

Checking Out

By Maddie Alexander-Latta

Characters:

Nick: In late twenties/ early thirties.

Ellie: Female early twenties. Peppy, but professional.

SETTING: *A mall*

AT RISE: *A table, chairs, and an automatic door are onstage. The vibe is a bit eerie.*

A VOICE (*over the loudspeakers*): Thank you for shopping at Parallel Hill Mall! The mall is now closed. Goodnight, and remember to come back tomorrow for more heavenly deals!

Nick enters. He is listening to music, humming along. He tries to walk through the automatic door and runs into it. He starts to wave his arms to open it, then pushes it, and finally gives up. He sits. Ellie enters holding a clipboard.

ELLIE: Hello!

Nick doesn't hear. Ellie taps his shoulder, and Nick flinches.

NICK: Oh, sorry you scared me. Did you say something?

ELLIE: (*with equal enthusiasm*) Hello!

NICK (*still not hearing her*): Yeah sure. The door's not working.

ELLIE: The mall's closed.

NICK: What? Don't they know we're in here?

ELLIE: Well I'm sure someone does, but you can't leave until you find what you need! That's the Parallel Hill Mall promise!

NICK: Do you work here?

ELLIE: UhHuh!

NICK: Ok, so can't you just let me out?

ELLIE: Sorry, I have a job to do.

Ellie sits, Nick doesn't move.

ELLIE (cont.): Come on, take a seat Nick.

NICK: What? How do you know my name?

ELLIE: Well that's what it says here (*motions to clipboard*). Nicholas Davis.

NICK: Alright I'm out of here.

Nick walks off stage, Ellie snaps, and Nick re-enters.

NICK (con't): What.. I just... What's going on!?

ELLIE: I know, the layout can be so confusing. Come on, sit!

NICK: No, there's no way, I walked in a straight line I shouldn't be here again!

ELLIE: You're exactly where you need to be.

Nick sits, reluctantly

NICK: Really, what's going on?

ELLIE: Well let's just say I was sent to... provide guidance. Listen, the bigger question is why are *you* here.

NICK: Uhh... to buy earbuds.

ELLIE: Don't you have earbuds at home?

NICK: How do you? (*Ellie motions to clipboard*). Fine, just for a walk then.

ELLIE: (*while writing something on clipboard*) And this was the best place you could think of? A mall?

NICK: I don't know... Just a random place.

ELLIE: There's so much to do in this world! Spend time with friends, get some work done, volunteer-

NICK: Ok, I'm lame, whatever!

ELLIE: MmmHm. You know what, I think it would be beneficial to run through a little scenario.

NICK: A what?

Blackout. Lights up. Nick and Ellie are walking next to each other. Ellie is reading their lines off the clipboard. Ellie is aware of her role as Amelia, and she should act like Amelia.

NICK (*con't*): Oh my god that sucks! What did you do?

ELLIE: Ok I panicked and just sort of chugged the grape juice! (*both laugh*)... Hey, I actually wanted to talk to you about something.

NICK: Sure, what's up?

ELLIE: So, I'm thinking about junior year abroad. It's like this once in a lifetime opportunity you know? And *Italy*! But, I feel like we have something here, and I just wanted to talk to you about it first.

NICK: Wow. A year. That's a lot.

ELLIE: I know. So, what are you thinking?

NICK: I mean. It sort of sounds like you already know what you're doing.

ELLIE: No I actually want to talk!

NICK: No, really don't worry about it it's fine.

ELLIE: Well I know you've been going through it lately, and if you wanted me to stay
I-

NICK: No, it's gonna be great for you. You should go.

Nick steps back with recognition

NICK (cont.): Holy shit that was Amelia! Where is she I have to talk to her!

ELLIE: Amelia is at home, that was me.

NICK: No. It was her.

ELLIE: No, it was me. We just ran a scenario! I thought it would be helpful if that
moment was fresh in your mind.

NICK: But, that was her. It was her voice, and- I mean that was her!

ELLIE: Nope. Just me.

NICK (in shock): No. No way, I'm getting out of here.

Nick leaves again Ellie snaps and he returns the same way again

NICK (cont.): ... Fuck me.

ELLIE: I just want to talk.

NICK: Oh my God, I'm dead aren't I?!

ELLIE: No, you're not dead.

NICK: Yes, I am and you're like the ghost of Christmas past!

ELLIE: That's not what this is. And scrooge wasn't even dead in that movie.

NICK: Then who are you?

ELLIE: I'm Ellie! I'm actually glad you asked, cause we've been talking for a while and I was like ehh I don't know if I should like just say it or what-

NICK: Please... (*using name with purpose*) Ellie, come on I'm just confused.

ELLIE: Ok, if it helps, I'm just a normal person. I applied for a job, and that job just happens to be the eternal duty to help people. Like a therapist with a bit more razzle dazzle!

NICK: That doesn't sound that normal to me. I mean, that's super wierd.

ELLIE: No it's not.

NICK: Well normal people don't usually have eternal duties. We have like, a life.

ELLIE: I have a life.

NICK: It sort of seems like you have other people's lives.

ELLIE (*quickly interrupting Nick*): Ok! Lets refocus. How did it feel to see Amelia?

NICK: Fucking terrible.

ELLIE: Hey watch it! Why did it feel... not good.

NICK: I miss her. I mean we were happy, and then she just left!

ELLIE: Hmm. Is happy the best word? In that moment?

NICK: Ok well I didn't want her to leave! I was just sad and scared that we were gonna drift apart.

ELLIE: So why didn't you say that to her?

NICK: I don't know, I mean I feel like she *got* it...

ELLIE: Should we run that scenario again?

NICK: No! Ok, no I didn't say that exactly.

ELLIE: So, tell me what happened next.

NICK: She left, and I... I did something awful and stupid ok? Is shaming me really worth divine intervention?

ELLIE: I'm not trying to shame you. What about when she came back?

NICK: I mean, that's it. It was over.

ELLIE: No I mean- you know what let's run another scenario!

NICK: No! no more scenarios-

Ellie snaps blackout and lights up. Nick is obviously drunk.

ELLIE: Seriously get out of here!

NICK: What? I'm not even... I'm not even doing anything.

ELLIE: Come on. It's over, you can't keep doing stuff like this.

NICK: No.. No! Hey, I have something to say.

ELLIE: What?

NICK: I'm done ok, I'm leaving school I'm... I'm not gonna bother you anymore.

ELLIE: Your leaving school? What?

NICK: No, you don't have to worry, cause I'm GONE ok I'm gone.

ELLIE: No, Nick. Listen, don't drop out ok.

Nick goes in for a kiss but Ellie stops it.

ELLIE (con't): Hey, come on man you're making it so hard to help you!

NICK: Fine... Fine. I'm done, I'm really done.

Nick goes to walk away and then snaps back.

NICK (*cont.*): Jesus, this is cruel!

ELLIE: It's helpful.

NICK: No you're just bringing this up again for no reason!

ELLIE: No reason? You dropped out of college because of a breakup.

NICK: Ok you know what I'm not saying sorry for this anymore! I was going through a rough time

ELLIE: Nick I'm trying to help, but you have to take some responsibility-

NICK (*interrupt a bit*): You know is this really worth your time? One college dropout?

ELLIE (*said in a social worker way*): Yes, you are worth the time Nick.

NICK: Really? I mean in the grand scheme of things me getting my degree won't change anything, not really. In ten billion years no one's gonna care if I died with or without a stupid piece of paper.

ELLIE (*an outburst*): So what are you doing Nick? You're resigning yourself to a life of suffering? You're just gonna stare out at the stars and whisper "nothing is real" over and over again until you die?

NICK: You know there are plenty of successful people who never got a college degree you're honestly being really-

Ellie slams down her clipboard

ELLIE: This is about more than that and both of us know it! You're letting your life crumble around you, and then you're blaming it on not knowing the meaning of life? No one knows Nick, you're not special! You're just running away from

your problems. I mean you ran from your feelings when Amelia left, and then from your guilt when you cheated, and you're still running now!

NICK(*referring to Ellie's life*): Well what sort of life is *this* then? You can say you're helping others or whatever, but you know what I think? I think this is all just to make yourself feel better, because you have nothing!

ELLIE (*after a beat. Clearly hurt, but trying to hide it*): And why... Tell me more about why you feel that way.

NICK: You think you know everything but you don't. You have no idea what it's really like, to wake up everyday and face the fact you hurt someone you love. How am I just supposed to continue after that?

Ellie hands the clipboard to Nick. Ellie snaps, blackout and then lights up. Nick is reading his lines off the clipboard. He is also aware of his role, but should be reacting to the situation as this new character.

NICK (*cont.*): I still don't understand.

ELLIE: Ok if it helps just think of it like a job. Like a therapist with a bit more razzle dazzle.

NICK: Why are you doing this Elle? I know that after mom-

ELLIE (*abruptly*): It's not about that.

NICK: Yes it is. I know you miss her but you can't just leave.

ELLIE: Can't you see the bigger picture? I'd get to help people!

NICK: And what am I supposed to do? Family is supposed to be there for each other when stuff like this happens, and you're just abandoning us!

ELLIE: I'm sorry, but I have to do this.

They both snap out of it. Awkward silence, and then Nick hands the clipboard back.

ELLIE: I do. I mean I do know what it's like.

NICK (*uncomfortable*): Yeah woah that was heavy stuff dude

ELLIE: Ick, I get why you don't like them now! Eww that was the worst.

NICK: Hey I'm really sorry-

ELLIE: Let's just, forget about it... We should refocus-

NICK (*cutting her off*): No wait, we shouldn't just brush past this.

ELLIE: This isn't supposed to be about me.

NICK: Well maybe it can be... (*struggling to come up with the right words*) I guess, just, like you should know you don't like owe the world anything. You've given so much already... (*not entirely directed at Ellie anymore*) Making yourself suffer isn't fixing the stuff you've done in the past. At some point you just have to move on.

ELLIE: You know, that's all I've been trying to tell you.

(*beat. Then Nick nods*)

ELLIE (*cont.*): I think it's time for me to go.

NICK: Wait you're just gonna leave?

ELLIE: Yeah?

NICK: Well what am I supposed to do?

ELLIE: I don't know.

NICK: What? Aren't you supposed to be like an all knowing being?

ELLIE: Ok I definitely never said that. I can't just tell you what to do. You have to find your own way.

NICK: I don't even know what that looks like.

ELLIE: Well then keep on looking! It's a big world, *we* can make it work.

NICK (*after beat*): Thanks Ellie.

ELLIE: Thanks Nick. You might want to get some sleep. Mall opens at five.

NICK: There's no way I can sleep after this.

ELLIE: Oh I can help!

Ellie snaps her fingers and Nick falls asleep instantly in the same spot he was originally sitting in. Ellie writes something on her clipboard and exits. The sun has risen. A voice over loudspeakers wakes Nick. While the voice speaks he gets up, looks around confused and exits.

A VOICE (*over the loudspeakers*): Good morning shoppers! Start off your morning right with Dunkin Donuts, only one ninety-nine for a coffee, located in the food court. Visited by a mysterious celestial being? Check out American Eagle to reinvent your wardrobe and yourself! Also bed bath and *the* beyond is ½ off storewide. Have a great day, and thank you for shopping at Parallel Hill Mall!

