



**Sample Pages from
Life, Off Book**

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LIFE, OFF BOOK

A DRAMEDY IN ONE ACT BY
Scott Giessler



Life, Off Book

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Characters

OPHELIA: A phenomenal dancer and actress with poor social skills.

JEB: Ophelia's mild mannered fake boyfriend. Pianist who is a closeted gay man.

MAC: Jeb's significant other who is already out of the closet. Also a pianist.

JUDE: A teen on forearm crutches who has feelings for Ophelia.

DIRECTOR: A figment of Ophelia's imagination who helps guide her actions.

CONDUCTOR: The high school music teacher.

CYRUS: A bad actor who defies all acting rules.

KELLY: A "rough around the edges" student.

ABBY: Student in dance class.

ALI: Student listening to Jeb play.

Narrators

These are some of the high school students that populate their world. All are gender neutral. Use either name to suit your casting.

JOEY/JOIE: Other half of Garrison; intelligent and refined.

GARRISON/GABBY: Other half of Joie; intelligent and refined.

GEORGE/GWYN: The dry-witted narrator, with low tolerance for nonsense.

EMERSON/EMILY: The inner voice of the characters.

MIKE/MIKAYLA: The upbeat, on the bright side, mediator between the narrators.

GAVIN/GRACIE: A rambunctious, energetic, young, individual.

JULIAN/JULIA: A self-righteous "cool kid" who is clever with his words.

MARK/MARIANNA: An intelligent introvert with a particular interest in astronomy and physics.

ENSEMBLE: These are the students who watch Jude and Ophelia in the ballroom dance routine, are the band in the band room scene, the extra dancers in the dance studio, and are present at the end when Jude and Mac finally hold hands. They also assist with set transitions.

Life, Off Book was originally performed at Kingswood Regional High School in Wolfeboro, New Hampshire in March of 2017, with the following cast and crew.

CAST

Ophelia: Becca Connely
Jeb: Connor Nelson
Mac: Michael Crew
Jude: Patrick Doherty
Director: Rebecca Holland
Garrison: Garrison Barron
Joie: Joie Milbourn
Gavin: Gavin Williams
Beth: Mikayla Matos
Julian: Julian Cates
Gwyn: Gwyn Anderson
Emily: Emily Sutherland
Marianna: Marianna Palladino
Ensemble: Ali Champagne, Amanda Davis, Kelly Holland,
Heather Lucas, Kristy Verrill

ORCHESTRA

Piano: Marianna Palladino
Percussion: Mia Marbury
Saxophones: Ruth Barron, Mikayla Matos, Kaitlin Miller
Clarinet: Abby Corneau, Daniel Humer
Guitar: Cyrus Gauthier, Josh Martineau, Robert Hunt
Ukelele: Autumn Rodil
Music Teacher: Spencer Bolduc

PRODUCTION STAFF

Technical Design and Directors: Katie Kelliher, Joe Marino
Lighting Technicians: Meg Roche, Kenzie West
Follow Spot: Mariena Murray
Costume Design & Construction: Charlotte Hardy, Michael Crew, Gwyn Anderson,
Rebecca Holland, Mariena Murray, Autumn Rodil
Set Design and Construction: Andrew Baker, Ruth Barron, Savannah Billings,
Julian Cates, Cyrus Gauthier, Daniel Humer, Hansen
Matheson Joie Milbourn, Connor Nelson, Autumn
Rodil,
Stage Managers: Andrew Baker, Hansen Matheson
Costume Mentor: Michael Allfrey
Music: Robert Burns
Choreographer: Kaylin Dean
Assistant Directors: Rebecca Holland, Kimmi Adjutant
Set Mentor/Batman: Norman Adjutant
Director: Scott Giessler

JOIE and GARRISON, two very prim and proper students, push a chalkboard out onto stage and begin a presentation. JOIE has a pointer, and refers to a diagram on a blackboard, demonstrating the three-act structure.

JOIE: In the classic three-act structure, you have three distinct phases of the narrative. In Act One, the author establishes the world where the story exists and all of the rules that govern that world. The who, what, when, and where, if you will.

JEB, JUDE, OPHELIA and MAC step forward and pose. JUDE has forearm crutches.

GARRISON: The “who” in this case, is the most excellent story of Mac, Jeb, Jude and Ophelia.

GARRISON nods to them. The four step out of the scene.

GARRISON: Thank you.

JOIE: In Act Two, the author introduces the plot device that will begin the hero or heroes’ slow descent into chaos. Culminating in a “Darkest Before Dawn” moment where all hope is lost and...

GAVIN jumps out and cuts off JOIE.

GAVIN: ...and everyone is DEAD! — at least metaphorically — and then, bah-BOOM! Act Three! Where our heroes rise from the ashes and SAVE THE DAY... or at least, themselves.

