

## TWENTY-SOMETHING REASONS NOT TO BE IN A PLAY

MR. VASQUEZ. Good Evening, there may have been a miscommunication in tonight's program. You see when we were brainstorming on what to do for this year's PTG we hit a wall. How do I explain this? Well, I'll let the students explain it.

1. We are not here to put on a play.
2. If you came to see a play, we don't know what to tell you.
3. We believe that putting on a play is a bad idea.
4. A horrible idea.
5. A rotten idea.
6. A putrid, stinking, slimy, greenish-liquid oozing...
7. ...you'd rather kiss your cousin than have to deal with idea.
8. We aren't going to do it. Period.
9. So don't ask.
10. Don't plead.
11. And whatever you do, don't beg. It's not a "holly jolly" thing to do.
12. But we are out here, and you may wonder why.
13. No, it's not because our teacher is making us.
14. Nope, we made him put on this play actually.
15. He bought the script and everything.
16. Yeah, this year's play will be longer than 15 minutes.
17. Right, Mr. Vasquez?
18. Where is he, anyway?
19. He's sitting up front on the floor, Indian...I mean criss-cross apple sauce.
20. He doesn't let us call it "Indian Style."
21. We even tried Native American Style but he still said "No"
22. Plus that doesn't have the same...same ring to it if you will.
23. Why are we out here if we're not putting on a play?
24. I dunno, we went off on a tangent, telling a story. Hmmm...wonder where we learned that from?
25. Oh, yeah! We're out here with a message.
26. We're out here with a warning.

ALL. Twenty-Something Reasons Not to be in a Play! Reason Number One...

John. Plays are horrible!

ALL. Reason number two...

Misty. You had a teacher named Mr. Griswold. He was older than dirt and smelled like stale coffee and socks. When he came in every morning he said...

MR. GRISWOLD. Now, students, pay close attention. Focus, focus, focus is the key to success.

MISTY. He invented amazing methods of torture using construction paper and Popsicle sticks. He turned perfectly normal questions into sadistic games of chance that you would always lose.

SHARON. Mr. Griswold, can I go to the bathroom?

MR. GRISWOLD. I don't know. May you?

SHARON. What?

MR. GRISOWLD. May you go to the bathroom?

SHARON. That's what I'm asking. Can I?

MR. GRISOWLD. I am assuming that you can, but I don't yet know if you may.

SHARON. Mr. Griswold, I really have to go.

MR. GRISWOLD. Then you can go.

SHARON. Thank-you.

TWENTY-SOMETHING REASONS NOT TO BE IN A PLAY

MR. GRISWOLD. But you may not go until I have given permission.

SHARON. You just did!

MISTY. By that time you had either made a puddle on the floor or had to run in desperation, a crime for which you paid by writing "I will not run out of the room in desperation" on the board 7 million times!

ALL. (Fear in their voices) Mr. Griswold!

MISTY. You had Mr. Griswold and he decided to put you in a play.

ALAN. You were so young!

MISTY. The play was about loving the earth and you spent weeks in papier-mache trying to put together costumes and props.

ALAN. Only seven years old, and so terribly impressionable.

MISTY. It was a play Mr. Griswold wrote and it had lines in it like...

EMILY. If we don't get busy and plant all those seeds,  
The Earth won't be able to meet all our needs!

MR. GRISWOLD. No, no, Emily. Put more emphasis on the word "needs." I want you to really experience that word fully. I want you to taste it in your mouth, do you understand? Say "needs?"

EMILY. Needs.

MR. GRISWOLD. Say it like you mean it.

EMILY. Needs.

MR. GRISWOLD. Say it like the most important in the world for you to do is to say the word needs.

EMILY. Needs.

MR. GRISWOLD. Emily, say it as if I'm going to take you home and throw you in a hot oven if you don't say it right!

EMILY. Needs! Needs! Needs!

MR. GRISWOLD. Much better.

MISTY. You were small for your age. Everything was so intimidating to you, especially Mr. Griswold.

ALL. Mr. Griswold!

MISTY. He made you put on a tree costume. It itched like you had lice all over your body. When you tried to turn your head you faced the inside of the tree. You were blind in that thing!

PETE. (from inside the tree:) Mr. Griswold, I can't see.

MR. GRISWOLD. (To EMILY:) Remember now, how are you going to say "needs"?

EMILY. With feeling! I don't want to go in your oven!

MISS GRISWOLD. Stop crying. We're about to go on. Now where is my head of broccoli?

PETE. Mr. Griswold, I can't...

MR. GRISWOLD. Quiet! We're about to start!

