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## Hustle & Flow: Pitching and Writing to Great Success

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Charles Thomas

Capstone

4/01/2024

### **Pitch Like a Pro: Finding a Successful Formula for Selling Movies and TV Shows**

Before I started writing screenplays it never occurred to me that the process was difficult. That realization came after I completed my first script, titled *Consumed*, in 2006. In fact, I would say that the realization came two-fold: one from attempting to write my follow-up, a terrible, confusing script called *Home*, but mostly from reading tons of books about screenwriting that all led with the premise that the process is basically a magic trick.

I wrote *Consumed* during my undergraduate thesis project. Part of that project was to research what makes an effective horror movie while the deliverable was a horror movie script. I had dabbled in screenwriting before but never had completed a full script. Considering I needed this script to pass and receive my degree, I sat down one weekend and knocked the whole thing out in two days. The feeling of completing that script never left me. I still get a small thrill after completing each project, even after writing over thirty feature films, various TV show pilots, and many short films. Seeing my work up on the big screen is always exciting as well, especially when the audience laughs or screams or gasps during the right moments.

There's another feeling I'm extremely familiar with, and it's not as fun: failure. Committing your life to film, or really any art form, is to get used to the idea you're going to fail 99% of the time. That 1% of success sure feels great, and it must sustain you for the rest of the time, but it is not the norm. People

telling you that your idea sucks or the execution was weird or they hate your face so they won't buy your script is the norm.

To me, writing scripts always felt like putting a puzzle together. It never occurred to me that I then had to take that puzzle and try and sell it to someone. To me, that is the difficult part of this entire process and a skill I need to improve. But what makes a good pitch? How do you create one that sticks in the minds of producers and executives? Is there perhaps a template or at least a guideline I can discover or piece together that will help me on my current pitch sessions?

I will explore these questions and more during my research. Not only will I be learning from experts and other writers who have gone before me, but I will also sign up for pitch sessions to gain experience in the practice. With these combined approaches I hope to gain a better understanding of what it takes to successfully pitch and sell a script to someone who could potentially get it made.

#### The Immediate Issue

Immediately this proposition brings up a major issue. No two pitches will go the same way, and no two people will react the same way. If I pitch the same project a hundred times, I will not only have a hundred different experiences, but I will also get a hundred different responses. I can attest to this phenomenon in a different avenue of garnering attention for film projects: contests. I have two feature films, a comedy called *8-Bit Bloodsport* and a drama called *Kaylee Age 8*, currently making the rounds in screenwriting contests. The responses to both projects are not only all over the place - one could also call them contradictory.

One response I received recently for *8-Bit Bloodsport* is a full-throated RECOMMEND – the reader seemed to not only like the script for the contest, but they indicated they would support the film being made, and that the script was ready for production. Feeling on top of the world, I clicked on the second response when it came in hoping for a similar take. I was sorely disappointed to find this person

didn't like the main character, didn't seem to understand the core concept, and overall think I was a rank amateur.

*Kaylee Age 8* might have given me even more whiplash. The script has previously placed highly in various contests and even won Best Drama at the 2018 Script Summit in Las Vegas. Obviously, the script is solid, for lack of a better term. Imagine my surprise when the script didn't even crack the first round of a recent contest. Two reviews where both readers basically said "meh" and that was that.

What gives? As my mom always said, there's no accounting for taste. Since *8-Bit Bloodsport* is about video games, the first person may have grown up playing them, while the second had no frame of reference. The two people who didn't think anything of *Kaylee Age 8* might've had bad mornings and just weren't happy about anything that day. Art is subjective. The only thing a screenwriter can do is work at making the best script possible. It doesn't matter how amazing or professional the final product is, a reader will inevitably bring their own feelings and bias to it. Pitching and selling isn't about perfection because perfection doesn't exist. What we're examining is how to make the best pitch possible so that when the right producer, executive, agent, or whoever comes along they'll be forced to say yes.

#### Experience Up to Now

I have a framed one-dollar bill hanging on my wall. It's from optioning my first script, *Consumed*, in 2008. Long story short, I dated a woman whose sister was trying to also get into the movie business and loved the script. I don't remember pitching the story to her, so this doesn't count as experience there.

Optioning and selling a script are two different things. According to Michael Deblis III, optioning is "...similar to the concept of making a lease agreement on a luxury car. The producer offers the writer a fee at a fraction of what the script is worth in exchange for temporary exclusive right to purchase the

script. The agreement obligates the seller to sell to the purchaser at a price specified in the agreement. However, the producer would be under no obligation to purchase the script” (Deblis). This is what happened with *Consumed*. The producer who optioned the script tried to get the script made, repeatedly, but ultimately failed. Along the way, we met many people in the Atlanta and Georgia movie scene. This experience is the first of many where I realized the importance of networking. When I first started getting paid assignments for writing scripts, it was largely through networking and word of mouth. The more work I did, the more chances I got to write for money.

I started my podcast Atlanta Film Chat in 2014 with the thought of growing my network in mind. I am terrible at networking events and just end up standing around, talking to people I already know, defeating the purpose of going to the event. It made sense to me to make people I wanted to connect with hang out and talk with me for an hour or so, and this process has worked ever since.

My most recent writing job, *Dirt Track Honeymoon*, came about directly because of the podcast. In 2016, one of my guests was Seth Slick who was working on a movie called *Bloodloss*. Last summer, we reconnected, and he told me he was working with an insurance agent who had a story for a movie and needed a screenwriter. I met with the agent and got the job. It took six years, but meeting Seth all those years ago paid off. What this experience has told me is this movie game is all about patience. You meet people, you act nicely, you do your work, and something might happen years later. Last year, I received a call from a producer I wrote a script for in 2012. He told me there was some movement on it. After ten years! It’s easy to get discouraged, but keeping your head down and doing the work can pay off.

The pitches I’m doing for this project may not pay off immediately, but experience tells me they might down the line. Even if they don’t make these particular movies or shows I’m currently pitching, they’ll hopefully remember me for another project when they need a screenwriter. If they contact me, I’ll be ready to go.

### Methods and Methodology

First of all, what is a pitch? According to film website Backstage, “A movie pitch is a brief summary of a hypothetical film’s components, including plot, setting, themes, and characters. Movie pitches are used by screenwriters who hope to see their idea become a film” (Woltmann). Substitute “TV show” for “movie” here and you have a pitch for a show.

Considering I do want to see my idea become a film or show, utilizing this pitching method to get my scripts to others makes sense. Basically, I need to give people who have never heard of me or my work an idea of what I’m all about and why they should care about the film or show I hope to sell. I have the entire story in my head, and I must find a way to succinctly tell them why it’s worth throwing a ton of money towards to get the project made.

As mentioned, no two pitches will go the same, and no two people being pitched, who I’ll dub in this paper as “pitchees” for the sake of brevity, will have the same reaction to the material. As a result, experience will be the key. Not just my own experience in pitching but learning from others who have gone before me. I will need to utilize both personal and expert experiences to maximize my chances to land a successful pitch. The material I’ve collected for my research includes books, articles, and videos from the perspectives of those who are in the industry and have sold content before or are in the process of selling content.

The other perhaps bigger part of this research is pitching projects. I have several to choose from, but I am focusing on content I have created here during the Master of Arts in Professional Writing at Kennesaw State University. The film and TV social media website Stage32.com has a terrific resource for screenwriters to pitch to executives, managers, and others for a nominal fee, so that is the main source of contact I will be using. Occasionally I will also reference in-person pitches as well.

### My Pre-Research Pitches

Since I began the MAPW program, I have produced what I believe is some of my best work. This includes the aforementioned feature film *8-Bit Bloodsport* as well as a medical procedural TV show called *Pocket Doctor*. These two projects are the focus of my pitches. Various websites have programs that allow you to sign up for pitches for production companies, executives, managers, and the like. These pitches take place over Zoom or Skype and give you a small window to shoot your shot. I signed up for one session with an executive named Gregory Hughes.

The entire session would last eight minutes, but they said to keep it short to allow for questions and comments. I knew I only had roughly three minutes or so to pitch, so I worked on condensing the story of *Pocket Doctor* down to a bite-size portion. In hindsight, I may have gone overboard, but I wanted to leave extra room for questions at the end. You can find this pitch in the deliverable under Appendix A. This pitch went well, and Gregory seemed interested – at least interested enough to ask questions and recall character names. I took that as a good sign and awaited a response. In the meantime, I had an in-person pitch at the South Georgia Film Festival I had signed up for coming up, so I practiced this pitch to recreate it there.

This pitch did not go as well. I went dead last, which meant my anxiety had time to swell up inside of me enough to completely dry out my mouth. At the end of the pitch, the pitches asked questions, but they seemed off-topic and random, like they were ready to call it a day. The winner of this pitch session received a cash prize and a chance to develop the project with the executives involved. Even after they expanded the winners to five, I was not selected.

A week later I received feedback from Gregory. He did not pick up *Pocket Doctor*, although he said the concept was interesting. He did send over some great notes on how to approach my next pitch: “Something that I think can strengthen your pitch a bit more is to give a sense how each show will tackle

each medical mystery and how it is intertwined with Felton's medical mystery that will play out throughout the season. Maybe offer some other medical mysteries that need to be solved and some of the characters who check themselves into the hospital along with the personal stories of the people checking in to seek out Dr Sylvester's expertise. I think by giving the person you are pitching to a clearer sense of the structure of each show, it may give a bit more insight into how the show will evolve over each season and a better feel for the tone and style of the show overall" (Hughes).

Gregory reiterated my pitching style was fine, and I made the subject matter seem interesting. I took this experience as a great first step, especially after the disaster that was the in-person pitch. It was time to do some research before stepping back into the proverbial ring.

#### Literature Review

When I first began writing I enjoyed buying various screenwriting books to help me along my path. I would often browse the aisles at bookstores to see what was new and exciting. I picked up Robert Ben Garant & Thomas Lennon's *Writing Movies for Fun and Profit* during one of these trips. Robert and Thomas are the brains behind the TV show *Reno 911* and movies like *Night at the Museum*. While I initially thought this was another writing book, the stories inside are mainly about the crazy machine that is the Hollywood studio system. They go into great detail about how they got movie deals for movies like *Herbie: Fully Loaded*.

The book was released in 2011, and as a result, comes off as dated in its approach to making movies and TV. "...YES-you need to be in Hollywood, California, if you're going to make even TINY piles of money writing movies" (Garant, 3). This is no longer correct, as I can attest I have made a tiny pile of money writing movies living in Atlanta. They also talk about the indie movie industry like it's a foreign concept, but this was before everyone had cell phones capable of shooting in 4K.



Most of the book still holds up, though, particularly the section “How to Pitch Your Movie.” There are plenty of tips here, including some I already knew, like “...be original, but don’t reinvent the wheel” (Garant, 18). If a pitcher doesn’t have a frame of reference for what you’re pitching, they won’t be interested. They want something new, but not so new the project confuses and scares them.

There are also tips in this section such as “Don’t be afraid to actually play the characters. Take an improvisation or acting class to hone your skills for pitching. Make your pitch a performance” (Garant, 20). Considering movies and TV show scripts will ultimately be acted out on the screen, it makes sense to act them out during the pitch, but it’s a point I never considered. I was a theater kid in high school and loved acting and improv, so I feel I’m prepared to try this out.

While Robert and Thomas’ book is focused on selling to studios, Lloyd Kaufman’s book *Sell Your Own Damn Movie!* is focused on the independent industry. Lloyd is the brains behind Troma Studios which produced movies like *The Toxic Avenger* and *Class of Nuke ‘Em High*. Lloyd was never under the impression he was making high art and just wanted to make fun, weird movies to show late at night. His book reflects this attitude.

When Lloyd speaks on pitching it’s in reference to selling a completed movie, but the thought process is the same. “When it comes right down to it, people are going to give your precious film about 1.7 seconds of their attention” (Kaufman, 74). This has been my experience thus far as well, exaggerations aside. The online pitches have been restricted to eight minutes, with three of those being for me to pitch. In other words, you need to be catchy, and you need to be quick about it.

Lloyd makes another great point: “Your title is arguably the most important feature that will convince people to watch your movie” (Kaufman, 76). I have never been particularly great at coming up with titles, so taking a second to rethink the titles of my pieces isn’t a bad idea. After all, there’s a

chance whoever buys them will change the titles anyway, so there's no need to be precious about them. If a catchier title leads to a sale, it's worth it.

All of the material I've collected has emphasized just how important it is to be catchy and quick. People are busy and don't have time to sit around while I try and think of a great phrase or get sidetracked. I need to figure out how to be interesting to anyone I pitch to, which also means I should be more selective in the pitch sessions I select.

If there's one major element that sticks out with all the research material, it's the importance of preparation. I can have the most interesting, sellable product of all time, but if I'm not prepared for the session, it won't matter. The pitcher will sense I'm phoning it in and could discount me before I even begin.

### Second Round of Pitches

"It's called the movie business, not the movie fun." I've heard this statement in various forms so many times over the years that I've lost count. I'm sure I've said it myself. Basically, it's a reminder that if you're going to take writing seriously you must start seeing things in dollars and cents. Getting wound up about how amazing your script is from a creative standpoint is irrelevant. There is a truth to this, of course. People with money don't typically enjoy losing that money, so they would prefer it if you made something that will get them their money back, or even better, make them more money. This can lead many executives and producers to be risk averse and only make movies and shows they are reasonably certain will turn a profit.

In fact, I would say that's how I approached my TV show concept *Pocket Doctor*. Medical procedurals tend to do well, which is why there are so many of them. The ones that do get picked up tend to last for several seasons. The concept of "people are sick and our heroes are trying to make them better" is simple enough for viewers to understand immediately. Knowing this, I feel I am well-armed to

pitch this project to more people. It's a much safer bet than my other material and should be an easier sell. There are several people at Stage32.com who are looking for TV shows, and I try and sign up for people who are looking for TV dramas.

Pablo Carranza writes in his No Film School article that "There are three major types of 'frames': The Power Frame, The Time Frame, and The Analysis Frame" (Carranza). Pablo argues that approaching a pitch is more like approaching an animal – you must understand what you're getting into or you're going to get hurt. He also talks about The Croc Brain: "Should I kill it? Should I eat it? Should I have sex with it? If the information doesn't fall into either of these categories, it's classified as 'boring' and a neurotoxin is attached to your pitch (AKA, your script) and your prospector loses attention" (Carranza). He compares the pitches to dogs doing a trick – give them a treat, and they'll keep doing it.

Using this information and the great feedback Gregory Hughes provided, I reworked my pitch, which you can find attached as a deliverable under Appendix B. This takes into account the information the previous pitch was missing, namely, how is this show going to reach one hundred shows and make everyone rich? That's what they want to know. They don't care about my creative process; they want to know if they can eat it or have sex with it. They want the treat.

My pitch with a producer named Nick Oleksiw exemplifies this "Croc Brain" approach. He opened the Skype session with some awkward small talk about all his other pitchers "wanting to hop off the call quickly to go do cocaine." I immediately got his dry humor and shot back with "I knew there was something I forgot to bring today." Luckily, this worked. He made another joke, something about the Stop Cop City protests, but I missed it entirely. Then I broke into the pitch. I quickly realized something wasn't quite right, but I ran through my entire pitch nonetheless. He seemed distracted, and I wondered if I wasn't hitting the right parts of his Croc Brain.

When I finished, he said, "This is a medical procedural?" I replied in the affirmative and he replied, "I'm not looking for that. Don't really like them." Later, I checked his profile on Stage32.com, and reaffirmed to myself it said he was looking for any genre of hour-long drama TV. In the moment, though, I thought I had clicked on the wrong person. Luckily, he didn't immediately end the session. Instead, he asked if I had any feature-length thriller film scripts. In hindsight, I wonder if this wasn't part of his game, him using some power moves to satisfy his Croc Brain. Perhaps he enjoys putting people on the spot and putting them in a desperate position.

In any case, as I have written over thirty feature films, I did have a few thrillers to choose from. I immediately began tossing the concepts over to him, and he knocked them down one by one. My last-ditch effort was a script called *FreeWire*, a horror-thriller feature film concept. He hadn't mentioned horror so I wasn't sure this project would work, but he said, "You seem like a good dude, so send it over. My email is..." And the Skype session ended! I wasn't able to get his email in time. Later, I successfully hunted it down, and I sent him the script. He replied that he received the script and said it was nice meeting me. If he had indeed intended on using Croc Brain tricks, then I was prepared for them. My backlog, previous experience, and my improv skills all came into play and got me into the door.