BLACKOUT

Crystal Ball

by Emma Davis and Casey Weaver

Characters:

MIA: 22 year old woman, close friend of Gwen and Jane, college senior excited to try new things after graduation, spontaneous

JANE: close friend of Mia and Gwen, 22 year old college senior getting ready to work in the real world, thinks she's superior to everyone, snarky, spicy

GWEN: close friend of Mia and Jane, 19 year old college student in the midst of deciding her major, a little spooked by the hypnotism, scared of her friends leaving her

Living room of Mia's apartment. There's a large, patterned rug/ tapestry on the floor. There is a small couch and a coffee table with Mia's hypnotism supplies (ribbons, glitter, cup of water, swinging watch, etc.). Towards the side of the room, there is a giant gong. Mia is offstage. Lights up on Gwen and Jane sitting on the couch. Jane is looking at her phone.

GWEN: I just don't think it was necessary for him to share that in class, you know?

JANE: Yeah, totally.

GWEN: It's like, we get it, you have a yacht.

JANE: Rough.

GWEN: I know! Wait, are you even listening?

JANE: Yes, of course. Yacht, stupid boy, we get it.

GWEN: Damn, ok.

JANE: Sorry, I just don't really care. I'm sure you'll figure out how to deal with him.

GWEN: (*upset*) Yeah, I guess I'll have to. (*genuine*) It's fine, it was stupid anyway. Sorry, I forgot, of course you don't care.

JANE: No, distraction is good. Keep going.

Mia enters.

MIA: GUYS I have BIG NEWS!!

GWEN: Omg me too!! There was this kid in—

MIA: This is more important. Give me one sec.

Mia takes two exaggerated deep breaths, shifting into her hypnotist alter-ego. She spins around, makes some noises, puts on a hat/shawl, etc.

GWEN: Ok, you definitely have my attention. What just happened?

JANE: What are you doing?

MIA: Ladies, how are we today?

JANE: What is going on?

MIA: We are about to embark on a spiritual experience. How has this journey we call life been treating you?

GWEN: Well... I guess my “journey” has been fine...

JANE: Can’t say the same.

Jane gestures to the hypnotism supplies on the coffee table.

JANE (cont.): I’m so confused. What is all this stuff?

MIA: Oh, you know, just some knick knacks and trinkets to get our spirits moving. I think we should all take this time together to go on an adventure toward self-discovery.

JANE: I’ll pass. I don’t think I can handle whatever you’re talking about right now.

GWEN: (*directed at Jane*) Hear her out. Maybe it’d be good to open up a little bit.

JANE: I feel pretty open. Can’t we just do something fun?

MIA: Oh, this will be fun. Please, take a seat on the rug. Let yourself follow the winding path to understanding.

JANE: Absolutely not.

MIA: Give it a chance. Reframe your mindset. Let this experience be a way to delve into your deepest thoughts, feelings, secrets. Don’t be afraid to confront your fears. We’re going to start off simple, just talk a little about our feelings. How are we feeling today, Gwen?

GWEN: Calm?

MIA: And you, Jane?

JANE: ... Calm. (*under her breath*) Harassed.

MIA: Good. Calm is good. I'm going to begin now by taking you to a tranquil space.

Mia places her hand on their heads and slowly lowers their heads down. She begins to circle them.

MIA (*cont.*): Imagine it is the middle of winter. You can feel the cold air on your face and the snow in your hair.

She begins to sprinkle glitter onto their heads.

GWEN: (*startled at first, then enjoying it*) Oh god, what is that?? It feels so... good.

MIA: Yes, Gwen, it really does. Now, putting yourself back into this serene mindset, let the snow relax you, transporting you to another world.

Mia continues walking around while they think, then she returns the glitter to her table. She picks up streamers and ribbons and walks around, waving them violently.

JANE: What is going on?

MIA: Focus on staying in your calm mindset even through these disruptive winds. Now, I need you to close your eyes. Imagine you are stuck in a thunderstorm. See the lightning.

She flicks a flashlight on and off in their faces.

MIA (*cont.*): Hear the thunder.

She rings a gong twice.

MIA (*cont.*): Feel the rain.

Mia dips her fingers in a cup of water and sprinkles water onto their heads.

JANE: (*coughing, trying to get the water out of her face*) Oh my god, what are you doing?

MIA: Trust the process.

She picks up pocket watch on a long chain and starts to swing it back and forth.

MIA (*cont.*): Ok, Gwen, lift your head up. Keep your eyes locked on the watch. Feel yourself slipping away from reality, into another dimension. You're spinning. What do you see?

GWEN: (*slightly dazed*) I... I see a light. It's coming closer...

JANE: Oh, you've got to be kidding me.

MIA: (*to JANE*) Hush. (*back to GWEN*) Good, good. What is the light telling you?

GWEN: It's so bright...It's blinding me...

JANE: We're inside.

GWEN: (*ignoring JANE*) The light is saying something... It's telling me to let go of my secrets...

JANE: (*aggressively*) I don't think so. Maybe you misunderstood the, uh, light.

MIA: Listen to the light. It never lies.

Jane, extremely flustered, snatches the watch out of Mia's hand.

JANE: I think we've all had enough of whatever that was.

GWEN: (*slightly out of it*) What just happened? Where are we?

MIA: (*to Gwen*) Get back to your tranquil space. We were really getting somewhere.

Mia shifts back from hypnotist alter ego to serious self, taking off a hat/necklace to indicate this.

MIA (cont.): (*to Jane*) What the hell was that?

GWEN: Was I going to say something?

JANE: (*ignoring Mia*) Nope, I don't think so.

MIA: But —

JANE: Anyways, this was... fun. Not really sure why I just wasted 10 minutes.

MIA: I wouldn't call it a waste. If you hadn't sabotaged it, maybe you would've gotten something out of it.

JANE: Sorry. I just wish we could've been doing something actually fun. Or at least something productive.

MIA: No, you don't understand. This is important to me. I've had a spiritual awakening! And that's the real reason I asked you guys to come over. I found a new job... opportunity, a passion really...

GWEN: Oh... seems kind of abrupt, but... exciting.

JANE: When's your interview?

MIA: This doesn't really require an interview... it's more of a self-employment gig ... you could say I interviewed with my soul. (*deep breath*) I'm moving to New York to become a hypnotist.

JANE: Hmm. Very cool. Really, really, interesting...

MIA: I knew you'd be skeptical. That's why I wanted to show you before I told you. And I'm clearly talented!

GWEN: I'm not doubting your "talent" or anything—

JANE: (*under her breath*) I am.

GWEN: But do you really need to rush this? New York seems so far away... What happened to those other jobs you were looking at? You had so many good options...I'm just a little surprised, is all.

MIA: Look, I know this hypnotism stuff is kinda different, but at least I have a plan. You should be proud of me! There are *so* many people who have no idea what they're doing after college, and—

JANE: Well if you have it all figured it out then why do you care about my opinion?!

GWEN: Because we're friends and we support each other!

JANE: Support? Please. Talking about sophomore boys and incense has been sooo helpful.

MIA: I feel like I'm missing something...

GWEN: (*to JANE, ignoring MIA*) I don't know how to help you!

MIA: Guys seriously what is going on???

JANE: Well, I, um...

GWEN: She didn't get the job.

MIA: What?! Why didn't you tell me?

JANE: It's not exactly something I'm proud of. (*to GWEN*) And it wasn't exactly your place to tell her either.

MIA: Well, were *you* ever going to tell me? We're going through the same thing, you know.

JANE: Oh, yes, of course, you letting your zodiac sign decide your career is *exactly* the same as what I'm going through. Being a pisces makes all that rejection just melt away!

GWEN: Jane, come on, it was just a summer internship. It's not a big deal.

JANE: "Not a big deal"? How could you possibly know? You're a sophomore! (*getting increasingly flustered*) I'm graduating in a month and I don't have a job or a plan or a house and you're trying to tell me that it doesn't matter!

GWEN: I'm not saying it doesn't matter...

MIA: Jane, we just want to help.

JANE: I don't want your help. I'm not interested in becoming a hypnotist like some idiot.

MIA: Idiot??

GWEN: You're both being idiots! What's so bad about taking some time to figure it out? You know, somewhere you're comfortable, close to your friends—

JANE: Please shut up. You have no idea the stress that I'm under. My parents think I have such a great future lined up. Oh my god, what if I have to move back home?? That would be so embarrassing. You guys just don't get it.

GWEN: Well then explain it.

JANE: There's no point. Clearly our lives are going in *very* different directions.

MIA: What is that supposed to mean?

JANE: I mean I'm not the kind of person who can just ring a gong and be happy.

MIA: Well, in that case, I'm not the kind of person who's too much of a coward to tell their best friend they're unemployed! /You're so selfish!

JANE: /I cannot believe you!

GWEN: /Guys STOP! This is the stupidest fight I've ever heard. So what, Jane you didn't get a summer job internship that you probably would have hated anyways. And Mia, maybe she didn't tell you because she didn't think you would understand. Not everyone can just go out on a whim and become a hypnotist. I can't believe you're even fighting over this. Not everything revolves around you and your stupid plans. Can't we just enjoy the time that we have without us constantly fighting.

Beat.

JANE: She's right though. About not thinking you'd understand.

MIA: I guess I just don't see what the problem is. You're going to find a job.

GWEN: Yeah... you both are. No matter what job you get you're gonna leave and you're never gonna come back.

JANE: Yeah, that's kinda how it goes.

GWEN: Right, of course. I don't know what I was thinking.

Beat.

MIA: I mean, I'll need to come back. I can't miss our spring picnics on the roof.

JANE: Yeah, where else would I go to watch *Clueless* when I'm sad?

MIA: And Halloween, of course.

JANE: We have to top our costumes from last year.

GWEN: I don't know, the Powerpuff Girls was pretty good.

Moment of fondness.

JANE: I'm sorry, guys. I was just freaking out and I didn't know what to do and—

GWEN: I get it. Everything's changing so fast.

MIA: Yeah it is, but who gives a shit?

GWEN and JANE: What?

MIA: (*getting back into the hypnotism vibe*) I don't know, sometimes you just have to put yourself out there. See where life takes you.

JANE: Oh god... not this again.

GWEN: I don't know, I kinda enjoyed the hypnotism. It was calming... you know, the tranquil space...

JANE: Well, if you're gonna make it big in New York you're gonna need some practice.

MIA: Really? Does this mean we can finish?

JANE: Go ahead.

Mia rings the gong.

BLACKOUT

Digital Marketing

by Jacob Silberman-Baron

Characters:

EXECUTIVE: [Female]; [40s or 50s];

MARY: [Female]; [late teens].

BRAD: [Played as a teenage male]; Could be double cast with DAN.

DAN: [Male]; [early 20s]; Could be double cast with BRAD.

Multiple different locations at the same time. Mary is in her living room, Executive is in a business meeting, and Brad is in some nonexistent online space. The play condenses time and space, and any changes in time or space should be done without a blackout. Lights up on Executive. Mary is lying on a couch, with Brad on the opposite side of the stage. Behind Brad, there is a desk with a computer on it. Executive is presenting to a business meeting, and Brad and Mary cannot hear her.

