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UNCONVENTIONAL: A PLAY IN ONE ACT

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ABSTRACT

Unconventional, A Play in One Act is a full script that explores identity, agency, and expectation. I have worked closely with Dr. Martha Kemper to gain a clearer understanding of the nuances and creative process behind playwriting and working with this medium to create a full story. Many psychological and nuanced factors of one's life can be uniquely expressed through theatre due to the aspect of performing in front of an audience and removing the separation between actors and the audience. The process of creating this script and understanding the ways in which these factors come into play on the stage has changed dramatically, as I have worked to restructure the plot to be more conducive to these factors. This thesis does not extend to any plans to perform this show, as it is solely a completed draft of a full script.

The medium of theatre is one that allows each performance to be unique, as each performance will be done for a different audience and elicit different reactions from each of them. Sharing the same physical space and having a nonverbal exchange of understanding with one's audience are experiences that can give way to introspection for an actor. The ability for the actors to break the fourth wall to directly address the audience can help them bring the characters of their story closer to the audience in a way that is realistic, comedic, and genuinely surprising during each new show. This script was written to emphasize these intrinsic qualities of theatre and to explore the ways in which the central characters work against their guilt and self-doubt over the course of their first meeting each other at the Atlantic City Convention Center.

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UNCONVENTIONAL

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By

Bridget Welsh

Dramatis Personae

Cast of Characters

Camille: A young woman, deviating from her sister's vision of her future, twenty-one years old.

Sonny: A young man, attempting to remove himself from his group of longtime companions, twenty years old.

Edith: The personification of Sonny's self-doubt, vitriolic and unrelenting, in her mid-twenties to early thirties.

Avery: The personification of Camille's guilt, patient, but determined, in his late twenties.

Jessica: Sonny's friend, uptight and quick-witted, twenty years old.

Elise: Camille's sister, a student at Pratt University, dismissive of Camille's interests outside of her original art, twenty-two years old.

Alan: Sonny's friend, constantly trying to look on the bright side of the situation, but often exasperated, twenty years old.

Skylar: Camille's cheerful cousin who introduced Camille to her first convention, in her early thirties, only heard from offstage.

Elliot: Camille's easygoing cousin who introduced Camille to her first convention, in his early thirties, only heard from offstage.

Dr. Lindwell: A professor of anthropology in his early sixties, only heard from offstage.

Setting

All scenes take place in the same location. Room D-3, a large meeting room in the Atlantic City Convention Center, the AnimeNEXT Convention, an event centered around comic books, anime, and American animated television shows. Friday, June 7th, 2019.

10:15 A.M. Up center, a 72 x 30" folding table covered by a plain, dark blue tablecloth, and two folding chairs behind it. Two wireless microphones on the table facing the chairs. A blank screen present against the back curtain. A projector hangs above it and is currently turned off. Two large portable speakers up right and up left. Two sets of staircases leading from the edge of the stage into the house, down right and down left.

SCENE 1: INTRODUCTION

CURTAIN

(At Rise: AVERY sits in one of the middle left seats in the house.)

(Stage lights up. Spotlight on CAMILLE as she enters from the door of the Audience's entrance to the house, carrying a backpack and a plastic bag full of convention merchandise. This includes three 18" x 24" posters of various popular television shows such as "Stranger Things" and "Steven Universe." She wears a lanyard and an I.D. badge with the year and her name written on it. She crosses towards the stage up the left aisle, looking a little bit lost, and stops to ask one of the Audience members a question.)

CAMILLE: Hey, is this room D-3? *(After presumably being told so)* Okay, thank you! *(Crosses to the stage and puts down her backpack and plastic bag next to the seat right)* Whew, I'm in the right place! Good morning, guys, we'll be setting up our panel when Sonny gets here. We'll be starting at the top of the hour. I'm a little bit nervous. This is my first panel, but we're ready! We've been preparing for this for—

AVERY: The past two weeks. But you're here, able to finally show everyone what you've got and prove yourself a prodigy of the arts.

(Spotlight on Avery, who stands and crosses to the stage through the center aisle and up the right stairs, leaning on the proscenium.)

CAMILLE: Well, not like that. I'm excited to see what these panels are really like from the other side! You'd probably get better at them the more you do them, wouldn't you?

AVERY: Just like all of your other wonderful talents. They would be so impressed if you held a panel showing them your-

CAMILLE: Hold on, I thought you were going to wait for me until after the panel, get yourself some goodies at the dealer's room or something. Are you going to stick around?

AVERY: Why not? The dealer's room can wait until the panel's over. It's only the first day, they'll have plenty of posters afterward.

(Camille shrugs and opens her bag and starts rustling through it.)

AVERY: For those of you who don't know, I've been an old friend and confidant of the person you see before you since she was merely a young child. We grew up together, in a way. I like to think of myself as a sort of guide to keep her on the right path.

CAMILLE: I don't really need a guide to host this panel, though, do I?

AVERY: Did you forget about your trip with Elise?

CAMILLE: The trip to her open house? I haven't forgotten. I told her I wouldn't be able to make it. Why do you ask?

(Camille stops rustling through her bag and looks up at Avery. He crosses down center to the edge of the stage and addresses the Audience.)

AVERY *(To Audience)*: I think that Camille can almost feel her sister's eyes staring at her.

(Gestures to one of the left front row seats.) I wonder what she would say if she were here right now.

(Spotlight on the front left row seat, right next to the center aisle. Camille's sister, ELISE, enters right and descends the right stairs, sits down in the front left row seat with her legs and arms crossed, looking up at Camille. She has a calm, but disapproving expression on her face.)

ELISE: So, this is what you blew off the open house of Pratt University for? You know, you would still have time to make it if you come back home tonight. You could still get a full night's sleep before the tour tomorrow morning.

(Camille stands and crosses to Avery, stopping left of him. She is taken aback by the image of Elise in front of her.)

CAMILLE: I thought you were-

AVERY: Elise isn't really here, of course, she's still at Pratt University, a very prestigious art school, for those of you who don't know, rigorously preparing her group of ambassadors for tomorrow's tour. I'm just giving Camille a little illusion of her.

ELISE: I can show you the perfect art gallery for you to display your work to all of my fellow students. They would love to meet you.

CAMILLE: I told you, I'm staying here until Sunday evening when the convention is over. And about my artwork, I have enough room to display my work in Artist Alley, later on.

ELISE *(Stands)*: Artist Alley?

CAMILLE: It's the dealers' room, for fan artists to sell their work.

(Elise crosses to the left stairs up to the stage.)

ELISE: Fan art, of course. Cartoons, and such, right? Well, I suppose any patrons are better than none. *(Surveying the Audience)* Our auditorium at Pratt is at least five times bigger than this little room.

(Camille tries to apologize to the Audience but is stopped by Avery before she can say anything.)

EVERY: I understand exactly where you're coming from, however, we don't want to be rude to our audience members.

ELISE *(To Audience)*: No offense to any of you. I'm sure you would all love to see what—

CAMILLE *(To Elise)*: Hey, can you get down from the stage? I'll talk to you about all of this when I come back on Sunday. *(To Avery)* You made her appear, can't you do the opposite?

EVERY: Why wait on thinking all of this through? You have plenty of time before you set up.

ELISE: Your other panelist isn't here yet. You have plenty of time to at least show everyone a little bit of your work, don't we?

(Elise starts to cross to Camille's bag, but is interrupted halfway there.)

CAMILLE: He'll be here soon! This isn't the time or place for all of this.

(Camille crosses to her bag and picks it up, putting it on the chair next to her and stands in front of it.)

EVERY: We don't have any plans that are quite so important. *(To Audience)* This is the kind of stuff that Camille wants to regale you with on this fine morning.

(“Love Machine” by Morning Musume, A 90s J-Pop song by a Japanese Girl Group, begins playing for a brief few seconds as Avery and Elise cover their ears. Elise visibly cringes.)

ELISE: What was that? You can’t tell me that’s what you drove six hours for this.

AVERY: Oh, but of course. She wants to engage us in a riveting discussion about frivolous music idols in silly costumes and stupidly high voices.

(Camille crosses down center to Avery, visibly irritated.)

CAMILLE: Hey, those idols put more work than you think into making a knockout show. That kind of talk is what I’m trying to put an end to. Just because you haven’t heard it before doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t learn about it. The same goes for you, too, Elise. Well, that’s what I would say if you were really here.

ELISE: You’re too influenced by Skylar and Elliot, always taking you to these conventions. If it weren’t for them, it’d be so much easier to get through to you. This isn’t going to have an impact on your future, but if you took some time to think about it, you’d be home before you know it. *(To Avery)* She’s been slacking on her paintings because of them. I wouldn’t mind so much if they actually came to support her.

CAMILLE: They wanted to come with me, they’re stuck at-

AVERY: Your cousins, right? I suppose your first few trips with them are quite fresh in your mind, yes?

(SKYLAR’s and ELLIOT’s cheerful voices are heard from offstage right and left respectively. These characters are never seen, but we can hear them. Skylar’s voice comes from

the right wing and Elliot's voice comes from the left wing. At the sounds of these voices, Camille takes a few steps towards them, excited to see what she thinks will be illusions of her cousins. There are no illusions of her cousins, however, only voices. Elise rolls her eyes at the voices and rubs the bridge of her nose as she remembers them.)

SKYLAR (*Off*): Have you ever tried Pocky before? We always get some whenever we go to Zenkaikon. Here, have some!

