

The Shakespeare Solution

Ever since he could remember, Trent had had a crush on Camille. On the first day of fifth grade, she came to school wearing tiny purple ribbons on the tips of her braids. Some students had giggled; the impolite ones snickered and pointed. But secretly, Trent thought the ribbons were fine. They had hypnotized him all day, as he gazed at the back of her head.

Now, four years later, Camille still enchanted him. She didn't have the flash of a cheerleader or the popularity of a track star—but to him, she was perfect.

Trent admired her from a distance, watching her braids twist and twirl as she walked through the school hall. Sometimes he smiled at her; sometimes she smiled back. Once, he managed a "Hi," and nearly walked into a wall when she said, "Hello."

One evening, he had called her. "Hi talk Camille hello there please?" was what came out of his mouth before he quickly hung up. And he hadn't called since.

Today, walking to third period, Trent noticed a bright green Drama Club flyer posted on the bulletin board.

*The Drama Club's presentation of
ROMEO AND JULIET*

*has been rescheduled due to the unfortunate
transfer of our "Romeo" to Willow High.
Auditions are set for tomorrow to recast this role.
ALL STUDENTS WELCOME!*

Trent's breathing came in short, quick bursts. He knew that Camille was Juliet.

He closed his eyes and imagined himself on a stage, opposite Camille, telling her how pretty she was and how he'd like to take her to the movies, or to a basketball game, or something. But when he opened his eyes, he was alone in the hallway, late for class.

The rest of the afternoon was a blur. In science, Trent's mind was nowhere near the cells Ms. Raskawitz drew on the chalkboard. He tried to convince himself to audition: *It would force me to talk to her. But what if I make a fool of myself? I won't know unless I try. But I don't even act!*

By the end of the day, he had convinced himself to give it a shot. "What's the worst that could happen?" he asked himself sarcastically. "Only that I could embarrass myself in front of Camille." He sighed nervously, grabbed his literature book from his locker, and headed for home.

All that evening he practiced for the next day's audition. "But soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the East, and Camille—er, Juliet—is the sun!"

It was difficult for Trent to concentrate all through the next day. At lunch, he was too terrified to swallow.

"Hey, Trenton," Graham said with a mouth full of pizza, "not eating today?" Trent looked at his friend and then down at his basket of chicken fingers.

"Nah. Not hungry. You can have it." Trent pushed the basket toward Graham and left early for fifth period.

When the bell rang to end classes for the day, Trent somehow made his way from history to his locker and then to the drama room without actually remembering doing it. He found himself suddenly in front of Mr. Grisham, the drama coach.

"Are you here for the audition?"

"Yup."

"Please sign in and take a seat."

There were two other names above Trent's. He sat down and tapped his feet nervously. No one else signed in.

When Camille entered the room, he tried not to stare. She looked great. She looked as she always did—blue jeans and a colored top, and today she even had purple ribbons on the tips of her braids. She put her books on a chair and pulled a stapled set of papers from a yellow notebook. "I'm ready, Mr. Grisham."

Her words nearly made Trent melt. He didn't even notice the first two auditions—only that Camille's movements were simple and graceful, and that he hoped he'd remember his lines.

"Trenton Wilson." Mr. Grisham looked up and nodded to him. As Trent stood up and

walked toward Camille, she turned around to face him. Looking up from her script, she smiled at him.

"Oh," she said. "Hello."

"Hi," he said, and smiled back.

"OK, Camille. Same as last time," Mr. Grisham said. Camille began to read.

"My ears have yet not drunk a hundred words of thy tongue's uttering.... Art thou not Romeo, and a Montague?"

To Trent's surprise, the words sprang from his mouth immediately. "Neither, fair maid, if either thee dislike."

"How camest thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?" She looked up at him, smiling.

"With love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls," he began. Then, on impulse, he said, "to inquire if you might join me for a movie at yonder theater."

Camille giggled. Mr. Grisham looked up, confused, then ruffled through the script. Camille responded, "Oh yes, dear prince, at what hour shall we meet this eve?"

"On the eight o'clock hour, my fair maiden." Trent and Camille smiled at each other. He knew he wouldn't get the part. But somehow he knew he'd have a fantastic time that evening.