

The Love Star

An original play by

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Act 1 Scene 1 (Austin's House)

(Bed SR, kitchen table SL. Lights on SR, but not SL)

AUSTIN: *(practicing card tricks on the floor in front of his bed)* Pick a card! No that's too demanding... dearest Jennifer, would you do me the honor of choosing a random card? Too formal... can you pick a card for me? *(sighs)* Alright whatever, she picks a card, what comes next? She looks at it, puts it back and I shuffle. And then I say, "now I will make your card disappear, but then reappear in your left shoe!" *(starts to shuffle)*

(OLIVIA enters SL)

OLIVIA: Good morning Austin! *(scares him, throws cards everywhere)* Are you talking to yourself again? I thought Mom already told you that it's creepy and socially unacceptable.

AUSTIN: I'm under a lot of stress.

OLIVIA: What's wrong? *(sits next to him)* Talk to me, I can help!

AUSTIN: You won't understand.

(AUSTIN starts to clean up his cards)

OLIVIA *(upset)*: Come on, just because you're in high school and "more mature" than me, doesn't mean I can't listen!

AUSTIN: Ok you want to hear about my problems?

OLIVIA: Yes!

(OLIVIA hands him a couple of cards, as he gets up, goes to make his bed)

AUSTIN: A girl I like doesn't even know who I am, I am trying to practice a magic trick, but a talkative, little sister keeps distracting me, my homework makes no sense so I just don't do it anymore, I got accepted into three colleges, but they are too expensive even with scholarships! Oh, and my best friend barely talks to me anymore, do I have to continue?

(AUSTIN puts on his sweatshirt backwards)

OLIVIA: If I were you, I would-

AUSTIN: Olivia, I don't want to be mean, but I don't think you can help, you're still too young.
(realizes his zipper isn't there)

OLIVIA: You put your sweatshirt on backwards...

(AUSTIN frantically takes it off and fixes it)

AUSTIN: I am aware, but like I told you, your help is not necessary. I have a lot on my mind, and a lot of it wouldn't even make sense to you! *(puts on backpack)*

OLIVIA: That doesn't matter, we've been through the same thing! I think-

AUSTIN: I don't want you to worry about me, I promise, I am fine.

MOM *(from dark SL)*: Austin, Olivia, come eat some breakfast before school!

OLIVIA: I think we should talk to Mom...

(AUSTIN and OLIVIA walk over to the kitchen, SL lights on, SR lights off)

MOM *(looking up from a cereal box)*: Good morning to my favorite two children! Who's ready for another wonderful day?

(no response)

MOM: Alrighty then, I'll stick to being quiet for today!

OLIVIA *(caring)*: Mom, Austin has anxiety! *(jabs him in the stomach)* Tell her!

AUSTIN: No, it's nothing, I am fine. *(starts to pack up his backpack)*

MOM: Austin, please know that everything happens for a reason and maybe you're not doing so hot right now, but you know what I always say, something good could be headed your way! As I read in a book once "Every good deed whether big or very small is something that everyone deserves if they are short or very tall!"

OLIVIA *(sarcastically)*: Great quote, Mom.

MOM (*genuinely*): Thank you daughter!

(AUSTIN puts on his shoes and goes to leave)

MOM: Why are you in such a hurry?

(AUSTIN mumbles inaudibly, but stressfully)

OLIVIA: Was that English?? See? Something is definitely wrong with him.

AUSTIN: Sorry, I don't feel like talking about it right now. I got to go.

(AUSTIN exits SL)

OLIVIA: Mom, please tell me you're worried about him.

MOM: I know... did you see the way he put on his shoes, but then proceeded to pace around like some animal tracking dirt into the house?

OLIVIA: Not really what I meant. He seems a bit off to me...

MOM (*preoccupied*): It's ok honey, high school is tough for a lot of people. You will feel that way when you're-

OLIVIA: I don't want to feel that way! I don't want my brother to feel that way! You should've seen him in his room before, I had to interrupt him, he was so hard on himself. (*MOM in deep thought, not listening*) And it's been happening a lot lately. Every time I try to help him, he freaks out and blames me!

MOM: Hmm I have an idea...

OLIVIA: This isn't going to end well, I already know.

MOM: Have a little faith!

OLIVIA: Alright, alright.

MOM: Let's help Austin out a little bit, by giving him his folder that he forgot at home-

OLIVIA: That's his math folder... he doesn't need it today. And I would know, he has been singing "Math on Wednesday? No way!" under his breath since September.

MOM: It's not about the folder, it's about what's inside...

OLIVIA: You're not making any sense.

(MOM picks up a 20-dollar bill and slips into the folder, hands it to OLIVIA)

OLIVIA: How is 20 dollars going to help him?

MOM: Would you get mad at someone who gave you 20 dollars?

OLIVIA: No, but-

MOM: Then I don't see the issue. Just write him a little note with it and I am positive that it will make his day so much better! *(gives her sticky note and sharpie)*

OLIVIA: Even if I wanted it to work, it's impossible. How would I get it to him? I have school at the same time he does.

MOM: It takes 5 minutes to walk from the middle school to the high school, why don't you walk over after you eat lunch and before your next class?

OLIVIA: Maybe, but I don't think I would make it back in time.

MOM: Unless there was some kind of distraction...

OLIVIA: What do you mean, what distraction?

MOM: Leave that up to me...

OLIVIA: What are you going to do?

MOM: I think I hear the bus.

OLIVIA: I walk to school.

MOM: Is that the phone ringing?

OLIVIA: Nope. *(pause)*

MOM: So, will you give Austin his folder with the money or not?

OLIVIA: Ugh fine, I will, but what if he doesn't take it? What if he just gets mad at me again?

MOM: It won't be your fault; he just has a lot on his mind.

OLIVIA: Yeah...

MOM He's going to be so happy when he sees you, and then it might lead to him feeling happier in general!

OLIVIA: If you say so.

MOM: It will get better.

OLIVIA: How can you be so sure?

MOM: Problems are temporary, you know that.

OLIVIA: I do but you can't deny that he-

MOM: Life will beat you up if you let it, but sometimes, you have to fight back. It always gets better. *(pause)* It has to. Or else... what would there be to look forward to? What would be the point of waking up in the morning? If I didn't think optimistically when... *(Starts to tear up)*

OLIVIA: Alright Mom you're right. It will get better. It always does. I will give Austin his folder. *(hugs MOM)* I love you.

MOM *(still teary)*: Love you too. Now go eat your breakfast and I will drive you to school.

Act 1 Scene 2 (Front of School)

(AUSTIN standing with cards SL, SOPHIE and ZOEY enter SR, SOPHIE looks nervous)

ZOEY: Sophie, you're fine, it's a big school and he is almost never outside at the beginning of the day. *(sees AUSTIN in their direction, pushes her the opposite way)* Besides he is always in his own world, not really paying attention to either of us, I don't think he even talks to me anymore so if you're with me, you should be safe!

(AUSTIN taps ZOEY on the shoulder, SOPHIE crosses SL, ZOEY about to follow)

AUSTIN: Hey Zoey, how's life?

ZOEY: Pretty good, not much to report. *(tries to leave again)*

AUSTIN: You know it is kind of annoying that we don't talk anymore.

(ZOEY motions for SOPHIE to come and talk to them, SOPHIE shakes her head and writes something down)

ZOEY: What do you mean? We always talk!

AUSTIN: We used to, now not so much!

ZOEY: Yeah well, life can be like that sometimes!

AUSTIN *(walks downstage)*: Yeah, I guess you're right... Life is strange, so... unpredictable, you know? *(notices ZOEY's motions, turns around)* Are you talking to someone about me behind my back? Like literally behind my back?! You know how much I hate that!

(JENNIFER enters SL with map, looking lost, going on and offstage throughout scene)

ZOEY: Nothing bad! I am just trying to get my friend *(SOPHIE bolts off stage left, trips, but doesn't fall)* to come talk to us.

AUSTIN: Wait, since when are you friends with Jennifer? I have had a crush on her for so long! *(JENNIFER exits SL)* Can you tell her I like her- no wait don't tell her, just bring up my name nonchalantly in conversation tomorrow, then a week and two days after that, bring it up again, repeat for about 4 months and hopefully, she will want talk to me. Once she starts talking to me, I will wait another month or so to ask her about the possibility of a magic trick-

ZOEY: I forgot how ridiculous you are.

AUSTIN: Huh?

ZOEY: Why are you thinking so much about this? Just go up to her and ask her about your dumb magic trick. *(flicks the cards almost causing AUSTIN to drop them, he spazzes out)*

AUSTIN: It's not dumb, it's *(fans out his cards)* cool.

(DYLAN enters SR on his flip phone)

ZOEY: I thought you said cool people were dumb? I remember specifically because then you went off for about 6 minutes about what really classifies as cool or not. Bottom line you are jealous of the cool kids because they are more popular than you and get more attention.

AUSTIN: You're right that I should've used a better word, but you're wrong about how I was jealous! The amount of pressure that it requires to constantly be *(air quotes)* cool must be so exhausting. No one is that emotionless and stress-free. We all have our differences-

ZOEY: Austin, I can already tell that I have prompted another rant, so I am just going to walk away quickly, and you can just talk to yourself like you tend to do.

(AUSTIN puts away his cards in the side pocket of his backpack)

AUSTIN: Um that was kind of mean.

ZOEY *(going offstage left)*: Nice talking to you too!

AUSTIN *(following ZOEY)*: Not what I said!

DYLAN: Hey, Austin?

(JENNIFER notices DYLAN)

AUSTIN *(jumps out of fear, turns around slowly)*: Uh yeah?

DYLAN: Got a question for you.

AUSTIN *(like he's been through it before)*: I don't have any money on me, but if you come to my locker with me, I will give you some. On second thought, just wait here, I will get the money.

DYLAN: What? No. I'm not a bully.

AUSTIN *(completely hesitant)*: I know you're not...

DYLAN: So, I see you talking to Zoey a lot. You got a thing for her?

AUSTIN: A thing?

(DYLAN moves downstage)

DYLAN: You know, chicka chicka boom boom?

AUSTIN: No, I can't say I do know, sorry.

DYLAN: Are you trying to hit that?

AUSTIN: She's my friend, why would I want to hit her?

DYLAN: Dude, are you or are you not attracted to Zoey?

AUSTIN: Oh gosh no! I've known her for too long, it would just be weird, also if I date her, then who would be my best woman at our wedding? Yes, I said best woman because I don't have a guy friend that I am close enough to be my best man and my wife would choose her own maid of honor. Wait, she technically wouldn't be my wife quite yet since-

DYLAN: I feel bad interjecting, but please stop talking.

AUSTIN: Yes... sir.

DYLAN: You're weird.

AUSTIN: Everybody is!

(pause, DYLAN stares at AUSTIN who smiles)

DYLAN: Ok so Zoey...

AUSTIN: Yes! What about her?

DYLAN: I kind of think she's cute. And I saw that you were talking to her and was wondering if you could try to get her to talk to me.

AUSTIN: Wow, I have never been on this side of the conversation before! Yes, I could definitely do that! Would you like to start the process now?

DYLAN: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Awesome, that will be perfect, right before we graduate too!

DYLAN: Graduation is in 6 months...

AUSTIN: Exactly! I will get to work right away! Good luck sir!

(AUSTIN gives DYLAN a friendly slap on the shoulder, goes to exit SL)

DYLAN: Hold up, I am missing something. You said you will talk to Zoey for me right away?

AUSTIN: Correct.

DYLAN: But you also said that Zoey and I will get together right before we graduate.

AUSTIN: Correct again.

DYLAN: But that's 6 months away.

AUSTIN: Yes, that was a perfect recap! I say again, Good luck to you!

(AUSTIN gives DYLAN a friendly slap on the shoulder, goes to exit SL)

DYLAN: Let me ask you this. What is your process of talking to Zoey for me?

AUSTIN: Nonchalantly, bringing up your name in conversation for a couple of weeks and you waiting the appropriate amount of time to chick fil a or whatever you said.

DYLAN: First of all, it's chicka chicka boom boom, secondly, forget I ever asked you, I can just figure it out myself.

AUSTIN: Sounds good to me! *(starts to exit SR, goes to SL and waves goodbye to DYLAN who stands on stage looking flustered)*

Act 1 Scene 3 (Classroom)

(EVERMORE at whiteboard in the middle, AUSTIN, JENNIFER sit on SL, SOPHIE, ZOEY, DYLAN on SR—farthest to closest to audience)

EVERMORE: Welcome back class, glad to see that some of us showed up today, this morning we will be learning about giraffes! Their long necks reach up to-

JENNIFER: Mrs. Evermore! I was able to find our classroom all by myself, your map that you made me was extremely helpful and it only took me 22 minutes to get here instead of 27 minutes, so thank you!

EVERMORE (*friendly*): It's my pleasure, however if you're going to be sharing stories, please raise your hand, I thought you knew better than that, Jennifer!

JENNIFER: Oh, I do, trust me I do! I'm sorry, I promise it won't happen again!

(JENNIFER raises hand, pause)

EVERMORE: Do you have more to say or are you just practicing?

JENNIFER: Both! I was going to ask you... what is today's date?

(AUSTIN tries to answer but gets scared and goes back to notes. JENNIFER stares)

EVERMORE: The 5th. Alright where we were? Oh yes, the giraffe's neck-

JENNIFER (*raising hand*): Mrs. Evermore, hate to interrupt again but what month?

(AUSTIN tries to speak, but a weird noise comes out instead, JENNIFER stares at him weirdly)

EVERMORE (*understandingly*): December, today's date is December 5th

(JENNIFER raises her hand)

EVERMORE: Year: 2007

JENNIFER: Thank you!

EVERMORE: You're very welcome, questions are always encouraged!

(JENNIFER raises her hand)

JENNIFER: Where did our desks go?

EVERMORE: Well you see since we only have 12 students enrolled at this school and half of them are absent most of the time, the town thought it would be better if we just sold the desks for some extra money that we can spend on other "necessities"!

(JENNIFER raises hand)

JENNIFER: What are necessities?

EVERMORE *(changing the subject)*: Anyone else before we talk about giraffes?

(JENNIFER raises hand)

EVERMORE *(genuinely surprised and delighted)*: Yes, Jennifer?

JENNIFER: Are the chairs arranged this way because of “necessities” too?

EVERMORE: I don’t have a clear answer for you, but it’s an answer. I once tried to move a chair to face the board, but then instantly, a strange, silent woman with a headset ran into the classroom and pushed me to the side and positioned the chair exactly where they are now, shook her head while making eye contact with me and ran off, never to be seen again.

(pause, EVERMORE looks to her students while nodding her head)

EVERMORE: And then you might be thinking why don’t I just move the whiteboard so it’s facing the chairs I am afraid to move, but alas, the whiteboard is bolted to the ground. *(pause)*

DYLAN: I can’t speak for everyone, but I have a lot more questions. *(everyone nods)* Um who was that strange woman you referred to?

EVERMORE: I honestly couldn’t tell you. I am still unsure to this day if it was a dream or not, but I am not about to test it out. You should have seen the disappointment and disgust in her eyes, kind of like I should have known better. *(pause)* Alright moving on, giraffes’ long necks are able to reach up to- a certain height that I cannot remember so I declare we take this time to crack open our textbooks and read quietly to ourselves. Starts on page 252!

(EVERMORE sits down on the ground, pulls out a granola bar and starts reading)

(as the students start reading, DYLAN realizes he doesn’t have his book)

DYLAN: Hey, Zoey. Could we share books? I forgot mine at home.

ZOEY: Yeah of course. *(as she scooches over next to him, SOPHIE moves closer to ZOEY, JENNIFER glares over, jealous)*

SOPHIE: Huh, no sign of the strange, silent woman with the headset, nice!

ZOEY: Do you have to be 2 centimeters away from me at all times?

SOPHIE: Well I know I am just going to get distracted by something else if I wasn't distracted by you so I just figured... might as well! (*whips out a notebook*) Tic Tac Toe or Hangman?

EVERMORE: Aha! Giraffe necks can stretch up to six feet when fully grown! I am CRUSHING this teacher thing!

JENNIFER (*taps AUSTINS shoulder*): Psst, Austin.

AUSTIN (*jumps out of nerves*): Me??

JENNIFER: Umm yeah. Unless you think I should ask Mrs. Evermore, speaking of which...

(*JENNIFER raises her hand*)

AUSTIN (*nervous*): No, no, I am just a little shocked you are talking to me.

