

THE KINGDOM OF ACADEMIA

by Autumn Owens

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THE KINGDOM OF ACADEMIA

A One Act Ensemble Comedy

by Autumn Owens

SYNOPSIS: All is well in *The Kingdom of Academia* — a royal land ruled by the much-loved King and Queen and inhabited by loyal subjects like Art, Geography, History, and Philosophy. But when the Board of Education sends Math to become a new subject of Academia, the Kingdom's peace and unity are threatened as subjects riot against this new addition. The King and Queen, having failed their own math classes as young students, turn a deaf ear to Math's pleas to join the Kingdom. It's up to Math and his newfound friends, Science and the Princess, to convince Academia that Math isn't so boring and confusing after all. Just when it seems that Academia might have a change of heart, the notorious Board of Education arrives on the scene, offering to take Math back. Will the King and Queen seize the opportunity to send Math home, or can Math persuade the Kingdom that he counts after all?

DURATION: 30 minutes.

TIME: Modern day.

SETTING: Kingdom of Academia castle and subject quarters.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 females, 1 male, 14 either; 0-20 extras)

THE ROYALS OF ACADEMIA:

QUEEN (f) The kind ruler of Academia. *(40 lines)*
 KING (m) The stately ruler of Academia. *(49 lines)*
 PRINCESS (f) A reluctant, sassy royal. *(54 lines)*
 MESSENGER (m/f) A royal messenger. *(10 lines)*
 ROYAL STORYTELLER (m/f) .A royal narrator. *(10 lines)*

THE SUBJECTS OF ACADEMIA:

LITERATURE (m/f) Always quoting an author. *(15 lines)*
 PHILOSOPHY (m/f) Loves the great thinkers. *(9 lines)*
 THEATRE (m/f) Melodramatic. *(14 lines)*
 ART (m/f) Hangs around with Philosophy. *(12 lines)*
 SCIENCE (m/f) Rational and levelheaded. *(55 lines)*

HISTORY (m/f)	Passionate about the past. <i>(10 lines)</i>
MATH (m/f)	Sorely misunderstood. <i>(51 lines)</i>
P.E. (m/f)	Strongly opinionated. <i>(14 lines)</i>
GEOGRAPHY (m/f)	Always knows where to go. <i>(10 lines)</i>
MUSIC (m/f)	Hangs around with the artsy subjects. <i>(3 lines)</i>
DANCE (m/f)	Likes to move and stretch. <i>(2 lines)</i>
EXTRA SUBJECTS (m/f)	Optional; could include Psychology, Home Economics, etc. <i>(Non-Speaking)</i>
ALANA/ALAN FISHER (m/f)	From the Board of Education. <i>(9 lines)</i>

CASTING NOTES: With the exceptions of the Queen, King, and Princess, all roles are gender-neutral. Some gender-neutral roles may be referred to with gender-specific pronouns; these can be changed as needed.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

SCENE 1: Academia Castle
 Scene 2: Subject Quarters
 Scene 3: Academia Castle
 Scene 4: Subject Quarters
 Scene 5: Subject Quarters

SET/LOCATION NOTES

For larger stages, the Castle scenes may take place on stage right and the Subject Quarters can be set up on stage left. For smaller auditoriums, the Castle scenes can be played on a strip of blank stage downstage of the Subject Quarters, which can be set up upstage. The Subject Quarters should feel like a “hang-out spot” for the Subjects, with places to sit and room for the characters to socialize. There should be at least one set of table and chairs for the chess scene with Theatre and Literature; more tables and chairs or benches are ideal.

COSTUME SUGGESTIONS

The Subjects could be dressed in t-shirts with their names printed or drawn on the front or back—think school or university “team spirit” shirts. Alternatively, the Subjects could be dressed respective to their disciplines—Art is dressed in a palette of colors, Literature has a bowler's cap and a suit, etc. Additional subject-specific props may be added as desired (Art has a paintbrush tucked behind an ear, Music carries some sheet music, etc.).