ELLIOT (*Off*): Look at these posters! Maybe when you're older, you'll want to run a booth like this! Go on, pick any poster you'd like. It's our treat.

SKYLAR (*Off*): Did you ever think you'd see someone looking exactly like Sakura? Why don't you ask her for a picture? Don't be nervous, it's normal here. ... Smile!

(Sound of a camera click.)

AVERY: Where are they now, though? Where are those voices at the debut of your panel? Who else will you be sharing this tradition of conventions with?

CAMILLE: Sonny will be here soon.

ELISE (*Dismissively*): Sonny, that stranger you play games with over the internet?

CAMILLE: He is not a stranger, he's a friend I made two-and-a-half months ago, and he'll be here any minute to run this panel with me.

AVERY: You're absolutely sure he's going to—

(A knock is heard from behind the front of the house. Camille runs back to center and smugly addresses Avery.)

CAMILLE (*To Avery*): To show up? I think he already has. I'm going to get the door!

(Camille runs down the left stairs and down the center aisle, but stops when she hears Elise's voice.)

ELISE: Did you forget about me?

CAMILLE: I'll talk to you later!

ELISE: What, you don't want me here?

(Camille ignores her as Avery sighs, realizing that Camille is now distracted. He gestures towards the right wing, and Elise loses all facial expression, exiting right. Avery crosses to the left chair and sits down in it.)

AVERY: I suppose I should give her a minute.

(SONNY wrenches the door open and stumbles into the room, waving to the Audience with a half-hearted smile. He has a lanyard sticking out of his pocket, similar to Camille's. He carries a bag presumably full of convention merchandise, but no posters. He also wears a backpack over one shoulder. He is followed by EDITH who is holding car keys in her hands. She looks exasperated and is grumbling to herself.)

AVERY: Ah, there he is! Camille picked quite a *charming* panel partner, didn't she?

(Sonny freezes and looks at Avery, then at Camille. Camille beams and hugs him. He returns it enthusiastically. As she lets go, he relaxes and smiles wholeheartedly now, although it seems more out of relief than anything else, as if he has not smiled all day prior.)

CAMILLE (*To Sonny*): You're here! (*To Audience*) Everyone, please give a warm welcome to our other panelist, Sonny Lockett!

EDITH (*To Sonny*): You couldn't host your panel with someone a little quieter, could you?

SONNY (*To Camille*): Camille, I'm sorry I'm late—

CAMILLE: You're real! Man, that sounds crazy now that I hear it, but it's true! I mean, I know I should have known that from talking to you since March, but really seeing you here, I don't know if surreal is enough of an understatement.

SONNY: I'm real, for better or for worse.

EDITH: You wouldn't have been late if you didn't fall asleep on the train.

SONNY (*To Edith*): I know, I didn't mean to—

CAMILLE: That cosplay looks amazing. Look at the way he stitched up that vest, and those boots, they look exactly like the ones from the show! I'd think they came like that if I didn't know that you sadly can't get boots with iridescent sides like that.

SONNY: It's not much, it's all thanks to a battle with my sewing machine. It took me three days to paint these boots.

CAMILLE: It was certainly worth the effort! Come up to the stage, I almost have everything ready.

SONNY: Did you get a staff member to help you start setting up?

EVERY: I would hardly call myself a staff member. I'm just an old companion of Camille's who wanted to come along.

(Camille bounds up the left stairs and pulls out the left chair for him to sit in. Sonny follows her and sits down in it, putting his backpack and bag down next to him as she sits in the chair next to him. Edith follows behind Sonny in the same path, but stops a few feet away from the left chair, picking at something on her nail.)

EDITH: And you don't bother to introduce me at all? *(Tosses the keys onto the table)* If it weren't for me, you would've lost these in the hallway and missed the turn to the train station.

EVERY *(To Edith)*: Are we having three panelists today?

EDITH *(To Avery)*: Thankfully, no. I'm just Sonny's longtime faithful sidekick. More out of his necessity than anything else.

SONNY *(To Edith)*: I didn't meet you until this morning, though.

EDITH: Look, I've been keeping you from tripping over your own feet for the past two hours, give me a minute to rest.

SONNY: I wasn't that much trouble, was I?

EDITH: You almost took the wrong train and almost forgot your wallet until I reminded you. And then on top of that, you managed to fall asleep on the way up!

SONNY *(To Camille and Avery)*: Because I was up all night finishing my cosplay.

EVERY *(To Sonny)*: And all of this would have run smoother if you were awake?

(Edith stands and crosses down right, clearing her throat.)

EDITH: Oh, if he was awake, this would be a very different story. We stopped on the way up because of the engineer, but if he was awake, and one train car up, we would've been right next to her. We'd stop because *he* would ask her, how do all of these levers work? *(Takes a few steps forward, facing out right, raising her hands over an imaginary series of levers)* Can I pull one of these?

(Edith pulls an imaginary lever. A train's whistle blows. All three of the other characters are startled by this, as Edith glares at Sonny. Sounds of panicked voices shouting at each other. Avery stands and walks up to Edith.)

SONNY: That's not how the trip would go. I might be curious, but I would know not to interrupt her.

(Edith lets out a chuckle of disbelief. Sonny ignores her, realizing she will not listen to him. Stage lights dim. Spotlight on Avery, and spotlight on Edith. Sonny pulls out a map and he and Camille start to read it silently. The map is upside down, but neither he nor Camille seem to notice.)

AVERY: That seems like quite the little adventure. How long have you known him, again?

EDITH: Oh, since he turned about ten or eleven, I don't remember. *(Indirectly, to Sonny)* Shortly before he met Alan, Jon, and Jessica. If he'd listened to them, he could be skiing in the mountains instead of stressing himself out over a silly costume, but of course, he had to go and make things complicated for both of us, dragging me along to this little shindig. Hang on a

second, I've just noticed something. (*Turns her head to look at Sonny*) He's holding the map upside down.

(*Stage lights up. Edith crosses to Sonny.*)

EDITH (*To Sonny*): You can't read it like that, now can you?

(*Edith takes the map out of his hands, turns it the right way as if demonstrating to a child, and hands it back to him.*)

SONNY (*To Edith*): I was going to turn it around myself.

CAMILLE (*Ignoring Edith, to Sonny*): Do you think they have the Switch this year?

SONNY: I don't know. Last year someone took it—

EDITH (*To Audience*): That reminds me of something. (*Crossing down right*) Just a few days ago, Sonny tried to take someone else's backpack at the gym, right after he—

SONNY (*Stands, crosses to Edith, urgently*): Fell and hit my head. That's all.

CAMILLE: Were you—

EDITH (*To Audience*): That's not the whole story. He walked right up to the elliptical and said, "I got this," and proceeds to do this. (*Mimes getting onto an elliptical machine backward*) This is the right way, isn't it? (*Sound of a crash as Edith falls, miming hitting her head on something as melodramatically as possible*) Just your intuition, wasn't it?

SONNY: Why are you going into this now?

EDITH: Why didn't you accept your real friends' invitation to go up to the mountains with them this weekend? Half of them went to the gym with you yesterday. You wouldn't have to worry about making such an impression on all of these people if you did.

CAMILLE: An impression? I don't think he has to try very hard to make an *impression*. We know each other well enough after what, two and a half months of talking?

AVERY (*To Audience*): Online, remember. And we all know how different that is from real life, or at least, have some kind of idea.

SCENE 2: AVERY AND EDITH

AVERY: I'm sure you're all wondering who I am, *really*, and why Camille seems so surprised that I'm even here with you all. First of all, my name is—

SONNY: Not really. You look like you're just another staff member running this thing. I'd ask why you have so much time on your hands, but I don't think that's really necessary.

AVERY: Maybe it's best we bring all that up later.

CAMILLE: I do want to know one thing. How come everyone can see you? I mean, this is the first time I'm really seeing you too. I didn't want to bring it up, but now it's just too strange not to.

SONNY: Wait, what do you mean this is your first time "seeing" him? Is he-

AVERY: It's not a problem to worry about now, think of it as an advantage!

CAMILLE: No, this really is my first time seeing you! I thought you were just some idea in my head that just kind of took over, and then on my way up, suddenly you're in my passenger seat.

AVERY: Thanks to me, you managed to keep your hands on the wheel! I was just doing my job. What started as a small thought grew into an imaginary guide.

CAMILLE: I wouldn't really call you a guide. Maybe more of an imaginary friend.

SONNY: The kind of imaginary friend you wish you would've ditched by the time you hit double digits?

(Camille contemplates this.)

AVERY: I'll take imaginary friend! What about you, Edith?

EDITH (*To Avery*): I, myself, am not so different to you. Think about it, Sonny. Do you think you're ready to host this all on your own, just yourself and Camille?

SONNY: As ready as we can be. I spent a solid month and two weeks organizing our music samples and our presentation.

CAMILLE: That's no exaggeration. We have enough material for an hour-long documentary, here.

EDITH (*Sarcastically*): It's a real shock that you kept everyone else we know in the dark about this.

SONNY: I don't want to hear anything they'd have to say about it.

CAMILLE: Why not? Wouldn't they be excited for you?

SONNY: That's another story. I already have one person on my back who thinks I'm misguided in all of this.

AVERY: You're not the only one, then. Camille's been misguided since she graduated high school.

EDITH (*To Camille*): You're better off than Sonny, he might not have even been to high school if his friends hadn't—

SONNY: We don't need to get into it now. Camille, what were you going to say about Avery?

