



Sample Pages from Pandemic Pancake

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PANDEMIC PANCAKE

A VIGNETTE PLAY IN ONE ACT BY
Lindsay Price



Pandemic Pancake
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Casting

34 Any Gender

Doubling suggestions below

Scenes/Characters

What are you doing?: One to Twelve

First Period Check-in: Happy, Glad, Cheerful

Professor Fun: Professor Fun

Unfair: Moan, Gripe, Whine

Today is the Day: Rory, Jule

Words Wonderful: Ampersand

Dance Break: Hart, Tru

One Horse Town: Pestilence, Co (Covid), Famine

First Period Check-in (2): Happy, Glad, Cheerful, Fine

Words Wonderful: Ampersand

Future School Fine?: Aki, Lune

The Date: Stevie, Wynn

Holding Hands: Rain, Mani

Words Wonderful: Ampersand

The characters in *The Date* are on a date. You're more than welcome to change the genders and the pronouns but the content and intent of the scene must remain the same.

Doubling Suggestions

For a 12 performer in-person or virtual production. This is only an example. Adapt to fit your situation and your cast

ONE: One, Professor Fun, Famine

TWO: Two, Ampersand

THREE: Three, Happy, Rain

FOUR: Four, Glad,

FIVE: Five, Cheerful, Lune

SIX: Six, Rory, Co

SEVEN: Seven, Jule, Hart

EIGHT: Eight, Pestilence, Mani

NINE: Nine, Moan, Aki

TEN: Ten, Whine, Stevie

ELEVEN: Eleven, Tru, Wynn

TWELVE: Twelve, Gripe, Fine

Time

January 2021

Virtual, Socially Distanced & Hybrid Suggestions

This play can be performed virtually, socially distanced, or a hybrid of the two. Platform suggestions for each scene may be found in the Appendix.

Cutting for Time

The length of the play will vary depending on whether you are virtual or in-person. In-person it runs approximately 35 minutes.

You may cut full scenes (no cutting within scenes) to make the play fit the time limit of a one act competition.

See Appendix for suggestions for staging on different platforms.

What are you doing?

ONE: What are you doing?

TWO: Activating my personal shield. It makes it impossible for anyone to get within 6 feet of me.

ONE: You know there's no such thing as a personal shield.

TWO: You don't know that there isn't.

THREE: What are you doing?

FOUR: Celebrating. I'm asymptomatic.

THREE: Wait, you have Covid?

FOUR: I sure do.

THREE: Wait, why are you happy about that?

FOUR: I'm going to hold a super spreader party and infect all my enemies. No one is going to bully me ever again.

FIVE: Where are you?

SIX: Sitting in the park. There's free wifi and no brothers. *(sigh)* No. Brothers.

SEVEN: Where are you?

EIGHT: *(melodramatic)* Sitting in the dark.

SEVEN: Why?

EIGHT: I want to give up. All of this is ugh.

SEVEN: Ugh, is it?

EIGHT: Ugh.

SEVEN: Huh. Some of us don't have that privilege.

EIGHT: What do you mean?

SEVEN: My mom lost her job and I didn't. So I'm working after school and nights. But you go ahead and give up.

NINE: What are you doing?

TEN: (*inhale*) Seven. (*exhale*) Seven. I'm counting my breaths.

NINE: Why?

TEN: (*unemotional, matter-of-fact*) Because I really want to scream.

NINE: Oh. Why don't you?

TEN: I did. My mom said, "don't do that."

ELEVEN: What are you doing?

TWELVE: I don't know. What are you doing?

– END OF SCENE –

First Period Check-in Check-in

HAPPY, GLAD, and CHEERFUL address the audience. HAPPY is an adult, CHEERFUL and GLAD are students.

HAPPY: (*out to audience*) Good morning students.

GLAD: Hey.

CHEERFUL: (*waving*) Hello!

HAPPY: (*out to audience*) Thank you for joining us for the daily check-in. Let us begin.

GLAD: I am here.

CHEERFUL: I am here.

HAPPY: Good. (*to audience*) Please raise your hand, are you here? (*looking out*) Are you here? Good. Next.

CHEERFUL: (*very cheerful*) I am present!

GLAD: (*more subdued*) I am... trying to be present?

CHEERFUL: What happened?

GLAD: Sometimes I wake up and... I don't know. It feels like a weight. I can't get rid of the weight. What is that?