MIKAYLA appears and pulls GAVIN away.

GAVIN: What?

MIKAYLA: Not your turn yet.

GAVIN: But I...

MIKAYLA: Go!

They exit. JULIAN appears, bored, perhaps looking at his phone.

JULIAN: In other words, every story has a beginning, middle, and end.

GARRISON: However, there’s an old adage in script writing that if you haven’t annihilated the world in the first ten seconds, then your story is going to be a dismal failure.

JOIE: Well put.

GARRISON: Thank you.

JOIE: You're welcome. So, although it's not first up on the chronological narrative, we're going to start the story right when Ophelia does this...

Lights up on OPHELIA falling on the floor next to JEB. GWYN is standing next to them.

OPHELIA: NOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

JEB: So... good. You... you're taking this well.

GWYN: Okay, so this smoking hot mess is Ophelia. She's reacting to the news that Jeb just gave her.

GAVIN appears. Delivers in overly dramatic fashion.

GAVIN: What is that information? What destroyed her world?

GWYN: 'Kay. In order to heighten the suspense, we're going to hold off on that until later. And since this is the middle of the story... where Jeb's story mostly ends, and where Ophelia's mostly begins...let's go back and start with act one...

JOIE: To when Jeb and Ophelia were the couple of couples.

MIKAYLA appears. JOIE and GARRISON disappear. OPHELIA and JEB perform a visual representation of the following narrative. We start with two ensemble members standing upstage, representing OPHELIA's parents, waving to her.

MIKAYLA: Even from a young age Jeb and Ophelia were together as friends. Ophelia was named after the Shakespearean character, not because her parents hoped that she would one day marry Hamlet, but because they thought the name sounded pretty, with the hope that one day she would grow up and be something great, even though they themselves were not.

JULIAN invades her space.

JULIAN: They're dirt poor and losers.

MIKAYLA: Dude!

JULIAN: Bad attitudes, worse choices.

JULIAN disappears.

MIKAYLA: Well... from a young age, Ophelia understood that mission and took it to heart. Jeb lived across the street and every day they would meet and play.

GWYN appears. JEB joins OPHELIA, and they play like young children. Use your imagination.

GWYN: Even then, she knew something was up with Jeb.

MIKAYLA: But she didn't care.

We see JEB and OPHELIA playing and dancing.

GWYN: Sixth grade eventually comes along and suddenly the world goes from being kumbaya to dark and spooky. A world that's not nice to girls, and definitely not nice to gay boys.

GAVIN appears. Meanwhile JEB and OPHELIA are handed backpacks and middle school items by passing "students."

GAVIN: So, like, by eighth grade, Jeb and Ophelia had everyone thinking that they were an item... because it was... you know...safe. Safe from the middle school drama. A drama that crushes the soul...

GAVIN is getting worked up. MIKAYLA puts her hand on his shoulder.

GAVIN: But before too long, it became, like, way more than that. Already at thirteen, she was a total phenom on stage and in the dance studio, and he was a rock star on the piano.

Suggestion: JEB and OPHELIA pantomime quick scenes of her dancing and him applauding, and then him hugging her when she's sad.

GAVIN: So, despite all the tween angst and drama, they had an island of total bliss. It was like a...like a...

GARRISON appears.

GARRISON: Like a waltz?

MAC and his parents enter.

GAVIN: Like a waltz!

JEB and OPHELIA fall into a standard waltz.

GARRISON: Meanwhile, Mac lived in a lonelier closet, and elected ultimately to come out of it. His parents did not take it well.

MAC stands in front of his parents, they freak, slap him, etc. JUDE then enters, walking with forearm crutches.

JOIE: Our good friend Jude had no island to retreat to. Life does not provide a natural mechanism to hide forearm crutches. Expectations became practical, courage became intrinsic. Yet, despite practicality, Jude couldn't take his eyes off Ophelia, and Mac couldn't take his eyes off of Jeb.

MAC and JUDE stand on opposite sides of the stage watching the center where JEB and OPHELIA are dancing.

GARRISON: Meanwhile, their mystique grew. By tenth grade Jeb and Ophelia were THE school couple that everyone looked up to. They were the perfect package. Their waltz exploded into full-on Ballroom.

Everyone circles around them as OPHELIA and JEB perform an impressive competition grade ballroom dance. It resembles "Dancing with the Stars." The music and dance then finish to student applause. EMILY and MIKAYLA emerge.

EMILY: At least that's what Ophelia told herself. Other than Jeb, Ophelia didn't really have any friends. She had spent so much time busting her ass to be a success that there was no room for relationships.

MIKAYLA: Actually, that's not really true either.

EMILY: Yeah, no... She just didn't know how.

MIKAYLA: Right.

