

# **OUTSPOKEN**

a play by

**PRINCE GOMOLVILAS**

New Conservatory Theatre Center  
YouthAware Educational Theatre  
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## **ABOUT THE PLAY**

*Outspoken* was originally commissioned, developed, and produced by the YouthAware Educational Theatre program at the New Conservatory Theatre Center (Ed Decker, Artistic Director) in San Francisco, California. It opened October 5, 2005. It was directed by Sara Staley and stage managed by Jeffrey Cohlman, with the following cast: Wesley Cayabyab, Lisa Jenai-Hernandez, Joseph Holmes, Andre Pina, and Jennifer Rich.

*Outspoken* has been touring to middle schools and high schools in Northern and Central California since 2005, and continues to do so.

## **THE CHARACTERS**

|         |         |
|---------|---------|
| TEEN A  | XANDER  |
| TEEN B  | SABRINA |
| TEEN C  | YASMIN  |
| TEEN D  | ZACK    |
| TEEN E  | ABE     |
| AARON   | BARB    |
| BAILY   | CAMILLA |
| CALLIE  | DALE    |
| DAHLIA  | EILEEN  |
| ERIC    | FRANK   |
| FAY     | TANNER  |
| GARY    | FELIX   |
| HALEY   | GAIL    |
| IAN     | IKE     |
| JEFF    | JACKIE  |
| KATHY   | KELLY   |
| LANA    | LANCE   |
| URSULA  | MAX     |
| HENRY   | NADINE  |
| HILLARY | OPHELIA |
| HOLLY   | PAM     |
| RALPH   | QUINTA  |
| WADE    | RACHEL  |

This play may be performed with as few as five actors or as many as there are speaking parts.

## PROLOGUE

*TEEN A, TEEN B, TEEN C, TEEN D, and TEEN E address the audience.*

TEEN A  
The word “teenager”

TEEN B  
Was first mentioned

TEEN C  
In a magazine

TEEN D  
Titled

TEEN E  
*Popular Science Monthly*

ALL TEENS  
In 1941.

*Beat.*

TEEN A  
The columnist wrote

TEEN B  
“I never”

TEEN C  
“I never knew”

TEEN D  
“I never knew teen-agers”

TEEN E  
“I never knew teen-agers could be soooooooooo”

ALL TEENS  
“I never knew teen-agers could be so serious.”

*Beat.*

A few months later

TEEN A

That same year

TEEN B

*Life* magazine

TEEN C

Published an article

TEEN D

And reported

TEEN E

That teenagers

TEEN A

“Speak a curious lingo”

TEEN B

“Adore chocolate milkshakes”

TEEN C

“Wear moccasins everywhere”

TEEN D

“And drive like bats out of hell.”

TEEN E

*Beat.*

But that was 1941

TEEN A

And this is now

TEEN B

So:

TEEN C

TEEN D

What do you talk about

TEEN E

When you talk about teenagers

ALL TEENS

When you talk about you?

*Beat.*

TEEN A

I am:

TEEN E

Fill in the blank.

TEEN B

I am:

TEEN E

Fill in the blank.

TEEN C

I am:

TEEN E

Fill in the blank.

TEEN D

I am:

TEEN E

Fill in the blank.

*Beat.*

TEEN B

How about race? Color?

TEEN A

Is that who we are?

TEEN C

How about bodies? Clothes?

TEEN A

Is that who we are?

TEEN D

How about gender? Sexuality?

TEEN A

Is that who we are?

TEEN E

How about our opinions about the world? Our beliefs about life?

TEEN A

Is that who we are?

*Beat.*

TEEN A

So:

TEEN B

What do you talk about

TEEN C

When you talk about teenagers

TEEN D

When you talk about you?

*Beat.*

TEEN E

You talk about love.

TEEN A & B & C & D

What?

TEEN E

Yes. Whether people admit it or not, a love story, a love story is what everybody's interested in. A love story is what everybody wants.

TEEN A & B & C & D

Oh. Yeah. Right.

TEEN E

But what most people don't realize:

What? TEEN A & C

Is that every story: TEEN E

Every story? TEENS B & D

Every story: TEEN E

Every story is a love story. ALL TEENS

## TWO

*DAHLIA and ERIC are on opposite ends of the stage. DAHLIA looks at ERIC; ERIC does not notice. ERIC looks at DAHLIA; DAHLIA does not notice. Shift. FAY approaches DAHLIA.*

FAY

Oh my god, you were so staring at Eric.

DAHLIA

What? Nuh-uh.

FAY

Yuh-huh. There's like drool dripping off your lip.

DAHLIA

Whatever.

FAY

Close your mouth or a bug's gonna fly in there.

DAHLIA

See you at lunch.

FAY

See ya.

*FAY exits. GARY approaches ERIC.*

GARY

Dude. Why are you staring at Dahlia?

ERIC

Huh? I wasn't.

