

“Performance”

Approaching the door I know I’m already late. *Funny, being late used to fill me with a sick, giddy feeling like standing on the edge of a cliff but now nothing but a slow, weary sense of déjà-vu.* The door creaks when it opens but Teacher doesn’t even look up.

“Still wearing those lead boots I see.”

② *You mean “hear.”*

“Don’t suppose you brought a late slip?”

“Yes Miss.”

“And might I ask why are you late to class? Again.”

“No reason Miss.”

④ *Two performers doing the same routine.*

I take my seat at the back of the class, suppress the heat of mild irritation and irrational embarrassment rising up in my face.

④ *This isn’t our first performance after all and it probably won’t be the last... Another period delegated to the monotony of education.*

① *The Slackers mess around as usual. More studious types, the Nerds or the Desperates write down notes off the board diligently. I stare into space looking into nothing in particular. In the corner of the classroom nobody expects you to participate. It’s easier to listen this way.*

② *Teacher’s words float through the air (1) - A cumulonimbus of knowledge raining wisdom.*

But sometimes her voice doesn’t even reach my distant chair; it wavers, outnoised and rendered meaningless by the hum of social bees.

③ *Look on the bright side! At least they’re not talking to you*

True. Mindless banter from idiots is never appealing.

Hmmm... Your negative emotions regarding this particular social clique appear to be grounded in your own neurotic need to be accepted coupled with a self-knowledged social ineptitude and features of reactive depression.

② *Thank you Freud!*

Daydreaming gets me through the day, my own little sanctuary from school and home, somewhere quiet....

A slacker sniggers at one of Teacher’s comments. My eyes flicker open for a moment then a slow fuzziness, a pleasant drowsiness, honeylike, pours into me, turning animated chatter and Teacher’s authoritative tone into a low hum.... I jolt into back consciousness with a chair squealing behind me as a jock ducks for cover as his friends shower him with paper darts. I roll my eyes to the ceiling then notice for the first time that not only is it splattered with paper spitballs but it’s perforated with tiny little holes

③ *maybe 30 across 30 down 1,2,3,4,5,6,7, ... wait.... 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11.... Man, maybe it’s more than 30which would make it ummm.... Well, a lot anyway.... Try again 1,2,3....*

The “Hrrumph!” from the whiteboard is an abrupt reminder that sleeping in class, while not strictly prohibited is frowned upon by the faculty of the school.

“Mr Tamihana, would you care to explain why you are wasting your time and mine? Well??

Do you find this class boring?”

Maybe. “No Miss.”

I know what comes next. A few more generic lines and the teacher will back off and leave me to my own devices.

“Truth be told, you’re not planning on finishing this assignment, are you.”

“No Miss. No wait - I mean – What was that, Miss?” *Dammit, teachers never usually ask questions like that!*

Teacher’s glare could melt plastic. “After school, Mr Tamihana. No excuses.”

An empty classroom. Well, except for Teacher and me.

“Mr Tamihana. You’ve never been the most diligent student, but any one with eyes can see that something’s up.”

At least she didn’t say “What’s wrong,” a statement I profoundly dislike. Mainly because it’s almost never used sincerely.

“What’s wrong?”

④ A grimace almost crosses my face. **Time to play dumb.**

“Miss?”

She replies with one eyebrow raised, not fooled, “Don’t play dumb.”

Try another approach.

“Miss, I’m fine.” *Small grin and a slight crinkle to the eyes. Learning to smile authentically: probably the best spent thirty minutes of my life.*

④ A shadow, maybe doubt, crosses Teacher’s face. “You’re sure?”

“Absolutely.” **Hold the smile...**

Teacher nods whether in acceptance or resignation, I don’t really care. Home free at last. Whatever that means.