

AFTER MATH

by
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Cast of Characters

After Math is designed to be an ensemble piece, and the ensemble itself can range from a minimum of 4-6 actors to a virtually unlimited number. The ensemble members are the ones who populate the classroom, deliver all of the monologues (except for "Air") and become the chorus in "Greek Tragedy." They are critical to the success of the play.

In addition to the ensemble, the following named characters exist, though Alice and Terry (and possibly the other named characters, though never Emmett) can both be part of the ensemble when they are not required in character.

EMMETT, a teen Everyman, or the forgotten man

MRS. PARKS, a teacher with a reputation for being something of a dragon-lady

MAN IN SUIT, anonymous, mysterious and intimidating

WOMAN IN SUIT, like the Man in Suit

ALICE, a teen girl and Emmett's love interest, in one version of the story

TERRY, a blind student who sees

Settings

The play takes place primarily in a classroom, but the settings can be as unrealistic and suggested as desired.

SCENE 1: SHAKING

(A STUDENT, mid-teens, stands in a spotlight. Frozen behind him or her is a classroom full of other STUDENTS sitting at their desks and MRS. PARKS, a teacher. One desk is prominently empty.)

ACTOR

Mrs. Parks has this thing about tests. Well, she has this thing about everything, but when it comes to tests... If she's giving a test, you don't knock on the door, you don't stand by the door, you don't call the room, you don't even look in the window. And not just the students--the other teachers, even Mr. Bobell, the principal.

(beat)

One time, he knocks and comes in during a quiz--not even a test--a quiz on solving simple equations. You know, like x squared equals nine, or three x plus x equals eight. That's algebra. You should see how she looks at him. Her eyes get all narrow, and I'm not crazy so I know I'm not really seeing it, but I swear there's these flames shooting from her eyes. Or maybe it's lasers. I think it's flames, though, 'cause if I didn't know better, I'd say there's smoke comin' from her ears. And Mr. Bobell starts to say something, only nothing comes out. His jaw flaps in slow-mo, then flaps again. He takes one step back, two steps back--and he's gone.

(beat)

But today, we're in the middle of a major test--not just some quiz. This was an all-out unit test. Points, lines, slopes--we're graphing 'til we can't graph no more.

(like a rapper)

Graph those lines in the air--graph 'em like you just don't care.

(beat)

Anyway, this man in a dark gray suit walks in, and there's a woman--also wearing a dark gray suit--at the door, and I watch Mrs. Parks's eyes start to ignite, only the man doesn't flinch--and her eyes, they sink back into her head, like they're in retreat.

(beat)

He says something to her real quiet, and her eyes...her eyes totally wash out, and her face wipes blank. "Emmett," she says, "bring your books." And Emmett packs his books into his backpack and goes with the suits--the man inside and the woman at the door.

(beat)

And when the door closes and Emmett is gone and the suits are gone, it's "back to your tests. Ten minutes." But I don't believe her. Yeah, I believe we've got ten minutes of class.

ACTOR (cont'd)

I can see the clock, but I don't believe Mrs. Parks cares if we finish, and as she picks up Emmett's test, her hands--I'm not crazy, so I know my head's just making it up--I swear her hands are shaking.

(The Student from "Shaking" sits at a desk, joining the others in the frozen scene. The lights come up. From their scrunched over the desk postures and pained expressions, it's obvious the students are in the middle of taking a test. A math test, in this case.)

SCENE 2: ALIENS

(ALICE, a student, stands and becomes a narrator/storyteller figure.)

ALICE

"Emmett and the Aliens." Three different views of Emmett's ascension.

(beat)

Part One: They're Coming.

(EMMETT, teen Everyman--or is he the forgotten man?--enters and sits in the empty desk. Mrs. Parks and his classmates unfreeze. Enter a MAN IN A SUIT and a WOMAN IN A SUIT. They make unintelligible alien sounds.)

MAN IN SUIT

Is that the specimen?

WOMAN IN SUIT

Yes. Nanu nanu.

MAN IN SUIT

Do not be alarmed, little humans.

WOMAN IN SUIT

We come in peace.

MAN IN SUIT

Have no fear, Oom Chaka Laka Boom Boom Gnu Who--

WOMAN IN SUIT

And Who Gnu Boom Boom Laka Chaka Oom--

MAN IN SUIT

Are here.

ALICE

Of course, I'm the only one that understands them, because I've been studying alien languages on the internet. They piece them together from intercepted radio waves.

(beat)

I only speak three well enough to have a conversation. But I can get along in Venusian, and I'm learning Alpha Centauran and Sirian--the solar system, not the country. They have these CDs you can listen to while you're out jogging or waiting for your ride or in your car if you've got one, or put it on infinite repeat and play it while you sleep. I hear it seeps right in that way.

(The Man in the Suit pokes and prods Emmett.)

MAN IN SUIT

Is this the one?

WOMAN IN SUIT
(nods)

Check for space fleas.

(The Man in the Suit does so. It looks like a lice exam.)

EMMETT

What are you--

WOMAN IN SUIT

Silence, specimen.

MAN IN SUIT

Space fleas are a very serious problem on Piddly Widdly Sis Boom Bah.

WOMAN IN SUIT

You start out with a flea the size of a...

MAN IN SUIT

A flea.

WOMAN IN SUIT

Yes, the size of a flea. And before you know it, it's the size of a building.

MAN IN SUIT

It's a warp thing.
(He finishes examining Emmett.)

He's clean.

WOMAN IN SUIT

Of space fleas, maybe.

MAN IN SUIT

Of course. Not in general.

WOMAN IN SUIT

Dirty little human.

MAN IN SUIT

He'll be fine once we remove his first few layers.

EMMETT

When you what?!

WOMAN IN SUIT

Silence, specimen.

EMMETT

You can't remove my first few layers.

(They start to drag him out of the
classroom and offstage.)

I need my first few--help! Help!

(They drag Emmett offstage. Just as he
reaches the classroom door--or whatever
signifies the door--all freeze. Emmett
"rewinds" to his seat, and the Man and
Woman exit. Beat.)

ALICE

Emmett and the Aliens, Part Two: They've Been Here All
Along.

(Enter the Man and Woman, just like
before.)

MAN IN SUIT

Greetings, earthlings.

WOMAN IN SUIT

We come in peace.

(to the Man in Suit)

I always wanted to say that.

EMMETT

What are you doing here?

WOMAN IN SUIT

We come...in...peace.

EMMETT

Could you possibly embarrass me any more?

MAN IN SUIT

I got the call.

EMMETT

I'm in the middle of a math test.

MAN IN SUIT

(picks up Emmett's paper)

You call this math?

Want to read the rest of the play? Follow the
instructions to order a copy!