

# Between the Binary

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## Goals & Impact

My senior project that is being presented at SUNY Purchase College is *Catharsis*, an original play written with the intent that all those who watch it will feel heard, seen, and understood. This play shows the journey of Andi Malloy, a nineteen-year-old college student, who is being overwhelmed by all the stressors in their life. After coming out as non-binary, Andi's family grew more distant. In order to cope, Andi attempts to write themselves into a world of fantasy similar to a *Dungeons & Dragons* campaign; however, as real life becomes more complicated, so does this chimerical world Andi has built for themselves. Over the course of the play, Andi searches for acceptance and belonging within both of these worlds.

With this play, I intend to provide trans and non-binary individuals with a story they can identify with by seeing correlations to their own life through the themes and characters presented onstage. The project is cathartic, no pun intended, because it offers the chance for non-binary people, like me, to be able to step into roles that align with their gender identity. We have been silenced in many forms of media, but theater has often been a place where many minorities have found a platform to broadcast their truth. Those who feel silenced have a place in the world of *Catharsis*. During my time at Purchase, I have met many people from different queer communities. This gives me the ability to incorporate some of those identities into a script for others to relate to is extremely empowering. It allows them to see themselves within the world in theater, and it allows me to reach other people who might feel the way I do about how strict the gender binary is within the world of theater. A majority of shows well known within the theater world have roles that only adhere to actors of the gender binary we know: male or female. However, many people today have come to know gender as a spectrum and male or female being an extreme on either end of this scale. Those who have fluidity in their gender or express their

identity somewhere in between do not fit into the binary. *Catharsis* attempts to smash the expectations of what is expected from a character in terms of gender.

Most queer individuals go through a process of coming out. Whatever the reason may be, it is often a struggle. There is a vulnerability to it because it is presenting someone's true identity to people they certainly care about, and who might care for them just as much. Andi's family struggles to fully accept them because the change is difficult; it appears many cast members in *Catharsis* went through similar struggles. This was when I knew my intentions were clear, and Andi was not just my voice but the voice of many young non-binary individuals.

Many writers have reasons they began to write other than the fact they enjoy creating worlds they had never expected to see leave their own minds; mine is a mission statement to bring non-binary and trans actors into the spotlight - to see media that truly speaks to them. If the intentions of my mission statement could be met within the rehearsal room during the first rehearsal, certainly my hopes for what it could be for an audience could be met. Naturally, at every public showing there will be a different audience, including people with different understandings of queer identities. Hopefully, both cisgender and transgender people will find the message within this script. Acceptance is necessary and an easy step to take. Preferred names and pronouns can seem like a big change, but the adjustments seem small as time goes on. Andi was very hurt by the fact their parents appeared unwilling to change even if it meant knowing them for who they were or keeping them happy. Support is easier to give than exclusion if one is willing to open their heart and listen to what others have to share about who they truly are. In my experience, the term non-binary is foreign to people in generations that came before mine. Oftentimes, I have dealt with people who are ignorant to my identity who refuse to acknowledge that it is more than just a phase. This is harmful to my well-being, and it also harmed the

relationship I had with these people. Fortunately, there are people in my life who have been brave enough to ask questions. Both of us kept an open mind while talking. One of these people was a professor here at SUNY Purchase. After our conversation, we both understood each other much better, and the support given to me by this professor truly uplifted my spirits. It made me feel seen, and all it took was a simple conversation.

For the trans and non-binary people in the audience, the hope is that they, similar to the cast, will find comfort in the story and feel a little less alone in the world. The play's tagline is that "acceptance is just beyond the closet door". Transitioning is difficult; no part of the process is going to be easy, but it will start with them opening up to others. A problem Andi has within the script is that they overlook some of their biggest supporters. One of them is their best friend, Rain Fletcher. While Rain is not blood related, they have been friends with Andi for a long time, and she only wants what is best for them; she is one of Andi's biggest supporters within the real world. When people who may feel lost on their self-discovery journey see this, the hope is they will not overlook figures in their life that may simulate a feeling of love, belonging, and home - even if they are not family. This is what Rain does for the main protagonist of *Catharsis*.

Furthermore, acceptance can be found inside oneself, and I want people in the audience to be able to recognize this as the story goes on. Andi, as aforementioned, writes a story that is similar to a *Dungeons & Dragons* campaign (specifically the fifth edition). These fantasy characters all come from Andi's overactive imagination. These take form in a carefree bard, a shy wizard, and a rebellious rogue: Lysander Treble, Snow Fellflower, and Jaymie Hellmiss. As they venture forth, it is clear they become a found family for Andi despite the fact they are nothing more than glorified imaginary friends. This proves Andi can find a sense of community and belonging within their own mind. They know who they are despite the overwhelming

insecurities they deal with and the intense, unaccepting environment they live in. If those watching can see all of this comes from Andi herself, they may learn acceptance can start from within themselves.

Within the community of Purchase College there are several plays that center around queer identity, acceptance, and coming out. What makes *Catharsis* stand out is that it is solely about a non-binary identity and incorporates a few other genderqueer characters as well; furthermore, a lot of the plays that go up about queer identity on campus are love stories - *Catharsis* is far from this. It focuses on the struggles within the family and it shows the perspective of many family members. While some playwrights may fear expressing what an unaccepting parent might be thinking, Andi's mother, Melissa, is given the chance to explain herself. Many parents may sympathize with her since she is not shown as a villain but another person trying to do her best. While this play is not a love story, there are some examples of love lost; this is highlighted in the relationship between Melissa and Andi. Clearly, they used to bond over the things Andi loved growing up, and Melissa feels as if she has lost her child the more Andi discovers themselves. This may be a perspective, no matter how twisted it may appear to some students, they should be highlighted in queer scripts. Not everyone who appears to be transphobic is set in their ways. Melissa is grieving her youngest child, but she isn't thinking about how it is impacting Andi.

A script like this belongs at Purchase College and should begin its journey here because a majority of the student body is queer. Not everyone may be able to relate fully due to the script focusing on the non-binary identity, but there are likely similarities in coming out for all identities. It is clear this script will have a positive response from students due to the content within it being relatable. As aforementioned, many trans actors in the room were able to see

themselves in Andi's shoes. If people of the LGBTQ+ community can see themselves in one another, or are kind enough to support, then it's clear there is acceptance here. *Catharsis* proves how important it is for someone to be accepted, and the Purchase College community proves how powerful acceptance is by being kind to one another. There is a lot of respect for people for all sorts of queer identities around this campus.

Hopefully, *Catharsis* will not end its journey here. There are non-binary people beyond this campus, and not enough of them are aware of this script that could be telling a story that has similarities to their own. Many people need to see the acceptance that Andi craves and understand that if a few more hands had reached out, they may not have left reality behind. If others wish to escape reality or tell stories so other queer people don't need to be alone, all they need to do is reach out and pick up this script. It would be wonderful to workshop it and see it fully produced. In all honesty, I wanted a full production at Purchase, but there wasn't enough time on the school's production schedule; instead, this gives me the chance to graduate with a strong script and get it produced elsewhere. There are non-binary people outside of this campus who have been confined to the binary box of traditional theater scripts. It would be wonderful to give more people like me the chance to belong in this world they are so passionate about: theater.

## Reflection

When a die is cast, no one knows what the result will be. People will wish for the most favorable outcome, and while it may be disheartening not to have the expected result, they might also find themselves pleasantly surprised. This is very similar to the writing process, as the end result will never be exactly the same as one may expect, but it is almost always quite an enjoyable journey. The world of *Catharsis* was initially placed onto the page on October 15th, 2021. It started as a small dream in the notes app of my phone, but slowly became much larger than that. As a nineteen-year-old whose coming out did not go as planned, I needed a healthy way to cope with my reality. In all honesty, I was always a fan of using escapism, so I took inspiration from my real life and the worlds I often escaped to, and turned it into the play that first performed for an audience on May 3rd, 2024 at 7:30pm at SUNY Purchase College.

Before I transferred to Purchase, I was a student at Buffalo State University. All the scripts I had written while I was there were not assignments. I was writing to create worlds that popped into my mind, whether inspired by my reality or some horrifically detailed nightmare. I was writing *Catharsis*, my first play, at the same time as my first musical *Phantom Strings*. This presented itself as a challenge, but something enjoyable to do while I began creating original pieces in the proper format. To have it read by other actors felt like some sort of a fever dream, and I eventually put *Catharsis* down after writing the first scene of the second act due to the fact many of my peers expressed more interest in the musical I was writing. At the time, perhaps this was for the best. The play reflected a lot of real life scenarios, and stepping away from harmful memories eventually allowed me to attempt to see things from the perspective of others present.

Coming into the Purchase community sparked the flames of the fire to continue this project. I was within a larger community of transgender and queer individuals overall. This



seemed to be the perfect place to put up a play about how if coming out is not handled correctly, there could be dire consequences. I lacked support from fellow writers in Buffalo, but I had thankfully made friends with one particularly talented one when I had arrived at Purchase. With some feedback from him on the first three scenes, I knew where the project needed to go, and I was hoping to get it there in time for my senior project. Initially, it was going to be presented as a standalone full production for the fall of 2024, but my transfer credits came in late. This allowed for me to graduate on time, but have to proceed with my project as a staged reading.

Initially, I was upset with this change. I had been writing the script for over two years, and I wanted to see it as a fully realized production. The chance to dip in between the real world and the fictional world, referred to as Lightfell, felt exciting. The creative team and I were able to keep some of the elements of this fantastical world separate from the reality even within the confines of the staged reading. This also allowed me to focus on the script itself.

On November 28th, 2023, the very first reading of *Catharsis* took place. Going into it, I was extremely anxious, and made sure to bring a notebook to document my thoughts. Throughout the reading, I took notes of grammatical errors and small things I wanted to fix for myself. The cast did not give me feedback, but at the next reading we did on March 8th, 2024, several members of the cast did. Now, this script had been finished for a very long time; however, I was still open to making minimal changes to it. There was not much I could expand on before the staged reading, since I did not want to make massive changes. The rewriting process can be quite long, and I knew it would not get done properly within the time constraints I was given. Fortunately, I did find ways to incorporate the important feedback. This included adding another split scene that took place in both worlds of the play at the same time, Act Two Scene Seven. This elevated the material in an important way: it gave depth to the main

character's father, Jacob Malloy, and presented the fantasy party (Lysander, Snow, and Jaymie) with a reason to rescue Andi from their execution. The one piece of feedback that did perplex me was when several people voiced the scenes within reality were far more interesting than the ones that took place in Lightfell. Many, at this time, believed it would be wise to cut down the scenes that included Lysander, Snow, and Jaymie. In all honesty, I was quite taken aback by this. The play is told from the perspective of Andi. They created Lightfell and keep returning to it as their sanctuary. Without scenes inside this world, we lose the home Andi took time to build for themselves. This was one piece of feedback I had chosen to overlook.

Throughout the process, we also had several rehearsals that focused on certain scenes within the script. Oftentimes, the director, Kat Tobits, would take time to speak with the actors about where they believed the characters might be coming from. While some of the actors did have the desire to ask me, they ended up coming up with answers on their own; this inspired me to look closer into my script. It gave me the chance to give Lysander, Snow, and Jaymie motivations to travel through Lightfell and meet Andi beyond the idea these were people Andi created to be within their adventuring party. Furthermore, I also looked into Melissa's, Andi's mother, perspective throughout this writing process in order to not isolate her as some sort of villain.

In many queer plays, I've noticed, those with homophobic or transphobic points of view are not given much time to explain their understanding, or share the knowledge of what they know on the topic with the audience. It comes from a place of hate, and their words quickly inflict the main character. While writing Melissa, I attempted to truly humanize her despite the words she spoke to her child were harmful. She was grieving the loss of her youngest daughter as Andi no longer identified as a woman; unfortunately, this was taken out against Andi. During the

rehearsals with Melissa in them, I would ask the cast for feedback and receive that they believed Melissa was not a villain, but a grieving mother coping in a poor way. As the cast came to understand these things, it made me feel as Melissa was coming off as hurt and not evil.

*Catharsis* premiered on May 3rd and had shows through the day of May 4th. I was fortunate enough to speak with some members of the audience after all three showings. There was an astronomically positive response from audience members within the LGBTQ+ community. These individuals were from different queer identities, but they all thanked me for writing and presenting this story. Students from the Purchase community felt Andi's pain and resonated with the message of the piece. A plethora of students had moments in their lives where they were in Andi's shoes, and felt seen just by sitting in the audience. This reached the goal and impact I intended to have on the audience. There was understanding for what Andi went through because it was not dissimilar to what others had gone through in their own coming out, and this gave a space for queer individuals to be seen. A multitude of transgender students had thanked me with tears and asked to hug me when the experience was over, and asked for a copy of the script in order to keep the story close to them. It was extremely touching to know I had achieved the goals I had set out to reach.

Moving forward with the story of *Catharsis*, there are a few things within the script I would like to change. Some cast members shared more of their thoughts with me after the staged reading, and so did select members of the audience. I was quite pleased to hear a lot of people were interested in seeing more scenes within the world of Lightfell; while this contradicts what I heard earlier in the process, after seeing the show staged it became clear to many others how important the fantasy world is to the story. In interest of keeping the reality scenes inside of the script, I will look into doing more scenes like the aforementioned split scene. While Andi is

writing the story of Lightfell to escape from the bitterness of their home life, it is clear the scenes where these two worlds blend together create intrigue from the audience, the actors, and everyone else within the creative process. In the future, I'm hoping to create more scenes that split the stage into the separated worlds in order to show the correlation between the two.

Along with these edits to the *Catharsis* script, I am looking into creating more pieces that dive into the majesty of the world of Lightfell. This will include a prequel currently called *The Lightfell Chronicles*. This will dive into the backstories of Lysander, Snow, and Jaymie.

Furthermore, I am planning on writing a sequel that will show the events of what happened to Lightfell after Andi's passing called *May It Rain*. The world will be taken over by Rain, Andi's best friend. Also, there have been talks between a few of the actors and I about adapting into a screenplay and possibly a musical. Who knows where Lightfell can go? Hopefully, these will be full scripts someday, but also allow me to know where to go with the edits in the main script.

Overall, this experience was truly cathartic as a writer who has been writing since a very young age. I am extremely grateful for the feedback I received from my second reader, my actors, creative team, and audience. All the questions posed to me allowed me to think deeply and push the script beyond what I thought it could be. For those who are fans of *Catharsis*, I hope that they keep up with the script and where it will go in the future.

## Between the Binary

Where are the non-binary individuals in theater? The term itself is newer to some people; however, non-binary people have always been here, and people of the younger generation grew up familiar with this terminology. It was part of the education most people got about orientation and identity. Without a guiding template of characters who look or act like them, it is difficult for actors to find their way. There has been, in the news as of late, more reports on non-binary performers within the theater world. This can bring more representation, but it is only a starting point. Is the world really ready for these genderqueer performers, or do they say it for the sake of “allyship” without giving these non-binary individuals the respect they deserve?

So what is being non-binary? What is being transgender? A transgender individual is often defined as someone whose gender does not align with their biological sex at birth. When transgender is not being used as an umbrella term, people believe this community to contain individuals who transition from male-to-female or female-to-male; however, gender is defined as a spectrum and includes a lot more than just this binary of male and female. “The idea that there are only two genders is sometimes called a “gender binary,” because binary means “having two parts” (male and female). Therefore, “nonbinary” is one term people use to describe genders that don’t fall into one of these two categories, male or female” (National Center for Transgender Equality). Being non-binary broke what might be expected of someone’s gender expression, but has been a term used throughout history in multiple societies. Oftentimes, there is a distinction between the identities of transgender and non-binary people - not every trans individual is non-binary. Both of these communities are fighting a similar struggle to be recognized within the theater world, but in this paper we are focusing on the non-binary individuals.

The audition process can already be extremely daunting without the pressures of wondering if a performer will be perceived as the gender they identify as. Any cisgender person may share a fear of perception due to cracking a note during a song or fumbling words during a monologue. However, there are fears non-binary individuals may struggle with during the audition process and beyond. While there are non-binary people all around the world, there are also a handful at SUNY Purchase College. Luckily, most of them have experience with performing and auditioning. When asked about the audition process and how they may have been told they were perceived during casting, there were a plethora of different answers. While some believed their identity would always count against them when it came to audition and casting, another interviewee believed it would depend on what role they were auditioning for. Presentation is a rather large part of gender expression. For some people it could be a matter of tucking their shirt in, styling their hair differently, and sometimes even makeup, and this can determine how they are perceived by others - including those behind the casting table. Furthermore, Rowan Keane-Lombardo commented "Presentation is more of a fear than anything else--I know that mainstream theatre is probably never going to let me play a man without transness being a part of the man's identity," (Keane-Lombardo). This would make casting directors think about presenting a character as transgender/non-binary due to how this performer presents. This would be unfair to non-binary actors as they should be able to play a character as cisgendered despite how they might identify.

