



Sample Pages from Box

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Box

A VIGNETTE PLAY IN ONE ACT BY
Lindsay Price



Box

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Casting

6W+3M+9 Either

Box is a vignette play in which most characters only appear in one scene. This script uses a base cast size of 18. A breakdown for a cast of 10 can be found in the Appendix. If you want a larger cast, simply use less doubling.

ONE: Andrea, Claudia, Dori, Group A

TWO: The Voice, Rumour 3, Harper, Group A

THREE: Kasey, Lane, Group A, Cool

FOUR: Hoax, Justice, Group A

FIVE: Secrets, Tense, Group A

SIX: Jonah, Jumpy, Group A

SEVEN: Maren, Amy, Shaky, Group B

EIGHT: Patrick, Still, Group B

NINE: Whisper, Student, Brenna, Group B

TEN: Tattle, Student, Group B, Touchy

ELEVEN: Hugh, Tom, Group B

TWELVE: Hearsay, Peace, Group B

THIRTEEN: Marshall, Calm, Group C

FOURTEEN: Rayna, Drama, Diamond, Group C

FIFTEEN: Deputy, Rumour 1, Charlie, Group C

SIXTEEN: Erin, Rumour 2, Stone

SEVENTEEN: Commentator 1, Ease, Group C

EIGHTEEN: Commentator 2, Taylor, Group C

Box was first presented by Owensboro Middle School (Jr. Thespian Troupe 89126) in October, 2015 with the following cast.

One: Jessica Loyd

Two: Bri Boone

Three: Caroline Weaver

Four: Maris Blount

Five: Avery Elliott

Six: Kyle Reese

Seven: Summer Henry

Eight: Sam Tucker

Nine: Olivia Roth

Ten: Layne Draeger

Eleven: Brenna Kiesling

Twelve: Elliot Tines

Thirteen: Hayley Rudd

Fourteen: Bonnie Beth Olsen

Fifteen: Omarion Jackson

Sixteen: Ali Calhoon

Seventeen: Keiara Hagan

Eighteen: Devin Walker

Sound: Victoria Garrard

Lighting: Lily Hofstrom

The production was directed by Jessica Stafford.

Music plays in the dark. Lights come up and we see everyone is onstage.

There are a number of cubes scattered around the space and actors standing and/or sitting on those cubes. Those who aren't standing/sitting on a cube hold their own boxes. The boxes should be in a variety of sizes, from tiny to oversized. One actor stands inside a big cardboard box.

Music fades.

ALL: This is my box.

ONE: I'm cardboard—temporary.

TWO: I'm made out of wood. Oak. No one pushes me around.

THREE: I like to think of myself as a pizza box. Extra sauce. Extra cheese.

FOUR: Lock box. A steel lock box. Nothing goes in. Nothing goes out.

THREE: And double pepperoni. How could I forget the pepperoni?

FIVE: Black box—the kind that survives plane crashes.

SIX: Match box—If you play with fire, you might get burned. (*he snaps and points a finger*) You might like it.

ONE: Really?

FIVE: Gross.

ONE: Is that how you get girls?

SIX: Don't hate me cause I'm honest.

FIVE: We hate you cause you're gross.

SEVEN: Music box—the kind when you open it and a tiny little ballerina goes round and round. It's my grandmother's. I play it before I go to sleep.

EIGHT: I'm a tool box. (*pause, nervously looking around*) That's a box that holds tools? Tool box? (*pause, more nervous*) Hammer, wrench, screwdriver...

FIVE: (*interrupting*) We get it.

NINE: Jewelry box. Plain on the outside, shiny on the inside.

TEN: I'd rather be shiny on the outside, plain on the inside.

ONE: I'm a gazillion moving boxes. Cause that's all we do.

ELEVEN: Jack-in-the-box—Surprise! Whah!

TWELVE: An empty post office box because who even uses mail anymore?

THIRTEEN: A stuffed post office box. Bills my mom doesn't care about.

ELEVEN: (*crouching as he sings the Jack-in-the-box song [Pop Goes the Weasel] and then leaping up*) Whah!

FOURTEEN: I am a Kobako.

TWELVE: A koba-what?

FOURTEEN: A decorative storage box used to store incense. It means small box in Japanese.

THIRTEEN: Uh huh. That's weird.

FOURTEEN: Oh, absolutely.

FIFTEEN: Pandora's box. Every time I open my mouth everything bad gushes out.

THIRTEEN: (*looking around*) I am surrounded by weird people.

TWELVE: Pandora let hope out of the box. Hope is good.

FIFTEEN: I guess.

SIXTEEN: Chocolate box. Caramels only, I can't eat nuts.

SEVENTEEN: Lunch box.

