

## Summer Shorts 2025

### Script Excerpts for Auditions

#### **The Enthusiast, by Eddie Coleman**

(A poignant comedy drama)

Mick is late 40s and is dressed like a 20th century railway station employee. As far as the audience is concerned, has been playing with an invisible train set in his garage for hours. His wife, Maggie, (also late 40s) has been trying to talk to him, but he has been absorbed with his mental picture, to the point where he has picked up and put down various pieces of invisible train kit. Mick's mental abstraction and distance has led her to tell a story about being seduced and ravished by the milkman. The action below continues from this point, where she remains trying to persuade Mick to come in for dinner. The tone is poignant and thoughtful.

Mick:           Dinner time?

Maggie:       Yes, dinner time.

Mick:           Can I come back in here after dinner? Please.

Maggie:       Mick...we're supposed to be spending the evening together.

Mick:           And we will... I just need twenty minutes...I'm having second thoughts about where I placed the signal box. Probably shouldn't have moved it where I did. Please, Maggie.

Maggie:       Let me think about it. And as long as it's only twenty minutes.

Mick:           Thank you. *(Beat)* Love you, Maggie.

Maggie:       But not as much as you love your model railway, eh? Go on, admit it.

Mick:           I love you both equally the same.

Maggie:       I don't believe you. I think you love your railway just a teensy-weensy bit more than me.

Mick:           Why would you say that?

Maggie:       Just a hunch. Remember, I'm not the one who lives in our converted garage

morning, noon, and almost bloody night!

Mick: Fair enough!

Maggie: And yes, I love you too, Mick.

Mick: Thank you. So, did you really shag our milkman this morning?

Maggie: Oh, so you were listening!

Mick: Yes!

Maggie: No, of course I didn't. I just said that to get a reaction from you.

Mick: Sorry, I didn't react.

Maggie: I'll try harder next time...and you know, I really do think Gordon fancies me  
as he's given me two weeks additional credit.

Mick: What a lovely fellow. And why wouldn't he fancy you? You're a very  
fanciable woman.

Maggie: Thank you...right, are you coming in?

*(Mick turns to look back at his railway set. He is thoughtful, perhaps a little melancholic. He pauses, doesn't move)*

Maggie: Mick? Mick...

Mick: Do you think one day we'll ever have enough money to buy it all back?

*(Maggie takes a deep breath. She moves forward, stands beside him)*

Maggie: One day.

## **Too Much For One Goddess, by Marilyn McCaughan**

(A fantasy comedy)

Justicia (Female, age flexible) and Prudentia (Female, age flexible) are statues representing the goddesses, embodying the virtues of justice and prudence. Justicia particularly has become tired of standing proud, carrying her scales of justice and frustrated by her lot, has stepped down for a moment and has noticed the audience...

**Justitia** Who are they? What have they done? They look shift. Where are we? Are we in court?

**Prudentia** No need to panic. They're not murderers or muggers. They are mostly middle class materialists, guilty of minor misbehaviours only, fare dodging, not tapping in and out, leaving lights on, taking unnecessary holidays, not sending their kids to school on Fridays. They're AUDIENCE. This is a THE-ATRE. They're here to watch us. They've paid for this. Ignore them for now. We can deal with them later. Sit down, you're very wobbly. I know it's the weight of centuries of judgements and misjudgements, corruption and censorship. It's all been constant pressure. You've done well. I'm proud of you.

**Justitia** Oh shut up. You're always so reasonable. Stop being wise.

**Prudentia** You know I can't help it. Just as you are blind to money, power and status, I must see the future. I use my reason, my insight, to make everything better.

**Justitia** Have you got a can? I need a drink. And no shit local brewery stuff with a stupid name. I'll have a Guinness or a Harp.

*Justitia drops her scales and sword in a heap. Both goddesses sit on their plinths, open the cans.*

**Justitia** So how have things been in the last century while I've been administering fair and equal justice? Huh? Stopped any good wars or invasions? Persuaded any despots to be cuddly grandads?

**Prudentia** I have to admit, these are hard times. I had a small success with the Chuckle brothers recently - remember their troubles? I sorted that problem - for now at least. And there was the Treaty of Versailles, the Geneva Convention ...are they still working? ... touch and go ... in general, as soon as I counsel one villain and recommend a change of approach - forgiveness - working together for the good of all - another brutal bastard pops up.  
( Sorry, excuse my crude language. I get more like you every decade.)

**Justitia**      You are nothing like me. That's why we're a good team.

**Prudentia**    Exactly. Strength lies in differences not similarities. Feeling any better now? Let me feel your brow. Are you feverish? No. Cold as death. Good that's normal. You're getting your strength back. Have another drink.

