

BLANK CANVAS
Inspired By A Dream

by Lauren Sweet

BLANK CANVAS: INSPIRED BY A DREAM

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BLANK CANVAS: INSPIRED BY A DREAM

For Pattie

BLANK CANVAS: INSPIRED BY A DREAM

Blank Canvas: Inspired By A Dream recieved it's first public staged reading at California State University in Fullerton, California with the following cast

ANNALISE/MARGUERITE.....Alyssa Gauss
FRIEDRICH/FAUST.....Chris Suarez
HOWARD/MEPHISTOPHELES.....Cash Wheeler
ERNEST.....Austin Mooney
FABIO.....Alonso Valle
ANGELINE.....Heather Hawkins
EDDIE.....Joe Brendlor-White
SWEETHEART.....Ky Gaskill
STRASTOPHELES.....Maviene Tran
METHOS.....Jose Rafael Hernandez
LUCIFER.....Joshua Penrod
ZACH.....Alan Sanchez-Mendez
CAM (they/them).....Lee Johnston

CAST: 3 women, 9 men, 1 nonbinary

ANNALISE/MARGUERITE	20s, a young artist
FRIEDRICH/FAUST,	30s, a hedonistic and ambitious artist
HOWARD/MEPHISTOPHELES	50s, a venture capitalist, Lucifer's assistant
ERNEST	50s-60s, Friedrich's uncle, pious
FABIO	20s, a Spanish painter, flirtatious
ANGELINE	20s, a British socialite, intellectual
EDDIE	20s, a WWII veteran, gruff
SWEETHEART	20s, a sadistic demon
STRASTOPHELES,	20s, son of Mephistopheles, mischievous
METHOS	20s, son of Mephistopheles, shrewd
LUCIFER	30s, the Devil, cunning and sly
ZACH	20s, Annalise's friend, loyal and energetic
CAM (they/them)	20s, an art influencer, overzealous
THEATER KIDS, MUSEUM GOERS, DEMONS (ENSEMBLE)	

TIME: 1800s Germany to Modern day

PLACE: An art studio in Cologne, an art museum in Los Angeles

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PRESHOW

STRASTOPHELES and METHOS wander around to the front of the stage. They turn around to face the audience.

STRASTOPHELES: Oh HEY, there's people in here!

METHOS: Well, of course, you idiot! Don't you remember this is a show?

STRASTOPHELES: Right..... *(he faces the audience)*. Hello everyone, I'm Strastopheles.

METHOS: And I'm Methos.

BOTH: And welcome to Blank Canvas!

METHOS: *(gesturingly dramatically)* In case of an emergency, such as a fire, a robbery, or a curse, go to the nearest emergency exits, located at the front and sides of the theater, so basically where you came in-*

(This can be changed based on the venue/space)

STRASTOPHELES: Stop gesturing like that, you look like a flight attendant.

METHOS: And? *(Strastopheles smacks him on the back of his head)* Hey!

STRASTOPHELES: Also, take this moment to turn off your cell phones and devices, or we will set them on fire *(he pulls out a lighter)*

METHOS: No no no no NO!! *(He closes the lighter then faces the audience again)* No. Also, smoking, flash photography, and videography are strictly prohibited in the gallery. Some of our paintings are sensitive to the light and they find it awfully distracting- oh fuuuuuuck!

STRASTOPHELES: Man, you weren't supposed to spoil it! *(to audience)* But anyway, you'll see what he's talking about.

METHOS: So ladies and gentlemen.....

STRASTOPHELES: And everyone else.....

METHOS: We proudly present.....

BOTH: Blank Canvas: Inspired By A Dream! *(Strastopheles takes out his lighter and opens it, laughing as he runs offstage)*

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METHOS: *(running after him)* Oh no, don't you even THINK ABOUT IT! GET BACK HERE!

STRASTOPHELES: Up yours, asshole!

ACT I SCENE 1

The spotlight comes up on LUCIFER, appearing as a handsome young man - Director's choice of how he enters. He looks out towards the audience.

LUCIFER: You've all heard the phrase, "Be careful what you wish for... it just might happen." Let me tell you, I'm not one to bargain with your wishes, but rather with what you'd do to obtain what you desire the most. *(he stands up)* For example, take this young woman, Annalise. *(ANNALISE enters)*. She doesn't know it yet, but her life and her view are about to change forever. A little bit later on, I'm going to make her an offer she can't possibly refuse. *(Annalise leaves and Lucifer points to an audience member)* Please tell me you've seen *The Godfather*. *(Depending on the response, he responds accordingly)* And then there's my good friend Faust. Really smart guy, so smart he never felt like he could learn enough. He spent so much time trying to learn everything he missed out on all the life and love that lay before him. What happened with him, should you ask? It all began with a goblet full of poison. *(Shift to FAUST, who is sitting at a desk, holding a goblet full of poison. He exhales.)*

FAUST: Well, I guess this is it. *(Just before Faust is about to take a swig of the poison, a bright flash occurs. MEPHISTOPHELES suddenly appears out of nowhere.)*

MEPHISTOPHELES: Greetings, foolish mortals!! Who summons me, you pathetic, miserable - yeah, I wouldn't do that if I were you.

FAUST: Jesus! I'm so sorry, I didn't see you there. Can I help you?

MEPHISTOPHELES: Help me? HA! You're one funny bastard. But, can I help since I'm here?

FAUST: Yes, I think so. I guess I just haven't really lived my life.

MEPHISTOPHELES: Well, haven't we all felt that way.

FAUST: Plus there's no way I can get it all back. Is there?

LUCIFER: So, after a little talk and a little wine, my assistant Mephistopheles convinced him to make a deal. A deal in which he would

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gain all the knowledge and the youth and beauty he desired, but with one condition.

MEPHISTOPHELES: So, tell me... have you ever thought about what'd it be like to be the smartest man in the world? The most powerful? The sexiest man alive? No, not the last one, that's not relevant till 1974.

FAUST: What?

MEPHISTOPHELES: Never mind. On behalf of my friend Lucifer, I can offer you all of that as well as eternal youth and beauty, and anything else your heart truly desires.... and all you have to do.... *(He adds a special tablet to the poison in the goblet)* ...is drink this special elixir.

FAUST: And kill myself?

MEPHISTOPHELES: I just added the antidote. Straight Outta Hell.

FAUST: What's the cost?