ELEVEN: You carry a lunch box?

TEN: They're for kids.

SEVENTEEN: It's Gucci. No one makes fun of me.

NINE: Maybe not to your face.

SEVEN: What's inside of it?

SEVENTEEN: Nothing. I don't eat lunch.

TEN: You just carry it around? An empty lunch box.

SEVENTEEN: It's Gucci.

SEVEN: You don't eat lunch?

THIRTEEN: I hate people.

ONE: This is my box.

EIGHT: It's who I am.

SEVEN: I wanted to decorate but my mom told me to take the stickers off.

FOURTEEN: I think glitter solves everything.

FIFTEEN: This is my box.

ELEVEN: It's not so bad.

THREE: It's who I am.

EIGHTEEN: (*holding up box*) Do you like this? Fancy, huh. All the bells and whistles. This is one fancy box. Why, any person alive would love to have this box. It's so clean and shiny. It sparkles. Sometimes, it even hums with fabulousness. (*beat*) This is not my box. This is the box my parents want for me. This is who my parents want me to be. A shining star. Top of the class. Someone they can brag about. Someone they can thrust into the spotlight to prove their hard work was worth it. Look at her (*or him*) shine. We did good. (*beat*) I love movies. I think about writing movies. I haven't seen a movie in three years. The box my parents want me to have takes up a lot of time. I don't want to disappoint my parents... but this is not my box.

A school bell sounds, and then another one, and then another. Everyone reacts by running offstage.

The only ones left onstage are ANDREA, HUGH, and KASEY. They line up, side-by-side, with space in-between. KASEY is holding an orange.

An offstage amplified voice is heard. If your school doesn't have mics and speakers, simply have THE VOICE onstage, standing on a box talking directly to the actors.

THE VOICE: Good morning. Block A has been permanently changed to Block Q, Block Q is now Block I2E. And for the next week only Block N is Block M. Today is the Red schedule. Unless you're on the basketball team and then you're on the Falu schedule. Grade sixes, you're on the Red schedule until lunch time and then A to M's are on the Ruby schedule and N's to Z's are on the Garnet

schedule. Those on the Vermilion schedule will get a nutrition break at 9:40 and those on Scarlet will get a nutrition break at 10:40. Did you get that?

ANDREA: Yes!

HUGH: Of course.

KASEY: Block A is what?

THE VOICE: This is a warning. Do not miss the warning bell. You have been warned. If you miss the warning bell—

The warning bell goes off. ANDREA and HUGH are not fazed. KASEY dives to the floor.

THE VOICE: Did you do your homework?

ANDREA: Yes!

HUGH: Of course.

KASEY: (*from the floor*) Homework?

THE VOICE: Did you do the homework for all your classes?

ANDREA: Yes!

HUGH: Of course.

KASEY: Homework? (*gets up*)

THE VOICE: Did you complete your homework with strong sentence fluency, specific and clear ideas, and close attention to grammar, spelling, and punctuation?

ANDREA: Yes!

HUGH: Of course.

KASEY: My mom is going to kill me.

THE VOICE: People are relying on you. Your parents, your grandparents, your teachers, the principal, the custodians, the crossing guards, the crossing guard's mom. Are you prepared to live up to the expectations of Bernadine Kinkle?

ANDREA: Yes!

HUGH: Of course.

KASEY: (*to self*) Why am I holding an orange?

THE VOICE: This concludes your morning announcements.

ANDREA and HUGH turn smartly and exit.

KASEY: (*calling out*) Why am I holding an orange?

THE VOICE: Kasey Mack report to the office.

KASEY: What? Me? Why?

THE VOICE: Eating food during class time is against school policy.

KASEY: (*holding up the orange*) I'm not eating it.

THE VOICE: Holding food during class time is against school policy.

KASEY: You're making that up.

THE VOICE: Are you contradicting me? The penalties for contradicting—

KASEY: I'm not, I'm not! Ugh. How many days of school are left?

THE VOICE: One hundred and seventeen. Not that I'm counting. Office! Now!

The warning bell sounds. It repeats as KASEY scrambles offstage and MAREN enters. At the same time HOAX, WHISPER, TATTLE, and HEARSAY run on and get into place. Their heads are down.

There is no blackout for this. It all happens at the same time with the lights on.

The warning bell cuts off. MAREN holds up a box.

MAREN: This is my box. I have been trying for months to get another one. I don't want to be known for—it's not my fault Jenny said that stuff. None of it's true. I didn't do anything she said. But it doesn't matter. I can feel them looking at me. Talking about me. I've been trying and trying but I can't get away from this stupid box. It's stuck. I'm stuck. Why can't I determine who I am and how people see me? Ugh! This is my box.