JENNIFER: Well I saw you talking to Dylan earlier and was wondering if you knew what his deal was?

AUSTIN (*deflated*): His deal?

JENNIFER: Yeah like is he single?

AUSTIN: Yeah, he is.

JENNIFER: Oh awesome, so I don't know how to ask this, but... do you have any advice for me? I kinda really want to date him, but at the same time, I am kinda really nervous to even go near him, which is so unlike me!

AUSTIN (*not interested but helpful*): Just talk to him, it's okay to be nervous, but if you just find stuff you have in common, conversation will come naturally; I am sure he would love to go out with you too.

JENNIFER: You think so? I really hope you're right! Thanks, you're the best!

AUSTIN: Yeah, no problem...hey uhh (*stressed out*) do you mind, I mean... are you... card, ugh, wait hold on (*deep breath*) can I... can I ask you a question.

JENNIFER: Yeah sure!

AUSTIN (*breathing increases*): Do you like magic?

JENNIFER: Yes! Oh my gosh, do you do magic tricks?

AUSTIN (*overly excited*): Yeah! All of the time! Let me show you! I have a deck of cards in my backpack somewhere!

SOPHIE: I would like to solve the puzzle: “I don’t want to...play... this stupid game with you, loser”. Well you could have said that earlier in a less hurtful way.

(*SOPHIE rips out the paper from the notebook and crumples it up as AUSTIN fumbles around in his backpack, making all sorts of noises*)

SOPHIE: Hey what do you think Austin is doing?

ZOEY: Well since I was barely paying attention to you, I easily eavesdropped on his conversation with Jennifer and now Austin is looking for his deck of cards that he always forgets are in his side pocket of his backpack.

SOPHIE (*realizes something*): Wait, but you said Austin does magic to become closer with people... like people he is trying to impress?

ZOEY: I’m sorry Sophie, but this doesn’t mean anything. The way I see it, he is never going to find those cards.

SOPHIE: How do you know? What if he does find those cards and woos Jennifer with his cute charm and amazing attitude or his perfect personality?

ZOEY: Not going to lie, I’m pretty impressed that each pair of words in that sentence started with the same letter.

SOPHIE: Yeah, I love alliteration, it occurs occasionally, usually when I’m filled with worry or feeling fearful, thanks though.

ZOEY: Are you sure you're not doing this on purpose?

SOPHIE: So sorry, Sophie should stop speaking...

(AUSTIN finally remembers where he keeps them as JENNIFER raises her hand)

EVERMORE *(not looking up from her reading)*: Yes, you can go to the bathroom.

(EVERMORE pulls out another granola bar from inside of the book)

(JENNIFER exits SL with backpack)

AUSTIN *(deep exhale)*: Pick a card-

(AUSTIN realizes she's gone, stuffs cards in box, upset, cleans up the rest of his stuff, exits SR)

ZOEY: See? You still got a chance with him!

SOPHIE: I feel awful about Austin; he must be super sad right now... I don't think he even realized that he walked into the classroom's closet.

ZOEY: Oh no, he did, that's one of his thinking spots.

SOPHIE: I can't even imagine what he is thinking about, I hope it's not too negative. I wish there was something we could do.

ZOEY: He'll be fine, alright new round of hangman. Now I will guess, and you come up with the sentence.

SOPHIE: Really?! I have been waiting years for you to say that! I have the perfect sentence too!

ZOEY *(a little rude)*: I was kidding, Sophie. I'm not five anymore... I am going to go fill up my water bottle before our next class.

(ZOEY takes her book away from DYLAN, she exits SL)

SOPHIE: Hey Dylan, have you ever played hangman before?

DYLAN (*shaken that the book was taken right out from under him*): Huh? Oh hey, did you know that giraffes can consume about 75 pounds of food each day? They can also run up to 35 miles per hour! And! Their tongues can measure up to 20 inches!

SOPHIE: I could have lived without hearing that last fact...

(*DYLAN shrugs, SOPHIE exits SL*)

EVERMORE (*slams book shut*): Wow that was fascinating! (*looks up and stands, stretches*) Who wants to share what they learned?

(*DYLAN shoots up his hand*)

EVERMORE: Uh Dylan, where is everyone else?

DYLAN: Beats me, but I know a lot of fun facts about giraffes now!

EVERMORE: That's good enough for me! (*sits down next to him*) Tell me what you learned!

Act 1 Scene 4 (Hallway)

(*ZOEY and SOPHIE walking together from SL*)

ZOEY: Do you find it weird that we are required to take a class that's only about animals? Our textbook is literally called 5th grade zoology! 7 years too late, but Mrs. Evermore doesn't even seem to care.

SOPHIE (*not paying attention to her*): Yeah... haha....

ZOEY: What are you working on?

SOPHIE: Nothing, it's not ready yet.

ZOEY: OK

SOPHIE: Alright, never mind, I have been dying to tell someone, come here. Are you a visual learner or an auditory learner?

ZOEY: Well I would say visual because I normally do learn better with pictures but then other times-

SOPHIE: OK perfect. Listen to me. I have noticed something cool about the students at this school. All 5 of them.

ZOEY: Why is there only five students at this school? I never really thought about that-

SOPHIE: Kids are lazy, parents don't care about their offspring's education. I don't know. Anyway...

(BOOM)

SOPHIE *(scared out of her mind)*: WHAT WAS THAT?!

ZOEY: I am sure it was just the heating system turning on, it isn't natural by any means, but I think we are going to survive.

SOPHIE: Are you sure? What if the ceiling collapses causing chaos? What if the ground turns into a whirlpool? What if it was a big monster that is walking on the roof and decides to make a nest, what if-

ZOEY: Hey Sophie, can I ask you something?

SOPHIE *(still on edge)*: Anything.

ZOEY: How do I put this delicately? Umm do you... are you afraid of...everything?

SOPHIE *(laughs for a bit longer than normal)*: Of course not!

ZOEY: Oh good, let me ask you one more thing though, what is your biggest fear?

SOPHIE: Like top ten or just one thing?

ZOEY: Whatever comes to mind.

SOPHIE: Well let's see... spiders, no wait snakes. Spiders and snakes.

ZOEY: Alright that's normal enough, I thought you were going to list like 500 things, and I would just stand here bored out-

SOPHIE: Also, have you ever thought about space? Like apparently it just goes on forever. How do scientists know that? Do aliens exist? Do they know about humans? I also fear confrontation,

arguments, actually, any sort of social interaction now that I mention it. Driving, which reminds me of how I hate whenever someone yells out “shotgun!” because I always fear that they are just announcing that they have a deadly weapon with them. My imagination. All liquids that are yellow. Death is terrifying. *(pause)* Those pens that you have to twist the bottom for the pen part to come out. What kind of sicko would think of such a thing? Waking up one day and forgetting how to talk. Oh, and paper cuts, the dark. The depths of the ocean. Ooo bubble gum ice cream. Death again because literally, what the heck happens when you die, ok no, Sophie, we are not going there right now! Obviously talking to anyone I don’t know. *(breathes softly)* Oh, and sometimes I have the feeling there is a group of people watching me, judging my every move.

(SOPHIE stares at audience)

ZOEY: You got some real issues.

SOPHIE *(still dazed)*: Everyone does

ZOEY *(bringing her attention back)*: Anyway, are you going to explain what you were going to tell me before you went off on your foolish fears?

SOPHIE: Come again? *(ZOEY points at paper)* Oh right right! So! *(flips page)* ouch!

ZOEY: Now what??

SOPHIE: Paper cut.

ZOEY: Please hurry, we are going to be late to class.

SOPHIE: No, we won’t. There’s a strange time warp situation that I don’t understand, but it makes it so that we could stand here and talk for hours and somehow, when we end our conversation and head to class, the next thing we know, we are sitting in our class, right on time.

ZOEY: Huh, that is weird. *(SOPHIE starts writing something down)* What are you doing?

SOPHIE: Adding it to the fear list, “time abnormalities”

ZOEY: Alright well can you just tell me about your cool discovery now?

SOPHIE: Yes of course! Alright so look at this: I have been obsessed with trying to find a pattern of some sort that will prove that me and Austin are MTBTFAEWEH.

ZOEY: I don't even want to ask what that means...

SOPHIE: Meant to be together forever and ever with eternal happiness.

ZOEY: Naturally.

SOPHIE: So! This is what I came up with! If we put Austin's name over here, and connect him with Jennifer since we saw him trying to entice her with his amazing magic skills, and then we connect her with Dylan, who she seems to like, and connect Dylan with you because did you see the way he asked you if he could read off your book today?? We connect you with me because we symbolize the latitude of the school-

ZOEY: Latitude of the school? What could that possibly mean?

SOPHIE: Just go with it. Please. I have worked so hard on this.

ZOEY: Alright continue.

SOPHIE: Thank you. So, we are connected by the latitude of the school, which means I have to be connected to Austin and we will fall in love within the year!

ZOEY: Why exactly do you have to be "connected to Austin"?

SOPHIE: It wouldn't make this shape! I call it... The Love Star! (*shows audience, proud*)

ZOEY (*slight pause*): Who are you showing that too? Despite what you may fear, there is not a group of people judging us!

SOPHIE: You're right... they're not judging me this time; they're giving me approval!

ZOEY: There's no one there!!

SOPHIE: Agree to disagree, but either way, it's official and I am happy and there's nothing you can do or say to change that!

ZOEY: You're just a little off with your logic, but as I have said before, you and Austin would make a cute couple! I will help you get together with him before the year is over! (*walks off SR*)

SOPHIE: Wait don't walk away; it means we will appear in class at any second!

Act 1 Scene 5 (Classroom)

(written on the board: MRS EVERMORE WILL BE HERE IN 2 MINUTES, DON'T LEAVE PLEASE", SOPHIE /ZOEY sitting SR, AUSTIN sitting SL)

DYLAN: Why does it say Mrs. Evermore will be here in two minutes? Mr. Addams is our Spanish history teacher...

JENNIFER *(trying to make conversation, flirty)*: I was wondering the same thing, maybe he was tired of dealing with students all the time.

DYLAN: That is an accurate possibility... *(starts to laugh)* it's like how Mr. Moseby always gets mad at the twins in Suite Life of Zack and Cody! *(sits next to AUSTIN)*

JENNIFER *(laughs with DYLAN as she sits down next to him)*: I love that book!

(DYLAN stops laughing, but shrugs at JENNIFER's comment)

DYLAN: That reminds me... do you have your zoology book with you? I was hoping I could read ahead... I heard the next the chapter is about zebras!

JENNIFER: I love zebras!

(DYLAN and JENNIFER start to read in their book)

(AUSTIN annoyed, writes something in his journal, crumples it up, throws it away)

SOPHIE: See what I mean about the time warp? I don't remember walking in here or sitting down, but here we are!

ZOEY: Don't change the subject! It's not that hard! Just write a little note to get his attention!

SOPHIE: But what do I write on it? Should I write in cursive? How formal should I be? Do I sign my name?

ZOEY: Up to you, gosh no, not at all and...no.

SOPHIE: I have fifteen more follow up questions.

ZOEY: Well I am not going to answer them, just do whatever comes to mind, you don't have a lot of time before Mrs. Evermore shows up.

SOPHIE: He does not want to know what comes into my mind.

ZOEY (*raising her voice*): Sophie! This isn't something that you should be having trouble with!

(*AUSTIN sneezes, SOPHIE starts to write*)

ZOEY: There you go! What did you write??

SOPHIE (*happily*): Not telling!

(*SOPHIE gets up, skips to AUSTIN, drops off note in his lap, but walks right back to her seat*)

(*AUSTIN reads note, laughs softly but shakes his head, puts it in his backpack*)

(*SOPHIE notices his reaction; isn't how she wants it to go*)

ZOEY: Sophie, I am so sor-

(*EVERMORE bursts open SR, out of breath*)

EVERMORE: I AM HERE, SORRY I AM LATE!

JENNIFER (*raises her hand*): Where's Mr. Addams?

EVERMORE: They laid him off, he wanted a pay raise. Something about his grandson, causing problems in the household.

JENNIFER: How sweet! What's his name?

EVERMORE: Tuesday I believe.

JENNIFER: That's not a name...

EVERMORE: I don't know, maybe the kid was born on a Tuesday, does that matter?

JENNIFER: No, I suppose not... So why are you teaching us now?

EVERMORE: Good question, probably because no one else was willing to.

DYLAN: Did you know that zebras are actually black with white stripes?

EVERMORE: Wow look who is reading ahead! But wrong class, we can discuss that next time! For now, take out your homework, I think it was on Captain General Redondo Ventana Laguna Don Jose Cuervo if I am pronouncing that correctly.

DYLAN: Probably not.

(JENNIFER puts away her book, everyone takes out homework)

ZOEY: What did you write on that note??

(Bell rings)

EVERMORE: Yay, they finally decided to use the bells again! I don't understand why it just went off now since class just started, but I am sure they will figure it out.

ZOEY: Sophie, you have to tell me, you tell me everything!

(Bell rings)

EVERMORE: Welp that is going to get annoying if that persists.

(Bell rings)

EVERMORE: Alright well I guess we might as well just move on to the next period since I have no idea what I was going to talk about for this subject anyway, I hope this doesn't interrupt anything! See you all soon!

(SOPHIE exits SL quickly, ZOEY follows)

Act 1 Scene 6 (Hallway)

(SOPHIE enters SL alone)

ZOEY: Sophie! Wait up!

(ZOEY enters SL)

SOPHIE: I don't want to talk right now.

ZOEY: Why did you leave class so quickly? We always walk to Gym together!

SOPHIE: Did you not see the way Austin laughed at my note? He didn't react the way I wanted him to!

ZOEY: That was just because he doesn't know you yet! He doesn't know how creative and sweet you are! I am guessing you wrote something pretty funny on the note, right?

SOPHIE: No, that's the problem, he wasn't supposed to find it funny, I was hoping to be respectful, considerate if you will.

ZOEY: Please tell me what you said on that note.

SOPHIE (*very quietly*): I wrote bless you

ZOEY: Excuse me?

SOPHIE: I wrote on the piece of paper bless you! I panicked, you were pressuring me to write something and he sneezed, I thought it was perfect!

ZOEY: I told you to write something to get his attention, not something stupid like bless you!

SOPHIE: Hey! Being polite is never stupid! Politeness is the best policy!

ZOEY: That's not right.

SOPHIE: "Every good deed whether big or very small is something that everyone deserves if they are short or very tall!"

ZOEY: Why did it sound like you were reciting something?

SOPHIE: I read it on a cereal box.

ZOEY: Ok well maybe you shouldn't eat cereal!

SOPHIE (*offended about the cereal comment*): Why not?

ZOEY: Ok that came out wrong, you should continue to eat cereal because breakfast is the most important meal of the day BUT I am still annoyed that you didn't write anything meaningful on that note! Now Austin will think you're weird!

SOPHIE (*getting irritated*): What's wrong with being weird?

(*AUSTIN enters SL*)

AUSTIN (*upset*): Hey, Zoey! I was thinking I would tell you- (*trips and falls but gets up quickly*)

AUSTIN: Nothing! I'm good, are you good? Good, yes, gym class, see you there!

(*AUSTIN exits in a scurry SR*)

SOPHIE: He is perfect.

ZOEY: We have very different definitions of perfect. Anyway, where were we? Oh yeah, I was telling you that you have to be careful not to be weird around Austin!

SOPHIE: And then I said what's wrong with being weird?

ZOEY: Nothing! I am just saying he doesn't know you that well and first impressions make a big difference and you don't want him to think that you're always like this!

SOPHIE: Like what? Maybe this is just who I am! Maybe I like saying bless you or quoting cereal boxes! If that's weird, then I'm weird! I have no problem saying that.

ZOEY: But people aren't going to accept-

SOPHIE: Why should I even be listening to you? What was the name of your last boyfriend? Wasn't it something unusual like Hansel?

ZOEY: First of all, it was Hanschen, second, we promised never to bring that name up again!

SOPHIE: And you promised to help me get together with Austin!

ZOEY: I am trying! It's just difficult when- never mind. (*softens up*) Listen, I don't want to fight with you, we are just getting a little out of hand-

(*SOPHIE starts to walk away from ZOEY*)

SOPHIE: No, I'm done with this. I am tired of you constantly telling me how to live my life! This has gone on for as long as I can remember, even before Austin came into the picture. It started off as a nice gesture, but now you're claiming that being "weird" is a bad thing!

