

ANNATUDE

A ten-minute monologue by
Kenyon Brown

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

ANNA, female, 15, any race. Smart, feisty, a lot of attitude.

SETTING

A bedroom.

TIME

The present.

PROPS

Head cap, large hair bands, T-shirts (bottom halves only, with sleeves removed), jewelry (pins, brooches, cameos), scarves, decorative items found on hats (flowers, fruit, birds), cell phone, trigonometry workbook.

PRODUCTION NOTES

This monologue is intended for middle school and high school students. It might not be appropriate for younger audiences.

(A bedroom. Afternoon. Lights come up on ANNA, reading a text on her cellphone. She wears a black head cap. Different hats, scarves, jewelry, decorative items, and workbook are scattered on the bed. As Anna speaks, she models different looks.)

ANNA: My basic look. Just a black head cap. In the hospital, I call it my lymphoma-totally-sucks look. Oh, excuse me. I used the "S" word, and Mom doesn't like me using the "S" word. She wants me to call it my don't-bother-me look. "Annie has on her don't-bother-me look today," she says. "Everyone leave her alone."

Mom, hel-lo-ooo. What don't you get about "don't bother me"? Everyone gets it but yoo-ooo. And, Mom, it's Anna. Not Annie.

I wear a head cap under every look. It's like a second scalp until my hair grows back. Most of the time this is my at-home look. Whatever your style, you want to have several looks. It's the best advice Kiele's ever given me. And Kiele can definitely put a look together.

When I reread all the texts we've sent each other, it's like a record of who I was before knowing Kiele and after knowing Kiele. BKK, AKK.

This one time when Mom took me to the clinic for my chemo, Kiele was sitting in a chair with this intravenous drip in her arm, listening to her iPod with her eyes closed. She looked so pretty. Wearing a purple cap and this multi-colored scarf wrapped around her head. With metallic threads running through it and gold beads sewn on. Like fireworks were exploding on her head. She suddenly opened her eyes and caught me staring. She just smiled and said, "Since you can't hide it, make it a fashion statement."

Losing my hair sucks. SORRY, MOM, BUT THERE'S NO BETTER WAY TO SAY IT. It's so not fair. Maybe guys think

the bald-as-a-bowling-ball look is cool, but for girls it's like a disaster. You lose this important part of yourself. And when people say something lame like, "You may be bald, but you're still you," I want to get in their faces and say, "Nooo, this is not meee."

(She puts on baseball hat.)

My at-school look. At first, Mr. Guthrie, the principal, insisted—INSISTED—I take it off. He didn't allow guys or girls to wear baseball hats in class. So he couldn't allow me. I had to show respect. Respect for what? Like making an exception for me would be breaking the law, and the hat police would throw me in jail? But after Mom explained, he backed off. THANK YOU, MR. GUTHRIE. Like I'm wearing a black head cap and baseball hat because I'm sooo fashion forward.

"Annie, you must be patient with people." Mom says. "They don't understand what you're going through." Oh, yes. We must always be patient, mustn't we, Mom? *(Imitating her mother:)* "Annie, you have to imagine yourself as an ugly duckling that's really a swan," she says. "You have to visualize yourself as a moth waiting to become a butterfly," she says. "You have to picture yourself as a rose bud about to bloom. You'll be yourself again. Only better," she says. Yeah, right, Mom. Whatever.

(She takes off baseball hat. She ties a ribbon around her head.)

Totally easy, but totally boring. My I'm-feeling-better look. "Annie, you look so pretty today," Mom says. FYI, Mom, I definitely don't feel pretty, and it's Anna.

(She unties ribbon and puts on hair band.)

Whoever invented the hair band is totally a genius. GEN-I-US! Buy the really big ones so they fit around your cap. Definitely

use hair bands to help you accessorize. ACCESSORIZE, ACCESSORIZE, ACCESSORIZE is what Nana always says.

(She attaches small fake berries, a bird, and a flower to the hair band.)

"Annie, a girl has to have a signature look," Nana says. She took these off of old hats she used to wear. "Oh, Annie, you look like a beautiful wood nymph." Are you kidding me, Nana? Hang some fake moss on my head and call me organic, why don't you? I don't think so. And since I call you Nana, you can call me Anna.