EMILY: So, she told herself she didn't need them. For example, the dance studio was always a forced march.

OPHELIA is in the dance studio doing a routine. Other STUDENTS follow along but can't keep up. She stops.

OPHELIA: Take it from the top!

ABBY: Dance ended thirteen minutes ago.

OPHELIA: Well, you still don't have it.

ABBY quits and the others follow suit. OPHELIA shrugs and keeps at it.

EMILY: On stage it was no different.

EMILY exits. OPHELIA is on stage. She is performing a scene from The Taming of the Shrew. CYRUS is terrible.

CYRUS: Nay, come, Kate, come; you must not look so sour.

OPHELIA: It is my fashion, when I see a crab.

CYRUS: Why, here's no crab; and therefore look not sour.

OPHELIA: There is, there is.

CYRUS: Um...

OPHELIA: You were supposed to be off book three days ago!

CYRUS: Shakespeare's hard.

OPHELIA: It's really not.

CYRUS storms off. JULIAN and GWYN enter.

JULIAN: And remember junior year when she started directing? She was even worse.

GWYN: The note sessions?

JULIAN: Ugh.

Lights up on OPHELIA looking at the narrators.

OPHELIA: Cast on stage!

They all gather around OPHELIA.

OPHELIA: Joie and Garrison.

JOIE: (*excitedly*) Right here.

OPHELIA: You're sounding completely stuck up and snooty. I can't relate to you.

GARRISON: I thought we were charming.

JOIE: Effervescent, even.

OPHELIA: More like welcome to Nerdsville, population: you.

JOIE: Oh.

JOIE and GARRISON are shocked and ashamed.

OPHELIA: Marianna. Where are you?

MARIANNA buries her face in her hands. Others then point her out.

OPHELIA: I swear I can't hear or see you. Oh, and Julian, for the love of all that's Shakespeare, PHYSICALITY! Your posture looks like scoliosis, and your face is Botoxville. Alright, pick it up where we left off.

The NARRATORS get up and move away from OPHELIA, many of them stinging.

MIKAYLA: She looked like she had it together... even if we wanted to strangle her...

EMILY: Yeah. Beneath the surface however, was a much different story. She was an absolute traffic accident.

MIKAYLA: Well I don't know about tha....*(beat)*...traffic accident, yeah...

EMILY: ...and the longer she had to hold onto the lie, the more she had to construct it. Rehearse it. Just like theater.

MIKAYLA and EMILY exit. OPHELIA and JEB are with ALI and other STUDENTS. OPHELIA cozies up to JEB, who is playing piano and then stops.

JEB: So that's the beginning of it, but I don't really have the second part yet.

OPHELIA puts her head on his shoulder.

ALI: That's pretty good.

OPHELIA strokes JEB's hair a little.

OPHELIA: Jeb that's so good. *(more emphatic)* That's so GOOD!

JEB: Thanks.

OPHELIA: You're welcome.

JULIAN: Nothing too weird there, right?

EMILY: You think she was tough on us? Check out what the director up in her brain is doing...

The students, JEB, and OPHELIA reset. JEB goes back and plays the same riff again and then stops. We hear

a DIRECTOR from the audience. She has a very similar voice to OPHELIA.

JEB: So that's the beginning of it, but I don't really have the second part yet.

DIRECTOR: Okay, STOP! Ophelia! We want to make it at least LOOK convincing. Lean in. (*OPHELIA leans towards JEB*) In! IN! (*she goes further*) What? What is that? Put your head on his damn shoulder!

She does.

ALL: That's pretty good.

DIRECTOR: Do something! Stroke his hair! Oh my god!

OPHELIA strokes JEB's hair a little.

OPHELIA: Jeb that's so good.

DIRECTOR: Nope! Try again!

OPHELIA: ...That's so GOOD!

DIRECTOR: There it is.

JEB: Thanks.

OPHELIA: You're welcome.

DIRECTOR: LOUDER!

OPHELIA walks over to her locker. JULIAN enters. DIRECTOR remains in the audience.

JULIAN: So. Every day, In the locker there is a note in an envelope. The note is always different.

JEB moves downstage. He recites the notes from the side of the stage. OPHELIA repeatedly opens her locker and opens the envelopes, and reads the notes.

JEB: Your glistening smile makes my heart melt.

Reset.

JEB: Like a spring day, your warmth brings me life.

Reset.

JEB: Hey baby, are you a fermata? Because I want to hold you.

JEB walks off.

JOIE: She's flattered. She's touched. The notes lift her up.

EMILY: And they reinforce the picture. She never asks about it, because a buried part of her knows the truth. Instead, she just shows off the letters.

GARRISON: To the outside world, their relationship is a well-built theater set. And as we all know, theater sets eventually get taken down.