GARY

Your eyes were all bulging out like: (*Demonstrating:*) Ah-woo-gah!

ERIC

Whatever.

GARY

You might as well wear a sign around your neck that says, "I love Dahlia, and I'm creepy about it too!"

ERIC

See you at practice.

GARY

Yeah. If I decide to go.

*GARY exits. Shift. DAHLIA and ERIC address the audience.*

DAHLIA

You see him? He. He's one of the most popular kids at school. Star quarterback, top of his class, born leader. And he once adopted a three-legged puppy with multiple medical conditions and nursed it back to health. I know, right?!

He doesn't know that I watch him. Study him. I don't mean study him like he's an animal in the jungle. But I can't help looking at him because he has something I want. I wish I could have his confidence.

Me? I don't have any of his confidence. And probably never will.

ERIC

You see her? She. She's the most awesome girl at school. Beautiful eyes, kindest heart, fun to be around. And she once saved a kid from drowning in the pool at our local rec center, and was awarded a key to the city by the mayor because of it. I know, right?!

She doesn't know that I watch her. It's not that I'm obsessed like some crazy stalker. But I can't help looking at her because she has something I need. I wish I could have her confidence.

Me? I don't have any of her confidence. And probably never will.

DAHLIA

You see: the kids at school: they talk.

*ERIC disappears. Shift. HALEY and IAN appear.*

HALEY

Do you think Dahlia knows how fat she is?

IAN

If she knew, you'd think she'd do something about it.

HALEY

Maybe she doesn't know.

IAN

Why don't you tell her?

HALEY

Hey, Dahlia.

DAHLIA

What?

HALEY

You like to eat, huh?

DAHLIA

What do you mean?

HALEY

Do you get any exercise?

IAN

Exercise is important.

HALEY

Hot Cheetos and Takis aren't a food group you know.

*HALEY and IAN laugh.*

DAHLIA

What are you even talking about?

IAN

You. Need. To. Lose. Weight.

HALEY

A looooooooooot of weight.

*HALEY and IAN laugh and exit. Shift.*

DAHLIA

Other kids at school—well, they talk too:

*JEFF and KATHY enter.*

JEFF

Look how thin Dahlia is. It's like she's sick or something.

KATHY

Oh damn! She needs to eat something.

JEFF

Does she know she's way too bony? It's unhealthy.

KATHY

I think you need to tell her.

JEFF

Hey, Dahlia.

DAHLIA

What?

JEFF

Have you been throwing up a lot lately?

DAHLIA

What do you mean?

JEFF

Like, after meals. Do you stick your fingers down your throat to hack it all up?

KATHY

It's a strange diet.

JEFF

It's an interesting look, the whole stick-figure thing you've got going.

*JEFF and KATHY laugh.*

DAHLIA

What are you even talking about?

JEFF

You. Need. To. Put. On. Some. Weight.

KATHY

A looooooooooot of weight.

*JEFF and KATHY laugh and exit. Shift.*

DAHLIA

Words are like weapons. And everyone likes being armed for high school.

*DAHLIA disappears. Shift. ERIC appears.*

ERIC

You see: the kids at school: they talk.

*LANA enters.*

LANA

Eric, you would be so much hotter if you weren't so damn skinny. You need to get jacked.

ERIC

Seriously? But last week you were like:

*Shift.*

LANA

Eric, you look like the Incredible Hulk on steroids. It's disgusting. Do some cardio or something.

ERIC

Seriously? But last week you were like:

*Shift.*

LANA

Eric, you're as scrawny as tree branch. It's weird. Have a sandwich.

ERIC

Seriously? But last week you were like:

*Shift.*

LANA

Eric, you're as big as a rhinoceros. Are you looking to date girls or sit on 'em?

ERIC

I swear, I'm the exact same weight and size and everything as I've always been.

LANA

Sometimes we can't see our own flaws.

*LANA exits. Shift.*

ERIC

And those kids who don't say anything? I can still hear them anyway because sideways glances speak louder than words.

*DAHLIA appears.*

DAHLIA

But here's the thing:

ERIC

This is what sucks most:

DAHLIA

Some days I think I am too big. Some days I think I am too small. I know it's scientifically impossible to see-saw like that from one day to another, but I guess my body defies the laws of the universe.

ERIC

Some days I think I do look like a huge monster. Some days I think I do look like a weak little boy. I must have some kind of debilitating condition. It's called high school.

DAHLIA

I wish I could be around him.

ERIC

I wish I could spend some time with her.

DAHLIA

Because maybe he could show me how to not care what other people think.

ERIC

Because maybe she could show me how to feel good about myself.

DAHLIA

And I could go up to him and tell him how perfect I think he is.

ERIC

And I could just tell her the truth and say how perfect I think she is.

DAHLIA

Because I know by now that I cannot change my body.

ERIC

But I can change my mind.

DAHLIA

And I just need something to help me fight off the voices.

ERIC

Something to remind me that beneath my skin.