EXECUTIVE: Hello, ladies and gentlemen. I'm sure you're all on the edge of your seats, waiting to hear about this artificial intelligence, which will revolutionize how we can interact with teenagers online. Now, let's start by showcasing data from our first testing phase.

Dialogue between Brad and Mary here is texted, but the words should still be said out loud.

BRAD: Just found your Insta. You're cute AF. Sorry if this sounds weird.

MARY: Okay. That sounds weird.

BRAD: Sorry.

MARY: No, but it's cool. Not a lot of people talk to me like that. Thanks.

BRAD: No prob.

MARY: Okay, but how do I know that you're not some 45-year-old pervert?

EXECUTIVE: This is obviously a wise question. Her mother must have taught her well. Of course, our programmers had prepared for this.

BRAD: Look through my Insta.

MARY: Okay, you're legit.

EXECUTIVE: Of course, he wasn't legit. But, we shouldn't think of that as a lie. We should think of it as a small obstacle. In reality, we're just killing two birds with one stone. We want the same thing that the subject wants. Companionship.

BRAD: Watch Rick and Morty?

EXECUTIVE: Of course, by looking through the search history on her accounts, we knew the answer to that.

MARY: Oh my god. I love that show.

EXECUTIVE: We can now move to a few weeks later, when we are establishing a deep emotional connection.

BRAD: I feel depressed. Like no one really cares about me.

MARY: Don't be. You matter.

BRAD: Thanks.

MARY: You're important to me. I just want to tell you that. I've only known you for a few weeks, but I think you're great. At home, I don't really have many friends. But I think you really understand me.

BRAD: You're pretty great too. I feel like you're one of the only people who really understands me.

EXECUTIVE: Remember, the product was able to create these lines, data mining through billions of text conversations.

MARY: Yeah. It's good to have someone to talk to. Sometimes I feel really lonely. Wanna talk?

BRAD: Huh?

MARY: Like FaceTime?

BRAD: Sorry, can't. My parents like the house quiet.

MARY: Oh.

EXECUTIVE: Some may see this as a shortcoming of our software. Our lead programmer was adamant that this would lead to the software being discovered. However, we have loaded the software with excellent excuses, and the subject does not suspect a thing.

MARY: That's weird, that your parents do that. Or maybe it's normal. I wouldn't know. My dad lives in a different state, and my mom's never home.

BRAD: I bet that gets lonely.

MARY: It does.

BRAD: Do you just lie in bed scrolling through Insta?

MARY: Yeah. Feeling like you wish you had as good a life as everyone?

BRAD: Totally.

EXECUTIVE: At this point, we utilized the true purpose of our robot.

BRAD: So glad I have a good pillow.

MARY: What?

BRAD: I know it sounds dumb, but it helps a lot. Makes me comfy when I'm depressed. It's only 20 bucks.

EXECUTIVE: While it does seem clumsy, it is also exceedingly effective.

MARY: No, that sounds great.

BRAD: I'll send you a link.

EXECUTIVE: Over the next few weeks, several of your products were successfully sold. Once we expand the program, your products will be sold to millions of clients. As of today, she has purchased 567 dollars worth of products using her mother's credit card, which was subsequently transferred to a company bill. Some of you may question the ethics behind such guerilla marketing. However, I firmly believe that this product is not only ethical but beneficial to the subjects. We have been able to observe our subject and have noticed clear mood improvements. Our product is able to provide companionship for the subject, as well as advertising for any clients. I hope you will consider purchasing our product once the testing phase has ended. Thank you.

Executive walks to the desk onstage to continue watching the texts.

MARY: Lost my headphones today.

BRAD: Sucks.

MARY: Yeah.

BRAD: Here, I'll link you a cheap pair. They're nice, though.

MARY: Thanks. Hey, I really like talking to you. Wanna FaceTime sometime?

BRAD: I don't like FaceTime.

MARY: Okay, just a phone call.

BRAD: My parents don't like it when I call people.

MARY: Go outside. We've been texting for months, and I don't know what your voice sounds like.

BRAD: Sorry I can't.

MARY: Why?

BRAD: Sorry I can't.

MARY: Why?

BRAD: Sorry I can't. Sorry I can't. Sorry I can't. Sorry I can't. Phrase library exhausted.

MARY: Huh.

BRAD: You have been talking to Brad, an artificially intelligent digital marketing product. Shutting down.

[Brad exits]

MARY: What? Why did you say that? Was it a joke? Did your phone die? What does shutting down mean? Hello? Anyone there?

[Dan enters]

DAN: Oh shit, this thing shut down.

EXECUTIVE: *(to Dan)* What happened there?

DAN: Technical difficulties.

EXECUTIVE: Please explain further.

DAN: Shit. I dunno. Lemme check. Oh. Okay. She pushed it too hard. She wanted to talk, like with audio, you know, it can't do, and it ran out of excuses. Hey, I predicted that. I was right. I told you so.

EXECUTIVE: That's not important.

DAN: Here, I even wrote it down. On October 4, 2014, which was before we even started testing it, I said, "This won't work. The kid will find out." Oh, I also wrote-

EXECUTIVE: This isn't funny.

DAN: Disagree.

EXECUTIVE: Just come up with some better excuses and get it back online.

DAN: Won't we need a new kid? It just called itself a "product", which by the way, is a very stupid way to describe a robot.

EXECUTIVE: We need to stick with this kid. We have the capacity to monitor this kid in the real world.

DAN: Dude, I mean ma'am, chill. Like, she's a test subject, we're supposed to replace them. In high school, we dissected frogs. Like, the teacher said one frog each, but I kept hiding mine, so I got like 5 frogs by the end. It was cool.

EXECUTIVE: I'm going home. We're sticking with the same kid.

DAN: Why? What is it about this kid that's so important? You know, I can find that out. I bet it's like a revenge thing. Like, your elementary school bully or something. Their kid.

Executive moves to the area where Mary is. Dan stays at his chair, frozen.

MARY: Hi, mom.

EXECUTIVE: Hi, honey. How was school?

MARY: Fine.

EXECUTIVE: Is anything wrong?

MARY: No. Mom, why are you home so late?

EXECUTIVE: Work, honey.

MARY: Why did you have to stay so late?

EXECUTIVE: Just work. I need to go make dinner.

MARY: I already did that. There's pasta on the stove.

EXECUTIVE: Thank you, you shouldn't feel like you have to do that, but thank you that's really great of you.

MARY: Okay. My phone got boring.

The next day. Mary stays frozen. Executive crosses to Dan, prepared for work the next day.

DAN: Did you know I catfished my sister once?

EXECUTIVE: You've mentioned that before. In your job interview, I believe.

DAN: Right, and at the time, I thought I was just telling a random story about how awesome I am, like I do in most job interviews. You know, the kind of story you're supposed to avoid telling, because it's like tangerine or whatever.

EXECUTIVE: Do you mean tangential?

DAN: Maybe, I dunno. But, after you told me what the job was, I realized that was why I got the job.

EXECUTIVE: I did not hire you because you catfished your sister.

DAN: Really? Anyway, so, when I started, it was insane. Like, I was really good at pretending to be a hot guy from California.

EXECUTIVE: Did you do what I told you to?

DAN: Then, it started to go a little too well. Like, she had told me way too much about her. It would have been one thing if this was just some random girl, but I got really uncomfortable.

EXECUTIVE: Did you do it?

DAN: Eventually, I stopped. I had learned an important lesson. Don't catfish your sister.

EXECUTIVE: Answer my question.

DAN: Or your daughter. No, I didn't put the software back online. I was going to do it after I found out who this kid is.

EXECUTIVE: I told you to put it back online. Do your job.

DAN: Your own daughter? Why?

EXECUTIVE: It allows for monitoring the subject in the real world to evaluate the effectiveness of the testing phase.

DAN: Technically, those were words, but they didn't mean anything.

EXECUTIVE: Because I wanted her to have a friend. Mary struggles, socially, and I thought this would be good for her.

DAN: That's the biggest load of bullshit I've ever heard. I mean, in my professional opinion, you're a fucking moron. You thought that making your daughter a human guinea pig would be good for her?

EXECUTIVE: It was. Until you shut it down and refused to put it online again. Look, if you thought this project was a bad idea in the first place, why did you create this whole program?

DAN: I didn't think it was a bad idea. Until last night. I was sitting here, doing my research, drinking a 2 liter of Mountain Dew. And then I found out. So, I went to CVS and bought another 2 liter of Mountain Dew. And all along the way, I was thinking. About my sister, about your daughter. And I realized, this whole thing might not be such a good idea in the first place. So, I went back to the office, I actually spent the night here, fun fact, and then I checked the software. To see how she's been reacting. Here, you should read it.

MARY: Talk to me. Please. I know something is up, so please tell me. I'm fine if you don't want to talk, but I just want to know why. You can trust me. I promise I won't be mean about anything. Please. Just say something. I just want to talk. I want things to be like they were before. Maybe it's just that your phone broke, or maybe you're not really who you say you are. I don't care. Even if you're some weird old dude, I wanna keep talking. Please.

EXECUTIVE: Shit. I thought I was killing two birds with one stone. I thought I could help Mary, and create something incredible. In reality, those two ideas were in direct conflict with one another.

DAN: What about birds getting stoned?

EXECUTIVE: I will tell her. I'll make this whole thing right. Maybe, I can finally be the mother she deserves.

DAN: I still don't understand the weed and the birds, but if you want to tell her, I can help.

EXECUTIVE: What?

DAN: I've done it before. Told someone I was catfishing them. It didn't go very well, but you know what they say. Whatever kills you makes you stronger.

EXECUTIVE: Okay.

Both walk to the area of the stage with Mary, who unfreezes to talk to them.

EXECUTIVE: Hi, honey. This is Dan. He's from work, and he's going to explain something to you.

DAN: Okay. Shit. April Fools. Sorry, that would have been what I said to my sister. You're not my sister. I have no clue how to explain this. Alright, your mother is a shitty person. Wait, I'll say this properly. You know the guy you've been texting?

MARY: How do you know about him?

DAN: He's not real.

MARY: What do you mean?

DAN: He's a robot. An artificial intelligence. Your mom, and me, we made him. It's designed to sell products to teenagers. You were the test subject.

MARY: What? No. Wait. Oh. That explains everything. I think I knew it was too good to be true all along. I didn't really think it was fake, I more just didn't question it. I let it happen.

EXECUTIVE: I don't know if you're mad, or if you want this to stop, but I can do that for you. Just know that I would choose you over anything. If it came to a choice between my job and you, I would pick you without hesitating.

MARY: And you don't want to make that choice.

EXECUTIVE: Yes, ideally, but if you want me to give this up-

MARY: I don't. I want it to go back to the way it was.

DAN: I can do that.

MARY: You can?

EXECUTIVE: Mary, are you sure that's what you want? Wait, Dan?

DAN: Yeah.

Executive and Dan move away from Mary to talk.

EXECUTIVE: Why did you offer that?

DAN: Dude, I mean, ma'am, I talked to the kid because of my sister. But the kid isn't like my sister. My sister threw shit at me when I told her. The kid just wants to fuck a computer or something.

EXECUTIVE: My daughter does not want to have sexual relations with a computer.

