

# WONDERFALLS

"Curious Cat"

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## TEASER

FADE IN:

1. INT. LECTURE HALL, GODKNOWSWHERE, NY - AFTERNOON 1

AARON's looking sharp in a suit behind a podium. Contrary to implications, hell has not frozen over. He's giving a lecture to a small audience that includes the Tyler family.

AARON

...though western religions tend to see God as an objective Truth, other cultures are more flexible in their definition of 'deity'...

SHARON shifts in her seat and puts her hand on the armrest, only to recoil as she finds JAYE already has her arm there.

JAYE

(under her breath)  
Find yourself a girlfriend to hold hands with at the movies.

Sharon gives Jaye a how-dare-you glare, which Jaye ignores.

AARON (O.S.)

...as Einstein described his theory of relativity, Bergson and others were exploring similar ideas in philosophy. Since their birth, these ideas have stood in awkward contrast to religion...

Jaye and Sharon's faces begin changing subtly; they're used to Aaron talking out of his ass, but this is different.

AARON

... But! As I explain in my paper 'Relativistic Monotheism: is God on the train or beside the tracks?' a relative god, or even a lack of god can be a deity---

If the sisters' expressions were heading south, Aaron's mention of his paper's title caused an avalanche.

SHARON

That sneaky little bastard!

For once in her life, Jaye seems completely lost for words.

CUT TO:

## 2. INT. LECTURE HALL LOBBY - LATER

2

AARON stands beside a middle-aged man with an identical side-part, greeting audience members as they leave. JAYE, SHARON, DARREN and KAREN approach.

DARREN  
You nailed it, son.

JAYE  
More like crucified it.

Aaron motions to the man beside him.

AARON  
This is my advisor, Professor Davidson.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON  
Mr. and Mrs. Tyler, it's a pleasure to advise your son. I barely have to do a thing!

SHARON  
(through her teeth)  
And neither does he.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON (CONT'D)  
His ideas are so progressive!

SHARON  
(hissed, to Jaye)  
Say something!

Jaye throws Sharon a clueless look, clearly faked.

AARON  
My sister Jaye here has given me a lot of food for thought, recently.

SHARON  
She's given him more than that.

A look of panic washes over Aaron's face.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON  
... What do you mean?

The panic is contagious. Now Jaye's caught it too, and is talking fast.

JAYE  
Oh, my sister must be referring to the moral support I've been giving

Aaron. This theology stuff can get heavy. And I didn't want him to do that soul-searching alone, y'know?

Aaron smugly winks at Sharon. She looks as though she's about to do some searching for Jaye and Aaron's souls---and rip them from their bodies.

CUT TO:

3. INT. SHARON'S CAR - AFTERNOON

3

SHARON is driving home a little too recklessly. JAYE sits shotgun, seemingly unaware, or at least not alarmed.

SHARON

Why did you put on that act?

JAYE

Don't we always pretend to like each other in public places?

SHARON

The paper, Jaye! You wrote it.

Something flashes across Jaye's face. Discomfort, maybe. She plucks a piece of gum from her mouth and flicks it out of the open window.

JAYE

How would you even *know* that?

SHARON

Because you gave it to mom to proofread when you were a junior!

Jaye finally looks at Sharon, eyebrows raised.

SHARON (CONT'D)

(awkwardly)

... and mom was busy with her book-release, so I read it.

Jaye takes this revelation in, then rolls her head toward the window again. Whatever.

JAYE

So? Let him have it. It's not like I was using it for anything.

SHARON

But you could! You could publish it! You could get a better job!

JAYE

I'm fine!

Sharon throws up her hands, then grips the wheel tighter.

SHARON

Well I'm glad. I'm glad you're fine as a lazy, goalless cheater.

JAYE

How am I a cheater?

SHARON

Aaron is cheating, and you are allowing him to. *Legally*, that makes you his accomplice.

(beat)

If I'd used your paper to pass the Bar, you'd have outed me!

JAYE

Do you want my college portfolio? You can have it...

SHARON

I want you to take a vested interest in your own life, Jaye!

Jaye says nothing, just glowers at the rear-view mirror.

CUT TO:

4. INT. TYLER KITCHEN - DINNERTIME

4

THE TYLERS have gathered for a celebratory meal.

KAREN

So, Aaron, what's next? A book?

AARON

(chuckling)

Um... No. Probably not a book.

DARREN

If you take after your mother, your first book will be a smash, and you can take care of us when we retire!

SHARON

As if you have no other children capable of that.

KAREN

Don't be surly, sweetheart. We know you're successful. But tonight is about Aaron.

