

THE DIVINE ALCHEMISTS

A One-Act Play

GLOSSARY

Boymode: (slang) the act of a transgender woman or transfeminine individual presenting as male.

Cisgender: denoting or relating to a person whose gender identity corresponds with the sex registered for them at birth; often shortened to cis.

Cishet: short for cisgender-heterosexual.

Cisnormativity: the assumption that everyone is, or ought to be, cisgender.

Clock: (slang) to recognize that someone is transgender.

Crack One's Egg: (slang) when someone realizes they are transgender.

Deadname: a name a transgender person no longer uses; to call a transgender person by their deadname.

Enby: pronounced EN-bee; short for non-binary.

Misgender: refer to (someone, especially a transgender person) using a word, especially a pronoun or form of address, that does not reflect their gender identity.

Non-binary: denoting, having, or relating to a gender identity that does not conform to traditional binary beliefs about gender.

T: short for testosterone.

TERF: abbreviation for trans-exclusionary radical feminist; a person whose views on gender identity are considered hostile to transgender people, or who opposes social and political policies designed to be inclusive of transgender people.

Transgender: denoting or relating to a person whose gender identity does not correspond with the sex registered for them at birth; often shortened to trans.

CHARACTERS

AERITH. Pronounced "heiress." Transgender woman. She/her pronouns. Late Teens/Early 20s. Any race/ethnicity. The newbie of the group. Pop-culture aficionado. Her openness and eagerness to learn are her saving graces. They can also be her downfall.

GRAYSON. Non-binary. They/them pronouns. Late Teens/Early 20s. Latinx/Hispanic. It's not always easy to see where their thoughts are going, and yet they always know just what to say. Doubles as WISTERIA'S MOTHER'S SIBLING, PARENT, and HOODED FIGURE.

IGGY. Transgender man. He/him pronouns. Late Teens/Early 20s. Any race/ethnicity. A natural-born risk-taker. Sits at the intersection of "door-to-door salesman" and "punkhead." An earful, but an impeccable listener when he needs to be. Doubles as DR. DENSLow, WISTERIA'S COUSIN, PARENT, and HOODED FIGURE.

WISTERIA. Non-binary. They/them pronouns. Late Teens/Early 20s. Any race/ethnicity. A jack of all trades as far as the arts are concerned. Aesthetic and fashion best described as "Witchy Academia." With their capacity to see all possibilities, the gender binary was out of the question. Doubles as FOX NEWS ANCHOR, THERAPIST, and HOODED FIGURE.

SETTING

A private university in a medium-sized Midwestern city

TIME

Late 2021

NOTES ON CASTING

Every actor must, at least in part, identify with the gender identity of their character.

While every character has pre-determined pronouns, if an actor uses additional/different pronouns than the ones written for their character, then the actor's pronouns may be used instead/in addition. The placement of different/additional pronouns, as well as any necessary grammar modifications, will be at the discretion of both the director and the applicable actor(s).

SCENE I

A study room in a university engagement center.

Grayson, Iggy, and Wisteria sit at a table in the space. It is their regular meetup spot. Their sanctuary.

The friends have set up "The Game of Life."

Iggy holds the game's box, pointing at the cover art.

IGGY

I mean, look at this. How is a game with rainbows all over the box one of the straightest games I've ever played?

GRAYSON

Maybe they were going for some Noah's Ark imagery.

IGGY

Oh yeah, I'm sure some Bible-thumping corporate shill at-

He checks the logo on the box.

-Hasbro loves de-gaying the rainbow. Sorry, but my people will appropriate Christian symbols as we damn well please.

WISTERIA

Amen.

GRAYSON

Symbols *and* vocabulary, I see.

WISTERIA

Oh wow, look at that!

IGGY

Another thing, why are there spaces to "try for a baby?" Newsflash, Hasbro-

He picks up a blue peg and a pink peg.

IGGY (cont'd)

-not every couple is blue and pink *and* not every blue-and-pink couple can "try for a baby."

WISTERIA

Yeah, not gonna lie, that's a little ouchy.

IGGY

And why only couples? Why can't I ditch the kids and form a polycule?

GRAYSON

I see that speech team has provided some invaluable real-life applications.

IGGY

Damn straight!

GRAYSON

More like, damn *straights!*

They all laugh.

IGGY

"Life." Whose "life?"

Grayson raises their pinkie finger.

WISTERIA

What we really need is "Life: Reality Check Edition." Less cards like "try for a baby" and more cards like "find a soulmate who lives across the country."

IGGY

Do I smell a trademark "Wisteria-has-an-idea" project coming on?

WISTERIA

Maaaaaaaybe.

IGGY

What's up, Gray?

Grayson lowers their pinkie.

GRAYSON

Weren't you bringing "Uno" tonight?

IGGY

Someone else from Game Club already borrowed it, so I grabbed the first game out of the box. Talk about shit luck.

WISTERIA

Oh, speaking of Game Club, when's our other certified nerd friend gonna get he-

The fourth and final member of the friend group enters. She is wearing baggy black sweats and a beanie. She does not yet know her name.

Speak of the devil.

GRAYSON

More Bible speak.

WISTERIA

Hey! Two-for-two!

AERITH

(Bated breath)

Hey, gang! So, this may come as a surprise, but if anyone will understand it's y'all. I think I'm... I *am* a girl.

IGGY

Oop, there it is.

WISTERIA

Iggy!

IGGY

Oh, like we didn't see this coming.

AERITH

Y'all saw this coming?

IGGY

Well, you haven't exactly been subtle.

GRAYSON

"Painstakingly obvious," more like.

WISTERIA

Oh, hush!

Wisteria turns to Aerith.

WISTERIA (cont'd)

Look, sweetie, it's no one's place to assume. Buuuuutt you did show a lot of telltale signs. Remember when we watched *Drag Race* and you said how much you'd love to do drag?

AERITH

Drag doesn't make you trans.

WISTERIA

Oh right right right! Of course not. It's just-

IGGY

Wait wait, can I tell this part? You said, and I quote, "I could never do drag-

Aerith buries her face in her knees.

-the second I slip in that dress and put on all that makeup, *I'd never want to take it off.*" (Beat.) That's not very cis of you, sweetheart.

WISTERIA

Iggy.

AERITH

No, it's okay. It's just, here I was thinking I had this big news to share.

WISTERIA

Oh, but sweetie, it *is* big news!

GRAYSON

Herstoric!

IGGY

We're proud of you, girlie!

AERITH

God, I don't know what I'd do without y'all.

GRAYSON

We wouldn't have it any other way, *cariño.*

IGGY

Everyone could use some trans peeps in their lives.

WISTERIA

Wellllll, maybe not *everyone*. TERFs.

GRAYSON

Cops.

AERITH

J.K. Rowling apologists.

IGGY

Let me rephrase: Anyone who's *not* the target audience for "Life."

AERITH

Oh, right!

She starts towards the game board.

Dibs on red!

WISTERIA

Woah, hold on there, silly! We haven't given you your Baby Trans Orientation!

AERITH

My what?

GRAYSON

(Reciting some ancient writ)

"Whenceforth the moon thy mind proclaims transcendence from thy vessel-"

IGGY

Ancient speak for cracking your egg.

GRAYSON

"-the chosen-"

IGGY

That's you.

GRAYSON

"-shall procure guidance in the Transversal Inception."

IGGY

Or as our generation hath dubbed it, Baby Trans Orientation.

WISTERIA

Normally you'd get it done at a queer resource center, buuuuut, lucky for you, we brought everything we need to do it right here, right now!

AERITH

How come I've never heard of this before?

WISTERIA

It's our best-kept secret!

IGGY

Second only to how we're all so hot.

AERITH

Wait, so how'd you know you'd need the stuff tonight?

