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Dramatic Publishing

A GUIDE
TO THE
TEENAGE
ZONE

One-act comedy

by

CLAUDIA HAAS

A GUIDE TO THE TEENAGE ZONE

Comedy. *By Claudia Haas. Cast: 12 to 17 actors, flexible.* This is a light-hearted look at young teenagers who are still part child, yet emerging adults. A guide leads us into the everyday world of a group of 12 to 17 teenagers starting early in the morning. We follow them to school, back home again and end with late-night phone calls reviewing events of the day as a new dawn approaches. In eight rich scenes, we see sophisticated, yet simple interactive relationships working together: Good Morning!, The Bus Stop, Homeroom, First Period, Lunch, The Bus Ride, The Afternoon, and Evenings and Telephones. Sometimes teens that seem a bit uninterested in their current life circumstance emerge as late bloomers. Regardless, teens come up with brilliant ideas and questions about life as they grow into adulthood. This play highlights some of this transition. *Minimal props are used to suggest various scenes. Time: the present. Approximate running time: 35 minutes. Code: GC3.*

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CLAUDIA HAAS

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About the Play

A guide leads us into the everyday world of a young teenager. We spend the day with 12 teenagers starting early in the morning. We follow them to school, back home again, and ending with late night phone calls. This is a light-hearted look at young teenagers who are still part child yet emerging adults.

In eight rich scenes, we see sophisticated yet simple teen interactive relationships working together. Sometimes teens, who seem a bit uninterested in their current life circumstance, later emerge as late bloomers.

Regardless, teens come up with brilliant ideas and questions in life as they grow into adulthood. This play highlights some of his transition.

CAST

SMALL CAST: (12-13, 1 male or fm, 8 fm, 4 male)

LARGE CAST: (17, 5 male or fm, 8 fm, 4 male)

Below is the cast and suggestions for doubling. The "teachers" have small roles but if you wish to expand the cast, a separate actor/actress can be cast. This was written for Junior High/Middle School students, so the teens should be ages 12-15.

Guide: (Narrator) - could be a Rod Sterling type; could also be doubled by having the "teens" assume the role of narrator; if that is done, ANDREW should be the 1st. GUIDE.

Christa: (fm) - Lives in a dream world

Alicia: (fm) - Has teen life and all its rules and regulations figured out

Allie: (fm) - Nervous Nellie; can't make up her mind

Elyssa: (fm) - A teen who wants to please

Jeff: (m) - Straight "A" student, but has more of an edge than he lets on

Kristine: (fm) Going through a period of negativity

Kirsten: (fm) - Good at stating the obvious

Emily: (fm) - Very connected to her phone

Candace: (fm) - Her life is planned out and she is on track

Andrew: (male) - Has a short answer for everything

George: (male) - thinks outside "the box"

John: (male) a "conniver"

Below can be separately cast or doubled; suggestions for doubling included.

Mrs/Mr. Xavier: (male or fm) - but if doubled (fm) Emily

Mr./Mrs. Number: (male or fm) - but if doubled (fm) Kristine

Mr./Mrs. Grammar (male or fm) - but if doubled (fm) Christa

Mr. Mrs. Globe: (male or fm) - but if doubled (male) Andrew

A GUIDE TO THE TEENAGE ZONE

by Claudia Haas

SCENE I - GOOD MORNING!

[AT RISE: There is a set of tables and chairs. Huddled on some of the chairs are some of the teens, just waking up in the early morning. The lights are dimmed and from the darkness, a GUIDE appears and addresses the audience.]

GUIDE. There is a dimension previously forgotten by adults. It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between adult reality and youthful perception and it lies between space and superstition, the summit of childhood and the beginning of adulthood. This is the unknown dimension, the dimension known as "The Teenage Zone."

The time: a chilly autumn dawn. Teenagers are waking up all over town. Christa [*CHRISTA appears in her pajamas*] is in the middle of her nightly dream where she goes to school in her pajamas. Not wanting to wake up, she simply throws a sweatshirt over her night clothes and heads off to the bus stop. [*CHRISTA does exactly that*] On the other hand, Alicia [*ALICIA appears*] is already in a fight with her mother. Alicia is decisive.