ZOEY: Sophie come on, you know I love you and your personality! I'm just worried-

SOPHIE: I'm sorry, I can't be around someone who wants me to change, I need to be myself and if you can't accept that, I don't think we should speak anymore.

ZOEY: This is ridiculous! I called you weird once! You can't just throw away our ten-year friendship for that!

SOPHIE: You don't get it.

ZOEY: Get what??

SOPHIE: I am not offended that you called me weird, I think everyone is weird in their own way, the problem I have is the way you say it. And it's not just the one time, I know you judge my actions all of the time, but you've just put up with them. I am done being your friend that you put up with, I am ready to find someone who will accept me. Politeness and all.

(SOPHIE storms off SR)

ZOEY: Please come back! I am so sorry! I do love you just the way you are! I will talk to Austin for you and get it straightened out!

SOPHIE: Don't bother!

ZOEY: Sophie! Please! You're my best friend! *(ZOEY sneezes)*

SOPHIE: *(not happy about it)* Bless you.

Act 1 Scene 7 (Gym)

(EVERMORE in center of all students sitting, blows whistle)

EVERMORE: Alright lazy bones! Get on your feet!

(as the students stand, EVERMORE sits and whips out magazine)

EVERMORE: Austin, do you want to lead today's class?

AUSTIN: No, I kind of hurt myself when I fell down in the- *(notices that JENNIFER is staring at him)* I mean when I was lifting all of those heavy weights...

EVERMORE: Well someone has to; I am not qualified in the slightest.

JENNIFER: Mrs. Evermore?

EVERMORE *(gesturing to the whistle)*: That's COACH Evermore to you, young lady.

JENNIFER: Um Coach can we just walk around since we don't really have any equipment?

EVERMORE: Yeah! Great idea!

JENNIFER: Let's walk together Dylan! *(links arms with him)*

(AUSTIN starts walking in the opposite direction, sits down on floor SL)

ZOEY: Hey Sophie, do you want to walk together?

SOPHIE: Not talking to you!

(SOPHIE crosses SL, sees AUSTIN, crosses back to SR, blocking her eyes from ZOEY)

JENNIFER: This is such a small gym, like we are halfway done with a lap already! We are so athletic aren't we Dylan?

DYLAN *(staring at ZOEY)*: She is so cute...

JENNIFER: Thank you, but you don't have to say she, I'm right next to you...

DYLAN: You can say that again.

JENNIFER: No thanks, I will just listen to you babble nonsense!

DYLAN: Does she even know I like her?

JENNIFER: Yes, yes I do! What else is on your mind?

(OLIVIA enters SR with folder)

OLIVIA: Hello! Could someone direct me to the gym teacher?

(all point to EVERMORE who looks up, sees OLIVIA, throws magazine away and stands)

EVERMORE: Reporting for duty! You must be the new gym teacher! Here is your whistle, and... just make sure these kids don't do anything too crazy...

OLIVIA: I'm not the gym-

EVERMORE: No, thank YOU!

(EVERMORE exits SR)

AUSTIN: Olivia? What are you doing here?

OLIVIA: She looked familiar...

AUSTIN: We aren't going to discuss that now. Why are you here??

OLIVIA: Oh, right right, I was looking through my backpack this morning and I found your folder with the Finding Nemo stickers with my stuff for some reason-

(AUSTIN takes folder from OLIVIA)

AUSTIN *(nervous)*: Olivia stop talking, the whole school doesn't need to know I have stickers based on a kid's movie!

OLIVIA: Then why do you have them displayed for all the world to see on the front of your folder?

(awkward pause)

AUSTIN: Just... stop asking questions!

OLIVIA: Plus, you love Finding Nemo! Actually, any movie that involves talking fish now that I think about it... Well, here you go!

ZOEY: Did you hear that? Austin likes Finding Nemo too!

SOPHIE: Still not talking to you! (*crosses SL*)

OLIVIA: So, is your homework in there?

AUSTIN: That doesn't matter! I didn't have anything due today for this class!

OLIVIA: Yeah, but if you just-

AUSTIN: How are you even here?

OLIVIA: I walked...

AUSTIN: But you're supposed to be in class!

OLIVIA: That's true! But lunch got extended because our biology class is experiencing some difficulties, something about the frogs going on strike... (*holds in laughter*)

AUSTIN: Well alright then, thrilling story, really, can't wait to hear more about it, but you should run off now. (*pushing her towards SR exit*)

OLIVIA: Hi Zoey!

(*ZOEY stops walking to talk to OLIVIA*)

ZOEY: Hey, what's up?

OLIVIA: You know, life. How about you?

ZOEY: Same actually.

OLIVIA: Proceed.

AUSTIN: You're not normal, you know that?

OLIVIA: I get it from you.

AUSTIN: Now let's get you back to lunch before...

OLIVIA: HI!

JENNIFER: Hello...

OLIVIA: You must be Jennifer!

JENNIFER: I am! And this is Dylan, he's my-

OLIVIA: Is this the girl that you were talking about?

AUSTIN: We're leaving now!

OLIVIA: I'm just trying to help.

AUSTIN: Well you're not exactly being cooperative.

OLIVIA: I did you a favor! Just look-

AUSTIN: And I said thank you! Now leave!

OLIVIA: You didn't even say thank you...

AUSTIN (*sarcastic, still stressed*): Well thank you.

OLIVIA: Less sarcastic please.

AUSTIN: LEAVE!

OLIVIA: Why do you want me to go so badly?

AUSTIN: Because I don't need you here! I didn't even need this folder today! I don't know why it was in your backpack, but we could have figured it out at home, not in front of my friends!

ZOEY: He called you his friend!

SOPHIE: Now is not the time!!!

AUSTIN: You need to grow up, you can't just barge in here, embarrass me repeatedly and expect me to thank you for it!

OLIVIA: Austin, I'm sorry, I was just-

AUSTIN: You were just what? You've done enough.

OLIVIA: Don't get mad, I-

AUSTIN: I am not mad, it's just that you know how much stress I am under, just go.

(AUSTIN crosses SL)

OLIVIA: Austin, wait.

AUSTIN: I will see you when I get home.

(AUSTIN grabs backpack, exits SL)

OLIVIA: Yeah, ok.

(OLIVIA exits SR)

Act 1 Scene 8 (Cafeteria)

(EVERMORE with apron and hairnet behind desk with pot full of something SR, 5 chairs on SL)

(JENNIFER, DYLAN, SOPHIE, AUSTIN, ZOEY enter SR 1 by 1)

EVERMORE: Lunch time! Get it while it's hot! *(Scoops from pot to plate)*

JENNIFER: Goldfish again?

EVERMORE: No complaining young lady, food is food.

DYLAN: At least we get cheddar this time, parmesan just isn't as good. *(sits next to JENNIFER)*

JENNIFER: That is an excellent point!

(SOPHIE walks by without grabbing a tray and sits alone on SR, AUSTIN and ZOEY both get a tray without a word)

EVERMORE: A thank you would be nice.... Hey red/blonde/brown/black hair! *(dependent on actor's hair color/style)*

SOPHIE (*turns around*): Me?

EVERMORE: Come here! (*SOPHIE walks over*) why aren't you eating?

SOPHIE: Not hungry.

EVERMORE: Something got you down?

SOPHIE: You have no idea.

EVERMORE: Let's hear it.

SOPHIE: It's a long story.

EVERMORE: I got nowhere to be! Oh and, I love gossip!

SOPHIE: It all started several years ago when Zoey first spoke to me...

JENNIFER: I bet I could get a goldfish from my forehead to my mouth faster than you can!

DYLAN: What do I get if I win?

JENNIFER: A goldfish in your mouth...

DYLAN: Fair enough... ready, set go!

AUSTIN: Zoey, can we talk?

ZOEY: Sure, got nothing else to do.

(*AUSTIN stands to go to center stage*)

ZOEY: Why do we have to move?

AUSTIN: I don't want anyone hearing us.

ZOEY: I think they are in the zone right now; they won't be listening.

DYLAN: Almost had it!

AUSTIN: Not taking the risk, I'm already walking over, just come on. (*sits down in center*)

ZOEY: Ugh the things I do for you. Alright what's up? (*sits in center on the right side of AUSTIN*)

AUSTIN: What's wrong with me?

ZOEY: I don't know if you want me to answer that.

AUSTIN: I'm just stressed out because-

ZOEY: When aren't you stressed?

AUSTIN (*laughs for a little bit, but then straight face*): Funny.

ZOEY: Alright continue. What's stressing you out today?

AUSTIN: I really like Jennifer, but she doesn't seem interested.

ZOEY: No way really?! Maybe it's because you two have nothing in common or never speak to each other!

AUSTIN: Why do you sound so sarcastic?

ZOEY: Do you really think she would go out with you? She's way out of your league!

AUSTIN: What does she have that I don't?

ZOEY: She's beautiful, she has a great personality, and I heard that her dad's coworker is friends with someone who plays golf with the father of the woman who was accepted into Harvard Law School without even writing a personal essay! I heard she paid for all of her friends to fly across the country and dance around the admissions office and that was enough.

AUSTIN: Seems highly unrealistic.

ZOEY: Doesn't it?? Anyway, on top of that, I am sure Jennifer is also very smart.

(*JENNIFER gets the goldfish in her mouth*)

JENNIFER: Yes! I did it! Take that! Now let's see how many we can fit in our mouth at once!

ZOEY: Ok maybe not smart, but still beautiful beyond belief!

AUSTIN: So, what? I still want her to be my girlfriend more than anything. You're supposed to be my friend, help me!

ZOEY: You want my advice? Go for someone that is a little more... your style. Someone that not only tolerates listening to your stresses but appreciates them. Someone that can relate to your constant little worries.

AUSTIN: Where will I find that?

ZOEY: It's not as hard as you think. The woman of your dreams could be in this very room, right in front of you.

SOPHIE: Then, when we got to 7th grade, we both started to notice something that was developing and that's what we call "the yucky year", actually it's just me that calls it that, I won't go into the details for both of our sakes. Then in 8th-

EVERMORE: Alright that's enough for me, listen to mama Evermore, just talk to her, sometimes communication is all you really need, apologize even though you don't think you should, it goes a long way.

SOPHIE: You're probably right... thank you!

EVERMORE: Good luck! *(sneezes in pot of goldfish)*

SOPHIE/AUSTIN: Bless you!

(SOPHIE gives EVERMORE a tissue and starts walking over to AUSTIN and ZOEY)

AUSTIN: Just to confirm, you think I should make a move on someone who appreciates me for being me?

ZOEY: Just said that, yes.

AUSTIN: And they are in this room?

ZOEY: Yes!

AUSTIN: Alright here goes nothing.

SOPHIE: Zoey, I don't want to do this but-

(AUSTIN kisses ZOEY, SOPHIE opens her mouth wide open)

SOPHIE: You've got to be kidding me!

(SOPHIE storms off SL)

ZOEY: I didn't mean me, idiot!

(slaps him, gets her backpack and goes after SOPHIE, DYLAN stands)

DYLAN *(with food in his mouth)*: Hey, doofus!

(AUSTIN stands up)

AUSTIN: You really shouldn't speak with your mouth full, it's dangerous, and unsanitary.

DYLAN: I thought you said you were just friends with Zoey! I was trying to get with her!

AUSTIN: Well I was-I am- I just- she said-

(DYLAN slaps AUSTIN, exits SR)

JENNIFER: But I thought Dylan liked me...

AUSTIN *(nervous and stressed)*: It's ok. I am here if you need to talk through it with someone...

(JENNIFER looks at him for a second, slaps him)

AUSTIN: What was that for??

JENNIFER: I don't know, it looked fun! Also, since when does he want to go out with Zoey?!
Something is messed up and it's all your fault! Bye bye! *(exits SR)*

(AUSTIN slumps down in a chair)

BLACKOUT, END OF ACT 1

Act 2 Scene 1 (Nurse's Office)

(MRS. EVERMORE looking at AUSTIN's cheek who is sitting on a stool)

EVERMORE: Welp, if I were to give my opinion, it looks like you've been slapped three times and by a different person each time...

AUSTIN: Wow, you can figure that out just by looking at it?

EVERMORE: Ha of course not, I witnessed it all go down earlier at lunch! *(starts laughing)*

AUSTIN: Hey! It's not funny, I thought if I made a confident decision for once, it would pay off...I was just a little wrong about that.

EVERMORE *(holding in laughter)*: A little? I think your cheek says otherwise!

AUSTIN: Can you make it stop hurting instead of just making fun of me?

EVERMORE: You're right, you're right. Here, take this, I think it might be cough medicine.

AUSTIN: Why would I ever take cough-

(EVERMORE forces him to drink it, AUSTIN coughs, EVERMORE tries to take notes on clipboard)

EVERMORE: Hey, why won't this darn thing write??

AUSTIN: Are you sure it's a writing utensil? It looks a little big to me.

EVERMORE: Look, right here, it says in big letters, PEN.

AUSTIN: That says EPIPEN. Get rid of that, use this instead

(AUSTIN hands her a pencil from his backpack, EVERMORE chucks the EpiPen behind her)

EVERMORE: Much better. Where was I? Oh yeah, take this cough medicine.

AUSTIN: No, I already- *(coughs again)*

EVERMORE: Cough medicine *(slowly spelling)* ... ineffective-

AUSTIN: Um do you mind-

EVERMORE: Wait is it an a or an e? *(crosses it out)* cough medicine is useless.

AUSTIN: Um Mrs. Evermore do you-

EVERMORE: Nurse Evermore. *(pointing to nametag)* I'm a nurse.

AUSTIN *(going along with it)*: Right, of course, Nurse Evermore.

(as AUSTIN is talking, EVERMORE is fiddling around with stuff around the room)

AUSTIN: Do you ever get the feeling that people hate you and just pretend to put up with you? I always do and maybe it's irrational, but I can't stop thinking about it. I want people to be honest with me, but at the same time, do I really want to know what they are saying behind my back? Like take Zoey for example, we have been best friends since I don't know when, we were inseparable, but once high school started, things got weird. She doesn't seem to want to hang out with me as much and is always with that Sophie girl.

(as soon as AUSTIN says SOPHIE, EVERMORE makes a loud noise with an object)

EVERMORE *(embarrassed, hiding the object behind her back)*: I'm listening, I'm listening. Continue please.

(EVERMORE tests his reflexes, puts band aids all over him)

AUSTIN *(flustered)*: I don't know if it is my fault or maybe we are both just growing up but I don't want to lose our friendship that easily, and I know college is approaching, but I kept telling myself that we wouldn't drift apart, but maybe we aren't supposed to be friends anymore. Maybe it's just the way life works. Am I overthinking this?

EVERMORE: Look kid, I have no issue being honest with you. What the heck were you thinking when you kissed her at lunch?

AUSTIN: What do you mean?

EVERMORE: You were just blabbing about how long you've known Zoey and what good friends you were, but then you go and jeopardize all of that just to give her a little smooch?

AUSTIN: Well I was stressed and confused about everything and she said some things and it started to make me think some things and I just went for it.

EVERMORE: No way, do you like Zoey? Like... like like?

AUSTIN: Not after that slap I don't! And I don't even think I liked her in the first place! She's like a sister to me, I couldn't, it would be too strange.

EVERMORE: Then why kiss her?

AUSTIN: I don't know, I'm idiotic, that's why! I get wrapped up in my own thoughts and make dumb decisions! Any chance we can change the subject??

EVERMORE: Sure! There's this gross scab on the left side of my hip that's the size of a football. It will not go away no matter how much ointment I put on it... do you want to see it?

AUSTIN: Nope, ew, no, never, forget I asked. We can talk about my issues again, just please do not show me your scab.

EVERMORE: I don't know what to tell you, I have no idea what you're going through and I don't think I can help you in any way, but I hear the school guidance counselor is the best in the area, why don't you stop by her office at the end of the day? I'm sure she is very intelligent.

AUSTIN: It's not you is it?

EVERMORE: No of course not. Alright don't move, this is going to hurt... I think

(EVERMORE sprays something on his cheek, looking away)

AUSTIN: Oww! It was the other cheek!

EVERMORE *(giggles)*: OH oops, my bad, well, have a good rest of the day! Remember: Life is full of ups and downs and sometimes life slaps you in the face, but you got to move on and see what's right in front of you.