**Justitia**      How's the worm?

**Prudentia**    Aaah, my little pet Lucy. She's good. So wise. Always ready with her little fangs to move things along. Useful in meetings. I let her slither about and inject good sense into everyone. She's an effective serpent. It means I don't usually need to use my poking arrow but I keep it tucked in my sleeve just in case rationality slips. A swift poke keeps all minds on track.

*She jabs Justitia playfully.*

**Prudentia**    You're as tough as an old saucepan. Good for another few millennia. I must get you back up on your plinth now. I'm about to represent discipline and good governorship at the UN. They need all the help they can get so I can't be late.

## **You Ask Yourself, Am I Happy? By Rebecca Simon**

(A surreal comedy)

*All the action takes place in YOUR head. YOUR mind palace may look like a favourite take-away chicken place, the catacombs of Lima or a black void hurtling through space. Maybe your characters are dressed as Teletubbies or simply wearing black clothes and jazz shoes. It's YOUR mind palace, do as you feel.*

### **Characters (All ages and genders considered)**

YOU	Pretty easy this one – it's you! Just an average person trying to find out if you are happy.
ONE	The world according to ONE: Everything sucks!
FIVE	Always a bit tired, zones out sometimes. FIVE would mostly prefer to be re-watching Friends on Netflix.
SIX	A realist who accepts the grey areas of life and doesn't believe in opinions.
TEN	Ever the optimist, TEN strives to spin every bedraggled thread of life into gold.

*YOU is filling in a questionnaire to find out how happy you are.*

YOU	On a scale of one to ten with one being strongly disagree
ONE	You are talking absolute codswallop. I couldn't disagree more.
YOU	and ten being strongly agree,
TEN	This is me to an absolute tee.
YOU	score the following statements – I feel pleased with the way I am.
TEN	Looking at myself objectively, no ego. I am probably the most impressive person I have ever met. Objectively speaking. Take these for example ( <i>holds up their hands</i> ) I grew these shovels of wonder, these ladles of amazement. And I don't even remember doing it. These dexterous sausages have penned enlightening prose, sculpted monolithic masterpieces, tenderly caressed the sick and injured.
ONE	These things ( <i>holds up their hands</i> ) are clumsy hooves. They destroy everything they touch. Dropped mum's favourite Lalique figurine on the kitchen tiles. But worse than clumsy, they're fucking murders. Murderers of the English language when writing my short and painfully self involved diary from the ages of five to seventeen.

Murderers of art in my attempt to re-imagine surrealism in my GCSE art exam using feathers and twigs to explore the complex relationship between war and religion.

And of course actual murders when I was twenty-one and -

YOU What do you two think?

FIVE Us?

SIX Us?

YOU Yeah.

*FIVE and SIX shrug*

YOU You've got no opinions on this? You don't care?

SIX It's not that I don't care.

FIVE I don't care.

SIX It's just, you know it doesn't really matter. Things are fine. I'm just neutral.

FIVE None of it's important so.... *(shrugs)*

YOU So you're neutral and you are indifferent?

SIX Probably/

FIVE /Maybe

YOU So you are the same?

SIX Absolutely not/

FIVE /Pretty much

SIX Just put down six.

YOU I don't feel particularly pleased with the way I am.

SIX I'm fine.

FIVE Yeah, it's not like I'm awful, but you know, not great either.

*FIVE points at ONE and TEN.*

Those two are just a bit dramatic.

YOU Ok so five then?

SIX Sure.

FIVE Whatever.

## **What If We Were Not Measured, by Flora Blissett**

(Social Monologue)

1 x female presenting actor.

The play begins with a reference to a Bridget Jones' Diary film clip, where the character is asked why there are so many attractive single women in their 30s, to which Bridget replies, "Well, I don't know... suppose it doesn't help that underneath our clothes our entire bodies are covered in scales! Haha..." The action continues from there.

**GIRL:** Our entire bodies are covered in scales.

*(Lighting subtly changes from TV effect to whole stage normal lighting. There is one fluorescent strip light in the ceiling, off-centre)*

You laugh - I laugh - but it's not a joke, really. Women *are* covered in scales. *(Mock aside)* Looks of confusion among some of you: "ruh-oh, you sayin' the lady to my left is a crocodile?!"

But think about it. *(Impersonating a 'blokey guy')* "Whatya rate her on a scale of 1 to 10?" *(Her pace quickens, firing through these stereotypical questions and phrases)* How much do you weigh? SlimFast! Stand on the scales. Be low on the scales. But also, be 'off the scale': perform to new heights - scale peaks. *(She resumes her normal voice)* Have you ever looked into the history of female mountaineers? How are we supposed to scale peaks in a petticoat?