So how does a non-binary individual approach an audition? With audition materials prepared and their resume updated, one may need to proceed with other things in mind. Alvarez Pickett shared he would include his pronouns, he/they, in both his resume and slate while going into auditions. In terms of the audition process they also said "It's much easier now that I'm on

hormones, but I used to have to add things to my resume/audition sheet like ‘willing to play women’ and stuff to make their lives easier regardless of how I felt” (Pickett). Ultimately, the casting and audition process are up to those in charge, but it becomes more difficult for individuals who don’t identify as cisgender because they also have to offer to be cast in roles that may cause discomfort. In fact, another interviewee reported they attempt to cater to their assigned gender at birth in order to present professionally. This may not cause discomfort for a cisgender performer, but does put a non-binary individual at a disadvantage. No matter if they were assigned female or male at birth, these performers deserve a chance to feel comfortable within their own bodies and roles. It was disturbing to learn that, during casting, the non-binary label might be overlooked for the sake of simplicity, and these performers are often placed somewhere to cater to their voice type. To those people who have told these interviewees that they are brave for being cast and performing in these roles: they are simply doing their job just as any cisgender actor would.

Beyond auditions there are rehearsals and shows that include interactions with cast members, directors, crew members, and the audience. Harmful perceptions can form and cause bad experiences for non-binary actors just from performance. “Being cast as a girl means it's okay to misgender me (it always starts as ‘oh-- when I say she, I mean your character’)...” (Keane-Lombardo). While referring to a character with correct pronouns might seem respectful, the person should also be respected as they will be more impacted by pronoun usage rather than the fictitious person. Playing a role that presents, or is written, as a female or male will never be an excuse to misgender an actor. Even so, others have expressed disinterest in showcasing actors due to the fact it may discomfort the audience. “Then in rehearsal [the director] told me I don’t sound enough like any gender for it to make sense to give me solos because it’s ‘too confusing to

watch” (Pickett). Why are audiences being catered to rather than the comfort of these performers? The director who was leading the performance Pickett was part of would claim she was teaching transgender children, but refused to showcase them. It was to say there was inclusivity and acceptance without any action being taken for the non-binary performer.

There are plenty of things that may have gone unsaid during the shows both these performers were part of. What did it feel like, to them, to be portraying the roles they were cast in? Keane-Lombardo reported playing roles both male and female, but the role they played in *Catharsis*, Andi Malloy, was the first time they got to play a non-binary role; meanwhile, Pickett has usually been cast in masculine aligning or male identifying roles. Both have faced struggles when operating inside the heavily binary world of theater. “Acting alongside cis men in a male role and realizing that they have something you never will and how defeating that feels” (Pickett). Even being placed inside a role that was more gender-affirming created some concerns as Pickett was aware there was something that would set him apart from the cisgendered men. If he can never obtain the attributes they believe they are missing, there will always be a sense of loss when it comes to playing masculine characters. Keane-Lombardo shared a similar sentiment but for both of the binary genders: “I think there's a lot of expectations playing a girl or a boy, especially as a trans person who is also gender non-conforming. If I'm playing a man, I'm hyper-aware of everything about me that isn't properly masculine--if I'm playing a woman, I feel suddenly like I've forgotten or never properly knew how to be feminine. Either way, there's a pervasive sense of "everyone knows I'm faking" that makes it hard to focus on my performance” (Keane-Lombardo). Being within the binary may cause disorientation for the actors themselves despite them feeling secure in who they are and their identities. This impact on the actor can be rather discouraging, but both of these individuals have continued doing theater.



Finally from these interviewees, there was an open ended question that asked what other experiences they've had being trans in theater. Keane-Lombardo shared their struggle specifically about being a musical theater performer and enjoyer. Considering this is known to be the most popular medium of theater in America, this is a topic that may concern many non-binary performers. "For straight plays, you can mess around with gender if you've got an interesting enough director, and especially in Shakespeare I've felt incredibly excited to play with identity in surprising ways--but I can't sing low, so I'll never be able to play anything but the daintiest feminine characters in musical theatre and it's exhausting...if I want to succeed with my own body and voice I need to shut up and pretend I'm a girl" (Keane-Lombardo). The music of a musical is one of the most important parts of performance - arguably, it would be why someone would choose to go see a musical over a play. Vocal ranges cannot change without hormones being used, and this will not interest every actor as their voice is their main instrument. Keane-Lombardo has a stunning soprano voice, and this may leave them feeling trapped as they get cast to play women in musical theater. Meanwhile, Pickett has started to use hormones, and it has allowed people to believe they may be a man, so he will make sure to put his pronouns anywhere he can "especially because I am on hormones and pass more, I want them to KNOW who I am. All parts of me. I want to set a standard where a performer being trans is more of a side effect than a condition" (Pickett). There should never be shame for someone presenting themselves as they are, and Pickett is one of several performers attempting to do this. Being non-binary, or transgender, will never be an illness, disease, or condition as Pickett phrased it. If they are talented enough to be there, they are a glorious addition to a cast. Side effects are not lethal - neither are non-binary performers.

Outside the world of SUNY Purchase, there are a surplus of shows being put on all over. Despite them being professional productions, they do still struggle with representation and how non-binary actors are handled. A show running on Broadway has a role that is non-binary within the jukebox musical inspired by a work written by Shakespeare & *Juliet*. This musical showcased the songs for several popular artists, and these are songs people would commonly hear on the radio. This is what makes & *Juliet* a jukebox musical. The role of May, Juliet's best friend, was played by a genderqueer performer Justin David Sullivan. In 2023, they were asked to pick whether they felt more comfortable being nominated as an actor or actress for the 76th Tony Awards that would take place in June of that year. Sullivan struggled with trying to see where they believed they might fit, but overall stepped down from the possibility of being nominated for this prestigious award. "The Tony Awards, which are presented by The Broadway League and The American Theatre Wing, recognized Sullivan's decision to abstain from awards consideration and wrote that the organization is 'currently in discussion about how to best adjust' its current acting categories" (McArdle). The Tony Awards shared that they could not change their rules when a season had already started.

While there were no adjustments made for the 2024 season, there were also no known non-binary performers or characters. While some may believe Sullivan was paving the way for non-binary actors, they were not the first to begin this journey. "Sullivan is not the first nonbinary Broadway performer in recent years to abstain from awards consideration. Actor Asia Kate Dillon, who starred as Malcom in *Macbeth* last year, also asked not to be considered in either of the Tony's gendered acting categories, though that decision was not made public at the time, according to the *Times*." (McArdle). If the Tony's do not change their ways, many non-binary and genderqueer performers may miss out on an amazing opportunity to be

nominated or even win the award. Meanwhile, Alex Newell, another genderqueer performer did go on to win a Tony while conforming to being nominated in the best actor category.

Later in 2023, there was a controversy surrounding Sullivan and Newell. People were sending out messages to boycott the Macy's Day Parade that airs every year on Thanksgiving. An organization known as One Million Moms wanted to boycott the parade due to two non-binary performers performing in the parade. Despite objections from people on the far-right of American politics, Macy's told the parade to go on as scheduled, "the parade has long had close ties to Broadway, one of the most L.G.B.T.Q. friendly industries in the city" (Chen). Macy's may not have commented on the petition itself, but it continued to allow Newell and Sullivan to be part of the performances during the parade. Even as comments were attempted to be gathered from NBC, producers and actors of the shows - no one answered. "For large companies, there's a complicated calculus involved in trying not to alienate consumers" (Chen). The previous year, 2022, the parade was NBC's most streamed entertainment program. There were twenty-seven million people watching on NBC, and this did not include anyone who watched it on their streaming service. Newell and Sullivan were not the first genderqueer, or even just queer, performers who were part of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. They have not been stopped in the past, and they would not be stopped now.

Now, 2023 was not the first year to showcase non-binary performers or characters within the world of musical theater. Years before this, there was a musical infamous for poorly handling the gender identity of a character: *Jagged Little Pill*. Similar to *& Juliet*, this show was a jukebox musical; however, unlike *& Juliet*, *Jagged Little Pill* only showcased music from one artist. This was the work of Alanis Morissette. Despite the success the show had for its score, the character Jo was poorly handled in terms of gender identity. "A pre-broadway version had numerous lines

that signaled Jo as gender-nonconforming - a rarity in a Broadway musical - but many of these lines were removed when the musical opened on Broadway in late 2019” (Lee). There are plenty of pieces of evidence that Jo was listed as gender-nonconforming or non-binary. Rather unfortunately, there was a cisgender actor who originated the role named Lauren Patten. She claimed, as well as the production, that Jo was never made to be non-binary. Members of the non-binary community saw themselves within the role of Jo, and it was a relief to feel as if there was some representation on a Broadway stage. Audience members, no matter how they identify, always want to see themselves in stories; people enjoy stories when they are relatable. Taking this representation away was harmful to the non-binary community as they thought the world might be taking steps forward to include them.

Over the time of the pandemic, the creative team of *Jagged Little Pill* attempted to take steps that could begin to make up for this erasure. The pronouns that Jo used in the show, she/her, did not change, but the interpretation of Jo’s gender identity is supposed to be left open towards the end of the show - at least, one of the producers wanted to think so. In regards to casting Jo, the producers said this: “casting the role of Jo is open to performers of all gender identities. “We’re not explicit, we just ask that you see yourself somewhere within the spectrum of this role,” says producer Eva Price of casting the revised Jo” (Lee). While this seemed to satisfy some members of the transgender/non-binary/genderqueer community, many people are still hurt to discover a show would change the identity of a character just to make it more relatable for cisgendered women. Thankfully, the touring production did have a non-binary performer, Jade McLeod, in the role of Jo. This was a start to making up for past grievances.

On a smaller scale, Meg Greene faced some issues in response to casting regarding gender as a teacher to trans youth. One of her students, who identified as transgender, spoke

about the ignorance of another teacher who was leading a theater class at the high school. Greene's student was not involved in this class, but had heard the story from other students. While hearing this teacher had cast a cisgendered male actor in the role of a trans female (rather than a cis or trans female as the playwright requested within the script). Greene had several thoughts while reflecting on what her student said, one of them being "trans and genderqueer identities are less visible than race, so directors can be more flexible in the casting process" (Greene). While it is true that someone's gender identity may be less visible if they are genderqueer, it would still be incorrect to cast someone outside of the identity being written - especially if this disobeyed the wishes of the playwright. Unfortunately, Greene did highlight how important it is to cast things racially correct - she left gender out of the conversation. "My example painted a picture of a hierarchy of identities that we need to account for in our representation and it's okay if we can't hit all of the marks—the "visible" ones are the most important" (Greene). She expressed her remorse as she knew she had failed as an ally to her students.

While the transgender student who brought this concern to Greene was playing a genderqueer role in their play, that Greene noted they excelled at, it had occurred to her she had never asked her students what role they would want to play when it came to gender. Greene felt as if conversations with transgender and genderqueer students may have allowed the casting process to go smoother for those students. Perhaps they needed support around casting and did not receive it due to this ignorance. Greene was once told she should be lucky for the roles she got, so opening this conversation towards actors was very foreign to her. "because of my cis-privilege none of these moments felt inherently violent or invalidated my gender identity or very existence" (Greene). This privilege Greene had made the problem of being perceived

outside of how she identified a non-existent problem. Moving forward, she realized other steps needed to be taken to adhere to the comfort of transgender, non-binary, and genderqueer performers.

So, how do we move forward? Being aware of these non-binary actors is one thing, but people also need to know they are the same as every other performer in the business. They have dream roles just like everyone else does. This may fit within the gender they were assigned at birth, or it may reach outside those bounds; even so, both of these options should be dealt with the sincerity any cisgendered actor may receive when auditioning for these roles. Sure, it may be good to ask the auditioner what roles they may be comfortable in, but it should not contribute to them feeling any differently from other people going out for the male or female role (gender queer role if they're lucky) that other performers are going out for. Furthermore, it would be helpful if writers would write more genderqueer roles into shows. There are plenty of scripts with one or two transgender characters, but there should always be more shows - and even multiple characters within a show - who represent these queer identities. After all, cisgender people have this privilege in every show that comes out.

The world will continue to change as people discover who they are, what they believe in, and how they want to present themselves. Non-binary people deserve a place in the spotlight, but the small lights we are given barely fit even one body. There are actors who are looking for roles that they can see themselves in just as any cisgendered performer would, and the world of theater is coming up short. So where are the non-binary individuals in theater? They are graduating college, they are in audition rooms, and they are hoping to be seen by casting directors as who they truly are instead of what the binary wants them to be.

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# *Catharsis*

A Staged Reading of an Original Play

Written and Produced by

**Link Hagerty**

Directed by

**Kat Tobits**

Produced in association with the Conservatory for Theater Arts

May 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024

CMFT Performance Studio

## **CAST**

Andi Malloy	ROWAN KEANE-LOMBARDO
Melissa Malloy	KIM CROSSWAY
Rain Fletcher / Rookie / Bandit 4	KAELIN VIERA
Gatekeeper	LINK HAGERTY
Lysander Treble	SPENCER SCALAMONI
Snow Fellflower	OLIVIA SUMMER
Jaymie Hellmiss	ALVAREZ PICKETT
Jacob Malloy / Crewmate / Bandit 1	MATTHEW LAZZARINO
Ben Malloy / Bartender / Captain / Bandit 3	EVERETT CURRIER
Eleanor Walters / Bookkeeper / Librarian / First Mate / Bandit 2	KIRRY KAUFER
Narrator of Stage Directions	LYDIA HARADA

## **PRODUCTION TEAM**

Choreographer, Fight/Intimacy Coordinator	LINK HAGERTY
Stage Manager	AIDAN MITCHELL
Sound Design	NOEL HOLMGREN
Lighting Design	ARIN DEUTSCH
Run Crew	MARY GOFF, OWEN PARROTT
Poster/Program Design	LYDIA HARADA

**This play contains themes of suicide and transphobia.**

**Remember: you're never alone. Acceptance is somewhere beyond the closet door.**



## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Hello all! A quick note before we embark on our adventure:

When I was approached by Link to direct the staged reading of this play, I imagined the traditional staged reading arrangement: music stands, scripts, and barebones lighting, set, and costumes. After reading the script, I realized that a story of fantastical adventure and magic ought to be much more than that. With Link's guidance, I set about building the visual landscape of this staged reading (heavy emphasis on the staged) and experimented with this wonderful and generous cast to bring these characters to life. I wanted to break the mold and tell Andi's story beyond tradition. A story like this is necessary and integral to our current world, deeply personal to trans and non-binary people, and was a story that needed to be told. It is truly a part of our modern folklore, our eternal now, and a light of hope for the future. Without further ado, I warmly welcome you to Lightfell. Enjoy the show!

*–Kat Tobits*

## PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

Writing has been something I have done for as long as I can remember. When I was two-years-old, I would write in scribbles that were my own language until I was taught how to write properly. From that moment forward, I knew I wanted to create worlds the world hadn't seen or experienced before. I've attempted several mediums of writing, but playwriting seemed to always stick with me. Andi's story, *Catharsis*, came to me after facing quite a few complications after coming out. Most of these scenes are based on true events. It's true I embarked on the journey of creating Lightfell as an attempt to find some light in the dark path I found myself on at nineteen. The reason I present this story today is to help others know they aren't alone, and so others may not have to go through what I did. I hope trans and non-binary people know there is a place for us in the world of theater, and I will always do my best to write roles that allow trans people to feel comfortable in how they are presented onstage. Thank you for listening to my story, and I hope all of you can find yourself somewhere within these carefully crafted words.

*–Link Hagerty*

## MEET THE CAST AND CREW



**ROWAN KEANE-LOMBARDO** (they/them) (*Andi*) is a Theatre and Performance/Global and English Literature major. They've been performing all their life, most recently in productions of *Eurydice* (Nasty Interesting Man/Child), *Ride the Cyclone* (Ricky/Jane/Karnak swing & Ensemble), and the 2024 Spring Crescendos cabaret, and are so incredibly honored to work with this talented, hardworking, and kind team of performers. They want to thank their friends from home—their real-life adventuring party—who never let them go questing alone and remind them what they love about creating. They want to give special thanks to Raynah, who reminds them what they love about being real, too. Finally, they'd like to thank Link, for giving them the privilege of telling this story as best they can, and for giving them these words to say all the things that they've never had the courage to. Their favorite Dungeons & Dragons race is a genasi.



**KIM CROSSWAY** (she/her) (*Melissa*) is a THP senior from the Capital Region who enjoys video games, music, and streams in her free time. She also works as a Princess Performer for Hill City Ice Queen Princess Parties. Select Purchase credits include: her senior project – *The Haunting of Campbell House* (“Tess”), *Ride the Cyclone* (“Jane Doe”), and *The Attic* (“Samurai/Anchorman”). Other select credits include: *The Pirates of Penzance* (“Daughter/Police”) and *Xanadu* (“Thalia”). She has also filled many tech-related roles in other shows on campus, such as set designer (*The Haunting of Campbell House*) and stage manager (*She Kills Monsters*). She would like to thank the cast of this show for being so kind to her, and especially thank Link and Spencer for being so epic. She hopes this is a cathartic experience for the audience!