ALAN. You felt tiny and inconsequential in a huge, overwhelming world and she shoved you into a tree from which you couldn't escape!

MISTY. You could barely walk because the tree trunk was so small. You had to take baby steps just to keep your balance and when you tried to tell Mr. Griswold that you were seeing stars you tripped in the middle of the stage.

ALAN. At age seven, you toppled down, down, down. And your short life flashed before your eyes!

MISTY. You lay on the floor for the rest of the play because your arms were trapped at your sides. Mr. Griswold was whispering frantically...

MR. GRISWOLD. Keep going! Keep going. There's an audience out there! Don't you dare stop.

ALAN. No child should have to endure such trauma!

MISTY. No one stopped the play to help you up and by the second act of this five-act epic called "Mother Earth and You Are the Nurse" and everyone forgot you were inside the papier-mache tree and they started sitting on you during their scenes.

ALAN. Such stress!

## TWENTY-SOMETHING REASONS NOT TO BE IN A PLAY

MISTY. The papier-mache buckled over your face and you were sure that your classmates were going to suffocate you.

JANE. Oh, earth, oh, earth, we love you like crazy.

We're sorry we sometimes get sloppy and lazy.

STEWART. The trees all around, like maple, beech and ash. Just shouldn't have to put up with all of our trash.

MISTY. When the play was finally over and everyone had taken their bows and exited the stage, you were still in the tree. By the time your mom found you it was too late. You were asleep probably dreaming of Mr. Griswold.

ALAN. A classic case of post traumatic stress syndrome. You poor, poor child.

MISTY. So anytime you hear someone talk about a play you smell papier-mache and you see the inside of a tree and you hear Mr. Griswold's voice saying...

MR. GRISWOLD. Needs! Needs! Needs!

MISTY. And you walk away very quickly.

(curtain closes)

ALL. Reason Number 3!

JULIE. Because you're a fast talker. You come from a family of fast talkers and if there's such a thing as a gene for fast talking you'd definitely inherit it. You'd memorize all of your lines but you'd say them too fast and you know the director would say...

JULIE'S DIRECTOR. Take it slower.

JULIE. And you know you're supposed to take it slower and you would say to yourself over and over again, "Talk slower, talk slower!" but you would get all tense and then talk even faster. The director would get mad and he'd say...

JULIE'S DIRECTOR. You have to talk slower!

JULIE. And you'd practically be screaming at yourself inside your head and you knew you were going too fast but as you thought about it you'd be getting faster and faster and so the director would lose his patience and finally yell...

JULIE'S DIRECTOR. Slower!

JULIE. And that would make you go so fast that you never even took a breath and you'd go and go and go until you were out of breath but you still wouldn't stop until...

(Julie passes out)

5. It's all right. She does this. She'll be back.

JULIE. Hello. Did I talk and talk and talk so fast and so nervous that I actually passed out?

5. Yup.

JULIE. Again?

5. Yup

JULIE. Good thing I wasn't in a play.

(curtain closes)

ALL. Reason number 4!

MEG. Because your older sister was in a play and she said she loved it so you have to hate it. It's a law.

ALL. Reason number 5!

ROB. The play might have a part where you're supposed to hold hands with the person next to you and the person next to you might have warts on their hands and the whole time you're wondering if the wart like things are contagious. Then you start seeing yourself covered in warts from your bellybutton to your elbows. So it's definitely not worth the risk.

ALL. Reason number 6!

(open curtain)

DOUG. Because you remember Susie Jenson. When you were six, you lived in a neighborhood that had a lot of old people and one child your age: Susie.

## TWENTY-SOMETHING REASONS NOT TO BE IN A PLAY

SUSIE. Hey!

DOUG. Since you were the only fother kid Susie's age, she decided you must be her best friend.

SUSIE. Hey, best friend, let's go play!

DOUG. Since there was only one kid your age, your parents assumed you wanted to be with Susie.

PARENTS. There's Susie. Go play!

DOUG. But, in truth, Susie Jenson-whom you could not escape-bugged the living heck out of you. Why? Because every day, every single day she wanted to do the same thing.

SUSIE. Let put on a play!

DOUG. And every play, every single play, she wanted to be the same thing.

SUSIE. I'll be a fairy.

DOUG. And then Susie, the fairy, would proceed to tell you every possible way you could play your part.

SUSIE. Yeah, I'll be a fairy and pretend I got caught on a thornbush on a thorn and I was bleeding and you could be the ambulance guy who comes to save me, k?

DOUG. Hour after hour with Susie.