DAHLIA

Beneath my flesh.

ERIC

Beneath my blood.

DAHLIA & ERIC

Someone to remind me:

ERIC

That beneath it all:

DAHLIA

Beneath it all:

DAHLIA & ERIC

I am as perfect as he/she is.

**ONE**

*AARON and BAILY address the audience until otherwise instructed to do so.*

AARON

My girlfriend is black.

BAILY

My girlfriend is white.

AARON

But isn't it interesting?

BAILY

Isn't it messed up?

AARON

That nothing.

BAILY

Nothing in this world.

AARON & BAILY

Nothing in this world is black and white.

*BAILY disappears. Shift. (Shifts are achieved via a change in lights, sets, or the entire ensemble's physical position on stage.) AARON is approached by CALLIE.*

CALLIE

(TO AARON:) Bus come yet?

AARON

It's late.

CALLIE

You're in my history class, right?

AARON

Sit in the back.

CALLIE

Can I ask you something?

AARON  
Can I say “no”?

CALLIE  
I’m gonna ask you anyways.

AARON  
No.

CALLIE  
Your girlfriend is black, right?

AARON  
What about it?

CALLIE  
Well, don’t take this the wrong way, but, you know, she doesn’t act black.

AARON  
What?

CALLIE  
I’m saying, she’s black, but she don’t act it.

AARON  
How am I not supposed to take that the wrong way?

CALLIE  
Feelings are a choice.

AARON  
No. But wait. How do you “act black”?

CALLIE  
You know.

AARON  
No, I don’t.

CALLIE

You know.

AARON

No. I don't.

CALLIE

She talks like a white girl. She's all like: (*In an exaggerated "Valley Girl" voice:*) "Oh. My. God. Like. Can you believe the look he was giving me? Like. Ewww!

AARON

Are you serious right now?

CALLIE

I mean, she's black. She should be talking like: (*In an exaggerated "urban" voice:*) "Mm. Don't be gettin' up in my grill, girl. Step the hell back."

AARON

Whoa! Whoa. What is your problem?

CALLIE

I'm just curious.

*BAILY enters.*

CALLIE

(*To AARON, referring to BAILY:*) Ppssh. There's another one that doesn't know what's what.

AARON

What're you talkin' about?

CALLIE

Your girlfriend should trade personalities with her girlfriend.

AARON

You're lucky I don't have an anger problem.

CALLIE

Is that a threat? I'm not scared of you.

AARON  
This is not worth my breath.

BAILY  
Bus late?

AARON  
Yup.

CALLIE  
(*To BAILY, referring to AARON:*) Hey, he wants to know something.

BAILY  
What?

AARON  
I don't wanna know anything.

CALLIE  
Your girlfriend is white, right?

BAILY  
And? So?

CALLIE  
How come she acts black?

BAILY  
What?

CALLIE  
She acts like she's black.

BAILY  
Are you for real?

CALLIE  
This is real life, isn't it?

BAILY

What the hell are you talking about?

CALLIE

Does your girlfriend have a complex or something? Does she think she's black?  
(Referring to AARON:) I'm just asking 'cuz he wants to know.

BAILY

(To AARON:) You got a problem?

AARON

I told you, I don't wanna know anything.

BAILY

You got a problem, you come talk to me face to face.

AARON

I don't know this girl.

BAILY

Say it to my face, man.

AARON

Back down, yo.

CALLIE

I'm walking home. Bye.

*CALLIE exits.*

AARON

Don't look at me.

BAILY

Don't talk to me.

*AARON and BAILY look away from each other. Shift. AARON and BAILY address the audience.*

AARON

My girlfriend is black.

BAILY

But people say to her:

AARON

You don't act black.

BAILY

And she asks them:

AARON

How do you "act black"?

BAILY

And they say:

AARON

You know.

BAILY

And she says:

AARON

No. I don't.

BAILY

You see:

AARON

She was kind of sheltered growing up.

BAILY

Transferred from a private school.

AARON

She's sweet and down to earth.

BAILY  
Kind of shy.

AARON  
She doesn't rap.

BAILY  
Doesn't twerk or "turn up".

AARON  
She's more complicated than that.

BAILY  
A little bit of a lot of things.

AARON  
But people think that she's fake.

BAILY  
That she's trying to be something she's not.

AARON  
But that something they think she's not.

BAILY  
Is the only something she knows.

*Shift.*

BAILY  
My girlfriend is white.

AARON  
But people say to her:

BAILY  
Why do you act black?

AARON

And she asks them:

BAILY

How do you “act black”?

AARON

And they say:

BAILY

You know.

AARON

And she says:

BAILY

No. I don't.

AARON

You see:

BAILY

She was raised in a foster home.

AARON

Surrounded by all kinds of different people.

BAILY

She learned how to be opinionated.

AARON

To be vocal and maybe kind of crass.

BAILY

She doesn't listen to T Swift.

AARON

Doesn't drink pumpkin spice lattes.