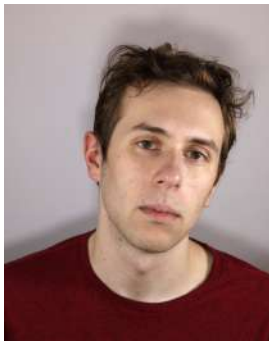
**KAELIN VIERA** (she/her) (*Rain/Rookie/Bandit 4*) is a freshman theatre and performance and journalism double major from Rhode Island. She is the recipient of two Ocean State Star Awards for her portrayal of Queen Aggravain in *Once Upon a Mattress* at Bishop Hendricken High School. At Purchase, she has lent her voice to *Kill the Man!* (Newscaster) and her sanity to *Ride the Cyclone* (Ocean, Dance Captain). Kaelin would like to thank the entire *Catharsis*

team for their dedication and you, reading this, for your support. Enjoy!



**LINK HAGERTY** (they/he) (*Gatekeeper, Producer, Playwright, Choreographer, Fight/Intimacy Coordinator*) is a senior Theatre and Performance major with a minor in playwriting. Past credits include: *Monty Python's Spamalot* (Lady of the Lake), *Macbeth* (Banquo), and *Ride the Cyclone* (Ricky Potts, Mischa u/s, choreographer); however, this is their debut as a playwright. They are honored to share their very first play with all of you. A special thanks to Kat Tobits for directing this world, Rowan Keane-Lombardo for

stepping into Andi's robes, and Spencer Scalamoni, their boyfriend, for helping them find their way, and for every member of this team for being their new family. It means the world that they all were willing to bring both sides of this world to life. Link would like to remind everyone that there is a place for everyone in this world - it sometimes takes time to find your people. OH! And thank you for attending the story they've created. They couldn't do it without you. Yes, you. The one reading this... roll initiative.



**SPENCER SCALAMONI** (he/him) (*Lysander*) is a senior Playwriting and Screenwriting Major with a minor in Psychology. He's been heard in *Kill the Man!* (Newscaster) and seen in things like *Ride the Cyclone* (Mischa), *Rough with Love* (Paris), *Ordinary Days* (Warren), and *Les Miserables* (Thenardier). He'd like to thank the cast for being so fun to play with, and his mom, stepmom, and dad for teaching him the importance of imagination. Love to all the people in my corner. You guys keep it cozy here. And of course, a

special shout out to My Boyfriend, The Playwright. I am beyond proud of your world, and you should be too. It's unlike any I've ever seen. May it thrive in its debut.



**OLIVIA SUMMER** (she/her) (*Snow*) is a freshman undeclared major, who is so excited to be making her CMFT debut. Previous credits include *Carrie: The Musical* (Margaret White), *Cabaret* (Fraulein Schneider), *Ride the Cyclone* (Constance) and more. She is beyond humbled and thrilled to be a part of this beautiful and brilliant show with some of the most talented and wonderful people ever. Special shoutout to her mom, Courtney, who has always been her loudest cheerleader. So much love.



**ALVAREZ PICKETT** (they/he) (*Jaymie*) is a junior communications major and is incredibly excited to perform. Previously, he has been in *Jekyll & Hyde* (Dr. Jekyll), *Ride the Cyclone* (Noel Gruber), and *Clue* (Wadsworth). They'd like to thank their mother for always supporting him, his strange antics, and impulsive hair cuts for all these years.



**MATTHEW LAZZARINO** (he/him) (*Jacob/Crewmate/Bandit 1*) is a senior Theatre and Performance major and Playwriting minor from Yardley, PA. He is happy and excited to be a part of this project. Recently, he has starred in *She Kills Monsters* (Orcus), *The Attic* (Hasegawa) and his Senior Project, *Judy's House* (Oliver/Larry). He would like to thank his family and friends for always supporting him.



**EVERETT CURRIER** (they/he) (*Ben/Bartender/Captain/Bandit 3*) is a senior double major in Anthropology and Communications. This will be their first show at Purchase, and they are excited to be part of this amazing cast! He is also involved with administration in Nerf Club, is the event coordinator at Game Club, and has read for POV Fest in 2023 and 2024. In their free time, they produce multiple forms of media like television, podcasts, and social media content. He would like to thank the cast and crew for taking a chance on him and welcoming them to the production with open arms. He also remarked that "Elf species with Cleric class is the best character type and I can't be convinced otherwise."



**KIRRY KAUFER** (they/them) (*Eleanor/Bookkeeper/Librarian/First Mate/Bandit 2*) is a senior Creative Writing major who also enjoys theater and performance. They have been acting since elementary school. Additional Purchase show credits include *She Kills Monsters* (Narrator/Farrah/Evil Tina), *The 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Halloween Cabaret*, and *The Haunting of Campbell*

*House* (Gio; Alex u/s). They are also a member of Purchase's show choir, Crescendo. Outside of theater, they edit for various literary magazines, including managing Purchase's official journal, *Italics Mine*. Their favorite Dungeons & Dragons races are tieflings, fairies, and pirates.



**LYDIA HARADA** (she/her) (*Narrator of Stage Directions, Poster/Program Design*) is a sophomore Communications major. She has been seen in *Ride the Cyclone* (Karnak) and made programs for *Ride the Cyclone* (incl. poster design) and *The Haunting of Campbell House*. You can also find her on YouTube as Lydia Valentino. Lydia would like to thank her incredible castmates, whose awe-inspiring talent regularly brings tears to her eyes. It feels like a privilege and a blessing to be in your orbits – especially Link, who has been the best mentor I could have ever asked for in my time at Purchase. We're part of the family.



**KAT TOBITS** (she/her) (*Director*) is a junior Theatre and Performance major from Readsboro, VT. Past directing credits include *How to Defend Yourself* (AD), *Kill the Man!*, *Leaving*, and most recently, *The Haunting of Campbell House*. She'd like to offer her love and thanks to the wonderful cast and crew of *Catharsis*, and to her family and friends for their love and support!



**AIDAN MITCHELL** (he/him) (*Stage Manager*) is a freshman Arts Management & Theatre and Performance double major. He has been doing theatre since freshman year of high school. High school show credits include *¡Bocón!* (Sound Designer), *Frozen: The Broadway Musical* (Scenic Tech), *The Old Man and The Old Moon* (Musician), *Puffs* (Ernie Mac/2nd Headmaster Seamus/A Very Tall Man/Professor Locky). He also loves playing music and creating art with friends. His favorite Dungeons & Dragons races are elves, dragonborns, and mountain dwarves.



**NOEL HOLMGREN** (they/them) (*Sound Design*) is a 2023 Purchase alum who graduated with a BA in Theatre and Performance with minors in playwriting and arts management. Select credits include *The Haunting of Campbell House* (Sound Designer/Operator), *Ride the Cyclone* (Sound Director), *Just a Little Anxious* (“Taylor”), and *She Kills Monsters* (Director). Noel would like to thank their mom; Link, and the rest of the cast and crew for this opportunity and for all their hard work put into this project!

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### **SPECIAL THANKS**

Lena Blair-Heim  
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William Heacock  
Larian Studios  
THP Faculty  
Gary Earl Ross  
Aneris Rivera Wagner  
  
The Hagerty Family

## Show Photos



Photo Credit: Frankie Joaquin Reyes

Pictured: Spencer Scalamoni, Olivia Summer, Alvarez Pickett, and Rowan Keane-Lombardo



Photo Credit: Frankie Joaquin Reyes

Pictured: Rowan Keane-Lombardo, Olivia Summer, Alvarez Pickett, and Spencer Scalamoni



Photo Credit: Frankie Joaquin Reyes

Pictured: Olivia Summer, Rowan Keane-Lombardo, Alvarez Pickett, and Spencer Scalamoni



Photo Credit: Frankie Joaquin Reyes

Pictured: Everett Currier, Kaelin Viera, Rowan Keane-Lombardo, Kim Crossway, and Matt Lazzarino





Photo Credit: Frankie Joaquin Reyes

Pictured: Everett Currier, Matt Lazzarino, Kirry Kaufer, and Kaelin Viera



Photo Credit: Frankie Joaquin Reyes

Pictured: Olivia Summer and Spencer Scalamoni



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Pictured: Rowan Keane-Lombardo and Kim Crossway



Photo Credit: Frankie Joaquin Reyes  
Pictured: Olivia Summer, Spencer Scalamoni, Everett Currier, Kirry Kaufer, Link Hagerty, Kaelin Viera, Rowan Keane-Lombardo, Kim Crossway, Matt Lazzarino, Lydia Harada

# Catharsis March Call Sheet

## Friday March 8th

**Time:** 5:30pm-7:30pm      **Location:** Humanities 1040

**Plan:** Script Read

**Called:** Full Cast

## Saturday March 9th

**Time:** 1pm-3:30pm      **Location:** Humanities 1040

**Plan:** Character Work & Festival Dance

**Called:** Rowan, Spencer, Olivia, Alvarez

## Wednesday March 13th

**Time:** 7pm-8:30pm      **Location:** Humanities 1043

**Plan:** Character Work

**Called:** Rowan, Kaelin, Kim, Matt, Kirry, Everett

## Friday March 15th

**Time:** 5:30pm-7:30pm      **Location:** Dance Studio L

**Plan:** Combat Scenes

**Called:** Everett, Kaelin, Matt, Kirry, Spencer, Alvarez, Rowan

## Monday March 18th

**Time:** 7:30pm-9:30pm

**Location:** Humanities 2033

**Plan:** Andi and Rain work. Act 1 Scenes two, six, and nine if time allows.

**Called:** Rowan, Kaelin, and Lydia

## Wednesday March 20th

**Time:** 7pm-9:30pm

**Location:** Humanities 2034

**Plan:** Intense family drama time. Act 1 Scene 5 & Act 2 Scene 5

**Called:** Kim, Rowan, Matt, and Lydia

Happy Spring break! We will see you all back in April. Questions, comments, and concerns can be emailed to [projectcatharsisplay@gmail.com](mailto:projectcatharsisplay@gmail.com) or to [aidan.mitchell@purchase.edu](mailto:aidan.mitchell@purchase.edu)

# Catharsis

By Link Hagerty

**The World:**

Modern day suburbia. There's nothing special to Andi's life as it's just a hometown any person could feel trapped in.

The fantasy world should mimic your typical *Dungeons & Dragons* campaign. It's a oneshot, so many locations are never seen again. There should be magic in each location as this is the fantastical imagination of Andi's mind.

**Characters:**

*Andi Malloy* (they/them)

- A nineteen-year-old college student who recently came out. While they know how they identify, they don't truly know who they are. They adore fantasy, and find comfort in it.

*Melissa Malloy* (she/her)

- Mid-forties mother. She claims to be liberal, but has a different agenda when it comes to her children. Trying her best, she can't seem to accept Andi for who they are.

*Jacob Malloy* (he/him)

- Andi's father who is younger than his wife by a few years. Stuck in a middle ground by trying to understand both Andi and Melissa.

*Rain Fletcher* (she/they)

- Andi's best friend who always has their best interests at heart even though they may not convey it correctly
- Should also be cast as the Rookie on the Pirate ship
- Also plays Fourth Bandit in combat scene

*Gatekeeper* (they/them)

- Being the holder of the fantasy world, they are sort of dressed like a wizard in a long white cloak, they carry around a staff. Their face is never seen by the audience.

*Snow Fellflower* (she/her)

- A book worm and wizard. She keeps her nose in a book after a tragic accident killed her sister, Phalyn. This is the first time she's been out of her tower in four years.

*Lysander Treble* (he/him)

- Part bard, part warrior, elf. He is very skilled with music, and wants to keep everyone's spirits up! He's known to tease Snow who was once his sister-in-law.

*Jaymie Hellmiss* (he/they)

- A rogue from royal blood on a mission to save his sister. He's sarcastic and cold at first, but he has a heart of gold.

A small ensemble for some of the background characters at the school, and in the fantasy villages. Furthermore, these background characters will play Andi's siblings later on in the play. Casting should work like this:

*Ben Malloy/Bartender/Captain/Third Bandit (he/him)*

- Andi's brother, and the one closest in age to them. Nerdiest of the siblings, and often overlooked since he does not apply his talents due to lack of confidence.

*Eleanor Walters/Bookkeeper/Librarian/First Mate/Second Bandit (she/her)*

- Andi's sister who left the family in ruin due to deception and lies. She loves Andi, but left them.

*Crew Mate/First Bandit*

- Just an ensemble track. Supposed to represent Andi's oldest sibling who is completely absent from their life - this character was later cut from the show. Could also be played by Jacob (Andi's father) if casting requires this.

**Content:**

Everything within this story is based on true events, and some of it is dramatized for the stage. Some scenes may contain topics that may make actors feel uncomfortable. Everyone, cast and crew, should be able to have their voices heard in a safe environment. While some scenes are played in the fantasy realm, the issues being shared within the script should be given the sincerity they deserve.

Remember: you're never alone. Acceptance is somewhere beyond the closet door.

**Note: For purposes of a staged reading some of the stage directions are in purple. The stage directions in black should be read for the audience.**

***To proceed please roll initiative***

**Scene 1**

(Rain, Melissa, Ben, and Jacob sit around a table with a few papers on it and a notebook. Some tissues are scattered on the table, and Melissa can be seen wiping her face. *There is silence as the lights come up on stage. Clearly, something tense has happened. It takes a moment for anyone to speak*)

MELISSA

Well. What do you want me to say?

JACOB

Andi... just...

*(Pause. No one moves. They go back to the uncomfortable silence.)*

RAIN

Anything. Just say anything! Your final goodbye is deep and utter silence? The one thing they hated-

JACOB

We loved her.

RAIN

Did you? Did you love *them*?

MELISSA

We gave her a good life...

JACOB

Them.

RAIN

Oh, like you're some kind of saint.

JACOB

At least we tried!

BEN

Who gave Andi the journal?

RAIN

They barely let me touch it.

JACOB

So you've seen it, then.



RAIN

Andi has a ton of notebooks, so it's probable.

BEN

It wasn't me. It could've been El-

JACOB

No.

MELISSA

If that girl had seen Andi behind my back, I'm certain I would know about it. I know my house. I know my children.

BEN

Did you?

(Rain takes the journal and leaves the table with it. They sort through some of the pages. Each page turn seems to be more upset than the last)

JACOB

Rain...

(Rain continues, and gets more distraught as this goes on)

MELISSA

You're going to tear it to shreds.

RAIN

No. No..

JACOB

Rain?

RAIN

No, no, no, no!

(Rain throws the book and it hits the ground with a loud thud.. It is at this point the Gatekeeper enters unnoticed by the others)

RAIN

It doesn't make any sense... Andi loved this story!

JACOB

I don't even know some of those names.

BEN

Reminds me of those fantasy stories they always loved...

JACOB

Andi would always tell us when they were creating something. They took pride in what they did.

MELISSA

I thought Andi told us everything...

RAIN

As if...

MELISSA

I gave Andi everything she could need! I clothed her, I fed her, and I gave her a home.

RAIN

You did the bare minimum.

BEN

It's not always about you guys.

RAIN

You drove them to hide something they loved! I know love is a double edged sword or some shit, but how the hell did this happen?

GATEKEEPER

Let's start from the beginning.

(The Gatekeeper stomps a staff on the ground, and there is a blackout)

## Scene 2

(This is Andi Malloy's bedroom. It begins with them attempting to fix their hair in the mirror. They put it up, look at it, and decide to take it down. For some reason, that style doesn't seem to fit right either. They place a beanie on their head and tuck some of their hair into it. They sit at a desk scribbling something down and muttering to themselves. They constantly are crossing out and rewriting things. They are discontent with every action they make)

ANDI

That can't be right, can it? There's no way this could be enough. The word limit is much.. Much too small. How could I fit an analysis in such a minute space?

(The other half of the lights come up on Rain Fletcher who's sitting in their own bedroom *fidgiting with something small (slinky), but not working in the way that Andi is. Rain is relaxed.* The two are on a phone call)

RAIN

I can hear you thinking.

ANDI

Is it that loud?

RAIN

You'll destroy yourself if you keep thinking like that. What's the word for it again?

ANDI

You think it'll be detrimental to my well being, or you think that this will turn into something catastrophic.

RAIN

That's what I was looking for.

ANDI

It doesn't matter.

RAIN

I'm sure you've got more than enough. The only person seeing it will be the professor anyways. They hate overworking just as much as we do.

ANDI

More than enough, maybe. But is it *good* enough?

RAIN

It's probably great, Andi. It's a lab report; they are supposed to be kept short and sweet so you don't over explain.

ANDI

Over-explain? Rain, since when do *I* over explain anything? I think what I put in is perfect. There's no repeating statements. It is grammatically correct, and I've got interesting sentences in there. I'm sure my professor will think it's a delight to read. I think it's going to be fine because why would I ever do such a thing as over explain? Why? I've got this. For sure. Definitely.

RAIN

Buddy-

ANDI

Don't say a word, I think I see your point.

(There's silence before Andi begins to start writing again. The crossing out more frantic than the first time. Rain puts down her slinky as she grows more concerned for her best friend)

RAIN

Hey, bro?

ANDI

What?

RAIN

Are you sure this is about school? I mean, you usually push yourself past your limits...

ANDI

Not seeing what you're saying. Nineteen credits is a normal amount. I'm perfectly fine.

RAIN

Andi-

ANDI

Dandy!

RAIN

Andi-

ANDI  
Spiffy, even!

RAIN  
ANDI!

ANDI  
... yeeeeeah?

RAIN  
You know exactly what I'm talking about. How can you-

ANDI  
I just can, alright? I'm pissed at myself for ... Whatever. You can't do anything; neither can I. Eleanor's gone, my parents don't know what to make of me, and Ben's... Ben.