WISTERIA

Oh, we've sort of been planning this for weeks now. Just in case.

AERITH

Wow, was I really that obvious?

IGGY

Better call yourself "Big Ben," baby, because you are clockable! "Big Bonnie" in your case.

AERITH

Thanks. Well, okay then. Without further ado!

WISTERIA

Yes yes.

Wisteria, Iggy, and Grayson scurry into a line in front of Aerith. Wisteria pulls a pamphlet out of their bag.

Let's see here.

They read from the pamphlet.

"So you've just realized you're trans."

Grayson, Iggy, and Wisteria look up at Aerith.

AERITH

Yeah.

WISTERIA

"First of all, congratulations!"

ALL EXCEPT AERITH

CONGRATS!

WISTERIA

"This orientation is designed to prepare you for the life you were always meant to lead" aaand blah blah blah skip skip skip.

They tear up the pamphlet.

AERITH

Hey, I want to hear the rest!

IGGY

Trust me, you don't. Just a bunch of corporate fluff text.

He walks over to the bag and prepares to grab the first item.

GRAYSON

The important thing is that we set you up with your new gear.

AERITH

What kind of gear are we talking about?

IGGY

Like-

He grabs a long, dark cloak out of the bag, unravels it, and holds it up.

-this!

AERITH

It's a cloak.

GRAYSON

Astute observation.

IGGY

This isn't some clearance rack Jawa apparel. This, my friend, is a handcrafted, top-of-the-line, Trans Cloaking Apparatus.

GRAYSON

Put it on and you'll be virtually undetectable to the cisgender eye.

IGGY

Unclockable, baby!

AERITH

Okay, but it's still just a cloak?

IGGY

Eerrrrt! Wrong! While you and I may see a simple cloak, once put it on, your appearance will morph into, well, whatever you want others to see. If you can envision it, this cloak can do the job!

WISTERIA

Certainly makes for practical-and sometimes necessary-camouflage, buuuuut it's also perfect for doing impressions. Observe!

They put on their own cloak. Aerith is taken aback by the transformation. (Note: Every time a character uses a cloak to impersonate or portray a different character, the hood should completely obscure the actor's face.)

AERITH

Holy shit! They look like a Fox News anchor!

WISTERIA (as FOX NEWS ANCHOR)

Actually, "they" is plural. You can't just make up new grammar rules.

Grayson pulls a remote control out of the bag.

IGGY

Actually, all grammar is made up. That's kind of how language works.

WISTERIA (as FOX NEWS ANCHOR)

Listen here, young l-

Grayson uses a remote control to "rewind" Wisteria. (Note: All rewound lines should be pre-recorded with actors mouthing along to the sound cues.)

-l gnuoy ,ereh netsiL

AERITH

What was that?!?

GRAYSON

That is the result of item number two.

They hold up the remote.

Behold! The Misgender Deflection Remote! This lets you pause, rewind, or otherwise interrupt people trying to misgender you.

They hand it to Aerith.

Give it a try.

Iggy points his thumb at Wisteria.

IGGY

Talk to Karen over here! If you can stomach it that is.

AERITH

Oh no, yeah.

She turns to Wisteria.

Uh, hi.

WISTERIA (as FOX NEWS ANCHOR)

Well, how do you do, mmm... *(As Wisteria.)* And this is where you'd use the remote.

AERITH

Oh, right!

She clicks a button. What would be the word "man" is censored

with a wacky sound effect. She then experiments with different buttons, each producing different sounds, her smile growing wider with each one.

AERITH (cont'd)

(Holding out the remote like a sword, imitating He-Man)
I have the powerrrr!

IGGY

Don't let it go to your head there, sport.

Wisteria removes their cloak.

WISTERIA

Alright, I've drained enough brain cells embodying the Karen headspace. Let's move on.

IGGY

We saved the best for last!

AERITH

Well, let's see!

She darts for the bag and reaches her hand inside. Nothing. Iggy and Wisteria walk to the back of the stage, preparing to pull back the curtains.

WISTERIA

Weeeeeee can't exactly fit this one in a bag.

IGGY

Drum roll please!

He mimics the sound of a drumroll. He and Wisteria pull back the curtains revealing a white scrim underneath.

Tada! The Transformation Station! This lets you change in and out of masc outfits, femme outfits, anything visibly queer. You can summon it anywhere.

WISTERIA

Any time!

GRAYSON

And while you're inside, you are completely safe from the outside world.

AERITH

Wait, I already have a transformation cloak. Why do I need a mobile dressing room?

IGGY

Au contraire! The cloak is so you can quickly hide from cishets. And make fun of them. This, on the other hand, is where you go to transform in and out of your true self. For everyone to see.

WISTERIA

Just step in one side, and when you come out the other, you'll have transformed.

IGGY

Whattya think of that there, sport?

AERITH

Oh yeah, all of this is awesome, for real. It's just if all this stuff exists, why isn't there just a way to, I don't know, transform into a woman?

WISTERIA

Honey, you're missing the point. This gear won't make you more or less a woman. It's here to make life a bit easier for you while the rest of the world plays catch up.

AERITH

Okay, I get that, but like, wouldn't life be easier if I were just born-

GRAYSON

Sweetheart. Look at me.

She looks at them.

You are all the woman you will ever need to be. Right now.

Beat.

AERITH

Wow. Okay.

IGGY

Don't you wanna step inside?

AERITH

Oh, I didn't bring any other clothes.

WISTERIA

Don't need 'em!

IGGY

We already put a little somethin' somethin' in there for you. I picked it out myself.

GRAYSON

Technically, we *all* picked it out.

IGGY

And I made a very strong case for it!

WISTERIA

Don't you want to try it on?

AERITH

Yeah. Yeah, I do.

IGGY

Well, hurry up already!

AERITH

Okay! Okay.

Aerith enters one end of the Transformation Station. The scrim lights up with a cacophony of soft, vibrant colors making visible her silhouette.

WISTERIA

Do you two remember your first time stepping in the T.S.?

IGGY

Yes, and can I just say, *perfect* abbreviation. But yeah, I'll never forget finally wanting something for myself..

WISTERIA

I'll never forget the power it gave me...

GRAYSON.

I'll never forget the language it provided me...

IGGY.

...and taking it.

WISTERIA

...and fighting with it.

GRAYSON

...and making myself heard.

IGGY

With that want...

WISTERIA

That power...

GRAYSON

That voice...

ALL EXCEPT AERITH

...you feel like you can do anything.

Beat.

WISTERIA

She's coming out.

IGGY

Did she not already come out?

WISTERIA

No! Out of the T.S.

GRAYSON

(Amused at the accidental wordplay and now running with it)
She came out as a T.S. to come out of the T.S.

WISTERIA

Here she comes!

*Aerith steps out of the
Transformation Station in a
beautiful, shimmering dress.*

IGGY

Okay, Miss Thang!

GRAYSON

Positively stunning.

WISTERIA

You look like the stars themselves.

AERITH

Hey, friends. I want you to call me Aerith from now on.

IGGY

Whatever you say, Aerith.

GRAYSON

(Reading from their phone)

"Aerith; a modern, invented name meaning 'peace' or 'earth.'"

WISTERIA

"Aerith." "Earth." "One who will inherit the Earth." *(To Grayson.)* I should really start writing these down.

*Aerith is too lost in euphoria
to respond to her friends. She
struts around in her dress.*

*Lights shift. Grayson, Iggy, and
Wisteria exit.*

Scene II

Sometime later.

Spotlight on Aerith. She is in a therapy session. Her therapist (played by the actor playing Wisteria in a cloak), clipboard and pen in hand, is seated at the opposite end of the room.