Sharon smiles crookedly, reaching for another cob of corn.

SHARON

And about Jaye. Don't forget.

JAYE

... me?

Jaye's eyes dart to Sharon. She looks incredibly pleased with herself.

KAREN

Your sister and I were talking this afternoon, dear. We agreed that your recent ... *antics*... might stem from a lack of intellectual stimulation. You used to have good ideas too. You were as sharp as your brother.

Jaye's gaze moves to Aaron. He smiles with his mouth full.

KAREN (CONT'D)

So we spoke with your father, and enrolled you--

Karen pulls a brochure from her lap and slides it across the table. Jaye's eyes widen in horror.

KAREN

--in Niagara Community College's continuing education classes. I think it'll be the perfect outlet for your stifled creativity.

JAYE

My creativity is not stifled. It's very free! In fact my brain is verifiably stormed.

Sharon tents her fingers keenly. Jaye sees it.

JAYE (CONT'D)

You treacherous, slimy, insipid--- You probably think this will make me admit that Aaron's paper is---

Aaron chokes on his peas. Sharon simply lifts an eyebrow.

JAYE (CONT'D)  
(recovering)  
... is way better than anything I  
could ever hope to come up with.

Jaye flees to the pantry, grabbing a Glacial Grains™ cereal box with a POLAR BEAR on it. As she pours a bowl, the bear whispers:

POLAR BEAR  
*Hit the books. Find the answers!*

Jaye shoves the box into the pantry and shuts it harder than she probably needed to, leaning back against it.

JAYE  
Shouldn't it be my choice whether  
I want to hit the books again?

SHARON  
It is. Just like it's my choice  
what I say at this dinner table.

JAYE  
Do you normally win court cases by  
coercion?

KAREN  
Girls, what is going on?

SHARON  
Just say it, Jaye!

Jaye hesitates, pouring milk into her cereal. It crackles, awkwardly loud in the silence.

JAYE  
I... I'll go to community college.

Sharon puts her face in her hands. Aaron takes an indulgent bite of corn. After a second, Darren shrugs; 'who knows?'

CUT TO BLACK

END TEASER

## ACT ONE

1. INT. NIAGARA COMMUNITY COLLEGE HALLWAY - EVENING 1

JAYE walks in a haze, messenger bag slung over one shoulder, class schedule in hand. We see a guy with shaggy hair and a plaid flannel shirt, then a woman in her forties with her car keys in her mouth and a screeching baby in tow. Jaye winces. Out of nowhere, somebody tugs on her bag.

VOICE (O.S.)

Excuse me! Hi. Excuse me?

Jaye turns, yanking her bag from the grasp of a small asian GIRL. The girl hugs her books, adjusting teal plastic glasses on her nose. Her backpack appears to have ears that stick up over each of her shoulders.

JAYE

What.

GIRL

I'm looking for 'Fundamentals of Anatomy' class. You can point the direction, maybe?

The girl's English is passable, but not great. Jaye looks at her own schedule. We notice the top line reads: 'Fundamentals of Anatomy - Professor McNeal - Rm. 245'.

JAYE

Can't help you.

GIRL

Oh, okay sorry!

As the girl runs off (in the wrong direction, no less), the EARED BACKPACK blinks and yells back at Jaye:

EARED BACKPACK

Girl's got craft. Make her fold.

Those are among the stranger instructions she's received; she chases after the backpack purely out of curiosity.

JAYE

Hey, kid, wait!

The girl spins around again.

JAYE (CONT'D)

I lied. I'm actually headed the same place. I think it's this way.

The girl raises an eyebrow, but walks with Jaye.

GIRL  
That's a silly thing to lie about.

JAYE  
Yeah? Well I have a thing about helping people. Call it a phobia.

GIRL  
(grinning)  
You don't want people to think you are good samaritan?

JAYE  
Shouldn't you mean samurai?

Another insult, but the girl just laughs.

GIRL  
My english is not so good, yes. Mama says I should try to practice more in classes so I sound better for college interviews.

JAYE  
College? This is a college.  
(beat)  
How old are you anyway?

GIRL  
17 in one month! This fall I will be a senior in high school.

JAYE  
(muttered)  
High school. Brilliant.

GIRL  
I take classes here to make my transcript competitive.  
(beat)  
How old are you?

Something fractures in Jaye's face---it was probably pride.

JAYE  
I...I'm ageless, actually. I mean, I stopped counting. Helps me stay on my dad's health insurance plan.

Giggles. The girl finds her funny. This was not the plan.

GIRL

So why are you taking anatomy? Do you want to study medicine too?

