

EXIT STAGE RILEY

By
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EXIT STAGE RILEY

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For Lauren
“Ca-caw!!”

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Exit Stage Riley was commissioned for The Box Theatre Co. in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. It received its world premiere in September 2023. Lauren Heinen and Allison Chicorel directed and the cast included:

*Janet.....Maddie Gosa
Tabi.....Addie Washburn
Ms. Arie.....Alannah McGlocklin
Mr. Beau.....Lucas Miller
Olivia.....Adeline Bergholz-Gleason
Chester.....Ryan Stepanski
Daniel.....Max Huber
Bre.....Kayla Malzahn
Alex.....Julia Baginski
Hotel Employee...Calder Williams*

List of Characters

Janet: she/her/hers, around 17
Tabi: she/her/hers, 15-18
Ms. Arie: she/her/hers, 25 or older
Mr. Beau: he/him/ his, 25 or older
Olivia: she/her/hers, 17-18
Chester: he/him/his, 10-15
Daniel: he/him/his, 14-18
Bre: she/her/hers, around 20
Alex: they/them/theirs, 15-18
Hotel Employee: they/them/theirs, 15-18

Some of the characters are given they/them/their pronouns and can be portrayed by an actor of any gender identity. Producing companies may keep these pronouns as written or adjust to better reflect their cast. There is also an optional ensemble of students. If the producing company does not wish to utilize this ensemble, they may give the “Student” lines to Daniel, Alex, Chester, and/or Olivia.

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ACT 1
SCENE 1

Lights up on an empty stage. Suddenly, several students enter in a very dramatic manner. While they aren't singing, everything about their demeanor and movement feels like a musical number.

STUDENT 1. Have you heard?

STUDENT 2. Yes, I've heard!

STUDENT 1. Is it time?

STUDENT 2. Almost!

STUDENT 3. I simply can't wait!

STUDENT 4. What? What is it? It's almost time for what?!

ALL STUDENTS. They're going to announce the nominations!

STUDENT 4. Nominations? For what?

ALL STUDENTS. For the Tammy Awards! *(BRE enters.)*

BRE. Ah, yes. It's that magical time of year. Where the theatre students seem just a bit more preoccupied and passionate than usual. The only thing that even comes close to this level of excitement is that trip to a local diner following your final performance. But even that isn't the same. That evening is filled with nostalgia for the good times, hope for the future, and a poor waiter who is being asked to cut the check seventeen ways. Today holds a different kind of excitement. It's heavier – dare I say – *darker*.

Today is the day that the Tammy Nominations are announced. *(At the mere sounds of the word "Tammy", the students begin to chant "Tammy" and walk around in an almost trance-like state. As Bre continues to speak, the chanting dies down.)* The Tammy Awards are the oldest and most accredited Educational Theatre Awards Program. Once a year, following the end of the theatrical season, we recognize and honor our state's public, private, and home school theatre departments. *(The other students come forward, joining in the explanation with Bre.)*

STUDENT 1. The Tammy Awards recognize a variety of categories

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including Best Actress in a Leading Role, Best Choreography, Best Lighting Design, Best Dramaturgical Work, Best Ensemble, and so much more.

STUDENT 2. We hold our annual ceremony every year in Madison as a fun and communal way to celebrate the great artists of tomorrow.

BRE. I'm Bre Rossmiller, student chair-person of The Tammy Awards and it is my great honor to announce this years' nominees! Unlike some other, more restrictive, theatre award ceremonies, the Tammy Awards are geared towards all students in K through 12th grade.

STUDENT 3. Just last year, the highly coveted "Best Revival of a Musical" honor was awarded to Little Learners Early Development School for their incredible production of *Hair*.

STUDENT 4. While all of the awards are special and meaningful, the main event continues to be the GOAT Award. That's right! The Greatest-of-All-Time Award! (*Bree holds up a trophy that is shaped like a goat. She holds it high and the students admire it with an almost insane love.*)

BRE. The winner of this highly coveted honor has shown themselves to be the best of the best this past season. They stood out from the crowd in awe-inspiring and jaw-dropping ways. We were unable to look away from them.

STUDENT 1. Talent and drive of that degree demands recognition. It also demands a full ride scholarship so that this superstar can continue to break ground and inspire us. Specifically, this award goes to a student in their final year of school or about to start their final year, ready for college and ready to continue their theatrical studies.

BRE. As a former GOAT Award recipient, I can personally attest to the impact that this honor - nay, this privilege! - bestows. To get the evening started, we will begin with this year's four GOAT Award nominees. In no particular order...

STUDENT 1. From Green Bay High School, Spencer Johnson for his performance as Heathcliffe in *Wuthering Heights*!

STUDENT 2. From Greenfield High School, Nancy Polowitz for her performance as Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady*!

STUDENT 3. From Madison East High School, Robin Dober in their directorial debut of *Rumors*!

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STUDENT 4. And from “Homeschooled” Riley Thane for her one-woman show *Thane’s the Thing*!

BRE. This is truly a spectacular group of artists and while it is an honor just to be nominated, as the name implies, there can only be *one* Greatest-of-All-Time. As a former GOAT Award recipient, I can tell you that personally. Now, we’ll move on to our next category: Best Actor in a Supporting Role in a Play. *(The focus shifts. In the background Janet emerges. Janet has mousy brown hair, wears thick glasses, and exudes things like “fear” and “anxiety”. Bre continues to talk and the students continue to hang on her every word, but time slows down for Janet who looks absolutely terrified. She grabs her inhaler and takes a puff as the lights go down.)*

SCENE 2

A barren stage. Several students (including TABI and ALEX) stand across the stage, wearing silly hats that are pulled down to cover their eyes. Tabi is the last to speak and attempts to recite some lines of Shakespeare while OLIVIA, DANIEL, and others heckle her from offstage.

TABI. Thus conscience does make cowards of us all. And thus the native hue of resolution-

OLIVIA. *(Off)* Boo!

DANIEL. *(Off)* You’re not funny! *(The heckling clearly makes Tabi angry, but she tries her best to push through.)*

TABI. Is sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought-

OLIVIA. *(Off)* You call that acting? You wouldn’t know acting if it slapped you in the face!

TABI. *(Quickly)* And enterprises of great pith and moment, with this regard their currents turn awry, And lose the name of action. Soft you now-

DANIEL. *(Off)* Get off the stage!

OLIVIA. *(Mocking Tabi, off)* “Oooh! Look at me! I’m Tabi, and I think I’m an actor!” You’re a disgrace!

TABI. The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons. Be all my sins

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remember'd!

(Done with the lines) There! I did it! Are we done?

OLIVIA. *(Off)* I say when we're done, rookie! *(Whispers are heard from off stage.)* Oh. Okay. We're done. *(The stage lights go out and fluorescent lights flicker on, revealing several chairs in a semicircle, as well as an ornate throne-like chair behind a table. A group of junior and senior actors including JANET, Olivia, and Daniel enter. Along with them comes MS ARIE, their drama advisor. Some of the students guide the pledges towards chairs but keep them standing and blind-folded. Olivia stands before the throne-like chair and addresses the pledges.)*

DANIEL. Pledges, you may now sit. *(The "pledges" all sit. It's a little awkward as they still can't see and are uncoordinated.)*

OLIVIA. You have passed your initiation, and, thus, you are now officially varsity members of the Durchschnitt High School Drama Club. With this honor comes great responsibility. We expect great things from you. As Neil Simon once said, "Act well your part. There all the honor lies."