MARIANNA is at the chalkboard, now tinkering with math equations. See author's notes for a suggestion.

MARIANNA: ...orbits...

GARRISON: What?

MARIANNA: Nothing...I...nothing...

GARRISON: No, what?

MIKAYLA: Go on. Tell them.

MARIANNA: It's like orbits.

MARIANNA writes math equations on the board.

MARIANNA: In order to attain a stable orbit, you have to take into account velocity, trajectory, mass, momentum... You can't just throw them together with faulty premises. Stable, ongoing gravimetric relationships require a considered, calculated and well-executed construct. If their vector of approach or speed are off by even a little, then yes indeed, for a short amount of time, objects may appear to orbit. But in the end, tidal forces will either hurl them away from each other or, as most likely in this case, spiral inwards towards cataclysmic collision.

All stare.

JULIAN: Freak.

MARIANNA retreats. Everyone else present silently scorns JULIAN. GARRISON points to the three-act diagram.

GARRISON: Act Two: Introduction of conflict.

The scene changes to band class. As the chairs and music stands come out, the band could play a musical interlude that will morph into the piece they are playing for the CONDUCTOR. The band faces forward

towards the audience. MAC and JEB sit next to one another. Feel free to use canned music.

CONDUCTOR: Stop! Stop! Stop!

The band stops.

CONDUCTOR: Brass section, where are you??

MIKAYLA: Jeb and Mac sit next to each other in band. Mac took up the piano so he could be next to Jeb. So, that's where the romance began.

MAC: This section is so loud I swear to god I can't hear myself play.

JEB: You get used to it.

MAC: So, ah, what are you doing this weekend?

JEB: Nothing really.

MAC: I'm going hiking. Do you want to come along?

JEB: Um, I...

MAC: It's Perch Peak. It's an hour and a half away.

JULIAN: An hour and a half away is important when you're gay, and you're not really wanting anyone to know.

JEB: Actually, yeah.

MAC: Yeah?

JEB: Yeah.

JOIE and GARRISON are standing in front of the blackboard again, away from the band. We see notes on the elements of a symphony on the board.

JOIE: Romance is like a symphony. It can be told in movements. The first movement, is known as an "allegro," which in Italian means "merry."

MAC and JEB leave the band. They walk to the edge of the stage. They are at the top of the mountain. We hear a short piece of music that has an allegro feel to it.

JEB: This is amazing.

They smile at each other and hold hands. Connection.

GARRISON: This... this is the part of the music piece where everything is new and exciting.

JEB and MAC return back to the band. As they approach, they stop holding hands.

JOIE: The second movement, known as an “adagio,” is a slower movement. The heart slows down, and you settle into it.

An adagio is played by the rest of the band.

JEB: You want to hit this coffee shop I know in Keene?

MAC: Sure.

JULIAN: Subtext: That’s an hour and a half away.

JOIE: You’ll notice the emergence of themes in the music. Themes can be used to represent ideas, such as love... or people.

We hear one flutter of music that represents the love between MAC and JEB as they look at each other out of the corner of their eyes.

GARRISON: The third movement is known as the “Minuet and Trio.” It’s a time in the music where tempos, and more importantly, themes are tampered with.

OPHELIA enters. The band plays a trio as she does so.

OPHELIA: Jeb!

The band stops. OPHELIA walks over to JEB. MAC fills with anger as OPHELIA and JEB smile to each other.

CONDUCTOR: STOP! Can I help you?

OPHELIA: Sorry! Jeb forgot his notebook. Just returning it.

JEB immediately gives MAC the cold shoulder.

JEB: Hey.

OPHELIA: Hey! Here.

OPHELIA hands him the notebook and gives him a peck on the cheek.

CONDUCTOR: Aww, that’s adorable.

OPHELIA: Really?

CONDUCTOR: No. I’m trying to conduct. Get out!

OPHELIA flees.

JOIE: The fourth movement is where the story comes into its culmination.

GARRISON: Throughout the symphony recurring themes have come up again and again, and at some point, they will have to resolve themselves.

MAC looks a little anguished. JEB leans in.

JEB: Do you want to go to Boston with me this weekend? *(pause)*
What?

MAC: Jeb, I don't wanna do this.

JEB: Do what?

MAC refuses to make eye contact.

MAC: It's just...

JEB: I don't want to do this here.

MAC: Look, I know. There's so...

JEB pulls MAC aside, looks around.

MAC: I know that there's so much to be afraid of. But I promise you, coming out, as scary as it is, is still better than the closet. I just don't want to hide.

JEB: We're not hiding!

MAC: *(leaning in)* Then why are you whispering?

JEB: Because this is none of anyone's business. That's why.

MAC: None of anyone's... What about you and Ophelia? That seems to be everyone's business.

JEB: Hey...

