

## **MISSION IMPOSSIBLE**

### **MISSION IMPOSSIBLE by McKenzie Boyd**

**Themes:** social justice, racial discrimination<sup>1</sup>

**Setting:**

Where: School Gym, Style, Chicago,

When: Summer, 2018, poetry competition, CityWide

**Characters:**

**Oz Price:** Protagonist: 15 yo, young black male, shy and quiet, smart, courageous

**Mr. Molotov:** judge: Antagonist: 59 yo, white german man, he's like a somber Gordon Ramsey

**Mr. White/Dwight:** 38 yo black man, very tall, deep intense voice  
Man/Director: Head of the creative writing club

**Plot:** Coming of age moment for Oz.

**Why are you telling this to the audience:** Bringing light to topics that are not discussed, especially racial inequality, this poem is about what he has gone through, and a way to say my history is important and nothing will happen if we don't talk about it

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<sup>1</sup> Viewer Discretion is Advised

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### **Scene I**

*Play competition. Open With Oz CS with a spot on him holding a microphone, the rest of the stage in black.*

Oz:

Mission Impossible (If you decide to accept it)

Here you *must* listen:

Keep your consonants crisp, words enunciated

Thoughts collected, feelings vacated

Yes *sir*, Yes *ma'am*

No 'yeah', no 'ain't', no 'wanna', 'finna', 'gonna', no 'cän't'

Better leave your feelings at the gate,

'Cause *here*, you leave your race at the doorstep

with your shoes and your coat. (don't take this mission personally, it's professional)-

*Lights up, revealing a judges table with 3 judges. Mr. Molotov and the other judges whisper among themselves, then Mr. Molotov stands up and walks towards Oz.*

Mr. Molotov:

Oz, do you mind speaking to me backstage?

Oz:

...sure...

*Mr. Molotov and Oz cross DSL. Molotov puts his hand on Oz's shoulder.*

Mr. Molotov:

Oz... normally when we have these competitions, we typically have subject matter that is more light-hearted and family friendly. Are you reciting a poem from a Black activist?

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Oz:

*(Confused)* No,

This is a piece I wrote. I want to bring awareness to my history as a black person.

Mr. Molotov:

*(Looks side to side before placing both hands behind his back)*

Yes, of course. Introducing the crowd to your story as a black individual would be very informing I don't doubt.

However, is it possible for your piece to go along the lines of the other pieces we will be sharing today? Do you have something else you'd like to perform? *Beat.* Something more *appropriate*?

Oz:

Oh, um, this is the poem that I have prepared

*(Oz looks down, processing what he just heard)*

Why can't I use it?

Mr. Molotov:

Mr. Price, This piece is simply not for the audience that we bring in.

*(sternly)* You have to cater to them and their interests. *(Jovial)*

There are very important people in the crowd and I want to give you the very best opportunity to find someone to help you achieve your dreams...

There is one way to go about this and this is *not* it.

Oz:

I wrote this, for myself, not for anybody in the crowd. *(Bothered)*

I want to get out the message of what I never saw performed when I was younger.

Mr. Molotov:

Oz, I'm gonna give you one more chance to replace this poem. If not, I will see you next year with more appropriate content. The doors will open soon so I would suggest you listen to what I say.

### **Scene 2**

*(Lights)*

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*Dwight enters SL.*

Dwight:

Hey, you excited? First year on the poetry slam,

*Dwight pats Oz on the back.*

how do you feel?

Oz:

*Oz pauses for a second then meets Dwight's eyes.*

Not that great.

Dwight:

Your poem is fire though! I was re-reading it over and over last night.

*Beat.* Are you at least excited?

Oz:

*Painful beat as Oz sighs before speaking.*

They told me I can't read my poem, Mr. White. Said I have to recite

something else.

Dwight:

*(Angry) Who? (Sadness) Why?*

Oz:

Molotov said the content was inappropriate for the audience.

Dwight:

*(pissed)* What do you mean *inappropriate*?

Oz:

*(mimicking Molotov)* Mr. Price, we typically have subject matter that is more light-hearted and family friendly.

Dwight:

What about the poem makes it not family friendly?