TABI. Neil Simon didn't say that-

OLIVIA. Silence! You may now remove your hats! *(The pledges do so and the upperclassmen applaud. Arie is crying a little. Daniel passes her a tissue.)*

ARIE. Oh, thank you, Daniel. Forgive me. I always get a little weepy at these initiation ceremonies. I remember when you were all freshmen and now look at you. *(Cries some more.)* Servants of Dionysus, this is a momentous moment for you. This is your first real step towards greatness. This morning, you were just students, but now you are *artists*. The future of the theatre depends on you. As Olivia so astutely put it: we expect great things from you. I remember my initiation like it was yesterday. I performed twenty lines from King Lear and Erik Julian told me that I couldn't act my way out of a wet paper bag. He was joking, of course. Ahhh, the heckling process! I'm sorry you all had to go through that, but don't you feel stronger now that you've come out the other end? You're all so brave. Oh, I'm sorry, Olivia. I'm rambling!

OLIVIA. I'm used to it, Ms Arie.

TABI. So...what? Is there cake now or something?

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DANIEL. Tabi! Shush!

OLIVIA. Thank you, Daniel. Now that our pledges are full-fledged members, it's time for their first official varsity members meeting. We hold meetings twice a month, and all members are required to join. *(The upperclassmen all take their seats. Olivia (obviously) sits on the throne.)*

TABI. You have meetings twice a month? You couldn't have told us that before?

DANIEL. Of course not! Everything that we do as the varsity theatre members is secret. *(Olivia bangs a gavel on the table.)*

OLIVIA. I, Olivia Hayword, president, call this meeting to order. In attendance is, of course, our advisor, Ms. Arie, our vice president, Daniel Roma, and our secretary, Janet Straid. Janet? Janet? *(Janet stands in the back, taking notes on her pad feverishly. She didn't even notice Olivia calling her name.) Janet!! (Janet looks up and is startled to see everyone is looking at her.)*

JANET. Oh. Right. *(She takes her seat and continues to take notes.)*

OLIVIA. We have a lot to cover today, people, so let's begin.

TABI. And then we'll have cake?

OLIVIA. Tabi, you're new so you don't know how things work around here so I'll be lenient with you this time. However, you need to learn that you can't just talk whenever you want to. I, the president, have to acknowledge you. Understand?

TABI. But there will be cake, right? I was promised cake.

OLIVIA. Tabi, I don't acknowledge you. You can't speak. I acknowledge my vice president, Daniel, who will now remind us of our last meeting's minutes. Daniel, I acknowledge you. *(Olivia sits and Daniel rises.)*

ALEX. Shouldn't the secretary go over the minutes?

JANET. Uh-

DANIEL. Janet doesn't want to talk. Anyway, thank you, Olivia. I acknowledge you acknowledging me. At our last meeting held on Tuesday, April 25th from approximately 3pm until 5:45pm, we began our time together with acknowledging who all was in attendance which was, of course, our president Olivia, myself, Ms Arie, Janet, Marion, Bobby, Tristen-

TABI. Seriously? You're just going to name off everyone who was there?

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OLIVIA. I don't acknowledge you.

ARIE. You can skip ahead a bit, Daniel. We do have a lot of important things to cover today.

DANIEL. Very well. Following attendance, Olivia welcomed us and turned the floor over to me where I reviewed the minutes from our previous meeting held on Tuesday, April 11th from approximately- (*Tabi lets out a dramatic groan.*)

OLIVIA. Tabi, I swear to goodness if you don't-

ARIE. Olivia. Calm voice. We don't want another *On Golden Pond* episode, do we?

OLIVIA. Ms Arie, thank you for your concern, but I assure you that I can handle myself. (*She clearly can't handle herself.*) All I am asking is that TABI handle herself! Do you think you can do that, Tabi? Do you? (*Everything is very tense for a second and then...*)

JANET. If I may, uh, Daniel - if it's not too much trouble - I acknowledge that Olivia hasn't acknowledged me, but for time's sake...perhaps the most important thing covered at the last meeting was that we agreed on next season. (*A beat.*) I'm just saying. (*She goes back to her notebook.*)

ARIE. An excellent idea, Janet. Thank you for that.

DANIEL. Yes. A very excellent idea. After a significant amount of debate, we are happy to announce next year's show lineup. Our season starts off with *Charley's Aunt*, followed by *Guys and Dolls*, and we go out with a bang with...*Phantom of the Opera*. (*Everyone gasps.*) The play. Not the musical. (*Everyone sighs in disappointment.*)

ARIE. This script is so good! I think it's better than the musical! (*Daniel sits and Olivia rises.*)

OLIVIA. Thank you for that recount of our last meeting, Daniel. This brings us to our new order of business. I'm sure you all heard, but, in case you haven't, let me be the one to shower you with this amazing news: Durchschnitt High School Drama Club has been nominated for a Tammy Award! (*Everyone cheers.*) Ms Arie has informed us that this is the first time the club itself has ever been nominated for one.

ARIE. Oh, darlings! This is monumental! Positively monumental! You all should be so very proud of yourselves for your hard work and dedication. (*Alex raises their hand.*)

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OLIVIA. Yes, Alex. I acknowledge you.

ALEX. What were we nominated for?

OLIVIA. Oh, it's a great category.

ALEX. Like...best actress?

OLIVIA. No.

ALEX. Directing?

OLIVIA. No.

ALEX. Costume design?

OLIVIA. Alex, I don't acknowledge you anymore. Please sit down. *(To the group.)* It's vital to remember that all the categories in an awards show such as The Tammys are important. People like to give attention to the big categories like "Best Actor" or "Best Director", but there are a wide variety of categories so that everyone can shine.

TABI. What were we nominated for, Olivia? *(Olivia glares at Tabi and is about to speak when Arie steps in.)*

ARIE. "Best Sound Design in a One Act Showcase at a Public High School". *(They all stare at her, confused.)*

TABI. That's a category?

ARIE. It sure is! And we are in the running for it!

TABI. How many categories are in this awards show anyway?

ARIE. Seventy-six.

TABI. There are seventy-six categories?

ARIE. Yes! And we're nominated for one of them! Oh, Olivia, tell them the best part!

OLIVIA. We're taking a field trip! For anyone who would like to attend, we are going to Madison for the actual ceremony. We will arrive Friday night and then spend the majority of Saturday attending various workshops, hosted by the Tammy Awards. The hotel we are planning to stay at is directly across the street from the theatre where the awards take place and is the location of the workshops. We encourage you all to join us and support Durchschnitt Drama Club! Ms Arie has given me the esteemed privilege of accepting the award - should we win. As varsity members, you are encouraged to attend, but if you can't make it, we'll understand. *(So much passive aggression.)* We know that the most devoted of our members will find a way to make it, but we completely understand if you

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have something “more important” to do than represent your fellow artists and your school as a whole.

ARIE. The more, the merrier! That’s what Olivia is trying to say. (*She hands out forms to all the students.*) Here is all the information. Please share it with your parents or guardians. There is a small cost, but we are still selling those candy bars in order to offset it so, again, the more you sell, the more people we can fund to attend. This is an overnight stay. I will need these permission slips back ASAP!

ALEX. (*To Olivia*) I’m totally going to be there! It sounds like so much fun! Maybe we could share a hotel room, Olivia!

OLIVIA. Yeah. Probably not. I’m sharing a room with Riley Thane.

ALEX. What?! No way! (*Janet begins to silently panic. And then she starts wheezing. She grabs her inhaler and takes a deep breath.*)

ARIE. Are you alright, Janet? (*Unable to speak, Janet just gives her a thumbs up.*)

DANIEL. Olivia! You know Riley Thane?

OLIVIA. Of course! We go way back.

ALEX. Oh, my gosh.

DANIEL. That is so cool!

ALEX. I saw her show last January. It was amazing! She just commands the stage. You’d think that you’d get bored looking at one actor for a whole play, but Riley was simply spellbinding! You can’t look away from her.