JAYE

Medicine? No... I think my parents were hoping I would stick knives in something other than my brother and sister in the evenings.

The girl laughs until she's pink-cheeked. This was not the plan. And yet, somehow, it's strangely refreshing.

GIRL

Maybe we can be lab partners!

Ok, not that refreshing.

JAYE

I prefer to work independently.

EARED BACKPACK

Make her fold, make her fold!

Fold what? Jaye looks back at the pack, and then notices '245' on the door they just passed. She grabs her little companion by the shoulder and turns her.

JAYE

Hey, here we are!

Jaye opens the door and lets the girl enter first.

2. INT. COLLEGE ANATOMY CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

2

The door hasn't even closed when the Professor speaks:

PROFESSOR MCNEAL

You must be Jaye and Michi! The last bench at the back is all yours. Take a seat.

So much for working independently. Jaye follows Michi to the empty bench, slumping into her seat.

MICHI

(wryly)

Thanks for being my samurai.

JAYE

Uh... Yeah. You're welcome.

CUT TO:

## 3. INT. COLLEGE ANATOMY CLASSROOM - LATER

3

PROFESSOR MCNEAL has been giving the introductory lecture to 'Fundamentals of Anatomy' for the last several eons.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
 ... The fields of 'anatomy' and  
 'physiology' are not one in the  
 same. Anatomy is concerned with  
naming of parts of the body---

JAYE surveys her classmates. The grunge kid from the hallway is here. His backpack is plaid too. Jaye's eyes jump back to Michi's backpack.

JAYE  
 (whispering)  
 Hey, Michi. Can you, uh, turn that  
 thing so it's not looking at me?

Michi kindly obliges, turning it to face her instead.

MICHI  
 Does it remind you of the cats?

JAYE  
 ... 'the cats'?

As it slowly dawns on Jaye just what she's signed up for, we focus on Professor McNeal again.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
 ... Since many human glands have  
 no analogue in frogs, cats are  
 often dissected in advanced  
 studies of anatomy. Each pair of  
 you will receive one cadaver---

JAYE  
 (interrupting)  
 What if we're not okay with being  
 around---I mean, dissecting cats?

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
 The syllabus made it clear that  
 dissection is an integral part of  
 the class. If you have a religious  
 reason---

JAYE  
 No! No religious reason. I mean, I  
 don't think it's a religious  
 reason.

(beat)

I just generally try to avoid  
cutting things that might talk.

The classroom erupts in giggles. Professor McNeal even  
cracks a smile; he's not new to these sorts of complaints.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
I assure you that there will be no  
talking from these cadavers. They  
are quite dead.

JAYE  
Believe me sir, I want to find  
that reassuring... but I don't.

The professor raises an eyebrow, stil not vexed.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
Since you seem so comfortable in  
the spotlight, Jaye maybe you can  
tell me the classification of the  
domestic cat? Start with the  
Kingdom. That should be easy.

JAYE  
Um. The... Animal... Kingdom?

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
Good. Take a stab at the Phylum?

Jaye hasn't had Biology since the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. She looks for  
a clock, hoping to be saved by the bell, and---good god,  
the clock is *cat-shaped*. Like, *Felix* the cat-shaped. Its  
eyes and tail move with the seconds.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
Should I see if anyone else knows?

As Jaye blears at the clock, its eyes rest on her, too.

CAT CLOCK  
*Chordata.*

JAYE  
No no no no. Not here.

CAT CLOCK  
*Chordata. Say it.*

JAYE  
Chordata!

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
Great! How about Class and Order?

CAT CLOCK  
Mammalia. Carnivora.

JAYE  
Mammalia, and....  
(gulping)  
... Carnivora.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
Very good, very good. Family?

CAT CLOCK  
Felidae.

JAYE  
(hissed, to clock)  
I bet you're having a field day.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
Sorry? I didn't catch that one.

JAYE  
Felidae?

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
And, finally, genus and species?

CAT CLOCK  
Felis Catus!

JAYE  
(loathingly)  
Felis Catus.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
What's your background, Jaye?

JAYE  
Um.... I'm a shop clerk.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
You must read behind the counter!

JAYE  
Oh, all the time.

CAT CLOCK  
Hit the books, find the answers!

Jaye glares up at the clock.

CUT TO:

## 4. INT. WONDERFALLS - DAY

4

JAYE is re-stocking a shelf of moose stuffed-animals. AARON enters carrying an unwieldy crate filled with notebooks.

JAYE

(eyeing the notebooks)

I'm taking an anatomy class at a community college, not trying to rewrite *Origin of the Species*.