I marked this pitch down as a success, but something didn't feel right. Perhaps it was because Nick was interested in something I hadn't planned on pitching. I had evaded all the traps and tricks he threw at me, but *Pocket Doctor* didn't interest him. Also, *FreeWire* wasn't exactly my favorite script, and I felt like it could've used a few more drafts before sending it to anyone. Also, because he pivoted to me pitching him feature film scripts, *Pocket Doctor* became an afterthought during the entire exchange. His feedback on Stage32.com reflects this: "Pocket Doctor was not quite for me, but I asked to check out his other thrillers! I commended Charles on his prolific portfolio and sadly told him a thriller idea of his was too close to another one I am developing. He was such a nice guy with a great personality, so I hope his thriller *Live Wire* is good!" (Oleksiw). Note that he got the title wrong. This harkens back to what Lloyd

Kaufman said about having a good title. Perhaps it's not memorable enough? Thus far, I haven't heard anything else from Nick about *FreeWire* or anything else.

The one thing I can take from this encounter regarding *Pocket Doctor* is being nice with a great personality can help me in the long run. Considering he mentioned his other pitchers were looking to go get high on cocaine, me being a regular person just trying to sell a TV show may have come off as a breath of fresh air. I'll take any forward momentum I can get. It was time to sign up for another pitch session!

Before I could, something interesting happened. Several years ago, some friends and I came up with a narrative podcast idea, a horror series we're calling *Parasomnia*. We had some preliminary talks with podcast production companies but life and Covid got in the way. Eventually, we picked up where we left off and got things moving again. Between the time we came up with the concept and got it back together to develop it again, an Atlanta native named Dan Bush became a heavy hitter in the podcast world, collaborating with great actors like John Boyega from the Star Wars films. My friends and Dan go way back, so we suddenly had the chance to present him with our spooky concept. This harkens back to my point about networking – you just never know when a connection will come through and present an opportunity.

We needed to pitch to Dan, but we knew it was going to be a little different. Since my friends knew him so well, there was considerably less tension in the virtual room. We were able to talk with Dan before we put the pitch together to get a feel for the podcast industry, something not available to us with my other pitches. Despite knowing Dan, we knew we needed to take the pitch seriously. Again, it's called show business, not show fun, and you must be prepared. As producer Jeff Deverett, who has several films on Netflix says, "...I pitch in two minutes, two to three minutes max. That's all it takes. Because they generally know, right?" (Deverett). We knew we had an "in" with Dan, and he was

interested from our prior conversations, so there was no need to waste his time going over every little detail. He was either in or he was out.

Luckily for us, he was very much in, and we are negotiating contracts right now. He hopes to help us get the podcast made one way or another, either through his company or just using him for contacts to podcast production companies. Would he still have been interested if we'd botched the pitch to him? Perhaps, or perhaps he would have had second thoughts collaborating with us; after all, if we can't do a simple pitch, why would we be able to pull off an entire series?

Now it was truly time to set up another pitch for my TV show *Pocket Doctor*. I hopped on Stage32.com to find my next pitchee, who ended up being Joel Ehninger, a producer with the company Matthew Carnahan Circus Products. At first, I was confused and thought I was pitching to Matthew Carnahan, but luckily I caught this in time. Calling Joel by the wrong name would've ended the pitch early or at least put a damper on the proceedings. I considered changing my pitch from last time, but ultimately, I decided against it. Nick never had any notes on the actual concept of the show, so I had nothing to go on. Besides, he said he didn't like medical procedurals at all, so even if he had notes, they might've been irrelevant. I decided to stick with what I had for the time being.

This pitch was easily the smoothest one thus far. Joel hopped on, we exchanged a few pleasantries, then I went right into the pitch. The words felt natural coming out of my mouth for the first time, and Joel took lots of notes. After I stopped, he had many great questions and seemed genuinely interested in the concept. Most exciting to me was he framed questions from the perspective of potential viewers. He mentioned how the sci-fi concept in *Pocket Doctor* could relate to the current A.I. explosion and how that might intrigue people. Overall, the entire pitch went great, and he told me he would let me know.

Unfortunately, Joel eventually passed on the project. One of the biggest notes from the pitch is he felt the concept was a little too limited. He felt I concentrated on the nanobot technology too much and it made the show seem small. It's a good note and has made me rethink the "Future Episodes" portion of my pitch deck. If a network is going to squeeze 100 episodes of this show out of this concept, I may need to think bigger.

I went with a simple solution. I kept one of the future episode examples a nanobot episode and made the other two examples more generic. There are still sci-fic concepts, but they could go in any direction. This way, when I give them as examples during the pitch, the pitcher will hopefully wonder just where the story could go, and become intrigued enough to request the materials.

At this point I wanted to switch gears. I've been concentrating so much on *Pocket Doctor* that I've been neglecting *8-Bit Bloodsport* and everything else in my catalog. I began scouring the pitch sessions on Stage32 to find someone to pitch this feature film.

In the meantime, something interesting happened. A friend told me she had signed a contract with a manager in town, Laureen Muller with RCM Talent & Management. This friend was kind enough to introduce us via email, and we scheduled a meeting time on Zoom.

The meeting went well. It was a general, so not a lot of pressure. Laureen mainly wanted to get to know me and what my experience was. I recounted my early days as well as the trouble I've had getting a feature film off the ground, including the epic disaster that was *Kaylee, Age 8*. She regaled me with stories of others who have had films and other projects collapse in front of their eyes which I assume she meant to help soothe my ego.

Laureen asked me to send her material, not for her to necessarily represent me, but she wanted to see what my writing was all about. She specifically asked for two scripts that were different from each other so she could gauge my abilities. Comedy isn't her strong suit, but I thought *8-Bit Bloodsport* is a

strong enough story that she could enjoy it anyway. I also sent her a script called *Ride*, a movie about an Uber-driving serial killer. I wrote it outside of school for my production company Hooty Hoo Productions to make. I thought it was a nice counter to the comedy of *8-Bit Bloodsport* and showcase my range as a writer.

I have followed up with Laureen, and she mentioned she got Covid and had to push a lot of stuff back. She said she would get back to me soon, but so far, that was the last I heard from her. I will follow up again.

After that, yet another interesting thing happened. I mentioned the script *Ride*, and we had the opportunity to pitch it to a line producer named Jenn Schwartz who has worked in the industry for years. She is a friend of the person, Eddie Pence, we want to cast as the lead, and she really only agreed to help us because of him. But we still needed to pitch ourselves to her, and that has been a unique experience in of itself.

Jenn knows people, and she knows people with money. Initially, she had agreed to help because I had a connection with a bank that was potentially getting into the film industry, but Jenn wasn't too keen on that. Luckily, we pitched ourselves well enough that she agreed to help us find money. We've started working on an assumptions sheet and plan on coming up with a schedule. Hopefully, I will have more news on that soon, because controlling our own fates with this script instead of having to rely on someone else to make it happen is ideal.

Back to *8-Bit Bloodsport*. I signed up for a pitch session with a manager named Nelson Cole. His profile said he was looking for all sorts of movies, comedies included. He's a manager who was with a firm for about a year but has now branched out on his own. It seemed like a good fit for my first pitch as the stakes were rather low. I have no idea if this guy could even help out if he did pick it up, so I could go into it with no expectations.



Nelson was very nice. He was a little late but apologetic. He had me go right into it, and he seemed to perk up a bit when I mentioned eSports. He REALLY perked up when I mentioned my docu-series on eSports *More Than a Game*. He wanted to know more about that while I was pitching. I tried to stick to the outline I had, which you can see below in Appendix C. I thought about pulling the outline up while I was pitching, but it seemed like an easy way to get distracted.

After the pitch was done, Nelson asked me more questions about *More Than a Game*. He thought it was very cool that I had made that show. We briefly chatted about him going solo and how he thought me being a filmmaker in Atlanta was great. He's from Austin and implied he had admiration for filmmakers not in LA or NY. The pitch was only eight minutes long, so we didn't have time to chat much longer.

Before he left, Nelson said he couldn't wait to read the script. He may have just been saying that, and if my previous pitches are anything to go on, it was just smoke up my rear end. However, I still have hope he might at least want to check out the script based on his interest on my docu-series work. If that happens, it will be a testament to how you can never tell what works are going to grab people and get you attention from the movers and shakers.

As of this writing, there has been no word from Nelson, but I remain hopeful.

Next up is Josh Sathre. He's a production assistant with Amasia Entertainment, and his profile said he was looking for all sorts of features, including comedies. I received an email shortly before the pitch that Josh was having some sort of conflict and was going to be an hour and a half late. That gave me time to look over my pitch again.

I decided to basically go with the first pitch, mostly because I felt pretty good about it from my pitch with Nelson. Also, I didn't have any feedback to go off, so I felt it was decent enough to try again.

Shortly before my pitch time, I received another email that Josh was going to be two and a half hours late. Nothing I could do but wait.

I had a feeling and set up my pitching station early. Sure enough, Josh called me on Skype several minutes before our new allotted time. I was ready, so I hopped on Skype. He apologized for being late. I played it off like no big deal, but he didn't really respond and just said to start the pitch.

Right away his body language was telling me he wasn't interested. It threw me off a little and I could tell I was throwing in way too many "ums." I finished and he told me I had several minutes left. Of course, I knew this because I always make sure to leave lots of room for questions, but he seemed surprised I wasn't using more time.

He asked a few questions. The first one was he was confused if it was modern day or set in 1983. I told him it was set in the modern day but the people in this subculture act like it's 1983, like they're living in nostalgia. He didn't understand. He asked a few more questions about stakes and some other plot points.

We had enough time that he was able to give me some feedback on the pitch. He said the tone was a little off with some of my word choices, like when I described Chong Li beating Renee's brother so bad he "mutilated" him. I realized that word choice was poor right when I said it, so that's valid. He also said he would like to know more of the stakes and to concentrate more on Megaton because "he's my strength." We said goodbye and that was it.

Overall, pretty disappointing. Being late happens, I get it, but to be that late and so obviously not checked in when you do call is pretty bad. Still, to be positive about the experience, he did give me good notes on the pitch, and in real time, so I didn't have to wait for them. The notes he sent after basically said the same thing. He didn't request it, but gave some tips on how he thought I could strengthen it.

As I rework the pitch, I realize I'm not using all of my resources. Earlier in the paper I mentioned I received some good feedback for *8-Bit Bloodsport*. Why am I not mentioning that fact? It might not be a big deal, but it shows that others have read it and approved of it. That sets I apart from many other projects. Also, I had a live reading of the script, I should mention that as well. It's not just another random script, this one has been through the wringer. I should mention all this.

I have included this reworked pitch in Appendix D. I'm off to look for more pitch sessions, but I must cut this paper off at this point. Have I learned enough? Have I made enough of an effort? Do I know how to pitch like a pro, and have I found a successful formula for selling movies and TV shows?

### Next Steps

When I began this research paper, my aim was to discover what constituted a successful pitch, both through reading others' experiences as well as gaining personal experience in the practice. The best outcome during this experiment would've been me selling a movie or TV show and getting filthy rich and famous. That did not happen, so I'm left wondering what to do next. Did I learn anything, and how can I move forward with my pitching?

Just like screenwriting, I learned pitching is mostly about experience. When I first started writing movies I just jumped in and did it. The first one I did was bad, as was the second, and the third, etc. Along the way, I started getting decent, then good, and now I write movies all the time with a confident hand. I'm still improving, but I feel I have a firm grasp on the craft.

Pitching a film or TV show will take the same dedication. I am not experienced in this and won't be for some time. Jeff Deverett came from sales and knew the world of the pitch before he got into the film and TV industry. He knew what it takes to finalize a deal. I don't have that experience, so I must learn it. This will only come through repetition. I do feel more confident with the pitch I crafted for *Pocket Doctor* already, even after only doing it a handful of times. I knew enough to practice it enough

to know it backwards and forwards before I ever pitched it, but talking to myself and talking to a live human being are two separate things.

I wish the feedback from Nelson Cole had come back in time for me to use for this paper, as it will be a big part of moving forward, especially since he so positively responded to *8-Bit Bloodsport*. Whatever Nelson says I did right or wrong will influence my next pitch to the next executive. Or, if his company decides to pick the project up, will make the next steps something else entirely. As of right now, though, the only next step I have is to find another person on Stage32.com (or perhaps somewhere else) and pitch to them. I should also keep an eye out for any in-person pitches so I can attempt that again. Considering that was easily my weakest performance, there is considerable room for improvement.

I also need to expand to the rest of my portfolio. I could pitch my award-winning script *Kaylee Age 8* to people looking for a family drama film. There are several horror movies in my portfolio, and horror films are considered very reliable when it comes to making money. *Pocket Doctor* isn't my only TV show, so perhaps pitching a half-hour comedy or a cartoon would fare better. Either way, now that I have several pitches under my belt, I need to keep at it. Most importantly, I feel confident in the material I'm presenting, so I know I just need the right person. It just takes one champion to grab the baton and run it across the finish line.

#### Taking Pitching to the Next Level

When I was little, I wrote a short story. I had been reading the *Bunnicula* books, the ones where a bunny rabbit becomes a vampire, and I wanted to write my own version. In other words, I was committing blatant plagiarism, but my excuse is I was like ten or something.

Anyway, I showed it off to everyone. I went over to my dad's place to show him. He read it, said it was great, then got drunk and spilled his drink all over it, ruining it. If I had to compare the constant

rejection over the years to anything, it would be that. A moment of praise, and then they dump a screwdriver all over your work and pass out.

I know it's just a numbers game, and I will find success again. However, I must cut this paper off at some point, or it will go on forever. But that's kind of the point, isn't it? This is a forever thing. If I want to have a real career in the arts, this paper can never end. Maybe I stop writing physical writing it, but the paper itself will go on forever. Otherwise, it means I've stopped trying.

I titled this paper *Hustle & Flow* due to a love of the movie of the same name. When my friends and I were making our stop-motion web series *Orgazimation*, we would watch movies as we animated all day and night, and one of those films was *Hustle & Flow*. None of us are rappers or even huge rap fans, but that movie hit us all square in the chest.

It felt like the movie was speaking directly to us, even though we were making goofy Claymation shorts and not hip-hop. I think it was the fact that DJ knew what it takes to make it in any industry, and that's constant hustle and flow. The flow doesn't mean anything without the hustle, otherwise nobody will hear the flow.

Since I started this paper, I became a Screenplay Programmer for the Atlanta Film Festival's Screenplay Contest. It has been very eye-opening. There is so much talent out there, and you really do have to be at the top of your game at all times. More than that, though, the job has taught me that talent is truly only half the story. If you can't get yourself out there and noticed, an amazing script is just that, an amazing script. It won't be made into a film.

Ultimately, what I want is a film, not just pieces of paper. I will continue my pitching journey after this project is done. Hopefully, I will remember these lessons after I find some success. I would hate to sell a movie, have it do well, and not be able to follow up because I forgot to continue the hustle

portion of "Hustle & Flow." As hard and long as I've worked towards this, it feels like getting my fingers on the ball and then dropping it would be worse than never getting a touch in the first place.

## Appendix A

### Pocket Doctor First Pitch

Right now in your pocket you have a phone that can tell you basic information about your body – heart rate, calorie intake, steps you’ve taken. In the world of Pocket Doctor, you can get a chip injected into you that gives you full access to your health. If you fart and cough weird, it’ll tell you why. In other words, a doctor in your pocket. You’re probably aware that a lot of rural hospitals are having major money trouble and many are even closing. That’s the life that Dr. Emily Sylvester lives with each day, solving medical mysteries in a small-town hospital called Worthy County Hospital that’s always threatening to close.

One day, a young man named Felton gets rolled into the ER. He’s a local kid, lives in the big city now, but came back for a family BBQ, where he collapsed. Felton should not be sick – his Pocket Doctor says so, but he also has the brand new nanobot upgrade. These nanobots are injected into you and fix everything that goes wrong – if you have heart palpitations, the nanobots diagnose it and fix it. So there is no reason why Felton is sick, much less dying.

Dr. Sylvester and her team, Dr. E, the cardiologist, and Dr. Bonaventure, who is basically a human version of those cancer-sniffing dogs, must figure out the mystery. There’s also Katie the Intern who is still learning the ropes, but she has a tendency to freak out during a crisis. Things get worse when the Pocket Doctor rep comes into town, accusing them of malpractice, saying they’re killing Felton and screwing up their tech.

In real life, this nanobot tech is about ten years away, and something we’ll be dealing with. This show gets ahead of the curve and explores the question of what is medicine? Dr. Sylvester is very wary of this new tech, but some of her peers love it, saying well we have pacemakers, what’s the difference? I have a script and a pitch deck I’d like to send over if you’re interested. That is Pocket Doctor!