BAILY

She's more complicated than that.

AARON

A little bit of a lot of things.

BAILY

So people think that she's fake.

AARON

That she's trying to be something she's not.

BAILY

But that something they think she's not.

AARON

Is the only something she knows.

*Shift.*

AARON

But wait. There's more.

BAILY

So hold on to your seats.

AARON

My girlfriend gets weird when we're in "rough" neighborhoods.

BAILY

My girlfriend had to be convinced not to do her hair in braids or cornrows.

AARON

She's not perfect...

BAILY

She can be problematic sometimes...

AARON/BAILY

But she doesn't say the N-word.

*Beat. AARON & BAILY look at each other.*

AARON/BAILY

She likes... Snapchat filters.

*Beat.*

AARON/BAILY

She loved "Black Panther".

*Shift.*

AARON

I am Filipino, but most of my friends are white.\*

*\*Lines like this may be changed to fit the race/ethnicity of the actor.*

BAILY

I am Latinx, but I don't speak Spanish.\*

*Shift. CALLIE appears.*

CALLIE

Stop.

AARON

*(To CALLIE:)* Confused?

CALLIE

Confused.

BAILY

What are we then?

AARON

We are just us.

BAILY

So people think that we're fake.

AARON

That we're trying to be something we're not.

BAILY

But that something they think we're not.

AARON

Is the only something that we know.

BAILY

*(To CALLIE:)* You got a problem with that?

AARON

*(To CALLIE:)* Do you?

CALLIE

I'm walking home. Bye.

## **FOUR**

*IKE, JACKIE, KELLY, and LANCE address the audience.*

IKE

I've got strong opinions.

JACKIE

And so do I.

KELLY

I have deeply held beliefs.

LANCE

Yeah, me too.

IKE

But the thing about opinions:

KELLY

The thing about beliefs:

JACKIE

You can't mix and match.

LANCE

You can't mix and match.

IKE & JACKIE & KELLY & LANCE

Can you?

*KELLY and LANCE disappear.*

IKE

Our first date was perfect. And even she would agree.

JACKIE

I agree.

IKE

We liked the same music.

JACKIE

The same TV shows.

IKE

The same books.

JACKIE

The same sports.

IKE

The same classes.

JACKIE

So we talked all night over burgers and fries.

IKE

In an old-school diner that made everything somehow seem almost magical.

JACKIE

And then, on my front porch:

IKE

A kiss.

JACKIE

A kiss on the cheek under the stars.

IKE

And if I ever forgot who I was, she could be my mirror.

JACKIE

And vice versa.

IKE

The ideal partner.

JACKIE

Shows you who you really are.

IKE

Kiss.

JACKIE

Kiss.

IKE

Good night.

JACKIE

Good night.

IKE

It was so good that I didn't even suspect that *that*. Was the *beginning*. Of the *end*.

JACKIE

How is it that after hours of talking that night we never got to talking about our opinions about the world we live in?

IKE

Maybe if we got all that out of the way right upfront, we never would've raised our hopes.

JACKIE

We never would've continued the date.

IKE & JACKIE

We never would've believed in love.

IKE

Over the next few days.

JACKIE

Over the next few weeks.

IKE

She began to show her true colors.

JACKIE

And he began to show his.

IKE

The more we talked.

JACKIE

The more we drifted.

IKE

The more we saw how different we really were.

JACKIE

We were once each other's mirrors.

IKE

But those mirrors began to crack.

JACKIE

And then shatter.

IKE

*(To JACKIE:)* How could you not see that making guns so readily available is a huge problem?

JACKIE

*(To IKE:)* How could you not understand that guns don't kill people—people do?

*Shift.*

IKE

How could you be so concerned about immigrants when citizens are suffering just as much?

JACKIE

How could you not acknowledge that this country was built by immigrants?

*Shift.*

IKE

How could you not pay more attention to how messed up the environment is getting?

JACKIE

How could you not care that there are more urgent issues that have to be dealt with first?

*Shift.*

IKE

Stop raising your voice!

JACKIE

Stop raising your voice!

*Shift.*

IKE

*(To the audience:)* So we argued.

JACKIE

*(To the audience:)* And we argued.

IKE

And we tried to convince ourselves that what we thought about the world didn't have to affect how we loved.

JACKIE

But we were wrong.

IKE

What you think about the world is who you are.

JACKIE

And who you are is how you're loved.

IKE/JACKIE

Right?... Right.

IKE

*(To JACKIE:)* And it was on your front porch that we decided we really weren't meant for each other after all.

JACKIE

*(To IKE:)* I was looking at the shattered pieces of our mirrors.

IKE

And what did you see?

JACKIE

I saw distorted glimpses of us in each shard.

IKE

And what did that tell you?

JACKIE

That told me that even in your broken pieces.

IKE

Even against your shattered glass.

IKE & JACKIE

I could still see myself.

JACKIE

*(To the audience:)* So what does that mean?