HAPPY: You are not alone. We are all simply trying to navigate these times.

CHEERFUL: (*to audience*) You are not alone.

HAPPY: Good. Next.

GLAD: I am breathing.

CHEERFUL: I am breathing.

HAPPY: *(to audience)* Please raise your hand if you are breathing. *(as if looking out)* Some of you don't appear to be breathing. All together, please. Inhale *(GLAD and CHEERFUL inhale deeply)* And exhale. *(GLAD and CHEERFUL exhale deeply)* Good. Mental state?

GLAD: Ok. I accidentally smiled this afternoon.

CHEERFUL: *(cheerful)* Almost excellent. I took an online dance class. *(does a small dance move)*

HAPPY: Good. *(to audience)* And how are you? *(As if listening. Nods and smiles.)* Good. How are you? *(As if listening. Nods and smiles.)* Good. Check-in complete.

GLAD: Thanks guys.

CHEERFUL: *(waving)* See you tomorrow!

– END OF SCENE –

Professor Fun

Aggressively fun music plays. The setting is a Zoom meeting. If done virtually, there is an aggressively fun virtual backdrop. PROFESSOR FUN is the human embodiment of aggressive fun.

PROFESSOR: Good morning Cohort Green! Like my new backdrop? Huh? Huh? Screams FUN, am I right? *(raises hand)* Hands up if you like it! *(hand down)* It's Monday, it's fun day but it's always fun here because I am "Professor Fun." *(raises hand)* Hands up, hands up who had a good weekend? Anyone? Anyone? *(hand down)* I sure did. I biked 100k and it was awesome. Headwind in all four directions, rain the whole time, my legs have totally disowned me but fresh air, am I right? Fresh air is... worth it. That's what they say. Ok, chat corner time. Chitty chat how about that! Write your answer: what is one thing you did this weekend? I'm going to start. *(as if typing)* I rode my bike. *(beat)* I hate bike riding, but I hate running more, so biking it is. Ok, guys your turn. Join in. One thing you did this weekend. One thing. Anyone, throw down something in chat. Throw it down. *(does a throw gesture)* ...Anyone? Did you read... or go for a walk...or watch a good movie, or, a bad movie, or I don't know... Did you eat? Anyone?

Someone ate *something*. I ate an entire pizza. No regrets. Lewis! Lewis! You ate pizza too? Awesome. Ok. Lewis ate pizza. With... green olives and pepperoni! Good combo. Love it. Gabriella! You ate toast? That's amazing! I am so glad to hear you ate toast. Toast is great. Are you a butter person or a peanut butter person, or a jam – cream cheese, nice, nice. Trinity! You had a grilled cheese sandwich. With ketchup or without? With, with, of course. Anyone ever eat grilled cheese with mustard? Isaiah! You wish you had pizza. I have got to tell you, pizza is the best. It is my absolute favourite. All right guys, tell me this. Does pineapple belong on pizza? (*Students are actually answering. The PROFESSOR gets more and more excited with the answers.*) Yes, no, no, no, no, yes, no, no, no, no, no, no, no! I think the no's have it. It's a "no" landslide! That's great guys. (*takes a breath, changes tone*) That is really great. (*back to fun*) Down with pineapple! Now. Where do you stand on anchovies?

– END OF SCENE –

Unfair

Follow the punctuation in the scene. It's written so the characters put pauses in weird places, and don't be afraid to chew and draw out your words. Sometimes question marks do not denote questions, but an indication that the end of the line should go up in tone. It should sound so presentational that when MOAN drops the tone, it's very noticeable.

MOAN, WHINE and GRIPE stare out. They are not happy. Take your time with the stare. Then they all make a face and groan.

MOAN: Un. Fair.

GRIPE: So. Un. Fair.

WHINE: Totally unfair.

MOAN: This –

GRIPE: This –

WHINE: This –

MOAN: Pandemic?

All three groan.

GRIPE: Like this? Is the most. Unfair thing. Like. In my life.

WHINE: Totally.

MOAN: My En. Tire. Life.

GRIPE: So unfair.

MOAN: This pandemic? Has RUINED my life.

WHINE: Totally.

GRIPE: My life is TOTALLY ruined.

WHINE: Totally.

All three groan.

GRIPE: It's like this pandemic? Happened just to ruin my life.

MOAN: *(dropping the presentation)* What?