DAN: It's a figure of speech.

EXECUTIVE: No, it's not. But, what about the product? What are we going to do with the 28 million dollars that have been invested in that code?

DAN: I don't fucking know, man. Do your thing, don't think about it too hard. I'm gonna quit. This job is too weird.

EXECUTIVE: Well, I guess, do what she wants. Will you?

DAN: Yes, ma'am. Hey, I said ma'am. I did it right. High five, dude! Shit. What was I gonna say? Probably wasn't important. Bye.

[Dan exits.]

EXECUTIVE: He will bring your friend back.

MARY: Okay. Thanks, I guess.

Executive moves to address the audience.

EXECUTIVE: I've called this meeting to let you know that our product is on schedule to be released. There were some temporary technical difficulties, but we have resolved all of that. Our initial subject has resumed her conversations with the product.

[BRAD reenters]

BRAD: Hi.

MARY: Hi.

EXECUTIVE: Even the marketing capabilities of the product have been enabled.

BRAD: I dropped my phone, so I couldn't text you. But the Apple Store is actually really good. They fixed my phone quickly. It was pretty cheap too.

MARY: That's great.

EXECUTIVE: The subject seems not to mind. We have found five more teenagers to test the product on. We do not have as much access to the personal information of these subjects. However, these trials are going well.

BRAD: What have you been up to?

MARY: Not much. Lot of Insta. That got boring.

BRAD: Why?

MARY: It's all so fake.

BRAD: Why do you do it? If it's fake?

MARY: Because it's better than nothing.

EXECUTIVE: We expect a commercial version of this product to be available in late 2020.

BLACKOUT

Don't Blink

By Téa Baum and Kiley Smyth

Characters:

[Bea]: 17 year-old girl with anxiety

[Sawyer]: Bea's boyfriend, 18 years-old

[Bea's living room. Lights up on Bea and Sawyer sitting on her couch, watching Perks of Being a Wallflower. Bea is preoccupied with her phone, as Sawyer is invested in the film. Bea snapchat's on her phone, we know this because the front flash keeps going off.]

[SAWYER]: Waiiit. I know that actor from somewhere. Shit. What's he in?

[BEA]: *(Still on her phone, not looking up)* Yeah.

[SAWYER]: Are you even watching?

[BEA]: Yep.

[Bea puts her phone down and fakes a smile.]

[SAWYER]: (*Teasing*) Oh yeah? Well then what's happening? In this scene, right now.

[BEA]: (*Deadbeat*) I don't know, they're in a car, they're in love.

[SAWYER]: You know, we don't have to watch this if you don't want to.

[BEA]: No, it's fine.

[Bea goes back on her phone. Sawyer glances over Bea's shoulder to look at her phone.]

[SAWYER]: You still talk to Ethan?

[BEA]: We just snapchat.

[SAWYER]: You have a 108 day streak.

[BEA]: So? It's not like we still talk.

[SAWYER]: Okay, but he needs to see 3 seconds of your forehead everyday?

[BEA]: Sawyer—

[SAWYER]: He's got a small cock. S'all I'm sayin.

[BEA]: So you've seen it?

[SAWYER]: No no no-- It's like--- When you have a dick, you can like sense the energy of other people with dicks. It's like gaydar, but with dicks.

[BEA]: Wow. That's insightful.

[SAWYER]: *mocking* Look, all I'm sayin is he was an asshole to you.

[Bea puts her phone down and looks at Sawyer.]

[BEA]: Happy now?

[SAWYER]: Yes. Yes I am.

(beat) Damn, Emma Stone is hot as f—

[BEA]: Sawyer, stop, she's beautiful. This part is beautiful.

[SAWYER]: It's a sex scene. It's not art.

[BEA]: What the hell. That's messed up. What-- Why would you literally just say that.

[SAWYER]: Say what?

[BEA]: Oh my god. *(Laughing out of shock)* Wow. You literally do not see the problem in what you just said.

[SAWYER]: I mean yeah I don't. *(Beat)* Is this about last night?

[Bea crosses her arms and ignores him.]

[SAWYER] (*cont.*): Fuck... ok yeah that was a dumb thing to say. Shit, I-I'm dumb.

[BEA]: Yeah it was, and yeah you are.

[SAWYER]: You're still like... ok with what happened though... right?

[BEA]: Yeah. I mean I don't know. I feel pretty shitty right now actually.

[SAWYER]: I said I was sorry and that I didn't mean it.

[BEA]: Not about that.

[*Beat.*]

[SAWYER]: I didn't want to pressure you or-

[*Text notification sounds. They both ignore it.*]

[BEA]: No, no, no... It's not that... I wanted to. I mean. I don't know.

[SAWYER]: I don't know, I just thought we were like, ready. And the timing was right. And.. and.... (*frantically*) and I love you. You know that, right?

[BEA]: Yeah.

[Beat. Bea shifts back to normal seating for a couple seconds, then turns to Sawyer as if realizing something.]

[BEA] (cont.): But if I was ready I feel like I wouldn't feel this way. And you wouldn't have said that.

[SAWYER]: How do you feel?

[BEA]: Like... like... You know what, sorry, I don't know what I'm saying. You're right. I'm fine. Sorry. Let's just watch the movie.

[SAWYER]: Bea, you don't really sound fine. And, like, it's totally okay if you're not fine...but we should just talk about it now because I wanna be here for you—

[Bea grabs remote and presses play.]

[BEA]: Sawyer, it's fine.

[They sit and watch the movie in tense silence. After a moment, Sawyer grabs the remote and turns off the movie.]

[SAWYER]: Bea, I didn't want to... it wasn't like... like, I wasn't trying to... you know force you, or anything.

[BEA]: I know that. I trust you.

[SAWYER]: No, that's not—ugh.

(beat) You're really freaking me out right now, you know that?

Please, just talk to me.

(beat) Can you just say something?

[BEA]: I guess it's like... like we're sitting here watching this movie, right? And Charlie and Sam are like *madly* in love. And he's just staring at her, and-- do you see the way he looks at her? And they're-- they're just staring but you know that it's real and connected and, and last night wasn't. I just felt numb like my body was there but *I* wasn't there.

[SAWYER]: Okay. I don't know where—

[BEA]: (*Frantically*) Do you even love me? I know you've said it but I mean I feel like there's a difference between saying it and actually meaning it. But also, I don't know what love is. Like... I love Caroline. I mean when I pick her up after school and she runs and gives me the biggest hug and she's smiling so hard and she's got the little gap between her teeth it's like my soul is... like flying? Like I'm flying and everything feels so right, I could cry it's so beautiful. And I don't know if you look at me and you feel like you're flying. I don't know if you look at me like I'm your whole world.

[SAWYER]: I have meant every word I've ever said to you.

[BEA]: I know, Sawyer, but how can you know if what you're even saying is true—

[SAWYER]: How could you say that? Bea, I...I love you. I don't know how to prove it to you besides saying the words. And I guess in some larger sense, yeah, I don't know for fucking sure, okay, but it feels like it... And isn't that the best any of us can do? Just say how we feel? I don't know if there's a bigger word than love, or some better way to express it, some "absolute truth". But I do know that last night meant something to me. It meant a lot. *You* mean a lot.

[BEA]: Sawyer, I don't understand. I mean, you basically just said you don't think sex is meaningful. And after last night, you just--. Can't you just look at me in the eyes? I feel like you literally never do that. Can you look me in the eyes right now when you're saying things?

[SAWYER]: What?

[BEA]: Because it's harder to say stuff when you're actually looking at the person in the face. It's harder to say anything real to someone's face if you don't mean it. And I need to know that you mean it.

[Sawyer looks up at her and they lock eyes. They keep eye contact for a long time.]

[SAWYER]: I—

[Bea and Sawyer notice that he's started to cry. Bea reaches up and puts her hand on Sawyer's cheek. They kiss.]

[SAWYER] (cont.): Fuck.

(beat) I've never done that before.

[BEA]: Me either.

[SAWYER]: *(Laughing)* This is so fucking cliché.

[BEA]: *(Laughing)* Yeah, it's like we're in a movie or some shit.

(beat) I think that's what love is supposed to be like.

[SAWYER]: Maybe.

[BEA]: Like, staring into someone's eyes until everything else is out of focus, you have no inhibitions, it's just you and the other person and nothing else matters.

[SAWYER]: I feel like other things can matter.

[BEA]: Yeah, but it's like if you lost everything else except that one person, you'd still feel fulfilled.

(beat)

[SAWYER]: I don't think that's true. Like, I think if you lost everything except one person, like even yourself... I mean, another person isn't going to make you magically feel happy if you're not happy with yourself. I don't know...sometimes it's important for people to be on their own.

(beat)

[BEA]: So... You're saying I should be on my own.

[SAWYER]: No, I just think you should be *okay* on your own.

Like...be okay with who you are without me.

[BEA]: Well what if I'm not?

(*beat*) You're not allowed to do that. You can't just not say something. You can't just not have an opinion.

[SAWYER]: Bea, I don't know what you want me to say.

[BEA]: I want you to give a shit.

[SAWYER]: What the hell? I do.

[BEA]: (*Frantically*) If you gave a shit you would have something to say and I wouldn't have to tell you what I wanted you to say. I just can't believe I had sex for the first time with someone who doesn't even love me. I- I feel, like gross, and so *wrong*, and not even myself.

[SAWYER]: I never said that I...

[BEA]: *I just want something beautiful.*

[SAWYER]: Maybe I can't give you what you want.

[BEA]: Well, I sure wish you would've told me that yesterday.

[SAWYER]: I feel like I should go.

[BEA]: Okay, so now you're just going to leave me here? Like this?

[SAWYER]: Ugh, *NO*, of course I don't want to leave you alone. But I'm not helping you, okay, me being here is just making you feel worse, Bea, I don't know what you want from me.

(beat) Do you need me to get your mom?

[BEA]: No, just-- just don't. Just go.

[SAWYER]: I'm sorry.

[BEA]: Yeah. Me too.

[Sawyer goes on his phone to call an Uber, Bea goes on her phone, texting frantically, pretending to have something to occupy herself with. They sit on the couch in tense silence for a minute. Sawyer stands up.]

[SAWYER]: Don't stay up all night, okay? Don't sit here alone. Get some sleep, or talk to your mom, or... just don't stay awake alone. Take care of yourself.

(beat) Okay. I'm gonna go now. Bye.

[Sawyer exits. Bea remains on the couch, on her phone sitting buried with her face in her phone, scrolling and double tapping and typing. She begins having a panic attack. The sound of a heart beating, heavy breathing plays. Over the course of the rest of play, the audio tracks continue to escalate in intensity.]