IKE

*(To the audience:)* It means something that neither of us recognized that night on the front porch.

JACKIE

Perhaps different people would've been able to make sense of it all.

IKE

Perhaps a stronger couple would've found a way to stay together.

JACKIE

But for us:

IKE

That was the end.

JACKIE  
Good night.

IKE  
Good night.

*IKE and JACKIE look at each other, longingly, hopelessly. IKE and JACKIE disappear. Shift. KELLY and LANCE appear and address the audience.*

KELLY  
My parents are deeply religious. So at my house, it was always like:

*Shift. MAX and NADINE approach KELLY.*

MAX  
God.

NADINE  
Jesus.

MAX  
Jesus.

NADINE  
God.

MAX & NADINE  
Amen.

*MAX and NADINE disappear. Shift.*

KELLY  
And in that kind of house, you either end up becoming as religious as your parents. Or you choose to be a rebel without applause. In other words, you become like me: an atheist.

My family did not cheer when I turned my back on religion. But I wasn't doing it for them. I was doing it for myself. And I guess I'd be a liar if I didn't admit that all my friends were doing it too.

*Shift.*

LANCE

My parents aren't very religious at all. So at my house, it was always like:

*Shift. OPHELIA and PAM approach LANCE.*

OPHELIA

Religion is a sham.

PAM

Outdated ideas.

OPHELIA

Outdated ideas.

PAM

Religion is a sham.

*OPHELIA and PAM disappear. Shift.*

LANCE

And in that kind of house, you either end up patching together a bunch of different ideas about the universe. Or you choose a religion that gives you some sort of logical structure. And I chose structure.

My family thought it was a little weird that I was studying the Bible since neither of them had ever picked one up. But I wasn't doing it for them. I was doing it for myself.

And I guess I'd be a liar if I didn't admit that all my friends were doing it too.

KELLY

But my friends are not me.

LANCE

And I am not my friends.

KELLY

Truth is, yes, I'm an atheist, but I missed going to church. I missed seeing familiar faces every week. Missed the comfort of being connected to a large group of people. Missed the shoulders of

my parents, who I had grown so far apart from, the shoulders of my parents pressing gently against mine.

LANCE

Truth is, yes, I'm a Christian, but I didn't like going to church. I didn't like the ritual, the worship. Didn't like the way everyone expected you to believe in things the same way. I wanted to keep my faith private. It's mine.

KELLY

So: I started to go to church again. Even though I remained an outspoken atheist.

LANCE

So: I stopped going to church completely. Even though I remained a devout Christian.

KELLY

But my friends thought I was weird.

*Shift. MAX and NADINE approach KELLY.*

MAX

Wait a minute.

NADINE

You don't believe in God.

KELLY

No.

MAX

So why are you going to church?

KELLY

Because I feel like it.

NADINE

That doesn't make sense.

KELLY

It makes sense to me.

*MAX and NADINE disappear. Shift. QUINTA and RACHEL approach LANCE*

And my friends thought *I* was weird.

QUINTA

Wait a minute.

RACHEL

You're one of the most religious people I know.

LANCE

So?

QUINTA

So why'd you stop going to church?

LANCE

Why not?

RACHEL

It doesn't make any sense.

LANCE

It makes sense to me.

*QUINTA and RACHEL disappear. Shift.*

KELLY

*(To the audience:)* So: do you choose your friends?

LANCE

*(To the audience:)* Or: do you choose yourself?

KELLY

And I'm sorry.

LANCE

But in the end.

KELLY & LANCE

I had to choose my friends.

KELLY

So: I had to act like an atheist. So: there I was on my last day of going church for one final time.

LANCE

So: I had to act like a Christian. So: there I was on my first day of going to church again.

KELLY & LANCE

*(To each other:)* And that's when I met you.

KELLY

You seemed like a contradiction.

LANCE

And so did you.

KELLY

But it didn't matter to me.

LANCE

And it didn't matter to me.

KELLY

And I respected your beliefs.

LANCE

And I respected yours.

KELLY

And that reminded me that my choices are mine to make.

LANCE

And that my beliefs are mine to practice.

KELLY

So now: I go to church every Sunday morning.

LANCE

And now: I sleep in as late as I want to.

KELLY

And after it's over.

LANCE

And after I wake up.

KELLY

I go outside.

LANCE

And I meet you in front.

KELLY

And we spend the rest of the day together.

LANCE

And this is how we spend our lives.

KELLY & LANCE

Hand in hand.

KELLY

You are you.

LANCE

And I am me.

KELLY

And I am me.

LANCE

And you are you.

KELLY

And that's one belief.

LANCE

That we both have.

KELLY/LANCE

And always will.

### THREE

*URSULA addresses the audience.*

URSULA

Prom. When most students at my school say that word, their eyes start glowing with the light of a thousand suns, and they're all like: *(Super enthusiastic:)* "Prom!"

