE gestures dramatically, and EMMETT blows her kisses as he exits with the SUIT-WEARING MAN AND WOMAN. Lights dim on the classroom.)

Scene 3: The Walrus

(A light comes up on an ARTSY-LOOKING STUDENT standing in front of a wall mural. It's not necessary that the mural really exist.)

The lights in the classroom should stay dim, thus allowing the actor playing EMMETT to return to his place during the monologue.)

ARTSY-LOOKING STUDENT. Check out this mural. Yeah—take a second.

(Beat.)

It's called the Unity Mural. You know, like peace and love, flowers in your hair, lighters in the air—you know.

(Points at a specific spot, center.)

So here you got a bunch of jocks—the guys in the football uniforms with the exaggerated biceps sitting around this dorky-looking kid with a pocket protector. And then over here,

(Points to a slightly different spot.)

you got a Goth hugging a prep. Look—the Goth is giving the prep the black shirt off his back.

(Beat.)

Of course, my favorite is this part here,

(Points again somewhere else.)

with the principal and his oversized arms reaching around the entire student body and lifting them. But if you don't count the parts of the mural I did—my favorite part is this one over here.

(Points far right.)

Emmett did this part. It looks all shiny happy people like the rest of the mural. The student polishing the apple for the teacher, a study group in the library that's one of those Disney movies: white kid, black—

(Correcting himself:)

African-American—kid, Latino kid, Asian kid—two boys, two girls. It's trippy how he does it, 'cause he's got four different study groups—there's hardly any books in the library there's so many study groups—it's like what's the point of it being in the library? And each study group is a different combination. Black guy, white

guy, Asian girl, Latin girl. Black girl, white girl, Asian guy, Latin guy. You get the idea. Disney.

(Beat.)

But if you look really close—

(Points at something very small in the mural.)

and it's not just way small, it's *upside down*—if you know what you're looking for, it's there. The principal going through a student's locker. A cloud of smoke in the bathroom filled with unflushed toilets. Books covered in cobwebs 'cause they're older than the teachers. A kid being shoved into a garbage can for being—just for being.¹

(Beat.)

It's like those animators who slip that one frame into the G-rated movie, or "I Am the Walrus" played backward. Emmett was the Walrus. I don't think the school liked that. He's lucky he's not John Lennon, 'cause I don't think they liked it at all.

(The lights fade on the ARTSY-LOOKING STUDENT, who steps back into the classroom and sits, as the lights come up in the classroom, but all remains frozen except for the TOM SAWYER STUDENT, of either gender.)

TOM SAWYER STUDENT. Do you remember in *Tom Sawyer* how he pretends to be dead just so he can see what people say about him at his funeral?

(Beat.)

Just putting that one out there.

(The TOM SAWYER STUDENT puts a finger to his lips and slips back into the frozen classroom scene. EMMETT, of course, should be back in his seat.)

¹ See Appendix for a potentially more appropriate alternate for this monologue.

Scene 4: The Lucky Winner

(The classroom unfreezes. The math test is again in progress. MRS. PARKS patrols the classroom. Enter the SUIT-WEARING MAN AND WOMAN—they approach EMMETT.)

SUIT-WEARING MAN. Emmett Wheeler, you are about to become a rock 'n' roll god.

EMMETT. What about my math test?

MRS. PARKS. What about his math test?

(One STUDENT in particular, who looks much more like a rock fan, interjects.)

ROCK FAN. Doesn't he have to finish his math test?

(The SUIT-WEARING WOMAN forcibly puts a T-shirt that says "Rock 'n' Roll God" over EMMETT's existing shirt.)

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. Emmett Wheeler, you are now a rock 'n' roll god.

ROCK FAN. This is so unfair.

SUIT-WEARING MAN. You are the lucky winner—

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. You have no idea how lucky—

SUIT-WEARING MAN. The lucky winner—

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. You have a better chance of being hit by a bus in a second floor bedroom.

SUIT-WEARING MAN. The lucky winner—

MRS. PARKS. You have a better chance of growing a third eye—

ROCK FAN. Mrs. Parks?!

SUIT-WEARING MAN. The lucky winner—

(Holds up a hand for silence.)

of two first-class tickets—that's you and the guest of your choice—to fly to an exotic island paradise and your very own personal rock experience with the legendary band PIGG.

ROCK FAN. Noooooo!

EMMETT. Was this a contest?

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. You have been selected from the millions and millions—

EMMETT. I don't think I entered this contest.

ROCK FAN. I did! Over here! I entered!

SUIT-WEARING MAN. That's right, Emmett—Squeezer (*Pro-nounced Bowel-bue-kuss:*) Balbukus will melt down his guitar—

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. The beautiful Iwana Somoora will shake her bootay—

SUIT-WEARING MAN. And you will be in hog heaven as you relax—

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. While giant palm leaves fan you all over.