OLIVIA. Riley told me that she actually doesn’t like it when people who aren’t her friends call her by her first name. Seeing as you are not her friend, Alex, you need to refer to her as Ms. Thane.

ALEX. Oh my gosh. I’m so sorry. Ms. Thane, wherever you are, I’m so sorry!

ARIE. Ms. Thane is a true artist. I also saw her show at the Dixon Library. She’s nominated for the GOAT Award, you know.

DANIEL. Of course she’s going to win it!

ARIE. You never can tell with these things, Daniel. But just being nominated is amazing. I was nominated for the GOAT award, you know.

OLIVIA. (*Rolling her eyes.*) Yes, we know, Ms. Arie.

ARIE. Oh, yes. My junior year. I played the titular character in my high

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school's ground-breaking production of Doctor Faustus. (*Arie takes this opportunity to relive the glory days. She rises and begins to recite lines.*) If we say that we have no sin, We deceive ourselves, and there's no truth in us. Why then belike we must sin, And so consequently die. Ay, we must die an everlasting death! (*Olivia, Janet, Alex, Tabi, Daniel, and some of the other students applaud politely. Arie takes a dramatic bow and then sits down.*) But that was a very long time ago. Time marches on, and a new crop of artists must spread their wings. Maybe you could introduce us all to Ms. Thane, Olivia.

OLIVIA. Oh, I'll see. But Riley is very selective in who she spends time with.

TABI. If she hangs out with you, she can't be that selective.

OLIVIA. I don't acknowledge you, Tabi!

TABI. I don't care! Now where is my cake!?

OLIVIA. Will you shut up about the cake?!

JANET. (*Quickly.*) I acknowledge that you have not acknowledged me, Olivia, but Tabi does bring up an excellent point. Uh, the cake is an ice cream cake. Perhaps we should cut it up now rather than later...seeing as it is ice cream...and we don't want it to...uh...ya know...melt.

OLIVIA. I see your point, Janet. We will adjourn for ten minutes so that *Tabi* can have her cake. We can continue this conversation afterwards.

ARIE. Into my classroom, little artists! Cake awaits! (*Arie leads everyone out. Janet, however, stays behind to clean up a bit. Upon seeing this, Tabi stays behind as well.*)

TABI. Don't you want cake, Janet? (*Janet is wiping down the throne-like chair that Olivia was sitting in.*)

JANET. Yeah. Uh...just a minute. Olivia wanted to sit in this chair rather than a folding chair. It's a really nice set piece and I want to check...(*She shakes the chair a bit.*) It just needs to be tightened. Go get cake, Tabi. I just need to grab a screwdriver.

TABI. Is that part of your duties? As the secretary?

JANET. No. I just noticed that some of the chairs in our storage are quite nice and they need a little love. We need to take care of them, otherwise we won't have them for later productions. (*Janet retrieves a tool box.*) Congratulations, by the way. You're officially a varsity member!

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TABI. *(Rolling her eyes.)* Yeah. Whatever.

JANET. It's a big deal. You should celebrate. Go get your cake.

TABI. I like cake as much as the next person, but I mostly just didn't want to listen to Olivia talk anymore. Let me help you. *(Janet smiles and begins looking through the toolbox. A terrifying thought comes over Janet and she freezes before grabbing her inhaler again and taking a puff.)* Janet, what's wrong?

JANET. *(Her voice squeaking.)* Nothing.

TABI. That's the fourth time you've reached for that inhaler in the last two hours. Is your asthma bad again?

JANET. Yes. No. I don't know. *(She digs through the toolbox, looking for a screwdriver.)*

TABI. If something is bothering you, you can talk to me. I'm not those pretentious jerks. We're friends, remember? *(Janet smiles but doesn't make eye contact with Tabi. Tabi looks into the toolbox and immediately finds the screwdriver.)*

JANET. Thanks.

TABI. You're worried about something. I can tell. *(Janet ignores this, accepts the screwdriver, and begins working on the chair.)* That was really awesome what you did just now: when you suggested to Daniel that he could announce the upcoming season. You stopped a blowout between me and Olivia AND you stopped Daniel from rambling. I'm really proud of you. You spoke in public! Gosh, it took weeks for you to open up to me and now you're actually talking in front of groups? That's awesome, Janet.

JANET. Thanks, Tabi.

TABI. You know, if it weren't for your shyness, you could be running this joint.

JANET. *(Laughing.)* No, I couldn't.

TABI. Yes, you could!

JANET. Don't be ridiculous.

TABI. Janet, why are you a part of the drama club?

JANET. *(Shrugs.)* Because it's fun, I guess.

TABI. That's right! Because it's fun. *(She points in the direction that the other students left.)* And they do it because they like the spotlight. If you were enrolled here full time, you'd be the president of this club. Goodness

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knows I wish I had some classes with you. Why do you have to be home-schooled, anyway?

JANET. It has its pros and cons. There are certain things that I can't learn from home like PE or chemistry so I come here. But otherwise, I like the quietness of being at home and learning how I want to learn. There's so much pressure here.

TABI. You're telling me. But, given enough time, you would adapt. And this drama club would be better off with you as its president.

JANET. No, it wouldn't. Olivia is a leader. I'm...not a leader.

TABI. Olivia is a *leading* lady. That doesn't make her a leader. She looks the part, but she doesn't care about any of us. You think that just because you're not an actor, that means you can't be the president?

JANET. I think because I get a panic attack whenever I have to talk in front of people is why I wouldn't be a good leader. I like being the person behind the scenes who helps the leader or the leading lady get the job done. I'm better at that.

TABI. Janet, when the drama club walked in the homecoming parade, and it started to rain, but there was only so much room in Ms Arie's car, who gave up her seat so that the new freshman could ride back to school? It wasn't Olivia. When we did *The Music Man* and Alex cut their finger mid-*Shipooopi*, who dressed up like a tree and tap-danced her way onto the set to give Alex a band-aid? It wasn't Olivia. And, finally, during the Night of One Acts last fall, when right before the house opened and Ms. Arie realized that she had forgotten to buy crepe hair for Daniel's beard, who cut out a hunk of her own hair because she knew that it matched Daniel's wig perfectly? It wasn't Olivia. It was you. You care about this place.

JANET. I do. I love the theatre. It's scary, but it's also safe, you know? You can be whoever you want to be and try new things and be a part of a team and...it's great. But...*(Somewhat sadly.)* "Act well your part; there all the honors lie." I know my part.

TABI. Who said that? That "Act well your part" line?

JANET. Alexander Pope.

TABI. *(Laughing.)* Not Neil Simon.

JANET. *(Laughing.)* Definitely not Neil Simon.

TABI. Are you going to those stupid Tammy Awards?

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JANET. I...I don't know.

TABI. I'm not. It sounds dumb. You know who gets nominated for these things? The schools with the biggest budgets. Not the best artists. Not the most talented. Just the schools who can afford pyrotechnics and rotating sets.

JANET. I hear that Riley Thane had a pretty simplistic set.

TABI. Ugh! Riley Thane! Riley Thane! Riley Thane! Who the heck cares? Her parents probably paid for everything. I bet she's really rich. I bet she didn't even actually write that show.

JANET. I think she did.

TABI. Don't tell me that you're obsessed with her, too.

JANET. I wouldn't say that I'm *obsessed* with her, but I hear she's very good.

TABI. That doesn't mean she's the be-all-end-all of theatre. The trouble with these competitions is that they make everything into a, well, a competition! Why does there need to be a "best"? Why can't we just do theatre and leave it at that? *(Janet isn't paying attention. Tabi notices this and softens a bit.)* But, ya know, if you want to go, don't let me stop you, Janet. I think it's just dumb pageantry, but if you can get something out of it, cool. I guess. *(Janet looks like she's on the verge of exploding. There's a pause and then she suddenly shouts.)*

JANET. Tabi, I need to tell you something!