I'm furious that I have to say 'female' mountaineers, and not just 'mountaineers'. Why are men a scale against which we are measured?

*(She's free flowing, following every train of thought relating scales and women)* A proper lady always practices her scales and her arpeggios *(curtsey)*. Stand on the scales. Don't trip over your tail - some people, mostly academics, have written tens of thousands of words determining the gender of the dragon in the story of Saint George and the Dragon. It's a strangely compelling Internet rabbit hole to fall down, actually. They intellectualise this analysis of dragon-bits by referring to it as 'gendering monsters', which is a fancy way of asking: 'how often are women the villains: all nameless and beastly and scaly?'

*(The fluorescent strip light flickers, buzzes/hums slightly. She ignores it)*

This image of Saint George killing a dragon was picked up and run with by European Christians from the twelfth century, being an easy symbolic shorthand for 'good vanquishing evil'. In a fight of 'man versus dragon', it's clear who the villain is. *(Dryly)* Apparently.

*(She paces, measuring her words with her steps)*

Somewhere along the way, a number of medieval artists decided the dragon was female. They depicted a slit or a hole under her tail, between her hind legs: belly up, slain on her back under George's...piercing sword. Scribes similarly embraced this poetic licence and gendered the dragon. Soon, the fight of 'man versus dragon' was injected with the more obvious duality: 'man versus woman'. George continues to vanquish evil, but now a particular type of evil: Untrammelled Female Sexuality. Turns out, the tale of England's patron saint can be paraphrased as "Saint George Kills The Slag".



## **The Scale-Up Guy, by Penelope Lipsham**

(A social comedy drama)

The scene flicks between the date we're witnessing and Katie's inner monologue. This distinction can be made through lighting, sound and/or the actors. Throughout the scene these two scenes will be called 'Inner thoughts' / 'Restaurant'

### **INT. RESTAURANT**

Gavin (early 40s), suave, smart with a nice jacket and shirt with an open neck. Relaxed but put together.

He sits at the table, straightening himself out, knowing he looks good. He looks around restaurant, trying to look casual. He makes eye contact with someone, gives them a megawatt smile and a wink.

Katie (early 30s) walks in. She's wearing a floral dress and dainty jewellery. Modest but flattering with well done makeup. She looks feminine and sweet.

She spots the table and takes a breath.

### **INNER THOUGHTS**

"Well at least he looks like his picture this time, unlike Pushing 60 Guy. And he's on time, unlike Adult Emo Guy. So far so good. He's actually quite good looking, which is always a bad sign. But no, positive thoughts, positive thoughts.

### **INT. RESTAURANT**

Katie sashays over to the table. Gavin looks up as she heads towards him. He looks her up and down, smiling.

Katie 'Hello, it's Gavin isn't it. Hi, lovely to meet you in person'

Gavin 'Yeah hi, glad we could make this happen'

Gavin gestures for her to sit down, leaning back as he casually observes her. She sits elegantly, and shyly tucks her hair behind her ears.

Katie 'It's a lovely place. Have you been here before'

Gavin 'Yeah it's not far from my office, so its one of my favourite haunts.'

Katie 'Oh lovely. What do you do at work?'

Gavin 'I run a scale up'

Katie 'Oh cool, what's a scale up?'

INNER THOUGHTS

Katie 'I actually do know what a scale up is. It's basically a start-up with funding. It's a way for the entrepreneurs to separate the ones with money from the pipe dreamers. But you have to ask, men love explaining things.'

INT. RESTAURANT

Gavin 'it's like a tech mothership that's launching a suite of new AI powered products that will become the foundation of how people connect. It's pretty high-level stuff'

INNER THOUGHTS

Katie rolls her eyes

INT. RESTAURANT

Katie 'Fascinating. AI's very now isn't it'

Gavin 'Yeah you could say that. But with what we're doing, its going to fundamentally reshape the future tomorrow too. What do you do?'

Katie 'Oh me, I just work in PR'

INNER THOUGHTS

Katie 'I don't know why I do this. Dumb it down. I'm actually a Global Comms Lead in a FTSE 500 tech company, I've been an advisor to the government on their AI policy and worked at the FT as their tech correspondent for 9 years. I'm a pretty big deal, so I'm surprised he hasn't heard of me. But this is a date, not an interview. So for now, I just work in PR'

INT. RESTAURANT

Gavin 'Yeah cool. We should order. I fancy the steak, but don't feel like you have to have something that big, if you'd rather have a salad or something.

INNER THOUGHTS

Katie 'Damn it. Now I feel like I should have the salad. And I'm starving. I skipped lunch for this.'