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Oz:

He said they won't be interested and I need the scouts to notice me.  
Maybe I should just-

Dwight:

No. When I was your age, I wanted to become a poet. I did many open mics and made it all the way to performing on stages much bigger than this. One time I decided to go to a competition, and not one person performing or in the audience looked like me. I had written a poem about growing up on the southside. Talked about what it was like being young, understanding what it's like for Black people in the world. And I listened to people tell me that is not what people want to hear.

*Half beat*

I didn't perform, and I regret that to this day. I can't let you do that.

Oz:

So what should I do? Molotov said-

Dwight:

Let me worry about that.

### **Scene 3**

*Dwight crosses to the judges table. Oz watches as Dwight and Molotov whisper to each other. Oz moves closer to center to hear.*

Mr. Molotov:

...I already told him this is for professional content, Dwight. I will not let this stand.

Dwight:

What about James Baldwin? Maya Angelou? Rita Dove? Are they unprofessional? Do you take their words to be a joke?

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Mr. Molotov:

I *already* explained to him that is not what this audience came to hear.  
Now, unless you've come to tell me that Oz is doing another poem, I need  
you to leave the stage.

*Dwight hits the table.*

Dwight:

They NEED to hear this.

*Molotov sighs and the three judges whisper between each other startled.*

Mr. Molotov:

Can he at least change the wording a bit? Edit how long it is?

Dwight:

We'll... we'll see what we can do.

*Dwight and Oz cross to DSL.*

Oz:

What did they say?

Dwight:

Don't worry about it. Just do the poem the way you wrote it. I've got this  
covered.

*Molotov crosses to mic at DC*

Mr. Molotov:

*Cheerfully*

Hello friends and family. Thank you for coming out this evening. We are  
excited to share the pieces from many talented artists. Our first poet for  
the night will be Oz Price, reading... an original piece. Please enjoy.

*The audience claps lowly as Oz enters the stage and Molotov returns to the  
judges table.*

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Oz:

Mission Impossible (If you decide to accept it)

*Oz takes a deep breath and looks towards the judges table before turning back  
and beginning the poem*

Here you *must* listen:

Keep your consonants crisp, words enunciated

Yes *sir*, Yes *ma'am*

No 'yeah', no 'ain't', no 'wanna', 'finna', 'gonna', no 'cän't'

Better leave your feelings at the gate,

'Cause *here*, you must leave your race at the doorstep

with your shoes and your coat. (don't take this mission personally, it's  
professional)

*The judges begin whispering and Oz stops. Dwight enters DSL. Gesturing to Oz  
to continue.*

Oz:

Be kind and gentle, you don't want to scare them away

*Molotov stands up. Dwight crosses DSC.*

Dwight:

Read me your poem.

Oz:

*Whisper scream*

What are you doing?

Dwight:

Don't worry about anybody else, just read it to me. Like we practiced.

*Dwight takes a deep breath in and out with Oz.*

Just keep your eyes on me.

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*Dwight looks out into the audience then to Molotov.*

Don't you ever silence progression, Molotov.

*Oz begins speaking again*

You must understand that this is their home field,  
When we tip-toe in, we are seen as outsiders, foreigners, *intruders*  
Here, the color of your skin will get you in trouble  
Because JUSTice will never be JUST enough to make things right in the  
land that does not welcome those who look like us.  
You must take  
EVERYTHING  
With a spoon of sugar.

*We begin to hear snaps of support from the audience and Oz pauses. Dwight  
gestures for him to keep going. The audience response builds throughout to  
cheering at the end.*

They will say what they will say, and you must tell yourself that it is okay,  
because they don't know any better.  
Because being black here means you can't wear your heart on your sleeve,  
or stand up...or kneel  
-it could get you killed.  
Do not mind their stares or their hands in your hair  
They will try to get "the pass" while you try to pass for something more  
than the "ghetto, hood kid," they think you are.  
You, who will become our token representative, hold so much power...  
only in February.  
You will be given the toughest assignment:  
Location: 109 South Ashton st  
Mission: Succeed

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Good luck

*Dwight and Oz hug. We hear the audience cheering. Mr. Molotov storms off SR.*

*Dwight and Oz cheer back at the audience. Fade to Black.*