

Harmony Tree International Speech Festival (HTISF)
2025-2026 Set Pieces for Asia Division

FINAL

Dramatic Duologue
Born in 2012-2013

Choice A
Time Limit:
4 minutes

Stowaways

By Jacqueline Emery

(The year is 1912. This scene takes place in the hold of an ocean liner. It's crowded with boxes, trunks and cases. Emma and Lily have both decided to stowaway on the ship and have crept in separately to hide. Neither knows that the other girl is there. Both want to escape and begin a new life on their own.)

- EMMA:** *(Slowly climbing out from behind a pile of trunks and packing cases.)* What an amazing place! This is so vast. If I stand very still I can almost feel the sea.
(The ship lurches a little and Emma nearly loses her balance)
Whoops! We must have got into the open water by now. America, here we come!
Even if they find me now, it's too late to send me back. I could always work my passage. I could... *(A loud noise interrupts her)*
- LILY:** *(From inside one of the large trunks)* Oooooooooooooowwww!!
- EMMA:** What was that? *(Going back into hiding)*
There's someone else in here. I'm not alone! Who is it? What shall I do?
- LILY:** *(Pushing up the lid of the trunk and sitting upright.)* Ooh - that's better. I had cramp. It's really painful. It was also quite spooky with the lid shut! Like being inside a coffin. Poor Old 'Magic Bones.'. When he comes to do his act, he'll find that half his costumes are no longer in his trunk!! Shame I had to throw them out. There just wasn't enough room for me. *(Climbing carefully out of the trunk)*
Hello, by the way. I know you're there. *(Waiting for a reply)* Don't be scared. You can show yourself to me.
- EMMA:** *(Slowing emerging from her hiding place)* Hello.
- LILY:** So you're a stowaway too? *(Going towards Emma and helping her up)* I'm Lily.
- EMMA:** Emma... Emma Browning. I'm going to start a new life in America.
- LILY:** Just like me! This is an amazing ship. So fashionable. They even say it can't sink.
- EMMA:** It's enormous. There are so many decks. Do you think we can remain hidden?
- LILY:** We'll have to try and steal food... but, there are two of us now, so that will be easier. One of us can keep watch, or distract people.
- EMMA:** While the other one takes the food!
- LILY:** There must be so much waste on a ship like this. Rich people getting greedy!

EMMA: I thought trays with led-over food would be put in the corridors outside the first class staterooms. They do that in hotels. My father told me.

LILY: This is a ship, silly! The trays would roll all over the place. Have you travelled?

EMMA: *(Sitting on a trunk)* No. I lived in a small village with my father. He was the vicar. My mother died when I was born. My father was a kind and gentle man. He always cared for people. He caught the influenza visiting a sick parishioner. I never saw him again. He died the next night.

LILY: And you ran away then?

EMMA: No. My aunt took me in. My mother's sister. She was so cold and distant, and my cousin Arthur treated me like a servant. "Fetch this," "Do that," "Make this," "Sweep that!" Then, I saw an advertisement about this ship.

LILY: So did I! I'm an actress. I could become famous in New York.

EMMA: An actress! You mean... you've been in plays... on the stage? But, you're my age!

LILY: *(Dancing around the packing cases)* Actress... Dancer... Singer... I can do them all! My mother can and Nathan, her gentleman friend, said that I could be just like her one day.

EMMA: I wonder what New York is like?

LILY: Nathan told me. He was born in America. He said the streets of New York are paved with gold and that anyone can do well if they work hard. There are theatres everywhere.

EMMA: And lots of people from all over the world. Just like us...looking for a new life.

LILY: Excitement!

EMMA: New beginnings!

LILY: When my mother and Nathan celebrate, they always have a drink.

EMMA: We could pretend. What shall we drink to?

LILY: To our future!

EMMA: Our future!

LILY: To America!

EMMA: America!

LILY: To this ship!

EMMA AND LILY: *(Together)* The Titanic!

(The ship lurches again and both Emma and Lily fall in a heap on the floor, laughing.)

- The End-

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The Play of the Royal Astrologers

by Willis Hall

(The Chancellor works for the Emperor in the Royal Palace. The Chancellor has been looking for the Emperor to discuss a play that they are showing at the palace and the Emperor has been looking for the Chancellor to discuss a robbery. The Chancellor enters Stage Left. At the same-time the Emperor enters Stage Right. They are both peering into the respective wings from which they made their entrances and slowly each walks backwards towards centre stage until they are a few inches apart, neither being aware of the other.)

EMPEROR: *(Turns around and spots the Chancellor, the Emperor speaks loudly)* Well, it won't do, Chancellor! It just won't do! Here am I, searching high and low, up and down, round and about, all over the kingdom for you... and here you are playing hide and seek behind my back in front of my nose.

CHANCELLOR: *(In agitation, bowing low many times)* A thousand apologies, Majesty. A thousand apologies. Indeed, I too have been looking for you.

EMPEROR: And for goodness sake stop bobbing up and down like a yo-yo. You make me feel quite ill.

CHANCELLOR: A thousand, thousand, apologies, Majesty.

EMPEROR: And stop calling out numbers, Chancellor! You know very well I hate numbers. Really, Chancellor! You must learn to control your emotions. You do lose your head so easily.

CHANCELLOR: Do I, Majesty?

EMPEROR: You do indeed. One of these days I can see that you are going to lose it altogether. *(Draws a significant finger across throat)*

CHANCELLOR: I'm sure I do my utmost to please your Majesty, your Majesty.

EMPEROR: Then it isn't utmost enough. I have more than enough to do without having to spend my afternoons running all over the countryside looking for my Chancellor.

CHANCELLOR: But it was so late, Majesty. And I knew that you would be annoyed if we ventured to begin without you, and before I could find you everyone had arrived and...

EMPEROR: Will you speak plainly! Will you speak audibly!
Will you make yourself understood! Start? Start?

CHANCELLOR: The play, Majesty.

EMPEROR: Play? Play? I've no wish to play, Chancellor!

CHANCELLOR: Indeed no, Majesty, you see...

EMPEROR: Indeed yes, Chancellor. (*Draws the Chancellor nearer*) Now, listen carefully, Chancellor. Pay attention. For while you've been hopping around in your back-yards, hiding and seeking... a crime has been committed.

CHANCELLOR: Crime, Majesty?

EMPEROR: A burglary, Chancellor.

CHANCELLOR: Burglary, Majesty?

EMPEROR: At the Royal Palace, Chancellor.

CHANCELLOR: The Palace, Majesty?

EMPEROR: Before we go any further into the matter, Chancellor, you will oblige me by not repeating every word I say like a stuttering parrot.
(*The CHANCELLOR bows low*)

EMPEROR: And don't start all that business again! This afternoon, Chancellor, four thieves broke into the Royal Palace Vaults and stole four chests of gold.

CHANCELLOR: You don't say so, Majesty?

EMPEROR: I have said so, haven't I, you bubbling idiot! The four thieves, Chancellor, must be caught.

CHANCELLOR: Indeed they must, Majesty.

EMPEROR: And when they are caught, Chancellor... They must be punished.

CHANCELLOR: Indeed they must, Majesty. Might I suggest the Royal Dungeons?

EMPEROR: Good, Chancellor. A good idea.

CHANCELLOR: Or even... (*Draws a significant finger across throat*)

EMPEROR: Excellent, Chancellor! A capital suggestion!

- The End-