MAREN exits as HOAX, WHISPER, TATTLE, and HEARSAY look up.

HOAX, WHISPER, TATTLE, & HEARSAY: Ugh!

The four talk as if they are sharing juicy gossip.

HOAX: My lungs are backwards.

WHISPER: I kissed him.

TATTLE: My mom's new boyfriend just got out a prison.

HEARSAY: I was grounded for a whole year.

HOAX: I have an illegal inhaler.

WHISPER: He kissed me.

TATTLE: I was abandoned when I was five. They found me eating garbage on the streets.

HEARSAY: My parents had to stop the police from locking me up.

They look at one another and shrug. They now speak normally.

HOAX: I have asthma. *(beat)* That's it.

WHISPER: He's lived beside me since I was two years old. That's it.

TATTLE & HEARSAY: I have no idea.

TATTLE: Eating garbage? Really? Who comes up with that?

HOAX: Words.

WHISPER: Just words.

TATTLE: That's all it takes to build a box.

HOAX, WHISPER and TATTLE turn around. They stay with their backs to the audience. HEARSAY takes the moment of silence to look left, and right. There's no one looking. HEARSAY takes a step away from his/her box. No one notices. He/she takes another step. No one notices. He/she starts to bolt offstage when the MARSHALL and the DEPUTY enter blowing a whistle.

MARSHAL: Hold it right there!

MARSHALL and the DEPUTY each grab an arm and drag HEARSAY back.

MARSHALL: Where do you think you're going?

HEARSAY: Nowhere...

DEPUTY: You were trying to escape your reputation.

MARSHALL: *(blows whistle)* Try to deny it!

HEARSAY: So what if I was?

DEPUTY: (*pointing at HEARSAY's box*) You stay with your reputation, your reputation stays with you.

HEARSAY: Why?

MARSHALL: Those are the rules.

DEPUTY: You know the rules.

HEARSAY: The rules are stupid.

MARSHALL: (*pointing at box*) Is this or is this not your reputation?

HEARSAY: No.

MARSHALL: (*blows whistle*) Wrong answer. It is with you. Ergo, it is your reputation. And that means—

DEPUTY: Ergo?

MARSHALL: Word of the day app. New day, new word.

DEPUTY: Why do you need new words?

MARSHALL: To increase my vocabulary. You should do the same.

DEPUTY: I like my vocabulary where it is. I don't want to sound (*as if eating brussels sprouts*) fancy.

MARSHALL: Gotta use your brain. Use it or lose it. Use it or it's going to leak out your ears and then you'll just be another brainless wonder.

HEARSAY sees the other two are not paying attention and starts sneaking away.

MARSHALL: (*blows whistle*) Hold it right there!

They run over and grab HEARSAY by the arms.

HEARSAY: You guys sound busy so I'll just—

MARSHALL: You'll just get back to your reputation is what you'll do.

HEARSAY: I don't want to. I hate my reputation.

DEPUTY: And whose fault is that?

HEARSAY: What?

DEPUTY: You heard me.

HEARSAY: What did you hear?

DEPUTY: You know what I heard. Everybody knows.

HEARSAY: Oh yeah? And you believe what you heard? Just like that?

DEPUTY: Sakura Sato plays the violin.

HEARSAY: So?

DEPUTY: People who play the violin don't lie.

HEARSAY: I didn't put my cat in the microwave! I don't even have a cat.

MARSHALL: You wouldn't. After the microwave.

HEARSAY: There's no reason why everyone in this school has to look at me like I'm a criminal because nothing happened. Nada. Zilch.

DEPUTY: Sakura Sato said—

HEARSAY: How about what I say? I'm standing right in front of you. I'm telling you, to your face, it's not true.

DEPUTY: She plays the violin.

HEARSAY: I'm pretty sure you can play the violin and lie at the same time.

MARSHALL: I don't know...

HEARSAY: No cat. No microwave. No story.

DEPUTY: Maybe.

HEARSAY: Unbelievable. Fine, I'll take the reputation. Okay?

MARSHALL: (*blows whistle*) So you did put your cat in the microwave.

DEPUTY: I told you Sakura Sato—

HEARSAY: No! But you won't let me walk away, ergo...

MARSHALL: Nicely done! (*to the DEPUTY*) See, he's improving himself. (*or she's improving herself*)

HEARSAY: So I can leave?

MARSHALL: Not a chance. You stay with your reputation, your reputation stays with you.

HEARSAY: Right. You can't fight city hall or Sakura Sato.

MARSHALL: I heard her parents won't let her eat dinner until she practices for three hours. They chain her to the chair.

DEPUTY: Really? Wait'll I tell Lizzie! (*runs off*)

HEARSAY: (*pause*) Where did you hear that?