GRIPE: That one time when mother shrunk three of my sweaters, three! At the same time! And said it was aaaaaall an accident but I know, I know she did it on purpose! You shrunk my sweaters out of spite! Sweater spite! *(pause)* This is worse.

MOAN: What?

WHINE: Totally.

GRIPE: This pandemic? It happened? With the sole purpose of making my life miserable. It. Is. Purposefully. RU-IN-ING my life!

WHINE: *(still in it)* Totally.

MOAN: That's not possible.

GRIPE: I know what's fair and what's not. And my life should be fair.

WHINE: All our lives should be fair.

GRIPE: But mostly mine.

WHINE: Totally.

MOAN: It makes no sense to say that a pandemic happened, millions of people getting sick just to ruin your life.

WHINE: *(now not sure what's happening)* Totally...?

GRIPE: I'm a good person. My life should be fair. That's the truth.

WHINE: *(back on solid ground)* Totally.

MOAN: Life isn't fair. For anyone. That's...life.

WHINE: What are we talking about?

GRIPE: Good people should have fair lives. Pandemics should only happen to bad people.

MOAN: Pandemics can't really tell the difference between a good person and a bad person.

WHINE: (*trying to commit but not really*) Totally...

GRIPE: (*change*) Why isn't this over? Why aren't we back to normal?

MOAN: We will be. Maybe. Hopefully.

WHINE: Totally.

GRIPE: Why is this happening to good people?

– END OF SCENE –

Today is the Day

RORY: What's your plan? Are you going to ease into it?

JULE: I don't know.

RORY: That's my suggestion. Ease in. Slow motion through the door.
Entry into a cold pool, one toe at a time.

JULE: You think? Maybe.

RORY: Maybe you should start with a joke.

JULE: Why? I am one hundred percent not funny.

RORY: That's not true. (*beat*) Eighty-seven percent, tops.

JULE: Ha.

RORY: Ok, what about starting with something way more serious to defuse the situation. Mom, Dad, I have cancer – surprise! I don't!

JULE: How do I “surprise” cancer?

RORY: Something else then.

JULE: Maybe.

RORY: We'll brainstorm. Deliberate. Think tank.

JULE: I think, I think I'm going to leap through the flaming hoop and do it.

RORY: Do it?

JULE: Yep.

RORY: (*gulping*) Really?

JULE: Eyes closed, words out. Done.

RORY: I need to sit down.

JULE: Suck in my stomach so I don't get metaphorically toasted.

RORY: (*blurting*) Doesn't that scare you to death?

JULE: Ro. When I asked you to help me prepare for this, I assumed you'd know that 'scare you to death' isn't on the list of phrases I find comforting.

RORY: Sorry. Sorry, I didn't – but maybe, maybe... you should wait? I mean, what's the rush? With everything topsy-turvy right now, what's the harm in waiting?

JULE: What happened to: "If this time has taught us anything, everything is temporary and you have to live your truth?"

RORY: I did say that.

JULE: What happened to: "The world owes us nothing and who knows what's around the corner?"

RORY: Are you going to quote back everything I've ever said? Something particularly pithy from the second grade?

JULE: Rory.

RORY: Talking about doing something and doing something are two different things.

JULE: They are.

RORY: We've been talking about you doing this and now you're actually doing it and when you're talking anything can happen but when you're doing, only one of two things happen. Yes. No. Accept. Not. Will. Won't. (*beat*) I'm scared for you.

JULE: My parents are not your parents.

RORY: That's a given. I think about what I would do if I had to tell them something... outside their bubble. How quickly they would...
(beat) This isn't helping, is it?

JULE: Nope. I was merely nervous before. Nervous but confident.
Now I'm striding toward freaking out.

RORY: Oh don't do that. Your parents are not my parents. Your parents are going to be fine. I one hundred percent believe in them and I one hundred percent believe in you.

JULE: Well, I eighty seven percent believe in me. (sighing) Will. Won't. Agh...If only I knew for sure! (beat) I'm just going to have to say it to them: I am gay. I'm gay. I am soooooo gay. (smiles and laughs)

RORY: See? That makes you smile! How could something that makes you smile be anything but great?

JULE: What will happen when your parents find out?

RORY: (pause before speaking) We won't be telling them.

JULE: What happened to living your truth?