WISTERIA (as THERAPIST)

Oookay. Now, before I forget, I'll go ahead and update your file so the counseling center can make note of the change. How do you spell that again?

AERITH

A-E-R-I-T-H.

WISTERIA (as THERAPIST)

I don't understand. It ends with an "S," but it's spelled "T-H?"

AERITH

Yeah, it's a character from a video game. It was originally spelled with an "S" at the end, but the real name is spelled with a "T-H," and some people still use the "S" sound anyway. It's a whole thing.

WISTERIA (as THERAPIST)

Gotcha gotcha. Now, see, when I hear the name "Aerith," the first thing I think of is the god of war.

AERITH

Oh, yeah, that's definitely part of it too. Just general badass connotations.

WISTERIA (as THERAPIST)

Just wrapped in all sorts of meaning, huh?

AERITH

Yeah! And like, the best part is that *I* chose it. *For me*. You know how they say, "your name grows with you?" A Billy becomes a William becomes a Bill? My deadname always felt like something I had to grow into. "Aerith" is great because it's fit for me right now.

WISTERIA (as THERAPIST)

Interesting.

AERITH

Yeah. Like, I've always been made to feel like my happiness—the things life is supposedly all about—were all things I had to wait for. Things where, even if you find them without dying first, you've gotta squeeze them into the margins. Hell, that's what half the movies and shows I watched growing up were about. Like they were conditioning me to lower my expectations. *Hannah Montana*, Superman—

WISTERIA (as THERAPIST)

And Harry Potter!

AERITH

... Right. But yeah, so, *Hannah Montana*. (*Singing*) "You get the best of both worlds." (*Back to speaking*) Well, for the first time in my life, I feel like the best of both worlds can be one in the same. I can finally live the life I deserve to lead.

WISTERIA (as THERAPIST)

And what does that life look like?

AERITH

Still working on that part.

WISTERIA (as THERAPIST)

I see. Well, it looks like our time's about up. It's always nice meeting with you—

Aerith uses the remote to censor her deadname with a wacky sound effect.

WISTERIA (as THERAPIST)

Oh! I'm so sorry!

AERITH

It's okay.

WISTERIA (as THERAPIST)

It really is so hard to get new names right.

AERITH

It really isn't.

WISTERIA (as THERAPIST)

(Desperately changing the subject)

Have you told anyone else besides me? Friends? Family?

AERITH

Three friends, yeah. Family's tough though. Immediate? Not yet I don't think. Extended? There's hundreds of us, so at least one of them is bound to accept me. But definitely my nonna. She loves me no matter what.

WISTERIA (as THERAPIST)

It's nice to have those support systems.

AERITH

Yeah. And if nothing else, when you're queer, you get to choose your own family.

Blackout. During this scene change, Aerith changes in the Transformation Station.

Scene III

Sometime later.

The friends sit about the space doing their own homework. Aerith has changed into a more casual outfit since the previous scene. She is holding a piece of paper, staring at it.

AERITH

I know I'll get it done but look at this rubric.

Aerith tosses the rubric onto the table. Grayson picks it up and reads.

GRAYSON

"You must interview at least three people about a topic of your choice and present your findings to the class."

Grayson raises their pinkie finger.

AERITH

I'm like, okay, can I maybe get some ideas for topics? Does this need a PowerPoint or video or whatever? Nothing.

WISTERIA

What class is this for again?

AERITH

Anthro. Dr. Denslow's section.

IGGY

They still let that fossil teach?

AERITH

You've had him?

IGGY

Me and everyone since the ink on the Constitution was still wet. Retirement's clearly not an option for the guy. I'd feel bad... but I don't. He misgendered me every chance he got.

AERITH

Geez, I'm sorry.

IGGY

Eh, I just had fun with it after a while.

Iggy slips on his cloak and begins impersonating Dr. Denslow.

IGGY (as DR. DENSLow)

And what's your name, m-

He clicks the remote to censor the word "miss" with a wacky sound effect.

IGGY

And then I said, "Actually, it's 'sir,' and my name is Ignatius, or Iggy."

IGGY (as DR. DENSLow)

Sounds good, m-

He clicks the remote to censor the word "miss" with a wacky sound effect. Again.

"Iggy," huh? Like Iggy Pop?

IGGY

No, Iggy Soda. Iggy Coke in Georgia.

He clicks the remote and a "ba dum tss" sound effect plays. He removes his cloak as the other friends clap.

Thank you. No really, thank you. Tip your waiters, waitresses, and waiterthems.

WISTERIA

"Waiterthems?" I rescind my chuckle.

IGGY

Can't bicker if you snicker!

AERITH

Anyway, bottom line is I need a topic by tomorrow and I'm drawing a blank.

GRAYSON

May I speak my pinkie thought now?

AERITH

What's a pinkie thought?

GRAYSON

Oh, whenever I'm mid-convo and have a thought I don't want to forget, I hold up my pinkie. I got the idea from tying strings around your finger, but I figured, "who wants to carry string everywhere?" So I took a cue from the Brits instead.

IGGY

A signature "Grayson-ism."

AERITH

You've never done it around me?

GRAYSON

I only do it in my closest circles.

AERITH

Awe.

WISTERIA

What was your pinkie thought, Grayson?

GRAYSON

Oh, yes.

They lower their pinkie.

Have you considered interviewing other trans people, Aerith?

AERITH

I mean, sure, but what exactly would I interview about? Sports? Bathroom bills?

Grayson raises their pinkie again.

Go on.

GRAYSON

You said this was for Anthropology, right? Have you thought about framing your project around social alchemy?

AERITH

"Social alchemy." Is that another Grayson-ism?

GRAYSON

I wish! But no, it's a problem-solving model derived from social architecture.

AERITH

(Counting off on her fingers)

"Anthropology." "Alchemy." "Architecture." You lost me.

GRAYSON

Lot of A-words to keep track of, I get it. Let me jump back. Last semester I read *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho for my Latinx Lit class, right? That led me to look up alchemy for shits and gigs. Then *that* led me down the rabbit hole of social alchemy.

WISTERIA

For shits and gigs?

GRAYSON

Yes!

Grayson walks to the dry erase board and begins drawing a simplified version of a Social Alchemy Model infographic (Note: The infographic, as it should be depicted in the scene, can be found in the back matter of this script labeled "Appendix A.")

Essentially, the model-

*They label the applicable point
"Define Problem."*

-defines a problem-

*They label the applicable point
"Collect Information."*

-collects information-

*They label the applicable point
"Test Ideas."*

GRAYSON (cont'd)

-and tests ideas for solving it.

WISTERIA

Soooo it's like the Scientific Method?

GRAYSON

Almost. See, problem-solvers in any field, but especially social sciences often ignore two things: the roots of a problem and how that problem impacts people. They want a quick, straightforward solution, and that's just not how life works.

WISTERIA

(Nodding)

Capitalism.

GRAYSON

With social alchemy, problem-solvers identify a problem's roots-

*They label the applicable point
"Prove Impact."*

-and measure the social impact along the way. That's what this whole middle cycle is about. The process is messy, it's repetitive, but it's the best way to find sustainable, long-term solutions.

Grayson lowers their pinkie.

WISTERIA

Well, that is very interesting, Grayson.

AERITH

Interesting? Try freaking brilliant!

GRAYSON

I appreciate your enthusiasm.

AERITH

Yeah, I totally get what you're saying. That problem-solving and social impact stuff? That's just what we all do as trans people.

GRAYSON

Hello, nail. Meet head.

WISTERIA

I'm sorry, did I miss something here?

AERITH

Right. Like, here we are, these outcasts—pardon the hyperbole—who craft our identities from the ground up. Every second of every day is a new problem for us. And do we sit there and take it? No! We find our own ways to fit into a society that doesn't have a blueprint for us.