## Appendix B

### Pocket Doctor Second Pitch

Right now in your pocket you have a phone that can tell you basic information about your body – heart rate, calorie intake, steps you’ve taken. In the world of Pocket Doctor, you can get a chip injected into you that gives you full access to your health. In other words, a doctor in your pocket. You’re probably aware that a lot of rural hospitals are having major money trouble and many are even closing. That’s the life that Dr. Emily Sylvester lives with each day, solving medical mysteries in a small-town hospital called Worthy County Hospital that’s always threatening to close.

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Dr. Sylvester and her team, Dr. E, the cardiologist, and Dr. Bonaventure, basically a human version of those cancer-sniffing dogs, must figure out the mystery. Things get worse when the Pocket Doctor rep comes into town, accusing them of malpractice, saying they’re killing Felton and screwing up their tech.

They figure out the mystery of what’s wrong with Felton – spoiler alert, his healthy spinach heavy diet was messing with the nanobots – but each week a new medical mystery in this brave new world comes up. For example, one episode features a young teacher who during class one day finds that she doesn’t have control over her own limbs. Did her students hack her nanobots, or has something worse gone wrong? Another episode features an old farmer, who has had a lifetime of sickness and other issues, who comes into the ER not because he’s sick, but because he’s healthy for the first time.



He hasn't even heard of the nanobot tech, but he has them – but they're not his, so where did they come from?

In real life, this nanobot tech is real, and it's just down the road. This show gets ahead of the curve and explores the question of what is medicine? Dr. Sylvester is very wary of this new tech, but some of her peers love it, saying well we have pacemakers, what's the difference? Medical procedurals do well, and I feel this one has enough of a sci-fi twist to it to make it relevant. I have a script and a pitch deck I'd like to send over if you're interested. That is Pocket Doctor!

## Appendix C

### 8-Bit Bloodsport First Pitch

My film is a comedy called 8-Bit Bloodsport. It's the tale of the most accomplished weightlifter in the United States who has always been number one. Perfect role for someone like John Cena, The Rock, Dave Bautista. He wins every competition – until one day he doesn't. His body catches up to him. So he cheats with steroids, he's caught, he's kicked out forever. Now what?

One day, he stumbles upon an underground eSports league. Like most people, he grew up playing video games. Megaton wants nothing but to dominate this league. But that will be difficult, because this place is different.

eSports games in today's world include League of Legends, Street Fighter 6, stuff like that. This underground group basically lives in 1980, nothing past 1983. They play Atari 2600 games, the music is from 1980, and in fact you can't take any modern tech inside, much to Megaton's chagrin. He measures everything about himself, his heart rate, blood pressure, calorie intake, etc, through machines, but he isn't allowed any of that here. He literally has to strip himself down to learn how to compete for competition's sake and learn how to play, lose, and win honorably. This will be tough, as his past threatens to ruin his chances forever.

He'll meet some friends along the way. There's Holiday, an old trucker who grew up playing in the arcades back in the 80s all over the country, and he missed it. He started the underground tournament and has put his life savings in it so he really needs it to work.

There's also Renee, a business woman who has no interest in video games, but is solely competing to get revenge for her little brother. An evil, sadistic man beat him so badly one time her brother ended up in an iron lung. Renee wins games by sheer anger and hatred alone.

Last but not least there's Chong Li, the mysterious evil entity everyone fears. Nobody knows anything about him other than he named himself after the villain from the movie Bloodsport and absolutely destroys anyone in his path. He put Renee's brother in the iron lung and has given other people heart attacks and hernias. He is a bad dude.

All these people and elements will come to a huge confrontation, and it will be epic.

Why this film? I grew up playing video games, and the Atari 2600 was my first console. Then the NES, then the Sega Genesis, and so on. I love video games and I've even made a docu-series about eSports called More Than a Game. eSports is one of the fastest growing industries in the world, some saying it's overtaken the NBA as far as money flowing through it. So it has a built-in audience clamoring for this material.

Overall, though, I just think it's fun. This is the kind of movie I would want to watch as a video game fan, and I think others will feel the excitement as well. I have a script and a pitch deck I'd love for you to check out when you get the chance. That is 8-Bit Bloodsport.

## Appendix D

### 8-Bit Bloodsport First Pitch

My film is a comedy called 8-Bit Bloodsport. It's the tale of the most accomplished weightlifter in the United States who has always been number one. Perfect role for someone like John Cena, The Rock, Dave Bautista. He wins every competition – until one day he doesn't. His body catches up to him. So he cheats with steroids, he's caught, he's kicked out forever. Now what?

One day, he stumbles upon an underground eSports league. Like most people, he grew up playing video games. Megaton wants nothing but to dominate this league. But that will be difficult, because this place is different.

eSports games in today's world include League of Legends, Street Fighter 6, stuff like that. While the film takes place in modern times, this underground group basically lives in 1980, nothing past 1983. They play Atari 2600 games, the music is from 1980, and in fact you can't take any modern tech inside, much to Megaton's chagrin. He measures everything about himself, his heart rate, blood pressure, calorie intake, etc, through machines, but he isn't allowed any of that here. He literally has to strip himself down to learn how to compete for competition's sake and learn how to play, lose, and win honorably. This will be tough, as his past threatens to ruin his chances forever.

He'll meet some friends along the way. There's Holiday, an old trucker who grew up playing in the arcades back in the 80s all over the country, and he missed it. He started the underground tournament and has put his life savings in it so he really needs it to work.

There's also Renee, a business woman who has no interest in video games, but is solely competing to get revenge for her little brother. An evil, sadistic man beat him so badly during a

tournament it completed ruined his life. Renee wins games by sheer anger and hatred alone. She doesn't even really like video games!

Last but not least there's Chong Li, the mysterious evil entity everyone fears. Nobody knows anything about him other than he named himself after the villain from the movie Bloodsport and absolutely destroys anyone in his path. He not only defeats opponents, he humiliates them completely so they end up as a puddle on the floor.

All these people and elements will come to a huge confrontation, and it will be epic.

Why this film? I grew up playing video games, and the Atari 2600 was my first console. Then the NES, then the Sega Genesis, and so on. I love video games and I've even made a docu-series about eSports called More Than a Game. eSports is one of the fastest growing industries in the world, some saying it's overtaken the NBA as far as money flowing through it. So it has a built-in audience clamoring for this material.

Overall, though, I just think it's fun. This is the kind of movie I would want to watch as a video game fan, and I think others will feel the excitement as well. The script has received some great feedback. A reviewer with the Six-Figure Screenplay Contest said that it's "This is a very original and well-executed idea. The tone is both absurd and unexpectedly heartwarming. It's clear the writer has a strong grasp on both structure and comedic writing, resulting in an entertaining and well-balanced script."

I also was fortunate enough to have a live reading of the script at a theater featuring actors from The Walking Dead, Hawkeye, Renfield, and more. I have a script and a pitch deck I'd love for you to check out when you get the chance. That is 8-Bit Bloodsport.

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CAPSTONE

Written by

Charles Thomas

INT. VIEWING ROOM - DAY

A small room, not much here in besides a small security TV which is currently off. TAYLOR, 30s, a stressed woman who looks like she's been in the theater game for a while and knows the ropes, sits in a chair taking notes on a clipboard.

BROOKS

Ahem.

Taylor looks up. Standing just outside the doorway, shrouded in darkness, is a man named BROOKS. He will reveal himself fully later, but his voice alone gives away his self-importance.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Is everything ready?

TAYLOR

Almost.

BROOKS

When will they arrive?

TAYLOR

Shortly.

BROOKS

So it begins.

Brooks turns to leave.

TAYLOR

Can I reiterate I find this--

BROOKS

Unorthodox. Yes, you have made yourself known.

TAYLOR

Unorthodox is not the word I would choose. What if someone gets hurt?

BROOKS

Emotionally? Inevitable.

Taylor gives him a look.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Physically? I'm willing to take the chance. Believe me, I understand success or failure entirely depends on me. How is our star holding up?



TAYLOR

Fine. I'm worried what will happen  
if the others find out.

BROOKS

Not if. I'm counting on it.

EXT. KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY

Spring has sprung on the campus grounds, the last vestiges of winter giving way to flower buds and warm air.

A hand brushes through the fresh greenery. This is KARINA, early 20s. She comes off as aloof, but it's a facade to hide a naturally talented creative who has never fit in anywhere.

Karina walks through campus, sauntering in a way that says she isn't in any hurry to get to her destination, and in fact may be stalling for time.

She checks her phone. Nothing. She continues sauntering.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE THEATER - DAY

A large yellow and brown building with two large white doors.

Karina walks up to the doors, then turns around. She approaches a row of bushes that are still in transition to spring and brushes her hand across their prickly stems.

Taking a deep breath, she turns and walks through the doors.

INT. THEATER LOBBY - DAY

There are rows of posters from performances gone by. Karina ignores all of these as she heads to the theater.

As she approaches the theater doors, she hears noises from inside that sound almost like CHANTING.

One last check of her phone before entering - nothing. She opens the doors.

INT. THEATER - DAY

This is decently sized theater that seats about 314. The seating is split into a gallery section and an orchestra section. There are steps up onto the stage on each side, and there are backstage entrances on each side.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - DAY

Any non-theater person walking into this scene would think the people here have lost their minds. They're all making insane faces and intense gyrations as they warm up.

Standing downstage is Taylor. She's conducting an exercise with the four other people on stage who are warming up.

From left to right, the other actors are:

YAVI, early 20s, a soft-spoken man with curly hair, someone who looks like he wouldn't hurt a fly.

FELICIA (pronounced Fuh-lee-see-uh), early 20s, a woman who has the look of someone who works in the restaurant industry and hates it.

DANIEL, early 20s, a dashing young man who would've done well in old Hollywood.

And MUFFIN, early 20s, who looks a bit like Karina if you squint, but with a harder edge. As soon as she sees Karina enter, her face drops, and she messes up her chanting.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - DAY

Karina notices Muffin's glare. She tries to ignore it as she approaches the stage.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - DAY

Taylor notices Muffin is dropping the ball.

TAYLOR

Let's try and keep up, you on the right.

MUFFIN

Muffin.

Karina walks up the stairs.

TAYLOR

Remind me of that after we cast you.

(she notices Karina)

Oh, hello. You're right on time.

KARINA

Sorry, I--

TAYLOR  
Hup! Don't care. On stage.

The only place available, naturally, is right next to Muffin, who inches away from Karina.

They chant briefly before Taylor signals them to stop.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)  
Great. Switch to "ha"s.

Muffin and Karina respond immediately, breathing in deep through their diaphragms, and uttering guttural noises with each exhale.

MUFFIN  
Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

KARINA  
Ha! Ha! Ha!

The others take notice and join in. Muffin looks annoyed at Karina's efforts.

MUFFIN  
Excuse me, Miss Taylor, you did say the ha, and not the bark?

KARINA  
Am I doing it wrong? It's been a while, sorry, I don't usually have to warm up.

MUFFIN  
Uck.

DANIEL  
I thought you were doing great. I'm Daniel.

FELICIA  
Oh! I'm Felicia, pronounced Fuh-Lee-See-Uh--

TAYLOR  
I don't remember saying it was chatter time.

YAVI  
Miss Taylor--

TAYLOR  
Stop calling me Miss, I'm only like ten years older than you people.

YAVI  
Taylor, when do we get to meet him?

FELICIA  
We are so excited.

TAYLOR  
You won't be meeting anybody if you  
don't listen to people trying to  
give you instructions.

The actor group clams up at that.

YAVI  
Sorry, ma'am.

TAYLOR  
Oh, Christ, that's worse.

She takes a good, long hard at their excited faces. She  
laughs to herself.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)  
You think you're ready for this?

The actors grin and clap and dance in place.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)  
Fine. We're running out of time  
anyway. I'll go get him. Keep  
practicing!

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - DAY

Taylor hops off stage and heads to the exit. She notices the  
actors aren't making any noise and turns around.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - DAY

Immediately all five actors spring into action. Daniel begins  
to slow motion walk around the stage.

DANIEL  
Receive and pass! Tant-a-mount!

He points to Felicia who mimics his walk but speeds up.

FELICIA  
Tantamount!

She points to Yavi. He speeds up even more.

YAVI  
Tantamount-tantamount!

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - NIGHT

Taylor turns to watch them before she goes through the door.

MUFFIN (O.S.)  
Tant-uh-mooooouuuunnnntttt.

TAYLOR  
Please let me be wrong about this.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - DAY

As soon as they see she's gone, they stop the game and gather in a circle.

FELICIA  
I can't believe this is happening!

MUFFIN  
When did everyone get the call?

YAVI  
Last night. I think it was supposed to be secret, but I was live streaming at the time. Whoops!

MUFFIN  
Unprofessional.

YAVI  
It was an accident!

FELICIA  
I got it last night too. I almost crashed my car when I heard.

MUFFIN  
I heard yesterday morning.

YAVI  
Wow! He must've really wanted you.

DANIEL  
How about you...

He nods at Karina.

KARINA  
Karina. It was... last week.

The others GASP. Except Muffin, of course.

YAVI

Last week?

FELICIA

That's insane!

Karina just smiles and shrugs. She can feel Muffin's eyes burning a hole in her skull.

DANIEL

Do you know anything about the play?

Karina shakes her head.

MUFFIN

Nobody does. The Dean said it was an original piece.

FELICIA

I wonder if he's testing out ideas for his big follow-up to Get On Your Knees?

MUFFIN

At this place? Come on.

FELICIA

Why else would he be here? He mentioned on Tiger King Season Four he was working on something big.

MUFFIN

I am the world's biggest Brooks fan and I didn't even watch that shit.

FELICIA

Don't pretend you didn't roll in the mud with the rest of us when that show came out.

YAVI

What I wouldn't give to have seen a production of Get On Your Knees in New York.

MUFFIN

There are plenty of places to find recordings of it if you look.

DANIEL  
Eh, can't lie, seeing it in person  
was a different animal.

YAVI  
No way! Did you see the secret  
ending?

MUFFIN  
Secret ending?

DANIEL  
Yeah! Thirty minutes after lights  
come up, a walrus--

The PA system roars to life.

TAYLOR (O.S.)  
I don't hear any warming up!

The group flinches.

DANIEL  
Ok, two truths and a lie, go!

He points to Yavi.

YAVI  
Oh, no, I'm bad at this. Ok. I've  
never been to Puerto Rico despite  
my family being from there. I  
donated a kidney to someone in this  
room. Um. I. Um. I went to outer  
space last year. No, this year.

KARINA  
You donated a kidney? To who?

Karina looks at Muffin.

MUFFIN  
Why are you looking at me?

YAVI  
How do you know I didn't go to  
space?

FELICIA  
Because you're a terrible liar,  
honey. It was me.

DANIEL  
No way.

Yavi lifts up his shirt, and sure enough, there are scars.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
Holy shit.

Felicia hugs Yavi.

FELICIA  
Gave me an extra life like Super Mario.

KARINA  
Did you guys know each other?

YAVI  
Nope. I had no idea she was here.

FELICIA  
We met after. Now we're besties.

DANIEL  
I can't beat that, but I'll go next. Um... My grandfather was in the movie The Godfather. I saw a ghost in my room when I was ten...

Karina hops off the stage.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - DAY

Karina grabs her phone out of her backpack and checks it. Still nothing. She looks worried. She puts it back.

She looks out into the back of the room.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - DAY

There's a woman. Only her eyes are visible, and they stare at Karina. She tries to hold onto a slimy substance but it keeps slipping through her fingers. Still, she tries.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - DAY

Karina stares in fear and confusion.

KARINA  
(to herself)  
I see her. Now, in fact.

MUFFIN  
What are you doing here?



Karina jumps at the voice.

KARINA  
Jesus, Marlie.

MUFFIN  
Don't call me that. What are you  
doing here?

KARINA  
What are you talking about? I'm  
doing the play. Or auditioning. Or  
whatever the hell this is. And I'm  
not calling you Muffin, Marlie.

MUFFIN  
It's my stage name.

KARINA  
We are not on stage.

MUFFIN  
It doesn't matter. It's just  
courtesy.

KARINA  
Do you think Lady Gaga makes  
everyone call her Lady when they're  
hanging out?

MUFFIN  
You know you're going to treat this  
like you treat everything else, so  
why don't you just leave now and  
get it over with?

The others on stage LAUGH.

DANIEL (O.S.)  
What are you guys doing? This is  
fun, come on!

YAVI (O.S.)  
I can't believe you've never had  
tofu! What a weird thing to lie  
about.

DANIEL (O.S.)  
It looks like snot squares!

MUFFIN  
That boy is lucky his head is so  
thick or...

KARINA

His brains would squirt down  
his chin.

MUFFIN (CONT'D)

His brains would squirt down  
his chin.