For me, it's more like: *(To the tune of DUM-DUM-DUM-DUM-DUM:)* "PROMPROM-PROM-PROM-PROM!"

And not for the reasons you would think. I mean, it's not like I'm not hard-up for a date.

*Shift. HENRY appears. URSULA continues to address the audience, even as HENRY speaks to her, until otherwise indicated.*

HENRY

Hi, Ursula.

URSULA

That's Henry.

HENRY

I like you.

URSULA

He's expressive.

HENRY

No. I really really really like you. No. Really.

URSULA

Very expressive.

HENRY

Has anybody asked you to prom yet?

URSULA

*(To HENRY, humbly:)* Just the entire senior class.

HENRY

Thought so. Same thing happened with the Winter Formal.

URSULA

I'll probably be crowned Prom Queen.

HENRY

Of course you will.

URSULA

And whichever guy I end up going with, he'll most likely be crowned Prom King.

HENRY

I am so down with that.

*HENRY disappears. Shift.*

URSULA

Now here's the thing I dread: all my friends can't stop talking about prom dresses.

*Shift. HILLARY and HOLLY appear.*

HILLARY

Where are you gonna shop for your dress?

HOLLY

What color dress are you gonna get?

HILLARY

Are you gonna have your dress altered?

HOLLY

Are you gonna buy a dress with a long train?

HILLARY & HOLLY

Choo! Choo!

*HILLARY and HOLLY disappear. Shift.*

URSULA

So of course I've been forced into thinking a lot about prom dresses lately. Length and fit and straps and hosiery and accessories and complementary undergarments. Yeah. That's a thing. Complementary undergarments. (*Exasperated:*) I know!

I don't want to be obsessing over this. Say no to the dress. Is that a saying? If it's not, then it should be.

Let me explain:

One night I was making these hilarious cat memes for my Tumblr page. And sometimes, you know, when you're on the internet you get sucked into a vortex where you click on something that leads you to another thing that leads you to another thing and you practically click yourself into a coma, and at one point—I didn't know how I got there—I was staring at two different photos side by side: one was Leonardo DiCaprio in a tuxedo on the red carpet and the other was me in a gown at last year's Winter Formal. And in a moment of inspiration and PhotoShop expertise, I moved my head and placed it on Leo's body, and I said to myself, "Daaaaayum, I make that tux look good."

But we all know that PhotoShop is a liar, so the next day I went to a tux shop to try one on in real life and not only did it make me look good but it also made me feel good.

I don't know exactly what that means yet, but my friends were all like:

*Shift. HILLARY and HOLLY appear.*

HILLARY

I totally support your decision.

HOLLY

I think Caitlyn Jenner is so brave.

HILLARY

'Cuz I am such an ally.

HOLLY

So so brave.

HILLARY

Are you gonna start using the boys' restroom?

HOLLY

Are you thinking about having some kind of operation?

HILLARY

When did you turn transgender?

URSULA

Whoa. Hold on. I just wanna wear a tux.

HOLLY

Yeah, but what does that mean?

URSULA

It means that's my prom outfit.

HILLARY

Oh. Okay. I get it.

HOLLY

Me too.

HILLARY

*(Aside, to HOLLY:)* I don't get it.

HOLLY

*(Aside, to HILLARY:)* Me neither. *(To URSULA:)* I'll totally launch a Kickstarter page to fund your transition.

*HILLARY and HOLLY disappear. Shift.*

URSULA

How did I go from wanting to wear a bowtie to getting funded for major surgery? I don't know.

*Shift. HENRY appears.*

HENRY

So did you decide yet whom you're going to prom with? Please notice I used the word "whom" instead of "who," which means I care about grammar, which means I'm a good person.

URSULA

Sure, Henry, let's go to prom together.

HENRY

Really?

URSULA

Really really really.

HENRY

Life is so awesome it hurts.

URSULA

But you should know something.

HENRY

What?

URSULA

I'm going to prom in a tuxedo.

HENRY

Yeah? Well. So am I.

*HENRY offers his arm to URSULA. URSULA links arms with him.*

URSULA

*(To the audience:)* There's this saying I hear sometimes: "It's good to be king." Yes, it is. And king, queen, whoever I decide to be, on prom night, I'm going to be good.

*URSULA and HENRY disappear. Shift. RALPH appears.*

RALPH

I'm a talker.

In class, I'm the guy who always has something to say, even if I'm sitting in the back. Some of the time, I'm smart. Most of the time, I'm a smart-ass. At home, I'm the one who keeps dinnertime conversations going because I know how to push my family's buttons and I have an endless list of "would you rather" questions. At parties, it's me who's cracking jokes and telling wild stories that are sometimes true and sometimes not and sometimes I can't tell the difference.

But there is one place where I am as silent as a church mouse:

The locker room.

Of course it wasn't always this way. I used to banter until my tongue got tired.

*Shift. WADE and XANDER appear.*

WADE

Did you see Marci today?

XANDER

She's lookin' fine as hell.