INT. RESTAURANT

Katie 'Oh yes, the chicken salad looks perfect, thank you'

Gavin calls over the waiter and orders for them both as Katie fiddles with her hair nervously.

Katie (flirtatiously) 'So tell me, how are you reshaping the future'

Gavin (leaning in, warming to her) 'Well, wouldn't you like to know'

## How To Audit Your Dragon, by Oneikeh Campbell

(Fantasy Comedy)

Scalecius is a dragon who has the misfortune of being financially audited.

Scalecius: Male presenting, flexible on age

Philip: Male presenting, under 40.

**SCALECIUS:** And *who*, may I ask, let *you* in?

**PHILIP:** Philip Benson, Junior Auditor, Kingdom Revenue Service.

Here to audit a dragon and rethink my career choices.

You're now subject to a surprise audit.

Sorry, I don't make the threats, just the appointments.

I'll be inspecting your hoard, your records, and anything in this cave that hisses when itemised.

**SCALECIUS: (with a long-suffering sigh):**

A surprise audit? How thrilling.

They've sent me a man in polyester with a clipboard and a death wish.

Very well. Shoes off please, you're standing on a fourth-century tapestry.

She's emotionally fragile.

**PHILIP:** This is a financial inspection, not a heritage walk.

**iSCROLL (V.O. ping):**

Tip: Use neutral tone. Dragons respond poorly to sarcasm.

**iSCROLL (ping):**

Reminder: sarcasm is not deductible. Would you like to file a tone adjustment?

**PHILIP:**

No. I would not

**SCALECIUS:** My last auditor became a statue. Gorgeous marble. Awful chat.

**PHILIP (Glancing at his iScroll):**

Just to confirm you are —

Scalecius Maximus the Infinite, a.k.a. *His Radiance*,

resident of Cave 59, Lava District, Kingdom 149,

postcode FL4-ME, mail redirected from Mount Doom Business Park,

Unit 3B, and professionally listed as: "Freelance fire-breathing overlord slash part-time life coach. (Pause)

Sound about right?

**SCALECIUS:(Smugly)** Don't forget *aspiring influencer*. I'm huge on DragTok. I went viral for emotionally roasting a tax collector, 1.7 million views and one very crispy intern. Top 10 wing tutorials? That was me. You're welcome, and that photo going around is deeply unflattering. My horns were going through something.

**iSCROLL (V.O.):**

Audit analysis complete. 83% dragon, 12% influencer, and 5% liability.  
Reminder: inflated ego is not covered under professional development.

**PHILIP (checking scroll, increasingly concerned):** You listed a solid-gold throne under "essential office equipment."

**SCALECIUS (casually):** It's ergonomic for my tail and it's heated for my scales, you wouldn't understand. Cold-blooded problems.

**PHILIP:** And this invoice, Mildly Cursed Goblet. Previous occupant had... mysterious outcomes."

**SCALECIUS:** Exactly. That's why it was on sale.

**PHILIP:** Dragon... Sir... Scalecius... whatever your official taxonomic status, this is a comprehensive audit. I need to record everything: gold coin hoard weight, enchantment level, risk category... including "miscellaneous flaming objects."

**PHILIP: (Pointing) Now, what's over there?**

***Scalecius tries, badly, to hide a glowing pile of gold behind his back.***

**SCALECIUS:** Oh, that? Just, uh...nothing to worry about.: This all sounds really exhausting. Must we really do this now? I had plans, a mud bath scheduled with a rather promising lady dragon I met on Drinder. *EmberellaFlame92. Scales like molten bronze and a laugh that melts villages and an interest in property investment.*

**PHILIP (scroll dramatically):** By law, you are required to disclose all capital assets, enchanted items, and (reads) "miscellaneous flaming objects." Clause 9.3 of the Kingdom Revenue Manual clearly states: "All magical holdings must be declared, including cursed jewellery, talking goblets, unstable weapons, living property, and anything that growls when disturbed."

## **Flat, by Kate Lynn-Devere**

(Surreal comedy)

### **Characters (All ages and genders considered)**

#### **ACTOR 1**

Alyx/ Alien

#### **ACTOR 2**

Shop Worker; Audiologist; Neurologist; Psychiatrist; Hypnotherapist

Premise: Alyx has found that they are unable to hear specific notes on the musical scale and goes on an odyssey of appointments to find a solution.

SHOP WORKER: Hello, can I help you?

*Alyx places a record player on the counter.*

ALYX: Yeah, well, I hope so. It's my record player. I think it's broken. It won't play my music properly.

SHOP WORKER: Oh yeah? What happens when you try, does it make any noise at all, or just sit there, staring at you?

ALYX: Staring at me?

