

Drumming Lessons

Some monologues for young people in drama education.

By Ciarán Myers

Written for members of the Family Centre Players at the Region of Waterloo Family and Children's Services, Autumn 2018. The author has used them in other educational settings since.

In a classroom environment, and especially if the students are preparing these to perform for an audience of their families and peers, students and teachers are welcome to edit and adjust the monologues to fit the students' needs and interests.

They are presented in a particular order to tell a story here. But they can be performed in whatever order feels best.

There is a Monster Under my Bed

I haven't told this to anyone.
But I've been sitting on it for a long time.
Lying on it for a long time. Actually.
There is a monster under my bed.
Don't laugh. There is.
I first noticed about a week ago. And, the day after it started ...
Well, I can hear it breathing. And sometimes talking. Kind of rhythmically.
But it's not just some kind of rhythm under my bed.
It's more of a ... well, I don't know what it is.
But it's alive.
And it doesn't belong there.
That's what's ... scary: it doesn't belong there.
Anyway, I first noticed it about a week ago.
And then, the next morning, I was so tired because I hadn't slept at all.
I was afraid to move.
Should I talk to it?
What if it says something back to me?
So the next morning, that was the day that Mom and Dad told me that I can't go to
drumming lessons anymore.
They said they can't afford it.
And it's ironic, right?
Because all I do is lie awake and listen to this thing's sort of rhythmic—rhythmic—
rhythmic ...
But it isn't a drum.
It's not a drum because I would know.
I'm a good drummer. I used to be a good drummer.
But would you talk to it?
Would you roll over in bed and check?
What if it's there?
What does it want?
I'm scared.

Monster #1

The only reason you can't go to sleep
Is that you refuse not to focus on me.
I'm doing my best not to make a peep
But still you listen and that's kind of sweet.
I needed a bed to lie underneath
Because that is the best for monsters like me.
No one believes in my kind anymore
And as I lie on your sweet dusty floor
I try to clench my muscles to the core
To silence my heart and try not to snore.
But, no matter how hard I do my part
No monster alive can silence their heart.
And I didn't expect to find a kid
Who still believes like their parents once did.
So, just between the two of us, my dear,
We're up all night for me to list your fears.
I'm scared of you, lying above my bed.
You're trying not to move over my head.
But I have no choice but to keep haunting
Unless you ask me what I am wanting.
So, as long as we are both wide awake
Won't you stay? Talk to me? For your own sake.

Going Home Tired

I like to sneak out of the house at nighttime.
I turn the doorknob so slowly. It takes a long time.
I go to the woods behind my apartment.
Because, at nighttime, the trees start to blend together.
The sky disappears under the branches.
And in the dark, the trees sort of disappear.
And then, if you stay there long enough and listen to the sounds of the sticks under your feet and the tiny little hunters rustling around, then you start to disappear too.
I like to come into the woods at nighttime because, when I do, that is when I can start to disappear.
I can be completely gone.
And you know the silly question that grownups like to ask when they think they're being smarter than you:
If a tree falls in the woods and there's no one there to hear it, does it make a sound?
Well, I've been no one in the woods so I know the answer.
Yes.
And no.
There are no sounds.
Everything is sounds.
Because you can't see.
And you become all of everything.
I am that tree falling in the woods.
I am the tiny little hunters rustling around.
I am the twigs breaking under my feet.
And I fall when no one is there so that I can touch the ground.
So that I can feel the sweet embrace of my branches break into the soft warm soil.
Then, little animals hunting, the tree falling, the leaves crunching, the wind ... we all surround around each other.
So lovingly.
So simply.
We become each other.
Then the day comes.
And I go home.
Tired.

So Angry

My insurance premiums went up.
I don't even know exactly what that means.
But they said that the cost went up because I didn't get my promotion at work.
I don't even get that either.
Because nothing's changed.
But I guess the insurance company thinks that, since I didn't get my promotion, I'm more likely to get into an accident or something.
So they increase premiums.
Which makes me mad because, like I said, not getting a promotion means that nothing has changed.
And I have to pay for insurance because I want to take care of you.
If anything ever happened to you then nothing else would matter to me.
Anyway, what I'm trying to say is that there's not enough money.
We have to make some tough choices.
So, my dear, you father and I discussed it and it looks like you can't go to drumming lessons anymore.
I'm sorry.
But we need to put food on the table and I'm as angry as you are.
And maybe I didn't get my promotion because I'm so angry but it only makes me angrier.
Which means, I guess, I'm never getting a promotion.
What do you expect me to do?
Teach you to drum all by myself?
I want to.
I want to spend more time with you.
But I can't even afford to do that.
Because I didn't get that promotion I'm stuck at work all day and it makes me angry.
We can all just be angry.
And maybe that means none of us are going to go anywhere.
Angry with no promotion and angry with no drum lessons.
But at least we can be angry together.
We're going nowhere. But we're going nowhere together.
No matter how bad it gets.
We get to go through it like we're a family.
I'm sorry.

Your Teacher Misses You

Since you stopped coming to my drumming class now I've got this half-hour break between the other classes.

I teach one kid.