RORY: The truth is, if they find out you're gay I will be forced to never see you again. My parents don't want the truth. They want to live in a void where no one challenges their beliefs.

JULE: And what happens if you have a truth that doesn't fit in their void?

RORY: I don't know. Move to the Gobi desert and research snow leopards?

JULE: That's specific.

RORY: What I do know is that right now, we are going to focus on you. I am here to support you.

JULE: But –

RORY: One truth at a time. Ok?

JULE: Ok. Ring of fire here I come. I am one hundred percent ready.
(exiting)

RORY: (following) You look eighty-seven percent ready.

JULE: (smiling) Jerk.

– END OF SCENE –

Words Wonderful: Ampersand

AMPERSAND is livestreaming on YouTube for the first time.

AMPERSAND: Hello? Hello. Yes...? Yes. Ok. Hello. Hi. This is my channel. And... my channel. My channel is called Words Wonderful, because... words are wonderful. I am... you can call me Ampersand bringing you all words, um, all the time, because words are... Wonderful. (*muttering*) That's redundant. (*stops, they are faltering*) Come on. You can do this. You got this. (*beat*) I feel that I have been... stuck forever. Cement blocks keeping me in place. I don't want to be stuck anymore. Or, if I have to sit in this room for who knows how long, I'm going to do something I love.

I love words. I love the history of them and where they come from and why not... talk about that. Share that? Why not? Do you know the origin of the Ampersand? It's a mondegreen: a mishearing or misinterpretation of a phrase that gives it a new meaning. The character, you know the character, right? The Ampersand? You know what I'm talking about? No one knows what I'm talking about. (*shakes head and tries again*) Anyway, it means "and." And the word, uh, the character, the character that means and, ugh! (*pause*) No, no, no! Keep going. (*takes a deep breath*) The character, which means "and" was the 27th letter of the alphabet. I love that our alphabet used to have 27 letters. Did you know that? They used to say X, Y, Z "and per se and." Over time those words got mushed together: "Ampersand." Ta da! (*pause*) I know no one cares about the origin of the Ampersand. I know no one is watching this. Or if they are... they're not...going to be kind. It doesn't matter. Well, it matters. It matters. Words make me happy. Maybe someone out there feels the same? If you do, hey! Hi! Nice to meet you. Maybe you and I can get unstuck together. Leave a comment. Or don't. Really don't, I'm not sure I can handle being told how much I suck at this. Ok. That's it. For now. Ha ha! I did it! First one! Oh – Words are wonderful and this is Ampersand with Words Wonderful. See you next time.

– END OF SCENE –

Dance Break

The two characters are on a Zoom call.

HART: Are you ready?

TRU: Maybe.

HART: Positive...

TRU: I am ready.

HART: Better. Now say it like a superhero.

TRU: Why?

HART: Because. I'm asking you to.

TRU: I don't...

HART: Positive...

TRU: *(like a superhero)* I am ready!

HART: Nice.

TRU: Ok, your turn. Say it like a cartoon character who is preparing to go grocery shopping right before a piano falls on their head.

HART: That's complicated.

TRU: Positive...

HART: *(as per TRU's instruction)* I am ready! *(beat)* How was that?

TRU: C+.

HART: What? I did awesome.

TRU: B –

HART: I had hand gestures.

TRU: B-

HART: So cold. Let's do this. Do you have enough room?

TRU: *(looking around)* Sure. Sort of. I can't jump. Mom yelled at me last time.

HART: Did you tell her that physical activity is extremely important, especially during these trying times?

TRU: She's a long distance yeller. I didn't get the chance.

HART: Our chosen subject for today's dance break is global warming.

TRU: What?

HART: Global warming.

TRU: You can't be serious.

HART: Positive...

TRU: What's positive about global warming?

HART: That is our chosen subject.

TRU: How can it be our chosen subject when you choose it?

HART: Do you have an alternative suggestion?

TRU: You want me to create a dance in my bedroom without jumping on the subject of global warming.

HART: Very much I do.

TRU: And how will you be interpreting our chosen subject?

HART: I will be a dying swan on the melting polar ice caps. With gestures.

TRU: Can we talk about Priya?

HART: You have 2 minutes to prepare. Go!

TRU: Five seconds on Priya. Please?

HART: Go, go! 2 minutes! You're wasting time.

TRU: Have you talked to her?

HART: *(pauses before talking)* No. I tried, I went to her house. Her mom said she was sleeping. Is that good or bad?