ALICIA. No, I will not have a piece of toast, pop tart, fruit or bowl of cereal! I do not eat breakfast! In the last four years, have you ever seen me eat anything before noon? [*And with great fanfare, ALICIA stomps off with her backpack*]

GUIDE. Alica, dramatic as always, is out of the door before her mother can respond. Meanwhile, Allie [*ALLIE appears in winter clothing covering every inch of her body*] is pleading with her mother. Allie is, to say the least, a bit over-dressed! [*ALLIE appears with a warm jacket, neck warmer, hat, scarf, gloves, and boots*]

ALLIE. I don't know if it's that cold out! Look at me! A jacket! Hat! Scarf! Gloves! I look like a total geek! You'd think we lived in Antarctica! [*ALLIE heads out the door as a two-year-old might, bundled up in a snowsuit.*]

GUIDE. Now we find Elyssa [*ELYSSA appears. She is packing her backpack and alternately eating toast and brushing her teeth.*] in her usual morning routine. It is reminiscent of a fire drill gone bad.

ELYSSA. What? No, it would not be easier to pack my bag the night before! This is how I wake up! You have your coffee and I like to run around the house like a maniac!

GUIDE. Jeff wakes up worried.

JEFF. *[Appearing]* I forgot the math book. I'll lose my "A" if I don't have my homework done. I won't graduate on time! I won't go to college. I, oh! We had a special assembly yesterday. We didn't have math. Close one.

GUIDE. And he falls back in bed. Kristine starts to wake up. *[KRISTINE appears with blanket and pillow]* Slowly. Very slowly.

KRISTINE. *[Under covers]* Yeah, I'm up. What, Mom? What? All right! I'm up! *[And she settles back to sleep]*

GUIDE. ...while Kirsten answers the phone *[KIRSTEN and EMILY appear]*

EMILY. Are you wearing the red sweater?

KIRSTEN. No, Emily. I'm in my pajamas.

EMILY. To school! Are you wearing the red sweater to school? Cause if you're wearing red, then I won't.

KIRSTEN. Emily, it's 6 a.m. I don't even know my name at this time of the morning.

EMILY. Kirsten! Wake up! This is important. I really want to wear the red sweater. But I won't if you're wearing red.

KIRSTEN. Emily, you're a big girl now. You can decide all by yourself what you want to wear to school.

GUIDE. And Emily and Kirsten hang up on each other already starting the day on a wrong note. *[EMILY and KIRSTEN hang up annoyed with each other and exit]* Candace, on the other hand, has been up for an hour!

CANDACE. *[Entering]* I love mornings!

GUIDE. Candace has always been *different*. Andrew, on the other hand *[ANDREW appears in sweats]*, has perfected the ability to go from bed to school without changing clothes. A definite "wash and wear" person, Andrew stumbles out of bed in sweat pants and sweat shirt, puts a jacket on and leaves for school.

[PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE: If GUIDE is to be played by the cast of students: GUIDE should be ANDREW and GUIDE should simply say: "Andrew on the other hand, well, you'll meet Andrew later."]

ANDREW. Oh! Shoes! Someone definitely needs to invent shoes that work equally well for bed and school. *[ANDREW picks up a pair of shoes and exits]*

GUIDE I. We come now to George [*GEORGE appears*] who lives in another world...another dimension...and dreams...

GEORGE. ...of being saved from school boredom by mythical creatures of epic proportions, or maybe just by being captured by aliens enroute to the bus stop. Or by being carried away by winged monkeys.

GUIDE I. George definitely thinks outside "*the box*." We end our morning at home with John. [*JOHN appears*] John carefully packs his backpack with...

JOHN. Comics for first hour, a snack for second hour, hand-held Yahtzee for third hour. Then lunch. I can handle that. Oh no! I'm out of stuff! I have nothing for after lunch! I may have to pay attention!

GUIDE. Now, the sun is just about up. The place: a bus stop. The time: the beginning of another school day.

