

SPELLING BEE

Catherine Cypher

1 INT. LARGE AUDITORIUM-DAY

We're at the Scripps Spelling Bee. The judges are on one side of the stage, the contestants, all kids, on the other. There is a microphone in the middle of the stage. The pronouncer, MR. BAILLY, speaks.

MR. BAILLY

Welcome to round two of the Scripps National Spelling Bee. Up first is Justine Henderson.

JUSTINE walks up to the microphone.

MR. BAILLY

Justine, your word is sagacity.

JUSTINE

Sagacity. Sagacity. Sa-ga-ci-ty. Definition?

MR. BAILLY

Sagacity. The quality of being sagacious.

JUSTINE

Um...is there a definition for sagacious?

MR. BAILLY

Probably! But that's not your word! It's sagacity, remember? You said it like 12 times.

JUSTINE

But that-that definition doesn't tell me what the word means, so it doesn't--

MR. BAILLY

Too bad! That's the definition. It's not wrong. Look it up! Sagacity, the quality of being sagacious. That's what you get.

JUSTINE

Oh--ok. Ok. Um...country of origin?

MR. BAILLY
Pangaea.

JUSTINE is silent, wide-eyed and confused.

MR. BAILLY
Spell the fucking word, Justine.

JUSTINE
(stuttering)
Sa-sagacity. Um, S-A-G-A-S-I--

MR. BAILLY
(yelling)
Wrong! Sit down.
(beat)
You kids get too many hints. There is a *first grader* in the bee this year. Are you kidding me? Shit's too easy. This is why no one takes us seriously as a competitive sport. Time to up the ante. Next! Jamari Price.

JAMARI walks up to the microphone, visibly nervous.

MR. BAILLY
Jamari, your word is semaphore.

JAMARI
Semaphore. Semaphore. Part of speech?

MR. BAILLY
The good part.

JAMARI
What?

MR. BAILLY
You heard me. Figure it out.

JAMARI
C-can you use it in a sentence?

MR. BAILLY
Absolutely. Semaphore is one of the words in the 2018 Scripps Spelling Bee.

JAMARI
I-I know that, I was hoping you could--

MR. BAILLY

Does LeBron James give defenders
hints? Does he go

(mocking, whiny voice)

ooh, hey, Kevin Durant, just wanted
to let you know I'm gonna pump fake
and drive and Kevin Love's probably
gonna set a screen for me!

(aggressively)

No. He doesn't. Now shut up and
spell.

JAMARI

Semaphore. S-E-M-I--

MR. BAILLY

Nope! Bye. Next!

LILY CHU, visibly shaken, shuffles up to the microphone,
head down.

MR. BAILLY

Lily Chu! Your word is eudamonic
[yoo-dee-mah-nik].

LILY

Yoo-dee-mah-nik?

MR. BAILLY

Uh-day-moan-ik.

LILY

Uh-day-moan-ik?

MR. BAILLY

Eh-du-man-EEK.

LILY

You're saying it differently every
time!

MR. BAILLY

No I'm not, spell the word!!

LILY

S--sorry, what--what's the word?

MR. BAILLY

I will not repeat myself again!
Time's running out, spell!

LILY
You, dah--um, mon. eek. Ok. Y-

MR. BAILLY
(screaming)
No! Sit down!

LILY'S mom, MRS. CHU, stands up from the audience.

MRS. CHU
Excuse me! You are abusing these
children, they can't spell without
context!

MR. BAILLY
That's not my problem honey! If
Lily over here needs context, she
should read a fuckin' book! Which
she clearly hasn't, based on her
spelling skills. Ok, next! One kid
left, huh? Kevin, the first-grader.
Of course.

KEVIN walks up to the microphone slowly. He is steely,
determined.

MR. BAILLY
Kevin.

KEVIN
Mr. Bailly.

MR. BAILLY
Your word is pilgarlic.

KEVIN
Pilgarlic? The noun that means "a
man looked upon with humorous
contempt or mock pity?" As in,
Jacques Bailly is a bitter old
pilgarlic who peaked at age 14 when
he won the spelling bee?

MR. BAILLY
You smug little--

KEVIN
Pilgarlic. P-I-L-G-A-R-L-I-C.
Pilgarlic.

KEVIN takes the mic out of its stand and holds it out in
front of him, then drops it.

Blackout.