MAC: Jeb! It's safe! You don't think anybody knows?

JEB: Did you tell them?!

MAC: No! Come on.

JEB: Look, what do you want? You want to start making out in the hallway?

MAC: No! That kind of stuff is just...uck! I just want to be us in front of other people.

JEB: We are...

MAC: People we know!

EMILY emerges as the two young men stare at each other.

EMILY: Jeb looks at this young man that he's fallen for. He knows he's right, but he can't tell him that, and he doesn't know why. In the end, the silence is so deafening that it pushes them both away from the conversation.

CONDUCTOR: Are you guys doing this or what?

MAC goes back over to band rehearsal. JEB follows.

CONDUCTOR: Okay, from 51.

The band plays as the scene transitions away to a hallway. A pop instrumental plays through the next bit.

GARRISON: For the sake of narrative, we're going to move away from the band room now and visit Jude, who has been waiting patiently to become part of our story. He's currently standing by Ophelia's locker for reasons that will become apparent in a moment. Meanwhile, Ophelia is about to round the corner after dropping off the notebook. An event, Jude's not anticipating.

OPHELIA enters and sees JUDE.

JUDE: Ophelia.

OPHELIA: Hey Jude... Did you just put something in there?

She opens her locker. She can't see anything. EMILY appears.

EMILY: Nothing's out of place. Her books are neatly stacked, and the red envelope is right where it always appears. Then, she remembers. It wasn't there right before she dropped the notebook off to Jeb.

Out comes JULIAN.

JULIAN: "Light dawns on Marblehead." She finally gets why a closeted gay man would write love letters to her. The answer: because he didn't.

She turns to JUDE.

OPHELIA: You!

JUDE: I... ah... You know what, screw it. Yeah it was me. I've been writing the...ah...

OPHELIA: The love notes.

JUDE: Okay, woah! That's a little strong. More like "like" notes.

OPHELIA: I can't believe this!

JUDE: You didn't think Jeb wrote them, did you? I mean, he may be fooling some people...but...

OPHELIA: This is completely...

JUDE: Okay, wait a minute. I admit, the first time I did it I wasn't sure if it was a good idea. But I watched when you read it, and a huge smile just washed over your face.

OPHELIA: That's when I thought Jeb was writing them!

JUDE looks at her quizzically.

OPHELIA: Yes, I hear how stupid that sounds, thank you. But this is... this is...I don't know...

JUDE: Look, I like you, I saw how happy it made you, and well, that was it. I had to keep doing it.

EMILY: And there it is. She feels something in that, and to be clear it's not pity. His directness, it's...

JUDE: Would you like me to stop?

OPHELIA: Yes...?

They both laugh.

JUDE: You don't sound sure.

OPHELIA: Okay, it was kinda nice. But, now that I know...

JUDE: ...yeah, the whole point kinda gets lost. *(beat)* How about, every day I just, ya know...say... nice... things instead. I mean, it's a great solution, listen to how well it rolled off the tongue.

They both laugh.

JUDE: Am I right?

OPHELIA: Okay. But... maybe tone down the cheap greeting card thing.

JUDE: Yeah, that would be a little creepy.

MIKAYLA: And he keeps to his word. Every day, they pass each other in the hallway. And every day he gives her the “like” note.

OPHELIA: Hey Jude!

JUDE: Great dance recital. That second number that you did? You were really feeling it?

OPHELIA: Yeah.

JUDE: It means something to you. Doesn't it?

MIKAYLA: It's not much. But it's just enough. A connection is born. And sometimes she goes out of her way to bump into him.

EMILY: It's so subtle that she doesn't even clock how it's getting past her defenses. She doesn't see him in that way...yet. He's still in friendville because she's still holding onto Jeb. For dear life.

GWYN appears.

GWYN: So, confession. We as the narrators weren't being 100% honest.

GAVIN lurks behind GWYN.

GWYN: He's back there, isn't he?

GAVIN: YEAH I am! We bald-faced lied to you. Our opening scene? with Ophelia vomiting her voicebox all over the floor? Looked way different than what we showed you. First, here's the thing that Jeb said to Ophelia to kick it all off...

We see OPHELIA at her locker. JEB hesitantly approaches her.

JEB: Ophelia, it's time we face facts. I'm gay, and Mac and I are dating.

GWYN: Here's what Ophelia really said.

OPHELIA: Oh, um. Ah, ha...yes. Um, right. Yeah. Right. I... I got the sense that... yeah. Yeah. Mac? I... yeah. Um, yeah... great...

The DIRECTOR approaches the stage.

DIRECTOR: Okay, Hold up! Hold up! That, WOW. That was a disaster!

OPHELIA: I'm sorry, I'm just not sure what to do with this.

DIRECTOR: Okay. Okay. Well... let's think about the subtext.