AUSTIN: Wow that was actually pretty insightful.

EVERMORE: Kid I swear to gosh if you kiss me right now...

AUSTIN *(clears throat)*: I wasn't going to! I was just... stretching my face!

(AUSTIN starts to leave SR)

EVERMORE: Here have a lollipop for the road!

AUSTIN: That's a toothbrush...

EVERMORE: Oh score! I have been needing one for a solid 6 months! Feel better!

Act 2 Scene 2 (Classroom)

(students already sitting, SOPHIE alone on SR, writing in a journal, angry at ZOEY, who is sitting between DYLAN and JENNIFER SL)

DYLAN: Hey, Jennifer... I was wondering if-

JENNIFER *(mad at him for lunch time)*: No you cannot borrow my textbook anymore! I am upset with you!

DYLAN: At me? What did I do?

JENNIFER: Our first date clearly meant nothing to you, our rendezvous was hardly organized and the "romantic lunch" you planned was subpar at best! You clearly have feelings for that dumb, know-it-all girl with... *(describes ZOEY)*

ZOEY: You could have been a little less descriptive... I am sitting right here.

JENNIFER: And now she is snooping in on our conversation! What do you see in her?

DYLAN: Ok back up, first date, "rendezvous"? Romantic lunch? I didn't do any of that stuff with you or this ill-mannered, immature girl.

ZOEY: Still here.

JENNIFER: This is what I mean! *(getting emotional)* Our first date was reading about zebras in Spanish History, our rendezvous was during Gym and then when you sat down next to me, I expected a romantic meal between the two of us to celebrate our two-hour anniversary, but I guess not! All you were focused on was slapping Austin because Ms. "needs to be the center of attention and has to be liked by everyone in this school" over here just happens to catch your eye too!

DYLAN: OK hold on, you are telling me that those were considered dates?!

JENNIFER: And one rendezvous!

DYLAN: Alright hear me out here, at one point, I think I did have feelings for Zoey, I thought she was cute and sweet.

ZOEY (*sits up*): Well thank you!

DYLAN: But now I don't think that.

ZOEY (*slouches back down*): That's more realistic.

JENNIFER: What are you saying?

DYLAN: Maybe the reason I was settling for this pitiable nobody was because I didn't have the confidence to go after a beautiful, kind, smart, thoughtful woman... like you.

ZOEY: Alright, that's too many insults for me today, maybe the guidance counselor has some better things to say. I am out of here.

(*ZOEY exits SL*)

JENNIFER: You think I am beautiful and kind and...those other things you said...?

DYLAN: I do...

JENNIFER: You better not be lying! Because... I think you're handsome... and funny... and more things that I can't think of right now, but I like you a lot!

DYLAN: So, (*stands up, leads her downstage*) how would you like to go out on an official date with me sometime?

JENNIFER: Yes please! I am free for lunch tomorrow and the next day, but not Saturday because we don't have school, but then on Monday we could and then on Tues-

DYLAN: I was thinking we could actually go out for dinner.

JENNIFER: Okay... but school ends at 2:15... how would we get dinner? I mean like I know old people usually eat dinner early, well some of them actually call it supper, but I-

DYLAN (*takes her hands*): Listen to me, I can come pick you up at your house on Saturday night, we both dress up nice, I bring flowers and we go out to a nice restaurant, just the two of us.

(JENNIFER thinks about it, raises her hand)

DYLAN *(laughs)*: Yes Jennifer?

JENNIFER: I like chocolate too.

DYLAN: Sounds like a plan.

JENNIFER: Can't wait!

(they kiss and sit back down holding hands)

(AUSTIN enters SR, sits down, rubbing his cheek, SOPHIE instantly gets nervous)

(EVERMORE enters SR with clipboard, takes off nurse's hat, throws it backstage)

EVERMORE: Alright everyone, sorry I am late, but here I am, once again to teach you about *(looks at clipboard)* cough medicine... I mean... something about English... I guess. Alright first let's do attendance because that's easy and takes up time! *(includes actors name, EVERMORE understands why because they are always absent, sick, vacation, etc. but the last name is ZOEY who is not there)*

EVERMORE: Anyone know where Zoey went? I could have sworn I saw her at lunch earlier.

SOPHIE *(grumbly)*: Probably kissing whatever is closest to her.

EVERMORE: Pardon?

SOPHIE *(nicely)*: Nothing, *(not so nice)* nothing *(scribbles in notebook, she has pages everywhere)*

DYLAN: I think she said something about going to the guidance office.

EVERMORE *(exhausted)*: You're kidding, seriously?

(DYLAN nods his head)

EVERMORE: Alright class, I have some business to take care of. Please just peer edit each other's essays. Jennifer and Dylan, you can be a pair, and Austin you're with Sophie.

(SOPHIE's head shoots straight up, eyes bulged out, scribbles ferociously)

(EVERMORE sighs deeply, takes out glasses and puts them on, exits SL)

DYLAN: What do you think that was about?

JENNIFER: I don't know, but can I stare into your eyes please?

DYLAN: As long as I can stare into yours!

JENNIFER: How can we do that at the same time? Ohhh

(as time goes on, lights get dimmer and dimmer towards SOPHIE and AUSTIN)

AUSTIN: Hey, Sophie, I think we are supposed to swap papers...

(SOPHIE stops writing, looks up)

SOPHIE: Huh, oh yeah, of course, let me find it really quickly. Please hold.

(SOPHIE filters through papers, some fall, AUSTIN picks them up, notices one in particular)

SOPHIE: Oh, thank you... *(notices he has the Love Star, takes it from him)* Yeah, I like stars, they are my favorite... 5-point shape. *(very embarrassed)*

AUSTIN: Why...why did it have all of our classmate's names on it?

SOPHIE: Just... no reason, those were just variables... x, y, that sort of thing *(nervous laugh)*

AUSTIN: Oh, I see... I was going to say it kind of reminded me of my Love Trapezoid.

(SOPHIE rummages for a second longer and stops)

SOPHIE: What did you just say?

AUSTIN: I said "Oh I see... I was going to say it kind of reminded me of my Love Trapezoid"

SOPHIE: Do...do you mind... I mean would you... *(deep breath)* can you explain what you mean by... the love trapezoid?

AUSTIN: (*flips to a page in his notebook, as AUSTIN explains it, SOPHIE is more and more shocked*) So I made this trapezoid one day in class a while back since I noticed something weird about the students here... um except for you because I didn't... or don't know you... that well... (*clears throat*) anyway, so if you put my name here and follow the shape, it creates a pattern. I have feelings for Jennifer, but Jennifer clearly is into Dylan and being the psychic, I am, I concluded that Dylan liked Zoey at least he used to. Since I am more a visual learner, I knew I had to make a shape, so I created what I call the latitude of the school between me and Zoey, which creates the trapezoid.... I know that's weird and I know you must have a bunch of questions and I don't-

SOPHIE: Just one actually.

AUSTIN: What is it?

SOPHIE: Why didn't you just make it into a simple square? What made you choose an uncommon shape like a trapezoid?

AUSTIN (*laughs at his work*): I guess you're right, and now that I hear it out loud, the Love Square has a better ring to it.

SOPHIE (*tries to laugh, but nerves get in the way*): Yeah... um so I have a strange coincidence. I lied to you before.

AUSTIN: I knew it! I had a feeling that stars weren't your favorite 5-point shape! Pentagons are where it's at!

SOPHIE: No, that part is true, stars are the best, but the lie was that I did have a reason for this specific star... it's my strange discovery about the students in this school. It's called the Love Star...

AUSTIN: Wow, that's kind of unlikely that we thought the same way, but I like it. Let me see yours! You obviously have yourself, which mine kind of... lacked in that department.

SOPHIE: Honestly, we were very similar, except the latitude of the school was connected with me and Zoey, since we are... well were such good friends.

AUSTIN: Makes sense... but wait... (*connects things on the paper*) if Dylan goes with Jennifer and you and Zoey are connected, then that must mean I... and you, I mean you and me are...?

SOPHIE: Yeah, I might have had a little crush on you...

AUSTIN: Had? As in past tense?

SOPHIE: Well, yes and no... *(starts to panic)* I think you are a great guy and I really respect you so much, but after the whole Spanish History class calamity, and Zoey opening my eyes about how weird my note was and why I had to write what I wrote out of all things and I-

AUSTIN *(looks through backpack)*: You mean this note?

(SOPHIE takes note from AUSTIN):

SOPHIE: Oh, sorry did I give you a paper cut??

(AUSTIN shakes his head)

SOPHIE: No way! You kept this!?

AUSTIN: Of course! I thought it was so thoughtful and kind when I read it! No one in this school ever says bless you! *(laughs)*

SOPHIE: I know right?! So, you didn't think it was weird to write a note just for those two words?

AUSTIN: No! And even if it was weird, I like weird people! *(stands up)* Normal people are... boring!

SOPHIE *(smiles so big, stands)*: YES! And everything has to go their way and there can't be any disruptions or else who knows what could happen! *(laughs)*

AUSTIN: Exactly, I have a friend like that, she always calls me weird and tells me to stop it, but like I can't just stop being me!

SOPHIE: Is that friend named Zoey by any chance?

AUSTIN: Um yeah, how did-

SOPHIE: She does the same thing to me...

AUSTIN: Honestly it never bothered me, I would just go about my day like nothing was wrong, I can always think about my future and how someday, somewhere I will find that one person who will love me for being me.

(pause)

SOPHIE: I wish I could be just as optimistic.

AUSTIN: You can be! You're awesome just the way you are, and clearly, you're polite!
(motions to note) I think I am going to frame it when I get home!

SOPHIE *(laughs)*: Please do!

(after a couple seconds of silence, looking at each other)

AUSTIN: Ummm, *(nerves rising)* so can I ask you a question?

SOPHIE *(just as, if not more nervous)*: Anything...

(Bell rings, lights come up)

AUSTIN *(frantically getting stuff together)*: Oh, I got to go, you know I have a dog at home that I need to talk to and a sister that needs to go for a walk.

SOPHIE: Oh of course I understand, I think I am going to head to the guidance office to shake some things out of my mind, oh and I have a paper to proofread!

AUSTIN: Yes right, I will proofread, I mean, never mind, bye!!

(AUSTIN exits SR, all nervous)

SOPHIE: You too!

(SOPHIE exits SL, all nervous)

Act 2 Scene 3 (Austin's House)

(OLIVIA enters SL drops backpack on ground, very unhappy, MOM eating, reading)

MOM: Hi! How was your day?

OLIVIA: Fine. *(continues to walk towards SR)*

MOM: Did Austin like his surprise?

OLIVIA: He didn't even look in the folder.

MOM: What do you mean he didn't look in the folder? Did you tell him that there was a little something in there for him?

OLIVIA: I tried to, he just got mad like he always does.

MOM *(stands)*: Hey, Olivia, look at me.

OLIVIA: I just want to go to bed.

MOM: It's 2 in the afternoon, what's wrong?

OLIVIA: You know exactly what's wrong! Austin is continuing to be negative and it's getting harder and harder to be encouraging if he just brings me down every time I try to talk to him.

MOM *(goes to OLIVIA SR)*: You know he appreciates you and everything you do for him.

OLIVIA: I honestly don't think he does at this point, I'm just the annoying little sister!

MOM: You cannot think like that! It's not your fault, this is just a bumpy time for all of us. New plan, we go into his room-

OLIVIA: No, Mom. No more plans, I think you need to talk to him.

(MOM leads OLIVIA to the table to sit down)

MOM: You're right, I will let him know that he's not being nice, and he needs to thank you more often. Are you hungry? Let me get you a snack.

OLIVIA: That's not what I mean. I'm saying I think he needs to talk to someone about what he's going through. And you can say that you're there for him, but I don't think he wants to put himself in a vulnerable place. He needs someone to start the conversation, someone who has been through the same thing, but also is "old enough to understand". He won't talk to me because of my age and that's fine, I am just worried if he doesn't talk to anyone, he's going to explode.

MOM: Like I said, he just needs time, he's almost eighteen, he can find solutions, I know he will.

OLIVIA: But what if he never finds that solution? What if he is just in a constant state of despair and living day to day with a raincloud over his head, waiting for someone to shine through and help him?

MOM: That can't be true, we would see that in the way he acts.

OLIVIA: Alright tell me then, how exactly would he act if he was truly in trouble mentally?

MOM: You know, short temper, heightened anxiety, overthinking simple situations, questioning life...

OLIVIA: Are you really that unaware? He's been doing all of those things to an extent! He is not okay, Mom, we need to do something, I've done everything I can, it's up to you!

MOM: He'll be okay, if something does come up, he knows that we are here for him.

OLIVIA: But I'm trying to tell you that it doesn't matter how many times you say that, sometimes people aren't going to take the invitation, which is when you have to go the extra mile and convince him to tell you what's on his mind.

MOM: Easier said than done.

OLIVIA: I'm not saying it's going to be easy, trust me, I have tried so many times to get him to open up to me, but it's just not the same. He always blames it on the age thing, but I know there must be more to it.

(MOM sits next to OLIVIA)

OLIVIA: There have been many times where I want to think like you and just let him figure it out, but I know how much I needed help and I cannot imagine he is any different.

MOM: Olivia, you're so thoughtful and sweet and I am proud to call you my daughter.

OLIVIA: Does that mean you will talk to him about his stress?

MOM: I never said that.

OLIVIA: But you just said-

MOM: You're so wonderful for looking after for your brother, but there are some situations that just cannot be talked through, he's going off to college so soon, and do you think I will be there for every little bump in his road? Of course not, why should I overprotect him? He's his own individual.

OLIVIA: But this is different, this is something no one should go through-

MOM: I love you very much.

OLIVIA: You're not listening to me! What about when I was struggling? You helped me! Why isn't it overprotection when it's my life?

MOM: You still have so much to learn, he should've already learned that life is never easy, and some events do cause despair, but in no way should it influence how you treat yourself or the others around you. It's unacceptable and rude of Austin to continue to make you feel bad about yourself when you're just looking out for him, that needs to change.

OLIVIA: I really do not like where this conversation is headed! I am not blaming Austin, well maybe I was, but even if he's pouring all of his stresses onto me when he gets overwhelmed, we shouldn't ignore that he's hurting on the inside!

MOM: Austin just needs to be alone, and figure things out.

OLIVIA: Mom! He's in trouble! I am okay, don't worry about me anymore, he's the one you need to focus on!

(MOM stands)

MOM: I'll be back in a bit, I just have to do some errands, you're welcome to join if you're interested.

OLIVIA *(gives up)*: I'm good.

MOM: Alright, I will see you when I get back, tell Austin we are having meatloaf for dinner!

(MOM exits SL)

(OLIVIA sits at table, deep breaths, takes out a piece of paper and starts writing).

Act 2 Scene 4 (Hallway)

(AUSTIN enters SL and about to exit quickly when JENNIFER and DYLAN enter holding hands from SL)

DYLAN: Hey, Austin.

AUSTIN *(gets scared)*: Oh, hey guys, I really got to get home, I was hoping I would be able to make a quick exit.

DYLAN: What's your rush?

AUSTIN: Well you know Sophie? I was talking with her in English just now and we both already said goodbye and I don't want to have that awkward situation where you say goodbye to someone and then you end up seeing each other two seconds after that so you don't really know whether or not to say goodbye again so you kind of just pretend you don't see them and look the opposite way. Do you know what I am talking about or am I insane?

DYLAN: You're so funny. You know that?

AUSTIN: How so?

DYLAN: You never let life run its course. You always seem to think things through to an extreme amount. Ever heard of the saying go with the flow?

AUSTIN: Yeah, that stresses me out. Even though I do love a good rhyme, I am more of a man with a plan.

DYLAN: That's very clear. Anyway, Jennifer and I just wanted to thank you for what you did for us.

AUSTIN: What did I do?

DYLAN: You did what you said you were going to do at the beginning of the day.

AUSTIN: That seems like a decade ago, because all I remember telling you is that I would try to get you and Zoey together, that didn't work out.

JENNIFER: Yes, but we both know who you really wanted together in the end!

AUSTIN: You...do?

JENNIFER: It's so obvious! You knew the whole time that me and Dylan were supposed to be together!

AUSTIN: It's Dylan and I...

JENNIFER: No, it's not, he asked me out, not you. *(holds up her and DYLAN's hands)* it's me and Dylan, weren't you listening? Some people just aren't smart, wouldn't you say? Ooo is that something shiny? I will be right back!