Uh-oh. A nice moment from their past. The smallest of smiles drifts across their faces.

KARINA (CONT'D)

Let's go back up.

Karina moves to leave, Muffin stops her.

MUFFIN

We're not done here yet. I put so  
much work into this and you can't  
just waltz--

Karina gets super intense and stares into Muffin's eyes.

KARINA

I'm not doing this with you again.  
I want to show this guy what I can  
do. He needs to see me because I'm  
the best. Got it?

The intensity rocks Muffin back a bit before she settles.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - DAY

The others watch.

FELICIA

Are they doing a scene?

YAVI

They're really good. Very  
believable.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - DAY

Muffin finally breaks.

MUFFIN

After you.

Karina returns to normal and hops up on stage.

MUFFIN (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Bitch.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - DAY

Muffin joins them on stage. Daniel points to her.

DANIEL  
Your turn for two truths and a lie.

MUFFIN  
Can't we play something else?

DANIEL  
Like what?

MUFFIN  
Zip!

She points to Felicia.

KARINA  
Oh, god.

MUFFIN  
You're out!

KARINA  
You didn't point to me! Whatever.  
I'm a land mine.

She crosses her arms.

FELICIA  
Zap!

She points to Yavi.

YAVI  
Zop!

To Daniel.

DANIEL  
Zip!

To Karina.

KARINA  
Boom!

DANIEL  
Shit!

BOOM! The door to the theater swings wide open. The actors GASP and turn to face it.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - DAY

In the doorway stands a man dressed exactly like someone who just skyrocketed to fame with his first ever play on Broadway, scarf included. This is BROOKS, early 40s, and he is in no shortage of ego.

He saunters in. Taylor joins him, clipboard in one hand and a suitcase in another. Brooks takes in the five actors on stage.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - DAY

Yavi and Felicia hold hands in excitement. Muffin trembles.

MUFFIN

Oh my god that's him. Oh my god oh my god oh my god.

DANIEL

Wow. The genius has returned to his alma mater. And we are witness to it.

Karina squints.

KARINA

He's shorter than I thought he'd be.

MUFFIN

Shh!

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - DAY

Brooks drapes his scarf over his shoulder and begins his journey to the stage, relishing the attention. Taylor attempts to jot notes on the clipboard as she walks.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - DAY

They approach the stage. Taylor sets the suitcase on the floor. She unclips it to open it, but Brooks stops her. He looks up at his actors.

BROOKS

Come, come. This is no talk for the stage. It must not know our secrets.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - DAY

The actors look at each other in wonder and confusion. They hop down.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - DAY

They gather around the suitcase. Brooks makes a motion for them to sit, and they oblige, almost vibrating in excitement.

Taylor twirls the suitcase so it will open towards the actors. Before she opens it, Brooks stays her hand. He sits back and addresses the group.

BROOKS

Let it out.

ACTOR GROUP

Oh my god I love you so much you're  
a genius can you sign my back so I  
can get it tattooed how did you  
come up with Get On Your Knees what  
is your favorite food so I can eat  
it...

This goes on for a few seconds until Brooks signals for them to stop. They do so in unison.

BROOKS

Better?

The actors nod.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Why are we here?

The actors take in a breath to all talk at once. Brooks wags his finger and points to Karina.

KARINA

To perform in your new play at the  
place where you learned how to  
write.

Brooks points to Yavi.

YAVI

To... audition for your play where  
you learned how to write?

Brooks points to Muffin.

MUFFIN

To be amazing.

Brooks considers this and nods. He taps Taylor on the shoulder. She opens the suitcase.

Inside are five small statues, each a distinct shape: pyramid, cylinder, star, pentagon, and moon. Taylor takes them out one by one and places them on the floor and moves the suitcase out of the way.

BROOKS

Someone asked how I came up with my hit Broadway smash Get On Your Knees.

Felicia and Daniel raise their hands.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

This is a question I get all the time, and it bores me.

They put their hands down.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Creation isn't a mystery, it's impossible. Simply impossible. Nothing is created. It is out there. It is here.

He gestures to the symbols on the floor.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

They are here.

The actors eventually realize Brooks is waiting for them to pick up the statues. They do so cautiously and nervously, like cavemen looking at a spaceship.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

You are the best of the best this college has to offer. I am told each one of you possesses the potential for genius. I must see it.

TAYLOR

There are four parts. One must direct. You have this evening.

Brooks stands up dramatically. Taylor picks up the suitcase and joins him.

BROOKS

If you want to leave, leave. Touch that door and you're done. Fail to put on the play and you're all done. I mean done. Done in entertainment. Everyone knows me. No one knows you. They never will. Succeed and your life will be made. Think of me as the Wizard of Oz - you get one wish, and it will come true. No matter what that wish looks like.

He makes a point to look at everyone, but lingers on Yavi and Felicia for a moment. They smile.

He turns to leave.

KARINA

Whoa, wait, Mister Brooks? Where is the play?

Muffin can't believe she's addressing him like that. Brooks turns to her.

BROOKS

My dear, the play is in your hands.

She looks at her statue. Brooks walks away.

FELICIA

Why this evening? What happens then?

TAYLOR

That is when the audience arrives.

The actor group's faces drop.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - DAY

Before exiting, Brooks turns.

BROOKS

Break all the legs!

Brooks and Taylor leave.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - DAY

The group sits in stunned silence, looking at their statues.

YAVI  
What... what?

FELICIA  
The play is in our hands.

They all flip their statues around to see if there's any text or anything on them.

MUFFIN  
I don't see anything on mine.

DANIEL  
Me neither. It must be a metaphor.

YAVI  
It must mean something. This is so exciting, you guys.

MUFFIN  
(unsure)  
It's like a fun puzzle. This is genius.

DANIEL  
Let's take them onstage. Might as well get to work.

Everyone but Karina heads to the stage. Karina heads to her bag first to check her phone. There's a missed call.

KARINA  
Oh!

She calls the number back.

KARINA (CONT'D)  
Hi, this is Karina Osgood, sorry I missed your call. Hi, Roger, how are you?

INT. THEATER - STAGE - DAY

Muffin joins the others, but she keeps an eye on Karina.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - DAY

Karina smiles and nods.



KARINA  
Oh, great! Tonight? What time?  
Oh... school is running late  
tonight, and...

She listens and nods, looking worried. She looks at the clock on the wall.

KARINA (CONT'D)  
No, I definitely need the job. I appreciate you giving me another chance. I'll call back soon and let you know when I can be there.

She hangs up and puts the phone away.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - DAY

Muffin shakes her head as Karina joins them onstage.

MUFFIN  
Bailing already?

KARINA  
No. I just need to leave as soon as possible.

FELICIA  
Bartending?

KARINA  
Yeah.

FELICIA  
Good money. Not like waitressing.

KARINA  
Which restaurant?

FELICIA  
Dim Sum Tacos.

MUFFIN  
Oh, the dim sum taco fusion place?

FELICIA  
Yes, honey... hence the name.

DANIEL  
Can we focus? What are we feeling about our statues?

KARINA  
I don't feel anything.

MUFFIN  
You haven't even looked at it yet.

YAVI  
Mine is heavy. Are yours heavy?

FELICIA  
Mine is sort of heavy.

Daniel puts his down in the middle of the stage.

DANIEL  
Ok. Let's refocus. Everyone put  
your statues down.

They all comply. The statues are in a little circle.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
Miss Taylor was having us do warm-  
ups.

YAVI  
Just Taylor.

DANIEL  
Maybe this is another warm-up game.

FELICIA  
Not if the audience will be here in  
a matter of hours.

She realizes what she just said.

FELICIA (CONT'D)  
A matter of hours! What the hell is  
this? This is a nightmare!

YAVI  
And he's going to kick us out of  
theater forever!

KARINA  
Nobody can kick anyone out of  
theater. Give me a break.

MUFFIN  
If anyone can, he can.

FELICIA  
No! No no no!

Felicia breathes rapidly. She tries to catch her breath. Yavi comforts her.

YAVI

Hey, don't overdo it. It'll be ok.

Felicia squeezes Yavi's hand. She pushes him away gently but firmly.

FELICIA

I'm ok. Thank you. I'm ok.

DANIEL

I gave up everything to be in this program, nobody's kicking me out of anything. Again, let's focus. Is anyone drawn to any of them?

Karina looks at the statues. The moon. The star. The cylinder. The pentagon. The pyramid.

KARINA

There are five of us. The pentagon has five sides.

MUFFIN

Genius. You got it.

KARINA

I'm just talking out loud, Marlie.

YAVI

Marlie? I thought your name was Muffin?

MUFFIN

It is.

FELICIA

We're looking at this all wrong. Four actors. One director. We need to figure that out first.

MUFFIN

Why?

FELICIA

That's easier to do. One director. Right?

MUFFIN

I suppose that's you?

YAVI

Why not? What's wrong with her directing? She can do anything.

FELICIA

Thank you for cheerleading, honey, but I got this. I was actually thinking of Daniel.

DANIEL

Me?

KARINA

He's been directing this whole time anyway.

Daniel nods.

DANIEL

I suppose I have. But I don't want to direct. I want to act!

MUFFIN

You can act in the next one.

Muffin picks up the pentagon and hands it to Daniel.

MUFFIN (CONT'D)

This means you take this one.

DANIEL

Why?

MUFFIN

It represents you directing the group.

Daniel puts the pentagon down and picks up the star.

DANIEL

Shouldn't I be the star?

YAVI

The director isn't the star.

DANIEL

Brooks kind of is.

KARINA

He definitely thinks he is.

Muffin shoots Karina a look.

MUFFIN

Everyone just pick up a statue and see if you identify with it. David, hand someone else the star.

She says this obviously implying to hand it to her. He hands it to Karina.

MUFFIN (CONT'D)

Fine.

David picks the pentagon back up. Muffin picks up the pyramid. Felicia grabs the cylinder. Yavi grabs the moon.

YAVI

I am the moon. I light the world in the darkness.

MUFFIN

Only sometimes.

KARINA

Technically the sun does that.

She shakes the star statue.

FELICIA

I'm the cylinder. I hold things. I shape things into me. Liquids. I am liquid.

MUFFIN

I am a pyramid. I am a Pharoah. I am Cleopatra. Yeah, I'm digging this one.

DANIEL

Water. The Nile. Cleopatra. Is that it?

KARINA

I think we're reaching. I don't feel like a star.

FELICIA

I don't feel like a cylinder.

They put the statues down.

YAVI

Maybe this is a sequel to Get On Your Knees?

FELICIA

Yeah, isn't there a moon in that one too?

MUFFIN

Yeah! That's right! Right after--

DANIEL

After the remix of 4:33. Yes.

MUFFIN

I still don't know how he did that.

KARINA

The what now?

The others look at Karina like she's on fire.

MUFFIN

Philip Glass's 4:33, one of the most famous pieces of all time. Brooks remixed it for... you never saw the play.

Karina smiles shyly and shakes her head. The others groan.

MUFFIN (CONT'D)

You have got to... again, what the fuck are you doing here?

DANIEL

Let's not get nasty.

MUFFIN

Shut it, Daniel. The rest of us are here to perform for the most exciting director since Stanislavski. What is she doing here if she hasn't even seen Brooks's first play? It's just like you to not prepare at all.

FELICIA

I'm taking it there's some history here, honey.

KARINA

We used to be friends.

MUFFIN

Very USED to be.

DANIEL

Can we get back to it, please?

KARINA  
No, she's right. I don't know what  
I'm doing here.

MUFFIN  
Quit the act.

KARINA  
You know I gave up acting for a  
reason.

MUFFIN  
Yeah, you're lazy and don't  
prepare.

YAVI  
If you gave it up, why are you  
here?

Karina is silent and hard to read.

DANIEL  
I wish we could use all this  
emotion for the play.

FELICIA  
You're definitely the director.

DANIEL  
Fine. Then I'll direct. Everyone  
pick up a different statue right  
now and tell me what you feel about  
it. Time's a tickin'!

Daniel takes the pentagon. Muffin gets the star, Yavi gets  
the pyramid, and Felicia takes the moon. Karina doesn't move.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
You have to take the cylinder.

KARINA  
What I have to do is make money so  
I don't get kicked out of my  
apartment. I gave this a shot, but  
I don't think it's going to work.

YAVI  
We're all going to fail!

KARINA  
No, just me. It's fine. I'll deal  
with it.

MUFFIN

Let her go. She was going to do it either way. It's what she does.

KARINA

Not all of us can afford to chase shadows our whole lives.

MUFFIN

Just admit you don't have what it takes to be an actor.

KARINA

I do have what it takes, as you well know, and proved it as I took parts from you again and again.

Muffin smiles and nods.

MUFFIN

There she is. There's the mastodon of hubris.

KARINA

Fuck off.

Karina leaves to get her stuff.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - DAY

Karina checks her phone again. There's a missed call.

KARINA

Dammit.

YAVI (O.S.)

Four parts! One director! You have to stay.

MUFFIN (O.S.)

We're better off without her. Trust me.

Karina calls the number back.

KARINA

Yes, hello? I missed a call, this is Karina... yeah, ok.

MUFFIN (O.S.)

Better now than if she bailed closer to showtime.



FELICIA (O.S.)  
What do we do with the cylinder?

KARINA  
Hey, it's Karina, I'm returning  
your call.

DANIEL (O.S.)  
Maybe it's not important. It's the  
only one that doesn't fit with the  
others.

Karina's eyes go wide, then she closes them in frustration.  
She hangs up.

KARINA  
No.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - DAY

Daniel raises an eyebrow.

DANIEL  
What's that?

Karina joins them onstage.

MUFFIN  
I thought you were leaving.

Karina picks up the cylinder. She hands it to Daniel and  
takes the pentagon.

DANIEL  
I thought we decided I was the  
pentagon.

KARINA  
But you're not. You're the  
cylinder. It's the only one that  
doesn't fit with the others.

DANIEL  
Ahh...

MUFFIN  
That's a stretch.

Karina takes the pyramid from Yavi.

KARINA  
In ancient Egypt, they had small  
round cylinders. They were engraved  
with symbols, like...

FELICIA  
The moon and the star.

KARINA  
And the pyramid.

DANIEL  
And the pentagon?

YAVI  
Probably. Wow! I can't believe you  
caught that!

MUFFIN  
So, what, you're back now?

Karina looks at her backpack.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - DAY

Her phone sits on her backpack. It BUZZES with a call.

Karina hops off stage and walks over to it. She picks it up,  
and turns it off.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - DAY

The others, except Muffin, clap as Karina rejoins them.

KARINA  
Ok. Let's figure this out and  
impress this genius.

FELICIA  
Yeah!

Muffin crosses her arms. She and Karina share a look. Muffin  
can't help but laugh sardonically and shake her head.

Karina looks to the Gallery.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - DAY

The woman is there. She has Karina's face and is dressed in a  
monk outfit. She tries to hold onto the slime.

Her eyes stare. Her lips move rapidly, like she's reciting an enchantment.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - DAY

Karina's lips move, silently.

KARINA  
(whispering)  
I see her. Now, in fact. Just over there.

INT. VIEWING ROOM - DAY

The TV is now on, showing a grainy video feed of the theater. Brooks and Taylor are crammed inside. All of Brooks's accoutrement lays on the table.

BROOKS  
Interesting. Very, very interesting. Write that--

TAYLOR  
Writing it down.

BROOKS  
Good. Very, very good.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - DAY

Daniel nervously rubs his hands together, the totems nearby.

DANIEL  
Ok. It's up to me. It's all up to me.

KARINA  
No pressure.

DANIEL  
I don't see how he does it. Ok. Everyone, stand here.

He points upstage. He walks downstage.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
We figured out I'm the cylinder, but we don't know what the rest are. Hmmm.

He picks up the pyramid.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
Egypt. Egyptians liked pyramids.

YAVI  
Did they? They built them, but did everyone like them?

FELICIA  
Yeah, like I like Taco Bell, but I wouldn't say I like Taco Bell buildings.

MUFFIN  
I bet some Egyptians hated them. All of a sudden these huge eyesores with dead leaders inside take up all the scenery.

DANIEL  
Ah, dead leaders. Right. Maybe this is about one of those ancient leaders?

FELICIA  
If it is, Yavi has to be the Pharaoh, right?

YAVI  
I get to be Pharaoh?

KARINA  
Hold on, not necessarily. What about Cleopatra?

FELICIA  
What about her, honey?

KARINA  
She was a Pharaoh.

MUFFIN  
She was a Queen.

KARINA  
I think they were also called Pharaohs.

MUFFIN  
When did you become an Egyptian expert?

KARINA  
That trip to Fernbank, remember?

FELICIA  
I could play Cleopatra.