SHOP WORKER: Metaphorically

ALYX: Does my record player stare at me, metaphorically?

SHOP WORKER: Yeah, you know, like, trying to make you question your life choices

ALYX: What? No, it just doesn't work properly. I wondered if it could be a power issue

SHOP WORKER: oh yeah, like maybe your record player hates you

ALYX: What?

*Shop worker and Alyx stare at one another for a moment. Alyx looks bemused*

SHOP WORKER: No, you're right. We should check the power cable before we move on to personal grievances

*Shop Worker turns the record player over in his hands, tinkering with it*

Seems fine to me, Let's test it

*Music plays*

Yep, all sounds perfectly normal, mate

ALYX: No, it doesn't, there's notes missing

SHOP WORKER: Notes missing? No mate, the music's all there. You, on the other hand...

ALYX: I beg your pardon?

SHOP WORKER: I mean, have you had your ears tested? I'd get me hearing checked, if I were you

## **Scene 2**

*Audiologist's office. Alyx is seated in a chair. Opposite him, behind a desk sits an audiologist in a white coat. The audiologist is pointing to a chart.*

AUDIOLOGIST: The good news is that I don't think you need hearing aids. This is your audiogram. You have excellent responses to pure tone audiometry.

ALYX: What does that mean?

AUDIOLOGIST: It means that you have excellent hearing. According to these results, there should be no musical notes that you can't hear.

ALYX: But there are musical notes that I cant hear.

AUDIOLOGIST: Yes, as you say. I'd like to refer you for some more tests. I think you need an MRI

ALYX: As in a brain scan?

AUDIOLOGIST: Yes, I want to rule out an acoustic neuroma

ALYX: Acoustic what?

AUDIOLOGIST: Acoustic neuroma. It's a type of noncancerous tumor that develops on the main nerve leading from the inner ear to the brain. Better to know what we're dealing with.

## **Big Ed's Big Show And Even Bigger Prizes, by Joe Reed & Matt Prestage**

(Dystopian Sci-fi Comedy)

Big Ed, probably male presenting actor; Rumpkins, probably male presenting actor;  
Galactocorp voice-over (any gender)

***Set aboard a spaceship/station after a world-ending crisis, we are tuning in for the first episode of a new gameshow. The show is mostly played for laughs, and is very silly throughout with big over-exaggerated characters. There is a slight underlying tension from the company 'Galactocorp' who have clearly taken over the world and destroyed the Earth, but their presence really just plays more into the silliness. They sponsor the show and it really is a way to placate a population by making them think there is a way back to Earth, though this is not really explored here. Characters can all be played by any gender.***

*Fanfare sounds and Big Ed jumps onstage with the verve of a game show host. The stage is empty besides a single table with a set of scales on it. Beside the scales is a pile of weights of identical size. One side of the scales is already weighed down.*

Big Ed: A very warm Galactocorp good evening to you all, ladies and gentlemen, both those with us on board the ship and those lucky enough to be tuning in from the protected zones on Earth. One year ago today marked a truly historic moment in humanity's history where, after two decades of zooming around the planet we once called home on this Galactocorp-sponsored life raft, the tireless scientists and boffins in the Galactocorp labs located in the Dead Zones finally found a way to start fixing the biggest mistake we've ever made. Now, one revolution around the sun later, the Galactocorp Earth Safety Compounds are set up, and we're beginning to take our first tentative steps back onto the planet we once called home, then called hell, and now are maybe ready to call home again. We're all champing at the bit to get back down there and leave this godforsaken spaceship-

*A booming voice echoes from somewhere.*

Galactocorp Voice Over: Galactocorp-sponsored.

Big Ed: Godforsaken Galactocorp-sponsored-

Galactocorp Voice Over: Just Galactocorp-sponsored. There is no God. We killed her.

Big Ed: We're all dying to get off this Galactocorp-sponsored spaceship! But how to decide who gets to leave and who stays to continue mining axiom tin from asteroids? Welcome to the first ever showing of...

*Drumroll, lights flash, the show begins for real.*

Big Ed: Big Ed's Big Show and Even Bigger Prizes! I'm Big Ed. Let's meet our first-ever contestant! Come on down!

*Rumpkins enters, full of excitement.*

Big Ed: What's your name, son?

Rumpkins: Hi, I'm Ed!

*Awkward pause.*

Big Ed: No, you can't have that, I'm called Ed, it'll get too confusing. No one will know what's going on.

Rumpkins: But that's my name.

Big Ed: Not for tonight it's not! I think I'll call you Rumpkins. Give it up for Rumpkins, everyone!