RAIN  
You have to cut yourself some slack.

ANDI  
What do you want me to-

RAIN  
Just... take a break.

ANDI  
A break?

RAIN  
It'll do you no harm. Call it a breather if it makes you feel better.

(From offstage a voice is heard, and Rain turns to look over their shoulder as they realize it's their mother)

RAIN  
I have to go. My mom wants me to help her build a shelf.

ANDI  
Oh uh... good luck?

RAIN  
Promise me you'll relax.

ANDI  
No promises, Rain.

RAIN  
Just do your best. It's always more than enough.

(The phone call ends, and the lights go down on Rain's bedroom. All that is left is Andi. They are exasperated as they put down all of their work and begin to pace around their room. Andi looks around their room looking for something that might keep them calm as their hands start to shake)

(Andi sits down at their desk with their head in their hands)

ANDI  
I can't just wait for something to happen. When you wait around, there's silence and silence brings memories. How do I fill those gaps?

GATEKEEPER (offstage)  
Jump over them.

ANDI  
What?

(A notebook falls off a shelf. It makes Andi jump, but they go over to it, rubbing their shaking hands against their pant legs.)

GATEKEEPER (offstage)  
Don't be shy. It's for you. Open it up.

(Andi runs their fingers along the spine of the book, and hesitates for a moment before opening the notebook. A loud hub-bub of ad-libs from Snow, Lysander, and Jaymie are heard from offstage until Andi shuts the book again)

ANDI  
What is this?

GATEKEEPER (offstage)  
An escape.

(Pause)

GATEKEEPER (offstage)

Go on. Open it.

(Whispers urging Andi to open the book come from offstage once again. They seem even more frightening this time. As Andi opens the book it glows. Andi and the Gatekeeper disappear. Ben enters to knock on Andi's door)

BEN

Andi! Mom said it's time for dinner!

(There's no answer as Melissa enters)

BEN

They must've gone to Rain's house, mom.

MELISSA

They probably wouldn't have enjoyed dinner anyways. How did I raise such an ungrateful child?

(Blackout)

### Scene 3

(Here we see a place that is oddly familiar to Andi that no one else would recognize. The floor is filled with smoke. The light coming in almost looks heavenly as Gatekeeper stands center stage with their staff. Andi is downstage left on their hands and knees still holding the notebook. In the background there are lingering voices)

GATEKEEPER

Hello, dear child.

(No response from Andi)

GATEKEEPER

I'm sure you have a lot of questions-

ANDI

Who the hell are you?

GATEKEEPER

Patience, dear one.

ANDI

Dear one?

GATEKEEPER

You have created this world as your own, and I am the keeper. Do you not recognize your own mind?

(The voices grow louder for a moment. The voice's of Andi's family all sounded like shouts, negative comments, and fighting. The other half are praises from the fantasy character Snow, Lysander, and Jaymie. There's a time where the voices clash before they quiet back down to whispers)

GATEKEEPER

The pathways before you all lead to separate sanctums of the mind. Memory, creativity, cognitive thought, darkness...anything that may turn your mind to fear - making you think you're less than. All those voices? They are memories. Daydreams...or nightmares.

ANDI

All because I opened a lousy book? This is insane. I gotta get back to my bedroom. My own mind is the last place I want to be! Can I get outta this hell hole?



MELISSA (offstage)

Hell hole?! I did my best to make this house a home.

ANDI

Why did I hear *her*?

GATEKEEPER

You haven't crossed over yet. This is just the outskirts of your mind, but it can turn into your very own escape.

ANDI

I think... It's just... Weird, but familiar.

GATEKEEPER

I hoped it would be.

ANDI

Alright... well... Okay. Which way am I supposed to go?

GATEKEEPER

Well, you can go back if you wish...

(The light shifts to stage left as the voices of Andi's family get louder again. All of these lines should be done from offstage and notably make Andi uncomfortable)

MELISSA

She needs to grow up!

JACOB

I had it a lot harder at your age. This is nothing.

BEN

It's not always about you, Andi!

ELEANOR

You're the golden child. Why would our parents care about us?

GATEKEEPER

Or you can go forward.

(The lights shift to stage right as the voices from a fanciful world become louder. All of these lines should be done from offstage or in a voiceover and make Andi hopeful)

SNOW

Have you seen Phalyn anywhere?

LYSANDER

Another round for the lady with the rusty dagger!

JAYMIE

Don't worry, Marcy! I'll be back soon.

(The voices fade away as lights come back to standard onstage. Andi looks in both directions but is more drawn to the fictional world)

ANDI

You said you keep this world. What does that mean?

GATEKEEPER

I protect your stories and your mind.

ANDI

Remarkable. Uh...yeah, anyway, so you could take me where I want to go?

GATEKEEPER

Choose your first words carefully, and soon you'll find yourself there.

(Andi opens the book again, it glows. The lights slowly come down as they begin to tell their story)

ANDI

Once Upon A time... there was a village for wandering travelers and artisans who had chimerical quests to begin, dreams in their hearts, and wicked magic that surged through their blood.. everyone could be who they were without shame. There were merchants, taverns, and libraries stocked to the brim with knowledge. People would gather from all around. Here, a party of travelers from all over would band together to begin a perilous journey...a journey to destroy a relic of dark magic.

(Welcome to Lightfell. Andi is no longer holding the book and there are people moving around busily as if it were some Dungeons and Dragons themed New York City. Gatekeeper is nowhere to be seen. Andi is dressed in adventurer garments - looking like a sorcerer in robes with elf ears)

BOOKKEEPER

New books in stock! Scrolls from The School of Necromancy, and collections of the latest new Bard songs to hit the pubs!

BARTENDER

Just got some new brews in! We have a bard performing tonight.

ANDI

Holy. Shit. I did this..?

(Jaymie enters looking dazed over a checklist, Lysander is walking while sharpening a dagger, and Snow enters with her nose in a book)

JAYMIE

Don't steal, keep your head on straight. This is for Marcy.

SNOW

I still need a few more ingredients.

LYSANDER

Lucky dagger. Where the hell would I be without ya?

ANDI

I know them. Why do I know them?

GATEKEEPER (offstage)

They are your adventuring party.

ANDI

Right. The rogue is Jaymie, Snow is a wizard, and Lysander is...he is a...

LYSANDER

I pride myself as being multi-classed between fighter and bard.

ANDI

And you're an elf as well?

LYSANDER

Right-o! Well, now I'm only a half-elf I suppose - but like ya have room to speak? You must be a full elf from the looks of ya.

ANDI

Huh? Oh, yes. Pardon my manners.

LYSANDER

No need, darlin'! Say, ya must be that adventurer everyone's talking about. The one who crusades through all the magic schools and knows the arcana unlike any other.

SNOW

Did you say magic? Oh! You're Andi, aren't you?

ANDI

Yes, yes, I am.

SNOW

Pleased to meet you again outside school grounds. It's nice to see you back here in.. oh goblin's ear, what's the name of this town?

ANDI

Lightfell.

LYSANDER

How could ya forget? Lightfell is common for all travelers to come through. As I recall, it's where we first encountered each other once upon a time.

SNOW

Sorry, it's been awhile.

ANDI

You two know each other?

LYSANDER

Yes. Danced together at the Festival of Luna. What a night!

ANDI

I'd love to attend. It's tonight, isn't it?

JAYMIE

Unfortunately...

SNOW

Oh! Has it been four years already? I'm not much of a partier...

JAYMIE

No kidding.

LYSANDER

Snow's nothin' more than a wee lil' bookworm. Her sister was the one who dragged her there the last time.

SNOW

I thought it'd be nice to write a report about, and she always loved to dance...

ANDI

I didn't know you also wrote.

JAYMIE

There has to be a reason to read. Inspiration, right?

ANDI

Hello, Jaymie. Come out of the shadows.

(Jaymie steps out of the shadows in full rogue attire, hood on)

LYSANDER

Can't sneak around this one, rogue! Their magic is incredible.

ANDI (relieved)

They.. you said they.

JAYMIE

Say...what brings you all this way?

ANDI

Well, Lysander's playing at the tavern tonight, Snow's here to read the new necromancy scrolls in the library, and you're here for...family reasons.

SNOW, LYSANDER, & JAYMIE

And you?

ANDI

I'm here...for a new adventure.

**Scene 4**

(Lightfell is busy with activity. The party sits inside of a tavern. It is nighttime and there are moon decorations spread about the bar. There's an upbeat tune playing as people are dancing, partying, and sharing food. Andi's with Jaymie and Lysander - the bard has a drink in hand)

ANDI

I can't believe I've never been here for this. This is so ethereal!

JAYMIE

I've seen better; I've seen worse.

ANDI

Have you been before, Jaymie?

JAYMIE

No, I'm on the same ship as you, but I don't like water.

BARTENDER

Lysander! Play a song for us, will you?

GATEKEEPER (off)

Roll for performance

(Everything freezes as Lysander rolls a die)

ANDI

Critical success.

(Action resumes)

LYSANDER

That's my cue. See you all soon!

ANDI

Don't party too hard, Lysander!

LYSANDER

No promises, fearless leader.

(Lysander puts his pint down. Lysander moves to the small stage within the tavern and starts to play. Snow tries to sneak in to see Jaymie and Andi clearly nervous)

JAYMIE

So you're looking for the Shadow Crown?

SNOW (quietly)

You're not the first.

ANDI

Snow?

SNOW

My apologies. I prefer books to crowds like this.

JAYMIE

Typical wizard things.

ANDI

I don't blame her. Magic does not come naturally to everyone.

SNOW

Yeah, not all of us can be as lucky as you.

ANDI

Oh, I'm sorry!

SNOW

No! I mean.. I didn't mean to make it sound like you were boasting or anything. I just um... I... I- uh, yeah.

JAYMIE (teasing)

I think Snow has admiration for sorcerers.

SNOW

Well, they're born with magical powers. It's practically surging through their blood.

ANDI

Magic is my life force. That's why I want to share it.

JAYMIE

Speak for yourselves. I don't need flashy magic to get by in life.

SNOW

I've never heard of you, being a successful thief.

JAYMIE  
That's the point, Snow.

SNOW  
Right...

(Lysander returns from the stage and brings everyone a drink)

LYSANDER  
You guys! We should dance!

ANDI  
Done already?

LYSANDER  
Songs only last so long, ya know? I want to get to know my party.  
Music speaks in more than one way.

SNOW  
He's been studying music since forever.

LYSANDER  
Not like Snow enjoys my music.

SNOW  
I never said I-

JAYMIE  
I can imagine there's a funny end to this argument, but I don't care.

LYSANDER  
I say, for now, let's dance. We'll have to teach Jaymie.

ANDI  
It only sounds right to dance in the moonlight.

SNOW  
I think I remember how it's done.

JAYMIE  
I don't know...

LYSANDER  
Come on!



JAYMIE  
OH-kay.

(Jaymie gets pulled by Lysander into the action. Snow giggles as Andi stands aside to observe. The Gatekeeper silently approaches.)

ANDI  
Ah!

GATEKEEPER  
Hush, dear one. You are the only one who can see me.

ANDI  
What're you doing here?

JAYMIE  
So how do I start?

SNOW  
I believe it's a step to the left?

LYSANDER  
It's right, lil' wizard!

SNOW  
Right, right. So sorry.

JAYMIE  
And then?

SNOW  
Circle around one another.

ANDI  
I'm happy here.

GATEKEEPER  
Is that so?

ANDI  
Where else would I want to be?

GATEKEEPER  
So you like your party?

SNOW

Then you bow to one another.

LYSANDER

It's fun if you maintain eye contact. I usually make Snow laugh.

JAYMIE

Heh, cute. You two really know what you're doing, huh?

GATEKEEPER

Everything in this world is yours.

ANDI

I know... and I wouldn't trade it for anything.

GATEKEEPER

Speaking of trading...

ANDI

Don't tell me.

SNOW

I think what comes next is... you can join hands.

LYSANDER

A symbol of people within Lightfell united whether they are family, friends, strangers, or lovers.

GATEKEEPER

You must go back to reality at some point.

ANDI

But this feels more like home.

GATEKEEPER

Even so, this night will end. You can pick the adventure back up at a later date. Consider it to be a short rest - or a long one if you need the spell slots.

LYSANDER

Hey, Andi! You should be Jaymie's dance partner.

JAYMIE

Please, do! I'd prefer someone who won't step on my toes, or someone who would squeak if I looked at them the wrong way.

SNOW

Only if you want to, of course. Please?

ANDI

Can't I stay a little longer?

GATEKEEPER

Of course. Dance your feet off, dear one. Just remember-

ANDI

Every author takes breaks.

GATEKEEPER

Precisely.

JAYMIE

Andi, may I have this dance?

ANDI

Of course, Jaymie, it would be my pleasure.

(The adventuring party dances with one another as the Gatekeeper looks on before stepping downstage and sighing. End Scene)

**Scene 5**

(Melissa is on the phone. Andi is humming a song and dancing through their dining room when they enter. They set down their bookbag. They have headphones around their head. Ben enters the scene and leaves without saying anything. As she hangs up, Melissa sits down)

MELISSA

Welcome home, Ann. I was thinking about making chicken for dinner.

ANDI (mumbling)

Step right, and turn to circle around...bow to one another..

MELISSA

Ann? Ann?!

ANDI

Ah! What? Sorry, Mom.

MELISSA

You walk in and you don't even say hello to me?

ANDI

I.. I'm sorry. I was working on something. What's wrong?

MELISSA

When you do that, it makes me feel like you don't care.

ANDI

I said I was sorry. I was just really in the zone, was all. I'm actually writing something-

MELISSA

You didn't even care to ask how I am or how my day was?

ANDI

Mom, I-

MELISSA

Just sit and talk to me.

(Nervously, Andi sits down in a chair at the table and starts to play with the cord of their headphones)

MELISSA

Didn't you have a test today?

ANDI

Um, yeah..I think I got every question right except one, maybe.

MELISSA

I heard about the lab report you turned in. You only got a B.

ANDI

How did you even-

MELISSA

Rain's mom talks. A lot. Maybe too much. Anyhow, isn't there something you can do about it? You're a straight A student. It shouldn't be too hard since you don't have a job, but maybe you should go back to work if you're slacking.

ANDI

Um.. I could speak with the teacher maybe, or something. I'll do some extra credit assignments..

MELISSA

Much better. You were always so good at science.

ANDI

Hey, Mom? Is it alright if I go to Rain's house?

MELISSA

Don't you have a-

ANDI

It's to study! She needs some help with one of their lab reports.

MELISSA

As long as it's to study, that's fine.

ANDI

Rain is very smart, just for the record.

MELISSA

Not as smart as you, Ann. You got a president's award.

ANDI

I was nine? A lot of kids did.. but um- they're here to pick me up.  
Thanks, Mom! Love you! Bye.

MELISSA

Just let me know when you're getting home! I love you.

(Andi leaves without another word. At this time, Jacob enters)

JACOB

What was all that about?

MELISSA

I just tried to talk to her about her lab report.

JACOB

Their.

MELISSA

Right, their.

(Short pause)

JACOB

The lab report was a B? 89% or something?

MELISSA

She's been so good about being the perfect student. I would hate to see that all get thrown away now.

JACOB

They just need to believe in themselves. Maybe just a push in the right direction.

MELISSA

She's nineteen. It's her life, but-

JACOB

But we still want her to succeed. Where is she now?

MELISSA

She went to see Rain - supposedly they're studying together.

JACOB

I don't believe that for one second. They spend most of their time playing video games together.

MELISSA

How can we trust Ann?

JACOB

I can send a few texts.

MELISSA

By the way, I just got off the phone with Eleanor.

JACOB

You're speaking with her again?

MELISSA

Yes, and you'll never believe what she said to me.

(End Scene)

**Scene 6**

(Rain's room. Andi is on a beanbag chair while Rain sits on a bed. All study supplies have been tossed aside. They are playing video games)

RAIN

Listen, I know you hate the romance in this game, but did you see the way Kendric was looking at Milan? It was absolutely golden! I could swoon just looking at it. It was like.. Um.. what's the word?

ANDI

Euphoric?

RAIN

Hell yeah! Euphoric.

ANDI

Yeah, it was.. Cool or whatever, I guess.

RAIN

Doesn't it make you happy to see other people happy?

(Phone buzzes)

ANDI

You have to have a certain amount of broken hearts before you find someone you might truly consider wanting to be with for life - some call it soulmates. I call it extreme false hope.

RAIN

Some people our age are getting married.

ANDI

Illogical.

RAIN

I just sometimes wish I could have what they do! Is that so wrong? People in games have it, people in real life have it.

ANDI

It's fine to lust after it; just don't become envious. Besides, the way they write in games is cheesy on purpose, to grab your attention.

RAIN



Even so, love is beautiful. The flames from its fire can keep one warm even from a distance. Isn't that magical?

ANDI

When did you get so metaphorical?

RAIN

You teach me words. It makes me sound... What's the word p again?

ANDI

Percipient?

RAIN

Dude, yes! Love that one. It just rolls off the tongue.

ANDI

A wide vocabulary does not determine *your* worth, Rain. I just like using bigger words because it makes my sentences feel worth it.