OPHELIA: The subtext? You want the subtext? I'll give you the freakin' subtext! The subtext is...NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!

GWYN: That's where that comes from.

GWYN and GAVIN exit.

DIRECTOR: Well we can't say that. I mean, it's not exactly like she didn't see this coming, right?

OPHELIA: Okay, yeah.

DIRECTOR: RIGHT? So, deep breath. Deliver the line.

OPHELIA: Okay. (to JEB) Jeb, good for you.

DIRECTOR goes back into the audience.

JEB: So... good. You... you're taking this well.

OPHELIA: (*rapidly*) I mean, we all... who are we kidding... we both kind of knew. I'm glad for you. Are you... are you... letting people... um, ah...know?

DIRECTOR: SLOW DOWN!!!

JEB: I... I don't know...

DIRECTOR: Be supportive. Even if you don't want to.

OPHELIA goes to JEB.

OPHELIA: Jeb... You know your parents won't care. They probably know. I think some people at school know already.

JEB: They do?

OPHELIA: Well, one or two, anyway...

DIRECTOR: Okay, on the next line, try to play up some friend zone stuff.

OPHELIA: How are things going, so far... bro?

JEB: You mean with Mac? Okay, I guess. Well, actually, no. Not okay. Really. He's angry at me for something. I'm not really...

OPHELIA: Maybe you should just try listening more. That's what you've always done with me, pal, and it works great. Try it.

DIRECTOR: Good!

JEB: Okay.

DIRECTOR: Mother him a little.

She turns to the DIRECTOR.

OPHELIA: What??

DIRECTOR: Put a good face on it, and give him an atta-boy.

She turns back and awkwardly says the next part.

OPHELIA: You... go back there and you make this work!

JEB: (*miffed*) Oh, okay. All right.

OPHELIA: Now!

JEB: Okay!

JEB looks at her quizzically, then starts leaving. He turns back to her. She gives him a “thumbs up.”

DIRECTOR: SMILE!

OPHELIA: You got this!

She gives a terribly disturbing smile. He smiles back, and she exits. MAC enters and we see them pantomime the next part. MIKAYLA appears with JULIAN and JOIE. DIRECTOR remains in the audience, close to the stage.

MIKAYLA: Jeb went back to Mac and tried to buy him off. Concert tickets, compliments, and even a cake.

We see JEB offer these up to MAC.

JULIAN: Which was weird because it wasn't his birthday, and it was eight o'clock in the morning.

MAC is smiling but completely confused by the gift.

JOIE: Mac was patient with him, but eventually, got tired of the third movement, and wanted a resolution.

Our NARRATORS exit. JEB and MAC are walking together. He's looking around.

MAC: You don't have to worry.

JEB: That's not what I'm doing.

MAC: Okay.

JEB: It's not.

MAC: And I'm saying okay.

JEB: Yeah you are, but no, you're not. I can hear it.

JEB looks at MAC and he shrugs and stares right back. OPHELIA appears on another part of the stage. She pulls out her cell phone and dials. Immediately JEB's phone rings. As they continue talking, he pulls it out, looks at it, and then ignores it. We see OPHELIA clock that and put it away, then walk off.

JEB: I'm trying... I promise. I'm trying to ease myself into the pool...

MAC laughs.

JEB: What?

MAC: Come on in, the water's fine!

JEB: You're such a dork.

Another phone call from OPHELIA. JEB hits ignore.

MAC: Is that Ophelia?

JEB: Yeah, why?

MAC: Every time she calls, you send it to voicemail. You're hiding us, even from her.

JEB: For your information I told her, and oh by the way, she's rooting for us.

MAC: And yet you keep ignoring her. That's actually worse.

JEB: You're determined to ruin this day. Hasn't it been great?

MAC: Oh yeah, don't get me wrong, the forty-five minute ride out here was awesome. You know, I'm not sure people suspect that we're dating so much as trying to find a place to dump bodies...

JEB: I'm trying to enjoy our time together...

MAC: Did you bring a cake? I'd love another cake.

JEB: Okay, that wasn't my best move.

MAC: I'm curious, what was?

JEB: Okay. Okay. I can take a beating.

MAC: Can you?

MAC gets up.

MAC: I can be patient, but I am waiting...

MAC exits. MIKAYLA, JULIAN and EMILY appear.

MIKAYLA: Mac was right. Ophelia had not seen Jeb for a while.
Walking to school in the morning, no Jeb. At her dance recitals,
no Jeb. At lunch, no Jeb.

JULIAN: But every time there was an argument between Mac and Jeb,
there he was, rubbing it in her face.

JEB appears before OPHELIA.

JEB: Okay, so, let me ask you something. If he's angry at me, do I let him
cool down first, or do I go right back to him?