TRU: I don't know.

HART: She's always sleeping.

TRU: *(beat)* Ok. You need to do your dance.

HART: It's okay.

TRU: Dance time. Now.

HART: We don't have to.

TRU: I have never been more ready than I am right now to present a dance, without jumping, on global warming. Ready, set, go!

Music plays. For 30 seconds, the two dance in whichever way they choose to represent global warming. The music stops.

HART: What do you think?

TRU: B-.

HART: So cold.

TRU: Truth is a helmetless polar bear on a skating rink.

HART: What does that even mean?

TRU: I have no idea. I never do. (*big smile*) Don't you know that by now?

HART laughs.

– END OF SCENE –

One Horse Town

PESTILENCE, one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse is taking selfies on their phone. CO – otherwise known as COVID-19, enters.

CO: Besti Pesti!

PESTILENCE: Go, go, go Co-vid! Good to see you! Gimme, gimme, what's the latest? What is la scoop?

CO: Second wave baby!

PESTILENCE: As planned, by me.

CO: I am riding the wave!

PESTILENCE: I knew I could count on you.

CO: Who has two thumbs and is exceptional at spreading disease. Me!

PESTILENCE: Under my firm guidance.

CO: Where is everyone? I thought I was giving a report to the whole gang. Isn't this an official Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse meeting?

PESTILENCE: Meetings are so last year. I'm in charge. You only need to meet with me. This is a one horse town and I am the number one horse. Numero Uno.

CO: Really? Death went for that? War? The one horse thing?

PESTILENCE: War's such a cry baby sour puss. Who brought the world to its knees? Me.

CO: With some help.

PESTILENCE: Oh sure, you're my awesome bestie!

FAMINE enters. Looks like an administrative assistant.

FAMINE: Good morning Ms. Pestilence. Good Morning Ms. Covid.
(change gender references to suit your cast)

CO: Hi Famine. That's a new... look for you.

FAMINE: Thank you.

PESTILENCE: (*snapping fingers*) Hey, hey. Where's my celebration menu?

FAMINE: Yes, I have it. It's coming. My printer is acting up. I'll be a minute.

PESTILENCE: That sounds like a "you" problem.

FAMINE: Yes Ms. Pestilence. (*exits*)

CO: Ms... Pestilence...?

PESTILENCE: I told you. Everyone works for me now.

CO: Does War call you Ms. Pestilence?

PESTILENCE: Such a crybaby.

FAMINE: (*entering*) I have your menu.

PESTILENCE: About time.

CO: Famine, don't you have your own work to do? Are famines on hold?

PESTILENCE: She enjoys working for me.

CO: Do you?

FAMINE: Of course. (*beat*) But I did have some ideas of my own to add. Which I thought I'd be able to share by now...

PESTILENCE: You are planning my celebration party. What could be more important than celebrating my success?

CO: With some help.

PESTILENCE: Oh sure.

CO: (*to FAMINE*) What kind of ideas do you have?

FAMINE: Shortages. We should focus on the drug supply, go after the pharmaceutical market.

CO: That's good. Very famine-esque.

FAMINE: Thank you.

PESTILENCE: Did you add colour-coded macarons to the menu?

FAMINE: Yes, Ms. Pestilence. I also ordered the projections for the water fountain.

CO: So... what are Death and War doing? Picking out tablecloths?

PESTILENCE: Death is super biz (*short for busy*), thanks to me, and War is, I don't know. Sulking? What more does he want? Everyone is fighting. I gave him major skirmishes between maskers and anti-maskers. (*referring to themselves*) Who's got two thumbs and is unstoppable?

FAMINE: Ms. Pestilence, you have your dress (*or suit*) fitting.

PESTILENCE: You hear that? I have a dress fitting. For my celebration. Living the dream Co, living the dream. (*exits*)

CO: Do you really enjoy... this?

FAMINE: It's temporary.

CO: Shortages are a good idea.

FAMINE: I'll get to it. Once this party thing is over.

CO: She's celebrating awfully early.

FAMINE: These things end. They always do. (*beat*) They're distributing vaccines.

CO: It has been some ride.

FAMINE: We can always count on the stupidity of people.

CO: It's remarkable how often history repeats itself. But something will take Pestilence's place. It always does.

FAMINE: Perhaps you could not mention that.

CO: Good luck with the party.