SCENE 2 - THE BUS STOP

[*ALICIA stands there alone shivering. She is joined by ALLIE who is still bundled up.*]

ALLIE. Look at you! You're freezing!

ALICIA. No, I'm not.

ALLIE. Why didn't you bring a jacket? My mom would never let me leave the house without a jacket.

ALICIA. I know. My mom's the same way. Still smothering me with outer clothing even though I'm like, almost grown.

ALLIE. So where's your jacket?

ALICIA. In my backpack.

ALLIE. So, you're keeping your back warm?

ALICIA. It's twenty-five degrees out! Who needs a jacket? Jackets are not cool!

ALLIE. No, they're warm. That's the idea behind jackets. They keep you warm.

ALICIA. Well, I don't know about you but I wouldn't be caught dead wearing a jacket on the bus. There are rules about that sort of thing.

ALLIE. There are?

ALICIA. Wait and see. Wear the jacket and the kids will talk about you. How you're so, you know, childish. Pretty soon everyone will feel so guilty about talking about you behind your back that they'll stop talking to you. *Then*, the teachers will notice that no one is talking to you and they'll call in the guidance counselor. *After that*, the guidance

counselor will call home and ask your parents why you don't have any friends and suggest you need therapy. In the end you'll have to explain to your teachers, guidance counselor, therapist, and parents, why nobody is talking to you. They'll never understand that it's all because you wore your jacket on the bus.

ALLIE. Scary. *[ELYSSA joins them]*

ELYSSA. *[Shivering with no jacket on, of course. Her backpack has things falling out as someone who has packed it in a great rush.]* I'd lose the jacket if I were you.

ALLIE. Oh yeah! Of course! *[ALLIE whips off her jacket and stuffs it into her backpack. Soon she is shivering]*

ELYSSA. Nice morning. A little brisk.

ALLIE. I hope the heater is on in the bus. *[JEFF comes running on with backpack packed and papers spilling from his hands]*

JEFF. Help! My papers are escaping!

ALICIA. What do you think you have a backpack for?

JEFF. It's loaded with all my books.

ALICIA. You should never take home your books.

JEFF. I have homework. Don't you have homework?

ALICIA. Well, yeah. But I do it at school. Nobody takes their homework home. That is so - retro.

ALLIE. I didn't know that.

ALICIA and ELYSSA. We know.

ELYSSA. You two need to get with the program or you're never going to make it socially. You do math homework during homeroom. You do English during math. Social studies during English. Get the picture?

ALICIA. And if you're really smart - you took a Study Hall just in case a teacher - you know - makes you work in class.

JEFF. I didn't have a study hall. I took music instead.

ALICIA and ELYSSA. Hopeless.

JEFF. I take notes during class. I can't relax when I get home until all my homework is done.

ALICIA and ELYSSA. Impossible.

ALICIA. He's never going to make it.

ELYSSA. Look, you're on the wrong road to success. High school is about friends, extra-curriculars. There's time enough to study in college.

JEFF. But I'll never get to college if I don't study.

ALICIA. Sure you will, you just cram in academics during school hours.

ELYSSA. Spend your time after school instant messaging friends.

ALICIA. Or catching a talk show so you're up-to-date on what's happening in the world.

ELYSSA. But never do homework at home.

ALICIA. The bus! [*ELYSSA and ALICIA run to the stop. JEFF and ALLIE remain frozen, stunned*]

JEFF. Wow! There sure are a lot of rules I never knew about.

ALLIE. Tell me about it. [*And they exit onto the bus*]

SCENE 3- HOMEROOM

[All enter and take seat. A student (EMILY) could act as MRS. XAVIER, the homeroom teacher or you can cast another person.]

GUIDE. It is a fact that all is quiet at school in the early a.m. The beginning of the school day is a test for the teacher. For at this hour of the morning, the speech of the tired teen is impaired. Their brains have yet to wake up. Unknowingly, the students band together to torture their teacher during the first part of the day.

MRS. XAVIER. Kristine Jaffe!

KRISTINE. [*Her head slumped in her arms*] Huh? Who calls?