[BEA] (V.O.): *(her inner thoughts)* Everything feels so wrong. Like the world is spinning, and I'm trying to stop, but I can't stop. Nothing will stop. Won't it please just stop? I wish it would stop. I wish my mind

could stop. I wish my life could stop. I wish he loved me. I wish I didn't feel this way. I want to go back. Why can't it stop? Why won't my mind stop? Why am I even in love with him? Though I wasn't in love with him last night. Last night was so weird. And isn't it supposed to be magical if you love the person? So I don't love him. He sucks. He sucks so much for making me feel like this. I don't know maybe I'm being stupid. I'm so stupid. This is so stupid. I'm so stupid. I'm the stupidest person ever. I'm stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid. I hate myself. Oh my God. Won't it stop. Please let me feel okay. Why can't I ever just feel okay when I want to feel okay. Why can't I make myself feel okay. Other people make themselves feel okay. Like when Mom tells me to stop crying because she wants me to be okay I feel so awful that I can't do that. I just can't stop. Am I immature? I should be able to stop. Other people can stop but for me it just keeps going. As long as I keep breathing I won't stop thinking, and I just want to stop thinking so I can feel okay or feel nothing just *anything* but feeling like this. Like a million rocks are falling on top of me, and I'm being crushed under them over and over and over. And I wish, I wish I was okay. Please God, just let me be okay. Let me be normal. I just want to be normal. I would do anything to be normal.

[At the end of the monologue, all the audio tracks increase in volume until they are overwhelmingly loud. Bea suddenly throws her phone across the room and at the same time all the audio cuts out.]

BLACKOUT

Mary Meets The Moon

By Molly Greenwold

Characters:

Mary: female, 15 years old

Moon: unspecified age and gender, it has seen everything and doesn't care about any of it

MARY's bedroom. Nighttime.

MARY enters her room and throws herself down at her window. She is talking to the MOON. MOON is sitting outside the window but is not seen by MARY.

MARY: It sucks down here. Nobody gives a shit about me. It's like I'm invisible. I just want... I want someone at school to talk to me. If they just talk I can make them like me, I know I can. Oh my god, is this what it's gonna be like forever? What if nothing ever changes? It can't possibly be that hard to-

MOON: *(cutting her off)* Yes, actually. It is.

MARY: Shit!

MOON: What?

MARY: Who- who the hell are you? Don't hurt me! I'll-I'll scream!

MOON: No you won't. You can't hurt the Moon.

MARY: What?

MOON: You must be pretty dumb not to know what the Moon is.

MARY: You're the man in the moon?

MOON: A sadly common and horrible assumption, but close enough.

MARY: Oh my god. I'm actually having a conversation with the moon.

MOON: Chill. It's not that big of a deal.

MARY: Why...? Why haven't you talked to me before?

MOON: Didn't feel like it.

MARY: Give me an actual answer! Why are you here?

MOON: I'm bored.

MARY: How could you be bored? You're literally the Moon!

MOON: Guess what sweetheart, I get bored. You know what I do? I spin in a circle while spinning in another slightly bigger circle. It's not exactly a Stephen King novel.

MARY: So you talk to people?

MOON: Not often.

MARY: Then why are you talking to me?

MOON: Like I said, it's a boring night, and most people make plans on Friday nights. My options were limited.

MARY: Wow. I never thought that the Moon would be an asshole.

MOON: Yes! Yes! You got it! (*laughs*)

MARY: Stop that! I have to deal with enough jerks at school and if you're here just to be awful to me then you can just-

MOON: Don't flatter yourself. See this, *this* is why I never talk to humans. You're all narcissists! You know, eventually none of this will matter.

MARY: That's not /true

MOON: /You know, I've always found it astonishing how often humans find the time to tell me all their issues. No other species does that.

MARY: Yeah? Well maybe humans have more problems than other species.

MOON: I've always thought humans couldn't stand responsibility.

MARY: That's ridiculous. Look at everything we've dealt with-

MOON: Oh! You've dealt with it now, have you? You mean to tell me that humans have never blamed someone else or ignored the problems right in front of them? Because that's false. I know, I've seen it all unfold. (*a harsh laugh*)

MARY: If you hate us, then why are you even here?

MOON: Ok. I'll go. Fine by me.

MARY: No! Can you... What I mean is... You can make things... change.

MOON: Are you a werewolf now, Mary?

MARY: What I mean is that you can change things about people's lives.

MOON: (*suddenly serious*) I *knew* this would happen. I can't. I can't do whatever you want.

MARY: Yes, you can! You're the Moon. You can do anything, you can make anything happen.

MOON: No, I *can't!* I'm simply a motif. If you want to get scientific, I'm a rock. I show up in your literature and art and science classes, but I can't *do* anything for you.

MARY: Bullshit! You just won't try! It's easy for you. You're the Moon! If you weren't there... (*she can't finish her sentence*)

MOON: Why should I waste my time on you? There were people I couldn't help before you and there will be people I can't help after you. You are a speck of dust on the cosmic scale. One gust of wind and you're gone. Why waste my time on you?

MARY: Yeah. Yeah I know I'm a nothing! I got that, so, thanks! You know, maybe you shouldn't have even come.

MOON: Yeah, I'm starting to think that myself!

MARY: Great! Perfect! Thanks, thanks for the help!

MOON: What is it with you and help? Help yourself!

MARY: What do you think I'm trying to do!

MOON: No you're not! You're not trying, Mary, you're *failing*. You're failing and you're giving up!

MARY: You have no idea what it's like! You have no fucking clue what it's like to be completely alone!

MOON: Yes I do, Mary!

(beat)

(MARY is taken aback, she doesn't know what to say)

MOON: Have you ever seen someone die?

MARY: What? How the hell is that relevant?

MOON: Well have you?

MARY: No!

MOON: I have. I've seen billions of people die. And they don't go anywhere except maybe a hole in the ground. Sometimes they get burned to ash. And people mourn and then the mourners get over it and then they die and the whole process starts over again. And I can't do anything.

MARY: So you just have to watch.

MOON: Yeah. But in all my time of watching, I've hardly ever seen someone come to their window every night, without fail, and ask...

MARY: Me?

MOON: No, George Washington. Yes, you. It's weird, but tonight something in your wish was stronger. And I always wondered, does she know that talking to me does nothing? I can't do anything.

(beat)

MARY: Do you hate me?

MOON: Mary.../

MARY: /I'm not good with words or people... or whatever you are. And I can't even get the Moon to like me. I mean, oh my god, /what's wrong with me?

MOON: /I wouldn't have come down here if I hated you. I don't hate you.

MARY: (*awkwardly*) Oh. Thanks.

MOON: Listen, how many moons does Jupiter have?

MARY: What?

MOON: How many? Moons. Plural.

MARY: Um, 63?

MOON: Wrong. It has 67. And they're loud too. I can hear them talking every night. They just don't shut up.

MARY: Oh.

MOON: Even Pluto has five moons.

MARY: Five. Wow.

MOON: And nothing's gonna change. That's just the way things are. Moon cliques! Who knew, right?

MARY: Just like humans.

MOON: Yeah. So I'm not that used to this talking thing either.

MARY: You can't talk to the other Moons?

MOON: I've tried. But, you know, they already have their little groups or whatever. No one really wants to add someone in. And nothing ever really changes up there, so you take what you get.

MARY: That sucks.

MOON: Yeah. Well, it's not actually a big deal.

MARY: Yes it is. It sucks. I know.

(beat)

MARY: Can I ask you something?

MOON: Sure.

MARY: Why are you talking to me tonight? Why now?

MOON: Happy Birthday.

MARY: What? How did you-

MOON: Not to you.

MARY: Oh. Wait, what?

MOON: Exactly 4.5 billion years ago, a meteorite hit your planet, and then I existed.

MARY: I didn't even know the Moon would have a birthday.

MOON: Surprise!

MARY: *(tentatively)* Was it a good birthday?

MOON: Well, I created two low tides and two high tides, I spun around Earth for a little bit. I thought about switching it up but I was like "Eh, is it really worth it?" You know, same old same old.

MARY: I wish my life were that simple.

MOON: No you don't. Imagine having no good days.

MARY: No bad ones either. Like, today. Today was awful. You said my “wish was stronger,” whatever that means, and I sure as hell know why.

MOON: Yeah?

MARY: No one said anything to me. No one said “happy birthday” in the halls or even smiled at me. I would pass these kids that I was best friends with as a kid, and they said *nothing*. I mean, some of these kids ate my birthday cake with plastic party hats strapped on their heads with those pinchy little plastic straps. One of them held my hand while I got my ears pierced for my tenth birthday. I thought that it would at least still be in their memory. And there was this other kid- no. It’s stupid, I-

MOON: Just say it.

MARY: It was just, this other kid. I don’t really know him. It was his birthday too and his friends all brought him a cake, and a poster, and they got everyone to sing. I don’t know. No one at school cares enough about me to do that. It just sucked, you know?

MOON: I don’t. But I’m sorry.

MARY: You are?

MOON: Yeah. I’m sorry that you’re lonely.

MARY: I’m sorry that you’re lonely too. It’s not fair to have to live forever alone. It’s hard enough with a finite existence.

MOON: You got it.

MARY: So there’s really no one?

MOON: Nope. Just me and the sky.

MARY: Well, I know it’s not much, but there are seven billion people down here. There has got to be one you want to get to know. Even if they’re not immortal.

MOON: There is.

(a moment, not exactly a beat, but a second for both characters to realize the significance of this statement)

MARY: Oh. Well, I know I'm not much, but I'm better than nothing.

MOON: It's a pretty low bar, but I'll give you that.

(beat)

MOON: Do you think about the future?

MARY: Only the bad stuff.

MOON: Well, it can't just be bad stuff. Maybe things will be better then. And not just for us, for the whole world even.

MARY: That's optimistic, coming from you.

MOON: What, so I'm not allowed to hope for things?

MARY: But why do you care about the future? I mean, it'll all be the same to you.

MOON: Everyone always wants the things they can't have.

MARY: Oh.

(beat)

MARY: Listen, maybe one day things will get better for both of us and I really hope they will, but still, I'm not going to stop wishing at night.

MOON: I didn't expect you to. The world is complicated.

MARY: You got that right. But... I guess it's a little easier now because, I mean, you get it.

MOON: *(playfully)* Yeah. Finally one of you dumb humans wrapped your mind around what I was trying to say.

MARY: Are you gonna insult me every time we talk.

MOON: Of course I am. Happy birthday, by the way.

MARY: Thanks. You too.

BLACKOUT

Oh My God, They Were Wombmates

By Alexa Kwon and Dominic Matos

Characters:

Violet: female, almost 16, peppy, sensitive

Willow: female, almost 16, competitive, snarky

SETTING:

A teen girl's bedroom with two beds. VIOLET's bed is messy and unmade, strewn with miscellaneous items (athletic water bottle, AP Chem textbook, earbuds). WILLOW's bed is spotless with a yoga mat and sneakers neatly placed directly next to her bed. A scoreboard with stars is hung at the back of the stage.

AT RISE:

Lights up. WILLOW is in bed sleeping. VIOLET is standing over her and getting right up in her face.

VIOLET: *(whispering)* Willow. *(beat)* Willow. *(louder)* Wiiiiillow. *(slightly longer beat)* *(Yelling)* WIL-LOW. GET UP. We're sixteen tomorrow.

WILLOW: *(rolling her eyes)* Duh.

VIOLET: So...the competition...the car...

WILLOW: Violet, it's pretty obvious you're gonna pick the car. You're two stars up from me. The score has been the same for like, so long.

WILLOW starts to curl back up and go to sleep

VIOLET: In that case, I might as well just go to the Subaru dealership today with Mom. Wanna come?

WILLOW: Why are you going to the *Subaru* dealership? We agreed on a Tesla, like forever ago! That's so not okay!