RALPH

*(To WADE and XANDER:)* Man, if she didn't have a boyfriend, I'd have her for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and dessert.

WADE

Yeah, right.

XANDER

In your dreams.

RALPH

When's the last time either of you douchebags have even *talked* to a girl?

WADE

Shut up.

RALPH

Thought so.

XANDER

Whatever.

*Shift.*

RALPH

*(To the audience:)* But lately, things are different.

*Shift.*

WADE

Oh, man, did you hear about Jonathan?

XANDER

What about him?

WADE

Well, you know how he's been growing his hair out and forcing everyone to call him Joanne?

XANDER

Yeah, what a weirdo.

WADE

I heard he's trying to join the girls' volleyball team.

XANDER

What?!

WADE

Yup.

XANDER

And, what, he's also gonna shower with the girls now?

WADE

I dunno.

XANDER

Lucky!

*WADE and XANDER laugh and high-five each other.*

WADE

I guess there are some advantages to being a freak!

*WADE and XANDER laugh some more. They disappear. Shift.*

RALPH

And I just sit there, as if I just zipped up my mouth and threw away the key.

You see, Jonathan was one of my best friends before he became Joanne. So when the merry-go-round of locker room talk circles back to Joanne the Weirdo, Joanne the Freak, Joanne the Fill-in-the-Blank, I suddenly go quiet.

I don't really hang out with Joanne any more, but I still consider her my friend. So I can't speak up and join in and pile on and laugh as if my friend's life is nothing more than a joke between guys. But I also can't speak up and jump to her defense and be the upstanding citizen I'm supposed to be.

And now that I think about it, how messed up is it that we talk about our friends, girlfriends, and female classmates we hardly even know like this! Maybe it's just "talk" in the safety of the locker room, but I've seen dudes who actually treat girls like less than them just because they can and I... I just stand by. And say nothing. And I can't help fearing the day that my locker room buddies turn to me and say:

*Shift. WADE and XANDER appear.*

WADE

*(To RALPH:)* What do you think?

XANDER

Yeah, you never say anything.

WADE

And you always have something to say.

*WADE and XANDER disappear. Shift.*

RALPH

*(To the audience:)* And honestly, right now, I don't know what I would say. Do I unleash a barrage of insults about Joanne, just so I can continue being one of the guys? Or do I tell them to back off because that's my friend they're talking about? For me, it's like the worst round of "would you rather" ever.

One day, I'll have to speak. But for the time being-

*MARCI walks past under a barrage of catcalls*

Hey, Marci! I, uh... want me to walk with you to your next class?

*MARCI smiles. RALPH and MARCI disappear. Shift. SABRINA appears.*

SABRINA

My dad is always like: “Kids today! They think they know everything!”

I guess he doesn’t pay enough attention because I, his own flesh and blood, will willingly admit that I am one teenager who absolutely *doesn’t* know everything. And, usually, in my everyday life, it’s okay for me to wander around confused, unsure about this and that, question marks crammed in my hip pocket.

After I graduate high school, do I want to go to college or immediately get a fulltime job or backpack across Asia for a year? I don’t know. Do I want to play volleyball this semester or audition for the school musical? I don’t know. Should I binge watch *Fear the Walking Dead* or *Teen Mom*? I don’t know.

There is one subject, though, that people demand answers to, and they won’t let you get away with a simple “I don’t know.”

*Shift. YASMIN and ZACK approach SABRINA.*

YASMIN

Are you straight?

ZACK

Are you gay?

YASMIN

Are you bisexual?

SABRINA

Uh....

ZACK

Do you like boys?

YASMIN  
Do you like girls?

ZACK  
Do you like both?

SABRINA  
Um....

YASMIN & ZACK  
What are you?

SABRINA  
I don't know.

YASMIN & ZACK  
Whaaaaat?!

*YASMIN and ZACK disappear. Shift.*

SABRINA  
I envy those people who do know exactly what they are.

*Shift. ABE, BARB, and CAMILLA appear—they address each other.*

SABRINA  
(*To the audience:*) They're definitely straight.

ABE  
That girl is hot.

SABRINA  
Or definitely gay.

BARB  
I have to agree with you.

SABRINA  
Or definitely bi.

CAMILLA

Yes, she is.... But then again, so is he.

*ABE, BARB, and CAMILLA disappear. Shift. DALE appears.*

SABRINA

Boys have asked me out. And I've been on dates. And hands touching accidentally in buckets of popcorn is sweet and romantic.

DALE

*(To SABRINA:)* Isn't this what you've always dreamed of?

SABRINA

But sometimes I think it's sweet and romantic only because I see it happen in the movies.

*DALE disappears. Shift. EILEEN appears.*

SABRINA

*(To the audience:)* And girls around school have given me what seems like flirtatious looks. And I've smiled back, not sure whether or not that's the right thing to do.

EILEEN

*(To SABRINA:)* You have pretty teeth.