*Applause. Rumpkins is confused, but gets on with it.*

Big Ed: Alright, Rumpkins, for every question you get right, I'll add one weight to this set of scales. All you need to do is tip the scales past this point (*he indicates a point on the scales*) and you win that trip to Galactocorp's Earth Safety Compound. There's a lot on the line here. You ready?

Rumpkins: Yes!

Big Ed: Alright, let's play! Round one is called 'name a thing'. We surveyed a random cross-section of the human race in a series of questions. All you have to do is give me an answer that no one else said to win the points, ok?

Rumpkins: Ok, yes, that sounds like something I can do.

Big Ed: Excellent! We surveyed 100... million people and asked them to name something...



Rumpkins: Woah hang on, you surveyed how many people?

Big Ed: 100 million.

Rumpkins: But that's... that's too many people, I'll never be able to name something unique.

Big Ed: Just focus, Rumpkins, I believe in you. Right, we surveyed 100 million people and asked them to name something that you sit on.

Rumpkins: I... I dunno, I'm... are you sure that's right? 100 million?

Big Ed: Absolutely.

Rumpkins: Well, I'm never going to get this right, am I?

Big Ed: Not if you don't give me an answer you won't.

Rumpkins: Um... ok... bean bag chair.

Big Ed: Ok, you said bean bag chair, but did anyone else...*(moment of tension and dramatic music and then a buzzer noise)* Oh unlucky Rumpkins! You were so close. Unfortunately, 852,567 other people also said bean bag chair.

Rumpkins: Was there a right answer?

Big Ed: You could have said 'gratitude'.

Rumpkins: But you can't sit on that...

Big Ed: That's probably why no one else said it! Zero points on the scale this round, Rumpkins, but don't worry, there's a long way to go still, so don't worry. This next round is called 'Crone a Friend'. So please give a warm welcome to our resident old crone, Miss Edna Clawfoot.

*(Edna shuffles in)*

EXCERPT CUT HERE

## **With You All The Way, by Joe Dominic**

(Drama)

Max & Will, male presenting actors, similar ages to each other, but otherwise flexible.

*MAX is sitting on a chair, next to an IV drip and a table with a vase. There are some dead flowers in the vase. Enter WILL, wearing full mountain gear. The window bellows behind him. He looks around, confused. As he gains his bearings, the wind dies down.*

MAX: Hello.

WILL: ...Hi. Well, this is unexpected.

MAX: You're telling me. Where have you been?

WILL: I was...where am I?

MAX: Sit down. You look like you've come a long way.

WILL: Something's not right. I was just...

*WILL takes a few steps into the room then he falls to his knees.*

MAX: Are you alright?

WILL: Yeah, I just need a minute...

MAX: Come on, up you get.

WILL: I just need a minute!

*WILL stays kneeled on the floor looking down. MAX goes over to WILL to help him.*

MAX: Come on, baby bear.

WILL: No one calls me that.

MAX: I do. You know that.

WILL: Yeah.

MAX: Because we liked to sneak out of school and play in the snow. I'd never seen you happier. And it's also because you've got a big hairy belly.

WILL: *(laughs)* Alright.

MAX: Look at me. Up.

*WILL stands up. He takes off his coat and is more relaxed.*

WILL: I can't believe I'm here.

MAX: You and me, both.

WILL: Is this... where am I, exactly?

MAX: My room. Obviously.

WILL: It's greyer than I remember.

MAX: They may have given it a new lick of "lonely cloud grey" since you were last here.

WILL: This might cheer you up. Do you remember what I promised you? I said that once I scaled the mountain, I'd pick flowers from the mountain itself, and I'd put them *right there* to replace the rotten dead ones you've got there. Well...

*WILL presents a bunch of crumpled flowers and puts them in the vase, chucking the dead ones out.*

Ta-da!

MAX: That's very thoughtful of you. But...it's too late.

*Pause.*

WILL: I know. I think I knew that from the very start. I still did, though. It made me feel like you were with me. I could never do anything by myself. I don't know why you chose to be friends with me at school. Everyone wanted to be around you. I was nothing special. I just wanted to be invisible, and suddenly everyone could see me when we hung out. Why did you pick me?

MAX: I didn't "pick" you.

WILL: And you were better than me at everything. I always struggled to keep up with you. I felt like if I could just be in your orbit, that I could just be better. The first time we went climbing, in our shitty local gym with the climbing wall that would wobble if we climbed it together, you told me that one day we were going to scale a mountain. On day one you said that! I was just pleased that I made it up the wall without it falling on me, but you... Do you remember that time that we went on that 3-day hike, and we set up camp in the forest. I was so miserable. I was hungry, tired, and homesick. I felt like I was falling apart. The rain: oh God, the rain!