MEPHISTOPHELES: Your soul.... and you have join us in Hell in the end.

FAUST: Well, I'll be damned. *(He makes a toast and drinks the elixir)* And thank you, sir.

MEPHISTOPHELES: Ah, go to Hell.

LUCIFER: He got whatever he desired during his lifetime. He met some pretty girl along the way too, but if you ask me, Marguerite was way too good for him. And my god, he fucked it up big time with her. Plus he should've used protection. *(Shift to MARGUERITE, who is on her knees, praying.)*

MARGUERITE: Oh please God, you have no idea how hard it is! I didn't want my bastard child to live a lifetime of shame! I'm leaving all my faith with you, please don't let me down.

LUCIFER: Dear child, you did the right thing. No need to be so hard on yourself

MARGUERITE: Shut up Lucifer, I was talking to the other guy.

LUCIFER: Well, you did kill your bastard kid, and now you're doing everything you can to get away with murder. Kinda sus if you ask me.

MARGUERITE: I guess I did, but you know God and His Angels always look out for those who believe in Him.

LUCIFER: I'm an Angel, you know.

MARGUERITE: Heh, nice try. You were one. In the meantime, I'm off to Heaven, say hi to Faust for me. *(she leaves)*

LUCIFER: As for my friend Faust, he was warned he'd get dragged to Hell after that mess. *(Faust screams from offstage.)* Good riddance, too. After that,

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Mephistopheles made a surprising move. (*Lucifer sits back down on his throne while Mephistopheles is standing.*)

MEPHISTOPHELES: Thanks for meeting with me, Luce.

LUCIFER: Of course, anything for my most reliable wingman and right hand. So tell me, what's been going on?

MEPHISTOPHELES: Here's the thing. Faust was, um... he was something else. Compared to all the Satanic deals I've had to make on your behalf, he was definitely a piece of work.

LUCIFER: A piece of work? You can say that again. You know Charles Gounod is writing an opera about the guy.

MEPHISTOPHELES: Stop.

LUCIFER: Yep. I know, his Ave Maria wasn't even that original. Just sampled Bach for crying out loud.

MEPHISTOPHELES: I'm just cringing at how it'll look onstage. (*Beat*) Anyway, I wanted to let you know I've decided to retire.

LUCIFER: Retire? Now's not a time to be making jokes. Faust wasn't that tough of a nut to crack.

MEPHISTOPHELES: I'm not joking, and besides, I'm burnt out and ready for a break. However, I have a plan for my replacement.

LUCIFER: Now tell me, who is this wonderful replacement?

MEPHISTOPHELES: Actually, it's Strastopheles and Methos.

LUCIFER: Get out! I get that they're your twin boys but why? They're complete idiots. There's not a single place they haven't set on fire.

METHOS: (*from offstage*) No no NO! We are NOT setting that on fire AGAIN!

STRASTOPHELES: (*from offstage*) But CMON! The last time we did this the whole place was LIT!

METHOS: Haha, very funny. But this ends NOW!

STRASTOPHELES: You gotta admit it bruh, it's a HELLUVA TIME!

METHOS: GET BACK HERE YOU IDIOT!

STRASTOPHELES: UP YOURS, ASSHOLE! (*Lucifer gives Mephistopheles a look.*)

LUCIFER: Mephistopheles, you know I love you but, what the hell were you thinking?

MEPHISTOPHELES: Hear me out; I think they could learn a thing or two from you. You know how to redeem others more than anyone else I know. Besides, you know they love to play pranks more than anything.

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LUCIFER: Well, obviously.

MEPHISTOPHELES: They would excel in the trickery and deceit portion of the business. And who knows, they could prove us wrong. Besides, I've been hearing rumors about a young artist who was recently disowned and is on the cusp of losing his faith. I know you think artists are hopeless, but if you could somehow get those two to make a deal with him, they could prove you otherwise. What do you think?

LUCIFER: Okay, but I'm only doing this because you're my best friend and they're your boys. But, if I see a single spark, they're out.

MEPHISTOPHELES: Deal. *(They shake hands)* But please, take care of them. They're the only family I have. *(Mephistopheles leaves. Lucifer walks to center stage and snaps his fingers.)*

LUCIFER: Sweetheart? *(In comes SWEETHEART, a demon dressed like a Playboy bunny with hint of red in her uniform.)*

SWEETHEART: Yes, Lucifer?

LUCIFER: Keep an eye on those two, especially the pyro.

SWEETHEART: Mephistopheles' boys?

LUCIFER: Yes, his boys. And besides, I heard the pyro likes you...

SWEETHEART: Well, if you say so.... *(Sweetheart exits. Lucifer then addresses the audience)*

LUCIFER: I let Mephistopheles have his pick of anyone to replace him, yet he chose his idiot twins. But what choice do I have? So knowing those two were completely hopeless, I put them on the case with young Friedrich, little did I know..... they actually had something, something good.

SCENE 2

Germany, 1900s. FRIEDRICH, a young painter, gets shoved into a room by his pious uncle, ERNEST. Next to him is a painted canvas on an easel and a table with various paints.

ERNEST: I have had just enough with you, lad!

FRIEDRICH: But Uncle Ernest-

ERNEST: -how could you have done this?? Have you forgotten everything I've ever taught you?

FRIEDRICH: But what is so wrong with art?

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ERNEST: You were raised to follow God, not pursue a selfish career making art locked away and painting art that no one will want to buy.

FRIEDRICH: But they might want to buy it! You never know-

ERNEST: Oh, I already know, I know enough that you'll never make it!
(Ernest walks up to Friedrich's painting and pulls out a knife. He stabs the painting, cutting it up in the process. Friedrich looks on in horror.)

FRIEDRICH: No. NO!!! YOU CAN'T DO THIS! STOP IT YOU BASTARD!!