TABI. I knew that something was bothering you. What is it? You can tell me anything. Do I need to kick someone in the shins?

JANET. What? No - no shin-kicking! It's just that – okay, this is going to sound absurd and you're not going to believe me so just listen all the way through before you react, okay?

TABI. Okay.

JANET. *(A dramatic pause.)* I am Riley Thane. *(A pause. Tabi is stoic.)* You're not reacting.

TABI. You told me not to react until I heard all the facts.

JANET. Well, I was expecting some kind of reaction.

TABI. But you told me not to react! *(Janet groans, anxiously pacing.)* It's partially because I have no idea HOW to react to that. Do I laugh? Do I gasp? Do I just stare in shock? I'm feeling "stare in shock" is my best bet

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so that's what I'm going to do.

(She stares in shock at Janet.)

JANET. It's a very complicated situation.

TABI. I bet. Tell me everything.

JANET. Well, I guess it started when I wanted to write a play. I don't know. You read enough plays, and you start getting ideas for your own. It was just a pipe-dream. Just a thought I had. But I started to write. It was just for fun. It's not like I thought that I would perform it. I've never considered myself an actor, obviously. But then I ended up really liking what I wrote. It's an epic story of this young woman: Riley Thane. What a name! Riley Thane! She's cool! She's daring! She tries things and doesn't mind getting messy. She's the kind of person who would roller blade off a dock, into sea lion-infested waters just to see what it was like. She loves the feeling of being alive! She's outlandish and dramatic and says what she wants when she wants to! In short, she's everything I'm not. And, well...I came to really like Riley. I liked being Riley. I would work on the show, reciting all of her monologues, and I guess I got a little carried away. My mom works at the library and she suggested that I put on a show. So...I did. I just wanted to do it for myself, but people came. At first, I was terrified at the thought of performing, but then I thought, "I don't need to perform. Riley does!" You understand? I became Riley instead of Janet. I took my name out of the program and everything. Nobody needed to know who Janet was. They just needed to know Riley. It went from a piece of fiction to a performed memoir. And it was a big success. And things have gotten out of control. And now I'm here and everyone loves Riley so much that she was nominated for that GOAT Award and that's amazing, but also...ahhhhhh! I'm not Riley! I'm just Janet! And Janet can barely string two words together when she's in front of other people let alone perform! Janet isn't an actor. That's Riley. And I mean, I've technically lied because Riley isn't real. So Riley can't win the award, can she? I just...I just...I don't know what to do, Tabi! *(A pause.)* Okay. You can react now.

TABI. *(Choosing her words carefully.)* That is a lot of information. Let me get this straight: *you* are Riley Thane. *(Janet nods. A beat. Tabi thinks. And then she screams with delight.)*

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JANET. You're screaming. Why are you screaming?

TABI. Because you're Riley Thane! *(Janet shushes her. Tabi whispers.)*
Because you're Riley Thane. Holy Saint Genesius! That's amazing, Janet!
You are literally the coolest person I know! *(She hugs Janet.)*

JANET. I thought you hated Riley.

TABI. That's when I thought she was a snob. Janet, you could win a full scholarship!

JANET. You're not listening. It's not me they want. It's Riley.

TABI. But you are Riley. She may be an alter ego, but she's one that you created. She's a part of you. You've got to go to that awards ceremony now. You could go to college for free! *(A beat.)* So Olivia was lying before when she said that she knew Riley Thane?

JANET. Yes! I didn't know how to react to that. I can say without hesitation that Riley and Olivia have never met. No one has met Riley! She never talked to anyone after the show. She only really existed on the stage.

TABI. No wonder you've been so anxious lately. That's a big secret.

JANET. Oh, I wish I hadn't been nominated! Can you imagine if I did win? I'd have to get up in front of all those people...on a stage...and...*(Gulps.)* TALK!

TABI. You got up in front of a bunch of people and talked for your show.

JANET. That was Riley! That wasn't me!

TABI. Why can't Riley just miss the award ceremony, but you accept it on her behalf?

JANET. It's a stipulation of the Tammy Awards that you have to be present to accept the award.

TABI. What if you were sick?

JANET. *(Rambling, panicking.)* "The show must go on!" What if they find out that Riley isn't real? That means she can't win the award, right? I mean, I lied! I lied big time! There are two thoughts in my brain, and they're battling. And one is like, "What are you doing, Janet? You can't do this! Come clean!" And the other one is like, "But what if you won? What if you got that scholarship? Then you're off!" I could actually be an actress. But I can't be Riley AND Janet.

TABI. Yes, you can.

JANET. No, I can't.

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TABI. Yes, you can! I'm going to these lame awards, and I'm going to help you. We'll do quick costume changes, just like we do in the shows here. When you need to tap out from being Riley, I'll escort you off. When you need a pep talk, I'll be there.

JANET. You don't need to do that.

TABI. Yes, I do. You work hard and you're talented and you're kind. You deserve to win, Janet. Let me help you. If nothing else, let the world see me, pathetic Tabi, walking arm-in-arm with THE Riley Thane. Imagine the look on Olivia's face!

JANET. I can't do it.

TABI. *(She grabs Janet's face.)* You can do this. You have worked so hard all these years, and this is your time to shine. The power dynamic has been all off, but we can make it right. It's time that the Janets of the world win. I am going with you to the Tammy Awards, and we are going to get you up on that stage in an awesome outfit and get you that award. Okay? *(Janet takes a puff from her inhaler.)*

JANET. *(Her voice squeaking.)* Okay.

TABI. Let's do it. Let's go win you a scholarship.

SCENE 3

The foyer of a hotel. Upstage there is a door leading to the stairwell and an elevator door. There are passages to the right and left, leading to rooms on the first floor, and the community rooms where workshops will be held. A front desk sits downstage with a door leading off the backroom where employees mingle. A group of students stand in the center of the foyer. They are attempting to harmonize and sing the latest cool hit from Broadway. Perhaps they're a little off pitch but don't realize it out of sheer excitement. A HOTEL EMPLOYEE stands behind the front desk, looking bored beyond belief. Daniel enters from the main entrance and runs past the group of students.

DANIEL. Excuse me! Pardon me! It's an emergency! *(He runs into one of the bathrooms. Arie, Olivia, Janet, Tabi, and other students enter, carrying luggage.)*

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ARIE. I did warn you! I did say, “Speak now or forever hold your pee!” Maybe next time you’ll believe me! *(She crosses to the front while her students mill around a bit.)* Good afternoon. Checking in for Arie Gleason. *(Bragging a little.)* We’re here for the Tammy Awards.

EMPLOYEE. *(Unenthused.)* You and everyone else.

ARIE. *(Still bragging.)* We are nominated for a Tammy Award.

EMPLOYEE. *(Unenthused.)* I’m so happy for you.

ARIE. *(Smiling, coyly.)* Yeah. It’s no big deal.

EMPLOYEE. *(They hand Arie a key card and a piece of paper.)* Here are your keys. And I need you to sign here.

ARIE. Oh! You want my autograph. *(She picks up a pen.)* We are here representing Durchschnitt High School. Remember our name.

EMPLOYEE. Durchschnitt? What a weird word. Is it German? *(The elevator doors open, revealing MR. BEAU. He's dressed in a nice suit and thinks he's very cool. As he exits the elevator, he addresses Arie and the hotel employee...but mainly he talks to Arie.)*

BEAU. Yes, it is. It’s German for “average”. *(Arie hears the voice but can’t bear to turn around and look. Beau pushes the students aside to get to Arie.)* Well, well, well. Look who it is: Arie Gleason. In the flesh. Here and now. Look at you.