CAMILLE: I just wanted to feel like I had some sense of direction. I heard you more in my dreams before you started talking to me all the time. Imagine explaining that to everyone I know.

SONNY: And all of a sudden, you've got this fiasco? (*Gestures to Avery*)

CAMILLE: Uh-huh. (*Looks at Avery*) You look a lot different than I would've expected.

EVERY: Do I? How so? Did you imagine me as some ethereal being, with a third eye and a microphone in my hand? (*To Audience*) I suppose I'd pull that off well, I do have the face for it.

CAMILLE: You look a lot less sophisticated than I would've expected. Your hair's a little bit out of sorts, and your suit doesn't quite fit you. Maybe if you were a little taller, or were a little more... in shape, I guess I'd call it, and if your nose was kind of-

EVERY: Hey, I did the best I could this morning. You might not have seen it, but I've got to work with what I've got. I'm not so bad once you get a good look at me.

SONNY: I think we've seen enough, and you look a little overdressed for the occasion. This is a convention, not a ballroom—

EVERY: We've been going on about me for quite a while. Let's hear more from Edith.

EDITH: Someone had to fill in for Alan and Jessica while Sonny is absent from them. He could still meet them and be on his way up to the mountains if he were to leave tonight, but of course, he wanted to come up to this *lovely* resort to spend the next three days fumbling around in a hotel in the middle of nowhere, pretending to be great friends with these *strangers*. All in the name of new experiences, right?

SONNY: Not exactly.

CAMILLE: Well, this is new for all of us. in fact, a lot of panelists here who aren't special guests aren't that different than us.

SONNY: I can attest to that, I guess. It does make this all a little bit less nerve-wracking.

SCENE 3: DRAWING

(Camille pulls out a laptop and a bundle of wires and starts looking into her bag for something else. After rustling around for a few minutes, she pulls out a charger and hands the wires to Sonny, who starts to untangle them.)

CAMILLE: Okay, I think we still have a little bit of time before our panel starts. *(To Audience)* Hey, if you guys don't feel like waiting for a little while, we're not going to be on until the top of the hour. Go get a snack, walk around the dealer's room a little bit, maybe take some pictures. We'll be here when you get back.

(Avery suddenly becomes alarmed at the prospect of the Audience leaving.)

EVERY: Wait! Wait, you don't want to leave! Just sit tight.

CAMILLE: What are they going to do, just sit here? They should get a little bored with us just setting up, don't you think? What else would they watch?

EDITH: Not if I have anything to say about it! We're just at the very beginning. Sonny, why don't you tell them a little bit about your story at the restaurant last Thursday, that'll crack them up! Or Camille, why don't you put some of your drawings on that projector screen you're setting up?

CAMILLE: You know how rude it is to force someone to look at your work, right? They didn't come here to see my art exhibit.

SONNY: Is this why you said you didn't want to make a full portfolio?

CAMILLE: Yeah, I get having one just for convenience, all of your best work is in there, but I feel like I'd be making it because everyone tells me that if I have all of my work here, I can run around and show everyone. I'm doing fine. I don't need to shove it in someone's face like some self-centered snob trying to show off how amazing I "think" I am.

EVERY: You are amazing, though.

CAMILLE *(To Avery)*: I didn't ask you.

EVERY: I've been telling you all week, if you just make a portfolio, you'll feel so much better about it. It won't feel weird about it once you actually do it.

(Camille pulls out her phone and starts searching on it for something, ignoring Avery.)

SONNY: Hey, do you remember that picture you drew for that fan-project?

(Camille pauses.)

CAMILLE: Oh, yeah! *(Pulls out her phone and scrolls through it, showing something on it to Sonny)* I can't believe its show ended last season.

(Avery looks to the Audience to see if anyone is leaving.)

SONNY: Do you think I would be able to make one of my cosplays look like that?

CAMILLE: I'd be surprised if you couldn't after seeing the pictures you showed me of all of the other ones you've done. I still can't believe you taught yourself how to do all of that.

SONNY: It wasn't really a choice so much as it was just a weird curiosity that just grew and grew, and there aren't many people in my vicinity who made stuff like this, well, aside from one

of the teachers at my high school, Ms. Kintan. But she didn't do cosplays, she worked in the fashion industry for seven years.

CAMILLE: You should have told her about it. If she liked working in the fashion industry, it's the perfect excuse to get back into the craft.

SONNY: I would, but can you imagine being a teacher, tuning out the nameless faces of all of the students you *don't* teach, one of those average students you've never even met coming up to you and asking—

EDITH: Hold on a second. Did I just hear you call yourself an *average* student? Aren't you giving yourself a little too much credit?

CAMILLE: It wasn't about grades—

EDITH: I'm just saying. If you spend enough time with him, you'll know not to let that slide. You don't want him having any delusions of grandeur about his capabilities. You've already gone far enough with this trip.

(Sonny groans and continues talking to Camille, although the Audience can no longer hear them. Stage lights dim. Spotlight on Edith. Edith turns aside to Avery and leads him down left. Camille pulls out a bundle of wires, and she and Sonny start untangling them. They do not finish by the time that the stage lights come back up.)

EDITH *(To Avery)*: I have an idea. You want us to see Camille's art, right? And I want to give Sonny a little taste of how hard things really are out here, hosting a panel and everything. I'm shocked I haven't gotten him to turn back yet and keep his friends the ones responsible for him.

AVERY: The question is of how we can bring all of this to light.

EDITH: Let's start with Camille. Do you happen to know if there are any easels nearby? Just get her in front of it. I'll give her an idea of what to draw. Just keep Sonny distracted.

(Avery nods in agreement. Stage lights up on Camille and Sonny.)

AVERY: As much as Camille plays down her career-related pursuits, you wouldn't believe what she can do in only a few minutes. Like you said, you still have some time to set up. Why don't you take a break?

(Avery crosses into the right wing and pulls out an easel with a pad and paper ready to be drawn on. He makes sure that it faces away from the Audience.)

AVERY: You have a few pencils with you. Would you mind drawing something for us, just for a few minutes? My wall is looking a little bit bare at home and I could use a little decoration.

(Camille gives him a look as if he's done things like this before, but isn't as enthusiastic about arguing with him this time.)

CAMILLE: I'm in the middle of something, though! What, do you want Sonny to just do all the work? It's *our* panel, I need to help set it up. *(To Audience)* Wouldn't you all do the same?

SONNY: Don't worry about it. I'm still untangling these wires and I'll start plugging them in. You go ahead.

EDITH: Yeah, you'll probably be done this drawing before he finds all of those outlets.

(Sonny grumbles to himself and continues to work on the wires in his hands. Camille gives Avery a look of annoyance before sitting down at the easel.)

CAMILLE: I'll give you a little sketch of your face. Would that make you happy?

(Edith crosses to Camille and stands to her left, leaning over her shoulder as she looks at the easel.)

EDITH *(Pointing at the easel:)* Oh, we had something specific in mind we wanted you to draw. It won't take too long, I know this might be a bit of a drag, but this isn't too complicated.

AVERY: Sonny, let me help you untangle those.

(Avery crosses to Sonny and starts pulling on the bundle of wires very lightly.)

SONNY: I think I can untangle them myself. These are for the microphones, Camille's laptop, and it looks like her phone charger got tangled up here, too.

AVERY: You didn't think of using wireless microphones? Isn't that how all of the MC's do it, these days?

SONNY: We would, but we'd have to buy our own microphones and clear them with the convention staff.

AVERY: Ah, yes. Too expensive, right?

EDITH *(Rattling off):* Let's start off simple. I want you to draw a person, but it's only these few details that count. This person needs bright neon hair, assume it's in several different colors. Oh, and the eyes are heterochromatic. This person's wearing a leather jumpsuit, plastic bat wings, striped socks, and boots with as many buckles as you can fit on them.

(Camille draws out the things that Edith is describing.)

CAMILLE: Is this a drawing of your own character? I don't know if you know about this, but there are artists out there who do commissions, and if you want something done like this, they can make it for you.

EDITH: Oh, not *my* character, I can't imagine anyone taking up so much time to make something like that. Turn it around, show everyone!

AVERY: I'm also curious as to what this piece really is.

(Camille turns the easel around, confused. On it is a colored sketch of what Edith just described. Avery crosses to the easel and stands left next to it. He rubs his chin as he looks at it curiously. Edith grins smugly at Sonny.)

EDITH *(To Sonny)*: You know what this is. My eyes are being assaulted by all of these colors.

(Sonny stands, haphazardly puts the bundle of wires on the table, and runs towards easel, trying to cover it to no avail. He looks like he might pass out.)

SONNY *(Tense)*: And this is why I make cosplay, not characters! Ha, ha, alright, I think we're done with my old, uh, nostalgia, should we say.

AVERY: And why Camille should be grateful that she can draw so well. She now realizes that—

(Camille laughs, but puts her hand over her mouth as she tries to be discreet.)

CAMILLE: I'm sorry, I'm laughing because—

EDITH *(To Audience, gesturing to the easel)*: Behold, the best thing that Sonny will ever make in his life, his own original creation, graciously drawn by Camille! We can't not laugh at it.

SONNY: We didn't come here to discuss my work.

(Edith takes his arm and roughly pulls him down right. She looks irritated. Stage lights dim. Spotlight on Edith and Sonny. Edith's irritation grows until the stage lights come back up.)