ROCK FAN. He didn't enter! He can't win if he didn't enter!

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. (*To EMMETT:*) Did you enter?

SUIT-WEARING MAN. If you didn't enter, we'd have to pick a runner-up.

ROCK FAN. Me! Me! Pick me!

SUIT-WEARING WOMAN. Did you?

EMMETT. (*Beat.*) I'm sure I did.

(EMMETT stands, and with MRS. PARKS and the other STUDENTS waving bon voyage—except for the unhappy ROCK FAN—EMMETT exits with the SUIT-WEARING MAN AND WOMAN.)

ROCK FAN. No! He doesn't want to go! It's supposed to be me! Pick me! I'm ready! I'm ready to meet PIGG!

(The lights fade slowly as the TOM SAWYER STUDENT sneaks forward.)

TOM SAWYER STUDENT. I didn't want to say anything in front of the others, but there's this new device,

(Confidentially:)

the Test Experimental Emergency Early Evacuator— *(Pronounced with a roll of the “e”:) TEEEE.* One flick of the switch—or maybe it's a press of a button—and poof. I hear Emmett had mad connections. CIA. NSA. Triple A. Bet he got his hands on one of those, and he was gone faster than you can say Test Experimental Emergency Early Evacuator.

(Beat.)

Just putting that out there.

(The TOM SAWYER STUDENT holds a finger to his lips for silence and sneaks back into the classroom.)

Scene 5: Disappear

(The DISAPPEAR STUDENT lets the TOM SAWYER STUDENT, who tries lamely to cover his face with his hand, pass by before stepping out and into a special light.)

DISAPPEAR STUDENT. Emmett's not the biggest kid in the world. I was at his house once—I don't remember why. Maybe for a science project or an English project or a birthday party back when people still had them—it was a while ago—and I see these pencil marks on the wall. “Those are my growth marks: my parents measure me every six months.” And for each mark, there's a date, and the last three or four marks are all bunched together. I don't know—maybe he's taking a break from growing. A vacation.

(Beat.)

Whatever it is, it doesn't help him much at school. Neither does wearing the same T-shirt three days in a row or the weird way he talks. His voice hasn't changed yet. And he takes a lot of crap for it. More than crap. “Are you a girl, Emmett?”

(Depending on the sensitivities of the audience, the words “a thespian” may substitute for “gay,” and “test” may substitute for “testicle.”)

“Are you gay, Emmett?” “Emmett, are you missing a testicle?” Some of the kids started asking him, “Any tests today, Emmett?” And for a while he thinks they’re being all sincere, and he’s like “yeah, there’s a math test,” or “no, history is tomorrow.” Until one day, somebody asks, “How many tests do you have today, Emmett?” And he says the number like he always does. “Two.” And the girl says, “Really? I heard you don’t have any, and that’s why you talk like that.” And everybody laughs. Everybody. And then Emmett understands.

(Beat.)

I think he always knew, but you pretend. You pretend you don’t hear. You pretend it doesn’t matter. And every second you’re pretending that the latest insult or the shove or the kid who makes you go around him or give up your seat on the bus or say that your mom is something horrible or lend him a dollar that you know you’ll never see or blows smoke in your face or threatens to burn you with that cigarette or calls you fat or ugly or stupid or trash or... I can understand why Emmett wanted to disappear. He just wanted to make it through the day without crying or screaming or wishing he was dead. Maybe even learn something. Yeah—learn something would be Emmett. He was smart.

(Beat.)

Bet that’s what he did. The suits come in, take him away. People talk, and it makes him look dangerous. So if he ever comes back, maybe they’ll leave him alone this time.

(THE DISAPPEAR STUDENT takes a seat, and the lights come up fully in the classroom.)

Scene 6: Election

(A STUDENT unfreezes and speaks. More and more STUDENTS unfreeze as they join the conversation. No sign of Emmett.)

STUDENT. He gave this totally incredible speech. Like off the hook incredible.

(Beat.)

Usually, people get up, and they're like, "if I'm elected, I promise to have more dances"—great, my life is so much better because we have one more dance. Two dances, and my parents get back together and my grandma skips out of the hospital. Three, and world peace breaks out. Yeah right.

(Beat.)

Or if it's not more dances, it's more field trips or better food or we can go off-campus. OK—off-campus is good stuff, but the point is he didn't say any of that.

(Beat.)

"What kind of school do you want this to be?" That's the kind of thing that the teachers say, only he's not a teacher and it doesn't feel fake like it does when they say it. It gets me right here

(Puts her hand over her heart.)

and here.

(Taps her head.)

and also kinda over here.

(Taps her elbow.)

I think that's 'cause I whacked it on the armrest, but that's deep. "What kind of school do you want this to be, and how can I help you make that happen?" Wow. And he starts talking about his dog. Like how his dog is dying, and it makes him promise he's going to change the school.

