

Any Questions?

A One Act By Sam Heyman and Peter Hurford
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The play begins with Tori on stage, talking to a tour group off-stage. Her group, which includes Sheldon and Rhonda (son and mother,) as well as Katie and Horace (daughter and father,) are broadly dismissive/skeptical of most things she says. Throughout the scene, the group meanders in a slow, snaking way across the stage, stopping occasionally.

Tori: Is everyone good? Everyone here? Okay, I guess I'll get started. Ok, as you might now, here at beautiful Kenyon, we're a private liberal arts college that prides itself on a rigorous curriculum and a prestigious faculty. We're all residential so all Kenyon students are living here on campus in one of our state-of-the-art dormitories.

Sheldon: But what if they don't want to live on campus?

Tori: Well they can go apply to one of those Ivy League money-traps, cause they've come to the wrong place! Hahaha.

Sheldon: But, like, could I get an apartment off campus?

Tori: Well I'd suggest shacking up with some livestock or driving down to Mount Vernon because Gambier is -- I don't know if you've seen the tumbleweeds -- kind of a dried up gulch.

Dean Thomas catches up with the group, shouting from off-stage:

Dean Thomas: Um, I think, eheh, what Tori means to say is that Kenyon believes that having students live and dine together is key for fostering our great community and scholarly discourse. We do want students brushing elbows together and what not... Tori's a little bit new here, you see.

Rhonda: And who are you?

Dean Thomas extends his hand to Rhonda who stares at him, perturbed.

Dean Thomas: Dean Thomas. Director of Admissions.

The tour meets the Dean's greeting tone with an awkward, uncomfortable silence.

Dean Thomas: Anyway, carry on, Tori. Just pretend I'm not here.

Tori: Alright, well, coming up on our left is Finn Hall, which looks like your grandmother's lemon bars and like a gingerbread man had a baby. ...if that baby were a

house.

Dean Thomas: ehem, I am here a *little* bit, Tori.

Tori: Also! Also, Finn Hall is the home to the Kenyon Review. Which is a prestigious literary journal here at Kenyon. Students can work here as associates to review articles and organize events, like Poem in Your Pocket Day.

Dean Thomas: Isn't that adorable? (*No one reacts.*) Well, I think it's adorable.

Horace: Maybe you could work there, Katie Cat.

Katie: Daaad!

Horace: My daughter wants to be a writer.

Tori: Well, she's going to have to get in line. Kenyon's writing program is *very competitive*.

Katie: Oh, well I bet I could make it in. I won my high school poetry slam. And I got my poem in the school's newspaper!

Tori: Oh, how quaint. Your school newspaper. I've published a few poems back in my day, but it takes more than a few gold stickers to get places, sweetheart.

Katie: Well I got an \$100 scholarship.

Tori: Well I got a fist with your name on it.

Dean Thomas: Tori! (Pulling Tori aside, a few paces away) You really need to keep your personal issues off the table in these tours, alright?

Tori: If that girl thinks she can come in here with her hoity-toity "Ooh, I won my school's poetry slam ooh, I'm the second coming of Lord Byron," UGHH. It's like this girl has no idea about what's an actual accomplishment.

Dean Thomas: Why don't you just let me handle the rest of this tour okay? Pretend you're my shadow. A really *quiet* shadow.

Tori and Dean Thomas lead the group off stage. As they do this, another tour guide, Geoff enters from upstage with four tourees (Jack, Jill (students,) Holly, Steve (parents.)

Geoff: ...So that means 9 out of 10 students here find themselves, at one point or another, let's be real, pressured to justify their decision to study a major in the humanities to their parents and relatives. Luckily our general education requirements give our students the oral communication and quantitative reasoning skills to stretch the truth and (air quotes)

“know statistics” (air unquotes).

Jack: Statistics like, “There are millions of jobs out there for an English major!”

Jill: Or “you can do *anything* with a philosophy degree.”

Geoff: Oh, you two are good. What are you thinking of studying, Poli Sci?

Jack: Pre-Med.

Jill: Economics.

Geoff gives Jack and Jill each high-fives and the tour walks off stage. Another tour guide, Sally, enters with her group, composed of two fathers, Lana and Alison, and their son, Ozymandias.

Sally: So let’s get to know each other a little bit. What are some of your son’s interests?

Lana: Well our son, Ozymandias, only likes old things. Old records... old movies... old men... do you have anything that would interest him?

Sally: We’ll he’ll fit right in here -- Kenyon is the oldest private college in Ohio. Kenyon College was founded in 1824 by Bishop Philander Chase. Plus, the median age in Gambier is *pretty* high. Like, I went to the grocery store down there the other day, and the cashier? Old as *balls*.

By this point Sally and her tour have made their way toward the edge of stage, and Tori and Dean Thomas’ tour has looped back around. In their path is some sort of pylon.