The Royal Family, the Messenger, and the Royal Storyteller should be dressed to stand out from the Subjects. Alana Fisher should wear nice street clothes or a business outfit.

PROPS

- large storybook (Royal Storyteller)
- bouquet of roses (Literature)
- chess set (Theatre/Literature)
- clipboard and pencil (Princess)
- easel and writing utensil (Math)
- whistle (P.E.)
- book (History)
- tiara (Princess)

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

It can be easy for actors playing subjects (*History, Art, etc.*) to get lost in the mix of the ensemble. Giving each subject a character action or prop helps them stand out from the crowd and adds some visual interest to group scenes in the Subject Quarters. Dance and P.E. might stretch together, History may be walking around showing the others pages from his book.

DEDICATION

For my sister Eden, my favorite Geography. For Mom and Dad, who always encourage me to pursue my dreams. With special thanks to Mary Beth Snider and Williams County Community Theatre.

SCENE 1
ACADEMIA CASTLE

AT START: *The lights rise as ROYAL STORYTELLER enters downstage right carrying a large storybook. In the background, there is a façade of a castle—this could be a painting, backdrop, cutout, etc.*

ROYAL STORYTELLER: *(Opening a large storybook.)* Once upon a time, there was a kingdom called Academia. Academia was ruled by a kind Queen, a stately King, and a reluctant Princess.

QUEEN, KING, and PRINCESS enter stage right and stand in front of the castle.

ROYAL STORYTELLER: The royal family had many loyal subjects, such as History, Art, and Science.

ALL SUBJECTS (except MATH) enter stage left and stand on either side of the stage.

KING: *(Stepping forward.)* Good day, loyal subjects!

QUEEN: *(Waving and stepping forward.)* Good day, History! Hello, Art! Hello, Science!

ROYAL STORYTELLER: The loyal subjects loved their rulers very much.

LITERATURE: *(Stepping forward and bowing or curtsying deeply.)* Your Highnesses.

QUEEN: Good day, Literature.

LITERATURE: As a token of my never-ending gratitude to the royal family, I picked these roses for you. *(Hands the family a bouquet of roses.)* As Shakespeare once said, “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.”

PRINCESS: *(Arms crossed.)* Um, what is that supposed to mean?

LITERATURE: You mean you've never heard that before?

PRINCESS: No, Shakespeare is boring.

THEATRE: *(Stepping forward.)* Shakespeare is what?!

HISTORY: *(Pulling THEATRE back.)* Don't be so dramatic, Theatre.

THEATRE obliges begrudgingly.

ROYAL STORYTELLER: The subjects of Academia were happy, and lived in peace for many long years.

PHILOSOPHY: *(To HISTORY.)* Hey—that reminds of a saying by Socrates.

LITERATURE: *(Elbows PHILOSOPHY; in a loud whisper.)* Philosophy—knock it off!

ROYAL STORYTELLER: Until one fateful day, when a brand new subject came to town... *(Exits stage right.)*

KING: Subjects of Academia: It is our great pleasure to tell you that today, we will be welcoming a new subject into our midst.

QUEEN: We expect everyone to be kind toward the newcomer. Remember how nervous you felt when you were first introduced into Academia.

MESSENGER: *(Enters rushing in stage left.)* Your Highnesses—he's here.

KING: Ah, perfect timing. Bring him in.

MESSENGER exits stage left.

QUEEN: Without further ado, we'd like to introduce you to...

MESSENGER and MATH enter stage left.

QUEEN: ...Math?!

MATH waves as ALL OTHER SUBJECTS gasp loudly. MATH is taken aback. The next lines are shouted out in quick succession, and any SUBJECTS who are not speaking are whispering angrily amongst themselves, pointing accusing fingers at MATH.

P.E.: This is an outrage!