MUFFIN  
Middle school?  
(to Felicia)  
I will be playing Cleopatra,  
actually.

DANIEL  
Nobody is playing anybody yet.  
(to Karina)  
Was Cleopatra buried in a pyramid?

Karina thinks. She shrugs.

KARINA  
Maybe not. Not totally sure.

Daniel hands the pyramid to Yavi. Yavi smiles.

MUFFIN  
Of course.

YAVI  
I'm a Pharaoh!

DANIEL  
Maybe the cylinder is a funeral  
urn. A funeral for a Pharaoh.  
Shakespearean.

YAVI  
I'm a dead Pharaoh.

FELICIA  
Still powerful.

Daniel picks up the star and hands it to Felicia.

FELICIA (CONT'D)  
Me?

DANIEL  
Feel it out.

FELICIA  
I'm a star. I light the path. I  
twinkle at night.

YAVI  
Think of me.

FELICIA  
 Right. I light the Pharaoh's way.  
 Oh, I'm an advisor, maybe?

Daniel nods.

DANIEL  
 That feels right. That feels right!

The others clap. Daniel hands the moon to Muffin.

MUFFIN  
 I'm a moon. I'm the moon. I light  
 the way at night.

KARINA  
 Sometimes.

MUFFIN  
 Usually. Unless I'm taking a break.  
 I control the waves of the ocean--

DANIEL  
 I think we're getting off track a  
 little.

MUFFIN  
 I'm just throwing stuff out there.

KARINA  
 Let her cook, she'll get there.

MUFFIN  
 I don't need any help, thanks.  
 (concentrating extra hard)  
 I'm the moon. I'm a moon. Moony-  
 moon. Light the sands.

Yavi tries to stand more Pharaoh-like, regal.

YAVI  
 Think of me.

MUFFIN  
 Light the... dark sands.

YAVI  
 I'm a Pharaoh.

MUFFIN  
 I know!

DANIEL  
 Keep working at it.

Daniel hands Karina the pentagon.

KARINA

Pentagon. Five sides. Five is a sacred number in Egypt. Ra spoke five gods into existence. Thoth created five extra days by winning a game... oh! The moon!

MUFFIN

Give me a break with this. It was middle school.

KARINA

It was a fun trip, can't believe you don't remember it. We were texting with that Joey guy outside of the dinosaur--

FELICIA

What about the moon?

MUFFIN

Don't bring up Joey.

KARINA

Thoth, one of the gods, created more days with the light of the moon.

DANIEL

Explaining Muffin's totem.

MUFFIN

I was close to coming up with something. You need to give me more of a chance.

DANIEL

Alright, we're on to something. Gods versus kings, maybe. The hubris of man.

MUFFIN

That might not be it. You didn't give me a chance.

DANIEL

We don't have a ton of time, so let's just roll with it for now, see how it feels.

Daniel bops in place, like he's excited about something.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
Everyone but Yavi, join me down  
here.

YAVI  
Ooh, center of attention.

The others sit near Daniel.

DANIEL  
Ok, buddy, you're our main  
attraction. The mighty Pharaoh,  
near the end of his life. Raging  
against the gods. What do you say  
in these final moments?

Yavi takes a breath, smiles, lets out the breath, gets  
excited, starts to talk, stops - he's overcome.

YAVI  
I... you... my...

DANIEL  
How about this. You're on your  
deathbed. The gods descend to take  
you away. What do you say to them?

YAVI  
Oh! Gods! Ye gods, ye.

FELICIA  
Use that special energy you got in  
you, honey. You know. Come on now.

Yavi nods at Felicia.

YAVI  
Hey there, it's your boy, uh,  
Pharaoh, coming to you live. Smash  
that subscribe button so you don't  
miss a second of my live tourneys.

MUFFIN  
What's happening now?

FELICIA  
He's a Twitch streamer.

KARINA  
Oh! What does that mean?

YAVI  
I play video games and people pay  
me to watch.



KARINA

Oh, shit.

DANIEL

That's great. Great! Use that commanding energy. Pharaohs just want to be loved by their people, right?

YAVI

Sure... can you just give me something to say? I'm not great at improv.

DANIEL

Sure... how about... "My loyal subjects! Last night I was visited by Ra himself, informing me it is my time to leave this kingdom. To that, I told him, death itself shall not rip my fingers from my beloved Egypt! I will rule for all eternity. To this you have my word as Pharaoh!"

The others clap, Daniel gives a little sarcastic bow. He motions for Yavi to try it.

Yavi does not do so well.

YAVI

My loyal subjects. Last night. I was visited by. Ra. Himself. Informing me it is. Time. To.

Everyone but Muffin is hiding their thoughts about Yavi's performance inside. Muffin's thoughts are all over her face.

YAVI (CONT'D)

Leave! This. Kingdom!

DANIEL

Good stuff, man, good stuff.

Yavi wipes sweat from his brow.

YAVI

I was really feeling it.

DANIEL

Oh, I could tell.

Daniel dances again.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
Ok, let's keep it going. The rest  
of you join Yavi and figure out  
your roles. I'll be right back.

He hops off stage. Felicia walks up to Yavi.

YAVI  
How was it really?

FELICIA  
A character like that will take  
time to grow into.

YAVI  
True. It's a big task.

Karina notices Muffin still making a face.

KARINA  
I know that face.

MUFFIN  
You don't have to talk to me.

KARINA  
You don't think we're on the right  
track?

MUFFIN  
There's no way this is what he  
intended. Did you see that  
performance?

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - DAY

Daniel is almost to the door.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Felicia notices where he's going.

FELICIA  
Hey! What are you doing?

Karina and Felicia turn.

KARINA  
Sure, but it's early.

MUFFIN  
We're doing something wrong...  
(to Daniel)  
Where the hell are you going?

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - DAY

Daniel points to the door.

DANIEL  
I just have to pee real bad!

INT. THEATER - STAGE - DAY

Felicia waves her hands.

FELICIA  
He said if we touch the doors we're  
out! You can't leave! You'll get  
kicked out!

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - DAY

Daniel waves her off.

DANIEL  
He didn't mean these doors! He  
can't keep us from bodily  
functions! I'll be right back!

INT. THEATER - STAGE - DAY

By this point everyone has walked upstage, frantically waving  
their hands.

YAVI  
Stop!

MUFFIN  
We have to follow the rules!

KARINA  
Just wait a second!

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - DAY

Daniel strolls up to the door, pushes on the handle to open  
it, and waits.

DANIEL  
See? Nothing--

A loud BUZZ fills the room as the speakers turn on. Daniel covers his ears.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - DAY

Everyone on stage joins him, wincing away from the sound.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - DAY

Taylor walks in past Daniel.

BROOKS (O.S.)  
Daniel Bloomstein! You are hereby  
disqualified!

DANIEL  
No, wait, sir! Sir!

INT. THEATER - STAGE - DAY

Taylor walks on stage and pulls the pentagon totem from Karina's hands. She turns and hops back off stage.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - DAY

Daniel gets on his knees.

DANIEL  
I just needed to pee! That's not  
fair! You can't do this!

BROOKS (O.S.)  
You are no longer eligible for the  
program. Exit immediately. Have a  
nice life.

Daniel breaks into tears and collapses to all fours. Taylor walks by him.

She turns to the others on stage. Watches their faces.

BROOKS (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
The play is the same. One director,  
find your actors. The pentagon is  
gone. Continue working.

There's a SQUEAL as the speakers turn off.

Taylor looks like she wants to say something, but stops herself. She helps Daniel to his feet and they leave. The door closes behind them.

MUFFIN

Fuck.

FELICIA

We're fucked.

KARINA

She took the...

(to the speaker)

Hello! Does that mean Daniel was the pentagon? Hello?

No response. Yavi drops the pyramid.

YAVI

He wasn't the cylinder. He was the pentagon. It was all wrong.

MUFFIN

(to Karina)

Great job. Total waste of time.

KARINA

Fuck off. It was an idea.

FELICIA

Now what do we do?

KARINA

I didn't see you throwing anything out there Miss Moony-Moony--

FELICIA

Hello?

MUFFIN

Oh, here we go, the goddamn ego--

FELICIA

Y'all! Hello! Audience coming, remember? What do we do now?

Yavi rushes over to comfort her.

YAVI

Whoa, you have to take it easy.

FELICIA

I'm fine, I'm fine.

YAVI  
Stress doesn't help our kidney.

FELICIA  
(touch of annoyance)  
I'm all good, Yavi, you don't have  
to hover.

YAVI  
I'm not trying to hover.

MUFFIN  
Well the Egypt thing is out.

KARINA  
Why, because we lost one piece?

FELICIA  
You're hovering a little bit,  
honey.

Yavi looks a little hurt but backs off.

MUFFIN  
There's a reason he took the  
pentagon with Daniel. That means he  
wasn't the cylinder, which means  
your Egypt idea is out.

KARINA  
I hardly think--

YAVI  
I think she's right. I'm no  
Pharaoh.

MUFFIN  
Thank you.

FELICIA  
It's true, but that's ok.

YAVI  
Oh, I thought someone would stick  
up for me.

MUFFIN  
Don't fish if you're afraid of what  
you're going to catch.

KARINA  
You're one to talk--

MUFFIN

I mentioned you don't have to talk  
to me.

YAVI

(to Felicia)

You don't think I was any good?

KARINA

You can throw out snide comments  
all day, but--

FELICIA

New plan!

The others stop arguing and look at Felicia. Whoops, seems  
she spoke a little too soon.

MUFFIN

Well? What is it?

FELICIA

Let's... let's split up.

MUFFIN

Split up? Like Scooby-Doo?

FELICIA

Yes. You two.

She points to Muffin and Karina.

KARINA

No, no. No no. Bad idea.

MUFFIN

I'm not splitting up anything with  
her.

FELICIA

Fine.

KARINA

You and me, Felicia. Yavi and  
Muffin.

YAVI

What are we doing?

FELICIA

Starting from scratch. Take a  
totem.

Yavi grabs the star. Karina gets the moon. Muffin takes the cylinder, and Felicia winds up with the pyramid.

FELICIA (CONT'D)

Now. Get with your partner and talk it out. What does this item mean to you personally?

YAVI

I think this is a great idea. Helps us get more real. Audiences like that.

MUFFIN

"Get real" is right. Come on.

Muffin and Yavi head off backstage. Felicia and Karina head to the Gallery.

INT. THEATER - BACKSTAGE - EVENING

Backstage is full of wires and rigs. There are a few leftover props and costumes from old plays as well.

Muffin and Yavi find a place to sit. There are a couple of folding chairs. Yavi sits while Muffin messes with the costumes.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - EVENING

Felicia and Karina laugh as they hide behind some seats.

KARINA

I used to do this during summer camp.

FELICIA

It was easier when we were little.

KARINA

One time I hid for so long I fell asleep. Coach Conley couldn't find me and called my mom.

FELICIA

Mama would've killed me, honey. Twice. Once for fooling around, twice for the teacher calling her.



INT. THEATER - BACKSTAGE - EVENING

Muffin continues trying on the clothes.

MUFFIN  
Well, go ahead.

YAVI  
What?

MUFFIN  
Get real.

YAVI  
Straight to it?

MUFFIN  
Straight to it.

YAVI  
So you and Karina--

MUFFIN  
Nope. You're going first.

YAVI  
Why?

MUFFIN  
Just go!

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - EVENING

Felicia and Karina stretch out on the floor.

KARINA  
What was it like before your surgery?

FELICIA  
Dialysis three days a week, pretty much all day. The other days I was exhausted, but I tried to keep going. Probably pushed myself to my limit too much. But you can't just roll over, right?

KARINA  
Right. That sounds awful.

Felicia picks up the pyramid.

FELICIA

When I got the call about a donor I hung up on the hospital. It was so overwhelming I couldn't even comprehend what they were saying.

INT. THEATER - BACKSTAGE - EVENING

Yavi turns the star around and around, trying to pull something out of it.

MUFFIN

Tick-tock, doc.

YAVI

That isn't helping.

MUFFIN

We don't have all day.

YAVI

Does that negative attitude work for you? Get you where you need to be?

MUFFIN

Come on. Doesn't it remind you of anything? Aren't you famous on your little live stream? Doesn't it make you feel like a star?

YAVI

No.

Yavi takes a deep breath.

YAVI (CONT'D)

But donating my kidney sure did.

Muffin stops fidgeting with the clothes and pays attention.

MUFFIN

Go on.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - EVENING

Felicia sits with her back against the seats.

FELICIA

Did you know a kidney is like a USB port in your laptop?

KARINA

How so?

FELICIA

They took Yavi's out and just... plugged it into me. And it started working. Just like that.

KARINA

I'm sure it was more complicated than that.

FELICIA

Sure, but not as much as you'd think. Just like that, my life went into a completely different direction. I get to do stuff like work a normal job at a restaurant, being yelled at by ungrateful idiots who never had to experience their body killing itself to make you live one more day.

KARINA

Lucky you.

Felicia spins the pyramid around.

FELICIA

Meeting Yavi was such a blessing. But it's come with its own challenges.

INT. THEATER - BACKSTAGE - EVENING

Muffin sits and leans in.

YAVI

All the attention, people fussing over me. It was nice, I won't lie.

MUFFIN

I get that.

YAVI

I'm not someone who stands out.

MUFFIN

Sure.

YAVI

Suddenly I was the coolest person on the planet.

(MORE)

YAVI (CONT'D)  
Just for a little while. People  
called me a hero, and I always  
waved it off, but...

MUFFIN  
But... you did feel like one.

YAVI  
I did. I was, goddamnit.

MUFFIN  
There's no way I would ever do it.

YAVI  
All the attention stopped. Nobody  
cared. Then I met Felicia in real  
life.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - EVENING

Karina shifts to a more comfortable position.

KARINA  
Feeling a lot of pressure?

FELICIA  
For the first time I was able to go  
out, have fun, drink, live life,  
act a fool, honey. But then I see  
Yavi...

She rotates the pyramid. She takes out a vape pen and puffs  
on it, looking around to make sure she isn't seen.

FELICIA (CONT'D)  
Yeah, it's pressure. Somebody gave  
me a piece of themselves. And  
they're right there, all the time.

KARINA  
Watching your every move.

FELICIA  
Mm-hmm. It can feel like... like a  
tomb, actually.

INT. THEATER - BACKSTAGE - EVENING

Yavi stands up.

YAVI  
I did it on a dare, you know.

MUFFIN

A dare?

YAVI

My followers. Part of my stream is they come up with a dare for me to do. That month it was to sign up for the kidney donor registry. One of them's sister was on it or something.

MUFFIN

Wow.

YAVI

Then, one day, I find myself on the operating table. Wasn't even my biggest stream. Did ok numbers, I guess.

MUFFIN

Does Felicia know this?

Yavi hesitates.

YAVI

Yes. Yeah, I told her. For sure.

MUFFIN

Ok.

YAVI

She does.

MUFFIN

Alright, I believe you. Settle down.

YAVI

You don't think it's fair? That I should feel like I did something good?

MUFFIN

This feels like a sore subject.

YAVI

I'm not the one who snapped at the mere mention of Karina.

MUFFIN

I didn't snap.

YAVI  
What is the deal there?

Muffin clams up. Yavi sits back down.

YAVI (CONT'D)  
Come on. It's your turn.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - EVENING

Karina nods.

KARINA  
That's pretty good. You should definitely use that.

FELICIA  
Maybe. What about you? I'm taking up all the time.

KARINA  
It's ok. Gave me time to think.

Karina picks up the moon.

KARINA (CONT'D)  
Do you think it's a waxing moon or a waning moon?

FELICIA  
I think I would need to look up what those words mean.

KARINA  
I think it's waning. Going away. Fading.

FELICIA  
What makes you think that?

KARINA  
Change is drama. End of a life. Beginning of a new one. That's drama. That's the moon a guy like Brooks would choose.

FELICIA  
I'm sensing something deep here.

KARINA  
Maybe. I'd say my current life is a waning moon, but I think it's been like that for some time.

INT. THEATER - BACKSTAGE - EVENING

Muffin rotates the cylinder.

MUFFIN

Round and round. Constant, unending  
cycle.

YAVI

What is?

MUFFIN

We're friends, then we're not.  
We're good, then we're out. It gets  
exhausting. Yes, we were best  
friends. We've tried to patch  
things, but it never works.

She puts it down and crosses her arms and legs, closing  
herself off.

MUFFIN (CONT'D)

I bust my ass every day. I want  
nothing but to work in theater.  
Nothing. But I have to try. I have  
to give a shit. Some people...

YAVI

Some people it just comes to them.

MUFFIN

Not all of us. Some of us have to  
sprint to keep up. She walks in and  
everyone loves her. I make people  
love me.

YAVI

That is intense.