(She removes the fake items.)

Kiele totally makes everything work. Even though she's 17 and I'm 15, and under any other circumstances we probably wouldn't be like BFFs, since we've spent a lot of time together in the clinic, we are. We even try to schedule our chemo at the same time.

SYASH is what we text each other. "See you at study hall." Instead of "See you at the clinic."

"Really, Annie, must you call it study hall?" Mom asks.

Huh? Maybe she thinks I should take chemo more seriously? Of course I take it seriously, but it doesn't mean I can't pretend it's something else. Otherwise, I'd just sit there, thinking about how all these drugs are flowing through my body and almost killing me but not quite. It's better to call it anything to take my mind off of it. So why not SYASH? And I actually do work on my school assignments during chemo.

Like trig—trigonometry—and figuring out the hypotenuse. Hypoten-useless is what it really is. The PT. Pythagorean theorem. Even after reading a word problem for like the gazillionth time, it still doesn't make sense to me. I have to draw a picture of a triangle and write the equation, or no way

can I work it out. But Kiele says right angles are everywhere. Doors, windows, cereal boxes, my phone. So she made this genius suggestion I should take pictures of right angles with my phone to make them like real.

"Don't freak out over the PT," Kiele says. "You're just finding the length of a side in a right triangle. No big deal." (*Imitating Kiele as she reads from her trigonometry workbook:*) "Okay, Anna," she says. "Think of it this way. Like you're standing on this footbridge in a city park that is 12 feet high above a pond. Okay, you look down and see this duck—oh, I love ducks, don't you? And the duck is in the water 7 feet away from the footbridge. What's the angle of depression?"

What???

(She continues imitating Kiele:)

"Okay, Anna, there's this road that runs due east from the base of Mount Baldy. Hey, Anna, they named a mountain after us. Okay, so from two points 235 meters apart on the road, the angles of elevation to the top of the mountain are 43 degrees and 30 degrees. All right, Anna. How high above the road is the mountaintop?"

Really, seriously???

(She continues imitating Kiele:)

"Anna, okay. So Juliet is standing atop a 15-foot balcony when she spots Romeo at an angle of depression of 5 degrees. He is so annoying. Okay, how far away is Romeo from the base of the balcony?"

Like who cares???

Kiele erases my equation, writes a bunch of numbers, and solves the problem. Ta-da! Just like that. I have to use the Trig calculator on my phone or no way will I get the answer. It's so

not fair. Sometimes I think I understand, but then I don't understand.

Okay, the hypotenuse of a right triangle is always the longest side. I get that. And the PT is the sum of the areas of the two squares on the legs – A and B – equals the area of the square of the hypotenuse – C. Blah blah blah. A squared plus B squared equals C squared, right? But really it's Anna squared plus Kiele squared equals cancer squared. The big C times two. The hypotenuse is us.

(She gives herself a self high-five.)

"Good one," Kiele says. Props to me and self high-five.

"Annie, you really must focus and apply yourself more seriously," Mom says. She's freaking out about me doing well on the SAT. Mom, chill! But she's like forever reminding me. "You're taking your SAT next year and you must do well if you hope to get into a good college."

There's the "M" word again. I must do this and I must do that. Why? And what exactly is it I'm hoping for?

"It's nice you have an older clinic friend, Annie," Mom says. But you shouldn't text her so much. Really, Mom? Older clinic friend? How lame is that? How about mature chemo buddy? Or senior vomit pal?

And like an alarm clock, four or five hours after the chemo, I start hurling. It's totally gross, but you know it's coming, and you really can't do anything about it no matter how hard you try to prevent it. I text Kiele, "Hurling." She texts back, "Me too. So not fun." Oh, I'm using the "H" word, and Mom doesn't like the "H" word. "Annie," Mom says, "Just say throw up." But Kiele says, "Anna, friends who hurl together, stay together."

So we named ourselves the Hurl Girls. And we swore we will get better together.

"Pinky swear," I said.

"Pinky swear," she said.

(She removes the hair band. She picks up a large T-shirt.)

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