ARIE. *(She finishes signing her name with a flourish of anger and then twirls around to finally meet Beau’s eyes. The two stare each other down.)* Hello, Beau. *(The employee rolls their eyes and exits.)*

BEAU. What on earth are you doing here?

ARIE. I could ask you the same thing.

BEAU. Arie, don’t play coy. You know why I’m here. *(He gestures to himself.)* Fifteen Tammy nominations. That’s a record. Last year, Washington Middle School had thirteen. We just keep getting better and better.

ARIE. Little Learners Early Development School is nominated for twenty this year. *(This clearly upsets Beau and it seems he may lose his composure for a moment, but he takes a deep breath and reverts back to his cool self.)*

BEAU. Gosh, I love those Little Learners. They are so very talented.

ARIE. Yes. They truly are the future. Twenty nominations. It’s hard to

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compete with that.

BEAU. Yes, well, at least Washington Middle School has thirteen. That's nothing to sneeze at. I don't suppose that you and your – *(He sneers at Arie's students.)* – students...are nominated for anything. You came to support the winners and partake in the workshops. How fun!

ARIE. *(She laughs but it's clear that she wants to snap his neck.)* Oh, Beau. We ARE nominated.

OLIVIA. We are nominated for Best Sound Design in a-

ARIE. I can handle this, Olivia! *(She gets right up in Beau's face.)* We are nominated, but the competition isn't the important part of this weekend. It's the things we learn. *And the friends we make along the way.*

BEAU. *(Glaring right back at her.)* How true. *(They continue to stare at each other. It lingers on for a while. Arie's students exchange looks, confused as to what exactly is going on. Suddenly, both Arie and Beau begin to laugh. It's a forced laugh, dripping with indignation, but they attempt to put on a show of friendliness.)* Well, I should get going. Do enjoy yourselves.

ARIE. Oh, we will. We will.

BEAU. I guess I'll see you around, Arie.

ARIE. I'll see you around, Beau. *(Beau makes a dramatic exit. The pair never take their eyes off each other until Beau is out the door and gone. The students cross to Arie. Daniel exits from the bathroom. He stares at his classmates and Arie.)*

DANIEL. I'm sensing some tension.

TABI. Uh, Ms Arie, who was that?

ARIE. It's nothing, kids. That's Mr. Beau. We went to school together and we just...we have beef. Real beef. Bad beef. Rotten, rancid beef. I figured he'd be here, but I hoped he'd be staying at a different hotel. I can't believe that I have to sleep under the same roof as that man! Ugh! *(She takes a deep breath and reverts back to her usual perky self.)* But we're not focused on that now. Let's go check out our rooms and then we get some dinner and then who wants to go swimming!?

TABI. Aw, yeah!

ARIE. Of course, we'll wait thirty minutes after eating! *(Everyone begins to exit but Janet stays back, clearly nervous. She can't move forward and*

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reaches for her inhaler again. Tabi sees Janet looking nervous and hangs back as well.)

TABI. Hey. You okay?

JANET. I'm just nervous.

TABI. Look, there's nothing to worry about. We've got this. We worked it all out. Tonight is just kicking back and chilling. Tomorrow during the day, we'll take Riley out for a test run. We'll get up before the others, get some breakfast and then get you dolled up. We'll go to a workshop and we'll see how it goes. If you need to excuse yourself, I'll help you get out and we'll take a breather.

JANET. Which workshop?! Which workshop are we going to?!

TABI. *(She pulls out a pamphlet on the various workshops and looks it over.)* I thought we agreed on "First Folio Fun".

JANET. I don't want to go to "First Folio Fun".

TABI. Why not?

JANET. They might ask Riley to get up and recite something. You know...because she's Riley Thane. This is my first run at Riley in public. I don't think I want my first run to be reciting Shakespeare.

TABI. Fine! *(She consults the pamphlet again.)* We'll go to "Fight Choreography 101".

JANET. Yes! That's good. *(She realizes something.)* No. Wait. That's horrible. What if I'm moving and fighting and throwing a sword around and I get all sweaty and my wig slips off? What if someone runs at me with a lance and I get so nervous that I pee myself?

TABI. First off, it's unarmed stage combat so no lances involved. Secondly, you're nervous about peeing yourself?

JANET. It's a possibility.

TABI. Okay. *(She goes back to the pamphlet.)* How about "Subtext Studies."

JANET. Yes! Tabi, that's a brilliant idea! *(Janet and Tabi move as if to exit when Janet stops abruptly, terrified.)* No. Wait. That's a terrible idea! It's SUBTEXT work which means that people are going to be reading into what I'm saying. What if they read too deeply and see beneath my exterior that I'm just a big liar? What if someone opens me up and reads me like a book and right there and then, they expose me and call me out and then I

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pee myself and then- (*The hotel employee enters, dusting.*)

EMPLOYEE. Please don't pee yourself. I just mopped the floors.

TABI. (*To the employee*) Thank you for your concern! (*The hotel employee shrugs and exits. Tabi grabs Janet by the shoulders.*) Janet! Get ahold of yourself! I'm here to help. It's going to be okay. You are better than you think you are and you can do this. You are a strong person and you are in full control of your bladder! You'll feel one hundred percent better once you get that one run under your belt. It's like opening night: Once you get that first performance in, the jitters go away. Now, you got your Riley stuff? (*Janet nods, holding up a suitcase.*) You've got everything? The scarf? The dress?

JANET. I have a couple of dresses. I wasn't sure which one to wear so I brought options. And I have a couple of wigs, just in case something happens to the one.

TABI. Good. Options are great. Now I want to hear you say it. I want you to say: I can do this.

JANET. (*It's difficult to say, but Janet manages to say it.*) I can do this.

TABI. Yes, you can. (*They share a smile. Olivia bursts in from the stairwell, looking livid and carrying some kind of iced coffee beverage from an overpriced coffee shop.*)

OLIVIA. Ahem! Ms Arie sent me to find you two. You need to stay with the group. (*She slurps her drink loudly.*)

TABI. We'll be up in a second, Olivia.

OLIVIA. No. Now.

TABI. We just spent three hours on a bus, listening to you lecture us on the rules. Let us have a little bit of peace.

OLIVIA. (*She saunters towards them.*) Perhaps you didn't hear me: you two are coming upstairs with me. I am the president and you won't defy me. (*She grabs Janet by the arm and pulls her towards the stairwell.*)

TABI. Don't you touch her like that! (*Tabi grabs Janet's other arm. She and Olivia tug Janet back and forth during the next few lines.*)

OLIVIA. We're going upstairs! And we're going now!

TABI. You are not the boss of us, Olivia!

OLIVIA. I'm the president so, yes, I am the boss of you! Get used to it! (*Tabi looks like she's about to burst. She's had enough of Olivia.*)

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Suddenly, it all boils over and she snaps.)

TABI. I know, for a fact, that you don't know Riley Thane! *(Janet is terrified. Tabi and Olivia let go of her.)*

OLIVIA. Um...yes, I do.

TABI. No, you don't. I know that you don't. I know that you're a liar, Olivia. You want to know how I know? I know because while you're prancing around pretending to know Riley, I actually do! Yeah! We're friends! Best friends! Best, best friends! We're best friends and she's... *(Tabi looks at Janet who is absolutely petrified. She shakes her head weakly, silently begging Tabi not to spill the beans. A beat. Tabi has to think quickly.)* She is, uh, she is in that bathroom! *(Tabi points at the bathroom doors. Olivia laughs.)*

OLIVIA. Right. Whatever.

TABI. *(Still improvising quickly.)* She is! That's why Janet and I didn't follow you. We were waiting for Riley to show up. And she did and then she needed to pee. But once she is done peeing, the three of us are going to hang out. Because Janet and I actually know Riley.