MARSHALL: Huh?

HEARSAY: Where did you hear that about Sakura?

MARSHALL: (*cagy*) I heard it... around... (*blows whistle for a long time and then—*) Gotta go. (*runs off*)

HEARSAY: Unbelievable.

HOAX, WHISPER and TATTLE have turned around to stare at HEARSAY.

HEARSAY: You believe me, right?

HOAX, WHISPER and TATTLE talk overtop one another as they exit. This is not unison. Everyone chooses their own line and then further adlibs as they exit.

HOAX, WHISPER & TATTLE: (*all talking at once*) Is that the time? I have to go. I'd love to talk to you about this but I've got class. My mom is picking me up, she's already texted me twice. Time is fragile, we'll talk later. Can't be late, can't be late! My mom! Time!

During the above SECRETS enters. HEARSAY sighs and exits.

SECRETS: This is my box. It's not so big. It's pretty light—I can hold it in the palm of my hand. I like the colour and I like the design. Not too much but not boring either. Looking at this box you'd have no idea what's inside. Not a clue. That's the point. My outside and my inside are two different people. For a long time I've kept my insides a secret. No one needed to know. It wasn't hard to hide. I've learned how. People see a well-designed outside and they don't think twice. They see what they want to see. This past summer I... I told my friends everything. They know what's in this box. I thought having friends meant you could tell them your secrets. Isn't that what friends are for? To have someone on your side. (*she pauses looks down, shakes her head*) Big mistake. (*looks up*) School just started.

She exits, passing RAYNA who enters from stage left texting on her phone. ERIN enters from stage right, sees RAYNA, and makes a beeline for her.

ERIN: I have to talk to you.

RAYNA: I have class.

ERIN: I'll walk with you.

RAYNA: No.

ERIN: Why?

RAYNA: Cause I said so.

ERIN: It's just walking. Walking and talking, you do it every day.

RAYNA: Later.

ERIN: Now.

RAYNA: *(this stops her)* Now? Now? You can't tell me what to do. *(she brushes past)*

ERIN: Whatever you say... *(almost a mutter)* Stinkweed.

RAYNA: *(spinning around)* Shut up.

ERIN: *(louder)* Sure thing, Stinkweed.

RAYNA: Who told you that?

ERIN: Your brother was happy to tell me your childhood nickname.
(loud) Stink—

RAYNA: Fine, fine. We can talk. One minute. *(she drags ERIN off to the side, looking around as she does)* Ok. Go. *(ERIN doesn't say anything)* Are you kidding me? *(pushing)* Go!

ERIN: When did it happen?

RAYNA: What?

ERIN: There was a turn somewhere and I missed it. You took a turn. You took a puzzle piece out of the box and hid it somewhere.

RAYNA: What are you talking about?

ERIN: We were friends, Rayna. Best friends. You were at my house almost every day this summer.

RAYNA: I have friends.

ERIN: Yeah, me.

RAYNA: I have different friends.

ERIN: I know.

RAYNA: So stop bothering me.

ERIN: That's the piece I'm missing. We were friends. And now we're not. You swam in my pool. Now you won't talk to me. There's a blank space.

RAYNA: Your time's up.

ERIN: Okay. Round Two it is.

ERIN sits on the floor and clamps herself to RAYNA's leg.

RAYNA: What are you doing?

ERIN: Looks self-explanatory, Stinkweed.

RAYNA: (*hissing*) Get off!

ERIN: Not till you fill in the blanks.

RAYNA: People are staring.

ERIN: (*loud*) Oh she was quite the stinkeroo!

RAYNA: People are staring!

ERIN: Awesome. It's been a boring week.

RAYNA: Erin!

ERIN: That's my name, don't wear it out.

RAYNA: Have you lost your mind?

ERIN: I want answers.

RAYNA: There are none.

ERIN: Then you're going to have to get used to this, Stinkweed.

RAYNA: Shut up!

ERIN: No can do, Stinky!

RAYNA: (*she tries to get ERIN loose*) No, I will not, I will not let you do this! (*she ends up on the floor*) We're not friends. We never were. Being at your house was just an easy way to not be at mine.

ERIN: I refuse to buy that explanation. We are best friends.

RAYNA: No.

ERIN: (*accidentally letting go in frustration*) Yes! Yes! Yes, we are! (*she pounds the ground*) We have to be! You're all I've got.

RAYNA: (*she stands and smoothes her clothes*) You know nothing about friendship, Erin. (*she exits*)

ERIN: (*there's a pause*) I guess I don't.

A bell rings and everyone enters, talking to one another, a babble of sound, moving in patterns. ERIN gets up and joins in the movement. PATRICK moves downstage. Everyone freezes.