## **A SENSE OF SCALE, Music and lyrics by James Taverner**

(A mini-musical)

### **CHARACTERS**

ALEX Adult, any gender, any age, any ethnic background

*This is a short musical scored for one voice and piano. Dialogue written in sentence case is spoken. Dialogue written in capital letters is sung. The script is written with the actor playing ALEX also playing piano to accompany themselves singing. Alternatively, it can also be performed with ALEX singing and a separate pianist providing accompaniment.*

### **SCENE**

*A piano keyboard is set up in the middle of the stage. As the lights come up, ALEX is sitting at the keyboard facing the audience and playing a C major scale.*

### **ALEX:**

(spoken) Learning to play the piano as an adult changed my life. It gave me life. Practicing is important.

*(Alex practices the C major scale while speaking, pausing where needed for emphasis)*

That's a C major scale. Every time you press a key, it builds a connection in your brain. A link between the part processing sound and the part controlling hand movements. Each repetition fires tiny electric currents between those neurons, strengthening those links.

Some of the connections between parts of our brains are stronger than others – and that's different for each of us. For me, the emotional part of my brain was almost disconnected from the rest. Those electric currents weren't firing. I would know I was feeling emotions...but I couldn't tell which ones. It felt like a blob of...something inside of me - I couldn't identify if it was "happy" or "sad" or "angry"  
. Even a simple "How are you?" was a question I couldn't really answer. I'd never know how to respond.  
Music might help me explain...

*(section in C major – sparse piano accompaniment with chords)*

*(sung)* "HOW ARE YOU?" IT SOUNDS AN INNOCENT REQUEST...

"HOW ARE YOU?" I KNOW YOU'RE JUST BEING POLITE...

"HOW ARE YOU?" YOU SEE IT'S MAKING ME QUITE STRESSED...

"HOW ARE YOU?" MY ANSWER NEVER FEELS QUITE RIGHT

I HEAR THIS QUESTION CONSTANTLY, I WANT TO REPLY HONESTLY.

THIS BALL OF STUFF INSIDE OF ME - JUST CALL IT OFF ENTIRELY.

I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S HAPPINESS OR SADNESS OR JUST...LUST.

I'D HEARD THOSE WORDS BEFORE BUT MY EMOTIONS I CAN'T TRUST.

I TRY TO LABEL HOW I FEEL BUT I'M UNABLE TO REVEAL.

MY BRAIN IS LINKING...NOT THAT WAY, SO AFTER THINKING I WOULD SAY:

*(spoken)* "How am I?" I don't know...

*(sung)* THE PERSON ASKING,  
"HOW ARE YOU?" WOULD THEN JUST TURN AND GO...

I GUESS I WAS SUPPOSED TO SMILE AND SIMPLY SAY "I'M FINE"-  
BUT THAT IS NOT AN ANSWER THAT IS GENUINELY MINE.  
I'D MAKE EXPRESSIONS ON MY FACE, A NOTIONAL ILLUSION -  
BUT REALLY, I WAS CAUGHT UP IN EMOTIONAL CONFUSION.

I THOUGHT THAT I WOULD ALWAYS BE THIS WAY,  
BUT SOMETHING CHANGED WHEN I BEGAN TO PLAY.  
A BRAND-NEW WORLD WAS OPENED UP IN ME  
THE DAY I HEARD MY FINGERS...CHANGING KEY...

*(music modulates to A flat major with arpeggiated piano accompaniment. The texture and key change feel like a world opening up compared to the first section)*

A LOT OF WESTERN MUSIC'S WRITTEN IN A CERTAIN KEY -  
IT'S MAJOR, MINOR; FLAT OR SHARP; AND LETTERS A TO G.  
TO MANY PEOPLE'S EARS THEY ALL MAY SOUND THE SAME,  
BUT...THEY'VE OPENED UP CONNECTIONS IN MY BRAIN.

AS I FOUND MY FINGERS PLAYING  
AND REINFORCED BY HEARING,  
I FEEL WHAT MUSIC'S SAYING  
EMOTIONS START APPEARING.  
SOME PEOPLE CAN SMELL COLOUR,  
OR TASTE WORDS - SO THEY'VE FOUND.  
WITH MUSIC I DISCOVER,  
EMOTIONS IN EACH SOUND.

FOR MY BRAIN, HEARING FEELINGS IS JUST EASIER -  
I GUESS IT'S MY OWN TYPE OF SYNESTHESIA?

I'VE PUSHED BEYOND MY CEILING,  
THESE SOUNDS ARE TEACHING ME,  
EACH SCALE'S A DIFFERENT FEELING,  
AN EMOTION FOR EACH KEY.

