

## Exercise:

One of our recurring conversations was around how to write dialogue that gives the information that we wanted the audience to know without being bogged down with exposition. I wanted our writers to remember that language isn't the only tool that we have when building the world. Silence can be just as enlightening. The exercise below practices a few skills: being precise with dialogue and editing judiciously to enhance conflict. It's from the Royal Court website (director Stef Smith), which is an excellent resource. We had lots of fun reading through the various versions to see what was gained when we took language away.

### 20-line Playverse - Full version Written by Maheney Macfoy

JESS: Hi, I –

HARRIS: Where is your ticket?

JESS: I've got it here on my phone.

*She hands him her phone*

HARRIS: Miss, this is the email acknowledging your ticket receipt. I cannot let you in unless I see a ticket.

JESS: The ticket's at the bottom of the email, if you just scroll -

HARRIS: It is not my responsibility to scroll for you

*He hands back her phone. She hurriedly scrolls and shows him her phone.*

JESS: There you go. Look I'm running a bit late I don't want to miss any of it.

HARRIS: Just a moment whilst I scan your ticket.

JESS: Please hurry.

*Harris' machine fails to scan the ticket*

HARRIS: The machine is not currently recognising it, excuse me whilst I replace the batteries

JESS: Sure fine.

*Harris' machine still fails to scan the ticket*

HARRIS: The batteries must be old, excuse me whilst I replace the machine.

JESS: Can you do this quickly please; I can hear they've already started -

HARRIS: Your patience is needed; I'm required to follow a set of standard procedures in order to guarantee your entry.

JESS: Right, I'm sorry, *please* continue.

*Harris leaves to get a new machine then returns*

HARRIS: Thank you for your patience, as this is an under 30s ticket I am required to ask for ID.

JESS: Are you joking, I'm still in my school uniform?

HARRIS: Standard procedures miss. Thank you, All set.

*Harris scans the ticket*

My apologies miss, you're 10 minutes late and have therefore missed your allotted ticket collection time.

JESS: Are you kidding me?

*Jess leaves and Harris turns to the next people in the queue*

HARRIS: Thank you, enjoy the event.

**End of Play**

## **20-Line Playverse - 5 Line version**

**SILENCE**

HARRIS: Where is your ticket?

**SILENCE**

*She hands him her phone.*

**SILENCE**

JESS: The ticket's at the bottom of the email, if you just scroll -

**SILENCE**

*Harris hands back her phone.*

*She hurriedly scrolls and shows him her phone.*

JESS: There you go. Look I'm running a bit late I don't want to miss any of it -

**SILENCE**

*Harris tries to scan the ticket.*

**SILENCE**

*Harris' machine fails to scan the ticket.*

**SILENCE**

**SILENCE**

*Harris' machine still fails to scan the ticket.*

**SILENCE**

**SILENCE**

**SILENCE**

**SILENCE**

*Harris leaves to get a new machine then returns.*

HARRIS: Thank you for your patience, as this is an under 30s ticket I am required to ask for ID.

**SILENCE**

*Jess hands over ID.*

HARRIS: Standard procedures miss. Thank you, All set.

*Harris scans the ticket*

My apologies miss, you're 10 minutes late and have therefore missed your allotted ticket collection time.

**SILENCE**

*Jess then leaves as Harris turns to the next people in the queue.*

**SILENCE**

**End of Play**

**20-line Playverse - Full version**  
**Written by Isabella Lopez**

*We are in a museum on a tour.*

Tour guide: Madame may I ask that you don't touch that please. These are all very rare and precious items.

Samantha: What do you mean? I paid for this tour, and I paid a very generous price so I think I have the right to just touch this vase. It's not like I'm going to make it fall.

Tour guide: Yes, I understand Madame but unfortunately on these tours you cannot touch the artifacts we show as they are all very delicate.

Samantha: Well look, I'm touching it and nothing is happening.

Tour guide: Please stop Madame that vase is more than 100 years old.

Samantha: Oh my gosh why are you being so dramatic? It's just a little vase.

Tour guide (*having a panic attack*): oh my gosh I'm going to get fired, it's happening, I can see it happening. It's going to break and my life will be over. All these years I have committed to the job gone, vanished forever!

Samantha: Jeez fine, calm down I'll leave it just so you don't end up ripping all your hair out.

Tour guide: Thank you. Now moving on with the tour this next item is....

*A loud crash - the vase has fallen*

Samantha: Umm, I might have accidentally broken the vase.

Tour guide (*panicking*): Oh my gosh, how did you do this? How could you do this? You have brought my life to an end. GET OUT NOW!

Samantha: I was just putting my handbag on, and I hit the vase with my elbow as I was putting it on, so it's not really my fault.

Tour guide: it's not your fault? It's not your fault! Are you ffff- kidding me. Because of your precious elbow, a 100 year old vase is now broken and history is ruined forever.

Samantha: Why are you being so dramatic?

Tour guide: Why am I being so dramatic, she asks. (*laughs*) maybe just maybe because you have broken the most precious artifact in this whole tour and I'm going to lose my ffff- job!

Samantha: Well, I'm sorry it was an accident.

Tour guide: You know what. Leave!

Samantha: No I deserve to see the rest of the tour, remember I *paid* for it. Besides I was hoping that there would be some sort of restaurant or something and the end of this because I am starving.

Tour guide: are you being serious right now. Well you know what then I'll just leave this broken vase here on the floor and carry on with the tour because it would be so unfair to just take your money for an unfinished tour and then maybe I can even buy you some lunch.

Samantha: Well, that sounds perfect seeing as you have already wasted so much of my time.

### **End of Play - Full Version**

### **20-line Playverse - 5 Line version**

*We are in a museum on a tour.*

Tour guide: Madame may I ask that you don't touch that please. These are all very rare and precious items.

Samantha: Well look, I'm touching it and nothing is happening.

*A loud crash - the vase has fallen*

Tour guide: You know what. Leave!

Samantha: No I deserve to see the rest of the tour, remember I *paid* for it. Besides I was hoping that there would be some sort of restaurant or something and the end of this because I am starving.

Tour guide: Are you being serious right now? Well, you know what, then I'll just leave this broken vase here on the floor and carry on with the tour because it would be so unfair to just take your money for an unfinished tour and then maybe I can even buy you some lunch.

### **End of Play - 5 line version**