FAMINE: Colour-coded macarons. What is this world coming to?

– END OF SCENE –

First Period Check-In (2)

CHEERFUL and FINE are talking.

FINE: I don't want to do this. Not in front of everyone.

CHEERFUL: You'll be great.

HAPPY: Good morning, students.

GLAD: Hey.

CHEERFUL: (*waving*) Hello!

HAPPY: (*to audience*) Thank you for joining us for the daily check-in.

FINE: (*muttering*) Not like we had a choice.

HAPPY: Let us begin.

GLAD: I am here.

CHEERFUL: I am here.

FINE: (*not really playing along*) I am here.

HAPPY: Good. Next. (*to GLAD*) How are you?

GLAD: I made some bread this morning. It helped.

HAPPY: Good. (*to CHEERFUL*) How are you?

CHEERFUL: I watched some sunflowers yesterday. (*exhaling*) Peaceful.

HAPPY: Good. (*to FINE*) How are you?

FINE: (*shrugs*) Fine.

This stops the other three.

HAPPY: What?

GLAD: What did you say?

FINE: I'm fine.

HAPPY: How are you?

FINE: I said, I'm fine.

CHEERFUL: (*cheerful*) Are you sure there isn't another word you want to use...?

FINE: No.

HAPPY: The purpose of the check-in is to give students a platform and a safe space to share. How are you?

FINE: I'm fine.

CHEERFUL: What else?

FINE: My answer isn't going to change.

HAPPY: Fine is not a true answer. It's a shield. How are you?

FINE: Fine.

HAPPY: How are you?

FINE: Fine.

HAPPY: How are you?

FINE: What are you going to do, fail me?

HAPPY: How are you?

FINE: Ok. Ok. You want to know how I'm feeling?

CHEERFUL: We really do!

FINE: I feel this is pointless. Why do you make us do this every day?

HAPPY: I see.

FINE: Sunflowers? Baking bread? It's fake. It's lies. (to CHEERFUL and GLAD) I'm sorry But I can't believe you go along with this. (to HAPPY) Pretending everything is normal is fake and forcing everyone to pretend right along with you is worse.

GLAD: (*losing calm demeanor*) There is no more normal!

CHEERFUL: (*singsong*) Now, now that's not the way to handle this...

GLAD: And what we're doing? Is more normal than anything we used to do.

CHEERFUL: (*singsong*) Tone check...

HAPPY: What we are trying to say is there's nothing fake about small joys. Finding happiness in the small, in the now, is being present.

FINE: Sounds like you're papering over cracks.

GLAD: The now is all we have. You think waiting around for things to get back to "normal," whatever that is, is healthy? Wake up! It's not happening.

CHEERFUL: (*sing song*) Tone check...

HAPPY: What we're trying to say is that change never goes back. Only forward.

GLAD: Happiness needs a different definition.

FINE: Why? There's nothing to be happy about.

HAPPY: (*a little sharp*) We know that. (*Beat. Gentle.*) We are aware of the situation. My grandmother is an anti-masker. I haven't seen her in ages.

GLAD: My mom hasn't worked in almost a year.

CHEERFUL: My uncle lost his sense of smell, and now he can't stand the smell of anything.

FINE: See? The world is falling apart.

CHEERFUL: Yes it is. Exactly.

FINE: That makes no sense.

HAPPY: Everyone knows the world is falling apart. (*to audience*) You know. But it's not your job to save the world. No one person can do that.

CHEERFUL: Exactly.

FINE: You keep saying that.

CHEERFUL: Focus on the world in front of you. Find happiness in the space in front of your eyes.

FINE: It won't help.

GLAD: How would you know?

CHEERFUL: (*singsong*) Tone check...

HAPPY: Have you tried? Hope happens in the small.

CHEERFUL: So. How are you?

– END OF SCENE –

Words Wonderful: Fine

AMPERSAND is livestreaming. They are much more confident now.

AMPERSAND: Hello and welcome to Words Wonderful, I am your host Ampersand, but you can call me And for short and for all since Ampersand means “and.” Today we’re talking about “Fine.” These days, fine is a word we use when we don’t want to say how we really are. How many times a day have you defaulted to “fine” so you don’t have to say any more? Everyone uses it. ‘How was your day?’ Fine. ‘How are you feeling?’ Fine. ‘Anything wrong?’ No, I’m fine.