ALL SUBJECTS: *(Except MATH.)* Yeah!

HISTORY: *(Frantically flipping through his book.)* There is no historical record of Math in the Kingdom!

ART: What has Academia come to?

THEATRE: This is more ridiculous than Christine falling in love with the Phantom!

GEOGRAPHY: My name may be Geography, but I'm not giving him the lay of the land!

ALL SUBJECTS: (*Except MATH.*) Yeah! Go home! (*Etc., ad-libbing as the QUEEN begins speaking.*)

QUEEN: Please, everyone, calm down, calm down! I'm sure it's just an honest mistake! We'll get this all sorted out and bring the rightful new subject as soon as we can.

ALL SUBJECTS except MATH, still chattering, exit the stage. As they are leaving, the ROYAL FAMILY, quite embarrassed, rushes over to the MESSENGER.

KING: You brought us Math?

MESSENGER: I'm sorry, Your Highness—this is what the Board of Education sent us.

KING: But we didn't want Math!

PRINCESS: Yeah, Math is boring. Even more boring than Shakespeare. (*Pauses, considering this.*) And that's saying something.

MATH: I can hear you guys, you know! I'm standing right here.

KING: I want a message sent to the Board of Education immediately. I demand to know why they sent us this abomination!

MESSENGER: (*Bowing.*) Yes, Your Highness. (*Exits, running off stage left.*)

MATH: (*To KING; upset.*) I'm not an abomination.

QUEEN: (*To MATH; motherly.*) I'm sorry, dear. We don't mean to insult you. We think there was a mix-up over at the Board of Education, that's all. We'll get you returned to the correct kingdom in no time.

MATH: But Academia is where I belong.

PRINCESS: This is one addition that needs to be subtracted.

KING: (*Ignoring MATH.*) I suppose we'll have to find a place for him to sleep tonight.

PRINCESS: Wait—he's going to sleep here? In the kingdom? Why don't we send him back now? Geography can show him the way.

KING: You know how slow the Board of Education is.

PRINCESS: *(Groans; crosses arms.)* Whatever. Just as long as he doesn't sleep in the castle. *(Exits stage right.)*

QUEEN: *(To KING.)* I think there are still a couple of rooms left down in the Subject Quarters.

KING: Perfect. *(Silence.)* Well, what are you waiting for? You heard the woman. Off to the Subject Quarters! *(Starts pushing MATH off stage left.)*

MATH: But wait—

KING: Off you go!

MATH: I don't even know how to get there—

QUEEN: *(Waving and smiling kindly.)* Goodbye now!

KING succeeds in pushing MATH off stage, MATH exits stage left. KING links arms with QUEEN and they exit stage right.

SCENE 2

SUBJECT QUARTERS

AT START: ROYAL STORYTELLER enters downstage right with the open storybook. As he speaks, ALL SUBJECTS (except MATH) enter and assemble onstage. They are grouped up, talking amongst themselves. LITERATURE and THEATRE have a chess set and begin playing. Other SUBJECTS may be playing games. DANCE and P.E. might be stretching together. ALL SUBJECTS may come and go during the scene.

ROYAL STORYTELLER: That night, while the King, Queen, and Princess were snug in their beds, Math made his way down dark, winding roads and alleyways, trying to find the Subject Quarters. After a long walk, he finally heard the sound of music coming from a brightly-lit abode down in the village. He followed the noise and the lights all the way to a small building, and opened the door...

ROYAL STORYTELLER leaves on this mysterious note; as he flourishes off stage right, MATH simultaneously walks on stage left. SFX: jig or swing music underneath the dialogue.

MATH: *(Loudly.)* Hi, everybody. *(Nobody hears him.)*

LITERATURE: *(Moving a chess piece; to THEATRE.)* Checkmate. I win! Ha-ha!

THEATRE: *(Annoyed.)* C'mon! That's the third time in a row!

MATH walks over to LITERATURE and THEATRE.