(JENNIFER exits SR)

AUSTIN: I am still confused, I never even once attempted to bring you and Jennifer closer together. If anything, I wanted you two to be farther apart!

DYLAN: Like I just said, you got to let things like that happen. She is convinced that everything you did today, including the times you made a fool of yourself were on purpose, *(starts to laugh)* like when you got slapped three different times, that killed me! *(JENNIFER enters)* oh here she's coming back; she will tell you how you brought us closer together.

JENNIFER: It was just a butterfly.

DYLAN: Inside?

JENNIFER: A picture of a butterfly, gosh maybe I should worry about your intelligence too, Beary Bear.

DYLAN: Love the new nickname, but can you explain to Austin how he helped us today?

JENNIFER: With pleasure. So, this morning, you obviously gave me the advice to connect with Dylan while also giving him some purposely horrible guidance on how to get with Zoey. You kissed Zoey at lunch for the sole reason of making him jealous, which then made me mad at Mr. Candy Corn here, but that led to our wonderful discussion about going out on a real date! And now I am telling the story of how you helped us today!

DYLAN: Wonderfully done! Except why am I Mr. Candy Corn?

JENNIFER: Just another great nickname for you! They just come naturally! Isn't that great?

DYLAN: Excellent!

AUSTIN: Yup that's exactly what happened, glad we cleared that up!

JENNIFER: Alright can we go now? I am bored.

DYLAN: One more thing. Austin, we want to return the favor.

AUSTIN: Um ok, how can you do that when you took the girl that I wanted to be with?

(AUSTIN covers his mouth)

JENNIFER: What did you just say?

AUSTIN: I said how are you today?

JENNIFER: It sounded like you said that you wanted to be with me...

DYLAN: I heard that too.

AUSTIN: Ok this is why I just wanted to leave and go home and hopefully never speak to anyone ever again.

JENNIFER: No no, it's okay, I am just confused.

DYLAN: Well that's nothing new, but I would also like clarification.

(AUSTIN starts to pace back and forth)

AUSTIN: Well you see I might have thought that Jennifer was really attractive and a great person and I kind of always wanted to date her and talk to her more but then when I tried to show you a magic trick earlier today you disappeared and I was half sad and half wondering if I somehow did that with my magical powers, then I went back to being sad because that seemed impossible. Then I saw that you and Dylan were walking together at Gym class and I was still mostly convinced that Dylan wanted my lunch money, so I got out of there quickly. We all recall how poorly lunch went so let's just not revisit that debacle. Then when I am about to accept that being single might not be as bad as everyone says it is and just get through today, I started talking to Sophie and-

DYLAN: That's it!

(AUSTIN jumps out of fear)

AUSTIN: What?

JENNIFER: HE SAID THAT'S IT! Geez, turn your ears on Austin!

AUSTIN: I know what he said, I just don't know why!

DYLAN: You and Sophie should be together!

AUSTIN: What?

JENNIFER: HE SAID THAT YOU AND SO-

AUSTIN: I know, I know! But why? How? Where? When?

DYLAN: I don't know yet, but we will figure it out. Come on, it's so perfect, she's been right in front of you the whole time! You said you wanted to be with Jennifer and who could blame you, but Sophie could be the next best thing!

AUSTIN: What if she says no? Can you give me a 100% guarantee that she says yes?

DYLAN: That's impossible, sometimes you just got to go for it! Like I did with Jennifer!

JENNIFER: Huh? I was not listening.

AUSTIN *(ignoring JENNIFER)*: Do I even like her? Do I even want a girlfriend in the first place? I just don't know! This is all happening so fast!

DYLAN: Look, we aren't pressuring you or anything, but if you don't act on this, you might be alone forever like you originally thought...

AUSTIN: That's reassuring.

DYLAN: Ugh sorry I am so bad with motivational, "you can do it" type things, just... don't listen to me, listen to what you want. If it makes you feel better, I know that she's a nervous freak just like you!

AUSTIN: We actually prefer panicked person over freak, it's kind of offensive.

DYLAN: Right, so what do you think?

AUSTIN: I don't know what I think! It seems unlikely. I barely know her, today was the first time I talked to her alone. What if she's weird?

DYLAN: You out of all people should know that weird isn't a bad thing, you're just anxious, just do it!

AUSTIN: It's not fair, you guys are cool, you don't really worry about social interactions like I do, they kind of just come up effortlessly! Like just then, you used the Nike slogan so smoothly, I bet you didn't even think twice about it!

JENNIFER: Can I tell you something?

AUSTIN (*shocked that she is still listening*): Sure.

(*pause, AUSTIN and DYLAN staring at JENNIFER*)

JENNIFER: Oh sorry, I just thought about how the word ram is in Framingham, I wonder if Framingham State knew that when they decided to make that their mascot, it was either that or the hams, but that doesn't sound as good... What were we talking about?

DYLAN: You asked us if you could tell us something and then Austin said sure.

AUSTIN: Is that the something you wanted to tell us?

JENNIFER: No, no, I think I was going to say something like this. My parents are super harsh on me, they aren't too happy with how I do academically, but it bothers me so much because they say I have to try harder and focus on my schoolwork, but they don't realize that I am! I ask questions all of the time, do the assignments, but sometimes, it just doesn't compute in my head like it does with the rest of the class.

AUSTIN: I can see how that's frustrating, but how does that relate to what we are talking about?

JENNIFER: You told us that it's hard for you to interact with people, but that's where I feel more at ease. I think it's important to value your strengths and although one quality may be

difficult for you, there are plenty of other aspects about you that others will love. If we were all perfect in every way, we would be robots or something.

AUSTIN: I guess that's true.

JENNIFER: I have told my parents this repeatedly and they still kind of refuse to accept it, but I am excited to tell them that I want to study psychological therapy next year. I am well aware that college will test my limits academically, but I hope to excel if I am working for something that I am passionate about. I will work well with my classmates and professors and create relationships. I have faith that they will be able to accept my weaknesses and work with me to make them into strengths.

AUSTIN: That's really awesome, Jennifer, I am happy for you. And just remember that if there are people who judge you based on your struggles, they don't deserve to be in your life, the right people will guide you in life, whether that includes your parents or not. They might not see it now, but they will.

JENNIFER: Listen to your own advice Austin.

AUSTIN: Not as easy as you think. Dylan, do you have a story too that I don't know about?

DYLAN: Actually, I do.

JENNIFER: Can we sit first? My step count is up to seven... hundred steps and that's just today, my legs are killing me.

AUSTIN: In the middle of the hallway? It's so dirty and the number of germs there must be-

DYLAN: Live a little!

(DYLAN sits down with JENNIFER, AUSTIN follows)

AUSTIN: Alright go ahead!

DYLAN: As you guys know, I came here around March of last year, but I don't think anyone knows why I moved here.

AUSTIN: I don't.

JENNIFER: No idea, tell us why!

DYLAN: I used to be bullied, like all of the time. I had very little friends and unlike this school, there were plenty of people to become friends with. I would be so friendly, always trying to connect in any way to anyone who would listen. It got to the point where I would enhance my interests or just flat out lie about them. There have been plenty of situations where I finally get to be friends with a group, but they would find little “problems” about me and start to make me feel ashamed of myself. I was so conditioned and worn down that I started to feel upset more often and it influenced my athletic performance. Once I was kicked off the basketball team, that’s when I started to let my grades slip. My parents didn’t even seem to understand that there was a bigger issue than what was right in front of them. They just assumed I needed a fresh start, something that would take me away from the “distractions”. I hate how I’ve gained this reputation for being the cool, emotionless person already. I am just trying to fit in and sometimes, all that means is to fly under the radar.

AUSTIN: I am so sorry... sir; I had no idea this was going on. I should have gotten to know you better instead of just assuming something right away and continue to be close-minded.

DYLAN: Couldn’t have said it better myself. Never judge a person before you get to know them because you cannot possibly know what it could lead to. They could be one of your best friends for all you know.

AUSTIN: I feel so bad. I always felt like I should be scared of you, but I had no reason to think that.

DYLAN: Don’t feel bad, Austin. You’re a great guy. You are never afraid of being true to yourself and although you may be nervous around people, you stay positive no matter what happens! I just wanted to tell you this to understand that there’s no need to change or overthink your decisions because it will all work out!

AUSTIN: I know I understand, but I am just not confident enough for that! Unless you can promise me that if I do ask out Sophie that it will have perfect results without any issues!

JENNIFER: We can never predict that, just give it a try!

AUSTIN: What if you two ask her for me? I don’t think I can come up with the right words.

DYLAN: Nope, it’s all up to you.

AUSTIN: Just for future reference, all up to you are the four most terrifying words ever to be said.

DYLAN: My bad. Just know that you have it in you, Austin, you got this.

AUSTIN (*gets up, brushing himself off*): I don't know.

(*DYLAN and JENNIFER get up at the same time*)

DYLAN: Don't let her think that you're ignoring her originality! If you show her how much you appreciate what makes her unique, she will appreciate you so much more!

JENNIFER: Don't let your nerves stand in the way of how happy you can be! Show her what you're capable of!

AUSTIN: Alright, I'll try, it's just decisions are difficult you know?

DYLAN: Trust me, I know. Asking Jennifer to go out on a date was very nerve-racking, but here we are.

AUSTIN: Alright alright I can do this. How do I even bring it up that I want to date her though??

JENNIFER: Use your strengths!

DYLAN: Stay true to yourself!

AUSTIN: But that would mean... no I couldn't. Well maybe I could, but I just don't know if I could pull it off, do you two know what kind of shoes she was wearing?

DYLAN: What are you planning?

AUSTIN: I might, or no, I will, probably do a magic trick for her.

DYLAN: Nice.

JENNIFER: SO romantic! Hey that reminds me, I am still waiting for you to do one in front of me, sorry I left earlier, but you gotta go when you gotta go, you know?

AUSTIN: I've been there. Oh great, you got me thinking about it, I gotta go. can I use the bathroom?

DYLAN: Why are you asking us??

AUSTIN: I don't know, I am nervous... and sweaty. Alright thank you so much guys, really appreciate you both!

(AUSTIN about to exit SR)

JENNIFER: Does he know the bathroom is right here?

AUSTIN: Oh, I never use the school bathrooms, I have to use the one at my house!

DYLAN: Why am I not surprised? Good luck! Let us know how it goes!

AUSTIN: I'm trying really hard not to pass out right now.

(AUSTIN exits SR)

JENNIFER: He is kind of cute when he gets nervous...

Act 2 Scene 5 (Guidance Office)

(EVERMORE sitting on SR with a pad of paper and a crayon in hand, ZOEY center)

EVERMORE: Sorry about the wait, you would not believe the day I have been having. First, I had to take my cat to gymnastics-

ZOEY: I thought I was supposed to be the one talking?

EVERMORE: Oh yeah, why are you here exactly?

ZOEY: I was being bullied by Dylan and Jennifer.

EVERMORE: Um ok, well if they bother you again, stand up for yourself, don't let them walk all over you! Fight fire with fire!

ZOEY: I feel like that's bad advice...

EVERMORE: I wouldn't know either way. Anything else on your mind?

ZOEY: Not really.

EVERMORE: Ooo I got one, tell me exactly why you're mad at Sophie. She seemed pretty upset at lunch today.

ZOEY: I am not the one mad at her, she's mad at me!

EVERMORE: That's what I said... tell me exactly why Sophie is mad at you.

ZOEY: That is not what you said...

EVERMORE: Excuse me but last time I checked, I am the counselor here and you will respect that.

ZOEY: Why does your nametag say nurse on it?

(EVERMORE rips off the label to reveal...)

EVERMORE: It doesn't, it says Dr. Evermore, PhD!

ZOEY: You got your PhD??

EVERMORE: I'll be the one asking the questions! Sorry if that was aggressive, I have always wanted to say that even though I have no idea what it's from!

ZOEY: Alright, I feel much better thank you! *(about to get up)*

EVERMORE: No, come on, I want to help! Give me your issues and I will help solve them!

ZOEY: Fine, whatever, I need someone to listen and tell me that I am not crazy.

EVERMORE: That's what I like to hear! Now! Next question: who do you have a crush on? Austin or Dylan? Or both?

ZOEY: Can I just talk please?

EVERMORE: Of course! This is your time!

ZOEY: So, I have always been a great student, getting good grades, doing my homework and always turning in assignments, but I can't remember the last time I have ever felt happy or proud of what I have accomplished. I would have the motivation to do the work, but the result would

stay the same: there is more work to be done. I never joined any clubs or sports throughout my school experience, and I didn't have many friends to hang out with.

EVERMORE: What about Austin?

(SOPHIE enters SL, writing down something)

ZOEY: I think as kids we became so close because he was always there for me, to make me laugh or just someone to have a good conversation with.

EVERMORE: But now, as you get older, you seemed to have become more distant.

ZOEY: I didn't want that to happen! I was always so grateful for our friendship, he never let me down. But I don't know what happened, it seemed like when high school started, everything went weird.

EVERMORE: But from what I have seen, you aren't very friendly with him, you almost seem... a little insensitive.

ZOEY: Not true at all, I just think that his stresses can be a tad overexaggerated and I need to put him in place, make him look at the big picture.

EVERMORE: Great idea! Here, take these crayons and my pad of paper, and draw me a picture. Here's what I just drew when I was half listening to you, it's a dragon toasting marshmallows by breathing fire on them. Reminds me of my uncle George on Thanksgiving.

ZOEY *(completely ignoring what she said)*: What should I draw? And why should I be drawing something in the first place?

EVERMORE: Don't question it! I have a method to my madness!

(ZOEY begins to draw, EVERMORE takes out some deodorant and applies it)

SOPHIE: Thing #17 to talk about with the counselor: is there any logical reason why every time I see a Disney movie I cry at least once? Thing #18 to talk about with the counselor: how do I stop talking to myself when I get nervous? Thing #19-

EVERMORE: Alright time's up, let me see it.

(ZOEY hands it to EVERMORE)

EVERMORE: What am I looking at here?

ZOEY: It's a visual representation of how my mind feels right about now...

EVERMORE *(showing the audience)*: Hmmmm alright that was useless. *(flips to next page, grabs a new crayon)* Moving on, let's talk about Austin a little more. You were saying that you used to love talking to him, but now it's weird. Why do you think that is?

ZOEY: I wish I knew. I kind of just thought it was because we are both separate people and although we might have gotten along in the past, doesn't necessarily mean we will forever.

EVERMORE: But that can't be the end! You two had such a strong friendship before, you cannot just let that die!

ZOEY: I think the biggest problem I have is that I want to be there for him, I really do, but it's gotten to the point where everything is a bad thing for him. I try to support him and solve his problems, but sometimes he just doesn't think about stuff and resorts to the worst possible thing. And I know he's been through a lot. I just feel like I can't connect with him at times.

EVERMORE: But you being here clearly shows that you're not perfect either, he can help you with your life and you help him with his! Problem solved!

ZOEY: I don't know if you know this, but I am not the most eager person to reveal to him what kind of issues are swirling in my head.

EVERMORE: Let's talk about Sophie.

ZOEY: What about her?

EVERMORE: Why does she bother you so much?

ZOEY: Like I said with Austin, she doesn't bother me at all! She just tends to overthink every little occurrence and I just need a break from that every once in a while.

EVERMORE: There's more to it than that.

ZOEY: What the heck does that mean?

EVERMORE: Think. You can't possibly think that you're the perfect human and everyone else is the problem. What else could there be? Something that you have never admitted to anyone.

ZOEY: Wow you're really digging for an eye-opener, aren't you?

EVERMORE: That's what I do. Just please, take a moment and think about what we've talked about and what you've been struggling with, there must be something we aren't seeing.

SOPHIE: Alright, 62 things, that should be enough for today.

(SOPHIE rolls out her list and it drags behind her as she goes to enter the office when EVERMORE sees SOPHIE and puts up a finger to tell her to wait a minute)

ZOEY: I guess the reason I am so hesitant for Sophie to complicate things or for her to be herself is because I get nervous.

EVERMORE: Nervous about what?

ZOEY: I don't know, nervous that she might not be accepted by what's "normal" in this society. Whenever she does something original or creative, I always get so scared someone might be judging her, judging us.

EVERMORE: Go on...

ZOEY: Like take for example last week. We were both eating lunch and she was somehow able to balance ten skittles on top of each other and then eat each one separately without knocking over the rest. It was actually kind of awesome but all I could think about was the people looking at us behind our backs.