Dean Thomas: Let’s see... Oh! Here we are! This is a fun one. So we’ve been walking on Middle Path for a while, and this place right ahead of us is “The Gates of Hell.”

Sheldon: It just looks like the ground has a boner. Pretty lame. I’m bored of this.

Rhonda: Quiet, dear. Let Dean Thomas explain his stupid traditions.

Dean Thomas: So you see, eh, you all have to walk single file on one side of the gates, like this, see?

Sheldon, Rhonda, Horace and Katie all walk past Dean Thomas on different sides of the pylon, ignoring him, despite his protests.

Dean Thomas (*visibly distressed*): Uh, actually, well--you don’t--not that way... well.

Dean Thomas and Tori exchange haggard looks as the group continues down the path without them.

Tori: Want me to take over?

Dean Thomas: *(To Tori)* That shouldn't be necessary. *(calling after the group)* I actually don't remember why we have that tradition anyway. Maybe it doesn't take effect until you're actually admitted, hahaha...

Dean Thomas hustles off stage after the group. Tori follows after, with a sigh, shaking her head. Geoff and his group return to stage, traversing it in a new arc.

Steve: So why did you decide to come to Kenyon?

Geoff: Actually I have a specific spot in the tour where I answer that question, so if you just wait for a few minutes, I'll get to it.

Holly: Well, my daughter and I are planning on visiting a few other Ohio schools, but we're just not sure which ones are worth visiting.

Geoff: Well, you know, there's Denison, if you're looking for a school that's just a *little bit* worse than Kenyon. And Oberlin, of course--but it was a bit too liberal for my tastes.

Sally and her group cross behind Geoff's group.

Alison: Y'know, we visited Oberlin before we came here, and y'know, it wasn't liberal enough for our Ozymandias. What's the political culture like here?

Sally: Yeah, uh--um--Coming up on our left is our local coffee house, Wiggin Street Coffee. I'm pretty sure the architects designed it after the underground joint where Ani DeFranco got her start.

Dean Thomas leads his group across the stage, his pace slower and his step with a noticeable lack of spring. His spirits have fallen considerably over the course of the tour.

Dean Thomas: Here at Kenyon we have a whopping 35 majors. In addition, we offer 13 concentrations. *(a long sigh, as the group seems interested in other things)* We also have pre-professional advising for students seeking careers in--

Sheldon *(interrupting):* Hey, do you guys have a skateboarding major?

Dean Thomas: *(hesitates)* Ehh... not quite. But we do have like ...um... physics? That's kind of like skateboarding, right? Erm, what about you Katie? Got your eyes on our English program, I'll bet?

Katie: Well, actually, I don't think I'm going to major in English. Like, I'm a good enough poet already and I mean, let's face it, English is kind of a useless subject. *(smug)*

laugh) Not like Art History.

Dean Thomas (*holding back rage with a smile*): Erm... well... that's a charming opinion you've got there. We respect all opinions here at Kenyon. And we do our best to cultivate them, don't we, Tori?

Tori (*with an exaggerated, sunny expression*): Mmhmm. Oh, sure!

Rhonda: Well, I don't want to make waves, but it *is* kind of a useless subject, isn't it? Like who *reads* anymore?

Tori: Oh yes, a useless subject, like that fake perm of yours, kind of useless, not fooling anyone! (*Rhonda reacts, offended*)

Dean Thomas: Tori--

Tori: Oh, look, coming up on our right is Sunset Cottage, home to 29 PH.D AND MFA BEARING ENGLISH PROFESSORS. We built this nice building for them, to house their USELESS knowledge, their USELESS degrees, and their useless, book-lined, tastefully decorated *OFFICES!*

Dean Thomas: Tori. Calm down, Tori.

Tori: I CAN'T, I CANNOT, there is no more can in my arsenal, not even a smidge of able to do, I am OUT.

Tori storms off stage.

Dean Thomas: So, eheh, uh, what about you, Sheldon? What do you think about English?

Sheldon: Mom, I'm more bored of this. And besides, I already told you, I want to go to Ohio State. Why are we even here?

Dean Thomas: Ohio... State? Well... Well, I never! Who said we'd even admit you anyway, you buckeyed brat! Kenyon is a prestigious institution for those who want to take their education seriously, not waste it away on their footgames and their basket rackets and all that! Saskia Hamilton didn't graduate from here and write "As for Dream" for you to come in here and *shit* all over her alma mater!

Sheldon: Saskia who?

Dean Thomas points off stage with a trembling, rage-filled finger, refusing to meet eyes with Sheldon.

Dean Thomas: Get your uncultured ass out of my sight!

Sheldon and Rhonda walk off stage in a huff. Horace and Katie awkwardly remain on stage.

Dean Thomas: ...So! Any questions?

Lights fade to black. End of Play.