PATRICK casually holds his box under his arm as if it doesn't bother him at all.

PATRICK: This is my box. It's all right. I don't think about it much. I like thinking about hot tubs. A nice dip in the hot tub. We have one in our backyard. I think about ice cream in the hot tub. How long do you have before it's puddle city? I mean, I'm not putting my ice cream *in the water*. That would be wrong. Who wants to swim in ice cream? Wait, I could swim in ice cream? Would that be wrong? Would that be gross? I have to think about that. (*He does. Pause.*) Oh—sorry! Where was I? Hot tubs. That's what I think about. It's better than thinking about the other million crappy things that happen in a day. Really, who needs it? Hot tubs are fun. Why not think about fun things? Ice cream in a hot tub... That would be wrong. Definitely. Maybe. I'll think about it.

PATRICK tosses his box in the air and rejoins the movement. Everyone is on the move again, moving in patterns, talking to one another.

COMMENTATOR ONE and TWO end up on top of two boxes. DRAMA enters like a lion. Everyone freezes. As the COMMENTATORS talk in hushed tones, DRAMA stalks around the stage, looking for prey.

COMMENTATOR ONE: What do we have here?

COMMENTATOR TWO: Be very, very quiet. What we're looking at is the dreaded Drama stalking her prey through the middle school hallway.

COMMENTATOR ONE: I've never seen a Drama out in the wild before.

COMMENTATOR TWO: This is a special day for our audience. (*to audience*) Pay close attention. You may want to take notes.

COMMENTATOR ONE: What precautions can one take against Drama?

COMMENTATOR TWO: The most important thing to remember is to stand still. If you don't draw attention to yourself, sometimes Drama will pass you by.

COMMENTATOR ONE: I've heard that Dramas can smell fear. Is that true?

COMMENTATOR TWO: Yes. And if you wear anything sparkly, that's asking for trouble. Look, look!

The COMMENTATORS turn to see TWO GIRLS have started an argument. Everyone onstage is trying to get them subtly to stop, but they don't want to get attacked by DRAMA either. DRAMA locks onto the GIRLS just as a lion would.

AMY: Shut up, shut up!

CLAUDIA: What's your problem?

AMY: Shut up about (*mocking*) Isabelle.

CLAUDIA: I didn't say anything.

AMY: "Izzy's so much fun, Izzy's dad got us backstage passes," I don't want to hear about it.

CLAUDIA: You're just jealous.

AMY: Why would I be jealous of you?

CLAUDIA: Because I'd rather hang out with her.

AMY: What?

They continue their fight silently. DRAMA slowly approaches, stalking her prey.

COMMENTATOR TWO: Those watching with young children be advised—This could get bloody.

COMMENTATOR ONE: Isn't there anything we can do?

COMMENTATOR TWO: This is the way of the wild.

COMMENTATOR ONE: But those two are in danger! Serious danger!

COMMENTATOR TWO: (*serious*) We cannot interfere. (*upbeat*) Let's watch.

*DRAMA takes AMY and CLAUDIA down like a lion.
Everyone onstage reacts and turns away.*

CLAUDIA & AMY: AHHH!

BOTH COMMENTATORS: Oh!

COMMENTATOR TWO: (*serious*) Drama strikes again.

COMMENTATOR ONE: (*serious*) Tragic.

COMMENTATOR TWO: (*upbeat*) Next, we're going to take you the cafeteria where I believe we'll be able to catch the rarely seen three-headed Rumour.

COMMENTATOR ONE: (*upbeat*) Exciting!

Everyone turns to see RUMOUR (three actors) entering. CLAUDIA, AMY, and DRAMA exit in the opposite direction.

As the COMMENTATORS talk in hushed tones, RUMOUR stalks around the stage, looking for prey.

COMMENTATOR ONE: I can't believe we're seeing a Rumour up close like this.

COMMENTATOR TWO: Indeed. What we often see is the result of the Rumour, the aftermath of carnage and destruction.

COMMENTATOR ONE: Let's watch.

RUMOUR ONE: Did you hear?

RUMOUR TWO: What?

RUMOUR THREE: Lane Ripley got 100% on that County Math Test.

RUMOUR ONE: Impossible!

RUMOUR TWO: She must have cheated.

RUMOUR THREE: Did you hear?

RUMOUR TWO: What?

RUMOUR ONE: Lane Ripley cheated on the county math test.

RUMOUR TWO: Of course she did.

RUMOUR THREE: What a fake.

The RUMOUR starts to interact with individuals onstage, spreading the rumour.

COMMENTATOR ONE: The Rumour has an infectious bite. Its poison can spread in mere minutes.

COMMENTATOR TWO: Fascinating.

