

## MONOLOGUE MADNESS

*Leslie and Bill, late twenties to early thirties, are teachers at competing high schools. Leslie teaches theater; Bill teaches U.S. history. Tonight, they have come to judge the annual Monologue Madness competition. All the high schools in the area come together to compete in this fiercely competitive event. As the scene begins, the competition is about to begin.*

### CHARACTERS

Leslie: late 20s to early 30s, theater teacher

Bill: late 20s to early 30s, history teacher

### SETTING

The Monologue Madness competition at a local high school

### TIME

The present

LESLIE: Don't you just adore these events?

BILL: Actually, this is my first time.

LESLIE: Really? Do you mean this is your first time attending or judging Monologue Madness?

BILL: Both.

LESLIE: Well, you must have a pretty impressive background in the theater. Do you teach theory as well as the usual classes?

BILL: No, I teach history.

LESLIE: Theater history, huh? No acting, voice, or speech?

BILL: *(Correcting her.)* No, no, no. I teach U.S. history.

LESLIE: You're a history teacher? *(He nods.)* How in the world did you end up as a judge in the annual Monologue Madness competition?

BILL: They needed teachers, and I thought it sounded interesting.

LESLIE: *(Annoyed.)* Oh, I see. Doesn't . . . which high school are you from?

BILL: Naperville Central.

LESLIE: Right. So Naperville Central doesn't have any acting teachers?

BILL: She's judging the History of Marlowe as Shakespeare debate.

LESLIE: Right. Makes perfect sense. I'm Leslie. *(Extends hand.)* From Wheaton North.

BILL: Bill. *(Shakes hands.)* From Naperville —

LESLIE: Central. Right. Well, Bill, if there's anything I can help you — ooh, looks like we're starting.

BILL: Yes, it does. And thank you.

*(They both focus out at the "stage" and watch in silence for a moment.)*

LESLIE: Oh, no! Not *Agnes of God* again. This piece is soooo overdone.

BILL: Well, there is such a thing as tradition in any culture.

LESLIE: *(Looking at Bill with disgust.)* This isn't Thanksgiving, it's a competition.

*(They stare out for another beat. The actor has obviously ended. Leslie looks sickened. Bill is enraptured.)*

BILL: That was wonderful. Very moving.

LESLIE: Yes. Just like after I eat prunes.

BILL: What?

LESLIE: Shhh. Here's the next one. *(Beat.)* Mamet. Brilliant playwright.

*(They listen. Suddenly Bill looks horrified and Leslie looks pleased.)*

BILL: He just cursed! And again! But the rules clearly state that cursing is cause for disqualification!

LESLIE: It's Mamet, Bill. You can't do it without cursing.

BILL: Well, he should have edited that out!

LESLIE: There would be nothing left! It's Mamet's trademark.

BILL: Well, then it worked. I am trading the mark to a zero. Oh, again! It's blasphemous!

LESLIE: It's truthful and passionate. It's real.  
BILL: Maybe in your classroom, but not in mine!  
LESLIE: Well, this is not your classroom, Bucko.  
BILL: Well, it's not your classroom either.  
*(They stop arguing and smile at the actor who has just finished.)*  
LESLIE: Fabulous.  
BILL: Appalling.  
LESLIE: Maybe you should write *The Virgin Monologues*.  
BILL: Maybe you should get yourself to church.  
LESLIE: *(Laughs.)* Maybe you should get yourself to therapy!  
*(They cease fire at the introduction of the next actor's monologue.)*  
LESLIE: Ooohh, a piece I don't know. How refreshing.  
BILL: Indeed. Maybe you'll be quiet and listen then.  
LESLIE: Oh, stuff it, Your Prudeness.  
*(They watch. Bill is taken in, Leslie suddenly breaks out of it. The actor finishes the piece.)*  
BILL: *(Tearfully.)* Now that was superb. She actually cried. Did you see that?  
LESLIE: Did I see it?? She emoted all over the stage. How could anyone miss it? Disgusting overacting. She had absolutely no objective whatsoever except to flood her dress . . . and her shoes . . . and the stage floor.  
BILL: How does one teach acting when one is so unfeeling?  
LESLIE: I'm feeling. I'm feeling all kinds of things, Bill. I'm feeling like punching your historical face!  
BILL: Oh, violence as well as language. I can see why you liked that Mammy piece.  
LESLIE: Mamet.  
BILL: Whatever.  
*(Again they quickly stop talking as the next actor is introduced.)*  
LESLIE: *(Whispering, childlike bitterness.)* I wonder who George Washingtine is? *(Dumb giggle.)* I'm judging the presidency competition.