SUSIE. I'll be the fairy and you could be my wings. Stand behind me and flap, okay?

DOUG. Day after day with Susie.

SUSIE. So, listen, I'll be a fairy and you can be this mean dragon that eats dirt and spits at me. Go ahead. Eat some dirt.

DOUG. The weeks, the months, the eternities with Susie and her fairy variations.

SUSIE. I'll be a fairy and you can be a little bug that I step on.

DOUG. And you curl up in the fetal position and refuse to eat or speak for a month.

ALL. Reason number 7!

(curtain closes)

ANDREW. No one wants to sing.

ALL. Reason number 8!

MEGAN. Because rehearsals and performances will make you run the risk of not monitoring your cell phone and snapchat on a regular basis. Yeah most of it is gossip or musical.ly videos your friends posted but you never know! The one call might come, the one tweet that has to be replied to within five minutes, the one message that will completely change your life. Okay, so it's never happened to you before and it's never actually happened to anyone you know but it could happen.

ALL. Reason number 9!

John. Plays are horrible!

ALL. Reason number 10!

Cecily. Because you're just, you're just, you're just too shy. You...you can barely get two words out of your mouth in front, in front of, of an audience. Whenever you have oral presentations in class, you, you, you, you, you, just take a zero. If somebody tries to force you, you start to cry. A play? Oh, no, no, no. You're painfully shy. That would kill you. You would just die from embarrassment, staring out at those lights, knowing that people are sitting there, judging you-judging what you're wearing, what you're saying, the way you're standing. You'd be mortified! I mean, it's a completely unreasonable request, to ask you to be in a play. They might as well tell you to stand against the wall so they can assemble a firing squad and have you shot, right? You're shy, remember? Hands-freezing, armpits-dripping, knees-knocking, head-pounding shy! Is that a problem? Is it? Just because you're shy, can't you be allowed to just stay in the corner and be that way, or does this society absolutely require that, no matter how traumatic it might be, you have to get up on stage and do whatever some script requires? You're shy, darn it! Shy, shy, shy! So what, if the script says sing the ABC's like an opera star, do you have to go ahead and start singing away? (Singing like an opera star) A-B-C-D-E-F-G! That's way too much to ask of a shy person, I'm telling you! I can't make a fool out of myself stand in front of a crowd full of people because I AM JUST WAY TOO AMAZINGLY, INCREDIBLY, PITTIFULLY...shy.

ALL. Reason number 11

## TWENTY-SOMETHING REASONS NOT TO BE IN A PLAY

(curtains open)

MAVIS. Your mother wrote you a note that said, "Mavis is allergic to plays. If she is in one, she will break out in hives. Her legs will swell to five times their normal size and she will begin to sneeze uncontrollably. Please excuse her."

ALL. Reason number 12

JOHN. Plays are horrible!

NORA. John, that was reason one and nine. Can't you tell us anything more?

JOHN. Plays are really horrible!

NORA. Could you be more specific?

JOHN. You want me to be more specific? All right, I'll be more specific. Plays are full of.....

(CENSOR claps a hand over JOHN's mouth as he starts screaming)

CENSOR. This monologue has been reviewed by the National Script Board and found unfit for student consumption.

JOHN. (breaking free for a moment) And do you know what else? Plays are.. (hand back over his mouth)

CENSOR. If you wish to read an unedited version of John's monologue you may find it on his blog.

JOHN. (free again) And that's why plays are horrible.

(curtain closes)

1. On that note, we believe it is time for a little break.
  2. Go to the bathroom, call your mother, eat a snack..
  3. Get your oil changed...
  4. Whatever you do during breaks..
  5. If this were a play, we would call this a little time out intermission, but remember...
  6. This is not a play.
  7. This is a lesson.
  8. This is a heavy dose of wisdom.
  9. So take a break
  10. Come back alert.
  11. Come back ready to learn the rest of our Twenty Something Reasons Not to be In a Play!
- (lights down)
12. Before we begin again, some of you may be thinking, "Why so much energy on showing why not to be in a play?"
  13. We'll tell you why.
  14. Because somewhere in this nation of ours, the natural order is being violated.
  15. Yes! Unbelievable and horrifying as it may seem, at this very moment some unsuspecting child may be bursting through her front door happily shouting...

(curtain opens)

TABITHA'S MOM. What did you just say?

TABITHA'S BROTHER. Tab did you just swear? Say a bad word? Mom will get out the soap again.

TABITHA. No, I just said...

TABITHA'S MOM. Say it again, Tabitha-slowly.