MUFFIN

No. It's normal. Because normal  
people have drive. I want to be the  
star. Always. There are no  
supporting roles. Just winners and  
runner-ups. But I'm not the star.

She picks up the cylinder.

MUFFIN (CONT'D)

It's just this. Every day.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - EVENING

Karina spins the moon on the ground.

FELICIA  
That's really sad.

KARINA  
Things end. Marlie talks a lot of  
shit, but she's right about one  
thing. I have a tendency to quit  
when things get tough.

FELICIA  
You guys were close before?

KARINA  
The closest. But, again...

She picks up the moon and shakes it.

KARINA (CONT'D)  
Waning moon. Jealousy can poison  
anything. There's not much for her  
to be jealous of anymore.

FELICIA  
Not feeling it anymore?

KARINA  
Just not sure.

FELICIA  
I get that. Honestly, if we're  
getting real here, I'm using this  
to get into reality. That's where  
the money is.

KARINA  
Oh yeah? Like one of the Housewives  
or something?

FELICIA  
Honey, whoever will take me. Just  
get me on TV and watch me shine.

KARINA  
I love the confidence.

FELICIA  
Nobody will believe in you if you  
don't go first.



MUFFIN (O.S.)  
Hey! Did you two DQ yourselves like  
that Daniel idiot?

Karina and Felicia stand up.

MUFFIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Oh.

KARINA  
Don't sound so disappointed.

YAVI (O.S.)  
Come on! It's time to roll!

INT. THEATER - STAGE - EVENING

Karina and Felicia join them on stage. Yavi is bouncing.

KARINA  
Special therapy session time over?

YAVI  
We have an idea!

MUFFIN  
We have half an idea.

FELICIA  
Let's hear it!

YAVI  
Can I?

MUFFIN  
Go ahead.

Karina can't help but laugh at them.

YAVI  
We think the play is us. "It's in  
our hands" he said, right?

KARINA  
Right.

YAVI  
The play is us.

MUFFIN  
Our lives. We were picked for a  
reason.

FELICIA  
What about Daniel?

MUFFIN  
He offered himself. He doesn't matter.

YAVI  
The play can change with whoever is here. That's why it's genius.

KARINA  
Is it?

MUFFIN  
Here we go.

YAVI  
You're just not seeing it yet.

KARINA  
That is true, I am not.

Muffin and Yavi share a look. Karina laughs again.

KARINA (CONT'D)  
You two sure bestied up quick.

FELICIA  
How do we decide who directs and all that?

YAVI  
I think you should do it. If you feel up to it, of course.

FELICIA  
Of course I am. But I wanted to act.

MUFFIN  
His last message said, "One director. Find your actors."

KARINA  
You're thinking a Coach Conley situation?

MUFFIN  
Yeah. It makes sense to me.

YAVI  
Who is that?

KARINA

High school drama. Not enough boys,  
so he stepped in for a few parts.

MUFFIN

Pretty sure he just wanted to be an  
actor and did it on purpose.

FELICIA

So I can do both?

YAVI

Yeah!

BOOM. The door to the outside slams open.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - EVENING

Brooks walks in dramatically.

BROOKS

No!

Taylor walks in behind him. She looks agitated.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - EVENING

The actor group groans, although Muffin still looks excited  
to see Brooks.

KARINA

What now?

Brooks dramatically walks on stage.

BROOKS

Great work, everyone, great work.  
Taylor, grab them.

The actor group gasps and backs away. Taylor grabs the  
cylinder and the pyramid.

YAVI

Oh. That makes more sense.

KARINA

So now we're down to the star and  
the moon? What does that mean?

FELICIA

Yes, Mister Brooks, sir, are we  
even close to getting it right?

MUFFIN

We'd appreciate any guidance. To make sure your work is represented correctly.

Brooks paces back and forth downstage, occasionally looking up at the actors. The others wait patiently.

BROOKS

Art. Without art, the crudeness of reality would make the world unbearable. The moment you think you understand a great work of art, it's dead for you. Acting is standing up naked and turning around very slowly. The main factor in any form of creativeness is the life of a human spirit, that of the actor and his part, their joint feelings and subconscious creation.

The actor group nods, although Karina looks confused.

KARINA

Stanislavski?

Brooks points to himself.

BROOKS

Brooks.

Brooks turns to leave.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

You're almost there.

He and Taylor walk offstage. The actor group runs downstage.

YAVI

Please, can you give us any direction at all?

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - EVENING

Brooks stops. He turns.

BROOKS

You don't feel directed? Is that what I'm hearing?

Taylor whispers something to him. He holds up his hand. Taylor looks away, annoyed.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Fine. Here's some direction. One play. One actor. One director. One star. One moon. One play. Two sacrifices.

He turns to leave. Taylor follows.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - EVENING

The actor group is distraught.

FELICIA

What? What did he say?

MUFFIN

Mister Brooks, please, what are we doing?

YAVI

Miss Taylor, ma'am, can you please talk to him?

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - EVENING

Brooks stops at the door and waves.

BROOKS

Be brilliant! Or else!

The group continues to yell as he and Taylor leave.

INT. THEATER LOBBY - EVENING

Brooks and Taylor walk through the lobby to a side hallway.

INT. THEATER LOBBY - HALLWAY - EVENING

They continue down the hall to a door. Taylor fumbles the totems she's carrying and opens the door for him.

INT. VIEWING ROOM - EVENING

This is the room where they've been watching the proceedings. Taylor puts the totems down as Brooks sits to watch the reactions. The actors are walking in circles on the camera.

TAYLOR

I thought we agreed you weren't going to do that.

BROOKS

You said it, I did not agree.

TAYLOR

You did it out of spite. Why can't you just tell them the truth?

BROOKS

Because they are close. You don't interrupt when they're this close. Truth matters not one iota. You wouldn't understand.

TAYLOR

What I understand is this is needlessly cruel. I did not sign up to be your assistant to torture--

BROOKS

You signed up to be my assistant to do what I ask of you.

TAYLOR

I hardly think that included psychologically harming--

BROOKS

If you want that cushy Broadway casting job it involves everything I say.

Taylor wants to argue, but sits down instead. Someone hands her a drink and she smiles and nods at them. She gulps it.

TAYLOR

You didn't have to call them "sacrifices."

BROOKS

But that is what they are. That is what we all are, a sacrifice to art. I know that now.

(nodding and smiling)

This is going to work. Trust the process. The kids will be fine.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - EVENING

The kids are NOT fine, and are in fact yelling at each other while yanking the star and the moon back and forth.

MUFFIN

If there's one star, it's obviously  
for me!

FELICIA

Says who?

YAVI

Any of us can be the star.

KARINA

I didn't kill my best chance for  
rent money to stay on the  
sidelines.

MUFFIN

Oh, so now you deserve a spot?

KARINA

Yeah, I think I do.

YAVI

Why you? Weren't you going to quit  
earlier?

FELICIA

Yavi!

MUFFIN

He's right.

YAVI

Just saying.

FELICIA

That doesn't seem like you.

YAVI

What does that mean?

KARINA

She means you're letting this get  
to you.

A thought hits Karina.

MUFFIN

Maybe this is how he really is.

FELICIA  
I don't think so.

YAVI  
How would you know?

Felicia looks hurt.

MUFFIN  
It's evident you two aren't cut  
out. Maybe you should leave, hash  
it out.

FELICIA  
You want to be left with...

She thumbs at Karina who is lost in thought.

MUFFIN  
Well she's off in outer space now,  
so it doesn't matter. Hello? Space  
cadet?

KARINA  
Three, two, one, returning to  
Earth, ma'am.

Another brief moment where they remember they are friends,  
then it's gone.

KARINA (CONT'D)  
We are letting this get to us. We  
were working together, and as soon  
as they came in, we turned on each  
other.

MUFFIN  
Yeah? And?

FELICIA  
You think this is the play?

KARINA  
Those quotes about art.

YAVI  
I recognized some of it.

KARINA  
The last bit was definitely  
Stanislavski. I know it.

MUFFIN  
So what? We're in the play now?



KARINA

It's just a thought. How else would he accommodate for people getting kicked out? It could've been any of us.

YAVI

So the play is about us, like you said before.

MUFFIN

No.

KARINA

Oh, you have a thought?

MUFFIN

What does that mean?

KARINA

Nothing, just go on.

MUFFIN

If you do not tell the truth about yourself you cannot tell it about other people.

FELICIA

Whoa! Did you come up with that?

MUFFIN

I would love to take credit, but it's Virginia Woolf. Another woman unappreciated in her time.

KARINA

The play is about him. Brooks.

Muffin shrugs.

YAVI

It's a good idea.

Karina nods.

KARINA

Yeah. What else would a narcissist write about but himself?

MUFFIN

Hey, I didn't say that...  
(to the speakers on the wall)  
That was Karina, not me!

FELICIA  
Let's run with it.

YAVI  
You think if we hit on the right  
thing he'll tell us?

KARINA  
No. Who knows the most about this  
guy?

FELICIA  
Daniel.

KARINA  
Well, he's dead to us.

MUFFIN  
He was an actor first. Then a  
director.

YAVI  
Maybe that explains the star and  
the moon.

MUFFIN  
How?

YAVI  
The star is the actor, and the  
moon... reflects the star, like a  
director... I'm grasping at straws.

FELICIA  
You're doing great, honey.

YAVI  
Thanks.

FELICIA  
Don't want you to get upset again.

Yavi gives her a look.

KARINA  
What else?

MUFFIN  
His first play was "Get On Your  
Knees." It was a smash success,  
because he's a genius.

YAVI

That has to give somebody a big head, right? If enough people tell you that you're a genius, you start to believe it.

KARINA

He went to school here. Is he from here?

MUFFIN

You couldn't even bother to skim the Wikipedia page about him? He grew up in Ellijay.

FELICIA

Oh! I love the Apple Festival up there. It's so cute.

YAVI

Way too dusty for me.

KARINA

Ellijay... huh...

She turns and hops off stage.

MUFFIN

Now what are you doing?

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - EVENING

Karina picks up her phone and turns it on.

FELICIA (O.S.)

Isn't that off limits?

KARINA

I made a call before and nothing happened.

YAVI (O.S.)

That was before all this kicked off, wasn't it? Don't risk it!

MUFFIN (O.S.)

Let her do it. We won't have to worry about her anymore.

Karina makes a call.

KARINA

Ok, calling!

She looks at the speaker.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - EVENING

The others freeze and wait as well.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - EVENING

Nothing. Karina shrugs.

KARINA

Hey, mom? You remember that  
Priyanka lady Aunt Kathy used to  
work with? Didn't she live in  
Ellijay?

INT. THEATER - STAGE - EVENING

Muffin perks up.

MUFFIN

Mom? Hi Miss Angie!

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - EVENING

Karina closes her eyes.

KARINA

Yes. Yes, that was Marlie.  
Apparently she goes by Muffin now.  
No. No, we're not, it's a school  
thing. Listen, do you have  
Priyanka's number?

INT. THEATER - STAGE - EVENING

Felicia walks over to Yavi.

FELICIA

Hey, you ok?

YAVI

Yeah, I'm fine. I'm just a little  
rattled.

FELICIA

It's been a lot.

YAVI  
How are you feeling?

FELICIA  
Stressed. Can't wait to get home.  
Ron's got some new hero dose  
gummies for me to try.

YAVI  
Oh, is that something we're  
supposed to have?

FELICIA  
We?

YAVI  
Us one-kidneyers.

FELICIA  
The doctor didn't say anything  
about it.

YAVI  
Just seems like something to avoid,  
don't you think?

FELICIA  
No, I don't think.

YAVI  
I just don't think my kidney needs  
more stress--

FELICIA  
I've told you to not call it your  
kidney--

KARINA (O.S.)  
Aha!

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - EVENING

Karina winces as she types something into her phone.

KARINA  
Sorry, mom, didn't mean to yell  
into your ear. I'll explain later.  
Love you.

She hangs up.

KARINA (CONT'D)

Ok. I've got the number for someone who used to be in a writing workshop with Brooks. I'm going to call and dig up some dirt.

INT. VIEWING ROOM - EVENING

Brooks crosses his arms and sits back in his chair. Taylor watches his face.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - EVENING

Muffin picks up the star and the moon.

MUFFIN

Cool. You run off to chase shadows. We'll keep working.

Yavi and Felicia hop off stage.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - EVENING

Yavi and Felicia grab their phones.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - EVENING

Muffin can't believe it.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - EVENING

Yavi shrugs.

YAVI

It's not against the rules.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - EVENING

Muffin shakes her head.

MUFFIN

Are you guys actually serious right now?

She places the star and the moon totems down and stares at them, trying to unlock their mystery.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - EVENING

Karina makes another phone call. Yavi wanders back towards the Gallery. Felicia heads back towards the stage.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - EVENING

Yavi brings up his Twitch account and starts streaming. Immediately he's bombarded with comments.

YAVI  
Hello, my friends! Just checking in. How are we all doing this evening?

The comments ask where he's been.

YAVI (CONT'D)  
For those who missed my last stream, I had to break my consecutive streaming record tonight, but for a good reason. I can't go into much detail...

He makes a face like he's being coy. The comments ask him for more details.

YAVI (CONT'D)  
Well, since you twisted my arm...

INT. THEATER - BACKSTAGE - EVENING

Felicia tries to find a good spot to record.

FELICIA  
Hello my doves, it's your girl Felicia.

Nope, no good. She finds another spot and tries again.

FELICIA (CONT'D)  
Hello my doves, it's... no.

Still no good. She spots the discarded costumes and tries there.

FELICIA (CONT'D)  
Hello my doves, it's your girl Felicia.

She picks up some of the costumes and drapes them across her shoulders as she records.

FELICIA (CONT'D)  
 Just here on the set of the brand  
 new play by a certain theater  
 superstar!

She makes a face like she can't believe it.

FELICIA (CONT'D)  
 You know your girl's killing it,  
 and I can't wait for you to...  
 can't wait to show you... no.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - EVENING

Muffin holds the star near her face.

MUFFIN  
 I am the star. I light the  
 mysteries of the universe.

FELICIA (O.S.)  
 Hello my doves, it's your girl  
 Felicia.

Muffin closes her eyes in anger.

MUFFIN  
 Jesus tapdancing Christ.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - EVENING

Karina sits on the floor next to her bag. She's taking notes  
 in a notebook as she's on the phone.

KARINA  
 Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Oh, wow. And how  
 did he react? Uh-huh. He cried how  
 much? Wow, that's a lot.

INT. VIEWING ROOM - EVENING

Brooks and Taylor watch Karina on the camera. Brooks still  
 has his arms crossed. Taylor tries to hide a small smile.

BROOKS  
 Maybe you were right.

TAYLOR  
 About?



BROOKS  
I should go in there.

TAYLOR  
This was all your idea.

BROOKS  
I should ban the phones. Or maybe  
it's time...

He reaches underneath the table and pulls out a cardboard box. Inside are various insidious looking objects, including several knives.

Brooks pulls out one of the knives.

TAYLOR  
No! No, absolutely not.

BROOKS  
Is it not time to kick things into  
gear?

TAYLOR  
You said trust the process, and  
we're all trusting the process.

Brooks stares at the knife, then puts it away. Taylor breathes a sigh of relief.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - EVENING

Yavi has become very animated.

YAVI  
And that's about where we are now!  
Can you believe it? I never thought  
I could get caught up in something  
like this.

The comments respond by talking about how amazing he is, but they quickly switch to a cry for one thing: DARE TIME.

YAVI (CONT'D)  
Oh? Oh, is it... Dare Time?

He does a little dance that signals it is indeed Dare Time.

YAVI (CONT'D)  
It is Dare Time! What is the dare  
the town square will haveth me  
doeth this time?

He smiles as the comments fly by, but then his face slowly falls as he sees where the tide is turning.

INT. THEATER - BACKSTAGE - EVENING

Felicia has found another spot.

FELICIA

... I can't wait to show you all of our hard work! It's truly been an honor and a privilege--

MUFFIN (O.S.)

It will be a privilege to not hear the same goddamn thing over and over!

Felicia huffs and stops recording.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Felicia walks out on stage.

FELICIA

Am I bothering you?

MUFFIN

No, not at all. Why would you be bothering me? I'm just working on the most important thing any of us has ever done while everyone else plays on their phone.

FELICIA

We all needed a break.

MUFFIN

We don't have time for breaks! What the hell are you doing back there anyway?

FELICIA

Recording a video for all my fans. Social media presence is important, honey, no matter if you're going into theater acting or reality TV like me.

MUFFIN

Reality... what are you doing here, then, if you just want to do that junk?

FELICIA  
Junk? How dare you. It's a  
perfectly reasonable dream, thank  
you very much.