(Phone buzzes. Andi pauses the video game)

RAIN

Tell me it isn't them.

ANDI

Helicopter parenting. We love to see it.

RAIN

I don't see why they care. When will they let you be an adult? My parents let *me* go, and I'm surviving.

ANDI

And my parents love you... yaaaay.

(Phone buzzes. Andi and Rain resume playing their game)

ANDI

I just want to be anywhere else right now.

RAIN

Okay... anywhere specific?

(Snow, Lysander, and Jaymie walk across the stage as Andi speaks)

ANDI

A realm where no one has to be fearful of trivial things like normal humans do.

RAIN

Because you're not normal?

ANDI

I'll just shut up. It's stupid. I'm sorry.

RAIN

No, no, no. Don't do the thing where you shut up because then I get all nervous and don't know what to say. I'm curious... go on.

ANDI

Okay...imagine a medieval city, for people who are searching for adventure and-

RAIN

Escape?

(Jaymie, Lysander, and Snow exit)

ANDI

... yes.

GATEKEEPER (offstage)

Adventure awaits...

ANDI

Can't you imagine it?

(Rain pauses the game and puts down her controller)

RAIN

It seems...majestic. So, what are you doing here if you'd rather be anywhere else?

ANDI

Um.. I.. Rain, I don't know what to say.

RAIN

It's an honest question. I know you're dealing with a lot.

ANDI

A lot? I wouldn't say it's a lot exactly. Sure, exam season is approaching, and my family has always been a little bit dysfunctional, but-

RAIN

Your sister ran out on your family. Your brother is never home. We don't even go to the same school anymore. Your brain is much happier than you are. If you don't like it here, why haven't you made moves to go somewhere real?

ANDI

Stop it.

RAIN

Are you just going to move on? You went through-

ANDI

My mom took the family photos off the wall.

RAIN

I thought Ben said that had nothing to do with you.

ANDI

You think anyone can understand what my mother is thinking? I'm trying, but what other choice do I have?

(Phone buzzes. Andi puts their controller down)

SNOW, LYSANDER, & JAYMIE (offstage)

Come back to Lightfell.

ANDI

I mean, you're the one who told me to take a break. It makes me happy! It's a catharsis.

RAIN

A what?

ANDI

A sanctuary in which I can release what is repressed.

RAIN

Well...I suppose that's a good first step.

ANDI

I wish I could escape with you, but I don't think that's really how this whole thing works. Besides, Lightfell's still cleaning up from the Festival of Luna. I think you'd love it, Rain!

RAIN

A place that only exists inside your head?

ANDI

I just want to plug my brain into a projector and show people the imagery inside because I can't draw. I don't know if my words do it justice. Haven't you ever wanted to do that before?

(Gatekeeper enters and stands on the other side of Rain from Andi)

RAIN

Not really. It's just...

ANDI

Alien. I'm familiar with the phrasing.

RAIN

That's not what I said. I think what you're doing is interesting. I just worry if you don't think you're human, that might be where you're setting yourself back.

GATEKEEPER

But why be human when you could be interesting?

ANDI

Of course I'm human, Rain. I just sometimes don't feel that I am.

RAIN

You claim to be different from everyone else - and don't get me wrong you can be very different sometimes - in the best ways! But you are putting yourself at a disadvantage! You are trying to punish yourself for something that isn't even a crime.

GATEKEEPER

Rain is wrong.

RAIN

You can identify however you want.

GATEKEEPER

Unless you stick out like a sore thumb in the box everyone's trying to pull you out of.

RAIN

I love you for you, Andi. You don't have to be on a quest.

GATEKEEPER

But that's mundane.

RAIN

You could have a haven right here. You're my best friend. I wouldn't change any bit of you! I never understood how you could hate some of the best things about you.

GATEKEEPER

Then why can't Rain accept Lightfell?

RAIN

Andi, what are you looking at?

ANDI

What? Huh? I'm sorry. I appreciate what you're saying. There's just-

(Phone buzz. This time the ringtone is slightly different than before)

RAIN

Ignore the message for now. Go on, it's okay.

ANDI

Home is supposed to be where the heart is, and I'm just worried that it isn't here anymore.

RAIN

Here?

ANDI

If I have to stay at home and I need somewhere else to go, what's so wrong with pretending I'm inhuman to get there?

RAIN

I'm worried one day you'll float up into the clouds.

GATEKEEPER

Then keep your feet on the ground.

RAIN

Just.. don't fall in love with something that isn't there if there's still people here to love and support you.

GATEKEEPER

Perhaps this Rain *is* quite wise.

ANDI

Thank you, bro. You know I'd never leave you behind.

RAIN

Of course. We're in this together.

(Phone buzzes a different ringtone. A car door being shut can be heard. Rain looks out the window)

ANDI

Tell me it isn't my mom.

RAIN

That's *my* mom. I'll be back in a minute. You wanna stay for dinner?

ANDI

Only if I'm invited.

RAIN

Of course... and I recommend picking up the phone this time.

ANDI

Sure thing. Thanks again.

RAIN

Anytime. Anytime at all.

(Rain exits. Andi checks their phone before taking a deep breath)

ANDI

Eleanor? When did she come back?

(There's a pause as Andi carefully reads the texts on their phone. They look defeated, confused, and hurt. They look out the window to check to see where Rain is. For a moment they look at the video game) (Gatekeeper presents Andi's journal. As Andi opens the book, it begins to glow as they take a pen to the paper)

GATEKEEPER

Welcome home, dear one.

(Blackout. End Scene)

**Scene 7**

(The adventuring party begins to travel through a dark forest just outside of Lightfell. Jaymie is twirling a dagger, Lysander strums a lute, and Snow is reading a book. Andi is last in the walking order as if they have just re-entered the story)

LYSANDER

How far from Lightfell do you think we are now?

SNOW

I don't know, but dancing sure was fun! I haven't been to that festival since I met you, Lysander.

JAYMIE

Shocker. You really don't get around much.

LYSANDER

It's not like *you're* ever around much.

JAYMIE

I've attended plenty of...hullabalooos before. You just wouldn't know it.

ANDI

I'm glad you all had such a lovely time.

LYSANDER

Indeed! And now we can start on our venture!

JAYMIE

Which is what exactly, Andi?

SNOW

Oh goodness, did I spill a forgetfulness potion on you?

ANDI

We're looking for the Shadow Crown. It drove rulers mad back in the day with its dark magic. It's rumored to be in Corrin Cavern up North! I want to return it to Lightfell and give it a safe home so people cannot continue to use its malicious power.

LYSANDER

Hot.

SNOW



Oh, it was! King Octavious used it during the rise of the Solar  
Flare.

JAYMIE

My eldest sibling grew up then.

SNOW

I've heard it was like an awful time loop.

ANDI

It was... many were lost.

JAYMIE

Yes... yes they were.

(As night falls, the adventurers stop to set up camp with one tent.  
They sit around a fire as Jaymie unfurls a map)

JAYMIE

There's several routes to the North. Paths, trails...plus plenty of  
unconventional ways to travel.

LYSANDER

We could go through Marrowbrooke.

SNOW

The Drow would try to cut Andi's ears off. You should know that.

ANDI

Is that why you're missing one?

LYSANDER

Barbarians are a violent bunch. They didn't like my songs.

ANDI

Wait. You found Drow barbari-

JAYMIE

Maybe your lute was as out of tune as your voice.

LYSANDER

Oh can it, edgelord. You love my music.

SNOW

What if we went through Gregorville?

LYSANDER

That's a rogue hub. We need to hold onto everything we have right now.

JAYMIE

I second that. They're not...good rogues down there.

ANDI

What if we went through Thunder's Peak?

JAYMIE

No. Absolutely not.

LYSANDER

By Loki's horns, why not?

JAYMIE

We may end up in pirate territory.

SNOW

Well, a ship up north would be the best way to get to Trident.

LYSANDER

Right-o! I got a few buddies in Trident. No doubt they know their way to Corrin Cavern! They've got plenty of great travel stories to tell. Say, I remember this one time when I met this lovely-

JAYMIE

I'm not sure if it's our..best interest to go through Thunder's Peak.

SNOW

Well, Trident is the best place to get us to Corrin Cavern safely, and Thunder's Peak is the way to get there.

JAYMIE

If it's the only way... I can survive it.

ANDI

You've survived a lot, Jaymie.

JAYMIE

That's easy for you to say. If you'd fought your way to Valhalla-

ANDI

We all have our own Valhalla worthy battles.

LYSANDER

We got your back if anything happens, Jay.

SNOW

We're more than prepared to fight or flee. There's always a plan B.

JAYMIE

Thanks guys; I just need a moment.

ANDI

Then you can take the first watch.

JAYMIE

Sure thing, captain.

(Andi, Snow, and Lysander go into the tent the group had set up)

LYSANDER

Give a holler if you need anything.

(Jaymie paces the stage while thinking. The sound of Andi writing should be heard. First Watch begins)

JAYMIE

Oh dear, oh Loki, oh Odin! What would they think of me if they knew of the truth? None of them know of Marcy, nor of my family roots.. A runaway! My persuasion is so high compared to low passive perception they can't see what I really am... and a rogue coming into contact with pirates is nothing but average... but I could put their lives on the line all for some high bounty.

(Time for second watch. Snow and Lysander sit outside of the tent. Lysander is actively looking for danger while Snow is reading)

LYSANDER

Must ya always have your nose buried in a book?

SNOW

There's no harm in light reading.

LYSANDER

Don't ya fear you'll miss the world if you don't keep your chin up?

SNOW

I fear plenty of things, Lysander.

LYSANDER

Like other people?

SNOW

You know there's good reason for it. At least, I know how to be quiet.

LYSANDER

Are ya bringing up this mess again?

SNOW

You act like you can forget.

LYSANDER

Trust me, I've tried everything I could.

SNOW

Have you truly considered why it's been so long since we've seen each other? The Festival of Luna only happens every four years, and I missed the last one because of what you did.

LYSANDER

... ya know you dance like her?

SNOW

Don't bring her into this.

LYSANDER

Is that not what you did?

SNOW

Pardon me, my book is more important than this.

LYSANDER

Than your sister?

(Snow goes for the book, and Lysander picks it up)

LYSANDER

Running again?

SNOW

Give me back my book.

LYSANDER

Snow-

SNOW

I'm being serious, Lysander! I don't want to have to sit out here with you and meet the same fate she did. Now give me my book!

(This is the first time Snow has raised her voice. Lysander reluctantly tosses the book to Snow who struggles to catch it)

SNOW

Goodnight, Lysander. Make sure nothing goes wrong.

LYSANDER

At least I did that back then.

(The sun begins to rise, and the light is somewhat visible through the trees. Lysander is standing outside the tent. For a moment he grips a music note pendant that hangs around his neck before he looks down at his own hands - too shaky to pick up an instrument)

LYSANDER

I'm so sorry Phalyn.

(End Scene)

**Scene 8**

(Andi is seen pacing in their room. The notebook is left open on a desk along with a few loose papers. Andi stares at their phone. Ben is in the doorway watching)

BEN

I don't see what the big deal is.

ANDI

She texted me, Ben. She cut us all off for what felt like forever and now this?

ELEANOR (offstage)

Hey, Andi! How have you been doing? I hope everything's been going alright. We should meet up for coffee some time soon.

ANDI

I don't know what to do with this!

BEN

Yeah...you don't even drink coffee.

ANDI

But... I want to talk to Eleanor.

BEN

Then talk to her.

ANDI

I don't know what to say! I can't just text whatever...

BEN

Not with that attitude. If you want to talk, speak. Tell her how you've been feeling.

ANDI

I don't know if I should be completely truthful.. She left because she didn't feel supported, and that was never really true. I supported her! Mom never said she didn't.

BEN

Isn't that how you feel right now? Unsupported by Mom and all.

ANDI

How did you-

BEN

My point is: Share as much as you want. But I'd be wary if I were you.

ANDI

Yeah... Why are sisters so complicated?

BEN

I don't know. I've only had one.

ANDI

Thanks, Ben.

(Andi starts typing, quickly stops, and pockets their phone)

ANDI

But what if Mom finds out?

BEN

How would she know?

ANDI

The guilt would cut my heart out and tell Mom against my will.

BEN

... Then don't say anything.

ANDI

It's not that simple.

BEN

Nothing is ever simple with you.

(There's a knock on the door, and Andi looks over at Ben scared. Ben answers the door, and Melissa enters)

MELISSA

Oh, you're both here. I was thinking about changing the plans for dinner tonight. I was going to make breaded chicken, but I don't really feel like cooking. Are you both okay if we go out to eat?

BEN

Sure.

ANDI

Where are we going?

MELISSA

I haven't decided yet. Oh, Ann, please finish your homework soon. I don't want you to be distracted during dinner.

ANDI

Yeah, of course. I just need to record something.

MELISSA

Remember not to be too loud. Your father's working in the basement.

(Melissa exits the bedroom and Andi let's go of tension that they didn't know was in their shoulders)

ANDI

She has come in here at least seven times since I opened this message.

BEN

Aren't you supposed to be doing a project?

ANDI

Yeah. I can't get it done here though. My thoughts don't flow as easily. It's like she knows or something.

BEN

That sucks. Happened to me a lot when I was trying to write essays.

ANDI

What did you do?

BEN

I went to the school library. They have some quiet corners there, and I enjoy some alone time.

ANDI

Hm.. with some music, I could probably get some writing done.

BEN

I thought you had a science project.

(Andi's phone buzzes, and they immediately look at it)

BEN

Andi, what's going on?



ANDI

Just a phone call. Do you mind?

(Ben leaves the room as Andi picks up the phone)

ELEANOR

Andi, hi. How've you been?

(Andi hesitates as they gather their school things up. They seem relieved as they begin to talk to Eleanor more)

ANDI

I'm alright. Are you still free to meet up? I have some studying to do, but I can meet you before I go to the library.

ELEANOR

Fantastic! It's been too long since our last chat. I can meet you there in fifteen minutes.

ANDI

See you then.

(End Scene)

**Scene 9**

(Rain sits at a table in the library as a few other students push by. Andi is walking through as they are writing in their journal. *The Gatekeeper narrates as Andi writes*)

GATEKEEPER

The brave sorcerer Andi understood the party had history as they continued to press towards Thunder's Peak. Traveling mostly consisted of Lysander playing his lute, Jaymie noticing the... the...

RAIN

It's like they can't hear anything.

LIBRARIAN

They come through the library everyday like this. Hey, Andi! Cool notebook!

GATEKEEPER

Fauna of the forest! Jaymie continued searching for a cure for the mysterious illness Marcy had contracted - still completely unknown to the rest of the party.

RAIN

Hey, Andi?

LIBRARIAN

They're in the zone, Rain. I'd give it a rest.

GATEKEEPER

Snow kept to herself mostly. Being a wizard could be hard work. Even so, the three all seemed to enjoy teasing each other as the four traveled on.

SNOW (offstage)

Watch your step, will you? This cloak is from... from...

JAYMIE (offstage)

From who? A lover? A beloved author?

SNOW (offstage)

Someone who was very dear to me...

LYSANDER (offstage)

I wrote a lovely song about that cloak, ya know.

GATEKEEPER

Both of them attempted not to speak about Phalyn.

LIBRARIAN

It's a wonder they can walk and write at the same time. Last time I did that, I landed face first into a bookshelf.

(Andi runs into a bookshelf. The notebook falls out of their hand. this causes the Gatekeeper to completely freeze)

RAIN

Andi, are you okay?

(Andi grabs the book and finishes the sentence they were writing. Gatekeeper starts moving again)

GATEKEEPER

Still, the promise of the Shadow Crown lingered in the back of the leader's mind as-

RAIN

Andi?

GATEKEEPER

The party reached the entrance of Thunder's Peak.

(A boom of thunder, Rain closes the notebook, and Gatekeeper disappears from the stage as the lights go to a blackout before coming back up)

RAIN

I thought you were taking a break from creative breakthroughs because of midterms.

ANDI

Inspiration hits when inspiration hits - Sue me.

RAIN

You and what money?

ANDI

Um.. I'm on scholarship?

LIBRARIAN

Good for you! Now, could you two keep it down or move it?

RAIN

Yeah, fine, whatever.

ANDI

Why are you so upset?

RAIN

You were supposed to be here a half hour ago.

ANDI

I had an important meeting, and it only ended ten minutes ago.

RAIN

Are you serious?

(Rain pulls Andi's wrist up, and then pulls their sleeve down to show the watch they are wearing)

ANDI

Oh... would you look at that: it's 2:45.

RAIN

How did you manage to lose track of time when you're wearing a watch?

ANDI

Magic?

RAIN

Is magic your solution to everything?

ANDI

Rain-

RAIN

It's a fantasy story, right? That you're working on? That's what you said.

ANDI

Um, yeah... yeah, it is. And you know what? It's really freaking cool. Jaymie's worried about running into pirates. I mean, who doesn't love pirates? And Snow and Lysander are speaking about this unspoken-

(Pause. Rain is looking at Andi completely unamused, and all excitement drains from Andi's face as they sit down at a study table)

ANDI

It doesn't matter; you don't care.

RAIN

I do! But you're being carried away by false cognition.