She grabs her cloak and remote.

Need to switch outfits quickly?

She holds her cloak up.

We found a way. Cis people won't use our names or pronouns?

She holds up her remote.

We found a way. We always find a way because that's just what we do to survive. Y'all! I know what my project is gonna be!

WISTERIA

Oh yay!

AERITH

I'm gonna interview other trans people, right? And I'll present on how trans people craft their identities to get by in the world! Would y'all be down for that? Letting me interview you?

WISTERIA

Of course, sweetie!

GRAYSON

I would be honored.

Iggy nods.

AERITH

Iggy, what's on your mind?

WISTERIA

Yeah, Ig. You haven't been this quiet since Derrick Saltzman dared you ten bucks not to talk for all of Bio.

IGGY

And it was ten dollars well-earned. But uh, alright. Aerith look, of course I'll help you with your project. But I can't get behind this "craft your identity" stuff. To me, that just sounds like a roundabout way to say "planning." I don't *do* plans; plans *happen* to me. *Life* happens to me, and I do my best to duck out of the way. You wanna know how I "get by in this world?" Luck. Life can deal as many shitty hands as it wants at me, fine, but it takes a certain type of guy not to leave the casino empty-handed. Luck: that's *my* world, baby.

WISTERIA

Iggy, I appreciate your contribution to this discussion.

IGGY

Here it comes.

WISTERIA

Buuuuut you can have a plan *and* still be adaptable.

GRAYSON

That's the entire point of the social-alchemy model: To adjust your plan as you make new discoveries.

IGGY

That's just it! What's the point of a plan if you're gonna go in and change it? I say, why bother starting with a plan at all? I just don't think you're gonna get a good interview out of me, Aerith. Not with this stuff.

AERITH

Iggy.

*Lights shift. Grayson and
Wisteria exit. Aerith sets up
her phone to record.*

When and where do you think your reliance on luck began?

Scene IV. Interview #1: Luck Be an Iggy

Later that night.

Spotlight on Iggy.

IGGY

Well, let's see. I mean, if I *really* wanted to, I could tell you about my dad. A guy his age, his health, we're talkin' well and above a ninety-five percent survival rate for pneumonia. But alas, he was in that five percent. And that left me in that twenty-five percent of kids without a dad. You can't plan for that. Which, yeah, that sucked. It would have been nice for him to teach me how to shave once I (start/started) T, but my mom (will get/got) the job done. She always has. But I don't want to tell you that story. Well, I guess I just did. But you wanna know how my sweet love affair with Lady Luck began? Tabletop gaming. Yes, ma'am, the very pastime that brought you and me together was what sold me on fate. You see, when I build my characters in D&D, I roll for everything. Not just stats, I roll for alignment, traits. Hell, I even roll for names. I print out the alphabet and roll a die on top of it, whatever letter the die lands on, that's the next letter in the name. I've had characters with names like "Jcfrmkv" and "Kwnrp," and I love that! But there's one thing I don't roll for. Gender. I used to. Just like everything else. If it landed on odds, male. If it landed on evens, female. Later I devised a number system to include more identities, but we don't need to get into all that. And looking back, I rolled for every other attribute because it guaranteed every new campaign would be something different than the last. When everything's a surprise, nothing surprises you. But for some reason, whenever I rolled for gender, I could hear a little voice hoping the die would land on male. I heard that shit in my soul, you know? So, I just started making all my characters male. It wasn't long after that I cracked my egg. And ya know, that's the thing about gender. No one will ever push you to explore it. With being gay it's easy. A guy chooses musicals over sports and society labels him a big ol' queer.

Iggy flips his wrist.

Don't put that in the transcript.

AERITH

(Tapping her fingers as if she's typing)

Bracket. "Interviewee flips his wrist like a big ol' queer."

Bracket.

IGGY

Walked myself into that one. Point is, people ascribe any label on you they want, but with gender, your birth certificate picks that label for you. So if your birth certificate's wrong, you gotta take that want for yourself. And so, for once, I chose my own luck. And I've never looked back. Just think, without D&D of all things, I might not have cracked my egg, and I never would have formed our little group we got going. Talk about a lucky break.

Blackout.

Scene V

Sometime later.

Wisteria enters with great anticipation. They set down their bag.

Aerith has been typing away at her computer. She takes off her headphones to talk.

WISTERIA

Hey, girlie!

AERITH

Hey! Guess who came out to her grandmother today!

WISTERIA

Oh wow! How'd all that go?

AERITH

I mean, I knew she would accept me-that was a no-brainer-but it still feels good to be out besides school and therapy.

WISTERIA

Felt that. I've got some family to come out to myself.

AERITH

Oh sick! Let me know how that goes.

WISTERIA

Sure thing!

AERITH

Sweet! So, you ready to start the interview?

WISTERIA

Actually, is there any chance you could help me with something first?

AERITH

Yeah, totally. What is it?

WISTERIA

Soooooo, okay. Two things: I'm in photography, right?

AERITH

I'm with you so far.

WISTERIA

We have a portrait assignment due tomorrow, and not gonna lie, I wasn't all that excited at first. I love portraits and all, but my professor wants us to photograph two models. To quote the rubric: one man, one woman.

AERITH

We love non-binary erasure.

WISTERIA

Ex-ACT-ly! And ya know, I was gonna wade my way through the cisnormativity, but then I was like, "No! Screw that!" Soooo I decided to photograph a *trans* guy and girl *and* a non-binary model!

AERITH

Gee, Wiz, that's awesome!

WISTERIA

I know, right- wait, did you say "gee comma Wiz?" As in both "Wiz" my name and "gee-whiz" the exclamation?

AERITH

Maybe.

WISTERIA

You and Iggy, I swear.

AERITH

You're not wrong, but hey! Way to stick it to the man, huh?

WISTERIA

The *cis* man, more like!

AERITH

Right! So, if that's all going good, what do you need my help with?

WISTERIA

Well, here's the *other* thing. I've already done shoots with Iggy and Grayson, and those went super well, buuuut I've had trouble finding a trans girl to model for me. I think you can see where I'm going with this.

AERITH

Say no more, Wiz. You've got your model right here.

WISTERIA

Aaaaah! Thank you thank you thank you!

They walk back over to their bag.

Why don't you go change into something nice for the shoot!

AERITH

Right here right now?

WISTERIA

Well of course right here right now, silly! I'm on a time crunch! Besides, I've got everything I need here.

They gesture to their bag. Aerith enters the Transformation Station. Iggy and Grayson enter. They both help Wisteria pull increasingly large pieces of photography equipment out of their bag; lights, light fixtures, roll-out background, etc. These items appear larger than what should be able to fit in the bag. Once everything is retrieved, they begin setting up their light sources, turning on their camera, etc. Aerith exits the Transformation Station having changed into a beautiful outfit.

AERITH

Woah, when'd you all get here?

IGGY

I'm here to be your hype man!

GRAYSON

And I your hype non-man!

IGGY

What'd I tell you, Wiz? She'd totally be down for this shoot.

AERITH

"Down for—" Now just how many surprises do y'all plan for me?

GRAYSON

Well, there's your birthday pa-

WISTERIA

(Slamming their index finger into their pursed lips)
Up-bup-bup!

IGGY

What they *meant* to say is, we're all set up and ready to go!

AERITH

(Taking notice of Wisteria's set-up)
Wow. You really fit all this in that bag?

WISTERIA

I don't usually travel this light, but like I said: Time crunch!
All ready?

AERITH

As I'll ever be.

WISTERIA

Good!

*They begin taking photos as
Aerith poses.*

WISTERIA

Yesssss, I'm living for the sass!

Click.

Okay, now give me sexy.

Click.

IGGY

Sexier.

Click.