EVERMORE: That was amazing, I kept thinking she was going mess it up somehow.

ZOEY: And maybe that's what is holding me back with her. She is a great person and I love her, but I am always skeptical that someone will crush her spirit. I don't want her to stop being herself, I just want everyone else to be accepting of her unique personality.

SOPHIE: But then why do you constantly undermine my stress? If you feel the same way?

(ZOEY jumps, not realizing SOPHIE was behind her)

ZOEY: Sophie! I missed you so much!

SOPHIE: Answer the question...please.

ZOEY: Well, I can't really explain that, I just don't really understand why you feel so negative about some situations.

SOPHIE: Oh.

ZOEY: But that's because you're just such a perfect person that you have no reason to be doubting yourself.

SOPHIE: Nobody is perfect.

ZOEY: Which is something I always have to remind myself. You may not be perfect, but neither am I. Mrs. Evermore... not even close. *(both look to her)*

(EVERMORE looks up from picking things off of her shoes)

EVERMORE: What's up?

(SOPHIE and ZOEY laugh softly)

ZOEY: I respect you so much Sophie and every time I seem annoyed or disapproving of your originality, it's all a big coverup for how I really feel.

SOPHIE: Which is?

ZOEY: So super scared.

SOPHIE: Did you just use alliteration?

ZOEY: Just for you. I know it's kind of hard to believe, but I want to be weird. I want to have a fun and different personality and enjoy what I do, but I have to ask you. How do you not worry about everyone who talks about how different or weird you are?

SOPHIE: What people?

ZOEY: Well I can't think of anyone specific, but there has to be someone somewhere!

SOPHIE: Where are they?

ZOEY: I don't know, why do you care??

SOPHIE: That's just it, I don't care. They might be sitting next to me or they might be across the country, I just don't let it bother me. If they don't accept me as one of their friends, that's fine with me! Just look at earlier today, I was fed up with what I thought was you rejecting me as a person, so I cut you out of my life.

ZOEY: You were going to cut me out of your life?

SOPHIE: Back when I thought the only reason you wanted me to change my personality was because you thought there was something wrong with me, I was considering it. You have to admit you were a little rude... sorry.

ZOEY: No no you're right. But do you get where I am coming from now?

SOPHIE: It's getting there, I understand the constant concern that you're being judged, I do, but that shouldn't limit how you act around others. And you should never influence how you treat your alleged best friend.

ZOEY: I know, that all makes sense to me now. How many people have you cut out from your life because they were mean to you?

SOPHIE: None surprisingly. It seems like they get the hint that if they think I am too weird to be their friend, they back off. It's like a forcefield. The right people will come along eventually, and you start to gain confidence in yourself, it's a wonderful feeling.

ZOEY: Can we please be friends again? I promise I will never get mad or annoyed with you again, I will always love you, and now I appreciate you even more for accepting my unique personality.

SOPHIE: I'm sorry Zoey.

ZOEY: What are you sorry for?

SOPHIE: Almost not being friends with you, I should've realized that there was more to it than you criticizing my every move. I feel bad that I was so willing to say that we can't talk anymore when you were hurting on the inside.

ZOEY: Don't feel bad, you did what you had to. I was being a jerk, we both made mistakes, but I think I know what to do now.

SOPHIE: One more question and depending on how you answer, you can do what you think you know what to do.

ZOEY: Go for it.

SOPHIE: Why the heck did you kiss Austin at lunch??

ZOEY: Oh that. He kissed me; I didn't initiate it at all!

SOPHIE: So, he likes you?

ZOEY: No! He doesn't! He's already made it very clear that we can't get married because I am already going to be his "best woman"

SOPHIE: Then why did he kiss you?

ZOEY: I think it was because I told him that the woman of his dreams could be right in front of him.

SOPHIE: Well that's misleading!

ZOEY: Technically you were in front of him, I was just... in front of you! I am sorry, I didn't realize he-

SOPHIE: You know what? It's okay, I won't overanalyze it, because something amazing happened in English that I haven't told you about and I need to tell you right now or else I might self-destruct.

EVERMORE: Did you guys make up yet?

ZOEY: Oh yeah we did, and now I am going to do the thing I was going to do earlier.

SOPHIE: What's that?

ZOEY: This.

(ZOEY hugs SOPHIE)

EVERMORE: There we go, my work here is done! That is how you mend a bridge! See you two tomorrow! Evermore OUT!

(EVERMORE exits SL)

SOPHIE: Thank you for everything that you said.

ZOEY: Thank you for being you.

SOPHIE: Alright can I freak out to you about the amazing thing that happened?!

ZOEY *(laughs)*: Of course!

SOPHIE: I TALKED TO AUSTIN!!!

ZOEY: NO WAY!

SOPHIE: YEAH! IT WAS IN ENGLISH AND-

ZOEY: Lower your volume please... not a judgment or a complaint, just worried about losing my hearing.

SOPHIE: Sorry, I'M JUST EXCITED!

(SOPHIE leads ZOEY to chair, she sits where ZOEY was sitting earlier)

SOPHIE: So! We were supposed to proofread each other's essay but I was busy writing about how scared I was that he sat down next to me and then he taps me on the shoulder and says *(in AUSTIN's voice)* "Hey, Sophie, I think we are supposed to swap papers..." and then I freak out even more, frantically searching for my paper and then my love star sketch drops on the floor and worried little me didn't even realize, but when he pointed it out to me, I lied and said it was just my favorite 5-point shape.

ZOEY: Good cover up.

SOPHIE: Right?? But wait there's more... then he says "it reminds me of my love trapezoid"

ZOEY: He did not!

SOPHIE: HE DID!

ZOEY: Why didn't he just make a love square?

SOPHIE: THAT'S WHAT I SAID!

ZOEY: I'm so surprised I haven't seen it! What did his look like??

SOPHIE: Well he didn't have me in it, which burned a hole into my heart just a little bit. He connected himself with Jennifer, told you so, and then he connected you to Dylan, told you so again, and then his latitude of the school was you and him.

ZOEY: What are the odds that you would both have something called a latitude of the school?

SOPHIE: It's a thing! OR maybe it's a sign that we are meant to be!

ZOEY: Together forever and ever with eternal happiness?

SOPHIE: Maybe!

ZOEY: So, then what happened? Did he ask you out? OH my gosh did he do a magic trick for you???

SOPHIE: No no no, that would have been too much, I would have passed out right then and there. The next best thing happened.

ZOEY: He proposed!?

SOPHIE: What? No! I would not want that. We shouldn't get married until we are both financially stable with secure jobs and living in the same apartment, but not sleeping in the same bed just yet because if-

ZOEY: Sophie, stay focused. What happened?

SOPHIE: OH yeah! He told me that he loved the note I gave to him during Spanish History! He might even frame it!

ZOEY: You're lying!

SOPHIE: I would never!

ZOEY: I love it! You two are just so adorable!

SOPHIE: I'm aware!

ZOEY: *(stands)* Well you know what we have to do??

SOPHIE: *(stands)* Do I?

ZOEY: Go to his house and ask him out yourself!

SOPHIE: Uhhh nope! *(sits back down)*

ZOEY: Come on that would be so romantic! Trust me, I bet he is currently walking back home muttering under his breath about what happened and how much he is considering asking you out, but all of the complications there are! If you did the asking out, he would have nothing to worry about except saying yes!

SOPHIE: But what if he says no?!

ZOEY: He won't. You have always been the perfect match and now that you actually talked to him, there's nothing in your way!

SOPHIE: Ok. I will do it! *(gets up quickly)* woah, seeing stars, everything is going blurry, going down!

(SOPHIE is about to fall when ZOEY catches her)

ZOEY: I got your back; we can do this! Let's start walking!

SOPHIE: We have to walk there?

ZOEY: You got another solution?

SOPHIE: Hmm guess not! At least we will be burning some calories on the way! What could go wrong?

(SOPHIE exits SL quickly, ZOEY close behind)

Act 2 Scene 6 (Austin's House)

(MOM is sitting at table, staring at a piece of paper blankly, AUSTIN enters SL, looking nervous)

AUSTIN (*muttering under his breath*): So, in conclusion, as much as I want to ask out Sophie, I don't think I can because there are so many complications.

(*AUSTIN notices his MOM at the table*)

AUSTIN: Oh, hi Mom.

MOM (*jumps*): Oh hello son, hope school went okay, there's some wheat thins in the fridge if you're hungry.

AUSTIN: Why are they in the fridge?

MOM (*looks up*): What?

AUSTIN: Never mind... Is everything okay?

MOM: Fine. Why?

AUSTIN: You didn't even mention how I didn't take off my shoes as soon as I entered the house.

MOM: Shoes off please.

(*AUSTIN takes off shoes and starts to walk towards SR, but hesitates*)

MOM/AUSTIN: There's something I need to tell you.

MOM (*really thinks about it*): You first.

AUSTIN: Well I don't really want to tell this to my mom, but I am kind of running out of options.

MOM: Seems reasonable, what's on your mind? Have a seat.

AUSTIN: Too nervous to sit. So, there's this girl, at my school and I don't know, she-

MOM: Is it Zoey? I like to visualize the story when I hear it.

AUSTIN: No, it's not Zoey, it's another girl that I haven't really talked about at all. I don't think you know her...

MOM: What's her name?

AUSTIN: Let's call her... Glumpy

MOM: Why not her real name?

AUSTIN: There could be people listening in on our conversation!

MOM: Who would be listening?

(AUSTIN slowly turns to the audience, but shakes his head at the thought)

AUSTIN: Doesn't matter, whatever her name is, I like her, I like Glumpy.

MOM: Well that's no surprise, one thing that makes you so special is that you like everyone, flaws and all, no matter how hideous their name may be.

AUSTIN: But the issue here is that it's not just a friendship thing, it's more than that. Well I don't know if it's more than that, Dylan and Jennifer seemed to think that So- I mean Glumpy and I should be together.

MOM: Well what are your feelings towards Glumpy? Is she cute?

AUSTIN: I barely know her. From what I have experienced so far, it's been pretty enjoyable, plus she admitted she had a crush on me at one point. But what if I get to know her and she turns out to be faking her personality just to date me and then when we start dating, she changes?

MOM: That might be a risk you're going to have to take.

AUSTIN: We both know how much I hate risks.

MOM: Yes, but when it's about putting your happiness first, it may be what you need to do or else you might never have this chance again.

AUSTIN: Does everyone I talk to have to be so pessimistic?

MOM: I'm being realistic. Austin, you're an overthinker. You get that from me. But what I have learned in the past several months is that you cannot run away from your fate.

AUSTIN: But I am not even running away from anything! I just met this girl and now you're saying I have to marry her or no one?

MOM: That's not what I said. All I am saying is that every little event that happens in your life leads to another. Every conversation, every class, every person makes a difference.

AUSTIN: I am still not understanding what you're trying to tell me.

MOM: If you have even a little bit of an inclination to go after this girl, you should do it. She could be the one you end up with, or maybe this one leads to a new one and then you realize you don't want to date, I don't know, but whatever happens happens and you cannot change that.

AUSTIN: Ok, but if I don't ask her out, then I didn't do anything to alter my life course so there's nothing to change, perfect!

MOM: That may be true, but trust me, something happened and that something has changed your life forever.

AUSTIN: How?

MOM: Think about it, you told me she had a crush on you, now you talk to her, that's got to mean something to her!

AUSTIN: It does?

MOM: One seemingly meaningless conversation to you might have been a horribly terrifying exchange to her.

AUSTIN: I doubt it.

MOM: Doubt all you want, she admired you from a distance, she gets the opportunity to talk to you one on one and you being you probably wooed her with your charm.

AUSTIN: What charm? (*sits*)

MOM: Your nervous, borderline nerdy character! It's so adorable! (*fixes his hair*)

AUSTIN: Ugh stop it, I don't need my mom to give me compliments when I am in a time of need!

MOM: What are you in the need of? I gave you all of the positivity and encouragement I have!

AUSTIN: Yeah but, it's just making me more stressed! You just told me about how life will run its course, with or without me!

MOM: I said that life will run its course, but I also said that it's what your life is. The good, the bad, everything in between, that's what makes you into who you are.

AUSTIN: Okay so what if I am supposed to be with Glumpy and I don't have the guts to say anything to her?

MOM: If it's meant to be, it will work out.

AUSTIN: What if I do ask her out, but then I realize she isn't the person I thought she was?

MOM: We've been over this, she has her life path, just like you do, if there's an intersection where you two get together for a bit and then break off, then that's just the cards you were both dealt.

AUSTIN: Great visual.

MOM: Isn't it??

AUSTIN: What if I do have the guts to say something to her, but I make a fool of myself?

MOM: That's my prediction, and I see it going more smoothly than you could ever imagine.

AUSTIN (*sighs*): I am still not entirely convinced, but currently, I am content watching some Suite Life of Zack and Cody until dinner is ready. (*heads to SR*) What is for dinner anyway?

MOM: Olivia ran away.

(*AUSTIN stops in his tracks*)

AUSTIN: That was weird, it almost sounded like you said that Olivia ran away.

MOM (*holds up the note*): That's because I did.

(*OLIVIA appears, but not able to be seen by either MOM or AUSTIN*)

OLIVIA: Mom and Austin, I will be leaving in a few minutes. My hope is that you two finally find some time to talk without any distractions, which I realize is me. I don't know where I am going, but I know it is for the best. Don't let anyone change you Austin and take care of Mom. Love you both. Olivia.

(AUSTIN slumps down in the chair as OLIVIA fades out)

MOM: I found that when I got home from the store. I was stunned. You walked in a few minutes after that.

AUSTIN: And you let me share my story first??

MOM: On the bright side, we did talk a little bit, she somehow knew that running away was actually going to help.

AUSTIN: But she's gone?? Just like that?

MOM: I don't know what to do. Maybe she went to a neighbor's house? I don't think the police should be involved just yet.

AUSTIN: I just can't believe she would leave.

MOM: Well it's not like you were helping the situation.

AUSTIN: What does that mean?

MOM: Don't deny it, you have been a little mean to her lately.

AUSTIN: Huh? I can't think of anything I would have done to her that would classify as mean.

MOM: You can't? Really? Open your eyes, Austin! I didn't want to mention it because I thought you knew better. She has been trying for so long to get you to explain your stresses to her! You're always saying she's too young to understand, but I think you're the one to grow up.

AUSTIN: Where is this coming from? I thought you were all positive and supportive? Remember Glumpy?

MOM *(snaps)*: I cannot win here! You don't realize how hard it is to be a mother do you? Neither of you do! I have to be there for you and your sister for everything, but at the same time,

I don't want to overprotect you because you are both so capable of doing your own thing! I am at a loss here, please tell me what I am doing wrong!

AUSTIN: Mom, you're not doing anything wrong, you're doing the best you can with-

MOM: Don't lie to me. Olivia is constantly at my neck about not giving you enough attention, but if I ever left her alone, she would be miserable, or in this case run away! At the same time, I have my own mental stability to worry about!

AUSTIN: Are you not feeling okay? We could call up your therapist and see if she's available-

MOM: I am not saying I am insecure at this moment; I am just speaking generally.

AUSTIN: But why would you mention it?

MOM: Austin, don't worry about me, I am fine. I just need to find my daughter.

AUSTIN: I know we will find her. Let's go to the-

MOM: You're not going anywhere.

AUSTIN: What?

MOM: I need at least one of my children safe. (*stands up*)

AUSTIN (*stands*): I can't just sit here and think about everything I have been doing wrong, I am starting to think that Olivia ran away just because of me!

MOM: That may be true.

AUSTIN (*sarcastic*): You're doing a really great job of making me feel better, Mom, really keep it up!

MOM (*deep breath, holding back tears*): Stay here, watch your TV show, I hope I will be back before dark.

AUSTIN: What can I do to help?

MOM: Just... look in your Math folder please.

(MOM exits with pocketbook/keys SL)

AUSTIN *(goes to backpack, mutters)*: Why does she want me to look in my math folder? I should be looking for Olivia-

(notices the 20 dollars with note, OLIVIA reappears)

OLIVIA: Heyo Austin, I found some money for you, maybe you could buy yourself a nice kazoo, sorry I tried to do a fun rhyme, but it's not as easy I thought. Anyway, I hope you are having a great day because you deserve the best! See you after school! From the best sister in the world, Olivia.