TABITHA. (slowly) I got a part in the school play!

TABITHA'S MOM. Oh no! Please no!

TABITHA'S BROTHER. What were you thinking? What's the matter with you?

TABITHA'S MOM. Where did I go wrong? I tried to be a good mother!

TABITHA. But I...

TABITHA'S BROTHER. Mom, it's not your fault. (to TABITHA) See what you've done!

TABITHA'S MOM. I have to buy a costume, get it fitted, find a ride for you after school in case rehearsals run late, take time off of work to meet you at the school to apply your makeup and touch up your hair. I'll need a florist to buy a dozen roses to hand you after the performance...

## TWENTY-SOMETHING REASONS NOT TO BE IN A PLAY

(TABITHA'S MOTHER runs off stage)

16. Instead of that completely natural and appropriate response, somewhere in this great but confused country of ours, this is happening...

SAMMY. Hey, Mom and Dad!

SAMMY'S DAD. What's up, Sammy?

SAMMY'S Mom. Honey, what's the matter?

SAMMY. Everybody, I have something very, very, very important to say. It's big. It's serious.

SAMMY'S MOM. Well? Out with it.

SAMMY. I...got a part in the play! I'm going to be in the play!

(The family freezes, shocked, then erupts into shouts of congratulations, hugging SAMMY. The other students on stage look on in disgust, shaking their heads.)

ALL. Gross!

17. Impossible as it may seem, children of all ages are continuing to contract this disease called drama.

18. And they're being congratulated for it!

19. This is why we are out here, generously contributing our time...

20. Our talents...

21. Our energy...

22. Our quality hours glued to our phones...

23. To bring you Twenty Something Reasons Not to Be in a play! (pause)

ALL. Reason number 13!

MIA. Abraham Lincoln!

(everyone looks at her. She looks back, nodding her head knowingly)

MIA. Oh yeah.

(after another pause, everyone turns back to the audience)

ALL. Reason number 14!

JOHN. Because when you're doing stuff in the play, you might hurt your left pinky. Yeah. And you know you never know where science is going nowadays. Maybe soon scientists will come out and say that the whole key to your entire healthcare system isn't your lungs, heart or brain it's your left hand pinky finger. And you'll be really old and feeling really crummy and you'll hear the science people say that and you'll look at your left pinky finger and think "That play! That school play didn't just ruin my career as a professional rock-paper-scissors champion, it ruined my life!

ALL. Reason number 19!

LISA. Because, generally, you are very even-tempered. However, there is a spot, buried deep down within you like lava in a volcano, where your anger lies...

GREG. And a certain thing that can happen when you are in a play is like a drill reaching that dangerous place inside of you.

LISA. Yes. Exactly. This trigger, this drill, if you will, is something called stepping on lines...

GREG. You have your lines in the play, of course, and other actors have their lines. They are supposed to happen in a set order. When one person finishes her line then the next person should come in.

LISA. But when an actor gets anxious-or perhaps selfish- he will come in too quickly, thus cutting off the very last word you're supposed to say.

GREG. It'll drive you crazy, this stepping on lines. You, once a sane and calm person, will feel yourself starting to boil.

LISA. Yes. And when you boil, when this lava inside has been trapped, your voice starts to go higher and higher and louder and loud...

GREG. The tension will build like a pressure cooker until-to your utter embarrassment and the audiences' utter shock you just have to scream...

LISA. STOP STEPPING ON MY LINES!!!!

ALL. Reason number 20

TWENTY-SOMETHING REASONS NOT TO BE IN A PLAY

MIA. Half inch plywood.

NATE. Um, Mia?

MIA. Hello, Nate. How odd and entirely unnecessary of you to address me at this particular moment.

NATE. Well, uh...

MIA. When we should, for the sake of pace, be moving on with maximum speed through the play, yes?

NATE. Sure, but...

MIA. Unless you have made it a top priority to question the reasons I have proposed so far?

NATE. I was just hoping...

MIA. Because such questioning would indicate a lack of trust in me, which trust is the very cement that holds any organization together.

NATE. Mia.

MIA. Do you not trust me, Nate?

NATE. No! I mean, not "no" that I don't trust you, or, I mean...

MIA. Perhaps you think my reasons are similar to John's insipid and repeated "Plays are horrible." Is that it?

JOHN. Hey! I don't know what insipid means, but I'm pretty sure that wasn't a compliment.

MIA. Do not worry about it, Jake.

JOHN. Yeah, well, you know something, Mia? You're not a nice person. And my name is John.

MIA. Oooh, I'm hurt. You have wounded me to my soul.