MATH: Hi, guys. Are you playing chess?

LITERATURE: *(Ignoring his question.)* Hey, how'd you find us?

MATH: I just followed the sound of music.

MATH points up to indicate the music playing overhead. SFX: At this point, the jig or swing music can begin to fade out.

THEATRE: *(Standing.)* The *Sound of Music*? I LOVE that show! *(Singing.)* THE HILLSSSS ARE ALIVE...

LITERATURE: Shh! Sit down, Theatre!

THEATRE: *(To MATH.)* So, what's your favorite song? My Favorite Things? Edelweiss?

MATH: Wha—? No, I don't... I'm not into musicals.

THEATRE: Not into musicals?! You, sir, need to exit stage right! *(Points to stage right.)*

LITERATURE: *(To MATH.)* Look, now she's making a scene! *(Sighs.)* Let's go, Theatre.

LITERATURE and THEATRE exit stage left as THEATRE gives MATH stink eyes.

MATH: *(Confused. Moves on to PHILOSOPHY, ART, and SCIENCE.)* Hey, guys.

They ignore MATH.

ART: *(To PHILOSOPHY.)* I just don't think I agree with you, Philosophy.

PHILOSOPHY: *(To ART.)* How can you not agree? I mean, have you seen his self-portraits? He was clearly making a statement about the nature of the human condition.

MATH: (*Pointedly.*) Hello!

They ignore MATH.

ART: (*To PHILOSOPHY.*) The problem with your theory is that you're painting with too broad a brush.

SCIENCE: (*To ART.*) What do you mean? I thought the brushstrokes in that painting looked quite small.

PHILOSOPHY: We're not talking about literal brushstrokes, Science.

SCIENCE: But Art just said—

ART: I was speaking metaphorically.

SCIENCE: Why do paintings have to have metaphors, anyway? Can't a painting just be a painting?

PHILOSOPHY and ART look at each other and burst into hysterical laughter. SCIENCE shakes his head and stands up.

SCIENCE: I don't get you guys. (*Starts to cross the stage.*)

MATH: (*Sees an opportunity and runs after SCIENCE. Indicates PHILOSOPHY and ART, who are still chatting quietly.*) Humanities, right? (*Scoffs.*) I never did understand them.

SCIENCE: (*Surprised to see MATH.*) Yeah, me neither.

MATH: So, uh... what do you guys do for fun around here?

SCIENCE: (*Shrugs.*) This, mostly. People just hang around and talk during the summer.

MATH: That's it?

SCIENCE: It's a lot more exciting during the school year, when all the students come to the kingdom.

MATH: Oh, so you guys teach the students, then.

SCIENCE: (*Laughs.*) We don't teach the students. The teachers teach the students.

MATH: If you guys don't teach, then what do you do?

SCIENCE: We're the subjects. The teachers explain who we are, what we do, and how we're useful in the real world.

MATH: (*Nods; absorbing this information.*) Okay. I think I get it. But I have another question for you. (*Sits down at the table.*)

SCIENCE: (*Sitting across from MATH.*) What's that?

MATH: Why don't they want me as a subject?

SCIENCE is quiet. After a pause, MATH continues.

MATH: I mean, math is an important part of life. People use me every day, whether they know it or not.

SCIENCE: Yeah, that's true....

MATH: (*Urging SCIENCE on.*) But...?

SCIENCE: But... well, nobody likes you.

MATH: (*Stunned.*) What?

SCIENCE: (*Louder.*) I said, nobody likes—

MATH: I heard you, I heard you! But... why doesn't anyone like me?

SCIENCE: I think it's because nobody understands you.

MATH: What do you mean? With the right teacher, anybody can understand me.

SCIENCE: I mean, yeah, but still... you can be kind of complicated.

MATH: All the more reason to study me, then! And anyway, science can be a lot more complicated than math.