(AUSTIN almost crying, looks towards OLIVIA, goes to the table, turns over OLIVIA's original note, writes down "going to find Olivia", exits SL)

Act 2 Scene 7 (Railroad Tracks)

(OLIVIA walking slowly with a suitcase, AUSTIN enters SL, walks in the same way, looks up)

AUSTIN: Olivia? *(no reaction, speed walks)* OLIVIA?

(AUSTIN catches up with her, spins her around, they hug)

OLIVIA *(teary)*: How did you find me?

AUSTIN: This is where I come to clear my head when I have too much on my mind...when Mom told me you ran off, I couldn't think straight, I knew if I came here, I would have an answer and little did I know...

OLIVIA: This is my thinking spot too. *(sniffles)*

(AUSTIN leads her to edge of stage)

AUSTIN: Tell me everything. *(gives her the twenty dollars)*

OLIVIA: Why should I tell you what my issues are if I can't help you with yours.

AUSTIN: You won't understand, I have too much-

(OLIVIA gives him a look)

AUSTIN: Oh gosh, you're right. Look, I clearly appreciate your constant concern, I just don't want you to feel like you have to solve my problems or get stressed about what I am going through, you've been through too much already.

OLIVIA: But they don't have to be just your problems! If you just let me or Mom help you, we can solve them together.

AUSTIN: I wish it was that easy, but when the girl that you thought you had a chance with moves on to someone else and-

OLIVIA: Sophie met another guy?

AUSTIN: Alright does everyone on this Earth think that Sophie and I should be together?

(OLIVIA nods)

OLIVIA: You are both... panicked people.

AUSTIN: So, I've been told. Well, it doesn't matter anymore anyway. Once Jennifer clearly wasn't interested, I thought I was going to die alone, but that's when me and Sophie were paired up together in class, and we started talking, and we actually have a lot in common and she's nice and polite and funny. She's actually kind of...perfect and came into my life just when I needed it the most, but then me being me, I got all flustered and ran out of the classroom without telling her any of that.

OLIVIA: She was right in front of you the whole time. *(pause)*

AUSTIN: I feel so dumb, but to be fair, how was I supposed to know she was like that? She never said anything to me! She was always with Zoey, keeping her distance, it doesn't add up...

OLIVIA *(knows exactly what's going on)*: Hmm your best friend who knows you very well is talking to a girl who is too afraid to speak to you... unless you have body odor, I am pretty sure she liked you but didn't know how to start up a conversation with you.

AUSTIN: How do you know?

OLIVIA: You are so oblivious! You know that feeling when you saw your crush across the hallway or whenever she would sit next to you in class? That's exactly how Sophie felt about you!

AUSTIN: If that's true, then why wouldn't she talk to me? I would have loved to get to know her better rather than her avoid me all the time.

OLIVIA: Do I really have to spell this out for you? She gets nervous! Just like you do! I bet she has a notebook full of ideas of how to talk to people too!

AUSTIN: How do you know about my confidence journal?

OLIVIA: You mean that orange notebook that's on your dresser? Not exactly hidden...

AUSTIN: You had no right to look through it!

OLIVIA: Honestly, now that I think about it, she probably has four notebooks, like you, your confidence journal, the one with all of your schoolwork, one for doodling, and my personal favorite, the one where you write down all of your angry or nervous thoughts just so you can crumple it up and throw it in the trash!

AUSTIN: Alright first of all, it goes into the recycling bin, not the trash. Second, those journals are my personal property! You always do this... maybe it's better if I leave you alone.

(AUSTIN gets up and goes to leave SL)

OLIVIA *(hard for her to admit)*: Austin, I am worried about you.

(AUSTIN stops)

OLIVIA: Every time I try to be there for you, it doesn't seem to help. That's why after I got home from my failed attempt to give you 20 dollars at your gym class and Mom was clearly worried about the wrong things, I packed up some of my stuff, wrote a note for you and Mom, and left. I didn't know where I was going to go, and as painful as it was, I knew home wasn't home anymore.

AUSTIN: Is this because of something I did...? Olivia, if I ever did anything to hurt you, please let me know and I will stop, I don't want you to-

OLIVIA: Do you realize how much Mom is hiding from us? She puts on a brave face and a smile for both of our sakes. She tried to convince me that you are grown enough to deal with what life dealt us, when it's just that she's afraid herself. I knew that if I left, it would allow for you and her to fully connect, without any little distractions that don't understand.

AUSTIN: Mom did reveal to me that she struggles with being our parent, kind of stuck in the middle of overprotecting us versus giving us too much space.

OLIVIA: I feel as though she did what she had to do with me, and I have grown through it, but you... you are still in denial.

AUSTIN: But, running away? Mom was numb when I saw her, she left to find you, but I have a feeling she will never find you here. I am telling you this from a brother to a sister, this can't be the solution.

OLIVIA: Austin, you have no idea how much emotional pain I have endured, how much we have all endured, but you don't even talk to us about it, you isolate yourself, so now it's time for me to isolate myself. *(starts to leave SR)*

AUSTIN *(verge of tears)*: Do you realize how bad you're making me feel right now?

OLIVIA: That feeling right there. That is just the beginning of how much it hurts and emotionally drains us when you don't open up to me or Mom! How does it feel? Please explain to me how locking yourself in your room and ignoring the problem can be better than talking about it.

(pause)

OLIVIA: I know Dad is irreplaceable, but ever since he left us, you turned into someone else. I cannot let what happened to him happen to you. You deserve to be happy Austin. Mom can help you like she's already helped me. You just have to ask yourself: what's getting in your way? Why are you so hesitant to express your true emotions? How can you make it just a tiny bit more bearable?

AUSTIN: Olivia, you're right about Dad, I miss him more and more as time goes on, but there's always been something that I could never admit to you or Mom.

OLIVIA: What is it?

AUSTIN *(deep breath, walks toward front and sits)*: I feel like I should be blamed for Dad's depression.

OLIVIA: You can't think like that.

AUSTIN: It's not intentional, it's just looking back, I can't think of any other reason for... it.

OLIVIA: Lots of reasons, his job was horrible, both of his parents passed away, his-

AUSTIN: His needy son constantly pouring daily worries into him, slowly eating away at him until he couldn't take it anymore-

OLIVIA: You know that's not true!

AUSTIN: Do I? It's not like he can talk to me anymore and explain why he did it! It's taken me so long to move on from that night, but it's taking me longer to let go of his unhappiness that I caused, I was completely unaware.

OLIVIA (*sits next to him*): Austin, listen to me. You cannot blame yourself for this, everyone handles stress differently and unlucky for us, Dad chose a more definite route. But by no means, is that your fault.

AUSTIN: Why not?

OLIVIA: No one accuses you for it.

AUSTIN: What makes you say that?

OLIVIA: You are not responsible!

AUSTIN: How can you be so sure??

OLIVIA: Because I have had the same thoughts! (*pause*) You might have been too busy thinking about your own world, but I struggled just as much as you did! I was only 10 when it happened! Mom was in just as much pain, if not more and I think we both kind of knew what the answer was. I had to talk to someone that was not in our family.

AUSTIN: How does that-

OLIVIA: Mom put me in therapy. She said it was the only way for me to really express my inner thoughts in a safe environment. From there, I went to a group with some kids my age with a similar experience. At first, it seemed like the adults were just saying generic stuff to get me to talk about it, but once I started admitting more out loud, it was hard to stop. I talked about

everything. All of my emotions came pouring out, and eventually after a while, I felt better. I was able to start middle school with a fresh set of eyes.

AUSTIN: Wait... start middle school, that was this year...

OLIVIA: Yeah you know that "summer camp" I started to go to in May?

AUSTIN: Why didn't either of you tell me about this?

OLIVIA: We knew you had your own concerns. We thought you would be able to cope in your own way, and some people just need time to heal, but we were wrong. I think Mom would agree when I say this process is never over. We will never truly overcome this loss no matter how much time or therapy we experience. Our lives really have changed forever.

AUSTIN: I couldn't agree more. I feel like I have been doing okay with pushing my feelings deep down and focusing on everything else that is happening right now, but you're right, it is unbelievably impossible to forget.

OLIVIA: Please don't lose your positivity, Austin. You inspire me every day with your willingness to work through your stress and make it the best it can be.

AUSTIN: I just wish there some magic that could just make it all go away.

OLIVIA: Well I think it would have helped if me or Mom were there for you when you needed it most.

AUSTIN: But you were there for me. I really do appreciate every time you show attention to me, but I knew I couldn't burden you with my own problems since you had enough to worry about.

OLIVIA: But it's not a burden, the burden is not expressing your emotions. We want you to talk to us. Sometimes you have to put your needs first, which I know is hard for you.

AUSTIN: Why am I like this? I feel so stupid.

OLIVIA: You're not stupid, it's just that you're so thoughtful and loving that it can become a negative. Mom and I are the same way, so was Dad. He was obsessed with finding ways to make everyone happy, but it turned out that he always left out one person every time, himself. He couldn't solve everyone's problems and it slowly made him fall apart.

AUSTIN: So... you think that's where I am headed?

OLIVIA: If you continue to be like this...

AUSTIN: Wow.

OLIVIA: And I know I am just a middle schooler, but I am mature and more grown up than you think. I want to listen to you, whether it be about Dad, Mom, Sophie, or anyone else that comes along.

AUSTIN: So, you're telling me that in order for me to be happier, I need to stop helping people and ignore their perspectives?

OLIVIA: No, there are so many people in this world that admire you for being the positive and amazing person you are.

AUSTIN: But you were just saying that Dad-

OLIVIA: What I am saying is that Dad would go too far. He would pile up so much of other people's problems and took it upon himself to turn those issues into solutions. Issues that he had no reason to be involved with. He was a great man and you are too; you just need to know when to help others and when to help yourself.

AUSTIN: That's impossible, whenever I make a decision, whether simple or complex, I think about it from everyone's point of view. Like for instance, this morning, when I went to go eat some Lucky Charms, I noticed there was only a little bit left for one person and I know you also like Lucky Charms, I decided I should let you have it and just skip breakfast. I thought it was more important for you to have the last bowl.

OLIVIA: See? This is what I mean! That's ridiculous!

AUSTIN: And then this other time at school, I told Zoey I would hold her backpack for the day because she was complaining about her back pain, next thing I know, I am holding everyone's backpack to every class!

OLIVIA (*laughing*): Are you serious?

AUSTIN: And then every time you ask me what's wrong, I could easily complain your ear off, but I get worried about how much of a burden that would be.

OLIVIA: Ok let me tell you something. You cannot think like this anymore. It's not bad to think of others, I respect that so much, but if it becomes a horrible pattern like this, it turns into a big problem and I don't want to see the result.

AUSTIN: OK, what you're saying makes sense, but we can't just ignore the fact that you were going to run away without saying goodbye to me!

OLIVIA: Do you blame me? It was getting to the point where if you didn't want me around, why try?

AUSTIN: But I do want you around! I couldn't imagine a life without you!

OLIVIA: Honestly at this point, it seemed like I didn't make much of a difference whether I was at home or not.

AUSTIN: Olivia, you don't understand how much I love you and how much I cherish our relationship and I don't want anything to get in our way.

OLIVIA: You can say that now, but if I go back home, what's going to change? How can you promise that you'll open up?

AUSTIN: It might not be easy, but if it means you will stay home, I will tell you everything that's on my mind as scary and selfish that sounds.

OLIVIA: It's not selfish.

AUSTIN: But what if I just never stop talking and annoy you so much that you want to run away again?

OLIVIA: I cannot imagine being annoyed about you talking too much, trust me.

AUSTIN: So, you don't mind if I explain what's on my mind at all times?

OLIVIA: Not at all!

AUSTIN: Alright, but you have to promise me something.

OLIVIA: Of course!

AUSTIN: Smack me if I go on for too long.

OLIVIA: Sounds like a plan, but for now, I will just be happy to listen!

(pause)

AUSTIN: I don't deserve a sister like you...

OLIVIA: You're not so bad yourself

(AUSTIN and OLIVIA hug)

AUSTIN: *(realizes he needs to be there for her too)* Same goes for me though, if you ever want to talk about guys or girls or anything else, let me know and I would be happy to listen.

OLIVIA: You first, I have been waiting so long to hear about the inside of Austin's brain! Come on, let's go home, on the way you can tell me about this crazy school you go to.

AUSTIN: Alright! *(AUSTIN takes OLIVIA's suitcase)* So, to understand, it would be easier if you just imagine the 5 students in a star formation.

(AUSTIN and OLIVIA exit SL)

Act 2 Scene 8 (Austin's House)

(AUSTIN and OLIVIA are sitting at the kitchen table)

AUSTIN: So then after talking to Jennifer and Dylan, I got even more stressed, which I didn't know was possible, but it was the feeling where something could actually happen between me and Sophie, but it was all up to me do something about it. All worked up, I walked home to rant to Mom about this whole thing and she being the wonderful mom she is, let me relieve some stress even though she had problems of her own. *(huge sigh)* Well, speaking of, we should probably call her to let her know that we are both safe.

(AUSTIN gets up, but MOM enters SL as soon as he picks up the phone, OLIVIA stands, AUSTIN runs up and hugs her)

AUSTIN: I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry!

MOM: No, I am the one that needs to be sorry, I couldn't find Olivia anywhere and now the police are on their way to ask us some questions about- *(notices OLIVIA)*

OLIVIA: Hi Mom.

MOM: Oh honey, come here.

(MOM drops everything and hugs OLIVIA)

OLIVIA: I think I am going to stay at home.

MOM: What changed your mind?

OLIVIA: My brother. I finally told him how I really feel about everything and how we can't get through this if we don't talk about it.

AUSTIN: And I told her about how much I want to talk to you both about what's going on, but I didn't want to worry you.

MOM: You shouldn't think like that, we want to worry with you, not worry about you.

OLIVIA: That's what I told him. I am hoping he understands that we will never get annoyed with him no matter how long he may complain.

AUSTIN: I still find that hard to believe, but for right now, I am happy that we are all together again!

OLIVIA: Mom, is it true what Austin said? Do you really think you are a bad mother?

MOM: Well back when I thought I had one child run away and another one who was stressed out about something he had no control over, I concluded that I must have been the problem.

AUSTIN: But that's just not reasonable at all, you cannot possibly take all of the blame for what's going on in our lives!

MOM: I disagree, it's my responsibility to ensure that you two are okay, physically and mentally, I can't let anything happen to you. Not now, not ever.

AUSTIN: But what about what you always say? Problems are just temporary; it always gets better. Life will keep moving forward whether it's going well or not so well.

MOM: You're right, but you can't just ignore how whenever we solve one thing, another thing comes up. It's impossible to be optimistic 100 percent of the time if there's something that always needs to be done.

OLIVIA: We're not asking you to be positive all of the time. We understand that everyone deserves time to be authentic and show how they are really feeling.

MOM: You're sure about this?

OLIVIA: Absolutely.

AUSTIN: You've always been there for us, now we need to return the favor.

MOM: I miss your father so much.

AUSTIN: I do too.

OLIVIA: Me too.

(OLIVIA hugs MOM, AUSTIN joins)

(pause)

AUSTIN: I think I know what I have to do.

OLIVIA: Take a shower? Someone doesn't smell too great.

AUSTIN: No! Wait... *(sniffs)* okay, maybe it is me, but I don't have time, I will just put on some more deodorant, be right back.

(AUSTIN exits SR quickly)

OLIVIA: You okay, Mom?

MOM: Yeah, I think I am, and I know more than ever that I raised my kids the right way. You feeling okay?

OLIVIA: It's been a day to say the least, but I am so glad it happened this way.

MOM: I love you, Olivia.

OLIVIA: Love you too.

MOM: Quick question...

OLIVIA: Yes?

MOM: You're wearing your shoes?

OLIVIA: Yeah...

MOM: Inside the house?

OLIVIA: Sorry!! I forgot! At least I know you're back to your normal self!

(OLIVIA hurriedly takes off shoes and puts them SL, MOM glares at her daughter)

OLIVIA: Happy?

MOM: Very.

(pause)

MOM: How long does it take one boy to put on deodorant?

OLIVIA: That's a good question. Here, sit down, I will get you some water, you've been running around all day. Which reminds me, how did you ever think of letting out those frogs in the biology lab during lunch?? It was the perfect distraction!

MOM: What are you talking about? My distraction was just lying to your teacher about how I think the earth is flat, he had plenty of counter arguments to say the least.