JOHN. You think you're so...

NATE. John, go lie down. Relax.

JOHN. But she's...

NATE. Re-lax.

DARREN. What I think Nate is trying to say, Mia, is not that he doesn't trust you, but that he, and many of us and our audience are curious about the reasons you presented. They are...fascinating but also a bit cryptic. Would you tell us more?

MIA. Certainly, you will see that my reasons are absolutely correct. My first reason-Abraham Lincoln. Long recognized as one of our greatest presidents, killed in a theater while watching a play. Make sense now?

DARREN. Oh, yeah...I guess it does.

MIA. Mia's next reason-half inch plywood. One common error in theatrical construction is when amateurs use plywood that is too thin for platforms. They use  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch plywood rather than  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch plywood. Does that  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch really make a difference? Absolutely! The stage cannot hold the actors and they plummet through the stage injured not by the fall but by the lethal shards of wood and metal on their way down. Nathaniel, are you satisfied with my "crazy" reasons not to be in a play?

ALL. Reason number 22!

BILL. Because meteorologists tell us that the beating of a butterfly's wings in South America can trigger a hurricane in North America.

WEATHERMAN. We can expect sunny skies for the next three days-absolutely gorgeous weather, with a tanning index 10.

BILL. Putting on a play, with its lines and movements and all, will generate a significant amount of wind and hot air. By consulting The National Weather Council Guys with their clipboards and large computers...

GEEK 1. If we take the barometric pressure and divide it by the average rainfall of the eighth largest state...

GEEK 2. And we take the inverse proportion of the geometric isometric idiosyncratic quadratic equation.

GEEK 3. And two plus two equaling four

GEEK 4. I think it's going to be a nice day.

BILL. And by consulting old people sitting on the park benches gumming tuna fish sandwiches...

OLD 1. Say, you remember back in '54 when we had that big hailstorm that took the roof off the old McGiven's place?

OLD 2. That wasn't in '54, you ninny! That was '58. '54 was the year we had the ice storm that took the tree down next to the paint factory.

TWENTY-SOMETHING REASONS NOT TO BE IN A PLAY

OLD 3. Well, all I can tell you is we're gonna have good weather for the next couple of days. My bunions ain't aching.

OLD 4. And my scalp ain't itching.

OLD 5. And my arthritis ain't flaring up.

BILL. And by consulting my step-brother who recently almost passed his tenth year of high school...

REED. Uh...No clouds. Guess I'll go outside today.

BILL. By consulting all of these expert opinions on the weather, you can see the kind of disastrous weather that a play will trigger.

WEATHERMAN. So if you've been planning getting some vacation time, you should certainly take it... Wait a minute! This just in! A sudden disturbance in the air has radically changed the forecast. Forget all that I just said! We've got a massive storm coming our way! Rain, snow, sleet, hail, are all about to clobber us in less than 24 hours! Normally I would tell you not to panic, but, in this case...panic!

GEEK 1. These numbers can't be right! According to the confabulation of the tenth power of the 39<sup>th</sup> parallel..

GEEK 2. adding in the square root of pi in which the numerator dissects the denominator...

GEEK 3. and putting the hard-drive into overdrive we see that...

GEEK 4. We're gonna get clobbered!

OLD 1. Oh, boy, I'm aching!

OLD 2. Feel that vein in my forehead! Feel it pulsing! It hasn't pulsed like that since the Winter of '02!

OLD 3. Mother McCree, my bunions are about to explode.

OLD 4. Run for your lives, you old coots! Head for the Bingo Hall and crawl under a table if you know what's good for you!

REED. Uh...Getting cloudy. I'll stay inside.

BILL. Mother Nature's fury is unleashed!

1. Listen to that wind howl!

2. Look at the size of that hail!

3. We're never going to survive this!

BILL. ...food shortages, fear and trembling, panic in the streets, weather-induced chaos and pandemonium, massive power outages all because...

(the lights go out)

ALL. Who turned out the lights?

(curtain closes)

(BILL and REED step through the closed curtain to the edge of the stage)

BILL. What triggered the biggest storm of the century? What disturbance in the air could have started it? Who or what is responsible for the destruction, chaos and loss of life?

REED. Uh...somebody put on a play.

(curtain opens, everyone is onstage)

1. So you see, there are many reasons for not putting on a play.

2. Pick your favorite.

3. Tell everyone you know.

4. Together we can end this disaster before it starts.

5. Thank you for your attention.

6. Thank you for coming to our...

ALL. Twenty-something Reasons Not To Be In a Play!