Fine has other meanings: rich, valuable, expertly made. Unblemished, refined and free of impurities. Words change meaning. Words drift away from their original use. When people say I’m fine, they are not saying “I’m free of impurities.” When did fine become a word to stop a conversation rather than start one? It seems counterintuitive since the point of words is to communicate. Imagine using words to avoid communicating. But sometimes there are bigger things going on than we have words to say. How many of us are feeling beyond words right now? I ask my dad how he is. He says he’s fine. He’s not. Yesterday he fell asleep at the kitchen table. No one is fine. But it’s easier to say “I’m fine” instead of the truth. Can you imagine if we told the truth? Thank you for joining me. I’m Ampersand, and this is Words Wonderful. See you next time.

– END OF SCENE –

Future School Fine?

AKI and LUNE are in an online breakout room. They are speaking in a rhythm they have repeated many times before.

AKI: How are you?

LUNE: Fine. How are you?

AKI: Fine. How are you?

LUNE: Fine. How are you?

AKI: Fine. How are you?

LUNE: (*pausing before talking*) Fine.

AKI: What?

LUNE: It's your turn.

AKI: You paused.

LUNE: No I didn't.

AKI: You didn't keep the rhythm.

LUNE: I took a breath. That's all.

AKI: Are you sure?

LUNE: Yes.

AKI: Positive?

LUNE: Why wouldn't I be?

AKI: I don't know.

LUNE: It's your turn.

AKI: This has never happened before.

LUNE: Everything's fine. Ask me the question, I'll answer as required.
Because I have nothing to be un-fine about. Anti fine. The
complete opposite in the spectrum of fine.

AKI: Lune.

LUNE: (*sarcastic*) There is so much to feel fine about these days.

AKI: Mr. Tracker could drop in at any moment.

There is a pause.

LUNE: Sorry. Right. I got sidetracked. Who's turn is it?

AKI: Yours. Mine? I'll go. (*back in rhythm*) How are you?

LUNE: Fine. How are you?

AKI: Fine. How are you?

LUNE: Fine. How are you? (*AKI doesn't answer*) How are you?

AKI: What do you think would happen? I mean, I know what the
exercise is. I know what they're expecting us to accomplish.

LUNE: They're not expecting us to accomplish anything. They want us
to not cause trouble. (*beat*) I shouldn't have said that.

AKI: Mr. Tracker could drop in at any moment.

LUNE: He could.

AKI: He seems tired. Crazy tired. What do you think would happen if he dropped in and we weren't doing the exercise?

LUNE: What do you think would happen if we were to say what we were truly feeling? Instead of not causing trouble.

AKI: If we actually talked? I don't know. We'd fail the exercise.

LUNE: Maybe.

AKI: I don't want to fail.

LUNE: Right. Should we get back to it then?

AKI: I don't want to fail. But... *(beat)*

LUNE: But what?

AKI: We can do who they want us to do. Or we can do what's good for us.

LUNE: I'm, um – well that's pretty – Is that what you want?

AKI: I don't know.

LUNE: Oh. *(beat)* They'd hate it. They never want what's good for us.

AKI: *(blurting)* I'm afraid.

LUNE: Of what?

AKI: Exploding. For real. I'm not being metaphorical, I might lose myself to dust. I might, I – *(sits straight up and launches into the rhythm of the exercise)* How are you?

LUNE: Fine. How are you?

AKI: Fine. How are you?

LUNE: Fine. How are... He's gone.

AKI: *(with a big exhale)* That was close.

LUNE: We're safe now. He never drops in twice.

AKI: No. My heart is racing. That was close.

LUNE: We can sit here until time is up.

AKI: Yes.

LUNE: Shouldn't be long.

AKI: Yes. *(beat)* Ask me the question. For real.

LUNE: Are you sure?

AKI: Ask.

LUNE: Ok. How are you?

AKI: I...I am not good. My family is not good. My mom has no energy, she can't concentrate. She can't breathe. We used to hike all the time. I can't reach her. I can't help her. What could I do? And my dad is using this as leverage. He says my sister and I need to come live with him, that my mom is overreacting, it's an overblown flu. He doesn't care about us. *(pause)* How are you?

LUNE: I'm supposed to be making plans for the future. I had plans. Now, who knows? How can I plan for next year when who knows what's going to happen next week? What are we supposed to do?

AKI: I don't know.