ANDI

Cognition? When did you learn-

RAIN

I come here a lot. I don't need you to teach me all the time.

ANDI

Well... there's no shame in using more laborious words, but why must you be so determined to make sure your vocabulary is not infinitesimal?

RAIN

Are you fucking showing off now? Whatever. I'm not spending our time together arguing.

ANDI

Is it really that big of a deal?

RAIN

If you're going to run away from reality? Yes. Paper can't console you. There are people who care about you. Do you care about us?

ANDI

You sound like my mother.

RAIN

Are you serious?

GATEKEEPER (off)

Critical hit.

ANDI

That's not what I meant! I-

RAIN

But you sure as hell fucking said it.

GATEKEEPER (off)

Saving throw failed.

ANDI

I'm sorry, Rain. I just.. The way you sounded...you're nothing like her!

RAIN

Well, I should hope so.

ANDI

I'm sorry. I'll be perfectly attentive. I promise.

RAIN

Good. I miss you, buddy.

ANDI

I miss you too.

RAIN

So I've actually been struggling in my chemistry class. Are you any-

(Andi's phone rings, and they pick up)

ANDI

I'm so sorry.

RAIN

What now?

ANDI

It's... my dad?

RAIN

You're kidding me.

(Jacob and Melissa are downstage in a spotlight. Jacob is holding a steering wheel. They are in a car)

ANDI

Hey, dad.

JACOB

Where are you?

ANDI

I'm inside the library with Rain.

JACOB

Well, we're here to pick you up.

MELISSA

Yeah, and we have stuff to do. I need you to come home now.

ANDI

I could find another way home. I haven't gotten to see Rain lately. Ben's probably still on campus. I'd hate to inconvenience you just because I'm not ready.

JACOB

You can see Rain in the future.

MELISSA

Just be out here within five minutes or else.

(Lights down on Jacob and Melissa)

ANDI

I- I have to go.

RAIN

Tell me you're joking.

ANDI

Just text me your questions or something. I only have five minutes.

(Ansi packs up their things and tries to leave)

RAIN

When are you going to start living your own life?

ANDI

Pardon?

RAIN

You've let them pull you around for almost two decades now. When are you going to become your own person, huh?

ANDI

You think that's so easy? I have to make them happy. They are my parents, and I live in their house. They feed me and I'm.. I'm their

kid! They gave me life and I have to do as they say. I want them to  
be proud of me.

RAIN

Is that why you contested your professor with an 89? You don't need  
their approval in order to succeed.

ANDI

Rain, I can't do this right now.

RAIN

Can't you just be selfish for one second?

ANDI

No! I can't afford that. Did you not yell at me while I was walking  
into the library?

RAIN

I did.

ANDI

This is why I can't take time for myself because it's going to  
displease everyone.

RAIN

Then can you ask yourself one question?

ANDI

Shoot.

RAIN

Who are you living for: everyone else or yourself?

(Andi exits. End Scene)



**Scene 10**

(Thunder rumbles as lightning streaks across the sky. A storm approaches... Jaymie is the first to come onstage; Jaymie appears to be looking out in the area before rolling behind a small bush and signaling Andi, Snow, and Lysander they could enter Thunder's Peak. Snow hands over the map to Andi. The map unfolds from being tiny to being almost comically large)

JAYMIE

Coast appears to be clear.

LYSANDER

No need to be on high guard. We're not in Trident yet.

JAYMIE

Right...

SNOW

Is something wrong, Jaymie?

JAYMIE

Yup.

SNOW

What is that, pray tell?

JAYMIE

Andi's holding the map upside down.

ANDI

Shit. Sorry!

JAYMIE

I told you going this way would be unwise.

SNOW

It's one little map mistake.

LYSANDER

No big deal. We'll find our way.

ANDI

Right, Right... Just read the map...

JAYMIE

I say we set up camp and-

ANDI

But we're almost there!

LYSANDER

Have a little faith in Andi, will ya?

JAYMIE

We don't need a ship. We have a better way!

ANDI

Jaymie, nothing bad is going to happen to you in Trident. I'll make sure of it. Now, let's head left... I think.

SNOW

Are you sure you're okay?

ANDI

I don't believe I ever said I was.

JAYMIE

See, we should stop. If our leader is unwell-

ANDI

No, we're going and we're going left. We're getting on a ship to Trident so we get to Corrin Cavern and we are going to get that damn crown. We'll just keep on going because I know we can handle it. We'll be just fine; it's easier to keep on moving. You know, sharks die if they stop swimming. I will not lay down, and die like a shark!

LYSANDER

Andi?

SNOW

Did something happen?

ANDI

It's nothing like that... We're going left.

JAYMIE

I can continue to lurk ahead of us to see what's going on.

LYSANDER

I'm not sure that's a good idea since you tried to rob those bandits  
blind this morning.

JAYMIE

Would've worked if someone hadn't sneezed.

SNOW

My books are dusty! Lysander's the one who charged into battle.

LYSANDER

Well, if you have a sword, ya better use it!

ANDI

You guys are adorable.

SNOW, LYSANDER, & JAYMIE

What?

ANDI

It's like you guys are all siblings or something the way you  
interact...

JAYMIE

I guess? I doubt we could ever-

LYSANDER

Do ya not have siblings, Andi?

ANDI

Um, I do have siblings- or I did.

SNOW

Did something happen, dear one?

LYSANDER

You don't gotta say a thing if you don't want to.

ANDI

They're gone in one way or another - which leaves me abandoned with  
the shambles of our family. My parents don't understand me... there's  
no way they love me - just the idea of me.

JAYMIE

That's ridiculous.

SNOW

No wonder you're such a frequent traveler..

LYSANDER

So you don't have a home?

ANDI

Not exactly, no. My home was my best friend. Rain's... not safe anymore.

JAYMIE

I'm sorry to hear that, Andi.

ANDI

Me too..

(There's an awkward pause between everyone as they don't know where to go. They seem to be fully frozen. Oh dear... it appears Andi does not know what to write. They attempt to fill the void with-)

SNOW

Well, we can be your family!

LYSANDER

Aye! I second that.

JAYMIE

I guess... it would make sense.

SNOW

We could be more than just a party.

LYSANDER

Yeah, family doesn't have to be blood, Andi.

JAYMIE

Sometimes there's more of a family in those you meet along the journey than the people you're stuck with.

SNOW

So are you in?

(Snow, Lysander, and Jaymie have all put their hands together in a circle. Andi hesitates before they put their hand in)

ANDI  
Consider it done.

SNOW  
Splendid!

LYSANDER  
Huzzah!

JAYMIE  
Epic!

ANDI  
Yes... so, now may we continue our quest? We're almost to Trident!

LYSANDER (drawing his sword)  
Well, what are we waiting for?

(Lysander, Snow, and Jaymie all go down the path left as Andi smiles.  
Gatekeeper enters and scares Andi)

GATEKEEPER  
No going back now.

ANDI  
AH! How do you do that?

GATEKEEPER  
I come when I'm needed, dear one. Are you resigning?

ANDI  
I'm immersed in the world. I want my adventure.

GATEKEEPER  
Yes, but hands cramp, pens run out of ink, and life goes on.

ANDI  
I can't waste a rest now. We're almost there!

GATEKEEPER  
You trust them, don't you?

ANDI

Of course, I do. Aren't families supposed to?

GATEKEEPER  
This isn't real.

ANDI  
I don't care. At least I finally belong.

LYSANDER (offstage)  
Come on, Andi!

ANDI  
We'll catch up soon.

GATEKEEPER  
Certainly, dear one.

(Andi runs off to catch up with the party as Gatekeeper faces the audience)

GATEKEEPER  
Some stories are lessons, and others are sanctuaries... but maybe it's more sickening than the suffering will show.

(Gatekeeper exits as the adventuring party runs back on stage from separate direction with their hands in the air)

JAYMIE  
I told you this was a bad idea!

PIRATE CAPTAIN  
Jaymie! Long time no see, laddie... I think we have some business to take care of, matey.

SNOW  
Odin help us...

LYSANDER  
Holy Hells, this is quite the welcoming party..

ANDI  
Welcome to Trident.

(Blackout)  
(End Act 1)

Act 2

Scene 1

(Lights up on pirate's cove. There's barrels and crates around, and swords in the side of some of them. For a moment, there is no one onstage, but suddenly there's a bit of a chase scene. First Mate is after Andi who is attempting to use magic to save themself, Lysander plays chase music on one of his instruments while being followed by a Rookie, Snow is hiding behind a barrel and is spotted by Crew Mate and is chased offstage, and Pirate Captain follows Jaymie with a sword. This continues until the adventuring party ends up back to back with the pirate crew circling them. There's a blackout for a moment and everyone in the adventuring party has their hands bound)

LYSANDER

Well, was this what we were avoidin', darlin'?

JAYMIE

Don't taunt me with your stupid bard words.

PIRATE CAPTAIN

Silence!

JAYMIE

Like you could ever shut me up!

PIRATE CAPTAIN

If ya want to keep yer tongues, you'd seal those royal lips.

CREW MATE

Or we could take the runaway's feet instead!

ROOKIE

Aye! Tear 'em up!

FIRST MATE

Mate, I believe they want Jaymie in good shape.

PIRATE CAPTAIN

Aye, you're right. You should still watch yer mouth, scoundrel.

JAYMIE

Me? A scoundrel? You're the pirate.

ANDI

Does someone want to explain what's going on here?



PIRATE CAPTAIN

Did yer wee little friends not know yer secret?

JAYMIE

I'm a runaway.

FIRST MATE

Jaymie's much more than that!

SNOW

What did you run from?

JAYMIE

Home.

ANDI

I know the feeling..

JAYMIE

No, this is different, Andi.

PIRATE CAPTAIN

We're from the same place. Ain't that right?

FIRST MATE

Drownin' in illness and famine.

PIRATE CAPTAIN

Most fled because the prince of their land did too.

SNOW

Jaymie, are you-

JAYMIE

Yes. I'm royalty.

SNOW

You left your land and people in their time of need?

JAYMIE

That disease was going to spread with or without me. Besides, I'm not their true leader.. yet.

PIRATE CAPTAIN

Unless your parents were dead..

JAYMIE

They aren't... are they? That means Marcy would be-

PIRATE CAPTAIN

Wouldn't you like to know?

JAYMIE

It can't be true! The plague hadn't reached my parents. Just because you're a pirate doesn't mean you have to be a jackass.

ROOKIE

Well, they're not dead yet...

ANDI

You leave them alone!

PIRATE CAPTAIN

Well now! Who's this yer traveling with?

JAYMIE

Tch, you don't know?

CREW MATE

What? Should I be shakin' in me boots? A lil' ol' elf that can do magic? I know plenty o' those.

LYSANDER

Oh, Andi's much more than that.

PIRATE CAPTAIN

Aye, that name does sound familiar.

JAYMIE

Oh, are pirates literate now?

CREW MATE

By Odin's beard! You're Andi! The one who writes adventure books.

LYSANDER

And they never leave out any details..

PIRATE CAPTAIN

Sounds like it's good for business.

ANDI

You tied me and my friends up. What part of this seems good to you?

FIRST MATE

Is now a good time to tremble in fear?

PIRATE CAPTAIN

Aye, laddie.

JAYMIE

It'd probably be in your best interest to let us go.

PIRATE CAPTAIN

And miss the bounty on yer head?

JAYMIE

Listen, I don't know if you'll believe me, but I left my kingdom in hopes of finding an antidote. For Marcy.

PIRATE CAPTAIN

Family comes first, eh? What of your people?

CREW MATE

Your wee lil' sister won't have much of a kingdom if yer gonna destroy it, laddie.

LYSANDER

Marcy's your sister!?

JAYMIE

Not now, Lysander. Listen, if I can find an antidote, it could cure a lot of people. I'm going off of a formula I believe could work. If you could let me go... I could bring it to whoever you need. Just let us go.

PIRATE CAPTAIN

.. You promise?

JAYMIE

You have my word. Just let us go.

ANDI

Or take us to Corrin Cave for free. I mean, unless you want a bad review?

GATEKEEPER (off)  
Roll Persuasion.

(Action pauses as Jaymie & Andi make a stat check..)

ANDI  
Thirteen plus proficiency bonuses... eighteen for Jaymie. I rolled a  
fifteen against difficulty class fourteen.

(Action resumes)

CREW MATE  
They're a novel writer, Captain. I think it might be best we listen.

FIRST MATE  
Aye! Take the offer!

ROOKIE  
Think of the tale of our ship and our crew!

PIRATE CAPTAIN  
And you promise an antidote to me?

JAYMIE  
You have my word..

PIRATE CAPTAIN  
Very Well. Set sail, prepare what we need. We'll head to Corrin Cave.  
Settle in laddies.

(The Captain leads their crew downstairs as the party is untied from  
their post. Gatekeeper enters)

SNOW  
Oh, I've never been on a pirate ship before.

LYSANDER  
Nervous?

SNOW  
Always.

GATEKEEPER  
Interesting escape.

(Andi steps aside as everyone in the scene freezes)

ANDI  
Pardon?

GATEKEEPER  
I thought there would be more conflict and fantasy!

ANDI  
I'm running low on inspiration.

GATEKEEPER  
Maybe if you were to return home-

ANDI  
That place isn't home... and I'll get better. I promise.

GATEKEEPER  
Whatever you say, dear one.

(The chaotic crew of pirates return to prepare for travel as the Gatekeeper steps back to observe)

LYSANDER  
So, you thought that would be trouble?

JAYMIE  
I don't usually have good run-ins with the pirate crew.

SNOW  
We must be lucky to have Andi with us.

ANDI  
What am I, some good luck charm or something?

LYSANDER  
Well, we're getting to our destination.

JAYMIE  
Soon enough we'll return that Shadow Crown to a safe place.

ALL  
Onward!

## Scene 2

(Stage right lights come up. Welcome to everyone's favorite local coffee shop. Andi sits there writing in the notebook with headphones on. They seem withdrawn and a lot smaller than normal. Eleanor orders a coffee and texts on her phone before going over to sit with Andi. The Gatekeeper is watching from behind Andi)

ELEANOR

I'm sorry about the wait. My wife is held up at work, and we weren't sure if my husband could pick up the kids.

ANDI

It's okay. I can imagine it's difficult to balance.

ELEANOR

Everything always is, isn't it?

ANDI

Yeah...

ELEANOR

So, what are you writing?

(Lights come up on stage left. Lysander sits on the edge of the pirate ship playing a sad song on his lute under moonlight)

ANDI

Nothing important.

(Snow, seemingly following the sound of the music, stops in her tracks when she realizing Lysander's playing music)

SNOW

Where did you learn that song?

ANDI & LYSANDER

It's just something helping me move on.

ELEANOR

Times seem tough right now. You know Mom will let up in time.

ANDI

Since you left? I wasn't sure she ever would again.

(Andi and Lysander both wear an expression of guilt; Snow and Eleanor both look concerned)

LYSANDER

You've heard it before, darlin'?

SNOW

Of course I have.

ELEANOR

I didn't mean to leave you behind.

ANDI

No, I know. You were in a bad situation, and you had to get out of there. I can't be mad at you for that.

SNOW

Lysander, she gave you that melody, didn't she?

LYSANDER

It's one of the many things she did.

ELEANOR

I should've been there for you.

ANDI

It's.. really okay, El.

ELEANOR

No, it's not.

SNOW

Why do you still play her songs if-

LYSANDER

Snow, will you just listen?

(Silence falls over the group as Lysander attempts to find his groove once more. He turns back to his lute. He plays a melancholic song that has a lot of love in it. Andi stops writing as they hum along with the lute's tune)

ANDI

Well, the past is the past. We can't change it.

(Andi begins writing again)

ANDI (to herself)  
Not everyone gets to keep their sister.

LYSANDER  
She had a good ear, always humming some sort of tune.

SNOW  
She was trying to infuse it with magic, and she almost completed her work thanks to you.

LYSANDER  
She really loved you.

SNOW  
She really loved *you*, Lysander.

ELEANOR  
Well.. how is Mom taking it now?

ANDI  
She just... she claims to be accepting and she's done nothing to show that. With my friends it's another story.

ELEANOR  
It's different since you're her child.

LYSANDER  
You don't really believe that.

SNOW  
Yes, I do.

ELEANOR  
Picking out a name was difficult for you. She asked for opinions from Ben and I. Of course, Ben barely knew any words, so he wanted to name you after an object: "Piano Malloy".

SNOW  
I've always believed that. I remember the day Phalyn met you. It made her put down her studies - turning magic into music. It's like you were a perfect match. I watched her smile... you made her smile.



ANDI

But screwing up the pronouns? I wish Mom could be a little more understanding.

SNOW

But how could you make her smile if... if you were the one who-

LYSANDER

I tried to protect her.

SNOW

Tried and failed.

LYSANDER

It's not like you did anything, snowflake.

ELEANOR

What about Dad?

SNOW

I had my own battles to fight!

LYSANDER

Do you think I didn't?

SNOW

You slept next to her, and I found her bloody in her own bed. Where were you? I was towers over. When I get there I see you with weapon in hand and-

LYSANDER

I did the best I could! I wasn't always a fighter.

SNOW

Then play another song. I'm sure it'll save someone.

LYSANDER

It saved me.

SNOW

I'd rather have her.