ERNEST: You've broken our hearts, Friedrich. *(Ernest drops the knife and leaves. Friedrich looks on for a moment, then turns away. He begins to pray.)*

FRIEDRICH: Dear Lord up in Heaven, it's me again, it's.... Friedrich. I have looked up to you for so long, and you have never let me down. That is until I decided to start painting. I may have come from a rich family, but all I have ever wanted was to be a painter. Ever since Uncle Ernest disowned me my inspiration has been lost. I want my art to do good in the world, so I can't let his anger or his hatred towards me affect it. Please, *(clutching his rosary)* you've never let me down... until now. What's the use of praying if I can't reconcile with my uncle and do what I love the most? I've lost my family, but I can't risk losing what makes me who I am! *(Friedrich rips off his rosary and throws it to the ground. A loud boom and bright flashes occur. The room seems to come back to normal just as quickly, except Strastopheles and Methos have entered. Strastopheles is now carrying something in a bag and wandering around Friedrich's place, snooping over at his books and supplies.)*

STRASTOPHELES: This place is really messy! Does he ever take a broom to this - oh, um, hi, dude. Did you summon us?

FRIEDRICH: Who are you? You don't look like an angel.

METHOS: Weren't you ever told that looks can be deceiving?

FRIEDRICH: Jesus Christ, there's two of you! Who are you? Mephistopheles and...?

STRASTOPHELES: Oh no, that's our dad. I'm Strastopheles. And this is my brother Methos.

METHOS: Our good friend Lucifer sent us here. *(Friedrich stands up startled.)*

STRASTOPHELES: What's the matter, kid? You're the one who called for us in the first place.

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FRIEDRICH: I don't know what you two are up to, but you have to leave! This is no place for ungodly creatures like you!

STRASTOPHELES: Ungodly? Ha! That's exactly what we are! Besides, if there's anything I'm gonna say to that so-called Heavenly Father, I'm gonna say- *(he nearly gestures, but Methos cuts him off)*

METHOS: *(running over to his brother)* Uh-uh... we scared the poor fella enough. And you don't want him to throw us out like the last one did.

STRASTOPHELES: Fine.

METHOS: Good boy *(he pats Strastopheles on the head)*.

STRASTOPHELES: I'm not your bitch.

METHOS: Don't mind my idiot brother. Friedrich, we're here to answer your prayer.

FRIEDRICH: What are you going to do? And how did you know my name? *(Methos cues Strastopheles to take out what's in the bag. Strastopheles doesn't get the message the first time; he does the second time. Strastopheles takes out a bottle and opens it.)*

STRASTOPHELES: Now, Friedrich! Do you know what's in this bottle?

FRIEDRICH: Poison?

METHOS: No! In this bottle is everything you have desired and more! Not only will you be the most talented and admired painter in the world, but you will also be granted eternal youth that lasts forever! Not even the greatest wounds and attacks could kill you now!

FRIEDRICH: It- it does sound too good to be true, but-

METHOS: -but WAIT! There's one condition.

FRIEDRICH: Just tell me already!

METHOS: If you drink this, keep in mind that Lucifer will grant you a special gift. But he does expect something in return. Every year you have to repay him with a soul in the form of a portrait.

STRASTOPHELES: It may sound hard at first, but once you get the hang it'll be a breeze.

METHOS: Shut up, Strastopheles!

STRASTOPHELES: Sorry, Methos.

METHOS: Your life with your family is over now, Friedrich. *(Friedrich pauses for a moment. He thinks long and hard about this decision.)*

FRIEDRICH: Well, Uncle Ernest always believed in me... until now. I never thought I'd say this, but I'll take anything over being alone! Give it to me!

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METHOS: Drink up, Friedrich! And may you never put down your brush again! *(Friedrich grabs the bottle, drinks the elixir, and hands it back to Methos. A sinister look comes up across Friedrich's face. Ernest comes in.)*

ERNEST: Friedrich, I came to apologize- are you alright?

FRIEDRICH: Dear Uncle, it's too late. I'm already ahead of my time. *(He grabs the knife)*

ERNEST: What are you- *(he backs away as Friedrich comes toward him and runs into the other room)*

FRIEDRICH: Goodbye. *(The lights go dark on Friedrich and Ernest who screams from the other room. Strastopheles and Methos come to the stage edge, celebrating.)*

METHOS: See what did I tell you?

STRASTOPHELES: I told you we'd prove Lucy wrong! And now, we can do Daddy proud!

METHOS: Exactly! *(beat)* Oh no...

STRASTOPHELES: What?

METHOS: I forgot to mention that part about the prophecy... *(Strastopheles looks at Methos, confused. Strastopheles then realizes what his brother missed and looks at the label on the bottle.)*

STRASTOPHELES: You idiot! *(he bonks Methos on the head with the bottle as he says this)* You left out the most important part of the deal!

METHOS: But that's how you sell a curse, Strastopheles. You only mention the good parts so he'll take the bait. It's called marketing! C'mon, you know what happened with Faust.

STRASTOPHELES: Do you have to bring that up every time?

METHOS: I just don't want you to screw this up. I mean, you're usually the reason things go downhill.

STRASTOPHELES: But sooner or later, he'll learn that there is someone out there who could stop him.... *(Blackout on minions - lights up on Lucifer.)*

LUCIFER: So Strastopheles and Methos started serving young Friedrich for over a hundred years as he kept up with repaying me in souls.... through paintings. A majority of them ended up being someone he had some sort of grudge with, which if you ask me was pretty pathetic. So much for being the greatest. I was, however, very impressed that those two were able to sell this curse and stick around for so long. If you ask me, I think adding the soul a year in the form of a portrait was a stroke of genius. They're like their father

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in that way. However, Methos did leave out an important piece of the curse, which is that if someone could speak to his art and discover who he truly is, he would lose everything.... again.

SCENE 3

Lights up. Modern-day, Los Angeles. Annalise, who is working as a waitress at a Denny's, is just finishing up a closing shift with her friend and coworker ZACH. A group of obnoxious theatre kids (who are offstage) are just finishing their dinner, with multiple checks. They're shouting and singing very loudly. Annalise enters, glaring at the stack of checks that await her.

ANNALISE: God, I hate theater kids. *(she starts cashing the checks out)*

ZACH: *(looking at the stack of checks)* They couldn't just Venmo each other?

ANNALISE: I'm not talking about the checks, dumbass. They're always acting like they're onstage even hours after they've left. It's like "Yeah, we get why you're loud and obnoxious and why you look like a baby hooker."

ZACH: You're not one to judge them.

ANNALISE: Says who?

ZACH: Says me, because my colleague and best friend is an aspiring artist.

ANNALISE: You can leave the aspiring part out. I AM an artist. I'm just not famous yet. And with that fame comes money and security and just... I don't know.

ZACH: Success?