EDITH: If I had to sit on a train for hours waiting for us to reach our stop and help you carry your things all the way here, listening to you tell me we're going to be late, only to find out that we came *early* to the panel to *set up*, I don't think the audience will mind if I take a little bit of your time while they wait for you two to get your panel ready.

SONNY: What's the point of all of—

EDITH: You're full of shit if you think Camille wouldn't eventually find out about the things you try to hide about yourself. You'd end up telling her about this eventually. *(Grabs his arm and jabs a finger towards him)* And if it wouldn't have been this, it'd be something similar that you feel she surely won't judge you for. *(Letting go of him)* It might be something you won't even have to say. And do you know what she'll say when she finds out?

SONNY: I don't know, I haven't gotten there yet, I just met her three months ago—

EDITH: And it's not just her! Anyone who meets you, they'll all find out, eventually. *(Pushes him backward a few steps and roughly shoves him, but not enough to topple him)* Sure, you can mimic some fictional costume, but that's so small in comparison to everything I have to put up with from you, and Alan and Jessica are the only ones who can stomach it, aren't they?

(Edith takes his shoulder and pulls him towards her so that she can speak right into his ear, speaking so loudly that he tries to pull away, but she keeps hold of him.)

EDITH: But you couldn't take a little trip with the only people who will ever be in your corner, would you?

SONNY: I need to stay here. If I don't do this, I'll be letting Camille down. It's what got us to meet up in the first place.

EDITH: We'll see about that.

(Stage lights up. Edith lets go of Sonny and takes on a relaxed demeanor. Sonny crosses back to sit next to Camille and tries to pretend that nothing is bothering him. Edith crosses to back to the easel, standing right of it. She leans her elbow on it and looks at Camille and Avery.)

EDITH *(Casually)*: Didn't you ever hear that a creator is only as great as their worst piece?

CAMILLE: I've never heard that before. Is that really a saying?

EDITH: Of course! *(To Sonny)* Do you think Camille wouldn't eventually find out about this? And once she did, of course, what else could she say except—

CAMILLE *(To Sonny)*: I'm not laughing at you, Sonny, I'm laughing because it reminds me of my old anime "self-insert—"

AVERY: No, you don't need to—

CAMILLE: With six tails, seventeen love triangles- to be exact, four arms, and a superhero costume I ripped off from Teen Titans. She was so cool, she was able to crossover to the Teenage *Mutant* Ninja Turtles Universe!

(Sonny loosens up slightly and chuckles at her. Avery stiffens, but tries to appear nonchalant as he steps forward of the easel.)

AVERY (*To Audience*): Maybe she'll draw that next? Don't you all agree that she should take up her sister's offer for that open house, though? Surely, Sonny could just ask one of you to run this little panel since you're all so interested in it anyway, and just read off of her presentation or whatever she has prepared for you all, can't he?

CAMILLE (*To Avery*): Don't drag them into this, okay? We need to get back to setting up. (*To Sonny*) Sorry, I left you hanging, there.

AVERY (*To Camille*): I'm just asking them to consider it. I suppose I should give them a few minutes.

EDITH: I'm getting a little bit hungry, maybe I'll go and get something to hold me over until the end of the panel.

AVERY: There's a vending machine down the hall. I can show you if you want.

EDITH: I could use a drink. It's a shame the bar's not open.

(Avery crosses down the left stairs, followed by Edith. They walk down the far-left aisle and exit out of the door of the Audience's entrance to the house.)

SCENE 4: INTERLUDE

(Camille takes the drawing off of the easel and folds it twice. She hands it to him and then takes the bundle of wires in her hands.)

CAMILLE: I think you should keep this. I don't know what Edith is getting at. It's not all that bad. I think it looked pretty interesting.

SONNY: That's because you drew it. I might want to get back to designing characters someday, I just don't know who would want to see them, especially after what you just saw.

CAMILLE: If I would've known, I would've asked you about it. I didn't mean to embarrass you, and I apologize if I did.

(Camille pauses and turns over the wires in her hands. Sonny reaches out and helps her continue to untangle them.)

SONNY: You didn't. I'm just surprised that Edith thought to bring that up, of all of the things I tried to make, although I probably shouldn't be surprised.

CAMILLE: Not surprised? It seems like she went a little far, doing that out of nowhere.

SONNY: I thought she would just drop me off here and go elsewhere, but she said wherever I go, she has to follow. I just met her this morning, but she keeps telling me she's known me since I was young.

CAMILLE: Huh, maybe she was watching over you like Avery was watching over me? Well, I say he was watching over me, but I made him up. I didn't really have a choice of being unaware of him.

SONNY: It seems like he's at least trying to help you, even if he has no idea what that is. Maybe after the panel, we can get him to loosen up a little bit about your future.

(Sonny and Camille finish untangling the wires. Camille stands and plugs in the wires to the speakers, then takes the other end of each wire and crosses into the right and left wing to plug them into two unseen outlets before sitting back down in her chair. Sonny is still tense and wraps Camille's phone charger cord around his hand. He taps her on the arm and hands it back to her.)

SONNY: This snuck its way into the pile. I think it wanted some company.

CAMILLE: It gets a little bit lonely just sitting in my room.

(Camille puts it back into her bag and adjusts the microphone in front of her. Sonny stands and takes the other end of the right microphone wire, surveying the room for an outlet as he twists it in his hands. He wipes the sweat off his forehead and tries to breathe deeply. He puts down the wire next to his chair and crosses down to the edge of the stage, still surveying the room. Camille crosses to the other microphone and adjusts it before crossing to him.)

CAMILLE: Are you feeling alright? I have some water bottles in my bag if you need one.

SONNY: Thanks, I think I'm okay. I think I just need to get rid of my nerves, I don't want to blank out when we start. *(Sits down on the edge of the stage.)* I know we have everything right here, but I did try to memorize some of it to help us get off the ground.

CAMILLE: Don't be too harsh on yourself. *(Sits next to him)* I'm actually a little bit nervous, too. I heard that nerves can help you do better if you're just nervous enough. It means you care about what you're doing, and you can put your best foot forward easier.

SONNY: I guess you're right. I didn't think about being in front of so many people right away. Remember when you asked me about coming here together? I got so excited, I didn't even think about what we were going to talk about on this panel, let alone how everything would be set up.

CAMILLE: Yes! I asked you at the worst time ever, too, right at the end of the round, and Ace was about to get our team's payload all the way to the end.

(Camille laughs, raising her hands up as if she were about to smash the table in front of her, preparing to do an impersonation.)

Sonny: I'll never hear the end of it.

CAMILLE *(Impersonating an angry drunken man)*: I have been carrying this whole team for three hours! You two cost us the first win we would've had since last week! I'm going to find out where you live just so I can personally gouge your eyes out!

SONNY *(Continuing her impersonation)*: You'll be seeing the bottom of the sewers for the rest of your lives!

(Camille and Sonny burst out laughing. A few seconds later, Avery enters through the door of the Audience's entrance to the house and comes down the center aisle. Edith follows, holding a bag of popcorn. She is chews loudly and grimaces at Sonny and Camille and rolls her eyes. Avery is smiling and looks pleased with himself as if he is waiting for something exciting to happen. They both pause at the edge of the front row seats. Camille and Sonny come down from their laughter, though they still look very amused. Camille does not acknowledge either Avery or Edith. Edith makes eye contact with Sonny and raises an eyebrow at him, grimacing, and he clears his throat and looks away from her.)

EDITH: Did you miss us?

SCENE 5: PHONE CALL

EVERY: Of course, they did! Have you thought about—

EDITH: Sonny, weren't you told it's rude to leave your phone ringing in a theater?

(Sonny's phone begins to ring. He crosses up to his chair, takes it out of his bag, and looks to see who is calling him, before pressing to hang up and throwing it back in.)

EDITH *(Moving up the left stairs and crossing to Sonny)*: Who was it?

SONNY: It's just Jessica. I told her I would be busy today.

EVERY: Someone you know very well, I presume?

(Avery crosses up the right stairs to stop and lean against the proscenium)

EDITH *(To Avery)*: The one I told you about just now, one of his absolute, closest friends. You should've taken her call, you're lucky she's worried about you.

SONNY *(Through his teeth)*: I know.

EDITH: I'm curious. You've told them very little about what you're doing here, and I want to know just how you would justify this little excursion.

(Edith attempts to take his phone out of his bag, but he picks it up and moves it away from her, zipping it up and putting it on the other side of his chair.)

SONNY: Can't I worry about that after this is done?

EVERY: Why wait? I can't force you to call her back right now, but I can ask you what you'd say to her if she were here.

CAMILLE (*Stands, To Avery*): Why do you need to know so badly?

EVERY: I'm just helping Edith out. We've grown on each other quite a bit. (*Gestures to the right wing*) Jessica, did you want to say something to Sonny?

(Edith takes a handful of popcorn and eats it, looking towards the right wing. JESSICA enters right, looking rather tense and harried. She has been running her fingers through her hair and she is sweating. Edith leans on the table and looks rather intrigued. Sonny nearly jumps when he sees Jessica, stands, and backs away towards the left wing. Edith grabs his arm and stops him from moving any further, gripping him as if he were a young child trying to run off. Camille stands, suddenly alarmed as well.)

SONNY: Jess, how are you—

JESSICA (*To Sonny, shrill*): Do you have any idea how worried I am? If I didn't know better, I'd think you would have died! You haven't talked to me since Wednesday, and we're leaving for the Poconos tomorrow night. You do have everything packed, don't you? If you forget your I.D. again, I swear—

SONNY: I didn't forget my I.D.! I have it in my wallet.