GRAYSON

Not that sexy.

Click.

Give me fierce. WISTERIA

Click.

Bold. IGGY

Click.

Sad. GRAYSON

Click.

Sadder! WISTERIA

Click.

Girl, your puppy has no legs. IGGY

Click.

Now the puppy's blind. WISTERIA

Click.

Now the puppy has dog cancer. GRAYSON

Jesus Christ, what did the puppy do to you? AERITH

Stay in the moment! WISTERIA

Click.

Okay, that's enough sad. Let's see angry.

Click.

Angrier! IGGY

Click.

WISTERIA

A frat bro just gave you his opinion on cryptocurrency!

Click.

GRAYSON

You waited three hours in line to meet Shania Twain and they closed the doors right when you got up front!

AERITH

Well that just makes me sad again!

WISTERIA

Okay, forget angry. That's probably enough initial photos. Let's do those same poses with my tilt shifts.

AERITH

Listen, Wiz, I'm all for assisting you in your art, but I'm not used to wearing my emotions on my sleeves like that.

WISTERIA

Aerith, sweetie, you cried when the cafeteria ran out of Diet Dr. Pepper.

AERITH

(Actually upset)

And they're still out! *(Gets ahold of herself.)* What I mean is, going through that much range of emotion. That quickly.

WISTERIA

No worries! This should be enough.

IGGY

(To Grayson)

Welp, looks like our work here is done.

Grayson nods. Iggy and Grayson exit.

AERITH

So, uh, are you good to start the interview?

WISTERIA

(Holding out their camera)

Don't you want to see your photos?

AERITH

You know what? I trust your expertise. Surprise me.

WISTERIA

Okay, leave it all to me!

They look through their camera roll.

These are going to look so cute in the gallery.

AERITH

Yeah, I'll bet- hold up, these are going up in a gallery?

WISTERIA

Yup! A whole wall of my beautiful friends!

AERITH

Uhh, listen, Wiz.

WISTERIA

Uh-huh?

AERITH

I don't- I think with... me being me, I don't think I'm comfortable being displayed publicly. Not yet.

WISTERIA

Oh. I thought you were out at school.

AERITH

Nope. Just you, Ig, Gray, my shrink, and now my nonna. I'm sorry, I know I wasted your time, but-

WISTERIA

No no, it's okay. The gallery slipped my mind, and I shouldn't have assumed how out you were. You're fine, hon.

AERITH

Okay. So what about your project?

WISTERIA

I have some portraits of my friend Christina in my portfolio. Granted, she's cis, but at least I got some rep in there!

AERITH

Right! Right.

WISTERIA

Yeah.

AERITH

Oh, so, you good to start?

WISTERIA

Have at it!

AERITH

Okay!

*She sits down. She sets up her
phone and hits record.*

AERITH

So, Wisteria, in terms of your gender identity, what has your experience as a college student been like? Has it been what you hoped for?

*Lights shift. Spotlight on
Wisteria.*

Scene VI. Interview #2: The Wiz Kid

WISTERIA

You know, if you asked high-school-me that question, I would have given an emphatic "yes." If I weren't invisible enough with the whole witchy vibe I had going on—and let's be honest, still do—my gender was somehow less than. To say I had to fight to be seen wouldn't be accurate, because that battle was lost from the get-go. Compared to high school, this place is like a San Fran Disco, and in the art department, every day is a Pride Festival. I believed that validation, that visibility, would last forever. But I learned soon enough that everything was not as it seemed. It started small: a couple weird looks from other students, a professor or two would misgender me. Then one day in my world religions class, when the professor opened the floor to discussion, this one dude went on a whole tirade about "traditional marriage" and how "transgender groomers" are ruining America. And the professor just let him talk! That was when I finally realized that it doesn't matter how many rainbows you plaster everywhere, it doesn't even matter how often professors get my name or pronouns right. That's the bare minimum. Just because I've been starved does not mean I'm going to sit here happy with crumbs. So now, when it comes to assignments like these with their dumbass cishnorms, I ask myself, "what can I do about it?" And every time, the answer is "effort." Honest-to-gods effort. So back to your question, my dear friend, "has college been what I hoped?" My answer is still yes. Because for the first time in my life, fighting to be seen is a battle I can win. Sure, my playing with gender for these photos might not mean much in the grand scheme, but you know, what if it *does*? Even if my professor thinks nothing of it, I still get to show off my beautiful friends. And if *nothing* else? I'm just doing it for my soul.

AERITH

Wisteria?

They look up at her.

Use my photo.

WISTERIA

Aerith-

AERITH

I mean it. I want you to.

WISTERIA

I have until midnight tomorrow to submit my photos if you change your mind before then-

AERITH

I won't.

WISTERIA

Okay.

*Wisteria packs up their things
and prepares to leave.*

I'm proud of you.

AERITH

Proud of you more. And hey... keep fighting the good fight.

WISTERIA

(Giggling)

More Bible speak.

*Wisteria smiles. Aerith
struggles to smile in return.
Wisteria exits.*

*Blackout. During this scene
change, Aerith changes in the
Transformation Station.*

Scene VII

Sometime later.

Three chairs are arranged in a line, a foot or two apart, facing out towards the audience. Grayson and Iggy are in their cloaks. The two are helping Wisteria act out an anecdote.

WISTERIA

To review: If we think of gender as a spectrum, "man" on one end, "woman" on another, "non-binary" can consist of any identity in between or outside.

IGGY (as WISTERIA'S COUSIN)

I'm sorry-

Wisteria clicks their remote.

-yrros m'I I just don't understand why every variation in masculinity or femininity has to be its own gender?

GRAYSON (as WISTERIA'S MOTHER'S SIBLING)

Right, and like, I don't feel all that masculine or feminine myself. Everyone feels that way a little.

IGGY (as WISTERIA'S COUSIN)

I don't.

GRAYSON (as WISTERIA'S MOTHER'S SIBLING)

You don't?

IGGY (as WISTERIA'S COUSIN)

Nope.

GRAYSON (as WISTERIA'S MOTHER'S SIBLING)

Oh. Huh. (*Beat.*) So, Wisteria, is there, like, an article I can read about this stuff?

Grayson and Iggy promptly disrobe.

WISTERIA

And *that*, my friends, is how my mother's sibling cracked their enby egg!

IGGY

That's awesome, Wiz!

WISTERIA

There's just one small problem.

GRAYSON

And what's that?

WISTERIA

What am I supposed to call them now? They're not my uncle, and they're not my aunt. I've been referring to them as my "mother's sibling," but that's so awkward.

GRAYSON

Truly the semantic turmoil of our times.

IGGY

What they said.

Grayson raises their pinkie finger. Aerith enters, having changed into a graphic tee and jeans.

AERITH

Hey, friends. Sorry I'm late again. Had to turn back around to use my dorm bathroom.

WISTERIA

You're good, hon. Guess what! My mother's sibling came out as non-binary!

AERITH

That's awesome! But uh, "mother's sibling?"

IGGY

Way ahead of you there, pal.

GRAYSON

(Lowering their pinkie)

I use *elle* in Spanish instead of *él* o *ella*. So in Spanish you could say *tié*?

WISTERIA

That's nice, it sucks that English doesn't have as simple a fix.

AERITH

I'd love to brainstorm solutions to the limitations of the English language as much as the next girl, but could we maybe do that some other time? I want to get something off my chest.

WISTERIA

Of course, sweetie.

IGGY

What's up?

AERITH

So, I don't think my cloak is working anymore?

IGGY

Oh, hon. You can take mine 'til you can get a new one!

WISTERIA

Awe, don't you love it when trans men and trans women swap clothes?

GRAYSON

The ultimate act of solidarity.

AERITH

It's not that. I mean, it *works*. I just don't think it's working for *me*.