ANNALISE: Exactly. And when I'm successful, I won't have to deal with another theater kid again in my life.

THEATER KID: *(dramatically, from offstage)* ANNABETH???? CHECKS PLEASE!

ANNALISE: *(under her breath)* It's Annalise! *(she grabs the checks)*

ZACH: I mean, we do work at a hangout for artists. Performing's an art too, y'know!

ANNALISE: Fuck you, Zach. *(Annalise then walks offstage, delivers the checks back to the Theater Kids, incredibly rowdy and all singing different songs at the same time.)*

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ANNALISE: Have a great night, guys! (*Annalise walks back, motions a gun to her head, and slumps down on the table nearby. Zach gives her an "I told you so" look.*)

ANNALISE: What?

ZACH: You say you hate them, yet you're so good with them.

ANNALISE: That's because Gary doesn't want to deal with their loud asses.

ZACH: Or maybe because you're the best server. Which is true, by the way.

ANNALISE: You're just saying that because I'm the one person here you can stand.

ZACH: Nah, I'm saying it because it's true.

ANNALISE: (*chuckling*) Be an idiot. But literally, all that I'm doing these days is just working to pay my bills since that BA in Studio Art doesn't pay for shit. If I have to serve another 20 top full of loud, amateur actors who look like Jellicle Cats, I'm going to blow my fucking brains out. I haven't had any time to draw, paint, or get any new ideas. I just need a day to... find myself again.

ZACH: (*holding a couple of beers*) Most of the time I don't know what the hell I'm doing, too. So let's not know what we're doing or why we exist right now. Sound good?

ANNALISE: Okay....

ZACH: You know, since you've been wanting a day off so bad, I got an idea for something you- we could do.

ANNALISE: You're not asking me out, are you?

ZACH: Nope. I'm actually hitting on you. (*She playfully hits his arm and he laughs along with it*) So you know that art influencer you watch all the time?

ANNALISE: Cam's Canvas Chat? I'd give anything to be featured on there.

ZACH: You've sent several pieces in, haven't you?

ANNALISE: Yeah, but everyone else is better in their eyes.

ZACH: Hey, maybe you're trying a little too hard. You'll get your chance sometime.

ANNALISE: Sometime.....soon. (*Zach shakes his head diligently.*)

ZACH: Anyways, they posted some updates on new events coming in town this weekend. You might want to take a look at their latest video.

ANNALISE: Okay... (*Zach pulls out his phone and the video of Cam. The video starts like any other TikTok video.*)

CAM: Hi, everyone! Welcome to "Cam's Canvas Chat," where we live, breathe, and imitate art, cause it's full of life. In this community, we don't

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just talk about art, we make it and share it every week, travel around for more, plus “Look, I made a hat!” (*they pull out a crocheted hat*) I know my Sondheim fans would like this, CAUSE GET IT??? Eh, never mind, it wasn’t that good of a joke anyway. Also, if you want more exclusive content, like this video and hit the subscribe button if you like what you see today.

ANNALISE: I would more if you took any of my submissions.

ZACH: That’s not what I was talking about.

ANNALISE: Then what is??

ZACH: Listen to this one.

CAM: Part 2! I have some exciting news to share with all of you! The MOCA of Los Angeles is holding an all-exclusive showcase featuring a talented freelancer named Freddie Walter, who takes the phrase “Life imitates art,” to a whole new level, having been described as a modern Romantic artist. His technique with his painting is so similar to Michelangelo, Botticelli, and Da Vinci that critics claim he should’ve been born during that time. Not to mention, the value of his works is at least \$600,000 per painting. This Saturday, I’ll have open access to this black tie and caviar event and I’ll introduce this talented young Freddie, I might even score an interview! If you’re in Los Angeles this Saturday, I hope to see y’all at the MOCA, and don’t forget, keep creating with Cameron! (*they sign off*)

ANNALISE: (*grabbing his phone*) But it’s all exclusive.... there’s no way we’ll get in.

ZACH: I happened to snag two tickets and two slots on the guest list.

ANNALISE: Holy shit, are you serious??? How?

ZACH: I have some friends in pretty high places...

ANNALISE: But Saturday.... aren’t we working then?

ZACH: I got Tyler and Yolanda to cover us.

ANNALISE: (*excitedly*) Oh, I can’t wait to go!

ZACH: To living instead of surviving! (*They clink their beers and take a sip.*)

SCENE 4

Saturday - The art show at the MOCA. The atmosphere is sleek and sexy, with guests drinking from champagne glasses and deep house music setting the mood. Guests are looking around the exhibit already. Cam is coming forward with a handheld camera, documenting the event.

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CAM: Hi everyone, here I am speaking to you live at the exclusive opening night for Freddie Walter's gallery, "Life Sized". Tonight I'm here to give you exclusive access to this event, from the paintings, the food, and maybe even score an interview with our homeboy Freddie. So, let's get started! *(Cam walks around trying to find Friedrich but starts talking to fellow guests.)*

CAM: *(to a guest)* Hi! Cam's Canvas Chat. So tell me, what do you think makes this show special? *(Annalise and Zach walk in, now in formal attire.)*

ANNALISE: So this is it, huh?

ZACH: Oh, don't give me that look.

ANNALISE: No, I'm seriously impressed. Like, this is exactly who I want to be. If a Romantic artist can get into the MOCA, I can easily do this in a few years.

ZACH: Well, sure, but we're not here to take class notes and memorize how it's done. We're here to have a good time, have some champagne, and some caviar, and just enjoy some art while we're at it, right?

ANNALISE:.... right. *(notices a tasty appetizer from a waiter walking by)* Totally enjoying the look of that app right there. *(Annalise chases after the waiter but doesn't notice Cam ahead of her. Zach notices this and tries to warn her.)*

ZACH: *(seeing Cam in front of her)* Lise, look out!

ANNALISE: *(turning around to face him while walking backward)* Zach, I'll be fine- *(Annalise accidentally bumps into CAM, who is chatting with two guests.)*

BOTH: *(they crash into each other)* Ow!

ANNALISE: Oh my god I'm so sorry!

CAM: No worries, you're good-

ANNALISE: Wait a minute, are you that Influencer? "Cam's Canvas Chat?"

CAM: Yeah! I take it you're a fan?

ANNALISE: Oh yeah, I'm a HUGE fan. I'm Annalise Bowman, by the way-

CAM: Annalise? Nice to finally meet you. Aren't you the one who sends in stuff every week for the "Feature Friday" segment?