LANE: (*approaching a group*) Hey guys.

STUDENT: I knew you cheated on that test.

STUDENT: You're such a fake.

They turn their back on LANE, who has no idea what just happened. She turns and is face-to-face with the RUMOUR, who takes her down like a lion.

LANE: AHHH!

BOTH COMMENTATORS: Oh!

COMMENTATOR TWO: Fast moving and deadly.

COMMENTATOR ONE: We all must remain on our toes with these creatures. They are unpredictable and uncivilized.

COMMENTATOR TWO: And we're here showing you all the gory details. Stay tuned!

An "end of the news" music sting plays (something like CNN theme music).

Everyone moves swiftly with purpose. JUSTICE moves downstage, pushing a lumpy distorted box. Once JUSTICE is in place EVERYONE freezes.

JUSTICE: Everything is upside-down at my house. People keep leaving when they shouldn't and not leaving when they should disappear. Nothing is the same day-to-day. Last week I went downstairs and the furniture was gone. And she sat there, eating cereal on a milk crate like everything was alright. "It's fine. Eat your cereal." (*getting loud*) There's no furniture. This is not all right. What are you going to do about it? (*regaining control*) "It's fine. Eat your cereal." Everything is fine to her. Maybe if she keeps saying it things will magically... I don't know. Yesterday I came downstairs and she was eating cereal, on a milk crate with a black eye. (*beat*) Everyone in school is talking about Thanksgiving. "I can't wait—my mom makes awesome stuffing. I haven't seen my cousins all year! Football, Football, and more football..." I don't remember

the last time my sister and I had Thanksgiving. There's no one to do that for us. She says holidays are for suckers. (*imitating*) "Holidays are for suckers and I'm gonna take advantage of every one." (*looks around at the others onstage*) How do I explain my life? The cafeteria is filled with noise. The hallways are filled with drama. My mom is sitting on a milk crate with a black eye. This is my box.

Music plays softly as everyone starts to move. Think "Air on the G String" by Bach. Move slowly. Everyone is measured and specific with each footstep. PEACE, EASE, CALM and STILL turn to face the audience. As they talk, the others swirl around them—but again it's all slow-moving and fluid.

PEACE: It's the noise.

CALM: It's the push.

EASE: The ease with which someone can elbow you in the throat.

STILL: Sometimes I stand still just to see what happens. The swirl of the hallway around me.

PEACE: Sometimes I put my hands over my ears. Just to find peace.

STILL: It doesn't take long for someone to shove you.

PEACE: Or laugh.

CALM: You know who everyone is in the hallway.

EASE: Some walk like they rule the school.

STILL: Some try to take up as little space as possible.

PEACE: Some move fast to avoid the hurt.

CALM: Some can't avoid it.

EASE: There isn't any place to hide in the hallway.

STILL: There's nowhere to be yourself.

PEACE: It's noise.

CALM: And push.

EASE: And elbows.

STILL: If you don't move, everyone will know you don't belong.

PEACE: You'll get pulled under.

CALM: Pushed aside.

EASE: Dragged down.

STILL: And yet,

PEACE: If I look at my hands.

CALM: If I look at my feet.

EASE: If I count to ten.

STILL: If I take a deep breath.

PEACE: I can see myself. Ten fingers, all mine. Perfectly formed. I'm not a piece of garbage to be stomped on.

CALM: I see the shoelaces I picked out. I don't have to be like everyone else.

EASE: I don't have to panic. I can get to the next class and the next and the next. And then the day is over.

STILL: I can find stillness. I can find myself.

Everyone freezes. The music fades. The FOUR look at one another and smile.

PEACE: It's not so bad, is it. *(takes a deep breath)* It's not so bad.

All of a sudden the world explodes onstage. A huge wind storm. Everyone moves as if they are blown about by the wind. They stumble, crawl, fall backwards, all moving as if fighting a big wind. Use wind sounds, or music that explores the rush of movement— "Flight of the Bumblebee" for example.

TOM enters as if he is fighting the wind. He is holding an open-sided box.

Once TOM is in place, the music snaps off. This prompts everyone onstage to freeze.

TOM: What's a box got? Four sides. A bottom and a top. Anybody good with numbers? *(counting his sides)* One. Two sides. No Top. My box is incomplete. Everything blows in and out and I can never hold on. Just an open-ended loser. I don't know who I am. How could I? Nothing stays in my box long enough. Everyone else seems to have things figured out. *(looking around)* Look at

them. They know something. Right? Life is totally calm for them. They can see ahead. I can barely see to the end of the day. How am I supposed to know who I am if I can't see? My parents keep asking—What about baseball? What about band? Do you like photography? Rock climbing? Reading? Karate? What do you want to do Tom? What do you want? I don't know! Why do I have to know? Huh? What's the rush? Why does everything have to be in place? Why do I have to figure out the entirety of my life right now? *(beat)* I don't. *(beat)* I don't! I'm going to wait this one out. See what happens. I'm an open-ended loser and I choose to be incomplete until the wind dies down. *(strong)* I choose to be incomplete. Everybody got that? Good.