GRAYSON

Care to elaborate?

AERITH

Yeah. So like, all I need to do is envision an outfit, and the cloak will make it happen?

IGGY

Bingo.

AERITH

Thing is... I don't know how to envision myself as anything but a girl. Not out there anyway. It's one thing when we're doing our impressions and reenactments in here. That's all fun and games. But like, I want to visit my parents, but every time I throw on the cloak, all I can imagine are skirts and blouses.

Grayson raises their pinkie finger. Aerith gestures for them to proceed with their thought.

GRAYSON

That sounds like a difficult thing you're dealing with, sweetie. If I may provide my input-

Aerith nods.

GRAYSON (cont'd)

-have you considered that... clothes aren't inherently gendered?

AERITH

Sure, but my parents are inherently genderers.

IGGY

You gotta do what's most comfortable for you, hon.

AERITH

Yeah, but everything feels uncomfy right now.

WISTERIA

I hate to say it, but that's not really something we can tell you how to fix, love.

Beat.

IGGY

So perhaps it's better to *show* you!

AERITH

Huh?

Lights and music shift to indicate a gameshow atmosphere. During this shift, everyone but Iggy sits in a chair. Seated SR to SL: Aerith, Wisteria, and Grayson.

IGGY

(Holding his remote like a microphone)

Lady and gentlethems-

WISTERIA

I resent that!

IGGY

-it's time once again for America's favorite game show...

ALL EXCEPT AERITH

GENDER! THOSE! CLOTHES!

AERITH

Whaaaaat is happening?

IGGY

Points are the name of the game, people! Each right answer will earn one of our contestants two hundred points. First one to a thousand wins a fabulous prize! Contestants, are we ready?

GRAYSON and WISTERIA

Ready, Ig!

IGGY

Aerith: What gender is this clothing item?

A photograph of a cardigan is projected on the scrim.

AERITH

Uhh... feminine?

IGGY

She's locking in "feminine." Wisteria, same question!

WISTERIA

I'm picking up strong masculine and feminine energies from this photo, Ig. So in case my opponent is wrong, I'm gonna have to go with masculine.

IGGY

Solid strategy, Mx. Wiz. What about you, Grayson?

GRAYSON

My answer is "it doesn't matter," Ig.

IGGY

(Beat.) THAT IS CORRECT!

AERITH

What?

WISTERIA

Oh! I knew that one.

IGGY

Next question! Aerith: What gender is this clothing item?

*A photograph of a tracksuit is
projected on the scrim.*

AERITH

Um, pass?

IGGY

Oooo, and Aerith will incur a one-thousand-point penalty.

AERITH

What!?

IGGY

Just as passing isn't a requirement in our daily lives, it is heavily discouraged here.

AERITH

Did... did you just conflate "passing" in the gender sense and "passing" on answering a question?!

WISTERIA

"Gee-whiz!" Hurts, doesn't it?

IGGY

Wisteria, same question.

WISTERIA

I'm getting demiboy vibes from this one, Ig.

IGGY

"Demiboy," locking it in. Grayson?

GRAYSON

Who cares, Iggy?

IGGY

CORRECT AGAIN! We have now approached a lightning round. Grayson, as our leading player, you now have a chance to score an additional hundred points for these next few questions. Can you do it?

GRAYSON

I can try, Ig.

IGGY

(Flipping through playing cards with each question)
Galosh.

GRAYSON

Who cares?

IGGY

Correct. Leotard.

GRAYSON

Who asked?

IGGY

Correct. Serape.

GRAYSON

¿Quien lo quiere saber?

IGGY

Correct, plus I'm awarding you a hundred-point bilingual bonus!
Last question-

AERITH

You tell me!

Beat.

IGGY

Wow. Butting into another contestant's lightning round *and* before I even say the question? You got guts, kid! I'm awarding you nine hundred points. Aerith, Grayson, with each of you tied four hundred to four hundred, we have now entered sudden death. Whoever answers the next question correctly wins the game. Here it goes: What gender is this clothing item?

A photograph of two small paper items, shrouded in shadow, is projected on the scrim.

AERITH

Those aren't clothes! Those are tickets to Shania Twain's tour.

*The shadow over the paper items
fades away to reveal they are,
in fact, Shania Twain tickets.*

IGGY

Correct you are, Aerith! *And* those very tickets are your prize! What do you have to say to your fans watching right now? All three of us?

AERITH
(*Singing*)

"Man! I feel like a woman!"

IGGY

That's all the time we have today, folks! This is Iggy saying: Neither clothing nor good music taste knows gender bounds. Goodnight!

AERITH

Well, Gray, you put up one hell of a fight. How did you know all those questions right out of the gate? Just like that?

GRAYSON

Well, Aerith, I think it all comes down to the fact that I don't perceive any particular gender at all.

*Lights shift. Iggy and Wisteria
exit. Aerith sets up their phone
to record.*

AERITH

Care to elaborate on that?

Scene VIII. Interview #3: Gray Area

Later that night.

Spotlight on Grayson.

GRAYSON

If a social construct can be anything you want it to be, why not just choose anything and everything? As far as gender goes, I feel the entirety of the human experience is a possibility for me. I think that's where my love of language comes into play. Like, that explanation I just gave you. Palpable, Abstract, Spiritual. That's the same explanation I gave Wisteria. For Iggy, I said "my gender isn't a point on a map, but shading on a graph." Visual, Concrete, Pragmatic. Through my various word choices, I'm able to paint as vast and accurate a picture as possible for multiple souls to perceive. That's why I try to learn as much about words and language as possible. Precision. I value precision in all aspects of my life. I hate it when people say, "some things are beyond words." Precision *is* experience. You want to know why I came up with pinkie thoughts? Because when I find those people with whom I feel safe opening up all my being, I want them to express the fullest extent of their words as much as I want to hold on to mine. Language measures our capacity for precision. Ergo, language is precision is experience. It's funny though. As much as I preach my love of precision, my gender is anything but. "Non-binary" as a label is, in of itself, a misnomer. It seemingly defines me by what I am not, but what of all that I am? And still, how do you define what I am when gender itself has no point, no line, not even an infinite series of lines. It's everything and more. Because sometimes, things are at their most precise when there's a gray area. I do apologize if that wasn't any help to you.

AERITH

No no, I get it. "Everything and more."

GRAYSON

Hello, nail. Meet head.

AERITH

Grayson, I've been living in my own gray area for a while now, but I think it's time for a change. I'm going to stop using the cloak.

GRAYSON

Does this mean you're coming out to your parents?

AERITH

Yeah. Yeah, I think so.

GRAYSON

Well, I support you no matter what, *cariño*.

Grayson exits. Aerith reaches for her phone. To her surprise, it starts ringing.

AERITH

Hey, I was about to call. I plan on coming over this weekend. Something I need to-

Aerith falls silent. Blackout. Throughout this scene transition, Aerith changes in the Transformation Station.

Scene IX

Sometime later.

Grayson, Iggy, and Wisteria are sitting at the table. Iggy is fiddling with a Magic 8 Ball. One empty seat is placed downstage of the table.

IGGY

You ever notice how none of us ever sit on that side of the table?

Grayson and Wisteria look to the opposite side of the table. The friends move their seats to the opposite side and sit back down. They are now facing away from the audience. Beat.)

This feels wrong.

ALL

(Several improvised variations of "yeah," "I agree," "let's switch back," etc.)

The friends move their seats back to their original positions. Aerith enters the space and sits down at the empty seat. She's wearing her cloak.)

WISTERIA

Oh, Aerith, can you not sit there? Bad aura.

AERITH

Okay.

Aerith promptly gets up and drags the seat away from the table and sits down, facing away from her friends.

