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 sooooooooo”

ALL TEENS

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

Beat.

A few months later

That same year

Life magazine

Published an article

And reported

That teenagers

“Speak a curious lingo”

“Adore chocolate milkshakes”

“Wear moccasins everywhere”

“And drive like bats out of hell.”

Beat.

But that was 1941

And this is now

So:
TEEN D
What do you talk about

TEEN E
When you talk about teenagers

ALL TEENS
When you talk about you?

Beat.

I am:

TEEN A

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:
TEEN A & C
What?

TEEN E
Is that every story:

TEENS B & D
Every story?

TEEN E
Every story:

ALL TEENS
Every story is a love story.
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

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

HALEY
A looooonoooooot 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

KATHY
A looooooooot 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.
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:)* Ppsshh. 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:

You know.

AARON

And she says:

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?
And she asks them:

BAILY
How do you “act black”?

And they say:

BAILY
*You* know.

And she says:

BAILY
No, *I don’t*.

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.
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.
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-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.

HARRY 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.
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.

TEEN A
I am:

TEEN E
Don’t fill in the blank.

TEEN B
I am:

TEEN E
Don’t fill in the blank.

TEEN C
I am:

TEEN E
Don’t fill in the blank.

TEEN D
I am:

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.

TEEN A
I am.
TEEN B
I am.

TEEN C
I am.

TEEN D
I am.

TEEN E
I am.

ALL TEENS
We are.

END OF PLAY