MIKAYLA: Here's what she says on the outside.

OPHELIA: I'm not sure. I'm guessing wait, but not too long.

EMILY: ...and on the inside...

OPHELIA: I have no idea. Why are you asking me? Do you think I know
the first thing about this?

JEB: Yeah. I guess.

MIKAYLA: Outside.

OPHELIA: Why is he mad?

EMILY: Inside.

OPHELIA: I don't care.

JEB: It's complicated. I don't see you much after school. Where have
you been hiding?

MIKAYLA: Outside.

OPHELIA: I don't know. Just around.

EMILY: Inside.

OPHELIA: I've been hiding in the dance studio so I don't have to look at you two walking around together. Every time I see you running to catch up with him and not even bothering to look around for me it starts to tear me apart. The only time I see you coming in my direction is when you have a fight with Mac, and good GOD in heaven, I don't want to hear about that! So I hide in the dance studio. That's where I hide.

JEB: Okay, well, see you later.

OPHELIA: Not likely.

EMILY: Oh, that was the inside voice. Here's the outside...

OPHELIA: See ya.

EMILY: But this time, he hears the tone and he knows he's in the doghouse there, too.

MARIANNA appears at the chalkboard again.

MARIANNA: I was wrong...

MIKAYLA: What?

MARIANNA: I was wrong. They spiraled out...not in...

JULIAN: Maybe you oughta check your equations!

MARIANNA ducks away and goes back to the blackboard to check calculations. Other NARRATORS give JULIAN dirty looks.

MIKAYLA: Meanwhile, Ophelia would have stayed in hiding in the dance studio if someone hadn't eventually went in there after her. Ophelia does private tutoring in order to pay for her own lessons. She's waiting for her new six o'clock tutorial. A "J. Demerrow."

OPHELIA is in the dance studio, warming up. JUDE enters.

OPHELIA: Hey... hi Jude.

JUDE: Hello.

OPHELIA: Can I help you?

JUDE: Well I think so. I'm your six o'clock.

OPHELIA: You are?

JUDE: Yes. Didn't they give you my name?

OPHELIA: It says J. Demerrow here in the book.

JUDE: You don't even know my last name, do you?

OPHELIA: Um, sure... I... no.

JUDE: Awesome.

OPHELIA: So, you want dance lessons?

JUDE: Yes. And before we start ignoring the elephant in the room. I've got crutches.

OPHELIA: Well, no... I mean that's... yeah but... I'm just wondering if you're not here because...

STUDENTS appear in dance apparel on another part of the stage. They will perform a dance routine that echoes the dance moves used in the narration below. From time to time JOIE will adjust/correct the dancers, like a dance instructor. We hear light music in the background. Meanwhile, MARIANNA is in the back doing equations as she watches the two.

GARRISON: Their moment together is like a well-choreographed dance. Jude starts from a position of confidence.

JUDE: Because I have a crush on you? Maybe. I see you dance at school. And your grace... it's incredible. You know that, right?

JOIE: Ophelia always starts with a dig, a step without weight transfer, because it doesn't require her to put herself out there.

OPHELIA: Thank you.

JUDE: How does that grace make you feel? I mean, I know how it makes me feel. But how does it make you feel?

OPHELIA: Wonderful.

GARRISON: Jude on the other hand is constantly living on a ball change, so he goes right into a jeté, perhaps a little aggressive, a little early.

JUDE: Yeah. I know. I can see it on your face when you dance. And I know that I'll never have that. I mean, world class dancing has never been in the cards here. But on some level, even just a little bit, I want to feel... grace.

EMILY: Again, his confidence blows right past the façade, and gets inside her. It's something she's not used to.

JOIE: Meanwhile she executes a coupé, a small intermediary step done as preparation for a larger step, to test the waters.

They go to the studio barre.

OPHELIA: Alright then. We'll start simple with an élevé...

She demonstrates. He puts the crutches down and clutches the barre. He tries to follow. His wobbling begins, and she watches, concerned. His wobbling increases, so she runs to catch him before he falls. They stare at each other.

OPHELIA: Jude, this isn't just an elaborate scheme to get me to catch you.

JUDE: No, but I'll remember this for next time. Is this just a stupid idea?

OPHELIA: No... Actually, this gives me a better idea. Is your problem weight or balance?

JUDE: A little of both. Mostly balance.

OPHELIA: Good. Forget ballet. Let's go more contemporary. Put your hand here, I'm going to lead. Lean on me as much as you need to...

She places his left hand on her shoulder, and grabs his right hand with her left. She puts her hand on his hip, and they are in a waltz position with her leading.

OPHELIA: How's that?

JUDE: Good.

GARRISON: They touch, and at first, it's very much like an arabesque. The collective whole is supported largely by the strong leg. For one leg, it's freedom. For the other leg, it's a newfound sense of confidence discovering that not only can it support its own weight, but also the weight of another.