ANNALISE: *(Fake awkward laughter)* Ha! Not every week. *(back to seriousness)* Yeah, it's been every week.

CAM: Yeah, your pieces are really good. It's usually pretty hard to decide since so many talented people send in their work.

ANNALISE: I can imagine. But in all honesty, what did you think of the last piece I sent in, um..... "The Virgin?" I'm a Virgo.

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CAM: If I'm being completely honest, you're really good.... I just think you could be a little more original than that.

ANNALISE: Excuse me?

CAM: Like.... I don't see a lot of originality or personal touches in your pieces. I do think that you're an amazing modern crossover painter, but it just seems like you're trying too hard to bring that back. So, tell me, what do you draw inspiration from?

ANNALISE: Let's see, um.... Oh! Greek mythology, astrology, and my Catholic background.

CAM: That's what I thought. *(awkward silence between the two)* Anyway, it was great meeting you. Enjoy the show! *(As Cam walks away, Annalise stands there, disappointed in herself. Zach comes over with two drinks.)*

ZACH: There you go, one glass of Champagne... why the long face?

ANNALISE: I'm not sure if I'm cut out for this industry.

ZACH: Why? Says who?

ANNALISE: Cam.

ZACH: The art Influencer? How'd you even talk with them?

ANNALISE: It doesn't matter anymore. Let's bounce-

ZACH: Wait a minute... this is an all-exclusive art show with a top-of-the-line freelancer. We're not leaving till we've-

ANNALISE: Cam said I wasn't entirely original as an artist. They said that I'm trying too hard or some bullshit like that. *(she takes a somewhat aggressive sip of her drink)*

ZACH: Okay.... well, fuck whatever Cam said to you because you're an original no matter what. And besides, I think Freddie should be the one to decide that.

ANNALISE: Wait what-

ZACH: C'mon, from artist to artist?

ANNALISE: I guess so. *(Zach and Annalise slowly walk up to Friedrich and HOWARD, who are talking together.)*

HOWARD: Well, Freddie, it looks like we got at least 200 people at your opening here at the MOCA!

FRIEDRICH: Well, isn't that good news?

HOWARD: Of course, but you need to know what a huge break you're getting.

FRIEDRICH: What the hell do you mean?

BLANK CANVAS: INSPIRED BY A DREAM

HOWARD: This is my contemporary museum, and your style isn't what I normally display. This better make a profit or you'll be stuck bussing tables the rest of your life.

FRIEDRICH: Howard, I don't even-

HOWARD: Kid, I'm doing you a favor. You have no idea how many strings I had to pull to do this for you. So I'm asking you, to please let me do my part.

FRIEDRICH: You've curated this entire exhibition, isn't that enough?

ZACH: *(cutting in)* Hi, are you Freddie Walter?

FRIEDRICH: *(jokingly)* I don't know, am I?

HOWARD: Unless there's another guy here who goes by Freddie?

FRIEDRICH: Well, you came to the right place. *(he extends his hand to Zach, then Annalise)* What are your names?

ZACH: I'm Zach, and this is-

ANNALISE: Annalise. *(they shake hands)*

FRIEDRICH: Freddie Walter. And this is the MOCA's curator, Howard Cooper.

HOWARD: Pleased to meet you two. What brings you here today?

ANNALISE: I was gang-pressed into this. *(Friedrich gives her a puzzled look)*. No, seriously, we heard about this through "Cam's Canvas Chat." You know? The art Influencer?

FRIEDRICH: I heard they're here tonight. Right, Howard?

HOWARD: There is a guest named Cam here, but why does that even matter?

ZACH: I heard amazing things about your work, Mr. Walter. And besides, my friend's an expert in Romantic art like you.

ANNALISE: Oh, stop it.

FRIEDRICH: Is that so?

ANNALISE: Well, I have a degree in studio art from Cal State Fullerton*. I graduated three years ago. *(The university can change depending on the location of the venue)*

HOWARD: Wow...you must be really passionate about art.

FRIEDRICH: Are you? You must be a painter yourself.

ANNALISE: Well, yeah, I am. I've always wanted to be an artist. *(She pulls out her phone.)* In fact, I've been working on this piece recently. I call it "The Woman in Eden" *(she shows them her painting on her phone. Both men nod in approval)*

BLANK CANVAS: INSPIRED BY A DREAM

FRIEDRICH: That's quite good, Annalise. You have promising talent for your age.

ZACH: Told you so. *(he walks away)*

HOWARD: You could make lots of money by presenting your work in an exhibition here at the MOCA. *(Friedrich gives him a look)*

ANNALISE: Well, thank you.

HOWARD: You know, I could help you if you show me more of your artwork. I could also offer you my business card- *(Friedrich nudges him)*

ANNALISE: I'll think about it. I'm just here to take a look at the exhibit.

HOWARD: Well, please sign the guest book! *(Annalise signs her name in the guest book. Zach follows suit.)*

ANNALISE: Well, It was nice meeting you.... Freddie. *(As Annalise and Zach walk off, Friedrich and Howard look after her.)*

ZACH: That sounded pretty amazing. Why didn't you take the card?

ANNALISE: It does, but I want to come up with something original first. *(They walk away.)*

HOWARD: That's odd. Usually, an artist around here would take up that offer in a heartbeat.

FRIEDRICH: I suppose she was just being polite. If I were her, I would've taken the opportunity.

HOWARD: Exactly, and besides, you might as well scout for new talent while you're at it.

FRIEDRICH: But Howard, you're working for me right- *(Just then, Cam cuts in and interrupts them.)*

CAM: Freddie Walter, can I just say I'm soooo impressed with your show!

FRIEDRICH: Why, thank you. And you are?

CAM: Cam Nicks, I host "Cam's Canvas Chat" on TikTok. Besides, I promised my followers I'd give them exclusive access to your gallery and hear all about you! So tell me, what made you want to become an artist in the first place?

FRIEDRICH: Well, I grew up in a Catholic household, and I was always inspired by the designs in the chapels in my hometown of Cologne...*(Annalise and Zach start to look at the paintings, all of which are life-sized. The paintings are of Ernest, who is donning a stern expression and is dressed in black, and FABIO, a young Spanish man with paint stains on his ragged clothes.)*

BLANK CANVAS: INSPIRED BY A DREAM

ANNALISE: Damn, Zach, you were right! Mr. Walter definitely should have been born in the Renaissance!