WISTERIA

Hey, girlie. What's going on in Aerith Land?

AERITH

It's fine. I'm fine.

IGGY

(Shaking the Magic 8 Ball before reading off the answer)
My sources say no!

GRAYSON

Aerith, please tell us what's the matter.

Beat.

AERITH

My nonna died on Friday. Brain aneurysm.

WISTERIA

Oh, honey.

AERITH

My parents called and told me last night. Asked if I could come over. Which, of course, they don't even know I was already planning on it.

IGGY

Oh god, that's right.

WISTERIA

What did you decide to do about that, hon? Did you hold off on coming out?

AERITH

No. I couldn't keep hiding it from them... but I couldn't tell it to their faces either. At that point, whatever they thought the lifetime after didn't matter to me. But if I'd had looked them in the eyes and said it, and saw even a hint of disapproval or shame, I wouldn't know how to live with that fact. So I came out in a group text. And now I'll never know what they really thought in the moment. And life's better that way.

IGGY

You did what you felt you had to do. That's the important part.

AERITH

It went fine, by the way. They texted back not too long after and said-

GRAYSON (as PARENT #1)
(Prerecorded)

I don't quite understand, but I don't have to understand to love you. We will always love you.

AERITH

I think that's the best I could've hoped for. Hell, a response like that? I thought my visit might actually be bearable.

IGGY

"Thought?"

WISTERIA

Oh dear.

GRAYSON

What happened next, Aerith?

AERITH

They showed me the photo they chose for the centerpiece at the wake: A group photo from our last big family reunion seven, eight years ago. I wasn't standing with my parents. I was center, kneeling next to nonna. I had the goofiest grin on my face, and she was right over my shoulder, smiling back at me. And it dawned on me that these people I've known my whole life are going to look at this photo to identify me. "Ah, yes. There's Cheryl right there, and that's her *grandson*." I thought, no, I'm not going to play "boy" for my family. I don't want that, nonna wouldn't want that, I'm not doing it. So I decided to dress properly for the occasion.

She disrobes to reveal a plain black dress underneath.

Nothing too fancy, don't want to draw *too* much attention, but it'll do. I tried sneaking out the front door and-

Parent #2 enters.

IGGY (as PARENT #2)

What are you wearing?

AERITH

Clothes.

IGGY (as PARENT #2)

Oh no, don't you even think about wearing that out.

Parent #1 enters.

GRAYSON (as PARENT #1)
What's going on down here- What the hell?

AERITH
This is standard funeral attire.

IGGY (as PARENT #2)
Now just you listen, m-

*Aerith uses her remote to censor
the word "mister," only the
"wacky" sound effect has now
been replaced with TV Static.*

IGGY (as PARENT #2)
It's one thing to dress like that at school, but this is a
funeral home full of mourning Catholics.

AERITH
This is what nonna would have wanted.

IGGY (as PARENT #2)
You can't possibly know that.

AERITH
I do, and it's true. I told her before anyone else in this
family. She died remembering my true self, and to show up at her
wake as anything else would be a lie.

GRAYSON (as PARENT #1)
You are so selfish.

AERITH
How?

IGGY (as PARENT #2)
Using your grandmother's death as an opportunity to- to make a
political statement!

AERITH
Oh, is that all I am to you?

IGGY (as PARENT #2)
It's a *delusion* is what it is. I raised you better than this-

Static.

AERITH.

Goddammit! My name is *Aerith!*

IGGY (as PARENT #1)

(Barely holding back the urge to strike her)

Take the Lord's name in vain in this house, whyyyy... Young m-

Static.

I don't care if your name is Erin or-

Static.

Or Mahatma Gandhi. *Whatever you are, you're going to march to your room and change into something presentable this instant.*

AERITH

I'll wear and say whatever I *goddamn* want.

GRAYSON (as PARENT #1)

Young m-

Aerith tries to censor the word "man," but Parent #1 smacks the remote out of her hand.

Young *man*, you are going to change or so help me God I don't know *what*.

AERITH

"So help your God" all you want. I don't give a fuck about any god that would give me parents like you.

Aerith begins to storm off.

GRAYSON (as PARENT #1)

Don't even *think* about going to the wake or the funeral!

Aerith stops at the door. Beat. She promptly slams it and turns back out. Grayson and Iggy remove their cloaks. We are back in the present.

AERITH

So that was my weekend.

WISTERIA

Aerith-

AERITH

I know! Unbelievable, right?

WISTERIA

Aerith... I think your parents may have had a point.

AERITH

...

IGGY

Yeah, Aerith, I gotta side with Wisteria on this one.

GRAYSON

I concur.

AERITH

What?

WISTERIA

Make no mistake. The way they treated you? Inexcusable. But at the same time-

IGGY

They're not wrong that you wearing a dress would not fly at this funeral.

GRAYSON

Aerith, I know it's hard to pretend to be someone you're not. We all do. And it is wonderful that you have found it in you to live your truth. Truly it is... But this isn't about you. Your grandmother's funeral is not the place to come out.

WISTERIA

Surely you see that, sweetheart.

AERITH

My nonna was one of the only souls on this Earth who knew the real me. One of the only people who supported me no matter what. Now it looks like she was the only one.

Grayson raises their pinkie finger.

IGGY

Oh, don't pin that on us.

AERITH

Oh no, I *will* pin it on that my nonna is buried six feet under and I will never say goodbye or I love you to her face again. And I'll *absolutely* pin it on that my last chance to do just that was stolen from me by the people you side with. Imagine if your last chance to say goodbye to your dad were-

IGGY

Hey hey hey!

WISTERIA

Yeah, Aerith.

GRAYSON

That was uncalled for.

AERITH

You're right- That was- I shouldn't have- My *larger* point being-

Grayson promptly lowers their pinkie finger. This needs said now.

GRAYSON

(The toughest of love)

Aerith! I know you're upset, and we all care about you deeply, but you need to listen here and listen well. This room has always been a safe space for us; a quiet, closed-off little spot where we could meet up a few nights a week and just exist. But ever since your orientation, nearly every meetup you've asked us to carry the weight of your emotional labor. And it's not like we aren't happy to do it. You're in a turbulent stage of your life right now, and you should be able to lean on your friends. But for you to blow up, weaponize Iggy's trauma against him, disregard all the ways we've supported you after we have one disagreement... *that* is uncalled for.

Long beat. Aerith starts to say something, but instead turns back out.

Blackout.
AERITH

Blackout.

Lights up.
WISTERIA

Spotlight on Aerith.

...
AERITH

*All the lights come back on.
Aerith is alone on stage with a
figure in a cloak, facing her.*

Wisteria?

WISTERIA (as HOODED FIGURE #1)
(*Heavy breathing*)

*Aerith takes a few steps to the
side, inching her way toward the
nearest exit as the Hooded
Figure's gaze follows her. The
inching soon turns into a speedy
walk, then a screeching halt as
a second Hooded Figure appears
and blocks the exit.*

Iggy?
AERITH

IGGY (as HOODED FIGURE #2)
(*Heavy breathing.*)

*Aerith runs to the exit at the
opposite end of the stage. She
is halted by a third Hooded
Figure.*

Iggy, Wiz, Gray, stop it. You're freaking me out.
AERITH

*The Hooded Figures begin to
encircle Aerith.*

IGGY (as DR. DENSLow)
And what's your name, *sir*?

WISTERIA (as THERAPIST)
It's always nice meeting with you-

GRAYSON (as PARENT #1)
Young *man*!

AERITH
Y'all, this isn't funny. Stop it now.

WISTERIA (as THERAPIST)
It really is so hard to get new names right.

GRAYSON (as PARENT #1)
So help me God I don't know *what* I'll do!

IGGY (as PARENT #2)
It's a *delusion* is what it is!