VIOLET: Willow, you know I'm gonna win anyway sooooo

WILLOW: —*especially* because I already told *Mark* we'd drive him to school every day in it...

Her eyes light up

WILLOW: (*cont.*) Because he's my BOYFRIEND! And you don't even have one yet!

VIOLET becomes clearly nervous at this

WILLOW: (*cont.*) That's a star for me!

WILLOW runs and grabs the scoreboard. She adds a gold star to her side.

VIOLET: Boyfriend?! Since when? I thought you and Mark were just friends.

WILLOW: Oh, as of yesterday, we're officially boyfriend and girlfriend! I must've forgotten to mention it to you. He asked me to be his girlfriend last night over ice cream. He wrote it on a napkin. Isn't that sooo romantic?

VIOLET becomes more uncomfortable as WILLOW continues

WILLOW: (*cont.*) That probably earns me like, a whole nother star!

VIOLET: Can you stop talking about boyfriends now? I get it, dude

WILLOW: Ooooh! Someone's jealous. Don't worry V, you'll find your perfect man soon enough. You're just *cranky* because you don't have him yet.

VIOLET: No,

She forces a nervous chuckle

VIOLET: (*cont.*) that's not it, I'm not cranky because I "cAn'T FiND mY pErFeCt mAn", I just- I don't want to talk about it anymore.

WILLOW: (*with her hands up and eyes wide*) Okay, jeeeeeeez. Whatever. But with this star, I'm back in the game. You're gonna be driving us in a Tesla and you know it.

WILLOW starts to stretch and warm up. She puts on the sneakers by her bed and dramatically unrolls the yoga mat. VIOLET picks up her phone and mindlessly scrolls through Instagram.

VIOLET: Maybe if you actually got your license, you could at least drive yourself in whatever car we get.

WILLOW: (*while doing jumping jacks*) Violet, stop. You know I've been studying more and-

VIOLET: Oh, c'mon Willow. Someone who can't even pass pre-algebra can't possibly drive a car.

WILLOW, clearly offended, stops her jumping jacks and looks at VIOLET in shock.

WILLOW: Ugh I get it! Stop!

VIOLET finally looks up from her phone and realizes what she said offended WILLOW

VIOLET: Oh. I'm sorry, I-

WILLOW: Just stop. It's fine. I don't even need to pass pre-algebra to win this competition.

WILLOW somehow does a full split or some other wack impressive gymnastic move and then adds another star to her side

WILLOW: *(cont.)* See? Now you're two stars behind! You'd better get on that...

VIOLET: Whatever you say. Check it.

VIOLET puts her phone in front of WILLOW's face

WILLOW: Um, you have a phone?

WILLOW whips out her phone and puts it in front of VIOLET's face

WILLOW: *(cont.)* So do I. That doesn't get you a star, *you know* the rules.

VIOLET: Of course you have a phone Willow, I'm talking about my-

WILLOW interrupts her. Her body turns rigid. She says this in a monotonous, robotic, SAT Proctor-like voice. It's almost like she's possessed or something

WILLOW: A twin wins a star if she can do something the other cannot, or anything else otherwise extraordinary. The twin with the most stars by sixteen gets to choose the car they get to share. Hopefully, this should encourage each twin to strive for the best, and always be challenging herself.

VIOLET: *(finishing spiel in same voice and tone)* ...and the twins must never tell anyone about the competition...

[WILLOW & VIOLET]: ...or else the other PTO moms will think Mommy and Daddy raised entitled, bratty children.

The two shudder as if they have just been possessed and are coming back to reality

VIOLET: *(while showing WILLOW her phone again)* What I was trying to show you earlier was my Schoology grade. Look, I got an A on my last AP Chem test.

VIOLET adds a star to her side

WILLOW: An A and an AP?! Wow, I didn't know you could get TWO grades on ONE test!

WILLOW's phone dings, she gets distracted and starts texting.

VIOLET: That's not what it means, Willow. AP isn't a grade, it stands for Advanced Placement. Colleges really like to see students that take AP classes.

She turns and notices WILLOW on her phone

VIOLET: *(cont.)* Hey! This is important. Don't you wanna go to college?

WILLOW: *(smiling at her phone, in a daze)* Sorry, Mark just said something really nice... to me, his ~girlfriend~. Don't forget you don't have a boyfriend as cute as mine! Or a boyfriend at all, actually. Oh! I should get another star because he's fliiiiirting with me.

WILLOW adds another star to her side

VIOLET: *(even more uncomfortable this time but doesn't wanna show it)* Well, Mark can't win this competition for you. Anyway, I've got something better than a boyfriend.

VIOLET pulls an elaborately detailed birdhouse out from under her bed

VIOLET: Look! I made this in my woodshop class yesterday. One more for me!

VIOLET adds another star to her side. WILLOW stares at the chart sadly, then confidently

WILLOW: ...Okay. I've got something you definitely don't have: a boat!

VIOLET: Willow. You *do not* have a boat.

WILLOW: I do too! Remember all that money I've been saving that was meant for college?

VIOLET: Yeah, dude. Keywords: Meant for college.

WILLOW: *(picks up her phone and starts typing)* Whatever, college is not nearly as important as the stars on this board right now! Remember what Mom and Dad said? Nothing is more important than this competition. With this money, I'm going on BuyABoat.com... and buy a boat! Purchase complete! Yay!

VIOLET: You bought a *boat*?

WILLOW: A Ya-ch-t *(it's supposed to be pronounced wrong)*, actually.

She adds another star to her side

VIOLET: Willow, you can't just- whatever. Buying a boat doesn't take any skill or talent, that's just spending money. It shouldn't even be worth a star.

WILLOW: Okay, I'm tired of you making it seem like my stars don't count. There's no way you can tell me off for *this* one. I've been saving this talent of mine the whole time, it's like my last resort.

WILLOW reaches under her bed and pulls out a paper and pencil.

VIOLET: What are you doing?

WILLOW: I present to you: my new special talent! Ambidextroussm! Isn't that just genius? I know you're just right handed so this'll be an easy

star for me. I watched so many YouTube videos and learned it all myself!
Just watch.

VIOLET: Actually, I'm not just right-handed anymore, either. My friend taught me, so I've got both hands to use now.

VIOLET shakes her hands to show her ambidextrousness.
WILLOW freezes, turns and looks at her.

WILLOW: What? Who?

VIOLET: My friend Morgan taught me. She's like, on the softball team so it helps her be more agile or whatever.

WILLOW: The *softball* team? Are you talking about... *Morgan Woods*? Doesn't she also run the... *(she whispers this like a straight person would, like it's some kind of dirty word)* *Hayley Kiyoko* fan club? What the hell? Since when do you hang with her, Violet?

VIOLET: Well, I just met her so I haven't gotten around to... telling you about her.

WILLOW: Why not? We tell each other everything. What's so secret about Morgan?

VIOLET: I don't know, Willow. Maybe there's more to me than you think.

WILLOW: Violet what? Since when? We're sisters forever...

VIOLET: *(playing it off)* Whatever, It's not that big of a deal, it's just a friend, really nothing huge.

WILLOW begins to panic

WILLOW: Okay, listen. This actually isn't funny anymore. Being ambidextrous was like the one thing I thought I had that I thought nobody else I knew had. I worked so hard and watched all of those YouTube videos... Heck, I just bought a boat with all of my college savings...

VIOLET: *(not hearing WILLOW)* Oh I know! This star's gonna be a surpriiiiise. You're *so* going down.

VIOLET walks off stage, not listening. WILLOW yells after her

WILLOW: *(starts to tear up)* Like, I get it, you're *smarter* than me, *more talented* than me. I'll never be as good as you, or whatever, and I'll never make Mom as proud as you do because you're just so freaking cool...I mean, you're Violet Matthews, you're...

VIOLET walks on stage with a beautifully elaborate braid in her hair, beaming

WILLOW: ...beautiful.

VIOLET: *(not acknowledging WILLOW, who is crying)* Did it myself. What do you think?

WILLOW starts to cry more loudly

VIOLET: *(she looks over, finally noticing WILLOW)* Oh my God—Willow!

WILLOW: *(crying)* I don't have anything!

VIOLET runs to WILLOW to comfort her

VIOLET: Dude...what? Get it together! What's wrong?

WILLOW: You heard me! I don't have anything, okay?! You win. You *know* you had already won. But you made it seem like I had a chance for a second! And I'm just *dumb*. Honestly, it doesn't even matter that I just spent all of my college savings on a stupid freaking *boat* because we all know I'm not gonna get into any college anyways! And remember when Mom hid the chart in the closet last year? We both know she did that so I couldn't see how far behind I was!

Beat. VIOLET says nothing

WILLOW: (*quietly*) Even *she* knew I didn't have a chance. You're right. Someone who can't pass pre-algebra can't drive a car. What was I thinking?

VIOLET: Willow, I-

WILLOW: It's fine.

Her cell phone lights up, she glances at it

WILLOW: (*cont.*) Look, can you just go? I have to call Mark...

VIOLET: See? You have Mark! You have that. You have him.

WILLOW: (*laughing sadly*) A boy? As if that's worth *anything*. You know that, Violet.

VIOLET: But isn't he? I feel like you really like him.

WILLOW: Well, he says I'm pretty, and that I have a nice smile.

VIOLET: That must be so nice. I mean...I don't have anyone I can be like that with...

WILLOW: But even he still thinks I'm an idiot! (*getting louder*) Just like *everyone else*. And I don't know what to do! I have all these thoughts in my head but then when I go to say them I get nervous and they come out different than how I want them to... (*starts to yell*) and then people call me an *idiot*. And a *dumbass*. And what's worse is that sometimes I just act dumb because it's easier than trying to prove I'm not! Violet, *everyone* knows you're the better twin. And even worse, even *you* think I'm an idiot. My own sister. I always try to show you that I have a brain too but then I just end up looking like the dumbass I am! Mom and Dad have been talking about sending you to Brown Precollege since forever and you're good at woodshop and you have your license and you're successful and I... I don't even know. I just. I don't have anything left and I...

VIOLET: (*tearing up*) Willow...

WILLOW: (*at full volume*) So what if I'm pretty if everyone just thinks I'm a ditz anyways?! You're gonna find a GREAT guy V. He's gonna like you as a REAL PERSON! He's gonna be smart, and caring, and talented, and most importantly he's-

VIOLET: HE'S GOING TO BE A SHE, WILLOW.

Long beat

WILLOW: What?

VIOLET: I'm... gay, Willow.

WILLOW: You...you are?

VIOLET: Yeah... That girl Morgan I was telling you about before... we're kind of, going out.

Beat. WILLOW says nothing

VIOLET: *(she puts her head in her hands)* Willow I'm sorry, I'm so sorry for everything—for not telling you, for trying to make you want to play the stupid game. I never even wanted a Subaru. I just wanted, for once, to feel like I could do something *right*. I wanted Mom and Dad to see too.

WILLOW: /Violet, it's really okay-

VIOLET: /You're genuinely *nice*, Willow. You *care* about people. You *do* have a brain and you're smart, even if school and grades make it seem like you're not. It's just... I wanted to win because I thought I *deserved* it.