ZACH: I know a good art show when I see one.

Shift to Strastopheles and Methos, who are looking at the exhibit from a surveillance system.

METHOS: Who is that girl and who does she think she is?

STRASTOPHELES: I have to say she's pretty hot.

METHOS: Oh if she's so hot why don't you go talk to her?

STRASTOPHELES: Nah man I can't do that! We're supposed to be working! And y know...

METHOS: Yeah, that's what I thought. You know, to be a ladies' man you actually have to talk to women.

STRASTOPHELES: I obviously know that... it's just she's not my type.

METHOS: Of course not, I know you're too scared to leave that dominatrix in the back. Otherwise, you'll get your ass whipped.

STRASTOPHELES: She's a bunny, not a-

METHOS: Shhhh! Shut up, Strastopheles!

STRASTOPHELES: Sorry, Methos. *(Shift back to Annalise and Zach.)*

ZACH: Do you want to see the other part?

ANNALISE: Not yet, I wanna observe these for a little longer.

ZACH: Okay, I'll see you on the other side. *(Annalise goes up and observes the painting of Ernest for a few minutes. She then pulls out her phone and starts tapping notes. She walks away from the first painting, whose eyes start to follow her. With the feeling that someone is watching her, Annalise swiftly turns around only to see the painting, lifeless. She looks around, shrugs, then goes to observe the other painting. As she starts to look at the second painting, the first one starts to speak to her.)*

ERNEST: Lovely day, isn't it? Not much sunlight, though.

ANNALISE: *(drops everything in shock and turns around)* Who's there?? *(Strastopheles and Methos gasp.)*

BOTH: It's her!

SCENE 5

Annalise slowly walks over to the painting of Ernest. When she gets fairly close, Ernest starts talking to her, and she jumps back.

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ERNEST: Hello!

ANNALISE: Wait a min- you can talk?

ERNEST: Well, of course, I can. It's just that I haven't had anyone else to speak to for the last hundred years.

FABIO: Well, you got me, Señor Ernesto!

ANNALISE: Ernesto? You have names?

ERNEST: It's Ernest! Of course, we do! We once stood on the same ground as you.

ANNALISE: I'm sorry, what?

FABIO: Don't worry about Ernesto. I'm Fabio. Buenos dias.

ANNALISE: It's night.

FABIO: Then, buenas tardes. And might I say that dress you have on is quite gorgeous.

ANNALISE: Well, thanks. I found this on Amazon-

FABIO: You found that thing in the Amazon? *(Ernest clears his throat, signaling Fabio to stop talking.)*

ERNEST: What's your name, Fräulein?

ANNALISE: I'm Annalise. I'm just here for the art show.

FABIO: At least you're not his lover.

ANNALISE: What the hell does that mean?? Am I missing something?

ERNEST: Take a look around here, Fräulein. Do you see anyone else here talking to the other paintings in the room? *(She shakes her head).*

FABIO: Exactly!

ERNEST: But YOU can talk to the art! Just like dear Angeline did before she got cursed!

ANNALISE: Who? *(Friedrich walks over, the PAINTINGS freeze up as he approaches.)*

FRIEDRICH: Are you enjoying it so far?

ANNALISE: Oh, yes! Definitely! *(laughs nervously)* You've certainly outdone Da Vinci.

FRIEDRICH: Well, if you want to know more, feel free to ask. *(He walks away. Annalise waits until he leaves, and the paintings unfreeze. Fabio gazes back at Friedrich adoringly.)*

FABIO: He's still as handsome as the last time I kissed him.

ERNEST: Fabio! I thought you told me you two just painted together!

FABIO: We did! Then one thing led to another. I'm sorry, Friedri.... I mean Freddie should have told me his grumpy old uncle was a prude.

BLANK CANVAS: INSPIRED BY A DREAM

ERNEST: It doesn't matter, he betrayed God in every way possible!

FABIO: And that's my fault?

ERNEST: Well, I always knew-

ANNALISE: Okay, shut up! *(beat)* You were saying? *(Shift to Strastopheles and Methos.)*

METHOS: Strastopheles! Get down to the gallery and create a distraction! Quickly!

STRASTOPHELES: Why do I have to be the one to do it?

METHOS: Okay, FINE! I'll do it this time but follow me down just in case! *Shift back to Annalise, Ernest, and Fabio.)*

ANNALISE: What do you mean by his madness? Freddie's been nothing but nice to me!

FABIO: Freddie? Ha! That's not even his real name.

ERNEST: I tried to stop Friedrich from this dangerous path, but I was too late. Now this is my punishment.

FABIO: Exactly, Annalise. The same happened with me and now we're stuck for eternity.

ANNALISE: I'm sorry guys, but I can't help you.

FABIO: You CAN help us! You can talk to the ART! His art! The art that's been possessed by the devil!

ANNALISE: Again, I'm sorry but I can't help you! *(Two guests who have walked in stare at her as she says this. Annalise gets startled by their sudden presence.)*

ANNALISE: *(laughing nervously)* Sorry. I'm a theater major. We're doing a play this spring and I, uh, really want to get my lines down. *(The guests shrug it off. Annalise stands still until they have completely looked away. She lets out a breath of relief. Methos, disguised as a security guard, comes up from behind her.)*

ANNALISE: *(whispering to herself)* Why did I even say that? I don't even like theater!

METHOS: *(peeking around the corner)* Hey.

ANNALISE: Oh um... hi.

METHOS: Are you enjoying the gallery so far?

ANNALISE: Absolutely.

METHOS: Really? Did you know that there's more to be seen in the other hall?

BLANK CANVAS: INSPIRED BY A DREAM

ANNALISE: Actually, I enjoy taking my time in certain parts before moving on.

METHOS: But it gets more modern as you keep going. It's quite fascinating.

ANNALISE: But how could the same artist use another technique in the same show?

METHOS: Just go and see for yourself. *(Annalise shrugs, then reluctantly decides to move in the other direction. Methos waits patiently while Strastopheles comes up behind him. They watch as Annalise walks away. They silently watch her walk away and start a mini victory dance as she goes.)*

METHOS: To the other side...

STRASTOPHELES: There she goes! *(They pump fists, do their secret handshake, then realize something.)*

STRASTOPHELES: Dude, we need to tell him!