LYSANDER

This is coming from the wizard who was too stunned to cast a spell.  
At least I did *everything I could*.

SNOW

She was your wife, Lysander!

LYSANDER

And she was your sister!

ANDI

I don't know how he feels. He usually just follows Mom's lead.

ELEANOR

One throned ruler at a time, right? Dad could be your way in.

ANDI

Yeah.. but I don't want to have to explain everything for it to make sense. I should be able to exist as me.

(Lights go down on Snow and Lysander)

ELEANOR

Does he know you're talking to me?

ANDI

No.. No one does.

ELEANOR

It's not very like you to break the rules. Andi, is something wr-

(Eleanor's phone rings. She picks it up to look at it as Andi looks over what they've written)

ELEANOR

I'm so sorry about this. I have to go.

ANDI

It's alright. I actually have to meet up with some friends.

ELEANOR

Rain?

(Jaymie enters behind Eleanor and waves before offering his hand)

ANDI

No.. someone else.

(Andi walks over and takes Jaymie's hand. Upon making contact, there is a blackout)

**Scene 3**

(The Malloy family dining room. *It is evening.* Melissa is typing on her laptop, but can't seem to focus while Jacob keeps checking his phone. *The other half of the stage is not currently lit*)

MELISSA

Where is Ann? She never comes home this late.

JACOB

Are they with Rain?

MELISSA

I wish I knew! She hasn't been able to tell me anything. It's like she hates me or something. How can someone hate their own mother?

JACOB

Your oldest daughter does.

MELISSA

But this is Ann we're talking about. They have always been fine, so why would there suddenly be something wrong?

JACOB

They would tell us, right?

MELISSA

I don't know, Jacob. Things have been.. So different with them. I know she wants to be non-binary, but I don't like the person they have become. Ann was such a lovely young girl full of potential.

Andi? They're mean to me. They don't appreciate anything I do.

(Melissa closes her laptop *to give Jacob her full attention*)

MELISSA

I remember sitting in the hospital dreaming of what our baby would be like, and she was everything! I almost died - Ann almost died.

JACOB

I know. I was there too, Mel.

MELISSA

I hate the name Andi so much. They're not an Andi.

JACOB

Well, it's not like we can change that.

MELISSA

I tried to! Ann wouldn't listen to me. I refuse to call them Andi.  
Why would they spell in such an odd way?

(Ben enters, and puts his headphones around his neck)

JACOB

I don't know. I'm not sure that's what we should focus on though. We  
don't know where they are.

BEN

What are we talking about?

MELISSA

Do you know where Ann is?

BEN

I saw them in the school library earlier. They said they needed to  
catch up with some friends.

JACOB

Rain?

BEN

Not sure. Maybe they made up after their fight.

MELISSA

They fought?

BEN

Yeah, but I'm not sure what happened. It's probably just because of  
exams at school. Andi always gets a little freaked out.

JACOB

College is hard. I told them that forever ago, but I think it's  
catching up to them now.

MELISSA

Yeah, it's a different level of learning.

BEN

Yeah, and the school's a shit hole. They're better than that.

JACOB

They can go somewhere else for graduate school.

BEN

They still want that? I thought it was for scholarship money.

MELISSA

I thought she didn't want to leave the house.

(Ben scoffs as he puts his headphones back on)

JACOB

I don't think Andi knows who they are anymore... so they might not know what they want. Most non-binary people are just confused anyway. It's not like Andi has gender dysphoria.

BEN

Whatever you need to tell yourself. You won't know unless you talk to them.

MELISSA

Ann needs to talk to us.

BEN

Communication is a two way street.

JACOB

Don't talk to your mother like that.

BEN

Like what? It's just the truth. You tell me that all of the time.

MELISSA

Don't talk to us like we're your friends, Benjamin.

(As Ben goes to defend himself, Andi walks through the front door with earbuds in, writing in their notebook. Snow, Lysander, and Jaymie are following behind them. No one notices them walking through the room)

BEN

I don't understand. You talk to me whenever you want. Why not them?

JACOB

They're busy, Ben.

BEN

Oh, and I'm not? Do any of you know what I did this week? What video games I've played? The classes I attended?

MELISSA

You usually tell us when you-

BEN

Yeah, but you never ask!

JACOB

I feel like there's a lot of miscommunication-

MELISSA

Don't act like you're not a part of that.

ANDI

If only there was a way to get away from it all...

(Ben, Melissa, and Jacob all look over at Andi for the first time. In this moment Snow, Lysander, and Jaymie scatter offstage as if they were never there at all. Silence follows. The Gatekeeper enters, slams a staff on the stage floor as there's a blackout)

GATEKEEPER

Roll initiative.

**Scene 4**

(Lysander, Snow, and Jaymie are in battle on the side of a snowy mountain. They are being attacked by three bandits. The party stands together with Jaymie in the front. They all roll initiative before beginning conversation. Actors can ad-lib about their rolls)

FIRST BANDIT

Alrighty, you've come to the end of the line.

SNOW

First pirates, and now this?

JAYMIE

Trouble's always lurking.

SECOND BANDIT

We'll find a way to pull you out of the shadows.

LYSANDER

We'll drag you back in then.

(Third bandit enters)

THIRD BANDIT

Am I late?

ANDI (offstage)

No.

(The lights go down as the lights come back up. All four bandits are onstage. Lysander lets out a battle cry as combat begins between the four bandits and three party members. Lysander and Jaymie use melee weapons whereas Snow casts magic - this should take form in her shouting different spells names in tandem with grand gestures. Bandit Three and Fourth Bandit overpower Snow and she will die during the battle. This should be the loudest Snow has been in the entire show)

FOURTH BANDIT

Not so real now, are you?

ANDI (offstage)

Wait.

(The fight reverses itself and Snow comes back to life)

SNOW

That was a close one.

LYSANDER

Weren't you just... just- just-

ANDI (offstage)

Never mind.

(The lights go down and the scene restarts again. Lysander plays a song on his lute and the party and the bandits appear to be in a dance battle. It's intense until the song turns to something tender and Snow dances with Fourth Bandit. The pair seem to truly dig one another, and then lean in for a kiss. Blackout.)

ANDI(offstage)

Enemies to lovers is overrated.

(The scene restarts one more. There is no sense to it. People are dancing, fighting, dying and being suddenly revived. There is absolute chaos. The scene begins to move in slow motion. It should be clear the party is losing to the bandits. A guard slowly walks across the stage with her face hidden. The time slowing down does not impact the guard, and when they fully make it across the stage, the slow motion ends)

SNOW, LYSANDER, & JAYMIE

We won't lose.

(For one final time: The scene begins again from a blackout. The bandits are not seen onstage. Snow runs onstage with Lysander)

SNOW

Where's Jaymie?

LYSANDER

They must be fending off the bandits.

JAYMIE (offstage)

YOU WON'T EVER TOUCH EITHER OF MY FAMILIES!

LYSANDER

Oh...Snow, your cloak is ripped.



SNOW

It's not mine.

LYSANDER

... Right. Listen I-

SNOW

It's not your fault.

LYSANDER

What?

SNOW

Those soldiers would have bombarded Fellflower Tower either way.  
Phalyn took the fall. She was brave.

LYSANDER

Yeah, she always was, wasn't she?

SNOW

Yeah, and she really loved you.

LYSANDER

And that cloak.

SNOW

Maybe so...

LYSANDER

Well, it meant so much to her, y'know. Told me stories of studying  
magic with it growing up, how excited she was to take care of it the  
day it arrived, and eventually she introduced me to it. That day I  
gained a wife and a cloak-in-law. So it only-

SNOW

But now it's torn and it's all I had- ... Wait. You're talking about  
me, aren't you?

LYSANDER

You never let a poet finish, do ya?

SNOW

Fine, finish up, but please speak a language I know.

LYSANDER

Right-o... My love extended beyond her and I knew she wouldn't want anything to happen to you, so I made sure the last Fellflower didn't have her petals wilt. Those invaders sang their last tune.

SNOW

Lysander...How do you know that?

LYSANDER

Let's just say I have a band. We do love giving a good finale.

SNOW

You got revenge?

LYSANDER

Nobody kills my wife and gets away with it.

(Jaymie enters. Jaymie's clothes are tattered and torn. There's some blood on him)

JAYMIE

Those bandits won't bother us anymore.

SNOW

Thanks, Jay. You alright?

JAYMIE

I didn't die.

SNOW

It feels like I did.

LYSANDER

Hey, it's been a long time since you've been out, snowflake.

JAYMIE

Have either of you seen Andi?

LYSANDER

I think they went to set up camp ahead of us.

SNOW

Can you believe we're so close now?

LYSANDER

Bookworm's suddenly excited.

SNOW

It's for a good cause!

JAYMIE

We're almost there. I can taste it. Only slightly out of reach...

LYSANDER

Well then, let's travel onwards my friends!

(Lysander is the first to lead off as he hums a tune - similar to the one that was played during the dance battle. Snow begins to dance the way she did with Bandit Four. As they exit, the Gatekeeper enters. Jaymie stops as they find a plant on the ground that looks like a white flower)

JAYMIE

By Odin's beard!

(Jaymie picks the flower and holds it to his chest. They smile before running off after Snow and Lysander)

GATEKEEPER

Dear one, what is going on here?

ANDI (offstage)

At least it's over now... Jaymie found an antidote.. Yay.

GATEKEEPER

Dear one? Are you there?

ANDI (offstage)

It's fine, it's fine... it's fine.

GATEKEEPER

ANDI, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

ANDI (offstage)

Sorry! Sorry, I- I thought conflict would make things interesting, but I don't want my life bleeding into my story. They should have happy endings, right? I just...don't know where to go.

GATEKEEPER

What do you want?

(Andi enters. They are shaking, and they seem to be hiding themselves. The notebook isn't in their hand, and they are hugging themselves around their center. There's a hood on their head)

ANDI

I don't know. I've never known.

(Gatekeeper takes the hood off of Andi's head, and Andi is not in their fantasy clothes. This is everyday Andi)

GATEKEEPER

This is why they can't find you, dear one.

ANDI

Who are they really looking for? I'm just Andi, right? Who really cares? The author and magic caster that isn't real! Who needs them anyways? Magic casters are too squishy for combat...

(Andi sits on the edge of the stage away from the Gatekeeper. Snow, Lysander, and Jaymie can be heard calling out for Andi)

ANDI

Shut up! You're not real! I don't want to hear anymore yelling. I am going to make all of you happy.

GATEKEEPER

They will listen to you. You are their creator.

ANDI

They're too alive now. They've claimed agency over their lives. I'm not omnipotent. I'm just a writer... My story is all over the place.

GATEKEEPER

You were once eager to run to me. Did your Rain suddenly return?

ANDI

No. We've had fights before, but this might be the end.

GATEKEEPER

So you're free to roam. My adversary has fallen.

ANDI

Jaymie kept our adversaries at bay, but I can still hear them. There's more out there... I'm not at camp, I didn't set up a tent. I've

got no plans because where is the future even going? I know I'm not there...

GATEKEEPER

Then, Andi, where are you?

(The scene changes into reality around Andi as they stand in the center unfocused. We see Rain walk across downstage making a call to Andi and the party runs through the stage in chaos looking for Andi. Gatekeeper disappears in the chaos)

RAIN

Andi? .. Why aren't they picking up?

LYSANDER

Don't tell me the bandits got to them!

SNOW

Andi? Where are you?

RAIN

Hey, Andi. I really miss you, and I know life can be difficult. I'm... really sorry about what I said at the library.

JAYMIE

It's not a party without our leader.

RAIN

I don't know where you are...

LYSANDER

Andi, where are you?

RAIN

Just please call me back when you get the chance.

SNOW

Do you think someone captured them?

JAYMIE

The bandits were just a distraction.

RAIN

I'm really worried.

ALL  
Andi, where are you?

**Scene 5**

(There is no blackout from the last scene. The Gatekeeper slowly walks away as Melissa, Jacob, and Ben bring on set pieces onstage to make up the dining room. Snow, Lysander, and Jaymie are shouting for Andi as the family is shouting at one another. Andi stands in the center of the stage looking out into the audience. They have lost focus. The noise comes to a grand crescendo before coming to a stop as Melissa speaks to Andi. They still aren't fully present)

MELISSA

Are you even listening to me right now?

ANDI

I'm sorry...

MELISSA

You never have any respect for me, for this house, for other people. You can't ever appreciate anything, can you?

ANDI

I- I do! I appreciate all the cleaning you do around the house, and you make meals for us whenever you can. Not everyone gets that..

MELISSA

Rain would never speak to her mother like this, you know that? They have respect for their parents.

ANDI

I do respect you!

JACOB

Raising your voice at us proves that you don't.

BEN

That's not what Andi meant-

MELISSA

Benjamin, you stay out of this.

JACOB

Apologize to your mother.

ANDI

I don't.. Understand why.

MELISSA

You have been disrespectful towards me.

ANDI

I'm sorry if it appears that way.

JACOB

You need to *genuinely* apologize, Andi.

ANDI

I don't understand. Did I not just do that?

MELISSA

This is what I'm talking about. You would never talk back like this when you were younger. Can't you bring Ann back?

(This lands with Andi. They are still unfocused, but they slowly look over at Melissa. As this dialogue goes on, Andi should become more and more present)

ANDI

I don't go by that name anymore, but I'm still the same person.

MELISSA

You are not the girl you used to be.

ANDI

I'm not a girl.

MELISSA

Person! Are you happy now?! You're not the same living, breathing creature you once were! Does that work for you? I don't even know who

Andi is. You're some stranger in my house. I spent so much time picking out your name, and you don't like it. What's wrong with Ann?

ANDI

Nothing. It's just not my name.

JACOB

Legality would disagree with you.

MELISSA

Can't you let me use it? Just for me, let me call you Ann. Ann is my sweet girl, my daughter! She is full of love and potential. She's the smartest girl I have ever met, and I miss when she would come home



(MELISSA)

with a big smile on her face and tell me about her day. She would hug me and tell me how much she loved her mother. What happened to her? Andi is not my child. They are mean to me, disrespect me, and never care about others. They are off doing something else all of the time! You are putting yourself into this mold that is not who you are. I know who you are. You love the color pink, and you grew up playing with dolls. Your big dream was to be a princess, and you would tell me stories about it.

ANDI

I stopped wanting to be a princess when I was in middle school. I started playing actual video games with adventure in them, and you supported me! I even started playing D&D with you, Dad, Eleanor, and Ben. I like chemical formulas! The day I made ice cream in chemistry class changed my life.

MELISSA

Well, did it change your brain chemistry too? I want my daughter back. She was a beautiful young woman, and Andi isn't pretty. You should stop imprisoning Ann. She's too good to be a damsel in distress.

ANDI

Ann is not my name and that's not who I am.

MELISSA

Well, Andi's not my child, so you might as well stop calling me mom.

ANDI

What?

JACOB

Mel, wait a minute-

(Andi is fully present)

MELISSA

I raised a respectful young woman full of promise! I will not take in this asshole named Andi who thinks it's okay to come into my house and take up space. You want to be Andi? Fine. I'm not your mother.

ANDI

But...what am I supposed to call you now? Am I still allowed to live here?

JACOB

Of course you can live here, Andi.

MELISSA

But you have to pay rent. Only my children live here for free.

ANDI

I don't have time for a job! I'm taking nineteen credits to make sure I can graduate early. I'm barely keeping my grades up-

JACOB

You're what?

MELISSA

You were just fine a few weeks ago.

ANDI

Things change.

MELISSA

No kidding.

(Andi tries to go gather their things they left on the table)

MELISSA

You better figure things out. The world is rough out there for someone without a mother. Unless Ann is back?

ANDI

Ann never left. They just changed.

MELISSA

Ann never came home late. Ann never would talk back, and Ann was smart enough to make sure she didn't fail. Ann was-

ANDI

My name is Andi! I use they/them pronouns, and my name is Andi. I told you this *last year* and you refuse to believe it! I want to be your child. I am still right here. I have those memories.

MELISSA

Those are Ann's memories.

ANDI

That doesn't mean I don't belong in them. I would've changed if I was non-binary or not. People change all the time. You're not the only one grieving. I had to give up so many dreams because I'm not a girl.

Life is not at all what I thought it would be. I still love fairytales, and being royalty still feels like magic. My doll houses are something that make me smile. It's a bittersweet feeling.. I can't go back to being your daughter, but I am your child.

MELISSA

You're nothing like you used to be.

ANDI

Because I'm finally myself! Don't you see that, Mom?

MELISSA

I'm not your mother, Andi.

JACOB

Andi, just.. go to your room.

(Tears go down Andi's face as they run out of the dining room frantically. Andi's bedroom door slams shut as Ben, Melissa, and Jacob stand in silence onstage)

BEN

Don't you think that was a little harsh?

MELISSA

Excuse me?

BEN

This is the first time you call them by their name to their face, and you're disowning them.

JACOB

This is hard for your mother.

BEN

Yeah, but it's hard for Andi too. Can't you see that?

JACOB

Of course it's difficult for them. Andi-

MELISSA

But there's no reason for them to disrespect me.

BEN

They just want to be heard. It's not about you guys!