*(Bill tries to ignore her. They both watch the actor. Suddenly, their eyes open wide. Leslie's in excitement, Bill's in horror.)*  
BILL: Did you see that?  
LESLIE: *(Pleased.)* Yes!  
BILL: He's standing on the chair! He jumped up on the chair!  
LESLIE: Yes, bless his movement coach, he did.  
BILL: You don't stand on people's furniture! This is an outrage! He's an animal!  
LESLIE: He's an actor.  
BILL: Synonymous! I'm disqualifying him!  
LESLIE: What?! It was a beautiful move — fully motivated. It woke me up.  
BILL: Naturally the destruction of school property would awaken you.  
LESLIE: He didn't break it, he just used it.  
BILL: Is that what you tell your unchaste actresses to say at confession?  
LESLIE: Oooohhh, what a smutty thought from the preacher! Of course I don't tell them that. They don't go to confession! Being the wild, sexual, horrid beasts that they are!  
*(They both freeze and look out.)*  
LESLIE: *(Calling out.)* Uh, sorry. This is Bill's first time judging. He didn't realize the need to be quiet.  
BILL: *(Whispering harshly to her.)* How dare you?!  
LESLIE: Quite easily, I assure you. *(Calling out.)* Yes, please continue. Everything's fine.  
*(They both give angry, fake smiles. The next actor is introduced. Bill's jaw drops.)*  
LESLIE: Ahh! The dominatrix, moaning piece from the *Vagina Monologues*. And so, there is a God.  
BILL: *(Hiding his head behind his hand.)* Uhh.  
*(They watch the monologue, Bill peeking through his hand. Leslie laughs on and off. Bill's jaw and body sink toward the floor. The actress finishes.)*  
LESLIE: That was brilliant.  
BILL: *(Unable to speak.)* Hhhh . . .

LESLIE: Sorry, what did you say?  
BILL: Hhhh . . .  
LESLIE: You know, you really should take a class in voice and speech. Your articulation is the pits.  
BILL: Hhhhedonist!  
LESLIE: It speaks. Me or her?  
BILL: Both of you!  
LESLIE: Gee, thanks, Billy. *(She winks at him.)*  
*(They look out at the next actor.)*  
LESLIE: Hmmm. I never read that one. "The Lord's Prayer"?  
*(Beat.)* Wait a minute. This is not a monologue, it's a prayer.  
BILL: *(Smiles.)* Yes, it is.  
LESLIE: Ridiculous, it's not from a play. There's no action — no objective, no change, or discovery.  
BILL: Of course there is, she's talking to God. To ask for his help. That's her objective. At least it's more appropriate than all of that swearing. Now, shh.  
LESLIE: Oh, Jesus, she's bawling like a fool.  
BILL: *(Quietly speaking along with the actor.)* Lead us not into temptation.  
LESLIE: Honey, you could use a little temptation. It would do you a world of good!  
BILL: *(Clapping and teary-eyed.)* There's our winner, right there. That was so heartfelt and pure. So real, as you say.  
LESLIE: In what world? I'm disqualifying her. The piece must be from a published and printed play.  
BILL: Are you crazy? It's been printed and published many, many times.  
LESLIE: Oh yeah? Who's the playwright, huh? Huh???  
BILL: *(Beat.)* I'm beginning to understand why they call this the Monologue Madness competition. They invited you.  
LESLIE: Actually, it's in reference to the fact that any inexperienced, naïve, prissy dimwit, who's clueless as to what good acting — or even, acting itself — is, can judge the bloody monologue competition. Even if they teach booga-wooga, thump bibles, and cry at info-mercials.

BILL: O, beware, my lord, of jealousy; / It is the green-ey'd monster which doth mock / The meat it feeds on.  
LESLIE: You think I'm jealous? Of you???! *(She laughs.)* Puh-lease!! *(Beat. Realizing)* You just quoted Shakespeare.  
BILL: Pretty impressive for a dimwit who teaches booga-wooga. You act like I'm some sort of ignorant conservative idiot!  
LESLIE: Well, you act like I'm some sort of Medea-like, foul-mouthed harlot! And besides, you are conservative!  
BILL: No! Not entirely. I just happen to believe in God and think kids should stop swearing!  
LESLIE: Well, see?! You're a goody-goody!  
BILL: Well, at least I'm not wicked!! *(Beat.)*  
LESLIE: *(Standing in her outrage.)* Wicked?! I'll show you wicked! *(Turning out to those in the competition who are all watching.)* Oh, would you shut up?! I'm talking! *(To Bill.)* I can be a real witch when I need to be.  
BILL: I can see that.  
LESLIE: Ohh, you have no idea. My second car is a broom. You stink!  
BILL: Stink?! At least I'm not polluting my students.  
LESLIE: Uhhhh! You priggish stick-in-the-mud.  
BILL: And corrupting everyone who crosses my path!  
LESLIE: Oooh, better wear your garlic!  
BILL: No need. You aren't going to corrupt me, lady!  
LESLIE: Oh yeah?! *(She grabs him and pulls him in close and kisses him passionately.)* What do you think of that?  
BILL: *(Dazed and dizzy.)* That was . . . pretty corrupt. Um, do you think maybe when this thing is done, you might consider corrupting me some more?  
LESLIE: *(Crossing her arms.)* No.  
BILL: *(Puppy-dog.)* No?  
LESLIE: I can't wait that long. Let's go!  
*(They both look out at the competitors who are giving them a standing ovation.)*  
BILL and LESLIE: Oh. *(Giggling, embarrassed. Waving.)* Hi. Thank you. *(Bowing.)* Thank you very much.  
*(They rush out.)*