

## *Communication Acts*

**Y**ou are the only one in the room who knows what you know, but the way you express yourself makes you appear to lack expertise. If engaged in an argument with another less-qualified person. You would lose. This is why we took the metaphor of contest out of the example, why we let your conflict be an opportunity to lie in bed with your former adversary. You both envision how to stretch out your bodies. Making any sound will eliminate all intimacy you have achieved. As your adversary turns to share how much less certain she has been feeling since in conversation, you whimper. Despite moments of comfort. Your fear she will forget you is not absurd; rather your instincts remain quite accurate. Already she plots her exit, turns toward the door. Once she leaves, you write down all the places she will go.

You wonder if you keep missing the point of this exercise because you have grown angrier with us than you expected to be. You suspect we feel displeased with you, too. That is no longer true. We asked you to draw yourself at the center of the room, but when you pick up the pencil you can't figure out where the wall starts. Does it help if we tell you everything is composed of shapes, not lines? Each silhouette attached to another, no space between them.

You state concerns about our approach to relationship, our claims about pursuing discipline. The words do not come to you quickly enough, or the words you spit out reflect your diminishing ability to think on the spot. You hope critique reestablishes your authority in fashion and believe the emphatic way you point out failures in our approach counts for humor. You note antecedents to your main points, arguments by philosophers read by anyone but us. You reveal your disappointment like a parental authority, inspiring us to inaction. A woman across the room has recently been released from love. Did you watch her breath come back into her? Show us how she moves as she steals your best work. Your unpublished book.

Now you can see the illustrations, all pictures of cities you have been to, but they do not reveal where you set down. Every landmark promotes an atmosphere of establishment, of having been named a destination. You

refuse to study these images, so you miss a critical detail. A shadow on a bridge suggests the allegory of flight. Using your knack for pithy counterpoint, indicate how you failed to leap from this point of departure.

Decide why you need to be at the center of all dialogues not about you. This one. Now take your turn to be bright; show us you can tell the story of everyone else. Start by listing the names of the people who did not arrive. Explain the ways they rely on each other. Your argument should demonstrate an appreciation of symbols associated with escape.

You suffer from writer's block, so you pick up a book about a hero in order to emulate its style. This will be your key to infamy as you have been told options to achieve fame require causing pain. You need to be known because there is a lot you have overcome. To be here. No one understands what you went through because you do not talk about it at parties. No matter how many times they killed you off. Whenever you try to explain which moment was hardest for you, your best friend says there is no way your luck could have been that bad. But sometimes trees make up a forest.

Read what you have put down out loud to us. Focus on intonation and enunciation while you speak, and lean in so we can witness your eagerness to share. Do not fall forward. Most important is how we recognize you, not if we "get" what you are going for. Your argument should introduce us to history. Without it, you enter the room bookless. Do you really want to be that one? Even though intuition. Ellipses mark the vanishing point. From here we will annotate your missteps in tracing the origins of impulse. Or we will do what we want to do.

Despite negotiating in good faith. A discrepancy exists between what you wanted and what you can get from the law. You haven't signed the papers, but you keep losing money every day. Part of you wants to call the whole deal off in a show of independence that would make no difference to anyone but your mother, who suffers from more frequent bursts of righteousness. Such a display of self-possession would invite a better outcome into your future. Calling the win too early. You gave away all leverage you had.

Make it clear if your allegiance rests on the side of discipline—the way love should be done—or on the side of urgency—what love does to us most of the time. Consider what weaknesses you have carried to the

most remote outpost. To prove you belong here with anyone. Too many people think of North as a direction, but we invented the place. Do not disclose which mountain stands between the airport and the city. This is where your audience will find you, weathered from astonishment.

You decide to simplify the discussion, shift our disdain to topics that do not matter to you. By letting go of argument. You win the respect of police officers who vow to protect you no matter what crime you commit. Their dedication does not reflect a desire to keep you from harm, but rather their enjoyment in driving past your house, sirens blaring. Each night you write down their license plate numbers, report their showy interference to the precinct.

When you try to edit an argument you constructed, you go limp and fall on the floor. But pratfalls, despite being difficult to execute, are not noted as humor by this crowd. Try not to rob us of the pleasure of judgment. Another approach to gaining our favor is to show us how flawed you are. Present your body and face. As symptoms of evolution. Do you experience shame or disappointment first? This is your opening line.