They move slowly and deliberately. OPHELIA attempts to support him while counting off the steps.

JOIE: First they try an axial, then a cross, keeping it simple.

They start to pick up rhythm.

GARRISON: But before they know it, their synchronization becomes like a flexion, which brings to parts of the whole closer together. Like a body wave, they move almost as one greater whole.

They pick up tempo.

EMILY: For a moment, Jude gets his wish. As they move, he feels grace and she feels...brand new. It's all so exciting, and scary, and... amazing, they're breathless, not knowing what to do with all the rising tension...

EMILY and JOIE: ...and they hurl headlong towards a collapse.

JUDE and OPHELIA fall to the ground. The music and dancing stops. OPHELIA holds JUDE in her arms.

OPHELIA: Oh! Oh my god! Are you okay? I'm such an id...

JUDE: I'm fine, I'm fine! I fall at least ten times a day. At least this time I did it doing this. It's cool. Actually. Actually. It's...

They stare at each other for a moment.

OPHELIA: Are you going to try to kiss me?

JUDE: No. No. *(beat)* Did you want me to?

OPHELIA: No. I... no... I just thought... The way you were looking at me...

JUDE: You were looking at me the same way.

OPHELIA: No I wasn't. I was just...

He grabs her and kisses her, which shocks her. He pulls away.

JUDE: I'm sorry, I thought...

She kisses him back. Lights up on MARIANNA as she finishes his/her equations on the board, and triumphantly makes a mark indicating stable orbit. JEB enters. OPHELIA then pulls away. They all look at one another.

JEB: Wow, yeah?

JUDE: I guess so...

JEB: Rock on.

JUDE: Really?

OPHELIA: No. No. No. Get out. Get out get out get out get out! Both of you get out!!

She runs off. JEB and JUDE look at each other. JULIAN crosses over to the board, and crosses out the equation with a wry smile. MARIANNA retreats. JEB exits.

JEB: Hey.

JUDE: Hey. Um...I think you're going to have to go after her.

JEB: Right.

JEB runs out, scene change. MIKAYLA appears.

MIKAYLA: She runs down the street, past the golf course, almost to the ice cream stand before Jeb can catch up to her.

OPHELIA runs onto stage, JEB enters.

JEB: Hey, what is your problem?

OPHELIA: What do you care? What happened to us?? You just up and freakin' disappeared.

JEB: Ophelia, what part of "I'm gay" don't you get?

OPHELIA: I get it! I'VE ALWAYS GOTTEN IT! And I hate to shatter your fragile ego, but it was never like that for me either. But I never stopped needing you, you know? You're all I had!

JEB: Yeah. And this probably isn't what you want to hear right now, but hasn't that really been our problem?

She glares at him.

JEB: Mac wants to hold hands in the hallway.

OPHELIA: I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT THIS STUFF ANYMORE!!!

JEB: Just LISTEN! (*beat*) Mac and I got into a pretty bad fight. He wanted us to... I don't know... be like a couple and stuff in public.

OPHELIA: ...hold hands and stuff.

JEB: Right. And I didn't know if I was ready to... you know, let that out... and then like, two days ago, I overheard Kelly Holland telling a story at lunch.

KELLY steps up to another part of the stage.

KELLY: If you're going to smoke, do it in the back stairwell.

OPHELIA stares.

OPHELIA: Is this going anywhere?

JEB: Yes.

KELLY: The security camera there has never worked.

JEB: The kid across from him asked him how he knows that. I don't know who it was. It might have been David Krouse, because he had a little rat-tail in his hair...

OPHELIA: Get to the point.

JEB: Kelly says...

KELLY: Like a year ago, two guys jumped Mac Thompson back there and kicked the living crap out of him for being gay or somethin'.

She looks at JEB, horrified.

JEB: Remember when Mac had the bruise and the broken nose? Said he had fallen down a flight of stairs? That's what actually happened.

MAC enters the stage as KELLYs exits. JEB turns to him.

JEB: Why? Why didn't you tell anyone?

MAC: Why the hell do you care?

JEB: Because I care about you, Mac. Why didn't you tell anyone?

MAC: Because I don't need to be rescued!

JEB: This isn't about being rescued... this is about your freakin' physical safety.

MAC: Safety? (*laughs*) Damn, that's all you know. Isn't it? Isn't it?

JEB: Okay, how did this suddenly become about me?

MAC: Do you think I just sat there and took it? Oh, I gave them a couple tags to remember. I'm not just some wilting flower, and I'm not going to live my life under... you know, protective custody.

JEB: I'm just saying that they shouldn't get away with it. And I care about you.



help@theatrefolk.com www.theatrefolk.com

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