The music, the wind and the movement all swirl as everyone exits.

DORI and JONAH stand back-to-back, heads down, centre stage.

BRENNA and HARPER sit side-by-side stage left.

HARPER: Ok, are you ready?

BRENNA: Sure.

HARPER: Let's practice. *(big and fake)* Hey!

BRENNA: *(not so big and fake)* Hey!

HARPER: That wasn't enough. It's got to sound sincere. Try again, big smile, big teeth! *(big and fake)* Hey! How are you!

BRENNA: So people have to believe we want to talk to them? That's "good fake."

HARPER: Right. We sound sincere, but we're totally cutting and mean. All teeth.

BRENNA: Why don't we just talk to them. Actually *be* sincere?

HARPER: *(ignoring the question)* Repeat after me. *(fake)* You look so cute.

BRENNA: *(fake)* You look so cute.

HARPER: Bigger! *(fake)* I love hanging out with you!

BRENNA: *(not getting it)* I love hanging out with you!

HARPER: You're not trying. Do it again!

BRENNA: (*trying, over the top*) I love hanging out with— (*she grabs her calf*) Ow!

HARPER: What's the matter?

BRENNA: Got a cramp.

HARPER: Well walk it off.

BRENNA: It's hard being fake.

HARPER: Good things don't come easy.

BRENNA: (*limping around*) Ow. Ow. Ow. Ah! (*she topples over*)

HARPER: What'll happen if you see Danielle Crowe in the hall and you go down without even a "Hey!" She's a shark. She'll slice you in two without a second look.

BRENNA: That would be a problem. I like being in one piece.

HARPER: We can't be popular if we can't be fake. Being popular is everything.

BRENNA: (*quietly*) Or, we could be nice.

HARPER: (*seeming not to listen*) If we can master fakeness, we'll rule the world! (*she gives an attempt at an "own the world" laugh—which she then cuts off in the middle*) What did you say?

BRENNA: Hmm?

HARPER: You said, and I quote, "Or, we could be nice."

BRENNA: That's excellent recall.

HARPER: I eat tuna. Well?

BRENNA: Well... I was just wondering. Maybe we don't have to be fake? We don't have to be all teeth? We could say "Hey" to people and mean it?

HARPER: No.

BRENNA: We could say "You look cute" when someone actually looks cute?

HARPER: That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard.

BRENNA: Is it really?

HARPER: Fake is the only way to survive. (*beat*) You don't want to be popular.

BRENNA: I'm just thinking out loud...

HARPER: Do you want to be popular?

BRENNA: Thinking out loud? Not really.

HARPER: How long have you been thinking like this?

BRENNA: A while.

HARPER: You never said anything.

BRENNA: I was thinking something else too. *(beat)* You're not that great at being fake.

HARPER: What? How dare you!

BRENNA: I heard you compliment Tammy-Lynn's hair.

HARPER: Liar!

BRENNA: AND you were sincere. You were being nice.

HARPER: How did you—I couldn't help it! It framed her face. The words were out of my mouth before I could stop them. *(she slumps)* I am a failure. A fake failure.

BRENNA: It's not so bad being nice.

HARPER: It's not popular. Danielle is a shark and everyone loves her. We have to be like her—cold-blooded and ruthless. All teeth. That's the only way.

BRENNA: I'd rather be a goldfish than a shark. Just swimming around, being sincere. We should practice that. *(sincere)* Hey!

HARPER: No.

BRENNA: *(singsong)* You might like it... *(sincere)* Hey, I like you.

HARPER: I'm not listening.

BRENNA: Hey, let's do this together. We could you know... you and me...

HARPER: *(not as strong)* It's not popular.

BRENNA: Nope.

HARPER: Goldfish don't have long lives.

BRENNA: But there's much less blood. Much less slicing people in two. Less teeth.

HARPER: I just always wanted...

BRENNA: Did you really?

HARPER: I don't know. I thought... *(pause)* Together?

BRENNA: Yes.

HARPER: Promise?

BRENNA: Goldfish never go back on their word. Ok?

HARPER: Ok.

BRENNA and HARPER exit. JONAH and DORI turn around and end up face-to-face.

JONAH: Oh.

DORI: Hi.

JONAH: Hi... *(he looks around)*

DORI: No one can see you.

JONAH: What?

DORI: It's fine. No one can see you.