MRS. XAVIER. I'll take that answer to mean you are here. Kristen Johnson! Wake up! Answer me!

KIRSTEN. It's Kiiiiiiirsten. Not Krissssssten!

MRS. XAVIER. Kristine! Christina! Kristen! Kirsten! A person could go mad with these names. Kristina Lee! Kristina???

CHRISTA. It's Christa!

KIRSTEN. [*Whispering*] Psst, Christa!

CHRISTA. Yeah, Christa. That's what I said.

KIRSTEN. [*Loud whisper*] You're in your pajamas.

CHRISTA. It's all right.

KIRSTEN. [*Even louder whisper*] But today is not Pajama Day.

CHRISTA. But I'm not here.

KIRSTEN. Christa! You are totally here!

CHRISTA. No. I have this dream all of the time. I'm really at home sleeping in my bed.

MRS. XAVIER. Christina Lee.

CHRISTA. Christa!

MRS. XAVIER. Whatever. Stand up please. [*CHRISTA stands*] This is not proper attire for school. Please go to the principal's office at once.

MRS. XAVIER. Have the secretary call a parent and bring your proper clothes for school. You will stay after school next Monday for detention.

CHRISTA. Wow! This has never happened in my dream before. Cool. A new installment. [*CHRISTA exits*]

MRS. XAVIER. Alice Moran! *Alice!*

ALICIA. There is no Alice. There's me, Alicia.

ALLIE. And me, Allie.

ELYSSA. And me Elyssa.

MRS. XAVIER. Come on, people, you know your names!

JOHN. But you don't.

MRS. XAVIER. What's this? Is someone else asking for detention?
John Putnam!

JOHN. What?

MRS. XAVIER. [*Getting desperate*] Can't you people just say "present"?

CANDACE. Present!

MRS. XAVIER. I didn't call your name yet. Jeff Spellman! Oh, for goodness sakes! JEFF!!

CANDACE. He's not here. If he was, I'm sure he would say "present."
But I'm here.

MRS. XAVIER. That's so nice. I'm so pleased. But you are not *Jeff Spellman!*

CANDACE. But I'm next on the list. So now you know I'm here. And you don't have to waste time calling out my name. It sort of helps things move along, don't you think?

MRS. XAVIER. You're so kind. This morning I need all the help I can get. George Schuman! Is George Schuman here?

GEORGE. That is truly a metaphysical question. I am not sure I am present.

MRS. XAVIER. What?

GEORGE. I am here in body. There is no question about that. But my spirit is not quite here yet. My most alert hour will occur in 3 1/2 hours. At that time, I will be present.

ANDREW. Yeah, just in time for lunch.

GEORGE. But at this time I remain a lifeless form of matter devoid of spirit.

ANDREW. Devoid of intelligence.

MRS. XAVIER. Enough! For my record you are present. And if you [*Pointing fixedly at ANDREW*] call out again, I will arrange a few detentions for you. And George, please keep your metaphysical

wanderings to yourself.

GEORGE. I suppose you can't help but play by the rules of the hierarchy which does not understand the realm of the spirit.

MRS. XAVIER. Andrew Stoltz.

ANDREW. You just threatened me with detention a minute ago. You know I'm here.

MRS. XAVIER. *Just say "present."*

GEORGE. Don't you find attendance just an archaic ritual that accomplishes nothing but the chipping away of the precious moments of our lives?

JOHN. You sound like an instant coffee commercial!

MRS. XAVIER. Now, announcements for today!

ELYSSA. Excuse me! You didn't call my name!

ALLIE. Or mine.

ELYSSA. And we were going to say present and everything!

MRS. XAVIER. You're not on my list.

ELYSSA. But we must be.

ALLIE. We're always here.

MRS. XAVIER. You're not on my list. Ergo, you are not here.

GEORGE. Another metaphysical question! If you are not on the list and a teacher does not call your name, do you exist?

ANDREW. Maybe just her spirit is here.

MRS. XAVIER. I need to investigate this. Now for the announcements. *[the buzzer rings]* Oh no!