OLIVIA. Right. Well, I'm going to go say hi to Riley then if she's in the bathroom- *(Tabi and Janet block her way.)*

TABI. *(Mocking Olivia from before.)* Riley is very selective of who she wants to share a bathroom with-

JANET. We're on bathroom duty!

TABI. That's right, Janet. We're on bathroom duty. We make sure that no one bothers Riley while she is going number one.

JANET. Or number two!

OLIVIA. I totally don't believe you.

TABI. I don't need you to believe me, Olivia. I'm right and that's all I need to know.

OLIVIA. Ugh! Get out of my way. I'm going into the bathroom- *(Olivia attempts to push past Tabi and Janet, but the two hold her off. A small struggle ensues.)*

TABI. No! You're not! Riley is selective of her friends!

OLIVIA. I should know! I'm one of them! *(The hotel employee emerges again from the backroom upon hearing the commotion. They seem relatively uninterested in this fight until Olivia drops her coffee, spilling it*

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everywhere.)

EMPLOYEE. I just mopped the floors! *(Things happen very quickly. The employee comes out from behind the counter, huffing as Tabi grabs the suitcase from Janet and dives into the bathroom. The employee and Olivia begin to argue.)* I literally just mopped these!

OLIVIA. Oh my gawd! You just mopped them, but there's no "wet floor" sign. I could have totally fallen and died! My parents are going to sue you!

EMPLOYEE. This is why I hate these stupid competitions! You all walk in here like you own the place and-

OLIVIA. I do own the place! I am a guest here, and I have paid for the right to be here! *(Olivia and the employee begin an argument that only ends when Tabi emerges from the bathroom but now she is wearing the complete Riley Thane outfit: a quirky and colorful dress, a floral scarf, and the iconic red hair (a wig). Tabi, too, becomes a different person when she pretends to be Riley. She's over the top, outlandish, and speaks in a wild English dialect for some reason. Everyone is stunned: the employee by this person wearing this ridiculous outfit, Olivia by the fact that THE Riley Thane really was actually in the bathroom, and Janet by what Tabi has just done.)*

TABI. *(As Riley.)* Sorry I took so long! I had to poo!

OLIVIA. Oh. My. Gawd. Riley Thane. It's you. It's really you!

TABI. Well, of course it's me. *(Tabi pushes past Olivia to get to Janet. The employee shrugs and exits.)* Janet, darling, did I mention that you are looking stunning tonight. *(She sees the spilled coffee.)* Oh dear. What seems to have happened here?

OLIVIA. Riley! It is such an honor to finally meet you. I saw your show two times!

TABI. Who are you?

OLIVIA. My name is Olivia Hayword. I'm the president of Durchschnitt-

TABI. You seem to have made a mess. *(She gestures at the coffee on the floor.)*

OLIVIA. Oh, well...uh...there was a little misunderstanding with Tabi. *(She looks around, realizing now that Tabi is gone. The hotel employee reenters with a mop and bucket.)* Where did she-

TABI. Come now, Odette. Don't go blaming your mistakes on others.

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You made a mess and you should clean it up. *(She sees the employee with the mop and bucket.)* Ah, lovely! Here we are...*(Smirking at Olivia.)* Clean up your mess.

EMPLOYEE. *(Sighing.)* It's okay. I've got it. *(Olivia pushes the employee out of the way and grabs the mop and bucket.)*

OLIVIA. No! I'll do it! You're right, Riley-

TABI. Opal, you may call me Ms. Thane.

OLIVIA. Of course. Excuse me. You were right, Ms. Thane. I made a mess and I should clean it up.

TABI. Excellent. *(Olivia mops feverishly. The hotel employee shrugs and walks to their spot behind the front desk. Janet pulls Tabi aside.)*

JANET. *(Whispering.)* What are you doing?

TABI. *(Whispering.)* Acting!

EMPLOYEE. You theatre folks are weird.

TABI. Yes, darling, we are. But the greatest people on earth are the weird ones. You never caught Viola Davis doing anything ordinary.

EMPLOYEE. Oh, I do love Violas Davis!

TABI. Don't we all?! *(Olivia finishes mopping.)*

OLIVIA. I did it, Ms. Thane! I cleaned up my mess!

TABI. That's nice, Octavia. *(Suddenly, a group of people enter the foyer including Arie, Daniel, Alex, CHESTER, and several students.)*

STUDENT 1. Look, everyone! It's Riley Thane! *(They all descend upon Tabi. She's very careful to always pull Janet along with her.)*

STUDENT 2. Ms. Thane!

STUDENT 3. Riley!

ARIE. It's such an honor to meet you. To think that you're at our hotel!

CHESTER. Ms. Thane! Ms. Thane! *(He gets pushed to the back of the crowd and the general hubbub of excitement over "Riley" grows.)*

DANIEL. I saw your show, and it changed my life!

STUDENT 3. You inspire me!

STUDENT 2. I'm planning to study theatre because I saw your show, and I knew that that's what I wanted to do!

STUDENT 1. Ms. Thane, I know that you're going to win the GOAT Award!

TABI. Alright, alright. Settle down, everyone! Thank you for your kind,

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kind words. But it is getting rather late, and I would very much like to retire for the evening. If you have any questions for me or my work, look for me tomorrow at the, uh, the workshop of... *(She glances at Janet.)*

JANET. Uh..."First Folio Fun".

TABI. "First Folio Fun"! I will be glad to answer any questions after tomorrow's workshop, which I'm sure is bound to be lovely and spectacular. I'm taking my good friend Janet with me. Has everyone met Janet? She's a doll and really, the backbone of what I do. Oop! I think I just saw my other dear friend Tabi run upstairs. Please allow us all some privacy. My two very good friends and I are going to catch up. Goodbye! Good night! Goodbye! Good night! *(She makes a grand exit, pulling Janet along with her. Janet looks awestruck as everyone stands and admires them.)*

CHESTER. Riley Thane! I love you!

SCENE 4

The hotel foyer.. The next morning. Janet has exited the area designated for continental breakfast, wearing a big smile and carrying some kind of food. A moment passes. The same employee as last night enters from the backroom and stands behind the counter. Janet stares at them and decides that she's going to say hello. She approaches the front desk. The employee looks up. Janet has lost her nerve. She just awkwardly stares at the employee.

EMPLOYEE. Can I help you?

JANET. Uh...uh...*(She backs away and finds a spot at a distance. She takes out her inhaler and breathes deeply before smiling brightly and eating more of her bagel. The employee rolls their eyes and exits to the back room. A beat. Tabi enters from upstairs. She looks around nervously, spots Janet, and runs to her.)*

TABI. Hey.

JANET. Hi. Go get yourself some breakfast. I have lots of different bagels. *(Tabi sits down next to Janet.)*

TABI. I wanted to apologize again-

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JANET. Tabi, you can stop apologizing.

TABI. I don't know what came over me. I was just so mad at Olivia and she was so smug. I didn't mean to steal your spotlight-

JANET. Tabi, it's okay. I feel a lot better after everything that happened last night. Everyone really does love Riley, don't they? Did you see their faces? You hear about people fan-girling over Riley, but I saw it for real last night. I made that. I did that. It was amazing.

TABI. You *did* do that. Riley is awesome. It felt really good: to be loved that much, to be appreciated.

JANET. Yes! Riley is like a security blanket. You can be anything when you're her. *(Laughing.)* Why did you give her an English dialect?

TABI. *(Laughing.)* I don't know. It just seemed right! Nobody has really talked to her outside of her show, right? So she could be anything in "real life".

JANET. You did such an amazing job last night. The look on Olivia's face!