SABRINA

Are those friendly glances? Or blatant come-ons? And do I ever wonder about...you know...girls?

*EILEEN disappears. Shift.*

SABRINA

So I search for answers that will help guide me toward the right group to stand in, the right line to get behind, the right friends to hang out with, the right people to date, the right everything to everything.

Maybe I won't always be this way. Maybe I will. Only time knows.

*Shift. FRANK appears.*

FRANK

Kids today! They think they know everything!

SABRINA

(*To FRANK:*) Dad. I don't.

FRANK

Oh.

*FRANK shrugs. He disappears. Shift.*

SABRINA

So, for right now, maybe you're okay with that or maybe you're not. And if you're not, well, maybe I'm better off without you.

*SABRINA disappears. Shift. TANNER appears.*

TANNER

People at school call me "The Magician." You hear that, and you would think I have cards up my sleeve, or I could pull a bunny out of a hat, or I possess powers of levitation.

But none of that is true.

The reason they call me The Magician is because my life seems to be so carefree, so easygoing, so perfect. And it *is*. So people think that this must be the result of mysterious magical powers because there is no rational explanation why this should be so.

It's like this. I have understanding parents. Supportive teachers. Many friends. I've never been bullied at school, never been confronted on the street, and, as far as I know, never been discriminated against or been the victim of any kind of prejudice whatsoever, despite the fact that I am a guy. Who likes. Guys.

I didn't always have a level of self-awareness about my situation, about my life, though.

*Shift. FELIX and GAIL appear.*

FELIX

(*To TANNER:*) How do you have it so easy?

TANNER

(To *FELIX*.) Have what so easy?

GAIL

(To *TANNER*.) How are you so privileged?

TANNER

(To *GAIL*.) What privilege?

FELIX

I'd give anything to have it half as good as you do.

GAIL

I can live without one kidney, right? I'd give up my kidney.

FELIX

Are you just lucky?

GAIL

Or are you magic?

TANNER

My life is my life. I don't know what the big deal is.

FELIX & GAIL

(To each other.) See?

*Shift.*

TANNER

(To the audience.) And when you're in a kind of protective bubble, it directly influences the way you carry yourself in the world and the choices you make.

*Shift.*

FELIX

Hey, Tanner, will you sign this petition for a new club? We're trying to get a gay-straight alliance on campus.

TANNER

(*To FELIX:*) I don't want to get involved in anything controversial. I mean, I'm running for class president next year, and I can't ruffle any feathers.

*Shift.*

GAIL

Hey, Tanner, the club was approved. Will you come to our first meeting?

TANNER

(*To GAIL:*) I'm too busy with other things. Besides, why do you even need a gay-straight alliance? I mean, it's 2018.\*

*\*The year may be changed to fit the actual year the play is being performed.*

TANNER

(*To the audience:*) So there was this guy I liked. But I didn't have the guts to go up to him and say, "Dude, I like you." Instead, I followed him into the first meeting of the gay-straight alliance. Turns out he has a boyfriend and they're already practically married. Typical. But it was at this meeting where I began to realize things I never realized before.

You see, my peers, my friends, they don't live the way I live. Not at all. They have parents who mock them, parents who have disowned them, parents who have tried to beat the gay out of them.

FELIX

(*To TANNER:*) Do you know how lucky you are?

TANNER

My friends have other friends who have stopped talking to them, who have turned their backs on them, who have spread rumors like viruses.

GAIL

(*To TANNER:*) Do you know how magic you are?

TANNER

My friends get taunted by bullies, get called "fag" in the middle of the street, are easy marks when they're out in public.

FELIX & GAIL

Do you?

*FELIX and GAIL disappear. Shift.*

TANNER

Am I lucky? Am I magician? I don't think so at all.

Because if I were really lucky, if I were really a magician, I'd be able to transform the lives of my friends, of my peers, of the community I belong to.

If I were a magician, I'd be able to make their parents understand, make their friends embrace them, make the bullies leave them alone.

If I were a magician, I could make my protective bubble grow and surround the entire world and expand as far out as the ozone and beyond.

If I were a magician, I would hold all the world's hate, ignorance, wrong, in my hands. And in the blink of an eye, I would make it all. Simply. Disappear.

*TANNER disappears.*

## EPILOGUE

*TEEN A, TEEN B, TEEN C, TEEN D, and TEEN E address the audience.*

I am: TEEN A

TEEN E  
Don't fill in the blank.

I am: TEEN B

TEEN E  
Don't fill in the blank.

I am: TEEN C

TEEN E  
Don't fill in the blank.

I am: TEEN D

TEEN E  
Don't fill in the blank.

ALL TEENS  
Because:

TEEN E  
There are no blanks to fill in.

ALL TEENS  
I am. Period. End of sentence.

I am: TEEN A

I am. TEEN B

I am. TEEN C

I am. TEEN D

I am. TEEN E

We are. ALL TEENS

**END OF PLAY**