[EVERYONE gets up to go to the next class] But the announcements! Come back! Come back! *[But they are gone]*

GUIDE. For some miraculous reason the bell rings just as the teacher needs to accomplish something for the school. These teenagers have perfected the art of stretching attendance to last an entire homeroom period. The hallways start to fill with noise.

KIRSTEN. Watch where you're going!

KRISTINE. I don't know where I'm going. It's too early.

GUIDE. The teenagers are waking up.

JOHN. See you at lunch!

ANDREW. Did you bring a lunch?

JOHN. Nah. I thought I'd beg.

GUIDE. In fact, the teenagers expend so much energy in the hallways that by the time they get to their first class, they are exhausted. All is quiet again.

SCENE 4 - 1ST PERIOD

MRS. NUMBER. Time for math!

MRS. GRAMMAR. English!

MR. GLOBE. Social studies!

[STUDENTS all groan. ALICIA, ELYSSA and ALLIE are in math. EMILY, KIRSTEN, and JOHN are in Social Studies. CANDACE, JEFF and GEORGE are in English.]

ALICIA. Psst! Elyssa!

ELYSSA. What?

ALICIA. Do you have the homework for social studies?

ELYSSA. Alicia! We're in math! Social studies is next period.

ALICIA. I know. I need it.

ELYSSA. Didn't you do it during study hall?

ALICIA. I meant to. But I had to catch up on science.

ELYSSA. Well, what about later?

ALICIA. I had a soccer tournament.

ALLIE. *Ohhhh*, soccer. I was thinking of playing soccer.

ALICIA and ELYSSA. Shhh.

ELYSSA. So, why didn't you do it during soccer?

ALICIA. It was a tournament! The coach would have killed me!

ELYSSA. But we've had the assignment for a week!

ALICIA. I had a basketball clinic over the weekend.

ALLIE. What's basketball like? Is it hard?

ELYSSA and ALICIA. Shhh.

ELYSSA. You had the whole weekend!

ALICIA. Elyssa! That would mean actually taking the homework home.

ELYSSA. *[Handing over homework]* You owe me big time.

ALLIE. That's not right!

ALICIA and ELYSSA. Shhh.

ALICIA. I promise I'll make it up to you. When soccer is over. Wait! Then I have basketball. Well, when basketball is over. Wait! Then I have track! Well, sometime. Really. In the summer.

ALLIE. There's no school in the summer!

ALICIA and ELYSSA. Shhh!

MRS. NUMBER. ... so you see, the properties of X should directly affect the proportions of Y as you blah...and equate the...blah...so blah...

JOHN. Would you look at that?

KIRSTEN. What?

JOHN. That bug on my desk.

[They stare as in a trance watching the little bug crawl across the desk. EMILY is immersed in a game on her cell phone]

KIRSTEN. *Ohhh!* Squash it!

JOHN. You would have me end its poor pathetic life? What right do I have?

KIRSTEN. It's creepy! Get rid of it! Come on, John. Before it gets to my desk.

JOHN. *[Picking it up]* Fascinating, isn't it? Here I am at school and I hold the life or the death of a little bug in my hands. I could send it over to you.

KIRSTEN. *Ohhh!* Stop!

JOHN. I think I'll send it to Emily.

KIRSTEN. That would be too cruel.

JOHN. Horribly cruel. But fun! *[JOHN puts bug on EMILY'S desk]*

Emily, you have a visitor!

EMILY. *[Looking up]* Whaaat?

JOHN. A little friend has come to greet you!

EMILY. *[EMILY'S eyes open wider and suddenly she lets out an ear-piercing scream]* NOOOOO!

MRS. NUMBER. It's all right, Emily, if you got the answer wrong. I will go over it again.

JOHN, EMILY and KIRSTEN. No!

MRS. GRAMMAR. So the blah participle of the blah sentence should be blah diagramed in this blah manner...

GEORGE. It would really be cool if a winged monkey would just fly through this window right now, right this very minute and take me away. Wait! It would be really rocking if the winged monkey would come through the window right this very minute and take Mrs. Grammar away. *[GEORGE closes his eyes and tries to summon the winged monkeys]* Come on, just leave Oz for an hour. Come and save me!