MUFFIN  
If you like making garbage for  
garbage people, sure.

Felicia gasps.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Karina wraps up the phone call.

KARINA  
Ok. I will. Thank you very much.  
This has been super helpful.

She hangs up.

KARINA (CONT'D)  
Ok! I have news!

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Karina hops on stage.

FELICIA  
It's been around for like thirty  
years! Get over it!

MUFFIN  
So has the Macarena, do you still  
listen to that?

FELICIA  
What the hell is the Macarena?

MUFFIN  
It was something all the old people  
used to do while they watched  
shitty reality TV!

KARINA  
What is happening here?

FELICIA  
Your friend here thinks my dreams  
are stupid.

Former.                      KARINA    MUFFIN  
Former.

FELICIA  
Whatever. What did you find?

KARINA  
Where's Yavi? He should hear this  
too.

They look out into the seats.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - NIGHT

No sign of Yavi.

FELICIA (O.S.)  
Yavi?

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

No response.

FELICIA  
That's weird.

MUFFIN  
We don't have time for this, did  
you find out anything useful?

KARINA  
She was in the workshop when he was  
first working on Get On Your Knees.

MUFFIN  
No shit.

KARINA  
Yeah. Everyone hated it.

FELICIA  
Oh no!

MUFFIN  
Come on.

KARINA  
It was a huge flop. She said he  
just sat there and took it. His  
eyes were glowing with rage, but he  
didn't say a thing. Just thanked  
everyone at the end and left.

MUFFIN

Shows what the average idiot knows.

KARINA

No, that's the thing, she said the play was completely different when she finally saw it. He took all their notes and completely redid everything.

MUFFIN

This lady sounds like a glory hunter.

FELICIA

Taking notes and learning to work together is always a good thing!

Yavi YELLS and runs in from out of nowhere, holding his phone. The others gasp and flinch at the noise.

Yavi grabs the star totem and flings it as far as he can. It crashes into the wall, exploding into a million pieces.

Stunned silence, then Muffin SCREAMS.

INT. VIEWING ROOM - NIGHT

Taylor stands up.

TAYLOR

Never mind what I said. You've got to get in there.

BROOKS

Are you out of your mind? This is the most interesting thing that's happened all night.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Muffin is distraught. The others are frozen. They look at the speaker. Nothing happens.

MUFFIN

What did you do? What the fuck did you do?

Muffin hops off stage. Karina looks to the Gallery.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - NIGHT

The woman is there. She stares, mumbles, and fumbles the slime. She cries. She is also closer to Karina.

Next to her is another face. Another monk robe. It's Muffin's face. This other Muffin takes her hood off and gets in other Karina's face, angry as a hornet.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Karina closes her eyes.

KARINA  
(to herself)  
I see her. Now, in fact. Just over there. She's smiling, but through tremendous pain.

Yavi hasn't moved.

FELICIA  
Yavi? Honey?

KARINA  
Have you lost your mind?

Yavi doesn't say a word, just runs backstage.

Felicia starts to move, but Karina stops her.

KARINA (CONT'D)  
I'll get him. Go help.

She nods at Muffin.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Muffin scrapes all the pieces of the star together in a pile.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Felicia gives Karina a look. Karina just shrugs. Felicia heads towards Muffin, while Karina goes backstage.

INT. THEATER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Karina finds Yavi sitting, leaning against the wall. He's looking at his phone.

KARINA  
Yavi?

YAVI  
Hey.

KARINA  
Gonna throw something else?

He shakes his head. He shows her his phone. The comments are blowing up, they can't believe he actually did it.

KARINA (CONT'D)  
Your Internet friends wanted you to do it?

YAVI  
Twitch followers. They dared me to do it.

KARINA  
You just do anything they tell you to do?

YAVI  
It's either that or lose followers.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Felicia kneels down and helps Muffin scoop up the dead star. Muffin is still very upset.

FELICIA  
I'm sure Brooks can find another one. Maybe he has a bunch already.

MUFFIN  
It's not that.

FELICIA  
What is it?

She stops messing with the broken totem and slumps on the ground.

MUFFIN  
I was really close to figuring something out. I almost had a great idea. And now it's gone.

FELICIA  
We'll come up with something.

MUFFIN

It just takes me so much longer  
than other people.

FELICIA

When you say other people...

Felicia nods towards backstage.

MUFFIN

Ugh.

FELICIA

Comparing yourself to other people  
is never going to end well.

MUFFIN

It's so easy for her. Everything  
just comes to her. As usual I'm  
left sifting through the dust.

INT. THEATER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Karina sits next to Yavi.

YAVI

I don't know what I'm doing here.

KARINA

I'm sure you're here for a reason.

YAVI

I like theater. I guess. But it's  
just not my thing.

Karina nods.

YAVI (CONT'D)

Not like you. And Muffin.

KARINA

Yeah. Me and Muffin.

YAVI

This stuff is in your blood. You  
saw me earlier.

KARINA

Oh, come on.

Yavi looks at her.



KARINA (CONT'D)

We're not exactly getting a lot of direction here. It's turning into a lot of work. I wasn't expecting that.

YAVI

Just like to coast through things? I get that.

KARINA

What? No, I didn't say that.

YAVI

Oh, sorry. I just thought you meant you like to give up when the going gets tough. You're just like me.

Karina starts to talk, then stops herself.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Muffin and Felicia have the star basically back into a star shape again. Felicia puffs on her vape pen.

MUFFIN

So the reality TV thing--

FELICIA

Don't start.

MUFFIN

I saw you in Les Mis last year.

FELICIA

You did?

MUFFIN

I try and see every play here. You were really good.

FELICIA

Thank you! I worked really hard.

MUFFIN

It came through. Don't you feel you're more talented than doing some Housewives or whatever show?

FELICIA

I'm talented enough to be seen and loved and make money. That's my eye on that prize, honey.

(MORE)

FELICIA (CONT'D)

It's what people like, it's what they watch, and it's what makes money. Which, again, is what I want.

MUFFIN

It just seems so superficial.

FELICIA

It all is, really. Nobody will remember any of this shit. Not this play, not any of the plays you do on Broadway, none of my TV shows. It just doesn't matter.

Felicia stands up and helps Muffin stand.

FELICIA (CONT'D)

I want to make the most of it while I can. That's it. Get out of my shitty homelife and get into a Ferrari.

MUFFIN

Now you're talking. I get that. Get revenge on your parents kind of thing.

FELICIA

Is that where your bitchy intensity comes from?

Muffin decides to ignore that.

MUFFIN

No, actually. They never care about anything. Just coasting through life. I have no idea where my drive comes from.

FELICIA

We're either copying our parents or raging against them. Don't think there's anything else. And you know what? Good for you for raging.

Muffin smiles.

INT. VIEWING ROOM - NIGHT

Brooks gets very excited watching this, squirming in his chair and pumping his fists.

Disgusted, Taylor turns away. She takes out her notebook and quickly scribbles something down. She tears that paper out and puts it in her pocket.

She looks out into the hallway and nods at someone.

TAYLOR  
Sit here. Take notes.

She stands up and hands the notebook and pen to... Daniel, who sits down.

DANIEL  
On what?

TAYLOR  
Whatever he says. I'll be right back.

Taylor leaves. Daniel flips through the pages.

DANIEL  
Wha...

BROOKS  
Write that down!

DANIEL  
Huh...

Daniel squints at the camera feed. He shrugs and starts writing stuff down.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Karina and Yavi walk out from backstage.

KARINA  
Reconvene?

Felicia and Muffin hop on stage.

MUFFIN  
Everything ok now?

YAVI  
Yes. Sorry for freaking out. Won't happen again.

FELICIA  
Another dare?

MUFFIN  
Christ, first a kidney, now this?

FELICIA  
Huh?

YAVI  
No more dares.

FELICIA  
What does first a kidney mean?

KARINA  
You kinda did us a favor.

MUFFIN  
How?

KARINA  
Apparently we don't need the star,  
or you'd be out of here already.

YAVI  
Maybe we don't even need the moon.

Karina shrugs.

MUFFIN  
We've got to do something.

Muffin spots something in the back of the house.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - NIGHT

The door is cracked open. Taylor's face barely peeks through.

KARINA (O.S.)  
There's still an audience coming,  
and shortly.

Taylor sees Muffin sees her. She puts a finger to her lips  
and slips the piece of paper through. She closes the door.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Muffin looks perplexed but doesn't acknowledge what happened.

FELICIA  
We have to be doing something  
right. His reputation is on the  
line here, too, right?

MUFFIN

I need to stretch my legs.

KARINA

This is the time to do it?

MUFFIN

I'll remind you while you were all  
goofing off, I was trying to work.  
I need space to think.

Muffin hops off stage.

Karina picks up the moon totem. Felicia gets closer to Yavi.

FELICIA

Hey, what did she mean about the  
kidney being a dare?

YAVI

Oh... I told you that, right?

FELICIA

Told me what?

YAVI

I first signed up for the kidney  
donation program as a dare. From my  
followers.

FELICIA

Oh. Oh, yeah, that's right.

Felicia tries to hide the fact that she's hurt and confused.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - NIGHT

Muffin casually saunters up towards the door. She tries not  
to look over her shoulder to see if they're looking.

She reaches the door and squats down to pick up the paper.  
She hides behind the nearest seat so she isn't seen.

She opens up the paper and reads it. Her face turns white and  
her hands shake. A wave of conflicting emotions runs through  
her. She puts the paper into her pocket and stares at the  
door.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Karina, Felicia, and Yavi dance around the moon.

KARINA  
Ok, now Yavi, go!

Yavi raises his hands to the ceiling. He twirls around and WHOOPS.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Muffin walks up.

MUFFIN  
What the fuck?

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Karina points to Felicia.

KARINA  
Felicia, go!

Felicia wiggles around as Muffin hops on stage.

KARINA (CONT'D)  
Oh, there you are.

MUFFIN  
Should I ask what this is?

YAVI  
Karina had an idea.

KARINA  
It's a moon dance. It's based on an ancient tradition--

MUFFIN  
No. Stop this. This is nothing.

KARINA  
You can't just nix an idea because you can't think of anything.

MUFFIN  
I have an idea.

KARINA  
You do?

MUFFIN  
I am capable of having my own thoughts. Felicia, you can stop wiggling.

Felicia stops.

FELICIA  
Aw, I was really feeling it.

YAVI  
What's your idea?

MUFFIN  
Every actor's dream. Monologues.

KARINA  
Why monologues?

MUFFIN  
Just call it a hunch.

KARINA  
A hunch? Just like that?

MUFFIN  
Just like that.

FELICIA  
Who goes first?

MUFFIN  
Yavi. Yavi should go first.

YAVI  
Why me?

MUFFIN  
Another hunch. You have one prepared, right?

YAVI  
Of course.

MUFFIN  
Well, let's see it.

She hops off stage. Karina follows her.

Felicia starts to follow but Yavi stops her.

YAVI  
Which one do you think I should do?  
Lorraine or Clermont?

FELICIA  
I'm sure you'll do fine either way,  
honey.

YAVI  
I need help choosing.

FELICIA  
Why don't you ask your little  
followers to dare you?

Yavi is taken aback. Felicia takes out her vape pen.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Karina approaches Muffin.

KARINA  
What's the game here?

MUFFIN  
No game.

KARINA  
If you're pulling something--

MUFFIN  
No games, Kari.

Muffin using her nickname makes Karina stop. Muffin sits.

MUFFIN (CONT'D)  
It's just an idea. Ok?

KARINA  
If you say so.

Karina sits next to her.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Felicia's arms are crossed as she puffs on her vape.

YAVI  
I thought I had told you! I don't  
see what the big deal is?

FELICIA  
Oh, nothing, just saving my life  
was a fun dare to you.

She puffs some more.

YAVI  
That's why I did it in the first  
place, sure. Does it really matter?



FELICIA

No. I suppose it doesn't.

YAVI

Should you really be vaping?

FELICIA

Don't start. I've had it about up to here.

YAVI

Ok, ok. It just seems like it's not particularly healthy. That and all the drinking you've been doing.

FELICIA

Yavi!

YAVI

I'm sorry, please don't be upset. It stresses out your body and you know what the doctor said about my kidney--

Felicia stomps her foot.

FELICIA

Stop doing that! It's my fucking kidney!

Yavi steps back from her anger.

FELICIA (CONT'D)

It's in me! You gave it to me! Remember? It's up to me to do what I want with it!

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Karina and Muffin react to her outburst.

MUFFIN

Whoa.

KARINA

Is this his scene? It feels so real.

MUFFIN

Hey, tick-tock, doc!

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Felicia huffs and hops off stage, leaving a shaken Yavi to compose himself.

He clears his throat and looks at the floor, gathering strength.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

The others wait patiently. Felicia looks conflicted about whether to help him.

KARINA

Do you want someone else to go first?

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Yavi shakes his head.

YAVI

Hello. My name is Yavier Fuentes, and my monologue today is from the play "Heartthrob" by Lisa Chow.

He takes a deep breath. Again, his acting is not great.

YAVI (CONT'D)

No. It's not fair. It's not fair at all! Why should I be punished? I was this close, this close, dammit, to being up on that screen. Sure, it's just the end of the year highlight reel for Meadowcreek High, and it might not mean anything to you, but it does to me! It does to me, dammit.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

The others watch, their faces dropping the longer Yavi goes.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Yavi struggles to keep it together. He's still upset and he also knows he's not doing great here.

YAVI  
Johnny gets his. Why not me? Kalena  
got hers. Why not me? Why...

He stops. Takes another deep breath.

YAVI (CONT'D)  
Why...

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

The others watch.

KARINA  
You got this.

MUFFIN  
Just start over or something.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Yavi stands up straight, confident.

YAVI  
Why am I not on the minds and  
lips... hearts and lips...

Nope, it's gone.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Felicia can't help herself.

FELICIA  
Just remember to breathe. You're  
going to pass out.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Yavi gets offended.

YAVI  
Oh, ok. Great advice. So you can  
tell me how to live in my body, but  
if I return the favor I'm the  
asshole?

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Felicia stands up.

FELICIA  
Excuse me?

YAVI (O.S.)  
You heard me.

MUFFIN  
That makes NO sense.

KARINA  
You're not helping.

FELICIA  
You think this is the same thing?  
What has gotten into you?

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Yavi balls up his fists.

YAVI  
Fuck this.

He hops off stage.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

He walks over to his bag.

FELICIA  
What are you doing?

YAVI  
I'm not cut out for this shit. I  
don't know what I'm doing here.

KARINA  
Ok, don't do anything crazy now.

Yavi gathers up his stuff and heads to the door.

FELICIA  
Whoa, honey, wait!

MUFFIN  
There's one.

KARINA

What?

Muffin shakes her head.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - NIGHT

Yavi walks towards the door. Felicia and Karina follow.

FELICIA

It just takes time! You'll get there.

Yavi stops and turns.

YAVI

Look at me and tell me I belong here right now. That I'm killing it up there.

Felicia stammers. Yavi smiles and nods.

YAVI (CONT'D)

I play video games for a living. I know when I'm beaten.

He reaches the door.

FELICIA

Please, just...

Yavi turns and winks. He pushes on the door handle.

BROOKS (O.S.)

Yavier Fuentes! You are hereby disqualified! Please exit immediately! Still one actor and one director!

YAVI

Good luck.

He leaves. The door SLAMS behind him. It ECHOES.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Karina gets in Muffin's face.

KARINA

What did you do?

MUFFIN  
I made him act.

FELICIA  
Why would you do that?

MUFFIN  
Are you seriously asking that question?

KARINA  
Is your idea to embarrass everyone and get your way?

MUFFIN  
You can't be serious... fine. I'll go. Unless...

She gestures towards the stage, but neither accept.

MUFFIN (CONT'D)  
Me then.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Muffin gets on stage. She's instantly ready to go.

MUFFIN  
Hello. My name is Muffin Brumby, and I will be performing Frida's opening monologue from Tanner Brown's excellent play "Sword and Bone."

She clears her throat and steadies herself. She squats down and acts like she's picking something off of the ground with cupped hands.

MUFFIN (CONT'D)  
This. This right here, y'all. This sapling, it has no business being here.

She stands up and holds it aloft.

MUFFIN (CONT'D)  
It only knows how to keep moving. Keep growing. Keep reaching up. Keep for the stars. There is no in-between. There is no compromise. This sapling. It knows struggle. This sidewalk can't bring it down. Lack of rain can't kill it.

She squats down and replants it.

MUFFIN (CONT'D)  
Nothing can stop your roots from  
growing, little. Keep defying the  
odds.

She stands up, defiant.

