

GOOD FAITH by Karen Hartman

Unpublished

*Top of show. **Writer** appears. She is speedy, aims for charming.*

WRITER

My son does not test well.

My son is brilliant, he's really very special. At ten months he spoke and he had a way with verbs. Let me tell you a story: we were staying in a cabin one summer and we had some fruit, some dried fruit, and I called it dehydrated. And later that day I was soaking beans for dinner – yeah I soaked beans on vacation, I'm frugal – and my son said – he's three – are the beans *hydrating*?

He *intuited* our lexicon! To drop the “de” and create a new word “hydrate” meaning the opposite of dehydrate, to soak and plump?

His father and I stood agape with joy. On the one hand he could be a savant, a brilliant accident, on the other hand it could be us! We speak with him a *lot*. I was mostly home with him the first three years. Three years is pretty long. It was a long time. It was my wish and my value system and also I was earning so poorly it seemed impossible to do otherwise. Though some do. We all have options, we have choices, and maybe I blew mine. All of them. Anyhoo, my remarkable, special, objectively exceptional child does not test well.

Mind you, no one suggested an attention deficit! He is a preternaturally attentive boy. We saw *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* in a single day at Stratford-Upon-Avon (poor planning) and he was the only one who stayed awake. We called it Death by Shakespeare. We are a humorous family.

(Grand)

Theater helps us connect!

So, I get a call a few years ago from a, like renowned institution, which I attended “in the day” and to which I still owe money. A positive call, but not like “how can our resources further your vision,” more like, “would you care to dramatize a multi-year racially charged Supreme Court Case involving a bunch of firefighters in 2003? We're considering a couple people.”

First I think: I will fail; this subject lies in that evil zone where Boring meets Offensive. Then I think, Imposter Syndrome is a tool of the patriarchy. So I say, "Yes." They send me some articles and I say, "My former housemate wrote those articles. She can hook me up."

My former housemate is highly successful. She aced her choices.

I get the gig, and pay off my student loan. Like a company store! No not like that. Sorry.

(Grand)

I recall for you the words of a Burmese poem I don't quite recall: The heart of another is the one place we can never go.

But that's the only thing I want. I want to go to the heart of another. I want to guide you to the heart of another.

My sociologist friend, LaShawnDa, points out that fieldwork starts with kinship and affinity. Your people respond first. They connect you. And *those* people connect you, until, in theory, you transcend kinship and affinity. So my housemate hook turns out to be methodologically legit.

It is hard to transcend kinship and affinity. Especially to think down the power chain. Like if you're a man to think about a woman's experience, or if you're white to think about a black person's experience. And I'm not going to claim, "Oh I'm white, race has nothing to do with me, I'm neutral," because obviously *I read the internet!*

So I used to think it was a lot of glittered horseshit to give children special accommodations to take tests that other children take under standard accommodations. Yet my son, who read all seven *Harry Potter* books in the first grade, now in fifth grade still writes Harry with one R. How is that fucking possible?

Well, whereas previously I believed we exist on a spectrum from Genius to Dumbass, it turns out there are Learning Differences. So naturally I hire tutors and request accommodations. When a skewed system benefits us, we think it's fair, and when our son can't spell we believe in learning differences.

Please excuse my domestic example which I hope will open you to the nationally significant legal battle we are here to reckon with tonight.

You'll meet three men: Frank, Mike, and Tyrone.

In 2003 they sat in the same room and took the same test, a promotional exam to become Lieutenants in the New Haven Fire Department.

You'll like them. They're men. They're Fire Men. Well, Mike is no longer a fireman; which is interesting. And the one woman deeply connected to this case is so brilliant. Her politics are... but she's a badass bitch.

Don't call her that. She was kind to me.

They all were.

--

You are welcome to perform this monologue for free!

You may CUT but you may not CHANGE the words. Please introduce the monologue with title of play and author's name (this is a monologue from Leah's Train by Karen Hartman).

Feel free to send a video link to yourself performing the monologue through the Contact page, and let me know if I may share! Thanks and be well, KH

www.karenhartman.org