CANDACE. What are you doing? I can't concentrate on the work.

GEORGE. I'm summoning up the winged monkeys. I need them.

MRS. GRAMMAR. So for a proper sentence in the blah introductory paragraph of a blah research paper...

JEFF. That dangling participle stuff really has me confused.

GEORGE. Yeah, me too. Come on, where are those monkeys?

CANDACE. I am going to spontaneously combust if I can't get this stuff straight in my head. Come on, brain!

GEORGE. Come on, monkeys!

JEFF. Come on, guys, I can't hear!

GEORGE. None of this would be relevant if a winged monkey suddenly appeared in the doorway!

JEFF and CANDACE. What?

MRS. GRAMMAR. George, now can you phrase what you said in a grammatically correct way?

MR. GLOBE. If the blah Romans never met the blah Greeks and the blah cave man never walked upright, what would the situation in our blah world be today?

ALICIA. Mr. Globe!

GEORGE. Mrs. Grammar!

JOHN. Mrs. Number!

ALICIA. I would like to stage a formal protest.

GEORGE. Against the futility of the subject you are teaching us.

JOHN. I will *never*...

ALICIA. I repeat, *never*...

GEORGE. Need this in my adult life.

JEFF. Well, I don't know. I might need some of this! I want to be an engineer.

GEORGE. Jeff! Quiet! I'm on a roll!

ALICIA. Algebra! Come on! Who uses algebra in their daily lives? You need simple arithmetic to get through the day. A little adding and subtracting so you can shop. That's it! Did you ever see a shopper and a clerk figure out an equation before a purchase?

JOHN. And as for social studies, you know how they say that if you don't learn the past, you are doomed to repeat it? Near as I can figure out, we have been learning the past for at least a thousand years! And what is the result? We repeat it over and over again. Wars are studied and wars continue. If you ask me, if you really want a better world, you must eliminate history from the schools! Let us grow up ignorant of the past and maybe we will create a peaceful world!

GEORGE. And then there's English. Well, what a waste that can be. I mean if you want to get along in this world, you need to talk like the common man. You need to be a "person of the people". or you turn others off. They think you're putting on airs with your high falutin' speech. They don't relate and shun you! I say being overly educated is *over-rated!*

ALICIA. In fact in these days of *over-eating* and *under-exercising*, the most necessary subject is probably...

ALL STUDENTS. *Gym!*

[Buzzer rings and students all get up to go]

GUIDE. And so the morning classes continue until finally, in the midst of their grueling day, the students finally make it to...

ALL. Lunch!

SCENE 5- LUNCH

[Grouped together for lunch are: John, Andrew, George and Jeff; Kirsten, Kristine, Christa and Emily; Alicia, Allie, Elyssa and Candace. Note: The students will still talk back and forth at "tables" as they would in the cafeteria. Andrew has hot lunch, most have bag lunches, John has no lunch. Jeff is studying away.]

JOHN. Come on, don't you have one measly little extra lunch ticket?

ANDREW. Are you going to pay me back?

JOHN. I promise.

ANDREW. You still owe me from last year.

JOHN. Come over today. I'll have my mom pay you.

ANDREW. Can't. Need a note for the bus driver.

JOHN. What's the big deal? I'll write a note.

ANDREW. That's no good. The bus driver knows your writing from last year.

JOHN. *[To GEORGE]* Can you write a note for the bus driver?

GEORGE. It'll cost you.

JOHN. How much?

GEORGE. A dollar.

JOHN. *[To ANDREW]* Could you lend me a dollar?

ANDREW. Now, do you need a lunch ticket *and* a dollar?

[And there is a shift in the conversation. JOHN begs for some of JEFF'S lunch as the scene shifts to another table]

KIRSTEN. Trade you the apple for the carrot sticks.

KRISTINE. Too healthy. Anyone have a cookie?

CHRISTA. You want half of my sandwich?

KRISTINE. What is it?