METHOS: That she's the girl from the prophecy?

STRASTOPHELES: Yes! It's the one part you keep forgetting! *(They leave through a separate door, hence taking a shortcut. Cam approaches the area and is recording.)*

CAM: Here is the first part of the exhibit, starting with one of his first major works, one of his great-grandfather and another of his best friend Fabio, all painted with acrylics and- *(their camera battery dies)* Goddammit! Guess I'll shoot this from my iPhone then. *(Cam pulls out their iPhone when Lucifer walks in and grabs their phone.)*

LUCIFER: Trust me, you don't want that for your blog.

CAM: Excuse me, I'm not a blogger, I'm an influencer.

LUCIFER: Same difference.

CAM: Whatever. Besides, you have no idea what you're talking about. This is the event of the year, and I don't need cynics like you ruining this for me.

LUCIFER: Look, sweetie, I'm not a cynic. But I can show you something even better.

(Blackout.)

SCENE 6

The third room in the exhibit. Strastopheles and Methos are taking a break, hanging out with Sweetheart. Strastopheles has his arm draped around her back, almost reaching her ass.

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SWEETHEART: Really? You think SHE'S the one?

STRASTOPHELES: Of course, she is, baby. But trust me, she doesn't look nearly as hot as you do.

SWEETHEART: Then why don't you prove it? *(Sweetheart playfully slaps him in the face, causing Strastopheles to get turned on and kiss her violently.)*

METHOS: Seriously, why don't you two get a room already?

STRASTOPHELES: Says the man who said I'd get a whipping earlier?

METHOS: Because he was catcalling when he's got a bunny on the side?

STRASTOPHELES: She's not a bunny you idiot!

SWEETHEART: Excuse me, that's my information to share.

STRASTOPHELES: Do you want a smack in the mouth?

METHOS: Do you want an ass-whooping?

STRASTOPHELES: Well, you're the one asking for it you little- *(Fed up, Sweetheart intervenes and slaps Strastopheles in the face.)*

SWEETHEART: You want another? I can do this all day. *(Strastopheles looks at her, then backs away.)* But anyways, you were saying? Before you idiots got carried away again?

STRASTOPHELES: Right; first of all, I'm not an idiot. Secondly, I think this girl is the one who will be able to force Friedrich out of his abilities-

METHOS: -and drag him to HELL as Dad did with Faust!

STRASTOPHELES: Okay; first of all, we are not Dad. Secondly, Faust was a complete idiot, and he had it coming. Friedrich's not an idiot, but he is a complete and utter wuss. *(Everyone in the room looks at him, not believing his audacity)* There, I said it.

METHOS: You had to say it, now you're gonna get us fired. *(Strastopheles hits him on the back of the head)* Ow!

SWEETHEART: I couldn't have said it better myself. But in all seriousness, let's talk about the deal with this girl and what we know about her *(Strastopheles sits down and takes the floor. He clears his throat.)*

STRASTOPHELES: Here's what I learned so far. First of all, her name is Annalise, she went to Cal State Fullerton* and has a degree in Studio Art. Secondly, it's a real shame she's not using it. *(Same note as Scene 4)*

METHOS: Wait wait wait, *(beat)* I thought she said she was a theater major.

STRASTOPHELES: No way, she hates theater kids.

SWEETHEART: How do you even know any of this? You've barely spoken to her.

BLANK CANVAS: INSPIRED BY A DREAM

STRASTOPHELES: Lucifer keeps files and tabs on everyone the same way God does up in Heaven. Once he's given up on someone he sends the files our way.

SWEETHEART: So technically this girl's going to Hell like Friedrich is?

STRASTOPHELES: *(pulling out a smartphone)* No, I tried a little something called Google. Much easier than bribing angels for files.

METHOS: That's cheating.

STRASTOPHELES: Whatever. Anyways, Annalise is a talented artist herself, she's just so invested in bringing the Renaissance back that her style's become more and more derivative.

METHOS: In other words, she's the perfect candidate to put to the test with Friedrich over the curse. If you have the two of them face each other, they're both the selfish, arrogant pricks the world has come to know.

SWEETHEART: *(brandishing her beloved knife)* You know, you could get rid of the curse by just killing both of them.

METHOS: Annalise may be too blind and narcissistic to see it, but if she finds out who he truly is and proves it to Lucifer, he's done for-

SWEETHEART: -because you stabbed him in the heart.

STRASTOPHELES: No, because Annalise can see through his façade! And when she does, she'll inherit his curse and finally kill him.

SWEETHEART: -because he was stabbed in the heart.

STRASTOPHELES: *(taking her knife)* Sweetheart, you can't solve every problem with a knife.

SWEETHEART: You can't solve every problem with a knife - TRY ME! The only way I can get someone to agree with me is if I slice their hand off.

STRASTOPHELES: Don't go around preaching your sadist principles on me, woman. *(Glass breaks from the other room.)*

SWEETHEART: Shhhh! Did you hear that?

STRASTOPHELES: Relax guys, it was probably just a champagne flute or-

METHOS: That sounded more like a box of flutes or a-

STRASTOPHELES: Glass case?

METHOS: Ohhhhh, shit, we need to go!

STRASTOPHELES: Baby, stand still and don't make a sound
(Strastopheles grabs onto Sweetheart's breast, and she brandishes her knife in response.)

SWEETHEART: Don't touch me there, you pervert!

METHOS: She's right, you know.

BLANK CANVAS: INSPIRED BY A DREAM

STRASTOPHELES: Shut up, Methos!

SWEETHEART: Oh, how the tables have turned. (*Strastopheles and Methos dash out. Sweetheart stands completely still. Zach enters and is on his phone, trying to get a hold of Annalise.*)

ZACH: Hey Annalise, it's Zach. I left a few voicemails. I was wondering where you are in the museum; this place is a fucking maze. I don't remember the MOCA having this many halls for Christ's sake. I mean they were closed for a few weeks for renovation but they don't add this much in such a short amount of time- (*dial tone*) Goddammit!
(*Blackout.*)

SCENE 7

Annalise walks into the second part of the exhibit. Two more paintings are in the next room, except it is now one of Angeline, a young woman in elegant vintage clothes and EDDIE, a young man dressed as an army soldier around WWII. Underneath their portraits is an open book in a glass case, which also includes a dog tag.

