

The Language Archive
Audition Monologues

Content disclosures: discussion of depression, profanity

CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY:

GEORGE: A linguist. A man in his 30s or 40s.

MARY: George's wife. A woman in her 30s or 40s.

EMMA: A lab assistant. A woman in her 20s or 30s.

ALTA: An old woman.

RESTEN: An old man.

(The actors playing Alta and Resten MAY also play the following:)

THE DRIVER: A man of any age.

OLD MAN/BAKER: An old man.

LANGUAGE INSTRUCTOR: A woman of any age.

A PASSERBY: A man or a woman of any age.

A PASSERBY: A man or a woman of any age (different from the previous).

CONDUCTOR: A man or a woman of any age.

OLD MAN/ZAMENHOF: An old man.

Choose any one of the below monologues to perform at the initial audition. If invited to callbacks, you may be asked to present one of these monologues as well.

GEORGE MONOLOGUES

GEORGE. What did you say? (To us.) At this point, I'm thinking I must've misheard her, that this is all some kind of misunderstanding and that we can go on, just as before - she could lie, is what I'm saying, and pretend the words that just came out of her mouth did not just come out of her mouth. But she doesn't. And they do. My heart was beating, very loudly. But instead of thumping, every beat was saying, "Take it back, take it back, take it back." Just like that. And it was so loud I couldn't hear anything else, even my own thoughts, whatever they might have been. And I was sure she must have been hearing it too. It was as thunderous as horse hooves, louder than tanks. How could anyone not hear it? Take it back, take it back, take it back. Or if she couldn't hear it, I thought surely she must be able to see it, the words running like ticker tape through the whites of my eyes like those old cartoons where the cat is hit on the head with a mallet. Take it back, take it back, take it back. My whole body was begging her. Take it back, take it back - if you go, it'll destroy me. Take it back, take it back - I'll be a city in ruins. Take it back, take it back - it's not too late. Take it back, take it back - my whole body was shouting it. Couldn't SHE HEAR IT? Why wasn't she saying something? ...Don't...go?

GEORGE. I am a linguist. This is my trade. Lots of people ask me if this means I can speak a lot of languages. And I do have a passable acquaintance with Greek, Latin, French, Cantonese, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese and Esperanto. Of these all, I am perhaps most fond of Esperanto, that made-up, utopian dream of a language. Proudly, I say, "*La vivo sen Esperanto estas neimagebla al mi!*" Life without Esperanto is unimaginable to me! So. What is death to a linguist? What is, so to speak, worth mourning? I know this: There are sixty-nine hundred languages in the world. More than half are expected to die within the next century. In fact, it's estimated that every two weeks, a language dies. I don't know about you, but this statistic moves me far more than any statistic on how many animals die or people die in a given time, in a given place. Because when we say a language dies, we are talking about a whole world, a whole way of life. It is the death of imagination, of memory. It makes me much sadder than I could ever possibly express. Even with all my languages, there still aren't the right words.

MARY MONOLOGUE

MARY. I am not depressed. First of all I think you should know that. Depression, to me, is numbness: the absence of emotion. My husband sees me bow my head and weep and thinks that this is depression. Sadness, he calls it. My husband is very reductive. What he does not know - because he has not cried probably since he was seven and broke a limb or something - what he does not know is that there are many reasons for weeping. There is the: I can't believe how beautiful it is, so I weep. Or the: I can't believe how true it is, so I weep. Or the: I can't believe I'm going to die someday, so I weep. Or: I am marked for suffering, so I weep. Or: We are all marked for suffering, so I weep.

EMMA MONOLOGUE

EMMA. *(Offstage.)* George? George. *(Emma tentatively opens the door and enters.)* George? *(She realizes he's asleep. She sees the bottle of Scotch next to him and the glass. Surprised and a little disapproving.)* George. *(She goes to wake him and then stops. He looks as if he could use the rest. She looks around, curious.)* So this is your house. *(She runs her hand over his books.)* Your books. *(She picks up a photo frame.)* Your wife. *(To the photo.)* Hello, George's wife. Have a seat? Why thank you, George. I don't mind if I do. *(She sits and regards George.)* You know, George ... you look especially handsome today in that shirt that doesn't match your eyes. You haven't worn it in a while and I'm glad to see it reappear. I have fond associations of it. You wore it when we went to that conference in Atlanta and we had lunch at the Au Bon Pain and you complained about how Americans pronounce, "Au Bon Pain," which is pretty much how I pronounce, "Au Bon Pain," and so I just kept quiet. We had cream of broccoli soup. George. You know, sometimes? There's a little bit of hair sticking up at the back of your head and it makes me sad. As does the sound of your voice, and the way, sometimes, the elastic on your socks gives out and I can see them slumping

around your ankles. In Ubykh, "you please me" translates literally to "you cut my heart." George. You cut my heart. *(Slowly, as if she is about to help herself she reaches out to touch him. George stirs. She*

RESTEN MONOLOGUE

RESTEN. No, fleek, whatsa fleece? Fleek is kind of bird. Anyway. Fleek has nest at the top of highest tree in all of world. So warrior, say we call him, Resten, he has to climb this tree. And we are

talking one big fucking tree. But this bird, let us call her, Alta, she is very crafty. She like to play, "Hey, come get me if you can, nyah nyah nyah." So. What can Resten do? He have to climb fucking tree. So he climb and climb and finally he get to top of tree. And he grab Alta by the ankle so she cannot fly away. Alta, she is — holy cow — she is flip out! She is panic! She does not want to get caught! And Resten did not know this, but Alta, she is a changer! Suddenly, she become a tiger! And roar! And Resten, he is thinking, holy shit! But he do not let go. Then she become a gorilla and oh, this is very scary, she is roaring in his face, like to try to eat him. But he hold on, hold on. And then she change again, and this time, motherfucker, she is scariest thing EVER in whole world! She is demon and hairy monster and white man with gun all roll up in one! And Resten, he just about want to soil himself he is so scared! But he do not let go! He grip tighter and tighter the scarer and scarer he get! And then: You know what happen? The bird, she change into one last form and this is her true form. And you know what it is? A little lamb. Nothing but a little lamb. Meek and mild and beautiful. That's all she really was the whole time. She only become all those terrible things because she was scare. That is marriage, my friend. Same as myth. Except, each is both hunter and changer. Do you understand? Each grabs ankle of the other. Each is terrified of the other. And each take on many, many different form. But you hold on. Because if you hold on no matter how scare you get, something amazing happen: Everyone become too tired to change. And we become who we really are. No more roar, no more fang, no more claw — No. We are two lambs. We are two sparrows. We are mild and meek. And you know what else?

GEORGE. Beautiful?

RESTEN. Beautiful. *(Resten closes his eyes with a smile.)*

(Omit George's line.)

INSTRUCTOR MONOLOGUE

INSTRUCTOR: What could I do? I told her I loved her! I told her I could not live without her! I told her that the sun rose on this shoulder and set on the other! And then she left. Don't you see? Yes, I was heartbroken, but while I was in love with her, I was too afraid to learn a single tongue - she was a master speaker. How could I let her see my inadequacies? But in professing my love for her, something inside me loosened. She was gone, yes - but she left the door open! That is why you must tell him. Not for him - never for him - for yourself! This is your greatest fear and you must face it! Yes, it might break you to do so, but if you don't, how else will you ever be free? YOU MUST! Love makes warriors of us all. Men such as me know no fear! Now, go out there and say, George, I love you!