CAMILLE (*To Sonny*): She's not really there. They're just trying to freak you out.

EVERY (*To Camille*): I think we should stay out of it right now. Edith, do you want to take it from here?

EDITH: I'd be glad to. (*Gestures towards Jessica and eats another popcorn kernel*) Jessica, why don't you tell Sonny what's on your mind?

(Jessica runs her hand through her hair and takes a breath before starting towards Sonny. Camille attempts to walk back to the table but cannot cross past the proscenium, stopped by an invisible wall.)

SONNY (*To Jessica*): I have an idea of what's on your mind, and I can tell you—

JESSICA: What is this convention you're at, anyway? You look like a lunatic!

SONNY: I know. I'm at AnimeNEXT. I thought I would find some peace of mind—

JESSICA: Did you get lost on the way up?

(Camille bangs against the invisible wall, but neither Sonny nor Jessica can hear her. She tries to speak but is not heard by anyone. Avery gestures to her, and she reluctantly crosses to the proscenium and freezes in place, though she looks as if she is in the middle of saying something.)

SONNY: No, I knew where it was before I—

JESSICA: I would hope this isn't like the time you took us on a wrong turn on our way to the movies. If it weren't for Alan and me, we would've been lost for hours!

SONNY: That was four months ago, I didn't even remember that.

JESSICA: Why don't you come over tonight, and I'll help you get everything ready for tomorrow. You know, we do want you up here with us. You're a mess, but that's why we like

you so much. This trip wouldn't be the same without you to entertain us. *(Pauses, pleased with herself)* But I can't have you panicking tomorrow because you forgot your toothbrush.

SONNY: I had everything ready for a three-day trip, don't worry about it. I had to bring all of my extra thread in case this falls apart, as well.

JESSICA: Come on, you can't tell me you were up for a few whole nights in a row just for that. We're not little kids, are we? We're a little old to be playing dress-up, aren't we?

SONNY: If you try it, you might not mind it.

JESSICA: Wait. *(Pauses, looks at the Audience)* Are you giving some public speech?

SONNY: Don't worry about it. I'll tell you about it later if you want—

JESSICA: You should leave this to the professionals. Remember the last time you tried giving a speech?

SONNY: No, I—

EDITH: Perhaps you conveniently forgot why you were nervous about it this morning?

(Edith snaps her fingers. Stage lights dim. Spotlight on Edith, Sonny, and Jessica. Camille and Avery freeze, although they are still clearly watching Sonny. ALAN enters from the left wing with several papers in one hand and a stack of notecards in the other. Sonny freezes, then looks at the Audience. He stands and nods to Alan. He seems to have forgotten that Camille and Avery are there and that he is at the convention. He becomes tense and tries to breathe deeply. Edith is sending him into a flashback. Sounds of chattering, pens clicking, and distant footsteps. Alan hands Sonny the stack of cards and puts the stack of papers on the table in front

of him. Edith steps back towards the left wing and continues eating her popcorn. The projector turns on, and the words, "Australopithecus anamensis" in white type appear over a black backdrop, and a picture of an Australopithecus anamensis arm bone is underneath of it. DR. LINDWELL speaks offstage left.)

ALAN: It won't be that bad. This will bring your grade up at least five points if you nail it.

JESSICA (*To Alan*): He's going to need more than five points if he wants to really nail this.

(Sonny starts flipping through his notecards and reading them over.)

SONNY: This isn't supposed to be hard, right? I can feel my pulse in my ears. Do you have—

ALAN: Oops, forgot one.

(Alan pulls another notecard out of his pocket and hands it to Sonny.)

JESSICA (*To Sonny*): Did you look over your last test and those diagrams on it?

ALAN: It was actually my test. It doesn't have as many red marks on it. No offense. We thought it would be easier to read.

EDITH (*To Sonny*): I'm surprised you can read at all.

SONNY (*Flat*): None taken. These are all of the diagrams—

JESSICA: This had better be worth it. Remember, five points and you're one point away from passing.

(Sound of a door opening, then closing.)

DR. LINDWELL (*Off*): Who told you five points? What do you think this is, a basket-weaving class?

ALAN: No, we don't. You said it yourself, the average in this class is—

EDITH (*To Sonny*): A miracle if you ever reach it.

DR. LINDWELL (*Off*): Get on with your presentation. We don't have all day.

ALAN (*To Sonny*): Don't think too hard.

(Alan gives Sonny a clap on the back before he and Jessica cross down the left stairs and sit in the two empty front row seats left. Sonny clears his throat and holds up his notecards. He scans over the first one quickly before speaking. He does not look at the Audience. He holds his notecards tightly and reads off of them, almost using them as a barrier between himself and the Audience. He looks as if he is trying to remember something.)

SONNY: Good afternoon—I mean, good morning, everyone. Today, I'm giving you a brief overview of *Australopithecus anamensis*, and its discovery.

(Edith crosses to Sonny and grips his shoulder. He is unaware of her physical presence, but reacts to her voice as if it was his inner thoughts.)

EDITH: Try not to put us to sleep, will you?

SONNY: You're probably wondering what this bone is underneath its title. This is a fragment of an *Australopithecus* humerus that was found by the research team that discovered it. It lived—It lived... *(Flips through his notecards)* It lived between four and four and a half million years ago

based on its... *(Pauses to read it over again)* Faunal correlation data. It was discovered first in 1965 and then in... *(Flips through his notecards, to himself)* Is it 1994 or 1995?

EDITH *(Into Sonny's ear)*: You're boring the hell out of us!

(Sonny winces and rubs the back of his neck.)

SONNY: It was discovered in 1994, and—

EDITH *(To Audience, as Sonny freezes)*: This goes on for about a minute and thirty seconds before...

(The picture on the screen changes to the skull of a primitive human from about 4 million years ago, taken from an exhibit in a museum.)

SONNY: Its head was approximately six inches wide—No, that's not right—

EDITH *(To Sonny)*: Where's that card, huh? Did you lose the rest of them?

SONNY: Let's just go to the next part. It lived in East Africa in—in *(To himself)* God damn it, where did I put it... *(Frantically flipping through his notecards)* It has to be here somewhere, where's the next part—

DR. LINDWELL *(Off)*: Would you mind moving this along? *(To Audience)* This is why I told you not to bring notecards, people! This will be much easier if you memorize your piece!

JESSICA *(To Alan)*: This was all a waste of time, wasn't it?

ALAN *(To Jessica)*: He might find it, don't jump to any conclusions.

(Sonny starts breathing faster but keeps a firm expression, furrowing his brow as he continues reading. Edith shakes his shoulder hard, and he leans on the chair to regain his balance.)

EDITH: We'll just see about that.

(Edith takes another kernel of popcorn and chews it loudly. The picture on the screen changes to a photograph of Maeve Leakey.)

SONNY: It was discovered in 1965 again by Maeve Walker—

DR. LINDWELL *(Off)*: Maeve Walker? Did I just hear you say Maeve Walker?

SONNY: No, I meant—

EDITH: Alan Walker in 1995, don't you remember *our* Alan telling you that their names match?

(Sounds of a small group of students casually murmuring. Edith lets go of his shoulder and stands back.)

SONNY: Alan Walker. He discovered several new bones including... *(Keeps flipping through his notecards)* Where is it, I had it—

JESSICA *(To Alan)*: We should have just told him to memorize it!

(Sonny becomes rigid and grits his teeth, leaning harder on his chair.)

ALAN: We picked up the whole stack before class started, I didn't think we would lose any.

JESSICA: Who am I kidding, he can't remember all that on his own.

DR. LINDWELL *(Off)*: Ahem, do you have something you'd like to add, Jessica? Alan?

ALAN (*To Sonny*): Come on, just regroup. We went over it yesterday.

JESSICA (*To Sonny*): We spent all night on this for you! Can't you just do us a little favor and get through it?

(Sonny stands straight up and tries to collect himself, but cannot bring himself to say anything. The murmuring grows louder until it becomes distracted students loudly talking to each other.)

DR. LINDWELL (*Off*): Keep it down, everyone.

(The sounds of students talking fades out.)

EDITH: It's less of a favor and more of a full second wind—

(Sonny collapses and passes out. Alan urgently runs up the left stairs and crosses to Sonny, followed by Jessica, who puts a hand on her face and groans. Alan leans over Sonny and gives his face a light slap.)

ALAN: Hey, wake up, you can't stay there.

DR. LINDWELL (*Off*): If you don't finish your presentation, I'm not giving you another day to do it.

JESSICA (*Exasperated*): We'll have to take him to the nurse's office, won't we?

EDITH (*To Jessica and Alan*): I'm sure we'd all love to see that, but I think it's time for us to move on with the panel.

(Edith snaps her fingers. Stage lights up. The projector turns off. Jessica and Alan exit left.)

SCENE 6: ATTEMPTED ARGUMENT

(Sonny stands and freezes, looking to the right of himself where Jessica was originally standing before his flashback. Stage lights up. The invisible wall is gone, and Camille crosses to Sonny, nearly falling over herself.)

CAMILLE: Sonny! Sonny, can you hear me? Are you okay?

(Sonny attempts to regain his bearings and remembers that he is at the convention.)

SONNY: I'm fine. I think. I'm sorry I kept you waiting. How long was I out for?