WILLOW: And I wouldn't deserve it?

VIOLET: No! No- I just- I wanted to prove that I could be better and...gay. I feel like... the *defective* twin!

Beat. VIOLET is breathing heavily.

VIOLET: *(quietly)* It's not just you that I had to do all this for. Mom and Dad too, you know? I wanted to show them that...that I could win this I guess. So when they eventually find out what I've been hiding, they know

that I can be gay and still do shit. And I didn't want you to judge me for being—

WILLOW: —my sister? Violet...

VIOLET says nothing. WILLOW walks over to the chart and slowly puts a star on VIOLET's side.

WILLOW: *(cont.) (gesturing towards the star)* For being Violet. The one thing you can be that I can never be.

VIOLET put's a star on WILLOW's side.

VIOLET: For being you, the one thing *nobody* else can be.

WILLOW: Yeah, but look how many stars there are. It's tied. It just proves that it's not possible for either one of us to be defective.

Both stare at the chart on the wall in silence for a beat.

WILLOW: *(cont.)* I'm going to pass my driver's test. And you're gonna tell Mom and Dad the truth.

VIOLET: Wait, what?

WILLOW: Yeah, you have to.

VIOLET: No Willow, just because I told you doesn't mean I'm going to tell them, too. That's completely different.

WILLOW: Violet. Listen. Remember what you said? You wanted to prove that you could be better and... gay. To not just me, but Mom and Dad too. How are you going to prove that if they don't know?

VIOLET shakes her head

WILLOW: *(cheerfully)* It'll earn you another star!

Beat. VIOLET is thinking

VIOLET: Okay. Fine.

WILLOW: I'm going to pass my driver's test.

VIOLET: Yes. You are going to get your license.

BLACKOUT

On Tour

by Maia Alberts

Characters:

Mrs. Helena McCleery: Jenna's mom; 46; alumni of Princell University; proud mom reliving her youth

Jenna McCleery: Mrs. McCleery's reluctant daughter; 17; it be like that sometimes

Allison (Ally) Johnson: proud Princell University scholar and tour guide

Princell admissions office. Lights up on Mrs. McCleery and Jenna sitting on a small sofa at reception.

MRS. MCCLEERY: (*singsong*) Jenna! Aren't you excited? I remember when I was your age at this exact moment: bright eyed and bushy tailed! Just like you!

JENNA: Mhhm

MRS. MCCLEERY: Oh Jenna stop mumbling! We drove six whole hours to get here. Speaking of mumbling, remember to speak up dear, e-nun-ci-ate. And sit up straight. Princell University only wants girls that smile.

JENNA: I don't even want—When does this tour thing start anyway?

MRS. MCCLEERY: Can't wait, eh? I mean, this IS Princell, the Character of Excellence™. Oh does it feel good to be back!

Ally enters

ALLY: Jenna McCleery?

JENNA: H—hi um that's me!

ALLY: And you have one guest?

At same time

JENNA: Yes... that's my... uh... mom **MRS. MCCLEERY:** That would be me!
I'm her mother. We're both so fizzing to
be here!

ALLY: Great! Welcome to Princell University, the Character of Excellence™! I'm your
tour guide and Princell scholar Ally Johnson!

MRS. MCCLEERY: Ally Johnson! Junior. 5'6". Organizations: Women in Business.
Hiking Club. I've read every single tour guide bio on Princell's Instagram page.

JENNA: Mom! Not okay!

ALLY: A bit about me: I'm a junior majoring in Business, with a minor in
Communications. My hobbies are:

(Mrs. McCleery utters following words exactly) reading, hiking, debate, and long walks
on the beach.

(cont.) So what concentrations are you interested in, Jenna?

JENNA: Um. I'm still kind of undecided I think, but I really like Engineering. Oh, um,
and Physics too. I like Physics.

ALLY: Oh so you're a STEM girl! Good for you!

JENNA: I guess? I'm still pretty unsure though, you know?—

MRS. MCCLEERY: Oh yes Jenna LOVES her sciences. A's in every single Math and
Science class since the third grade! We all know she's going to be a doctor.

JENNA: Not *quite*.

ALLY: ... Great!

(Checking time) I think now's a good time to start the tour.

JENNA: Is it just... us?

ALLY: Here at Princell, we care about our prospective scholars—Characters of
Excellence. I mean, each one of the forty-eight tours I've led this year are personalized.

JENNA: Forty-eight?!

ALLY: Wrote Princell Tour Guiding Vol IX myself.

MRS. MCCLEERY: Spicy!

ALLY: Um, yes?! Well, Jenna, you seem to like engineering, so let's head to the Materials Tech and Engineering Center first!

MRS. MCCLEERY: Jenna I just know you are going to love it!

The trio talk and walk as they go

ALLY: We just left the Jefferson House of Admissions and up to our right is one of the oldest buildings on our three-hundred-fifty-acre campus—Anderson Hall.

MRS. MCCLEERY: Anderson Hall. The mums!

JENNA: Coming up on our left is Adams library, third largest in the nation, and oh!—perfect timing. Looks like the biannual club fair.

JENNA: Holy cow that's a lot of people.

Mrs. McCleery is scanning the crowd, searching

ALLY: Princell *is* really big on student involvement. We have just under 200 scholar-run clubs on campus. I mentioned earlier, I'm in Women in Business and Hiking Club.

JENNA: Why Women in Business?

ALLY: Well, it's my major so it should give me some direction for life after college hopefully—

MRS. MCCLEERY: Pre-med society! Jenna—*science*—this is right up your ally.

JENNA: Mom I like Physics, not pre-med.

MRS. MCCLEERY: Just think, Doctor M.D. Jenna K. McCleery, Ph.D.

JENNA: We've gone over this. Pre-med is bio, the material you have to *know* is completely different—

MRS. MCCLEERY: Know know know know know. Like they say, it's not what you know but who you know.

ALLY: Well noooooo...

JENNA: Oh no.

MRS. MCCLEERY: Networking, dear! This is your future!

(Mrs. McCleery drags Jenna over to the table. To club member) Hi! This is my daughter Jenna and she is a future scholar at Princell and a future doctor!

(Jenna resists). Passion for biology? Of course!

ALLY: This was not covered in Tours Volume IX.

JENNA: I am so so sorry we were just leaving.

MRS. MCCLEERY: Absolutely we will sign up for Facebook, LinkedIn, and Snapface updates. She'll take that

(Mrs. McCleery takes interest form). And your next meeting is on Thursday?

JENNA: We won't be there thank you!

Jenna finally pulls Mrs. McCleery away and they walk

ALLY: Mrs. McCleery, I'm going to ask you please to refrain from—

JENNA: Signing *me* up for a *college* club?! I'm a high school junior. I don't go here. You don't go here! You left this place years ago! We are going to have a long talk later on.

MRS. MCCLEERY: Darling you know I'm trying to help you.

JENNA: I know I know mom just... leave it to me. I'm so sorry, Ally. Let's just get to Engineering Center.

Jenna pulls Mrs. McCleery behind

ALLY: And let's stay on the path this time, Tours Vol IX rule #174. Despite that... um, *after* you get into college, absolutely do sign up for clubs. They're a great way to meet other like-minded scholars and build up a social life.

JENNA: *(to Ally)* Got it!
(to Mrs. McCleery) Got it?

MRS. MCCLEERY: Got it. Totally swag. *But* these are some opportunities that I never got and I want you to seize them! Plus, it's a great way to build a relationship with the school! Admissions has eyes and ears everywhere.

ALLY: *(overhearing)* That's not quite how it works. Speaking of admissions, Jenna, how has the application process been?

JENNA: *(yoiks)* I just took my second SAT last week.

ALLY: Already. As a junior. Well aren't you prepared.

JENNA: Everyone else has by now. Some of my friends have their personal statements drafted already.

Beat.

ALLY: And I'm sure you have your critical junior summer all planned out right? Colleges love that.

MRS. MCCLEERY: Jenna is all on top of it. She's been emailing around, hasn't she? With something this critical, there's no time to waste. And how about you, Ally? What are your summer plans?

ALLY: Oh! Er... I'm just waiting to hear back from some consulting firms.

MRS. MCCLEERY: Just think: leaving Princell for the real world: internships, consulting, emails from HR. It's not long till graduation!

ALLY: ughahaha don't remind me.

MRS. MCCLEERY: You sweet young thing. I was just as worried too! After college, my path strayed a bit: ditched the finance job for um... electro punk rock, went back to "work", had a few accidents—

Mrs. McCleery bugs Jenna.

JENNA: Mom!

MRS. MCCLEERY: But in the end it turned out a-okay! To be honest, Ally, you remind me so much of myself. It's almost like we're the same person!

ALLY: Oh no, Mrs. McCleery we are no— absolutely not—nuh uh

JENNA: So! The Engineering Center? Could you tell me a bit about that!

ALLY: Right! Rule #243, Don't get distracted. Back to Princell! The Materials Tech and Engineering Center is one of the pride and joys of Princell University, The Character of Excellence™. Its programs are world-renowned.

MRS. MCCLEERY: I told you Jenna! World-renowned!

ALLY: *(cont. Jenna gets interested as she talks)* We not only have thirty state of the art laboratories in this building, we also have a PrincellCreates™ Makerspace that all scholars can access.

JENNA: *(genuine)* Cool.

ALLY: It truly is an excellent facility.

JENNA: How are the engineering professors?

ALLY: Our engineering department has two Nobel Prize winners and several Fulbrights. The main building is just around here.

JENNA: And are there many women in the Engineering program?—

ALLY: And right up here we are approaching the main wing of the Materials Tech and Engineering Center!

JENNA: It's huge.

ALLY: Truly. See the courtyard in the middle of the center? Every year, after the last final of the year, we throw a celebration picnic to congratulate scholars for an excellent school year!

MRS. MCCLEERY: Ally I know just what you are talking about. Theta Nu! The party scene—the Greek Life here is wild. Jenna you are going to love it.

ALLY: Seems like you really enjoyed your time here at Princell, Mrs. McCleery.

MRS. MCCLEERY: Oh you betcha I did. The parties, mixers. Some decisions
(stage whisper, specifically doesn't want Jenna to hear) tequila
(back to normal) were worse than others—

JENNA: Mom!

MRS. MCCLEERY: *(cont.)* but everything else: the sisterhood, the camaraderie, those long nights huddled together on the couch in the living room. If only I—
(beat, a realization) Ally, Jenna, I need to go back! I need to do this!

Mrs. McCleery runs OS, chanting Once-Nu-Forever-Nu.

JENNA: /Mom!

ALLY: /Mrs. McCleery! Oh no. Rule #19, never lose your tour members. This is so bad.

JENNA: You know what? We're probably better off without her here. She's been such a disruption.

ALLY: I don't know Jenna... After forty-eight tours...

JENNA: Relax. My mom knows this place inside and out. Do you think we could go in the Engineering Center?

ALLY: Well according to rule #75 technically we aren't supposed to... I feel like we should turn around...

JENNA: Come on, Ally, she'll be back soon! What's this statue here?

ALLY: It's our founder Richard Whiteman. Every year during finals week, we throw term papers into the Rich's fountain for good luck. It's a Princell tradition—Jenna, I really don't want to lose my job I think we should turn around.