ANNALISE: (*imitating Fabio's Spanish accent*) "You CAN help us! You can talk to the ART!" (*Back to her normal voice*) Seriously, what the hell is this? Zach should've told me this was an interactive art show! No wonder it's so expensive! Freddie probably hired actors to stand behind all these frames and just pass it off as "art." Wait, they all appeared normal, then started talking, but I was the only one who heard it. Why would an interactive exhibit cater to one person, or make you imagine it? Or maybe they laced my champagne with something.... I've been on drugs before, but not like this.....

EDDIE: You're not on drugs, I can tell you that right now.

ANNALISE: You have GOT to be kidding me!

EDDIE: Maybe she didn't hear me.

ANNALISE: Oh, I heard you alright!

EDDIE: Jesus, no need to be rude about it.

ANGELINE: Oh hush, Eddie. Don't mind him, Annalise, Eddie's just a wee bit short with others. Don't take it personally.

ANNALISE: Slow down, and how do you know my name?

EDDIE: Oh, Angeline knows everything. (*Angeline glares at Eddie.*)

BLANK CANVAS: INSPIRED BY A DREAM

ANGELINE: Not everything, but I must say that I see a great deal of myself in you.

ANNALISE: *(laughing)* You're a painting, you're one to talk.

ANGELINE: Yes, but I wasn't always hung up on walls for the world to see. Annalise, you and me, we have more in common than you realize.

ANNALISE: Were you ever told you weren't an original one second and then the next be told you're special in some way?

ANGELINE: I can't say that I have.

ANNALISE: Ha! If you're going to tell me that, that's one way to fuck up one's self-esteem. I'm outta here.

ANGELINE: WAIT! I can talk to paintings too!

ANNALISE: Well, of course, you're in one!

ANGELINE: Well sure, but I mean I can talk to them the way you're talking to me!

ANNALISE: What the hell does that mean? No one can!

EDDIE: Actually, she can. I saw it myself. Shortly after I was cursed.

ANNALISE: Were you an artist too?

ANGELINE: No, but I was a writer. Aspiring.

ANNALISE: But how could you do this? Wouldn't it make sense for an artist to be able to talk to art?

ANGELINE: Art comes in many forms. Not just the kinds you see in art museums.

ANNALISE: Yeah... it is true. Art does come in different forms. But Angeline, how did you learn you had this power? To speak to art? Wait, was it Freddie's paintings?

EDDIE: Freddie? That's not even his real name.

ANGELINE: I learned I had it before I got cursed. You see, I met Friedrich one day when I was having car trouble on my way back to Oxford one day. He helped me fix the engine, and as a thank you I took him back for a drink. He told me he was an artist, and I told him I was hoping to become a writer. Shortly after that, one thing led to another and I became his muse and mistress.

ANNALISE: Mistress.... he was married???

ANGELINE: No, I was, engaged actually.

EDDIE: I'd rather not talk about that part.

ANNALISE: You two were... wow, this is awkward.

BLANK CANVAS: INSPIRED BY A DREAM

EDDIE: Hey, I was only in it for the money at the time. No hard feelings anymore.

ANGELINE: Of course not, Eddie. But anyways, most days I'd read Oscar Wilde's poetry to Friedrich, and he really embraced the writing in his painting, especially with *Poems In Prose*. It was a beautiful and romantic summer. But everything changed when I met Ernest.

ANNALISE: The old man in the other room? His uncle?

ANGELINE: Yes, Friedrich showed me his first painting of his uncle, and after he left the room the painting of the old man spoke to me. I thought it was just a dream, and I refused to acknowledge it at first.

ANNALISE: Okay....

EDDIE: Then I found out about the affair when I came back to town to visit Angeline, and boy was I furious. I stormed up to the studio and then I saw Friedrich. I asked him if he was going to kill me, but he said no, then I blacked out. When I woke up, here I was behind the frame.

ANGELINE: I came back to the studio, then realized that Friedrich wasn't there. Instead, I found Eddie in the painting and when he spoke to me, I knew. When Friedrich came out to confront me, I realized he was a real-life version of Dorian Gray.

ANNALISE: Who's Dorian Gray?

ANGELINE: You don't know the story?

EDDIE: Not everyone reads Oscar Wilde, Angeline.

ANGELINE: Don't I know it. So, Dorian Gray was a very handsome yet narcissistic young aristocrat who wanted all the love and beauty in the world. He had a portrait painted of himself, but he made a deal to keep his own youth and beauty while the portrait aged with every sin he committed over his lifetime. He ended up becoming so hedonistic he killed himself, and the withered portrait became young again as he died.

EDDIE: That's always a nice story when you tell it.

ANNALISE: So.... Friedrich is Dorian Gray?

ANGELINE: He's under a similar curse. He hasn't aged one bit. I found out through the book that if someone can speak to his art they can lift it. The instructions for it are in that glass case.

ANNALISE: What case? (*Angeline points to the glass case underneath her portrait, as Annalise gets closer, she notices a familiar title.*)

ANNALISE: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde- that's it! The way to reverse the curse is in here!

BLANK CANVAS: INSPIRED BY A DREAM

ANGELINE: Please take it. The dog tag too.

ANNALISE: Why the dog tag?

EDDIE: It was my last one before I got cursed. Might as well take it for luck.

ANGELINE: You'll find it in the book. Also if you lift this curse, you'll be able to set us free.

ANNALISE: You got my word.... here goes nothing. *(Annalise smashes the glass case, grabs the book, and puts on the dog tag. The minute she hits the glass, the alarm sounds, and she dashes off. As she leaves, Strastopheles and Methos enter. They notice the broken case and the missing objects.)*

METHOS: Oh no....

STRASTOPHELES: She grabbed the book and the necklace.

METHOS: It's called a dog tag you idiot!

STRASTOPHELES: First of all, I'm not an idiot-

METHOS: And secondly, I hate it when you prove points like that.

STRASTOPHELES: What do we do now??

METHOS: We need to tell Friedrich!

STRASTOPHELES: Where is he?

METHOS: He's in the studio with the investor! Let's go!

STRASTOPHELES: We can't lose our jobs after a hundred years! We've already gotten farther than Dad for once! *(he dashes out)*

METHOS: Well, you got me there, bro. *(METHOS exits. Blackout.)*

END OF ACT I

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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