JONAH: I wasn't—

DORI: Of course you weren't. *(she turns away)*

JONAH: How are you? *(DORI turns back. She stares at him.)* What?

DORI: Are you talking to me?

JONAH: Don't be—

DORI: Because if you're not, I've got things to do.

JONAH: Don't be like that.

DORI: What?

JONAH: You know.

DORI: Know what?

JONAH: You know how it is.

DORI: Sure. You're a jerk.

JONAH: It's not my fault.

DORI: Why would it be?

JONAH: It's not. You know how it is.

DORI: (*getting in his face*) You could have ignored them. You could have stayed my friend. Instead you caved.

JONAH: (*backing away*) Don't be like that. You never used to be so—

DORI: What? Perceptive of your lack of spine?

JONAH: They said we were dating.

DORI: We weren't.

JONAH: But they said—

DORI: I don't care what they said. I care what you said. What you did.

JONAH: They said I can't be your friend.

DORI: And so you're not. See you. (*she turns away*)

JONAH: Dori—wait!

DORI: (*turning back*) Yes?

JONAH: I just wanted to say... (*he sees someone offstage*) Hey Simon! Wait up!

JONAH runs past DORI without looking back.

DORI: (*to herself*) "I just wanted to say I'm sorry?" (*with bravado*) Too late, Jonah. Too late. (*she stands tall for a moment, then slumps, loses her bravado and looks off after JONAH with a sad sigh*) I miss you. Have a nice life. (*she exits*)

Music plays. Everyone walks onstage carrying boxes. TAYLOR and CHARLIE bring on the biggest cardboard box they can carry. They are having a blast, laughing together as they drag the box onstage. The two of them set the box on its side and sit inside.

The music fades and everyone freezes. TAYLOR and CHARLIE let out a sigh of relief.

TAYLOR: This is our box.

CHARLIE: It's a safe place.

TAYLOR: Everybody needs one.

CHARLIE: It's crazy out there.

TAYLOR: Middle school is the worst.

CHARLIE: If you're not careful, things fly in your face on a regular basis.

TAYLOR: Words.

CHARLIE: Fists.

TAYLOR: Lunch.

CHARLIE: You have to act fast. (*ducking*) Whoa! (*ducking*) It's coming right for me!

TAYLOR: Watch out!

CHARLIE: (*melodramatic, as if being hit*) UGH! They got me. (*slumps*) Middle School right in the gut.

TAYLOR: (*melodramatic*) Charlie! Charlie, speak to me! (*calling out*) Medic! Medic!

CHARLIE: Don't waste your breath, Taylor. I had a good few years.

TAYLOR: Don't talk like that. You're going to live. You're going to live!

CHARLIE: Tell my family... that... I... (*he slumps forward*)

TAYLOR: (*shaking a fist to the sky*) Curse you middle school! Curse you!

CHARLIE: (*sitting up*) If you don't have a safe place you're a goner, gonzo, bye-bye!

TAYLOR: In here, nothing can touch us.

CHARLIE: (*gesturing to the box*) This is an impenetrable force field. A steel door of energy that deflects all matter—physical, metaphorical, and alien. When the aliens come they will take one look at this fantastic field of force and say—you win. This is too much for our puny weapons of mass destruction. How could we ever find a crack in such strong armour? These humans and their box technology, they are light years ahead! They are untouchable!

TAYLOR: (*interrupting*) Charlie! It's just a cardboard box.

CHARLIE: Your mind says cardboard. My mind says "shields up!"

TAYLOR: This is our box.

Music plays. Everyone is on the move again. They gather into three groups – A, B, and C. Once everyone is in their group pose, the music stops.

GROUP A: I am alone.

GROUP B: I am alone.

GROUP C: I am alone.

GROUP A: (*annoyed at the others, pointing at self*) I am alone.

GROUP B: Uh uh. You're not alone. I am.

GROUP C: You're crazy.

GROUP B: Uh uh.

GROUP C: Uh huh!

GROUP A: (*pointing*) You're perfect.

GROUP B: (*pointing*) You're popular.

GROUP C: (*pointing at self*) I am alone.

GROUP A: My friends are fake.

GROUP B: My friends are fake.

GROUP C: My friends are fake.

GROUP A: Wait a minute—

GROUP B: My friends are fake.

GROUP C: You're crazy.

GROUP A: I'm the only one going through this.

GROUP B: *I'm* the only one going through this.

GROUP C: You're crazy. *I'm* the only one.

GROUP A: I'm the only one!

GROUP B: I am!

GROUP C: Me!

GROUP A: I am totally alone in my problems.

GROUP B: I am an island in the wilderness.

GROUP C: No one understands me.

GROUP A: No one understands me!



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