YOU MIGHT NOT UNDERSTAND ME, IT MIGHT NOT RESONATE  
ALLOW ME...TO TRY AND DEMONSTRATE:

*(music modulates to D major)*

*(spoken)* This is D major.

*(sung)* TO UNDERSTAND IF I'M FEELING JOY,  
I SIT AND PLAY D MAJOR – THAT'S THE KEY THAT I EMPLOY.  
IF MY FINGERS AND MY FEELINGS ARE PLAYING IN SYNC,  
IT REINFORCES THAT EMOTIONAL LINK.  
AND HEARING D PROVOKES JOY IN ME QUITE FAST.  
COMPOSERS' WORK HAS USED THIS QUIRK IN THE PAST:

*(piano part incorporates Beethoven's "Ode To Joy"*  
*– next lines are sung to that melody)*

WHEN BEETHOVEN WROTE "ODE TO JOY"  
, THE KEY HE USED WAS D, NOT F.  
(ADMITTEDLY WHEN HE COMPOSED IT, BY THEN HE WAS FULLY DEAF!)

*(music modulates to D flat major and slows)*

*(spoken)* Now D flat major.

*(sung)* D FLAT MAJOR TO ME SOUNDS LIKE TRANQUILITY AND PEACE.  
PLAYING MUSIC IN THIS KEY PUTS MY MIND AT EASE.  
A SCALE THAT RESONATES LIKE THIS CALMS ME VERY SOON  
IT'S WHY DEBUSSY USED IT IN HIS FAMOUS "CLAIR DE LUNE"

*(piano part plays a snippet of Debussy's Clair De Lune)*  
*(music modulates to C minor and speeds up)*

*(spoken)* C minor.

*(sung)* C MINOR - FOR ME INCITES  
RAGE, ANGER...A KEY OF FIGHTS!

I REMEMBER MANY ARGUMENTS WITH MY DAD,  
NOT ABLE TO SAY WHAT I FELT – THESE EMOTIONS THAT I HAD.  
HE'D SIT BY ME AND TRY TO UNDERSTAND.  
MY RESPONSE TO HIM WAS NEVER QUITE WHAT I'D PLANNED.  
MY SILENCE, FRUSTRATION – HE THOUGHT IT DISRESPECT,

I WISH I'D HAD THE ABILITY TO CONNECT.

I NEVER TOLD HIM I LOVED HIM - I KEPT IT ALL INSIDE...

*(music modulates to B minor and slows)*

...I THINK I HELD IT THERE BEYOND THE DAY HE DIED.  
AS I TUNE MORE INTO MYSELF, MY THOUGHTS ABOUT HIM SOFTEN.  
NOW I'VE LEARNED HOW TO FEEL, I THINK ABOUT HIM OFTEN.  
I WISH HE WERE HERE TODAY  
SEEING WHAT I'VE LEARNED FROM WHAT I PLAY.  
HE'D WATCH ME AT THE KEYS FROM HIS RECLINER,  
PROUD AS I EXPRESS SADNESS...IN B MINOR.

*(minor key reflection of opening "How Are You?" section)*

HOW AM I? I TRULY NOW CAN SAY  
HOW AM I? EMOTION'S NOT A STRANGER  
HOW AM I? I CAN NOW CHANGE WHAT I PLAY  
HOW AM I? I WILL MAKE MY LIFE E MAJOR!

*(music modulates to E major - previous modulations have been down a semitone each time, so this will feel more of a jump upwards)*

*(spoken)* E major.

*(sung)* NOW I HAVE THESE SCALES, I WILL USE THEM AS MY GUIDE,  
I'LL TRY AND TUNE TO THIS KEY, IT IS THE KEY OF PRIDE.  
I NEARLY HAVE CONTROL – VICTORY IS MINE.  
OK – IT'S JUST A STARTING POINT, ONE STEP AT A TIME.

*(music changes quickly between different keys as Alex grapples with emotions)*

I STILL DON'T ALWAYS GET IT RIGHT  
EMOTIONS AREN'T JUST BLACK AND WHITE.  
THE CLASH OF HAPPINESS AND SAD,  
OF JEALOUSY, OF BEING MAD.  
THIS LEARNING PHASE HAS BEEN FOR ME  
CACOPHONY, NOT SYMPHONY.  
OF COURSE I HAVE A LOT TO LEARN,  
TO MY KEYBOARD I MUST RETURN.

*(music wrestles itself back to E major)*

SOMETIMES I'LL SUCCEED, SOMETIMES I'LL FAIL,  
BUT I'VE FINALLY FOUND,  
I'VE FINALLY FOUND...A SENSE OF SCALE,  
A SENSE OF SCALE  
A SENSE OF SCALE!

**BLACKOUT**