

NOTES

Causing both progressive weakness and loss of muscle mass, Muscular Dystrophy is a group of diseases where abnormal genes, or mutations, interfere with the production of proteins needed to build and form healthy muscle. In his poignant monologue, playwright Thomas Steele introduces us to Jonah Dowd, a stand-up comedian with Muscular Dystrophy. This selection should be performed by a male and be entered in Dramatic Interpretation. It is important for the performer to portray Jonah's humorous side; he is, after all, a stand-up comedian. While comedy plays an integral part of this monologue, it is equally important the actor also play the dramatic, emotional transitions, as Jonah confesses to the audience why this will be his last performance. This is an outstanding showcase for the male performer adept at playing humor, as well as drama!

Jonah Dowd, a stand-up comedian with Muscular Dystrophy, rolls onto the stage in a wheelchair.

**Note: Jonah speaks in run on sentences, just as most comedians do.*

JONAH

Thank you! Thank You! Thank you so much for coming out tonight. No really. What a huge audience here tonight. The whole front row is empty. *(Looks around the room)* I'm sure they're all in the bathroom at the moment. They'll be back soon, I'm sure. Hah. What a room to do stand-up in. You know, they say some of the best places for stand-up are the best places for a fire. *(Looks around the stage)* A dark place with tall curtains and exposed wire? We're cooking with fire now! What do you say? Let's tell some jokes. So, if you don't know me, my name is Jonah Dowd, and as you can see I suffer from muscular dystrophy. And while some people call me a stand-up—

(Looks down at his wheelchair)

I think that's a bad description. *(Beat)* It's okay. You can laugh! It's a joke. Listen, if I can make fun of myself—then you can laugh if you find me funny. Okay? And if I'm *not* funny, you still have to laugh because—let's face it—you're kind of a jerk if you don't laugh at the disabled guy trying to do stand-up. *(Beat)* I'm just kidding.

Are you guys ready to hear some jokes? I can't heeaaaarr you! *(Beat)* Seriously, I can't hear you. Loss of hearing is a symptom of muscular dystrophy. *(Beat)* Again, I'm kidding! If you believed that last joke, it just shows how little you people know about muscular dystrophy. Let's be honest here. When it's clear you have a disability, people believe you're impaired anyway. *(Beat)* Once, I pretended to be visually impaired just to get a dog—and it worked! To be completely honest though—I'll do just about anything to get close to a dog. What I love about dogs—is that they don't see me as disabled. They just see a moving chair with *hands*, but that's beside the point! And even though I really love dogs—sometimes they can be really intolerant. I was talking to my dog about race the other day, and he said something so offensive. He said, "I don't see color." *(Acknowledging the audience's groans, laughing)* Oh, boo to you, too! I know that joke's bad. But, hey, you're still laughing.

I know, that was horrible. And it's only getting worse from here, so you better strap yourself in. *(Beat)* Where was I? Okay, so, what's the deal with short buses? I, along with my school counselor named Stacii, who spells her name with two "I"s, recently took a short bus from my school to the hospital. *(Beat)* Stacii...S-T-A-C-I-I. I promise. I'll never forget who she is, because I'll always remember her as the woman I knew with two "eyes." *(Beat)* Anyway, when the short bus pulled up, I was truly offended. You see, I believe we need to be more politically correct towards buses. It is not a "short bus." It's regular size! Sure, it's a little *stubby*, but the height? The height is no different from a regular bus! Call it a "half-bus," if you like, but stop calling it a "short" bus. I mean, we've been bullying busses for years, and I, Jonah Dowd, am here to put an end to it once and for all!

So, I recently—*(Talks directly to one of the audience members)* Excuse Me Sir? Are you texting right now? Yeah, I'm talking to you. Get off your phone. *(Beat)* Well, I'm sorry if I am so boring that you can't even pay attention to my last perfor—

(Stops himself)

—My last performance tonight. So, do you want to leave and stop wasting my time? *(Beat)* Oh, now you want to stay? Fine. Two rules though. One? You have to laugh louder than everyone else. And two? Put your phone away. Now! *(Beat, back to the rest of the audience)*