(A silence falls over the group once more. Jacob shakes his head in disappointment as Melissa begins cleaning the dining room table. Defeated, Ben sighs and puts his headphones back on)

BEN

Dammit, I never wanted to be the youngest child.

**Scene 6**

(Wind can be heard as the lights slowly start to come up on the stage. Andi enters first with a wizard staff in hand in their fantasy clothes and elf ears intact. Andi is followed by Jaymie, Snow, and then Lysander. The mouth of Corrin Cavern... we've arrived)

JAYMIE

Andi, there you are!

ANDI

Hey.

SNOW

Did you scout ahead?

ANDI

It's safe here. Always has been.

LYSANDER

Darlin', your disposition is rather glum.

ANDI

The cold will do that to you.

JAYMIE

It's nothing like home.

ANDI

I suppose most people would say that. I don't do well in the cold.

SNOW

I don't mind it.

JAYMIE

Well, there you have it. This is Corrin Cavern, then?

LYSANDER

We've finally made it. I'll buy us all a pint when we get home.

SNOW

The crown should just be beyond the cave entrance.

(Jaymie, Lysander, and Snow all go towards the cave entrance. Andi doesn't move at all)

LYSANDER

Well, are ya comin'?

ANDI

If we retrieve the crown that means it's all over. The story ends.

SNOW

But then you'll get to finish another book! Magic casters everywhere will see your greatness again.

JAYMIE

It means we were successful.

ANDI

But what... happens to us?

LYSANDER

We will wait for your call. We gotta celebrate first! Our inaugural venture with the great Andi.

JAYMIE

I need a moment to return home.

SNOW

And I have my studies to tend to... but we won't be gone forever.

ANDI

You said we were family. That means you won't leave.

LYSANDER

We'll be back when that book is on the shelf.

SNOW

I'll read every page.

JAYMIE

But we can't start doing that until we get that crown.

LYSANDER

And we're doin' that together!

(Lysander offers his hand to Andi, and they take it as they slowly walk into the cave with the rest of the party. Jaymie looks around the surroundings to make sure they are alone. Snow looks over the shadow crown)

ANDI

King Octavious left the crown here when the Solar Flare ended in hopes no one would find it in such a cold place.

JAYMIE

Wouldn't the madness seep into the atmosphere?

LYSANDER

Maybe it already has! That run in with the bandits was far from normal.

SNOW

I'm still not sure what happened there.

JAYMIE

Maybe the madness has already reached us.

ANDI

I'm sure you guys are completely sane. It's usually activated with magic. Here...

LYSANDER

Andi, wait!

(As soon as Andi touches the crown, soldiers enter. These soldiers are played by Melissa, Jacob, Ben, and Eleanor)

SOLDIER M

You foul travelers! Attempting to tarnish history? Why would you soil the history of King Octavious and the Solar Flare?

ANDI

This crown isn't safe here in the open. It needs to be protected.

SOLDIER J

That doesn't give you the right to steal it.

LYSANDER

We assure you that we mean no harm! We're trying to make sure this crown doesn't fall into the wrong hands.

SOLDIER M

I can assure you the Shadow Crown will be kept safe from those who want to unleash its power. History must not be forgotten, no matter how painful.

JAYMIE

That's a load of-

SOLDIER M

Tarnishing history is means for banishment from this realm. You will have to pay with your lives.

LYSANDER

Our lives?

JAYMIE

I have to get back home.

SNOW

Please, reconsider! I'm no law breaker.

SOLDIER J

There's no other way.

(The party rolls initiative with weapons drawn, but Andi doesn't move)

JAYMIE

Well, I won't go without a fight.

LYSANDER

Sing your final words to me if you wish.

ANDI

Wait! None of you placed your hands on the Shadow Crown. I did. I'll pay for it.

LYSANDER

Andi, no!

SNOW

What about our story?

ANDI

I promise people will hear it.

(The soldiers arrest Andi)

SOLDIER M

You're coming with us.



SNOW

Andi, you don't deserve this.

ANDI

It's okay. Just run before they change their minds.

LYSANDER

We won't leave you!

JAYMIE

We can't let them take your life.

(Andi holds up their shackled hands)

ANDI

They already have.

(There's a long silence. Lysander shakes Andi's hand as he takes a step back from the soldiers who are glaring at him and the rest of the party. Jaymie gives Andi a fist bump and the soldiers all grab their swords at the sight of "violence", and Jaymie leaves Corrin Cavern. Snow hugs Andi tightly and whispers something to them no one else can hear. Lysander and Snow exit hand in hand through the cave entrance. Andi is dragged off by soldiers in the other direction)

**Scene 7**

(Jacob stands outside Andi's bedroom stage right. He knocks but doesn't get any answers)

JACOB

Andi? I'm not sure if you can hear me, but I wanted to let you know that I'm here for you.

(The sound of a pen frantically writing on notebook paper is heard)

JACOB

I know this might not be happening the way you want it to, but that doesn't mean you're not supported here. I'm proud of you for whoever you are. If that's Andi? Then I'm here for you all the way. This has been really difficult for your mother, and I think you know that. If you could try to understand things from her perspective, things might calm down around here. Your mother really does love you, but this change is scary for her. Being a parent and having this change can be huge... and you know how she is. When your mom has her mind made up about something, it's not going to change. But uh.. This isn't about her; this is about you.

(Lights come up upstage center. Ben has his headphones on and is on a call about Eleanor)

ELEANOR

Ben, I wasn't expecting to hear from you. Is everything alright?

BEN

El, I normally wouldn't do this, but I have to ask if you think anything's wrong with Andi. Things are getting really bad around here.

ELEANOR

What's going on?

JACOB

You will always be my youngest child no matter who or what you are. Your mother can get really heated in arguments, but I promise you, you are still my child.

BEN

Mom just disowned Andi. It's because they're refusing to go by their deadname, and Mom keeps taking it as a personal attack or something. It's not about her.

ELEANOR

Andi's coming out does impact everyone. I lost my sister, but I'm not going to go up and say that to their face.

BEN

Right because they might take it personally - but beyond that I think they know. They brought up grieving dreams they lost...

(Lights come up on stage left where Lysander, Snow, and Jaymie stand outside the gates of a kingdom. Lysander tries to open the door... many ways)

LYSANDER

Jaymie, ya don't happen to have a lock pick set, do ya?

JAYMIE

I'm looking, I'm looking.. Don't rush me.

SNOW

I can barely see where they took them. Are we so sure about this?

LYSANDER

It's time you and I have a successful rescue. After all, we found our missing piece.

JAYMIE

How sweet, I could vomit.

SNOW

Jaymie.

JAYMIE

Okay... whatever.. I love you too.

ELEANOR

They did seem a bit off when I met up with them recently. They were writing, but that's nothing new.

BEN

They mentioned something about that to me a few months ago.

ELEANOR

It's not fulfilling them. To me it seemed like there's something else on their mind.

JACOB

It might take others more time to really accept you for you, but I'll always be in your corner. We can navigate this storm together.

BEN

That could be anything though. Their grades have been dropping, they got into an argument with Rain, and all of this stuff is going on with Mom. It's like we're not even a family anymore.

SNOW

They're preparing for the execution.

LYSANDER

Now or never, your highness.

JAYMIE

I got it.

(Jaymie fumbles with their lock pick set and the shadow crown falls out of his bag. *The party freezes and looks at them*)

SNOW

Um... Jaymie?

JAYMIE

Listen-

LYSANDER

Is that the shadow crown?

JAYMIE

Well... we had to complete the quest somehow.

SNOW

Holy hells... I'm a criminal.

ELEANOR

Well, whose fault is that?

BEN

I just don't want this family to lose anyone else. If Mom is going to exile all of you, I'm on the chopping board next. Unless it somehow skipped me...

ELEANOR

I don't think that's what she's trying to do. She says things, but they don't always come out right. Good intentions, but bad execution.

JACOB

There's a space in my office if you want to talk about it when you've calmed down.

JAYMIE

It's what Andi would've wanted, and I don't leave the people I care about out to dry.

SNOW

I'm a criminal! How could I ever go back home? What will everyone think of me when they know I-

LYSANDER

Retrieved a relic that ended suffering? Great. It'll be fine. Jaymie, pick the damn lock.

(Jaymie begins picking the lock. They toss the crown to Snow who, panicked, tosses it to Lysander. The bard puts it on his head)

LYSANDER

I'd make a great ruler, wouldn't I, darlin'?

SNOW

Lysander!

JAYMIE

Trying to concentrate.

BEN

I just hope this all blows over.

ELEANOR

It usually does. Listen, I'll try to reach out to Andi.

BEN

Thanks, sis. Let me know if there's anything I can do.

JACOB

I don't even know if you can hear me, but I'll shoot a text in a bit just in case. I love you, Andi.

(Jaymie picks the lock and the door opens. Jacob picks up his phone that's ringing as Rain enters)

JACOB

Rain? Is everything alright?

RAIN

Mr. Malloy.. I um..

JACOB

Please, you can call me Jacob. You've been coming over for years now.

RAIN

Right, um. I can't get a hold of Andi, and I'm really worried about them. Would it be alright if I came over?

ELEANOR

My texts aren't going through. Is their phone dead?

JAYMIE

Hope your stealth's up 'cause we're in.

JACOB

It's a little bit of a war zone here, but I suppose it's worth a shot. I really think Andi could use a friend right now.

SNOW

One last adventure for this party.

BEN

They're in their room. Their phone shouldn't be dead.

JAYMIE

Anything for family, right?

RAIN

Thank you so much, Jacob. I'll be there as soon as I can.

LYSANDER

Well, what are we waiting for?

JACOB

I'll leave the door unlocked for you.

## Scene 8

(This is a public execution. Soldiers stand upstage of Andi who is center stage. There's a silence as Andi looks back at the soldiers who aren't moving. They don't move their feet, but their eyes should scan the entire audience before they begin to speak)

ANDI

I don't regret my actions. Not every fairytale has a happy ending, and characters always die during campaigns. I didn't get a new character sheet... and my party never had a healer. But we agreed to journey together... I wanted to be a hero. We could've been heroes.

(Andi takes a step forward as one of the soldiers walks up and removes their elf ears. Andi's phone goes off)

ANDI

We climbed the mountain, fought bandits, and befriended pirates. Everything should have gone right... but a leader cannot lead a party properly if they don't know who they are. I was not meant to be a leader. I just wanted to write a story, but even now as I write this I'm not sure what to say next. No one else has ever said similar words before, so I don't know where the template is to make sure people are getting the message here... but maybe I can make it more clear.

(Andi takes off their fantasy robes)

ANDI

I'm a person who lost my way. Abandoned. Misunderstood. I get it, I make things difficult, but no one ever stopped to see I was drowning! Adventures are hard to go on! They might make a great story, but I'm so sick of telling stories. I don't know how they're actually supposed to go. So... I touched the Shadow Crown to stop the inevitable. I couldn't put the others at risk of losing a life they were only beginning to enjoy again. They found their way and so... they deserve to be themselves instead of shoved into a prison hold counting down days 'til death because the king demanded history shouldn't be touched. She's just the woman who gave me life now, isn't she? I thought home was a safe place to be. I can't blame her for everything because she's my mom. I'm supposed to love her, and I do when I can afford to. No- no.. not mother and not child. Not anymore. There's no family, and there's no adventure. So what is Andi anyways? Who is Andi? I don't know because everyone else was telling me who Andi was to them. I'm not anything now. I'm nothing but a spec

in the universe. A piece of dust that won't matter in the manner of minutes!

(A pause. As Andi speaks the next paragraph Snow, Lysander, and Jaymie break into the execution and the soldiers attempt to fend them off. The only soldier who doesn't leave her post is Melissa who watches Andi)

ANDI

If life doesn't have a plan, I shouldn't either. I don't - I never did! I played puppet for my parents because I wanted to fit into their mold so badly. I wanted to be someone they could be proud of, but that could never be someone I could be proud of. But I know what makes me feel like myself even though I haven't fully met myself yet. I am Andi Malloy. I am non-binary... and it's the first time I've ever felt like me. But the world tried to tear it out of my hands. I thought when you find yourself, you are celebrated! Finally, you can move on and be one with yourself and the world! Welcome Andi! We... we couldn't love you...

SOLDIER M

Any last words?

ANDI

Yes, but I don't know what they should be.

(There's a long silence as the fighting stops and the party falls in combat. There's a spotlight on Andi as the lights fade around the soldiers. We hear the text tone of Andi's phone)

ANDI

I have never belonged in this world. I made it a point to stick out... but that doesn't mean I wanted to. There needs to be a safe place for those who need it, and I never got it. I kept my mouth shut. I went on the adventure. Instead of trying to keep the family I had together, I made a new one and fell on my own sword. No - my own pen. There's ink covering my fingertips and seeping into my veins. Stories don't save people unless they get the point. So what *is* the point!? You'll watch another queer individual bleed out in front of you and stand idly by. How many of us have to die for people to understand we aren't harming others, but the exclusion of us will kill us! How many queer people have you seen in a spotlight, and why is there only one on me while I'm being murdered?

(Andi steps out of the light and into the darkness)



ANDI

It's my fault. I should know how to fight my battles, and not let my thoughts get to me. Maybe I just wanted peace, or maybe I just needed

(ANDI)

to find home. If I can't find that in either world, I don't want to toe the line anymore. I will make things easier for everyone else. The closet couldn't contain me, but this notebook will. I tried to love, but I couldn't love myself. I tried to smile, but it was never for myself. I cried, but they were tears that were ripped out due to words meant to harm me. I shouldn't feel alienated just for not being one with normalcy... so I'll join my siblings in outer space. That's the only thing meant for me. Next time: don't just sit there and watch.

(We're back in Andi's bedroom; in fact, we never left. They are a few feet away from their bed. There's a pen leaking ink in their left hand and a notebook just out of hand's reach from them. There is blood on the floor around them. Gatekeeper sits beside their corpse with blood on their white cloak. Lysander, Snow, and Jaymie stand behind them with blood on their faces. Rain stands in the doorway silently. A tense silence fills the room as she approaches Andi's body. Rain looks at every detail of the scene before making eye contact with the Gatekeeper, and the adventure party. Before Rain can scream there is a blackout. The audience should only hear Rain's shaky inhale)

**Scene 9**

(Back to the beginning. A familiar picture. Rain is on the floor with pages ripped out of the notebook while Melissa, Jacob, and Ben all stand around the table. This time Eleanor is present)

JACOB

It's still so unclear to me.

MELISSA

Things take time to accept.

BEN

Maybe we're still not listening.

ELEANOR

Is it my fault?

MELISSA

No, Andi did this to themself.

BEN

That doesn't mean we didn't solidify their feelings of isolation.

JACOB

We must have had some impact.

MELISSA

I don't want to think about this right now. This is so overwhelming.

RAIN

That's how they felt all of the time.

MELISSA

They were my baby. I remember holding them when they were so little..  
And now they're gone? Parents aren't supposed to bury their children.  
How do I carry on without part of my family?

ELEANOR

I wonder...

RAIN

You've clearly done it before.

MELISSA

You were the one who left them when they needed their best friend.

RAIN

Me? You were the one who disowned them when they needed their mother.

MELISSA

They were an adult.

ELEANOR

That doesn't mean you turn your back on them.

JACOB

You're one to talk, Eleanor.

ELEANOR

I left because I had to.

MELISSA

That's enough out of you.

BEN

You killed our little sibling! You told me to always protect them.

ELEANOR

Why should we stand idly by? Because that's what you did?

RAIN

If you were protecting them, why didn't you know about the notebook?

(Gatekeeper enters and sits on the dining room table)

BEN

They walked around with it all the time, so it was clearly important.

JACOB

This isn't going to get us anywhere.

RAIN

Either way, they're dead.

MELISSA

That's not my fault.

RAIN

Are you so sure about that?

JACOB

Andi did it to themself.

BEN

Not without a cause!

(Gatekeeper slams their staff on a table and everyone stops moving)

GATEKEEPER (ANDI)

Death sometimes brings people together, but other times it tears them apart. It is said that suicide not only kills the victim, but everyone around them. For those already lost: there are more of us out there. The world doesn't end in the closet, but your adventure begins as you step out of it. Keep your armor class high, plan your moves, and be aware of those with higher initiatives. Eventually, you'll be out of combat. After all, Lightfell is waiting for you.

(At this point Gatekeeper should be downstage center. They take off their hood to reveal their face to the audience. Gatekeeper is Andi)

ANDI

The end.

(Blackout. End of Play)

# Catharsis Tech Call Sheet

Monday April 29th

**Time:** 6:30pm-10:00pm    **Location:** CMFT STUDIO

**Plan:** Tech Day One

**Actors Called:** Everyone

Tuesday April 30th

**Time:** 6:30-10:30pm    **Location:** CMFT STUDIO

**Plan:** Tech Day Two

**Actors Called:** EVERYONE

*IT'S SHOWTIME !!*

FRIDAY MAY 3RD

**Call Time:** 6:30pm    **Location:** CMFT STUDIO

SATURDAY MAY 4TH

**Call Time:** 12:00pm & 6:30pm    **Location:** CMFT STUDIO

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns please feel free to reach out [projectcatharsisplay@gmail.com](mailto:projectcatharsisplay@gmail.com) and [aidan.mitchell@purchase.edu](mailto:aidan.mitchell@purchase.edu).