CAMILLE: Just a second or two. Are you sure you're—

EDITH: He just needed a little reminder of one of the things that should be at the forefront of his mind today. I wouldn't say he's quite so prepared as he thinks he is.

CAMILLE: If you mean prepared for public speaking, I don't think either of us are perfect about it.

SONNY *(To Camille)*: Trust me, I would have told you if I knew I was going to pull something like that on you. It was an accident, but I would be able to at least let you know if I started losing my vision.

CAMILLE: What did she just do to you?

EDITH *(Ignoring Camille)*: That doesn't change the possibility of it happening. Why take the risk?

SONNY: And miss something we've been preparing for over the last several weeks? I'm not going to pass out again.

(Camille attempts to interject, but is interrupted by Avery.)

EVERY *(To Audience)*: If he won't listen to Edith, maybe he should hear it from someone he will listen to. *(Gestures to Camille and holds his hand in the air as he speaks)* You should tell Sonny that after what you've just seen...

(Camille stands rigidly and stares at Sonny with a blank expression.)

CAMILLE *(To Sonny, monotone)*: You should probably just leave it for the day, and I'll find someone else to do the panel with me. I don't think you can handle something this complicated.

(Sonny gives her a confused look, then turns around to Edith as if to accuse her of something. She speaks before he is able to.)

EDITH: Ah, finally. *(To Camille)* Is this the most honest you've been with him since we walked into the room.? *(To Sonny)* What are you going to say about this?

(Avery gestures to Sonny in a similar manner as he had done to Camille. Sonny becomes rigid, similarly to Camille, and he tries to resist Avery's influence in making a blank expression, but is unable to do so.)

EVERY: I think you have a little bit of fight in you, let's see it.

SONNY *(Monotone)*: Then maybe you should find someone else, you're going to need them. You can't really keep all of these people entertained just by yourself.

CAMILLE (*Monotone*): And you're better off keeping your friends back home occupied with whatever problems you're always running into.

EDITH: Now she's starting to make a little more sense, isn't she? (*Eats another popcorn kernel and crunches up the bag before shoving it into Sonny's bag*) Or, maybe that's just to me.

SONNY (*Monotone*): If you can do so much better, why'd you ask me of all people to host a panel with you, then?

(Camille breaks out of her trance, although she does not realize it.)

CAMILLE: Because I didn't want to host it with anyone else! (*Realizing that her words are not being influenced by Avery*) I'm sorry. Just ignore everything else I said, okay?

SONNY (*Monotone*): You can't take any of it—

CAMILLE: Shh! Listen, you're not talking like yourself. Can you hear me clearly?

(Sonny breaks out of his trance and reels backward as if something has just hit him in the face.)

SONNY: You can't take any of it—what was I going to say? Never mind, I think my head is spinning. You didn't sound like yourself either.

CAMILLE: I didn't mean—

EVERY: Or did I just help you speak your minds?

(Camille and Sonny both turn towards Avery. Sonny gives him a suspicious look, and Camille becomes aggravated.)

CAMILLE (*To Avery*): Was that all from you?

EVERY: I'm just taking the time to test something, maybe with a few of your personal doubts.

(*To Audience*) I'll work on it later.

CAMILLE: My personal doubts? I may have some, but they have nothing to do with this. (*To Sonny*) I'm serious, I promise I didn't mean any of that.

SONNY: No, I know. I just want to know where he's getting all of it from.

(*Both of them sit down.*)

EVERY: I'm just making things a little more interesting. I don't know if Camille should stay here for two more days if—

SONNY (*To Avery*): Stop trying to antagonize us, or whatever that was.

EDITH: Who said he would have to try for long?

CAMILLE: Longer than the three months we've had to talk to each other, already.

SONNY: And then some.

EDITH (*Dry*): How touching. I think I want to throw up.

(*Stage lights flicker. Sound of electric fizzle.*)

EVERY: What's this? A power outage?

(*Blackout.*)

SCENE 7: CAMILLE'S BOOK

(Camille searches through her bag and pulls out her sketchbook and puts it on the edge of the table, closest to the Audience.)

CAMILLE: I think I have a flashlight under all of my stuff in here.

SONNY: I can go and ask one of the staff members if they know where to find one.

CAMILLE: Okay.

(Sonny crosses to the left stairs. Avery crosses to Camille and takes her book while neither she nor Sonny are looking and then crosses back to the proscenium right and leans against it. Camille reaches for it on the table and realizes it isn't there.)

CAMILLE *(To Sonny)*: Never mind, I found a flashlight. I think I dropped something, though, have you seen my book?

SONNY: It's not on the table?

CAMILLE: Eh, I can look for it after the light comes back. It's not a big deal right now.

AVERY: Ah, Camille's book, full of sketches, colored drawings, and a few pieces that would go right into a portfolio. Maybe she should start looking before someone takes it.

CAMILLE: I can always get another one and make new drawings if that happens. Most of them are just doodles, anyway.

SONNY: Heh, 'doodles.' Maybe you could make a show out of that, all in your art style. It looks good enough to be animated into something like that.

CAMILLE: What would you call it? If we did that, we could have you do the script and I'll do the art. Maybe it would be like a web-series, or something like that, and every episode-

AVERY: You're not going to make good work just by talking about making another show! If you're so interested in this thing, you should be looking for your book! What if it's gone by now?

CAMILLE: Oh, come on. You're starting to sound like one of my old teachers.

Sonny: I think I see your book, it's right over here.

(Sonny crosses center down and looks over the edge of the stage. Camille follows and looks over as well. Edith follows and also looks over the edge of the stage before loudly groaning in annoyance.)

CAMILLE: Where is it?

(Stage lights up.)

EDITH: That's a piece of someone's cosplay, it looks nothing like a book! I've spoken to you for a total of half the morning and you haven't ceased to embarrass either of us.

SONNY: It was right there, I could swear I saw it.

AVERY: I may have an idea of where it is.

(Avery holds up the sketchbook.)

SONNY *(Aggravated)*: You were just telling us to look for it because someone might have taken it.

AVERY: I was hoping you'd start looking for it then.

EDITH: I wouldn't be surprised. There's probably something you can actually make a little profit off of in there, from what I'd guess.

CAMILLE: There's no need. There's nothing in there I'd want to sell, anyway. *(Crosses to Avery, who crosses down the right stairs and into the center aisle)* Why do you need it so badly?

AVERY: I just want to ask a little favor from Sonny, as Jessica put it, and then I'll give it back to you.

CAMILLE: Just keep it, if it's that important to you.

(Camille crosses to the right chair and sits in it.)

SONNY *(To Avery)*: Oh, come on, you've been pestering us since I got here, and apparently Camille for who knows how long. What is it going to take to get you to just give it back and leave?

AVERY: I want you to help me convince Camille to consider applying to Pratt University, it's only about a half hour away from her! Better yet, tell her why the open house is clearly a better place to be tomorrow instead of this old hotel. Do that, and I'll give this back to her. If she won't listen to her sister, maybe she'll listen to you. *(To Camille)* You have no idea what it's actually like, you'd love it.

CAMILLE: Keep it, I said it's no big deal. And stop trying to pull everyone you find into this issue, it's not their problem.

EDITH: Good luck with that. I don't know a thing about art but he can tell you a thing or two about university. The articulation is another story, I must warn you.

SONNY: It sucks.

EDITH: In your rather unique experience.

SONNY: Still, this doesn't seem like such a bad idea.

EVERY: Finally, you're getting it! It has to have grown on you at least a little bit, though, right?

(Avery climbs the right stairs and pauses at the proscenium, now pleased with himself.)

SONNY *(Sarcastic)*: Oh, yeah, absolutely. *(Sincerely)* I might need a drink before I do this, though. I have a lot to say. Does anyone happen to have some water?

CAMILLE *(To Sonny)*: You don't have to do this, it's not up to you to fix all of this. I do have extras, though, if you're parched.

(Camille pulls a water bottle out of the side pocket of her bag and tosses it to him)

EDITH: Why not? It'll be the most productive thing he's done all day.

SONNY *(Ignoring Edith)*: Thanks. *(Takes a long sip and crosses to Avery, at about arm's length)* This is going to be a mouthful. I may have exaggerated a little bit, let me start with this.

(Sonny turns around and squeezes the water bottle, soaking Avery's suit jacket and pants. Avery drops the book and Sonny grabs it in Avery's recoil. Sonny tosses it to Camille, who catches it and laughs at Avery. Edith puts a hand on her face, now embarrassed and irritated.)

VERY: Well, that's one way to shut down the conversation, I suppose! I will return momentarily, everyone.

(Avery exits right.)

EDITH *(Sarcastically, to Sonny)*: Yes, because acting like a child about it really seals a successful debate.

CAMILLE: Whatever it took to get him to leave me alone works for me. *(To Sonny)* What gave you that idea?

SONNY: It's the least I could do. When you're at a disadvantage, you've got to work around it, somehow.

(Sonny crosses to the left chair and sits in it.)

EDITH: Oh, yes, because this 'disadvantage' isn't something you caused yourself, from the minute you woke up this morning.

CAMILLE: Well, disadvantage or not, in all seriousness, thanks.

SONNY: Anytime.

(Camille pauses and puts her sketchbook in her bag. She freezes. Stage lights dim.

Spotlight on Edith, and Spotlight on Sonny.)

EDITH: Don't let this little incident go to your head. Camille's not going to remember any of this tomorrow, and neither should you.

SONNY: Why not?