MUFFIN (CONT'D)  
I promise to honor your legacy. I  
will march on. I will know no in-  
between. I will know no compromise.  
I will keep for the stars.

She salutes.

MUFFIN (CONT'D)  
And scene.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Felicia and Karina clap.

KARINA  
Still got it.

FELICIA  
I love that play. All the hints of  
the character's downfall are right  
there in the opening, but you just  
don't see it.

Muffin hops down.

KARINA  
Yeah, it never occurred to me she's  
ripping that tree's roots out, just  
like she did to her family.  
Replanting it probably caused it  
more suffering. She should've quit  
while she was ahead.

MUFFIN  
You've overthinking it. The point  
of the play is to never give up.  
It's literally what she says.

KARINA  
But her family gets chopped up...  
never mind. Am I next then?

MUFFIN  
No.

KARINA  
No?

FELICIA  
Ok, I can go.

KARINA  
If you want me to--

MUFFIN  
She's got it.

FELICIA  
I got it.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Felicia readies herself.

FELICIA  
Hello. My name is Felicia Jones. My monologue is from Reggie Ochoa's play "Frames of a Broken Painting." I hope you enjoy.

She clears her throat. The monologue starts off well, but fizzles out, as her heart isn't in it.

FELICIA (CONT'D)  
There's a house. On a hill. In the country. Where it rains. The roof has collapsed. The walls have melted. Nothing there but ghosts. It is the house where I grew up. I have the key, here, around my neck. It can unlock the door. I will have to reattach it. But it will work again. I just need to turn it.

She stops and hops off stage.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Felicia walks over to her stuff and gathers it up to leave.

KARINA  
What happened? What's going on?



FELICIA  
I have to go. It was nice meeting  
y'all.

KARINA  
You were doing really good!

MUFFIN  
No she wasn't.

KARINA  
Hey!

MUFFIN  
She was holding back.

FELICIA  
She's right. I was.

Felicia is ready to go.

FELICIA (CONT'D)  
I have to go get Yavi. I can't lose  
a friend like that.

She stares at them poignantly for a second before walking  
towards the exit.

KARINA  
Felicia, come on. I'm sure Yavi  
will forgive you later.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - NIGHT

Felicia approaches the door.

FELICIA  
No time like the present, honey!

She kicks open the door.

BROOKS (O.S.)  
Felicia Jones! You are hereby  
disqualified--

FELICIA  
Yeah, yeah, I know.

She takes out her vape pen and leaves. She's gone.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Karina paces.

KARINA  
What the hell is going on?

MUFFIN  
Why do you suddenly care so much?

Karina gets in Muffin's face.

KARINA  
What did you do? Why did you make us do monologues?

MUFFIN  
Why did I suggest we actually do some acting? Is that what you're asking? Again, why do you care so much? I thought this was all bullshit and you were over all this.

KARINA  
I just know you're up to something and I don't like it.

MUFFIN  
Oh. You're scared.

KARINA  
Scared of what?

MUFFIN  
Going up. Performing.

KARINA  
Oh, come on.

MUFFIN  
Then go. Tick-tock, doc.

Karina huffs and climbs on stage.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Karina shakes off the cobwebs.

KARINA  
Hello, my name is Karina Osgood,  
and I will be performing Helena's  
monologue from "A Midsummer Night's  
Dream." How happy some o'er--

MUFFIN (O.S.)  
No!

KARINA  
What the hell?

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Muffin stands up and walks closer to the stage.

MUFFIN  
Give me a break. Shakespeare?

KARINA (O.S.)  
What's the problem? It's my  
monologue.

MUFFIN  
No it's not. Do the real one.

KARINA (O.S.)  
I am--

Muffin waves her off and sits back down.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Begrudgingly, Karina starts over.

KARINA  
Hello. I'm still Karina Osgood. My  
monologue today will apparently be  
from Claudine Moss's play "God is  
Dead and I Killed Her."

She spreads out her arms to Muffin like "is that ok?"

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Muffin nods for her to go on.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Karina steadies herself, although it takes a second.

KARINA

I see her. Now, in fact. Just over there. She's smiling, but through tremendous pain. Primordial ooze, blocks of life, slips through her fingers. She can't quite... get... hold. She has my face.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Muffin shifts in her chair, annoyed.

MUFFIN

Come on.

KARINA (O.S.)

Stop interrupting!

MUFFIN

Then do it for real!

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Karina wants to yell back, but she knows Muffin is right.

KARINA

She has my face. My fingers. They cannot grasp anything. The ooze drips. It drifts. I drift.

MUFFIN (O.S.)

Fuck sake.

KARINA

I swear to fucking god.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Muffin shakes her head in disappointment.

MUFFIN

If you're not going to try, forget it.

KARINA (O.S.)

You know why this is hard for me. What is your problem?

MUFFIN

You fucked it up one time in front of all your friends and family!

(MORE)

MUFFIN (CONT'D)

Whoop-dee-doo! You're supposed to be an actor! Act! Dig deeper! This is all surface level garbage. Do you have emotions? Are they in there somewhere?

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Karina settles.

KARINA

The ooze drips.

She can't get back into it.

KARINA (CONT'D)

Fuck this.

She hops off stage.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Karina walks over to her bag.

MUFFIN

What are you doing?

Karina grabs her stuff, getting ready to leave.

KARINA

Giving you what you want.

Muffin stands up and walks over to Karina.

MUFFIN

You're giving me the opposite. I wanted you to do your monologue, but actually try.

Karina throws her stuff down.

KARINA

I can't! Ok? I fucking can't! I can't fucking do what you do. I can't reach down and grab an extra layer of give a shit. I can't just recover and move on from ruining that performance. I can't let it go. Ok? Is that what you want to hear?

MUFFIN

No! I want to hear your monologue!

KARINA

Every time I go up on stage I have to fight off running away. I don't have the drive you have. I feel like a goddamn fraud every time. I never belong up there.

MUFFIN

Bullshit.

KARINA

It's true.

MUFFIN

I don't believe you.

KARINA

I don't care! I don't care what you think anymore. I stopped caring a long time ago.

MUFFIN

I gathered that from, I don't know, every time you sneered my way for the past five years.

KARINA

Don't throw this on me. You were so fucking mean to me. All I wanted to do is have fun with my friend. You turned it into a competition. Because you could never take second place. Better to reign in hell, right?

MUFFIN

So I'm Satan now?

KARINA

Admit it. You made my life hell because you couldn't take a back seat.

MUFFIN

Why should I take a back seat?

KARINA

Because you can't win all the time!

MUFFIN

When do I ever get to win? When is  
it my fucking turn?

KARINA

It's your turn when it's your turn!  
You don't get to take it out on me!

Karina pokes a finger into Muffin's chest. Muffin slaps it  
away.

MUFFIN

Don't touch me.

INT. VIEWING ROOM - NIGHT

Taylor stands up.

TAYLOR

Ok. This is getting out of hand.

BROOKS

Nonsense. This is what we came here  
for!

TAYLOR

No. You need to get in there.

DANIEL

It's getting heavy in there.

BROOKS

Settle down, both of you.

Taylor starts to sit down. Instead, she grabs a knife out of  
the box.

DANIEL

Whoa!

TAYLOR

No. I'm over this shit. Get in  
there, or I'm going to tell  
everyone about you. It won't just  
be them, it'll be everybody in the  
world.

Brooks looks hurt and confused.

DANIEL

Don't do anything crazy! Think  
about the consequences of your  
actions!

Brooks sighs and nods. He grabs the knife by the blade - it's a prop knife. He tosses it back in the box.

BROOKS  
Come on. About time you grew some ovaries.

He stands up and leaves.

DANIEL  
Huh? Grew some ovaries?

Taylor grabs his hand and pulls him out of the room.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Karina grabs her stuff and heads to the door. Muffin follows.

MUFFIN  
Oh, what a surprise. Running away.

KARINA  
It's either that or I start throwing elbows.

MUFFIN  
It won't work this time.

KARINA  
What are you talking about?

MUFFIN  
Running away. It won't work.

KARINA  
Watch me.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - NIGHT

Karina approaches the door.

KARINA  
I'd say it's been a pleasure.

MUFFIN  
Kari, just stop.

KARINA  
You don't get to use my nickname anymore.



MUFFIN  
If you leave, this has all been a  
waste of time.

Karina reaches for the door.

MUFFIN (CONT'D)  
Stop!

KARINA  
Goodbye.

MUFFIN  
This was all about you!

Karina opens the door.

They wait.

Nothing comes.

KARINA  
What do you mean it's all about me?

MUFFIN  
He called you first, remember?

Muffin hands Karina the note. It reads: "Karina is the broken star."

Brooks, Taylor, and Daniel appear at the door. Taylor is on the phone.

BROOKS  
Hi there. It seems I owe you a  
little explanation.

TAYLOR  
(on the phone)  
Please come back. I promise it will  
make sense.

Daniel waves.

Karina just looks completely lost.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Karina, Muffin, Felicia, and Yavi sit on the floor as they listen to Brooks, who sits in a theater chair. Taylor and Daniel sit nearby.

BROOKS

One day, once upon a time, there was a man with a dream. A dream to become a glowing god--

TAYLOR

Brooks.

Brooks sighs.

BROOKS

"Get On Your Knees" was the worst thing to happen to me. I curse the day that play came out.

The actors can't believe it, particularly Muffin.

MUFFIN

But... the genius...

BROOKS

Yes, yes. The genius. It was such genius that, as our Karina here discovered, was hated by everyone who read it, up until it was loved by everyone.

MUFFIN

That just shows some people just don't get it.

BROOKS

No. It just shows I got lucky. One New York Times reviewer loved it, and it caught on. Had they hated it, where would I be? Probably better off. Because, you see, I haven't written a word since.

YAVI

Surely that's not true.

TAYLOR

It is.

BROOKS

Well, sort of. I have written words, but I haven't saved any of them, because none of them have been worth saving. Then this, my old alma mater, came calling. I took the chance. Some said it was brave, but I knew it was cowardly. I was running and hiding.

KARINA  
There was no play.

BROOKS  
There was no play. There never was  
a play. Daniel is an old actor  
friend.

DANIEL  
Hi guys! Sorry for the deception. I  
don't go here. Also, I'm forty-two.

FELICIA  
There's no way!

Daniel pulls at his face to show he's wearing prosthetic  
makeup.

DANIEL  
See! I'll show you my license!

YAVI  
Oh my god!

KARINA  
If there was no play, what were we  
doing here?

BROOKS  
As I said, the play was in your  
hands. My plan was to give you a  
prompt and push you out of the  
airplane to fly.

TAYLOR  
In particular...

BROOKS  
In particular, Miss Karina. Her  
reputation is unmatched. The next  
superstar--

MUFFIN  
Ok, we get it. So this was all  
about her.

FELICIA  
So no audience?

TAYLOR  
Oh, no. That's very real. They will  
be here.

MUFFIN

This was a complete waste. This didn't work. Your plan failed. I thought you...

She stares at Brooks, her admiration for him vanishing.

BROOKS

Yes. I have failed everyone. For that, I sincerely apologize. I can't kick anyone out of anything.

Karina stands up.

MUFFIN

Where are you going?

KARINA

It hasn't been a waste.

She climbs on stage.

Brooks looks interested.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Karina waves for Muffin to join her.

KARINA

Come on.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Muffin looks up at her. Annoyed, she joins her on stage. Felicia and Yavi flip around to watch.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Muffin stands off to the side.

MUFFIN

So what am I doing?

KARINA

Directing.

It takes Muffin a second, but she gets it.

MUFFIN

If you're not here to act, then get the fuck off the stage.

(MORE)

MUFFIN (CONT'D)  
 This is place for truth, not  
 bullshit. You hear me?

Karina steadies herself and goes right into her monologue.  
 It's easily the best acting of the night.

KARINA  
 I see her. Now, in fact. Just over  
 there. She's smiling, but through  
 tremendous pain. Primordial ooze,  
 blocks of life, slips through her  
 fingers. She can't quite...

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Brooks watches this from his seat. His eyes glow with an  
 idea.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Muffin pounds her fist into her palm.

MUFFIN  
 Not good enough!

KARINA  
 What do you want from me?

MUFFIN  
 Emotion! Your inner self! This is  
 your only chance and you're blowing  
 it!

KARINA  
 Fine!

She goes again, and it's even better somehow.

KARINA (CONT'D)  
 I see her. Now, in fact. Just over  
 there. She's smiling, but through  
 tremendous pain.

INT. THEATER - GALLERY - NIGHT

The other Karina is there. The other Muffin gets in her face,  
 angry. Other Karina cries.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Karina ramps it up even more.

KARINA

Primordial ooze, blocks of life,  
slips through her fingers. She  
can't quite... get... hold. She has  
my face. My fingers. They cannot  
grasp anything. The ooze drips. It  
drifts. I drift. It's the same,  
every day.

Other Karina appears in Karina's face. She smiles.

KARINA (CONT'D)

How can I create, she screams. How  
can I create in a world like this?  
How can I go on? There is no  
answer, only a dull echo. Go on,  
the echo says. Go on.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Brooks stands and CLAPS. The others join.

DANIEL

Incredible!

BROOKS

I see now. I see what you're doing.  
Karina, were they ever right about  
you. You and I... we need others to  
push us. Otherwise, we flounder in  
the dark. But is it enough? Is it  
what they want to see?

TAYLOR

I might remind you we don't have  
time to worry about that.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Karina laughs.

KARINA

Yeah, tick-tock doc.

MUFFIN

Tick-dock doc.

They smile at each other.

INT. THEATER - ORCHESTRA - NIGHT

Brooks laughs.

BROOKS  
Right. Ok, the rest of you, let's  
go.

Felicia and Yavi stand. Brooks looks at Taylor and Daniel.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
You two as well. Come on then.

TAYLOR  
Huh? Us?

BROOKS  
Yes, yes, all hands on deck.

YAVI  
Excuse me, Mister Brooks?

BROOKS  
Yavier. Sorry again for all the  
troubles.

YAVI  
Listen, I was serious when I said I  
wasn't cut out for this. I just  
wanted to thank you for including  
me.

FELICIA  
Yavi...

YAVI  
No, it's ok. I really did learn  
something about myself tonight. It  
was worth it for that.

BROOKS  
Thank you for being a part of this  
adventure, then.

They shake hands.

Felicia and Yavi hug.

FELICIA  
You sure about this?

YAVI  
Yeah. Not for me. We don't have to  
do everything together.

Felicia nods.

YAVI (CONT'D)

You knock them dead, though. Keep chasing this dream. I'll be out chasing my own.

(to Karina)

You still need money?

KARINA

Very much so.

YAVI

I got you. I'll get you set up on Twitch.

KARINA

I don't play video games.

YAVI

That doesn't matter. After this, people will follow you. Trust me.

Yavi waves and leaves.

BROOKS

No worries. We still have more than enough people to pull this off. Up on stage, everyone.

INT. THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Karina walks over to Muffin as everyone piles on stage.

KARINA

Are you sure you're ok with this?

MUFFIN

What do you mean?

KARINA

It's not the main role.

MUFFIN

Who says? I thought there were no small parts.

KARINA

That's what they say.

MUFFIN

Maybe it's ok from time to time. With the right project.

(MORE)



MUFFIN (CONT'D)  
And only if someone better than me  
gets the main role.

Karina smiles.

MUFFIN (CONT'D)  
Which, in this, case... eh.

They laugh.

TAYLOR  
Is this really necessary? I'd like  
to remind you that my contract--

BROOKS  
Yes, yes, I obviously already  
talked to Mark about the casting  
job, you're in.

Taylor looks delighted.

DANIEL  
Oh! Do I get to be your assistant  
from now on?

BROOKS  
Oh... uh...

DANIEL  
I could really use the steady  
paycheck.

BROOKS  
We'll talk about it.

Daniel looks pleased. Brooks rubs his hands together.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
Ok, everybody settled. And,  
altogether now!

BLACKOUT

EXT. OUTSIDE THE THEATER - NIGHT

LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE ring through the night air.

Karina walks out of the theater, her head held high.

EXT. KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - NIGHT

She saunters through campus, again feeling the flowers and the brush, but in a more relaxed way, enjoying the moment.

A hand slips through one arm - it's Muffin. Karina smiles.

MUFFIN

Thought that went pretty well.

KARINA

They seemed to like it.

Muffin takes the moon totem out of her bag.

KARINA (CONT'D)

You stole it?

MUFFIN

Of course not. It's a wrap gift. That I took without asking. Maybe you can add it to your shelf with all your Monster High dolls.

KARINA

(laughing)

I got rid of those years ago!

MUFFIN

Oh. Well what are you into now?

KARINA

Come over and I'll show you.

They continue their walk through campus as the moon hangs high in the sky.

FADE OUT.