AERITH
Leave me alone.

WISTERIA (as THERAPIST)
I don't understand.

GRAYSON (as PARENT #1)
I don't have to understand.

IGGY (as WISTERIA'S COUSIN)
I just don't understand.

*The Hooded Figures have Aerith
surrounded.*

ALL EXCEPT AERITH
We will never understand.

AERITH
LEAVE ME ALONE!!!

*Blackout and spotlight on Aerith
as the Hooded Figures cease
their heavy breathing and
retreat to corners of the stage.
Aerith breaks down.*

AERITH (cont'd)

I never wanted to make waves, you know? I wanted this to be a private thing that no one would ever have to see if they didn't want to. I thought if I could draw the curtains and wear dresses around my bedroom and at our meetups that would be enough. I thought if I had that one shred of happiness, then that would be enough to carry me the rest of my life. But no. No no no I had to get too cocky. I had to peek behind those curtains. I had to sneak my way down the hall, through the lobby, and I just NEEDED to go out the front door, knowing full and well someone might see me. That little part of me just had to know how it felt to twirl my dress out on the quad. Run through the grass like it's *Wuthering Heights*. Have strangers gawk at me... and some of them smile. Finally know what it's like to be alive. Because that's just it. I've never been alive until I came out. Everything before that was going through the motions. I thought I had the best of both worlds going back and forth as long as I have, but there is no best world when you're compromising who you really are. I'm just masquerading as a man, and all the time I have to live as a woman, I spend it dragging everyone down with me. The thing is, I don't know what my "best world" looks like. I don't know what a world looks like where I can be happy.

*Aerith collapses to the floor.
Lights up. The friends disrobe
and bring her to her feet.*

IGGY

Aerith, you're not wrong. There is no "best world" for us. The world isn't *built* for us.

WISTERIA

We do what we can to build one ourselves, but we can't force everyone else to care.

GRAYSON

But until that day, we'll be right by your side.

*She looks at all her friends.
They all crowd around her for a
group hug. Blackout.*

Scene X. Epilogue

Sometime later at night.

A park bench on the university quad.

Seated across the space, some on the ground, some on the bench, the friends are playing a board game. The box, labeled "The Game of Life: Reality Check Edition," is propped up for all to see.

WISTERIA

Gods, just look at that sky. Why don't we come out here more?

IGGY

Well for one it's cold as balls.

GRAYSON

Like an arctic bidet.

WISTERIA

Lovely images, both of you.

AERITH

Your turn, Ig.

He takes his turn. He picks up and reads off a "Marriage" Card.

IGGY

"Try for a polycule! For every partner space on which you land, add one peg to your car." Nice!

GRAYSON

I appreciate how all the pegs are the colors of different gender flags.

WISTERIA

You better! Those were a bitch to paint. *(To Aerith.)* Your turn.

She takes her turn. She picks up and reads off a "Student" Card.

AERITH

"Attend college. Student loans: Minus three hundred dollars from your bank account on each subsequent turn. Friends: priceless."

*Wisteria checks their phone,
raising their eyebrows at what
they see.*

WISTERIA

Y'all! My portrait project just got graded!

*They fumble unlocking their
phone.*

AERITH

Since when do you say "y'all?"

WISTERIA

Since I've been around you, of course!

GRAYSON

A signature "Aerith-ism."

AERITH

More like a "my entire family thinks they're southern-ism."

IGGY

Hey, speaking of, you ever hear back from your parents after... you know.

AERITH

Maybe I will, maybe I won't. I'll own up to my shit, but I'm done waiting for an apology from them. As far as I'm concerned, I have all the family I need right here.

WISTERIA

Here it is, here it is! *(Reading.)* "Excellent work, Wisteria. You've captured each of your subjects in their element. And your choice of lighting--"

IGGY

Yeah yeah, "Wisteria is amazing at art" blah blah blah. What did he say about us?

WISTERIA

I'm getting to that! *(Reading.)* "Furthermore, I appreciate your subversive take on the rubric requirements for gender. I see the

WISTERIA (cont'd)

requirement alienated models who don't identify as male or female, and I will retract it from future assignments. F.Y.I. Your submissions were my favorite out of the class."

IGGY

Ayyyyyy!

GRAYSON

That's fantastic!

AERITH

Gee, Wiz!

WISTERIA

My ankle will be so proud!

AERITH

I'm sorry, your what?

WISTERIA

My ankle. Not my aunt, not my uncle, but my ankle!

GRAYSON

Yeah, sorry, Wiz. I'm sticking with *tié*.

IGGY

Doesn't do it for me, either. Doesn't pop.

AERITH

(Imitating Dr. Denslow)

"Like Iggy Pop?"

IGGY

Huh? *(It clicks.)* Oh god. What did that old fart have to say about *your* project anyway?

AERITH

I mean, nothing I didn't expect. *(Imitating Dr. Denslow.)* "Uh hmm, okay, uhhhh, very nice work. Thank you for sharing, uhhhh Erin."

IGGY

That's Dino Denslow for ya.

AERITH

But hey! A couple of cis kids stopped me in the hall-

WISTERIA

Oh gods.

IGGY

Who do I need to fight?

AERITH

(Laughs.) No! Nothing like that. They told me how well my project laid the groundwork for trans issues and now they have a better understanding of what we go through.

GRAYSON

Identify the problem's roots, demonstrate social impact. Just like a true alchemist.

AERITH

Aw shucks.

GRAYSON

It just goes to show that a few changed minds at a time are all it really takes.

WISTERIA

Wellllllll, I wouldn't say that's *all* it takes.

IGGY

True. And maybe we'll never find "all it takes" on our own. We want it so bad.

WISTERIA

We fight for it.

GRAYSON

We use our voices.

AERITH

But it's not enough.

IGGY

Because some wants are taken from us.

WISTERIA

Because some fights just can't be won.

GRAYSON

Because some people just won't hear us.

AERITH

We can't make people care. Not on our own.

IGGY

We need more people to want for us.

WISTERIA

Fight for us.

GRAYSON

Make us heard.

IGGY

And when that day comes...

WISTERIA

When that day comes...

GRAYSON

When that day comes...

ALL

... it will be divine.

On the word "divine," the Transformation Station illuminates with a sea of galaxies. At this point, all the friends have all made their way to the bench. They look up.

AERITH

You know, the light from those stars took billions of years to reach us.

GRAYSON

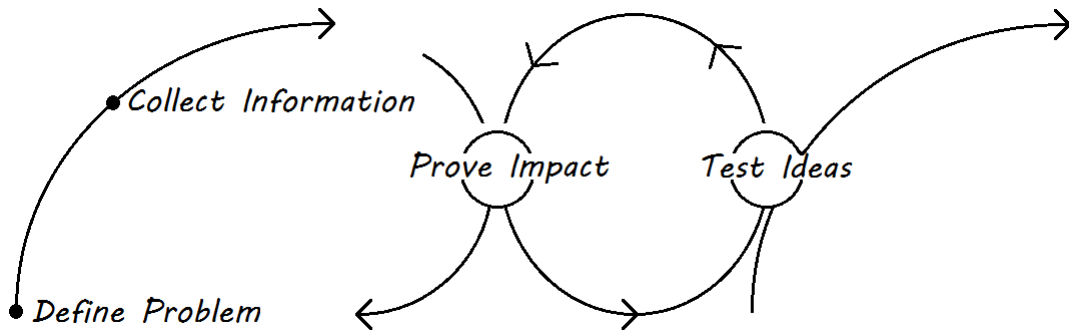
And yet it arrived just in time for us to see it.

They all exchange glances before returning their gaze to the sky.

End of play.

APPENDIX

A.



Source:
socialimpactarchitects.com