(A SECOND STUDENT has had enough and jumps into the conversation.)

SECOND STUDENT. He did not start talking about his dog.

STUDENT. He did too.

SECOND STUDENT. You can't make a promise to a dog.

STUDENT. I was there. He says—and I'm totally quoting him:

(Imitating EMMETT:)

Tiger puts his paw in my hand, and he says—

(EMMETT, spotlight, stands outside the scene.)

EMMETT. "M"—he always called me M—"M, promise me you'll make an impact. Promise me"—and I can hear Tiger choking up—"promise me you'll make your school a better place."

(The light fades on EMMETT, who freezes.)

STUDENT. *(Imitating EMMETT still:)* Tiger's words will live in my heart forever.

(Beat—no longer doing EMMETT.)

It was this totally beautiful moment.

SECOND STUDENT. Dogs can't talk.

STUDENT. I saw what I saw.

SECOND STUDENT. Does your dog talk?

STUDENT. You were sitting right next to me.

(ALMOST EMMETT, male or female, hovers in the background in the classroom. ALMOST EMMETT is on the verge of joining the conversation, but holds back.)

SECOND STUDENT. That's how I know it was a hamster.

STUDENT. They showed the photo on the projection screen. It was a big dog with black and white spots. That's why he called him Tiger.

SECOND STUDENT. That wasn't a dog. It was a big blurry hamster.

ALMOST EMMETT. Excuse me—

THIRD STUDENT. Who cares if it was a dog or a hamster? Emmett gets taken to the hospital right in the middle of class, and you're arguing about talking animals?

ALMOST EMMETT. (*Mostly to himself:*) But he didn't—

STUDENT. That speech changed my life.

THIRD STUDENT. Do you know what it was like, cradling his head in my arms until the paramedics got here?

ALMOST EMMETT. That's not how it—

FOURTH STUDENT. You didn't hold his head. He passed out face down on the desk.

THIRD STUDENT. Yeah, but after that, I held his head.

ALMOST EMMETT. But he didn't—

THIRD STUDENT. He might've picked it up and hit it against the desk again if it wasn't for me.

FIFTH STUDENT. Why do you keep saying he passed out? He went out the window.

(By now, it should be clear that ALMOST EMMETT is being completely ignored.)

ALMOST EMMETT. That's not what—

SIXTH STUDENT. (*Points to a "window":*) Yeah—dove right through this window.

FIFTH STUDENT. (*Pointing to an adjacent window:*) Actually, it was *this* one.

THIRD STUDENT. Hello...cradling his head!

FIFTH STUDENT. (*To the SIXTH STUDENT:*) You didn't have a good view.

ALMOST EMMETT. Emmett didn't—

STUDENT. Emmett did what he had to do. For Tiger.

SECOND STUDENT. Tiger the hamster.

SIXTH STUDENT. I know it was *this* window, 'cause he almost kicked me in the head as he's diving out.

ALMOST EMMETT. Is anybody—

FOURTH STUDENT. (*Grabs a water bottle from a desk:*) This was the Evian I splashed in Emmett's face when he passed out on the desk.

THIRD STUDENT. I saw you drinking that.

FOURTH STUDENT. Because it's my water.

SIXTH STUDENT. He jumped out right here, just before those mobsters could grab him.

ALMOST EMMETT. Will somebody—

FOURTH STUDENT. My water that I splashed on Emmett—

FIFTH STUDENT. (*As if reciting a list:*) This window, I was the guy he almost kicked, federal agents.

FOURTH STUDENT. But I couldn't save him!

THIRD STUDENT. (*Triumphant, starting to cry ridiculously:*) And he died, cradled in my arms!

ALMOST EMMETT. But that's not—

STUDENT. Reunited with Tiger, his faithful dog—

SECOND STUDENT. Hamster.

STUDENT. His hamster dog.

ALMOST EMMETT. But he's not—

SIXTH STUDENT. Gone forever.

THIRD STUDENT. (*Sobbing uncontrollably:*) I miss him so much!

FOURTH STUDENT. (*Joins the THIRD STUDENT in uncontrollable sobbing:*) I didn't even know him!

ALMOST EMMETT. But he didn't d—

FIFTH STUDENT. Maybe he almost kicked *you* with his right leg, and *me* with his left leg...

THIRD STUDENT. I didn't know him either!

THIRD AND FOURTH STUDENTS. And now we never will!

ALMOST EMMETT. He's right here!

FIRST AND SECOND STUDENTS. *(They salute the sky:)* Tiger, Emmett's on his way!

THIRD AND FOURTH STUDENTS. Emmett, come back!

FIFTH AND SIXTH STUDENTS. *(Hands on their hearts:)* Wherever you are, M, we feel ya right here.