LUNE: Me either. *(pause)* How did that feel?

AKI: Still not fine. But not worse. I feel... released.

LUNE: This should be the exercise. How are you? Not fine. How are you?

AKI: So not fine.

LUNE: Yeah. So not fine.

– END OF SCENE –

The Date

You're more than welcome to change the genders and the pronouns in this scene but the content and intention must remain the same.

STEVIE: Hi, hey!

WYNN: Hello. What's that?

STEVIE: Nothing. Well, not nothing. I wanted to, well, we can't do anything or go anywhere, and I thought, it's not much. Ambiance. Atmosphere. One of those words.

WYNN: Oh.

STEVIE: It's just a tablecloth. And flowers. The flowers are plastic?

WYNN: You're trying too hard.

STEVIE: I was hoping you wouldn't notice.

WYNN: It's fine.

STEVIE: It's not, otherwise you wouldn't have brought it up.

WYNN: It's my trigger reaction to be sarcastic when someone does something nice for me. I was this way before the pandemic. *(sigh)*
This is weird.

STEVIE: I wasn't trying to be weird.

WYNN: Not you. This. I forget how to date.

STEVIE: Did you date a lot? Before?

WYNN: I dated the normal amount.

STEVIE: Right. Ok. Forget the tablecloth, forget the flowers, what we're going to do instead is...

WYNN: We can talk.

STEVIE: If we do that you might find out how weird I am. That did not come out right. I meant, I mean, I was only trying to say that our interests might not be on the same page. That doesn't sound right either.

WYNN: Who cares if we don't like the same things? *(beat)* I am also cranky. Aren't you glad you asked me out?

STEVIE: I'm surprised you said yes.

WYNN: I'm surprised you asked. I'm glad you asked.

STEVIE: Really? It doesn't sound...

WYNN: I know. It's almost like I can't help it. Which is a cop-out. If I didn't want to be sarcastic I wouldn't be. Why did you ask me out?

STEVIE: I've always wanted to. And what's the worst thing that would happen? You'd say no. *(beat)* This year? My aunt and uncle lost everything. I'm not exaggerating. They work in travel. Everything gone. Nothing you say could compare to that. Am I going to sit around waiting for the pandemic to be over? Why? I don't want to be one of those people who look back and say I wish I had

done, or why didn't I do – it could all be gone tomorrow. Who cares if I screw up a date by trying too hard with a tablecloth.

WYNN: I...I've been doing a lot of staring at the walls. It feels important to do something. Anything. You know?

STEVIE: Yep.

WYNN: Thank you for asking me out.

STEVIE: Thank you for saying yes.

WYNN: (*sincere*) This is great. Hey! No sarcasm. Like, it came out sincere! Wait, wait, I'm going to "think" sarcasm really hard. (*sincere*) This is great. I did it again! Ha! What's weird about you?

STEVIE: We're not starting there.

WYNN: Why not? I'm game. Let's get weird. That did not come out right...

– END OF SCENE –

Holding Hands

RAIN: Are you –

MANI: – there? Are you there?

RAIN: Are –

MANI: – there? Are –

RAIN: I can't –

MANI: – hear you. I –

RAIN: can't hear –

MANI: – you. Can you –

RAIN: – see –

MANI: – me? Can you –

RAIN: Can't. I can't.

MANI: Can't. I can't... hey.

RAIN: Hey! You're there.

MANI: I see you.

RAIN: I got you.

MANI: I got you too.

RAIN: Every time. I hate this.

MANI: It is what it is.

RAIN: I can't take it.

MANI: Sure you can.

RAIN: I can't.

MANI: Hold my hand.

RAIN: Don't be –

MANI: I'm not. I'm serious. Hold my hand.

RAIN: You know I can't.

MANI: Hold your hands together – tight.

RAIN: It's not –

MANI: Clasp your hands together and close your eyes. Hold tight. I'm holding your hand. That's me. We're together.

RAIN: We're not.

MANI: Don't open your eyes. Things are different but they're not impossible. And if I say I'm holding your hand, I am. This is my hand. I'm here for you.

RAIN: You do it.

MANI: Sure.

RAIN: Do you feel my hand?

MANI: I do.

RAIN: Really?

MANI: Yes.

RAIN: Ok. We're together.

MANI: We're together.

RAIN: Yes. We're here.

MANI: We're here. We're here.



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