EDITH: I certainly don't want to remember this tomorrow. I hope I wake up tomorrow and find out that all of this was just some elaborate prank you pulled, and you can tell Jessica that you thought that today was April Fool's Day.

SONNY: Can't you just let me have a moment to myself?

EDITH: I would if I didn't have to watch you like a hawk all day. You would've walked into traffic if it weren't for me.

SONNY: What does that have to do with—

EDITH: Don't tell me you forgot about crossing the boulevard last year, on the way to the Brunswick Zone on Alan's birthday.

SONNY: That was an—

EDITH: Let me remind you.

(Stage lights up. Sound of a car screeching to a stop and Sonny letting out a yell. Sonny flinches at the sound of his own scream. Camille is startled and turns around to see if he is alright.)

Camille *(To Sonny)*: What was that? Are you—

SONNY *(To Edith)*: That car came out of nowhere!

EDITH *(To Sonny)*: Alan's twenty-first birthday, spent graciously hauling you to the hospital.

CAMILLE *(To Sonny)*: You were in the hospital?

SONNY: It was an accident. *(Distressed, but trying not to show it)* I just broke a few bones and got a concussion, it wasn't the end of the world.

CAMILLE: That's still scary, though.

SONNY: I guess so.

EDITH: You're really sure about that? Remember what Alan told you?

(Alan's voice is heard offstage left. He sounds agitated, but is trying to be optimistic.)

ALAN: That driver probably could have sued you, you're lucky he didn't. Get that look off your face, you've got nothing to be afraid of.

SCENE 8: BOILING POINT

(Avery enters right, now in a dry suit.)

EVERY: Well, that was all very entertaining. But, still, there are a few other things that haven't been addressed. Or, so I presume.

CAMILLE: What would that be? And how would you know—

EVERY: Maybe the buildup was a little bit overdone when you were waiting to meet each other. After all, there's bound to be at least a little bit of frustration between you two, or at least a sense of drifting after you haven't seen each other for quite some time anymore.

CAMILLE: We'll still see each other. It's not like we're never going to travel together again.

SONNY: It might be a while, but we'll figure something out.

EVERY: You are very busy though, Camille. You're going to be so busy you'll barely have time to see the people you live around and you being part of—

CAMILLE: It's no big deal.

EDITH: It won't be a problem for you. But if *we* get swamped in work and work off all of Sonny's student debt after what, ten years of university, to say the least, I doubt he'll be able to go anywhere.

SONNY: From what you told me earlier, it's just going to be me isn't? Never mind, it doesn't matter. And I'm not going to be in university that long!

CAMILLE: We can always wait. If things get too hectic for you, I can always come to you, instead.

AVERY: At this rate, you'd always be pulling all of the weight, now.

CAMILLE: And?

EDITH: That means you are going to have to split the weight if you plan on meeting each other even every few years. Won't you get tired of it soon?

CAMILLE: Probably not.

SONNY: I'd figure out how to take some of it off your shoulders, as much as I can.

(Stage lights dim. Spotlight on Avery, and spotlight on Edith.)

AVERY: Would you like us to settle this a little bit faster? I would have expected Camille to be heading back to her hotel now.

EDITH: Don't hold out on me, now. The sooner we finish this, the sooner I can haul Sonny back to the train and off of this dingy stage.

(Stage lights up. Avery crosses to Camille and lightly puts his hand on her shoulder.)

AVERY: I think it's time for you to clear a few things up. You two might not see each other at all if...

(Camille becomes rigid and a blank expression takes over her face as Avery lets go of her shoulder and steps back.)

CAMILLE (*To Sonny, monotone*): You have to retake so many classes that you're stuck in school for six more years, and won't have the time or the money to go anywhere from having to pick up so many extra work hours to pay for--

(Edith takes Sonny's hair and leans down to talk into his ear. She slams her hand on the table.)

EDITH: Don't tell me you have nothing to say about this.

(Sonny wrenches himself from her grip and moves to try to shake Camille out of her trance. Edith lets go of him and steps back, smiling deviously. Before he is able to do anything, he becomes rigid and begins speaking in monotone.)

SONNY (*To Camille, monotone*): At least I'm trying to do something with my life instead of sitting around settling for some dead-end job because I actually want to get an education, even if it's nearly impossible.

(Avery and Edith gesture to Camille and Sonny. Camille and Sonny stand at the same time. Spotlight on Camille, and spotlight on Sonny. Camille robotically slams her hand on the table and leans closer to Sonny, though she looks very strained. Sonny reaches over and takes Camille's sketchbook from her bag. Sonny opens up the sketchbook, ripping out one of the pages. It happens to be one of the very few realistic drawings that Camille has done. He holds up the drawing to show the Audience. Camille looks visibly frustrated and tries to turn towards Avery, but cannot. Camille and Sonny continue to speak in monotones towards each other, though they sound significantly strained.)

SONNY (*Monotone*): I can't make anything that looks like this, (*Slams the book and drawing onto the table*) and I know I can't find a career that will pay me for making the things that I'm wearing right now, but I know you could find somewhere that would probably pay you to do artwork like this. All you need is a little motivation. You have such a short way to go before you start getting recognition for what you can do. You're almost there, even if you don't go to college, you'll never have to worry about paying your rent because of this if you just—

CAMILLE (*Monotone*): I have all the motivation I need! I have something planned out for myself, and it doesn't include shoving my work towards everyone that might be able to pay me for something I don't enjoy doing.

SONNY (*Monotone*): Who cares if you enjoy it? You don't know how good you've got it. You don't know what it's like to not be guaranteed respect by everyone around you, even if you don't prove to them that you deserve to be with them, on a college campus, in a well-paying job, just from something that takes you little to no effort. You're throwing away everything I wish that I had. You don't know how hard it is to push myself to keep looking for a way to get out of my house, out of my city, to get myself to somewhere that I might find what I've been holding on to a sliver of hope for, where maybe I'll be able to get away from the inevitability of everyone I've ever known getting sick of me if I can't use my supposed stupidity to make them laugh every six minutes. Telling me I'll never get out of school, saying me getting a job anywhere near what they'll find after they graduate is a pipe dream.

CAMILLE (*Monotone*): Well, maybe you should pay a little more attention to your friends. You're never going to be a genius, and they're probably going to be there for you a lot longer

than anyone else you'll ever meet. Maybe myself included. At least they have the patience to look out for you.

(Both pause for a few seconds, looking at each other with strained expressions. Both look visibly angry. Sonny slowly turns towards the Audience, still speaking in monotones.)

SONNY: Maybe this panel wasn't a great idea. I don't think I want to be here anymore.

(Avery's and Edith's hold on both of them breaks. Camille suddenly stumbles backward, breathing heavily. Sonny looks as if he has just broken out of a trance. They must take a moment to re-adjust before realizing what they have said.)

EDITH: Oh, you think? I thought you'd never come to your senses.

VERY: I'll give you two a minute. I'm sure you don't need our help to pack up your things.

Edith, would you mind coming with me?

EDITH: Gladly. *(To Sonny)* When I come back, you'd better be ready for the train.

(Avery exits left, followed by Edith. Camille slows down her breathing and realizes what has just happened and addresses Sonny.)

CAMILLE: I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I didn't mean it.

SONNY: It's okay if you did, you know. I can take it. I'm sorry for ripping your book.

CAMILLE: Don't worry about it. I had it coming after what I said. As much as I think having friends who worry about you is nice, I don't know them.

SONNY: Be glad you don't.

CAMILLE: I wanted to talk to you when Jessica was yelling at you, but I don't know how I could have. What did she mean when she said you 'entertain' Alan and herself?

SONNY: According to them, their group wouldn't be complete without someone they can love, just for all of their flaws.

CAMILLE: It doesn't really seem like they 'love' you very much.

SONNY: They have an unconventional way of showing it. If I'm honest, if it weren't for them doing so, I probably wouldn't know what to do with myself, anyway. I'm not proud of this, but aside from wanting to be with you more than with them up the mountains, I don't know if I want to owe them anymore, even though they're always, *(with reluctance and frustration) always* there for me.

CAMILLE: I don't know if anyone's really told you this before, but I don't think loving someone for their flaws in debts them to you. You aren't indebted to Alan and Jessica.

SONNY: I've considered that, but even after everything they've done, I'd probably jump off a building for them. I've known them for too long to do otherwise.

CAMILLE: Really? How long have you known them?

SONNY: Since we were around 12 or 13. We were pretty close, and they still think we are, but I can't stand them anymore. I didn't notice it at first, because of course, I didn't, but I started to pick up on the things they'd talk about when I'm not around eventually.

CAMILLE: Did you ever tell them to let it go? I mean, if I were you, I would probably have blown up at them like I did just now. They'd have brought it on themselves, and I wouldn't jump

off a curb for them. Just today, I think that's the first time I've gotten up in someone's face like that.

SONNY: I wish I could say the same about myself.

CAMILLE: You do?

SONNY: I've said some variation of what I just yelled at you to a few people I've met. Needless to say, they didn't want it from me. As great as it felt to say it at the time, it just pushed them away.

CAMILLE: Maybe some of them needed to hear that. They really had a problem with you saying all of that?

SONNY: They told me to get my head out of the clouds and stop feeling sorry for myself.

CAMILLE: But that's not—

SONNY: Trust me, I needed to hear that. I just didn't follow along with what they wanted from me. I didn't suddenly start getting straight As and understand everything there is to know about everything around me.