ALMOST EMMETT. I'm Emmett!

(Beat.)

STUDENT. No you're not.

THIRD STUDENT. Who's that?

SECOND STUDENT. No clue.

ALMOST EMMETT. I'm a metaphor.

FOURTH STUDENT. You're a weirdo.

(They walk away, leaving ALMOST EMMETT alone, with the light fading until it dims almost completely.)

Scene 7: Superhero

(Just as ALMOST EMMETT disappears into the dark, lights up on the SUPERHERO STUDENT.)

SUPERHERO STUDENT. Something's wrong with this picture. Let's just say it straight up—there's no way Emmett Wheeler can get in trouble for his artwork, be kidnapped by aliens, *be* an alien, arrange his own disappearance, win a private PIGG concert, get a hold of his own personal teleportation device, promise to change the school for his dog or his hamster or both, collapse in the middle of class and still manage to go out two different windows. It's impossible.

(Beat.)

Or is it? Two words: Clark Kent.

(Beat.)

Let's take the most physically impossible thing: there is no way anyone can jump out two different windows at the same time. It's hard enough to jump out one. But two? And now, throw in the fact that he's supposed to be face down passed out on the desk—or maybe even dead—and it's double impossible.

(Beat.)

Unless, of course, you're so fast that you could go out one window, come back in and then go out again through the other one. So fast nobody can tell which window you went through first...and maybe you really did pass out face down...but it was only that version of you. That's right—I'm talking about somebody who's so fast he splits himself in two parts. Or three. Or four. Or *(The SUPERHERO STUDENT should say the number of students in the cast:)* _____. Like he's some kind of superhero. Just like Clark Kent. Emmett the Atom Splitter. Emmett the Atom. The Atom.

(Beat.)

And everybody who went to school here, every one of us has an Emmett Story, an Atom story—something we can tell our kids about.

(Beat.)

Now you finally know the truth.

(Beat.)

Right?

(The SUPERHERO STUDENT steps back into the classroom, where the lights come up.)

Scene 8: Greek Tragedy

(The math test is again in progress, and EMMETT is there. Several students form the FIRST CHORUS, perhaps leaving their seats and then speaking together.)

FIRST CHORUS.

And so it came to pass that Apollo and Athena
 Descended from the heights divine,
 Wisdom and light and beauty—
 Terrible to behold,
 Armored,
 The Goddess carrying her mighty father's thunderbolt.

(Enter the SUIT-WEARING MAN AND WOMAN as before.)

And as we tremble before them,
 Even those counted most strong among us
 Are struck dumb.

(MRS. PARKS, hands trembling, tries to speak, but no sound comes from her moving lips. THE SUIT-WEARING MAN AND WOMAN take EMMETT and exit. TERRY, a student who could be male or female, wearing sunglasses and walking with a white cane, steps forward.)

TERRY. It is a judgment upon us.

FIRST STUDENT. On us? What have *we* done?

(More and more students join the CHORUS, but like before, ALMOST EMMETT should definitely have the feeling of being excluded.)

CHORUS. We have done nothing.

TERRY. You have done nothing. We have all done nothing, and *that* we must bear.

(The CHORUS splits into two sections when marked.)

FIRST CHORUS. He is on a mission.
 Athena and Apollo, understanding infinite—

SECOND CHORUS.
 Foresight infinite.

FIRST CHORUS. Have plucked him from the tree
For a great exploration.

SECOND CHORUS. Into the expanse of the world.

FIRST CHORUS. An honor beyond reckoning.

SECOND CHORUS. Our representative.

FULL CHORUS. I wish it had been I.

SECOND STUDENT. (*Not so sure:*) What do you see, Terry?

TERRY. I see more disappearances.
I see more vanishings.
I see more no longers,
More of the never was or will be.

FIRST CHORUS. You cannot see.

SECOND CHORUS. You're blind.

TERRY. I can feel. And I can hear
The shrieking of the Furies,
The hissing snakes that tangle their hair,
The crackling whips of unsleeping justice,
Pursuing Orestes to the ends of the earth.
Stripped of his nobility, of his righteous cause,
Our only company will be their cries for vengeance,
For we are he.

FIRST CHORUS MEMBER. (*Points at a SECOND CHORUS MEMBER:*) This is all your fault.

SECOND CHORUS MEMBER. Me? What about you?

THIRD CHORUS MEMBER. (*To the FIRST CHORUS MEMBER:*)
Are you not to blame?

FOURTH CHORUS MEMBER. (*Pointing at another CHORUS MEMBER:*) The fault lies there.

FIFTH CHORUS MEMBER. (*Pointing at another:*) And there.

SIXTH CHORUS MEMBER. (*Pointing at yet another:*) And there.

SEVENTH CHORUS MEMBER. (*Pointing again:*) There.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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