TABI. She was all like... *(She imitates Olivia's surprised expression and both laugh.)*

JANET. My favorite part was when you said, "Sorry! I had to poo!"

TABI. Did you see that guy last night? The one who just screamed, "Riley Thane! I love you!"

JANET. That performance! You could win a GOAT just for that.

TABI. Oh, stop it-

JANET. Who says you're not an actor?

TABI. I really did do it, didn't I?

JANET. You did! The only thing is I don't think I know how to do an English dialect. I'll have to work on it. I mean, I don't have to do it I guess. Maybe Riley was just being mysterious and putting on airs last night. But it's probably best if I keep up with what you started.

TABI. What do you mean? *(Janet stares at her, confused.)* What do you mean "keep up what I started"?

JANET. I mean for when I play Riley today. You created the bit. I need to see it through.

TABI. Oh. I guess I didn't realize that you were going to still play Riley.

JANET. Why wouldn't I play Riley?

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TABI. It's just...I've already played her. Everyone has seen me as her.

JANET. Yeah but you were wearing the wig and the whole getup so we could easily sneak me back into the part.

TABI. But...is that necessary? The whole conflict in this situation was that you didn't want to talk in front of people, but now you don't have to. I'll be Riley for you. You can sit back and enjoy the ride. No social interactions required.

JANET. But I'm not afraid anymore. You were right: you need one good performance and then all the butterflies are gone. I saw you do it, and I know that it can be done. Opening night jitters are no more.

TABI. But you just saw me do it. You didn't actually do it.

JANET. It still made me feel more confident. I figure if you can do it, I surely can do it.

TABI. What does that mean?

JANET. Well, it's just that...you're not an actress. You're a techie.

TABI. I'm a techie so automatically I can't act?

JANET. That's not what I said. Look, I really appreciate what you did last night, Tabi, but I can handle it from here.

TABI. Are you sure that you're still not too nervous? You seemed really nervous yesterday.

JANET. But I'm not nervous anymore.

TABI. Are you sure?

JANET. Yes. *(They stare at one another. Tabi relents, trying to hide her disappointment.)*

TABI. Well, good. I'm glad to hear that. People are going to question, though, that you sound a bit different today than you did last night.

JANET. Classic theatrical trick: tell everyone that I had a cold last night.

TABI. Of course. *(A beat. Janet tries to change the subject.)*

JANET. They have blueberry bagels. I know how much you like blueberry bagels.

TABI. *(Smiling.)* I do like blueberry bagels. Do they have cream cheese?

JANET. Of course they have cream cheese.

TABI. But do they have garden veggie cream cheese?

JANET. I think so - wait. You want garden veggie cream cheese on your blueberry bagel?

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TABI. Don't knock it till you've tried it.

JANET. *(Laughing.)* You're so weird.

TABI. *(Putting on the Riley voice.)* You never caught Viola Davis doing anything ordinary! *(The two laugh. Tabi exits to the continental breakfast area. Janet eats her breakfast, content. Chester enters from the stairwell and, upon seeing Janet, hastily crosses to her.)*

CHESTER. I beg your pardon- *(Janet is spooked by his sudden appearance.)* My apologies. I didn't mean to startle you. May I join you?

JANET. *(Too nervous to really speak.)* I...I just...my...*(Chester takes this as a yes and sits very close to Janet who is clearly uncomfortable with this.)*

CHESTER. Thank you. I was hoping to catch you before today's events began.

JANET. I...me?

CHESTER. Yes, you! Jane, correct?

JANET. Uh-

CHESTER. Jane, my name is Chester Dodgerton. You've probably heard of me. *(Janet shakes her head, but Chester is too caught up in himself to notice.)* Yes, I am THAT Chester Dodgerton: the youngest to ever be nominated for a playwright award here at the Tammys. My first work - an adaptation of Beowulf - won the "Best Adapted Script" three years ago when I was merely ten. But enough about me. I want to talk about you - well, your friend, Riley Thane. I saw you with Ms. Thane last night. She made quite a spectacle, didn't she?

JANET. Uh-

CHESTER. Jane, I am desperate - desperate! - to meet Ms. Thane. She's a writer. I'm a writer. Can you imagine the art that we would create together? I saw Thane's the Thing four times! Do you think anyone else showed that much devotion to her art? I doubt it! I tried valiantly, yet in vain, last night to speak to her. Ugh! That insufferable crowd that keeps us apart. If there is anything - anything! - that you can do to get Ms. Thane and I in the same room, it would mean the world to me. Are you an actor yourself?

JANET. Yes-

CHESTER. Jane! Get me in to see Ms. Thane, and I will write you a role

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so moving and beautiful, that it will assuredly get you a Tammy nomination. I assume that you're not nominated this year, are you?

JANET. Uh-

CHESTER. You know what they say: actors don't get nominated, parts get nominated! Oh, Jane, please tell me you can help me! Ms. Thane and I are kindred spirits! I must meet her! I simply must! Please, do this poor and pitiful man the greatest of favors and say that you'll introduce us. Jane, please! Jane, I beg you! Jane, Jane, Jane! *(Janet is stunned, confused, and overwhelmed.)*

JANET. Uhhhh... *(Chester, of course, takes this as a yes.)*

CHESTER. Thank you! You are a saint, a true saint! Riley and I shall name our first child Jane! I promise you! *(He runs out. Janet is shocked. Tabi enters, munching on her bagel.)*

TABI. The trick is you have to put the cream cheese on thick and then add honey to one side of the bagel and sriracha on the other side and- *(She stops upon seeing Janet's worried face.)* Uh-oh. What's wrong? *(But there's no time to explain as the elevator doors open and Olivia enters.)*

OLIVIA. Janet! *(She rushes to Janet and links arms with her.)* Hey there! How are you this morning?

JANET. I'm okay-

OLIVIA. That's great. Say, have you seen Riley? Is she with you?

JANET. Uh-

TABI. We were just about to bring her breakfast up to her. *(Olivia glances at the bagel monstrosity that Tabi is holding.)*

OLIVIA. THAT'S her breakfast?

TABI. Yes. Got a problem with it?

OLIVIA. No! It looks delicious. *(The elevator door opens. Arie, Daniel, Alex, and the rest enter.)*

ARIE. We are running a touch behind schedule, students, so be like a squirrel and fetch yourself some breakfast. Olivia and Daniel, are you two still planning on attending the "Meisner Made Easy" workshop?

OLIVIA. *(Glancing at Tabi.)* I don't know. Riley said that you guys were going to the "First Folio Fun" workshop, right?

JANET. We are-

TABI. Riley changed her mind. We're going to "Fight Choreography

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101”.

OLIVIA. Oh, fun! Ms Arie, Daniel and I are attending the fight choreography workshop with Riley, Tabi, and Janet.

DANIEL. But I was looking forward to the Meisner-

OLIVIA. I don't acknowledge you, Daniel!

ARIE. Alright, alright: off you go! Get some breakfast, everyone! No one can learn if their tummy is a-rumbling! *(Arie Daniel, Alex, and the other students exit to get some breakfast. Olivia hangs back to talk with Tabi and Janet.)*

OLIVIA. I'll see you guys there. Tell Riley I say hi. *(She exits.)*

TABI. Oh, yes. We'll see you. NOT!

JANET. Tabi, I can talk for myself. I'm feeling more confident now. Remember? You don't have to answer for me every single time. Besides, I thought we agreed that we were going to the "First Folio Fun" workshop.

TABI. Oh, we are. But I don't want to spend an entire workshop with Olivia! I just told her that to keep her off our tail.

JANET. Could you at least let me in on the plan?

TABI. I don't plan, Janet. I just wing it. Things just happen. I should do improv.

JANET. Tabi, I feel as though you're kind of, sort of missing the whole point of why you're here.

TABI. And what is the point of me being here?