OLIVIA: So, you had no influence on the frogs being out of their container?

MOM: Nope.

OLIVIA: Huh, that's strange...

(OLIVIA hands MOM a water bottle)

(AUSTIN enters SR, out of breath in a star t-shirt)

OLIVIA: Did you change your shirt?

AUSTIN: Maybe...

OLIVIA: I like it.

AUSTIN: Then yes, I did change, thank you!

MOM: So, what are you up to?

AUSTIN: I'm going to Sophie's house and asking her out!

OLIVIA: No way!

MOM: Who the heck is Sophie?

AUSTIN: Oh, you might know her better as Glumpy!

MOM: SOPHIE IS GLUMPY? Oh my gosh, I talk to her mom at the grocery store like every Sunday, if she's anything like her mom, I think you two would be perfect for each other.

AUSTIN: I am absolutely terrified, but I think I have to push myself in this case. I hope it turns out in my favor.

OLIVIA: It will.

MOM: Just be yourself.

AUSTIN: Of course, now, one last thing.

(AUSTIN puts on sunglasses, pause)

AUSTIN: No, I can't pull those off.

OLIVIA: No, you really can't.

(AUSTIN throw glasses offstage)

AUSTIN: Here goes nothing.

(AUSTIN goes to exit)

(doorbell)

AUSTIN: Did anyone else hear that?

(doorbell)

AUSTIN: Who would be at the door? This is fate, that has to be her, it has to be! Oh no, I don't know how to answer the door anymore; do I speak before opening it or do I open it and then speak? Or do I open the door while speaking?

(doorbell)

OLIVIA: Just open the door!

(AUSTIN sighs deeply and opens the door)

AUSTIN: Good evening madame-

(ZOEY rushes in)

ZOEY: It's a good thing I am not Sophie or else she would have turned in the other direction and never looked back.

AUSTIN: Zoey? What are you doing here??

ZOEY: First, I am sorry if I ever made you feel bad about yourself or undermined your stresses, it's just because I am insecure myself and I hate how people judge other people for being different, and I know I just made fun of you for saying "good evening madame", but that is just because Sophie hates the word evening, don't ask me why. Second, Sophie is right outside, but hiding in a bush.

AUSTIN: I have so many questions.

ZOEY: I have the answers, what's up?

AUSTIN: Why now are you apologizing? You've been disapproving my originality for years... and it's never really bothered me, we just are two different people who were friends, but grew distant over time, no big deal.

ZOEY: But it is a big deal! I never wanted us to stop being friends, I loved talking to you and hanging out, but as soon as Sophie started to develop feelings for you, it became harder to balance being with her versus being with you.

AUSTIN: That makes sense, thank you for apologizing, it really does mean a lot considering I feel the same way, I never wanted us to stop being friends, I just thought it was the whole two separate life paths intersecting for a bit, but then breaking off type thing.

(pause, ZOEY thinks)

ZOEY: What?

AUSTIN: Never mind, forget it.

ZOEY: So, we are still friends?

AUSTIN: Definitely. Now, what's this about Sophie in a bush?

ZOEY: Right, so I finally encouraged her to go for it and ask you out and we walked all the way here from school, which was not easy let me tell you. She overheats like there is no tomorrow. So, every time she gets "too hot", we have to knock on a random person's door and ask for a cup of ice water with ice cubes and not crushed ice or else she won't drink it. Happened like eighteen different times.

AUSTIN: Well yeah, who in their right mind would drink water with crushed ice? Then there's a chance you could get ice chunks stuck in your throat.

ZOEY: Not the point I am trying to make here.

AUSTIN: Right, so as you were saying, Sophie was struggling to walk here even though it's like a ten-minute walk?

ZOEY: Some people just don't do well under pressure, that's all, I am supportive, I am understanding, don't let anyone else tell you otherwise.

AUSTIN: I believe you.

ZOEY: Anyway, we finally arrive at your house, I give her one last pep talk and push her very politely, but very literally to your door. I get in the perfect hiding position to spy on the conversation when she chickens out and runs into a bush.

AUSTIN: Which bush was it? The tall, leafy one or the short, fat one with the prickly sticks?

ZOEY: Does that really matter right now?

AUSTIN: I am just looking out for her safety!

ZOEY: It was the tall, leafy one.

AUSTIN: Phew! I was going to say if it was the prickly one, she would be in a lot of pain.

ZOEY: Moving on, she won't move, I tried everything, but she's not budging. So, I finally told her that as a compromise, I would talk to you first, say what I needed to say and then she would ring the doorbell when she was good and ready.

AUSTIN: That's smart, we love a good compromise.

ZOEY: We?

AUSTIN: The panicked people community.

ZOEY: I should've known.

AUSTIN: Alright so, why don't you have a seat, you know my Mom and Olivia. Do you want some lemonade? Not too much since it is a school night, but-

(doorbell)

ZOEY: That's her!! Let's do this!

OLIVIA: You can do this, Austin!

MOM: Zoey, you know the rules.

ZOEY: My bad.

(ZOEY takes off shoes)

(AUSTIN goes to door, scared, opens it, but looks confused)

AUSTIN: Um hello...?

ZOEY: Come on, why so unsure??

(JENNIFER and DYLAN enter SL)

DYLAN: Hey buddy!

JENNIFER: Hello!

ZOEY: Oh, that's why. What the heck are they doing here?

AUSTIN: Not to be rude or anything, but what the heck are you two doing here?

DYLAN: Just wanted to see if there was any progress being made with operation Sophie!

JENNIFER: Hi Zoey, hi Ms. Austin's mom, hi Austin's sister!

MOM: Hello, *(whispers)* who is this?

ZOEY: Jennifer.

MOM: Jennifer! How are you today?

JENNIFER: Wonderful, how about yourself?

MOM: Doing good, have a seat, I will grab chairs for everyone, we can have a fun little get-together!

JENNIFER: Sounds good, thank you very much! Would like me to take off my shoes?

MOM: If it's not too much trouble! *(whispering to ZOEY and OLIVIA)* I like her, very respectful!

(MOM exits SR)

DYLAN: So basically, you're telling me that there's the perfect girl for you, right outside your door, but you're too afraid to make the next move?

AUSTIN: Precisely. But to be fair, she has the perfect guy for her, right inside my door and she's also too afraid to make the next move.

DYLAN: Did you just call yourself the perfect guy for her??

AUSTIN: Yeah, it didn't sit right. I feel so... self-centered, conceited, even.

DYLAN: You're not self-centered, Austin. Just confident. I have no more words of motivation; I think we are all thinking one thing. You and Sophie are going to get together by the end of the day, and we won't leave here until it's official.

(MOM enters with two chairs)

MOM: Alright make room, two more chairs coming through!

(MOM sets them down)

MOM *(whispers to OLIVIA)*: Who is that man with Austin?

JENNIFER: That's Dylan, we are going on a date this Saturday.

MOM: How nice! Dylan, have a seat, remove your shoes, stay a while!

DYLAN: You know what you have to do!

(DYLAN goes over to the table)

JENNIFER: Come sit next to me Dylan!

DYLAN: Hey, Zoey, sorry for earlier, I didn't mean to call you all of those names.

JENNIFER: Yeah, I'm sorry too, but don't even think about coming near my boyfriend.

ZOEY: I won't... and it's okay, honestly, I deserved it.

OLIVIA: Can we just talk about how Austin just stopped moving?

ZOEY: I think he's frozen in fear.

AUSTIN: I need more positive encouragement.

JENNIFER: You got this Austin!

ZOEY: She's just as nervous as you are, trust me!

MOM: Make me proud!

OLIVIA: Do what makes you happy!

(creeps closer and closer to the door)

(doorbell)

JENNIFER: No. way.

AUSTIN: Should I answer it??

ALL: YES!

AUSTIN: No need to yell!

(AUSTIN opens the door)

AUSTIN: Hi.

MOM *(under her breath)*: Let her come inside, let her come inside.

AUSTIN: Do you want to come inside?

(SOPHIE enters)

MOM: Have her take off her shoes, have her take off her shoes.

SOPHIE: So, this is what Austin's house looks like, I expected the living room to be to the left of the kitchen and the stairs to be right here, but everything else seems to be in order. Hello everyone, how are you guys?

DYLAN: Pretty good.

ZOEY: Great!

JENNIFER: Wonderful!

OLIVIA: Doing well.

MOM: Shoes.

(from now on, AUSTIN and SOPHIE won't hear them, AUSTIN leads SOPHIE downstage)

AUSTIN: Nice weather we are having, huh?

(everyone shows disapproval)

SOPHIE: I... like your shirt.

ZOEY: This might be the most awkward conversation I have ever witnessed.

OLIVIA: Wait for it...

SOPHIE: So, I don't know exactly how to say this, but...

AUSTIN: I think I am thinking the same thing.

DYLAN: Don't interrupt her!

SOPHIE: Well that what are you thinking?

AUSTIN: Oh no, no, I think you should go first.

SOPHIE: I forgot it.

AUSTIN: That's too bad, we could just stop talking and wait until it pops into your brain again.

SOPHIE: Yeah... we could do that.

(pause, MOM sneezes)

SOPHIE/AUSTIN: Bless you. *(ding)* I LIKE YOU! NO LIKE REALLY LIKE, AW ME TOO!!

JENNIFER: Now kiss!

(AUSTIN and SOPHIE do the most awkward hug known to man)

DYLAN: Adorable.

OLIVIA: Is that supposed to be a hug?

MOM: They truly are made for each other.

ZOEY: They are, aren't they?

SOPHIE: I am so happy you said it, I have thought it for so long that I never thought it would be reciprocated.

AUSTIN: In the short time I've known you, I can already tell that you're one of the best people on this planet and I cannot express how lucky I feel to know someone like you.

SOPHIE: I could say the same thing about you. So, when is our first date? And where is it going to be? How will we get there? Walking is definitely not an option. Do you pay or should I pretend I am going to pay just to end with you paying? Will there be a second date?

AUSTIN: I was thinking we could go out on Friday, which gives a day to both relax after this crazy mess of a journey, we could go wherever you want honestly, I personally love mini golfing, but I am flexible-

SOPHIE: I love mini golfing and would love to go as long as you're okay with losing!

AUSTIN: Wow, ok! We will just have to see about that! As for transportation, I understand why walking would be a bad decision, I don't want to walk either, we will just take that one step at a time.

SOPHIE (*cracks up*): Oh, I get it, one STEP at a time, good one!

AUSTIN (*laughs*): I didn't even do that on purpose!

OLIVIA: That's not even a little bit funny.

AUSTIN: That is too good. Maybe I can get one of my friends to drive us or something. Oh I got it, hey Dylan!

DYLAN (*stands up*): What's up?

AUSTIN: You've been listening in our conversation, right?

DYLAN: Of course not! That's between you and your girlfriend- I mean your... acquaintance, your chum some might even say.

AUSTIN: Sure, yeah, I believe that, any chance you could drive me and my chum here to Minnie's Mini golf on Friday?

DYLAN: It would be my pleasure.

AUSTIN: Thanks sir!

DYLAN: Stop calling me that!

AUSTIN: Sorry, force of habit!

SOPHIE: Alright can't wait, we should go at 7:15 because I usually eat dinner at 6:30 and you need at least 60 minutes between eating and doing any sort of physical activity and if the ride takes about 15 minutes, we should be in prime condition to play!

AUSTIN: I'm so excited! I will meet you in front of your house too! I don't want to meet your parents just yet, that will come later on.

SOPHIE: Understandable, just like how I don't want to meet your mom until-

MOM: Leg cramp! Sorry, ignore me, I'm not here!

(MOM exits SR)

SOPHIE: That doesn't count.

AUSTIN: I agree. So yeah, I will see you on Friday!

SOPHIE: And tomorrow at school.

AUSTIN: Oh gosh! I almost forgot that we have school tomorrow! I haven't even started my homework yet!

SOPHIE: It's okay, I haven't either. It will be okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it will be. *(pause)*

JENNIFER: Is this when they kiss?

ZOEY: Not yet...

AUSTIN: Can I ask you something?

SOPHIE: Anything.

AUSTIN: Do you like magic tricks?

SOPHIE: Like them? I love them!

AUSTIN: Alright nice, I don't know if you know this, but I am a student by day and a semi-decent halfway okay magician by later that day!

SOPHIE: No way! I would have never known!

ZOEY: Wow, and the best actress Oscar goes to Sophie!

AUSTIN: Alright, stay right there! I just need to grab my cards from upstairs, I will be right back.

(AUSTIN hurries offstage SR, SOPHIE smiles so big as ZOEY comes up to her)

ZOEY: You did it!! *(hugs her)* I am so proud of you!

SOPHIE: Couldn't have done it without you!

(OLIVIA goes to AUSTIN's backpack SL)

JENNIFER: What are you doing Austin's sister?

OLIVIA: I wonder how long it will take him to realize the cards are in his backpack.

ZOEY: He is very forgetful.

SOPHIE: That's what makes him so exceptional.

(lots of booms and bangs from offstage)

AUSTIN: I'm okay!

DYLAN: Sophie, do you want us to leave? I think he gets nervous to do tricks in front of people...

SOPHIE: I think he would get more nervous if it was just me and him. Just stay. You all helped in your own way to get us here and I can't really say how thankful I am for you all.

(AUSTIN enters, overwhelmed, OLIVIA is sitting at the table holding up the cards)

AUSTIN: Olivia, do you have any idea where my deck of cards would be? I always keep them in my pillowcase when I go to school, but then the one time I need them, they are gone. *(about to speak)* OH you're right, they are in my backpack because I used them at school. *(dumps everything out)* They're not in there either! Are you sure you haven't seen them? *(notices she has them)* Why didn't you say anything?

OLIVIA: Breathe.

AUSTIN: Thank you, I really appreciate you finding them for me.

OLIVIA: No problem. Good luck!

AUSTIN: Alright now, Sophie, what I am going to do is just shuffle the deck before we get started because every good trick involves a shuffled deck.

DYLAN: Can I shuffle?

(pause)

AUSTIN: You're not part of the trick so... no.

(doorbell)

JENNIFER: Who the heck could that be?

OLIVIA: I'll get it. *(she opens the door)*

EVERMORE: Sorry I am late!

(EVERMORE enters)

ALL except Olivia: Mrs. Evermore??

EVERMORE: Officer Evermore, thank you very much. So, I hear there's a daughter on the loose, that true?

OLIVIA: It was for a short time, but she's back!

EVERMORE: I respect your optimism ma'am, but I will not rest until I find your child. Have you checked upstairs? Adolescents like to lock themselves in their room.

OLIVIA: But I am the child-

EVERMORE: Ma'am, leave it to the professionals please. Don't make me use the handcuffs.

(OLIVIA backs away)

EVERMORE: Hello students, any sign of a girl... with an olive colored shirt?

JENNIFER: Um hate to disagree, but isn't her name Olivia?

EVERMORE: Not according to my notes... it says here that on December 5th, 2007 an 11-year-old girl named Olivia was reported missing at 3:32P.M. eastern time.

JENNIFER: Where on there does it say she is wearing an olive colored shirt.

EVERMORE: Do you want to be in handcuffs?

JENNIFER: No officer!

EVERMORE: That's what I thought, moving forward, I will check the rest of the house, carry on.

DYLAN: Why is she the police officer too?? Hasn't she done enough?

(MOM screams offstage, MOM and EVERMORE enter)

EVERMORE: Ma'am, is this your daughter?

MOM: What is going on? I am-

OLIVIA: Olivia! I never thought I would see you again!

(OLIVIA runs over to MOM and hugs her)

MOM: What? Am I dying?

OLIVIA: Aw, she's getting emotional, thank you officer! Case closed!

EVERMORE *(speaking into her shoulder)*: This is Evermore. Solved the case of the missing olive. Over.

ZOEY: Annndd there's no walkie talkie.

EVERMORE: Have a good night citizens, be safe and love life.

(EVERMORE exits SL)

MOM: Someone please explain to me why that woman walked into my bedroom with her shoes still on!

OLIVIA: Come on, let's go upstairs, I will explain everything up there, your son has something he needs to do.

(MOM and OLIVIA exit)

DYLAN: I think that's it, all of the distractions that could possibly ever happen just happened. Go for it Austin.

AUSTIN: Alright, here we go. You ready, Sophie?

SOPHIE: You have no idea.

AUSTIN: Pick a card.

END OF SHOW