CAMILLE: Still-

SONNY: Don't worry about me. I'm trying something new. I think it would be nice to live a few days without their... constant care.

CAMILLE: Good. You can do without them. But what are you going to do about Edith?

SONNY: I don't know. I feel like she'll be back any second. What are you going to do about Avery?

CAMILLE: I have to think. I can't believe he just— I've never seen him do something like this before. Even on the way over here, he just talked to me, telling me what he thought was best, maybe like he really was some kind of guide, but never implied he'd try to do this much.

SONNY: You're saying he wasn't supposed to be this destructive?

CAMILLE: Destructive? Well, no. He never seemed destructive at all, and I never wanted him to be that way. His intentions were always like he said, he just wants to look out for me.

SONNY: Or so you thought.

CAMILLE: At the very least, we need to do something about Edith.

SONNY: It's not up to you to do something about her. I can't listen to her all weekend. I don't know if I can tell her everything that's been on my mind, but I can try.

SCENE 9: THE PANEL BEGINS

(Avery enters left. Edith enters right. Edith looks irritated. Avery looks content. Sonny stands and cuts Edith off before she can walk any further towards Camille. Avery reaches Camille's chair and stops as she stands. Stage lights dim. Spotlight on Camille and Avery, and spotlight on Sonny and Edith. Camille walks forward and descends the right stairs as she speaks, and Avery walks in front of her, backward. After descending the right stairs, they continue to walk through the left aisle of the house as they speak. During this scene, they slowly cross to the door of the Audience's entrance to the house and stop once Avery has reached it. Sonny and Edith proceed the same way, with Sonny walking forward and Edith walking backward, descending down the left stairs and towards the door of the Audience's entrance to the house through the right aisle of the house. As Camille and Avery speak to each other, Sonny and Edith freeze. As Sonny and Edith speak to each other, Camille and Avery freeze. This continues until Avery and Edith exit.)

CAMILLE: I need to talk to you. I'm going to tell you this bluntly. I don't think you'll get the message otherwise.

VERY: What won't I get?

CAMILLE: I'm tired of you telling me how important it is that I attend Elise's open house tomorrow. I don't need her, or you, planning out the rest of my life, either. I just want a little bit of room to myself.

EVERY (*Gesturing to the rest of the room*): You have plenty of room! You have your whole life ahead of you, and plenty of space to live in it. Four years is a very short amount of time-

CAMILLE: That's what I'm talking about. Every time I hear you, I just hear Elise telling me the same thing. I know you already knew that, but I don't want it anymore.

EDITH: Didn't I tell you to be ready to leave? What are you doing, just sitting there, picking invisible flowers?

SONNY: I'll leave when I'm ready. Give me a few days.

EDITH: A few days—they're leaving tomorrow, we don't have a few days to loiter here.

SONNY: I didn't come up here just to leave Camille hosting this panel by herself, and to say, oh, by the way, it's really exciting that we're just meeting each other, but I'm too nervous to see what might be our only time together through and bond with you like normal friends do.

EVERY: Don't you think that Elise knows more about you than you think?

CAMILLE: What, that she knows me more than I know myself? I know she's been trying really hard to help me over the past year, but I don't want to do exactly what she did.

EVERY: You know she always tells her professors you'll be there one day?

EDITH: You can't tell me you actually think you'll become—

SONNY: You have been reminding me to be afraid since I walked out my front door as if I don't already feel that way. Maybe I want to be someone other than Alan and Jessica's source of such great amusement, just for a short time. Would you grant me that simple courtesy?

EVERY: Did you forget how many hours she's been putting into her second job to help you pay your tuition as well as her own? She wants you to be able to be proud of your work.

CAMILLE: Maybe so. It still doesn't feel right, though. Ever since she started, she's been telling me how different things need to be for me from now on.

EVERY: It's what she's learned from getting a view of the world outside of her little bubble she called a high school. Her horizons have broadened in ways you wouldn't believe unless you followed her. Don't you want to share that experience with her?

CAMILLE: She never asked me whether I wanted that experience.

EDITH: You'll be completely aimless without them.

SONNY: They are not my keepers.

EDITH: What, you're just going to put all of that burden on me? If I have to spend another minute telling you how ridiculous this is—

SONNY: Is it ridiculous of me to do something for myself, and tell them again, after this panel, that I'm not coming to the mountains? I'm sorry for being so inconsiderate as to asking for a little time to not be seen as an eternal child, always causing some catastrophe.

EDITH: Ever so naïve, aren't you? You must feel so much better, shutting yourself out from the truth. You've had what, twenty years to turn yourself into something else, and now you suddenly think you can do it?

SONNY: I don't know, but maybe I won't have to prove myself to you, or Jessica, or Alan for another twenty.

EDITH: You put up such a big front for someone who knows can't change that sentiment in your head.

SONNY: If I work at it long enough, maybe I will.

EVERY: Well, I did ask you. You're much more talkative with me, aren't you?

CAMILLE: You never did anything about it though. You just answered me the same way she did when I tried to tell her I didn't want to do this right now. Just because you feign concern over my choice doesn't change what you've said to me.

EVERY: You're going to make life a lot harder for yourself. This isn't necessarily the same as *every* one of those old shows you used to watch. You may be part of a show now, but you're still going to have to put up with everything afterward. Don't you think it'd be nice to have someone looking out for you?

CAMILLE: I found out you're looking out for me, but with all of your good intentions, which I do appreciate, it hasn't helped me think clearly at all. And hearing it from Elise and everyone else I know hasn't really helped me either.

EVERY: You say it like they're judging you before knowing you at all. But they've known you since your life literally began. We're not talking about a bunch of strangers here, or your peers that don't really see you very much. We're at the core of your life.

CAMILLE: I don't feel like it's the core of *my* life anymore.

EDITH: Oh, good luck with that. Are you even capable of—

SONNY: I'm starting by asking you to leave me alone! You have done nothing but torment me, and I'm done!

(Edith chuckles at this)

EDITH: You think a polite little request is going to get rid of me?

CAMILLE: You're so invested in this, I never bothered to think that maybe you don't have one.

EVERY: What?

CAMILLE: If you weren't passing on Elise's requests, you wouldn't have anything to be invested in enough in your own life.

EVERY: I helped you more than you want to believe. I tell you these things because you deserve to live a full life.

CAMILLE: And I'll find it without your help. I know that you and Elise are older and that you know more about the world than I do. I know that you're trying to do what's best for me, but I'm asking you to leave.

EVERY: You need a minute, I see. I'll let you cool off before we continue-

(Camille gently takes Avery's arm and leads him to the door of the Audience's entrance to the house if they have not already arrived here.)

CAMILLE: It's time for you to go.

EVERY: Are you sure you're not going to miss me if you do this? I may not know everything about you, but I can show you how much everyone you know cares for you, as do I. How are you going to see that now?

(Camille pauses, looks to Sonny, who nods in affirmation. She turns back to Avery.)

CAMILLE: Just the way everyone else does.

SONNY: Did I articulate myself clearly? I said, leave me alone!

(She strides backward, a smirk on her face as if she is unaware of the door behind her.)

EDITH: I'm just telling everyone the things they need to know about you before they get too close, and you think you're going to keep me at an arm's length? I'll always be in your vicinity, whether you like it or not.

SONNY: I already know about them! Now, leave me alone!

EDITH: And you'll never forget them.

SONNY: I don't need to forget about them to tell you, I don't want you here anymore!

(Sonny opens the door of the Audience's entrance to the house, and she steps outside, still nonchalant. Camille gently pushes Avery out of the door. He does not know how to react. Camille and Sonny both shut the door. This is Avery's and Edith's exits. Camille and Sonny take a few moments to register what has happened and walk back to the stage through the center aisle and up the right stairs. Camille sits down in the right chair and Sonny sits down in the left chair.)

SONNY: Ready?

CAMILLE: Yes.

(Both Camille and Sonny sit up straight. Sonny clears his throat and speaks into his microphone.)

SONNY: Welcome to our panel, everyone! We're ready to start with our first segment. Who's ready to learn some history about a piece of the Japanese music industry?

(Blackout)

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ACADEMIC VITA
BRIDGET A. WELSH

OBJECTIVE

Pursuing a career in 2019 in the area of Corporate Communication.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Known as a reliable employee regarding time-management and attendance
- Competent in organization and teamwork
- Effective verbal and written communication skills
- Proficient in: Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
- Skilled in Social Media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr

EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania State University, Abington, PA

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Major: *Corporate Communication*

Honors: Dean's List, Abington Honors Program, Schreyer Honors College, Civitas Victus Dictio Honor Society

Relevant Coursework: Business Writing, Internal Communication, Information Science Technologies, Business Administration, Foreign Studies, Risk and Crisis Communication, Communication Research

Study Abroad: Visited corporations in Fukuoka and Tokyo, Japan over the course of one week

EXPERIENCE

Variety – The Children's Charity, Worcester, PA

May 2018 – June 2018

Communications Intern

- Supported the development office with preparation for two major charity events
- Researched and prepared multiple lists for prize and auction item solicitation
- Created flyers and emails with messages suited to the diverse interests of engaged participants
- Utilized creative and appropriate modalities for external communication
- Demonstrated dedication through a strong work ethic in a consistent manner

The Pennsylvania State University, Abington, PA

September 2016 – December 2016

Personal Tutor

- Assisted students with understanding assignments through effective study methods and material management
- Explained difficult concepts in an understandable way, which helped the students increase course grades