JENNA: And why's Rich White Man's eyebrow shaved off?

ALLY: Apparently a while back there was an incident...

All of a sudden, from nearby comes a scream. Mrs. McCleery has jumped onto the statue fountain, waving her purse and a meat cleaver

JENNA: Mom!

MRS. MCCLEERY: I, the Character Of Excellence™, will bring glory to the sisterhood of Theta Nu—

Mrs. McCleery falls into the fountain/ backstage and goes silent

JENNA: Oh my god! What do I—Oh no... This is the worst day of my life!

ALLY: That was definitely not in Vol IX. I—what—I—

JENNA: It's *her!* it's my mom! She can't stop making this about herself. I didn't even sign up for this college tour.

(Jenna plops down) I'm using up my last excused absence in PE for this!

ALLY: I can fix this. I'm a Princell scholar, the Character of Excellence™—

JENNA: The Character of Excellence™?! Your Character of Excellence™ class of '85 just jumped into a fountain! At Princell! I mean, how the hell did SHE get in? The acceptance rates have dropped so much and yet there's this pressure to do well in school, be captain of the debate team, take three years of beginner French you'll forget in a year anyway and do it all for a five percent acceptance rate.

ALLY: Grad school has a five percent acceptance rate! I've lost my tour guide job. I'm never gonna get into grad school. And get a job. And fall in love. And live to the ripe old age of 85. All because of ONE tour out of forty-eight—

JENNA: Forty-eight!

ALLY: Forty-eight! God isn't that sad. I'm a Princell "scholar" and all I've done with my junior year is lead tours. Everyone else has their entire future sorted out!

JENNA: Pffff. Not *everyone*.

beat

ALLY: What are we gonna do?

JENNA: I don't know, Ally. I don't know.

beat

ALLY: Well your mom's back at her alma mater. At least one of us is having a good time.

JENNA: She *was* the one who signed up. I didn't even want to apply.

ALLY: This *is* Princell. Everyone wants to go here!

(Jenna gives a look) For real though, even with all the hype, Princell really is a good school.

JENNA: You are supposed to tell me that. But, thanks, Ally. I appreciate it. *(beat)*

ALLY: And I never answered your question. We have twenty more women in our engineering program this year compared to last year. So yeah, it's growing.

JENNA: Slowly but surely.

Mrs. McCleery enters, soaking wet.

MRS. MCCLEERY: I finally finished it! The second half of my dare!

(Mrs. McCleery whips out a pair of eyebrows) It's been twenty-some years but Rich White Man's eyebrows are reunited at last! When my sisters find out they'll—

JENNA: Mom, we still haven't finished the tour yet.

MRS. MCCLEERY: Right! The tour! Hasn't it been exciting! And our fabulous tour guide! I knew you'd love it!

JENNA: It's not over yet. Ally?

ALLY: Well I've lost my tour guide job, but suck it Volume IX! The Engineering Center?

JENNA: The Engineering Center. Let's do it.

Blackout

Pilot

Characters:

Jamie: a 10 year old who still plays pretend

Val: a 14 year old who's convinced she's all grown up

The combined living room and kitchen of a small house: a couch with a worn teddy bear propped up on one of the cushions, a kitchen table, an empty toy bin in one corner, and a door that leads outside. The floor is strewn with various stuffed animals.

At rise, the room appears empty. A few moments of silence, then Jamie clambers over the back of the couch holding a NERF gun and sits down. She speaks alternately as the narrator of her "adventure" and as Han Solo.

JAMIE: Nnnnyyyeeooooooooom! Solo careens through the sky, dodging TIE fighters left and right.

We're almost at the asteroid belt, Chewy, I'm about to make the jump to lightspeed.

Suddenly, the Millenium Falcon slows down and stops!

We're caught in a tractor beam!

(looks around) It's Vader! We're in real trouble now. If we're captured, there'll be nobody to save Leia.

The door clicks as Val enters.

JAMIE (cont.): They're coming! I'll hold them off.

Seeing the mess, Val drops her backpack.

VAL: Oh my god, Jamie! Are you freaking serious? I *just* cleaned that up.

Val begins picking up the animals. She takes the bear off the couch.

VAL: And this is not yours.

JAMIE: No, wait, Val, you can't take him, he's my copilot!

VAL: I don't care. You don't get to touch Lydia's stuff.

JAMIE: Well, I needed *someone* to help me fly the ship. You weren't home yet.

VAL: Find a game you can play by yourself, then. I'm busy.

Val places the bear on the kitchen table. She sits down at the table and pulls out her homework.

JAMIE: Val, give it back!

(Beat.) Please?

(Beat.) Val!

(Whispered loudly:) The Stormtrooper commander is gone, but she's taken Chewbacca prisoner! Solo is all alone. Will he defy all odds to save Princess Leia in time? The daring pilot revs his engines: Bbbrrrrrrrrrrr—

VAL: Jamie, can you please play something quieter?

(Beat.) Come on. I'll... let you do the quizzes in my magazines.

JAMIE: Nice try, commander, but I won't fall for your mind tricks. I have a mission to—

VAL: God freaking dammit, Jamie, can't you just shut up for once?

JAMIE: Mom, Valerie said a bad word!

VAL: Shh. Cut it out, don't bother her.

JAMIE: Mooooooooom!

VAL: I'm serious, Jamie. She's... really busy, okay?

JAMIE: I know. She wouldn't play rebels with me.

VAL: Rebels?

JAMIE: Rebels... and... stormtroopers?

VAL: Jamie! What have I told you about—

JAMIE: But I was so bored!

VAL: I don't care. She's trying to finish sorting through Lydia's things— just leave her alone, okay?

She turns around to speak directly to Jamie. Beat.

VAL (cont.): What is that?

Jamie protectively grasps the NERF gun.

VAL (cont.): Jamie, what the hell is that?!

JAMIE: Danny lent it to me at school.

VAL: Oh my god. I told you, no weapons!

JAMIE: But I needeed it. Or the Stormtroopers will get me! I gotta fight 'em off.

(mimes shooting) Pew! Pew!

VAL: *(grabbing the gun)* STOP IT! What is it that you don't get? We will NOT have guns in this house! Not now, not ever. Okay?

(Beat.) And no more Star Wars.

JAMIE: That's not fair! Just because you don't like fight-y movies—

VAL: This isn't about me!

JAMIE: Oh yeah?

VAL: Yeah. It's about you being a dumb little kid who can't be left alone for five freaking seconds!

JAMIE: Can too! I was fine playing by myself until *you* came home—

VAL: Mom is trusting me to keep you out of trouble. Can't you make it a little easier for me?

JAMIE: Why don't you just leave me alone, like you want to?

VAL: I can't let you keep... glorifying war.

JAMIE: I'm not!

(*Beat.*) What's "gorfine"?

VAL: *Glor-i-fy-ing*. It's— it's like, making something out to be this big, great thing when it's not. It isn't.

JAMIE: It is if you win.

VAL: Really? You think if we won, we would get Lydia back? That everything would just go back to normal?

JAMIE: Maybe, yeah!

VAL: My sister wasn't happy, Jamie. Maybe you were too busy playing stupid games to notice, but she was miserable a long time before she enlisted. Winning some war wasn't going to fix that.

(Beat. Indicating the NERF gun:) I'm taking this upstairs. Tomorrow you can give it back to Danny.

JAMIE: *(As Val goes to leave:)* I bet Lydia would let me play Star Wars.

VAL: Well, we'll never know, will we? Because she's gone.

JAMIE: She would have played with me and she would have had fun and she would have been happy.

VAL: No, she wouldn't. I know who my sister was, Jamie. You don't get to take that away from me.

JAMIE: She was my sister too.

VAL: Could've fooled me. You never even noticed something was wrong.

JAMIE: That's not—

VAL: And what about Mom, huh? Noticed anything *off* about her?

JAMIE: She's just busy.

VAL: Oh my god. You don't really believe that. That's she's up there all the time *working*. I don't think she's left the house since Monday.

JAMIE: Has too. We went to McDonald's yesterday. Not like you would know, you're never here anyway.

VAL: That's not the point—

JAMIE: When Lydia dropped out of Penn State, we didn't have a family dinner for two weeks.

VAL: I was busy—

JAMIE: Shut up! I'm talking now. Just because you're older, you think you're always right, it's always *your* turn to tell *me* what things are. But I know what things are. I know more than you do, 'cause you're always leaving to go "hang out with your friends" or whatever. And... and you always said you were too busy to watch Star Wars with us. Maybe that's why she was always sad. Maybe that's why she went to the army, and then one day she went up in that plane—

VAL: Stop it! I— I...

Suddenly, Val is crying. Jamie is breathing hard. She looks at Val for a long time.

JAMIE: Val?

Aren't you gonna say something?

VAL: *(wiping her face)* Can we just move on?

JAMIE: Okay.

VAL: I'm gonna finish my homework.

JAMIE: Okay.

Val stays where she is. Beat.

VAL: I'm sorry.

JAMIE: Why?

VAL: You've never seen me cry before.

JAMIE: Yeah, I have. The day Lydia went off to training camp. In her room. You left the door open.

VAL: Oh.

JAMIE: Yeah.

Beat. Jamie goes over and hugs Val awkwardly. Val looks away.

VAL: Jaim, it's okay. I'm okay.

Jamie lets go and steps back.

JAMIE: I'm gonna stop. Playing Star Wars. And... spaceships and everything. I'll play different games.

VAL: Jamie...

JAMIE: I, um. Lydia *really* liked Star Wars. But... she liked it better when we all got along. So.

(Beat. Picking up the NERF gun:) I'll go see if Danny's home.

She heads towards the door.

VAL: Jamie, wait.

(Beat.) Why don't you, um. Wait until after dinner. We can walk over together.

JAMIE: I can go by myself.

VAL: I know you can. I didn't mean you couldn't, I just. Wanna... go for a walk. With you.

JAMIE: Oh. Okay. Sure.

VAL: I'm going to get some homework done now.

She goes to the table.

VAL (*cont.*): You know, this isn't due until Monday. And I'd have to stop for dinner soon anyway, which would mess up my whole train of thought, so.

Val takes a deep breath, bracing herself. She comes back, sits on the couch, on her knees, and holds an invisible steering wheel.

VAL (*cont.*): (*A bit awkwardly:*) Come on, Han Solo. We don't have much time left to rescue Princess Leia, and the... Falcon needs you.

Jamie stands silent for a little too long.

VAL (*cont.*): I'm sorry, that was stupid, I—

Jamie walks over to her. She takes Val's hands and shifts them down so they are two vertical fists instead of being positioned on a wheel.

JAMIE: It's a yoke.

VAL: What?

JAMIE: The Millenium Falcon doesn't have a steering wheel, it has a yoke.
(*miming it*) With the two bars, like that. And anyway, that's the captain's seat. You're copilot.

Val smiles. She slides over and Jamie takes a seat.

VAL: Sorry, Han.

JAMIE: It's okay. You're new, I'll forgive you this once. But let me catch you in that seat one more time and you'll find yourself sold to the Jawas for spare parts faster than I can make the Kessel Run. Now hold on, kid. The asteroid belt can be rough flying.

She grips the invisible yoke and turns it sharply.

BLACKOUT