SCIENCE: Fair point. (*Looks MATH over.*) Come to think of it, there's a lot of mathematics in science. I think Academia needs a subject like you around. I gotta go to the lab, but if there's anything I can help you with, let me know, okay? (*Starts to exit stage right.*)

MATH: Hey!

SCIENCE turns back around.

MATH: Maybe you could put in a good word for me with the King and Queen?

SCIENCE: Sure thing. Bye, Math.

SCIENCE waves and exits stage right. MATH exits stage left.

SCENE 3
ACADEMIA CASTLE

AT START: *KING, QUEEN, and PRINCESS are talking quietly to the MESSENGER. ROYAL STORYTELLER enters downstage right with the open storybook.*

ROYAL STORYTELLER: Back at the castle, the King and Queen were exchanging some heated words with the Messenger. *(Exits stage right.)*

MESSENGER: Your Highness, they're not going to accept him. They're just going to return him to the Kingdom.

KING: Just try to take him back! That's all we ask.

MESSENGER: I think we should wait. The Board of Education said they were going to send a representative over shortly.

KING: *(Scoffing.)* "Shortly." Riiiiight.

MESSENGER: Like I said, Your Highness, if I try to take Math over now, they'll just send him back.

QUEEN: *(To KING.)* It wouldn't hurt to keep him for a little while longer. School doesn't start until next month.

SCIENCE quietly enters stage right as KING speaks.

KING: Alright, fine. But if that scoundrel isn't out of the kingdom by the first day of school, the Board of Education will have me to contend with!

KING storms out, exiting stage left with the QUEEN exiting, chasing after him. MESSENGER exits, following them out. SCIENCE starts after the KING and QUEEN, brushing past the PRINCESS in the process.

SCIENCE: Wait! Stop!

PRINCESS: *(Smoothing out her dress; irritated.)* Watch where you're going, will ya?!

SCIENCE: *(Turning around.)* Oh. Sorry. I didn't see you there.

PRINCESS: Clearly.

SCIENCE: I wanted to talk to your parents.

PRINCESS: Well, now's not the time. Dad's really upset. Come back later.

PRINCESS begins to straighten her tiara, etc. SCIENCE starts to exit stage right, stops, and thinks better of it.

SCIENCE: You know what, maybe they'd take it better from you anyway.

PRINCESS: *(Stopping her primping.)* Take what better from me?

SCIENCE: *(Returning to PRINCESS.)* Well, the thing is, I was talking to Math last night, and he's actually pretty cool. I think Academia could really use a subject like him.

PRINCESS: But he's so boring. What student will want to learn about math?

SCIENCE: He's not that boring once you get to know him a little. Besides, even if you don't want to learn about math, you still need to know it.

PRINCESS: But why? It's useless!

SCIENCE: Okay, then riddle me this, Princess: I need five diamonds to make a tiara, but I only have three. How many more diamonds do I need?

PRINCESS is stumped. We see her calculating, "moving" numbers in front of her face and counting on her fingers.

PRINCESS: Okay, I've got it. *(A proud pause.)* Seventeen.

SCIENCE: Wow. Your Bunsen burner flame doesn't go very high, does it?

PRINCESS: What does that mean? Was I right?

SCIENCE: No! This is why we need Math in our kingdom! Otherwise, people—like you—won't know how to count diamonds. And you know what that means...

PRINCESS: No more tiaras?

SCIENCE nods. PRINCESS gasps.

PRINCESS: You're right. We do need Math in our kingdom!

SCIENCE: Finally, you understand!

PRINCESS: Let's work together. I'll try to change my parents' mind, and you can rally the other subjects.

SCIENCE: Sounds like a plan.

PRINCESS: I don't know how much time we have, though. If the Board of Education comes to pick up Math, it's all over.

SCIENCE: The Board of Education? (*Scoffs.*) Oh, we'll have plenty of time.

PRINCESS exits stage left and SCIENCE exits stage right.

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