And then there's this empty time when I would usually teach you.

And then I teach another kid.

I can't really go anywhere because I have to teach the other two classes on either side yours.

What am I supposed to do during your lesson time when I have nothing to do?

I pick my nose.

Gross, I know.

But maybe if I keep picking it then I can cover the ground with boogers and it will be thick and soft like a big green carpet.

That wouldn't be so bad.

People like carpets.

But it would be boogers.

Which are kind of warm and dry and wet and funky.

And, sometimes, when you pull them out of your nose, they're full of feelings and things.

They make your eyes water.

You know what I'm talking about.

Maybe I'll pick and flick enough that the carpet in my studio will start to get things growing out of it.

Like plants.

Like trees.

Maybe I can use the time to pick a whole forest out of my nose.

Of course, it will take time to grow.

But I have time. Now that you're gone.

And then people will come to my forest.

And we can enjoy the quiet and the trees.

And we will know that this forest came from me.

My boogers.

And then, if my forest is beautiful enough, then maybe you'd come back.

Because enough time will have gone by and you'd be able to come back.

And then we can be together in my forest.

Where it is beautiful.

And we can drum on the trees.

Which will kind of be like drumming on me.

I'd like that.

I'm a Squirrel

I try to go to sleep on my little pile of nuts and seeds.
But then this kid keeps coming into the woods and crying and I don't know what to do about it.
Like, should I talk to them?
I mean, I'm not actually trying to be helpful or solve anyone's problems.
I just really need to go to sleep.
Like now.
It's very important.
Because it will be winter soon.
And I need my energy to run around as crazy as possible and collect as many nuts and seeds as I can.
So that I can get fat.
So that I don't freeze to death.
Can you imagine freezing to death?
It happened to my cousin Natalie.
She got eaten by a wolf before the snow melted.
To be fair, I think the wolf was trying not to freeze to death too.
But I hope it does.
Stupid wolf.
I guess that would mean that Natalie would still be frozen inside a wolf that is frozen.
Weird.
Hey!
Are you here to cry again?
Are you okay?
Want to come into my nest and cuddle?
Maybe that will help you feel better.
And then we can all go to sleep.
And that will help us get fat and stay warm and not freeze to death.
Sounds great.

Just a Tree

In the daytime I'm just a tree.
I'm not that tall and half my branches are dead because I can't get sap up my trunk
and into them.
I would be sad except, when your branches die, you stop feeling them.
And when you can't feel you can't be sad.
The reason I can't get sap up there is because of the termites.
They're my friends.
I give them wood and shade.
They give me tickles.
I love them because, even though there's probably a million of them and I'm sure
they each have a unique personality, I can't tell them apart.
They run through my body like the sweet veins that once brought sap up into my
juiciest leaves in the sky.
They have a pulse and life and it's nice to know that a pulse and life are inside me.
Because, at nighttime, I'm more than a tree.
That's when all the trees become like one forest and you can't tell us apart.
We can't even tell each other apart.
I understand the termites.
It was at nighttime when we really all were the same. All one being.
The termites ate so much of me that I feel down.
But it didn't hurt.
Remember I can't feel.
And it was nighttime.
My branches just broke into the soft warm soil.
The termites scattered and it was like I scattered.
Into every tree in every part of the forest.
I felt them then!
All those trees. I felt them.
I felt the little animals hunting.
I felt the branches, the sticks, break under your feet.
I can feel a lot of things.
I can feel you.
Why are you sad?

Listen

Us termites work so well by using rhythm.
We're like the wood's greatest percussionist.
We feel each other's amazing little music in our feet.
That way a million of us can be like one creature.
There's another creature that comes into the woods.
It's rhythms are different.
It doesn't belong here.
It comes at night.
But it's not an animal like an owl or a wart hog.
I think it's ... human!
I think it's scared.
I want to make it go away because it makes my forest scared.
We can feel each other.
That is what it is scared of.
I can tell because it's rhythm is broken.
It's connected to something that doesn't come into the forest.
That's where the other half of it's rhythm has gone.
Something it feels at nighttime.
Maybe it should talk to it.
Maybe I'll pull this tree down and tell it.
The human.
I'll pull this whole big tree down and say ...
Hey! Human!
Talk to your other half.
Talk to your monster.
That's how I manage to do so well.
I'm connected to millions of other termites.
And we listen.
We listen so well we pulled down a whole tree for you.
So talk to that monster.
And listen to it.

Monster #2

Lying on the dust that's behind my head
I kind of like living under your bed.
It's stinky and musty with not much space
Which is perfect to hide my monstrous face.
And, you may not believe me but it's true:
Even though I'm scared, I'm glad I picked you.
What do I want? Did you just ask me that?
It's hard to answer. I'm scared as a bat.
But, honestly, since now we are talking,
I kind of like the idea of drumming.
Listen to my heart while I'm sleeping.
I'll listen for the beat yours is keeping.
Then maybe we can match them when we're calm.
And maybe our whole bed can be a drum.
It might take a while for us to sync right.
But maybe that will help us sleep at night.
Because if your heart is drumming just like mine
We won't have to feel alone all the time.