JANET. To help me.

TABI. I thought that you didn't need my help.

JANET. You're mad at me because I said you can't play Riley anymore.

TABI. You have to admit that it's going to look silly if we suddenly change actors midway through a performance.

JANET. You don't think I can do it. You don't think I can be Riley.

TABI. It's not that. This is a very delicate situation, and a lot is on the line here. We're fooling Olivia, and I have big plans to make an absolute fool out of her-

JANET. Olivia is not the issue here. My future is.

TABI. Riley is bigger than you, Janet. You're going to win the award. We all know it. Why not have a little fun with it while we've got the ball in our court? Think of the good you could do with this Riley platform. I know

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that you want to play Riley, but this just makes more sense. *(The hotel employee enters from the back room and begins to sweep the floor.)* Okay. How about this: you can have Riley if you go talk to that hotel employee. Just go over and say hello. Ask how their day is going.

JANET. What does that have to do with anything?

TABI. Prove to me that you can handle the role, and Riley is all yours. *(Janet looks from Tabi to the employee and then back again. She can't decide what to do. Finally, she crosses to the hotel employee. They look up.)*

EMPLOYEE. Hello again. *(Janet can't speak.)* Can I do something for you?

JANET. I...uh...hi. How are you?

EMPLOYEE. I'm-

JANET. FINE! THANKS FOR ASKING! *(She immediately runs back to Tabi. The employee exits, confused.)* There! I did it!

TABI. That didn't count!

JANET. Yes, it did!

TABI. No, it didn't! *(They glare at one another.)*

JANET. We need to go get dressed.

TABI. *RILEY* needs to get dressed.

JANET. Yes.

TABI. So it's understood then?

JANET. Yes. *(It is not understood.)*

TABI. So which workshop are we going to?

JANET. "First Folio Fun".

TABI. Okay. You go on up. I'm going to grab something to drink.

JANET. See you up in the room. *(Janet exits. Arie enters from the continental breakfast area. She quickly grabs Tabi and pulls her aside.)*

ARIE. Tabi! I'm so glad that I've got you. I wanted to talk to you about a very delicate situation.

TABI. What is it, Ms Arie?

ARIE. Do you remember yesterday when we arrived and we all had the extremely unfortunate displeasure of bumping into that insufferable ignoramus Mr. Beau?

TABI. Yeah.

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ARIE. Now, I would never speak ill of a fellow teacher. We all have it so rough these days with the budget cuts and long hours and what not. I could NEVER criticize someone...unless, of course, I had ample and sufficient reason to.

TABI. This Mr. Beau is a real jerk, right?

ARIE. Yes! He is the jerkiest of the jerks! He's...he's beef jerky! (*Laughs at her own joke.*) See, it's funny because I'm a vegan and I despise beef in any form...unless it is living beef. But then, it isn't BEEF, is it? It's just a cow. Not JUST a cow, you understand. But a beautiful and majestic bovine who deserves love and respect just like anyone else-

TABI. Ms Arie-

ARIE. The point is...I was hoping that you and Janet could do your favorite drama teacher a real solid. Could you please introduce me to your friend Riley.

TABI. Well, I don't know. She's very particular about who-

ARIE. -about who she hangs out with. Yes, I know. Riley Thane is all anyone can talk about at these awards, it seems. Could you imagine the look on that lame-o Beau's face when I am seen cavorting about with THE Riley Thane?

TABI. What's the deal with you two, Ms Arie? Why all this hostility? Did you two use to date or something?

ARIE. Oh, Tabi. I just threw up a little in my mouth. The mere idea of - nope, nop! I cannot think about it. (*Gags a little.*) No, no, no. Mr. Beau and I were classmates back in high school, and there's always been competition between us. You remember how I told you that I was nominated for the GOAT award back when? Well, so was Mr. Beau! I played Faustus, and he played Mephastophilis. On stage, we battled it out and then in real life we did the same. Truthfully, the show was a spectacle. We both did beautiful jobs. And we were both nominated. But then Beau wins? It didn't make any sense! I was Doctor Faustus! I was the titular character! I had to suffer the pangs of hell! I had the character arc, not Mephastophilis! It didn't stop there, though. Beau had his choice of any college and he followed me to the same school! I had to endure four more years of that buffoon. We both wanted to be Professor Chicorel's student aid our senior year. We both applied for the same job in the set shop. We

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sometimes went up against each other for parts! And Beau always won! Every. Single. Time. I hate Mr. Beau. He has spoiled every aspect of my life, and I shall not sleep well until I walk across the ashes of everything he loves and holds dear. *(Arie takes a breath. Tabi is terrified.)* So...what do you say?

TABI. I think we can make something work. I guarantee that I can get you and Riley together.

ARIE. Really?

TABI. Really. That Mr. Beau seems like a piece of work. If I - I mean - if RILEY can help take them down a peg or two, I'm sure she'd be more than willing to help.

ARIE. You're going to the fight choreography workshop, correct?

TABI. Yes. No. Wait. Uh... Riley decided that she wanted to go to, uh, "Subtext Studies" instead.

ARIE. But you just told Olivia- *(Tabi pulls out her phone.)*

TABI. Riley just texted me!

ARIE. I should tell Olivia and Daniel-

TABI. Don't bother. I already texted them.

ARIE. Well, aren't you prompt! Alright so we'll all go to "Subtext Studies". I'll make sure that Mr. Beau is there as well. Will Riley sit next to me?

TABI. I'll make sure of it.

ARIE. Excellent! Oh, I could kiss you, Tabi!

TABI. Please don't.

ARIE. Of course not. That would be unhygienic. Alright! I'll see you in a bit! *(Arie exits through the stairwell.)*

TABI. *(To herself.)* It was "Subtext Studies", right? Right. Or...was it "First Folio Fun"? *(Tabi shrugs and exits through the elevator. All is quiet for a moment until the front door bursts open and Bre Rossmiller enters. She looks around the lobby, perplexed. Upon seeing that there is no one at the front desk, she hits the bell and waits impatiently. The employee enters from the backroom.)*

EMPLOYEE. Can I help you, ma'am?

BRE. I was told that Riley Thane was staying at this hotel.

EMPLOYEE. I don't know who that is. Even if I did, I couldn't tell you.

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It's against hotel policies. Wait! Is she that one girl who made a big scene here last night?

BRE. So she IS here?

EMPLOYEE. I don't know! I can't tell you.

BRE. It's vitally important that I find this "Riley Thane". Something is going on here. I have reason to believe that the Riley Thane you met last night is an imposter.

EMPLOYEE. *(Indifferent.)* Okay.

BRE. I saw Thane's the Thing. How could I not? It was all anyone could talk about. And a homeschooled student? That would look so good for the organization as a whole. It makes us look very inclusive. I saw pictures from last night's little display, and whoever that was was not Riley Thane. I know greatness, and that wasn't her.

EMPLOYEE. *(Indifferent.)* Okay. *(The employee flips through a comic book and slurps a large soda.)*

BRE. What's more, I've been doing some digging and there's no evidence of anyone actually named "Riley Thane" living anywhere near here. There's one in Liverpool, but she's forty-seven and a mother of three. That can't be right! Don't you find that odd? The organization as a whole wants to turn a blind eye, but I won't. The integrity of the awards is at stake.

EMPLOYEE. *(Indifferent.)* Okay.

BRE. I'm not about to let some little imposter walk in and out with a full ride scholarship. I mean, we have a reputation to keep up. I've given too much to this stupid thing- *(She stops herself.)* Anyway, you'll tell her, yes? When you see her...

EMPLOYEE. I'll tell "Riley Thane"...what?

BRE. That Bre Rossmiller is coming for her. This is the end of "Riley Thane".

END OF ACT 1

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