AARON

Still, you have to take notes, and they were just collecting dust---

JAYE

Right, I forgot, you don't actually do any of your own work.

Jaye picks up her box of left-over stuffed animals and walks toward the back room. Aaron follows with the crate.

AARON

I'm just trying to be helpful.

JAYE

Or trying to compensate for a gnawing sense of guilt?

(beat)

Do you usually feel guilt? Should I be concerned about brain trauma?

In the back room, Jaye drops her box and spins to face Aaron. He stops suddenly to avoid smashing into her.

AARON

Look, I wanted to apologize. What I did was total crap. But---

JAYE

I worked hard on that paper!

AARON

And then walked away from it! Jaye, I wanted to cite it, but I couldn't. What would I put in the footnote? "Baby sis' Philosophy 101 Assignment 3, Tyler Living-room Library, 2004"?

JAYE

You could have at least asked me before lifting the whole thing!

AARON

And if I had asked you, you  
would've given it to me?

JAYE

Pft. No.

AARON

I was on a really tight deadline  
and I had nothing, Jaye.  
Absolutely nothing!---

JAYE

That sounds like enough to write a  
solid dissertation on Nietzsche.

AARON

(talking over her)  
---And then here you are, and  
either you're borderline  
schizophrenic or you know a hell  
of a lot more about this stuff  
than I do, and I just thought---

JAYE

It would more fruitful to cheat.

Something about the bluntness of this statement causes  
both Aaron and Jaye to pause, and linger for a moment in  
strained silence.

AARON

(quietly)  
Thank you. For not outing me. I  
don't really get why you're not  
outing me, given how angry you  
seem to be, but---

JAYE

Don't thank me. I still can.

AARON

Maybe I can convince you not to?

Aaron holds out the crate of notebooks again, hopefully.

JAYE

Cheating and bribery. Classy.

A STUFFED MOOSE in Jaye's box suddenly tilts its head.

STUFFED MOOSE

Hit the books! Hit the books!

Jaye hisses at the moose, then grabs the crate from Aaron, plopping it down on the table and examining its contents.

AARON

You evil-eyed that moose just now.  
The same way you eyed the cow...  
Did it tell you to take the crate?

Jaye finds Jedi scribblings in one of the notebooks.

JAYE

Is this your idea of theology? No  
wonder you think I can hear the  
cow creamer.

Aaron grabs the notebook and stashes it in his coat. Jaye tries to return to work. Aaron blocks her exit.

AARON

Whatever your deal with the  
animals is, at least there aren't  
any in class. That's good, right?

Jaye opens and closes her mouth silently, and swallows, before forcing a grin across her face.

JAYE

Right! It's great.

Now Aaron's got that private-eye aura again. It's a shame he can't use that trick to do some actual research.

AARON

There are animals, aren't there.

JAYE

I'm in an anatomy class. Dicing  
animals is par for the course.

AARON

I don't mean actual animals. I  
mean the knick-knacks. The  
tchotchkes. They followed you to  
school--like Mary's little lamb.

JAYE

(rolling her eyes)  
Oh, poetic.

AARON

(suddenly looming)  
Why don't you call me out, Jaye?  
You're getting nothing from this.  
Why pick the morally grey road?

JAYE  
It was the road less traveled?

AARON  
Unless you were already on that  
road...

Jaye is still trying to squeeze past Aaron, to no avail.

JAYE  
What are you on? I can tell you  
one thing---it's not a road.

AARON  
These animals randomly told you  
how to reunite Yvette with her  
family? What other ideas have they  
given you?  
(beat)  
Did they give you the idea for  
your philosophy paper?

JAYE  
What? ... No!

AARON  
How many of your ideas are  
actually yours at all?

Jaye blinks. Brain trauma is the only explanation for this.

AARON  
And if they were never yours to  
begin with, then either I'm not  
cheating at all, or you're  
cheating worse than I am!

With his detective monologue concluded, Aaron turns on his  
heels, triumphantly, and whisks out of the back room.

JAYE  
(yelling after him)  
Is that why you came here? You  
should ask Sharon how to blackmail  
people properly!

AARON  
Have fun in class!

CUT TO:

5. INT. COLLEGE ANATOMY CLASSROOM - EVENING

5

As Jaye enters, PROFESSOR MCNEAL is talking with a short

and conservatively-dressed Japanese woman. They're not exactly arguing, but the woman is clearly very adamant about something. We hear, vaguely, over student chatter:

PROFESSOR MCNEAL

Mrs. Kodama, I promise you this course covers all basic anatomy concepts. But Michi will, if she's accepted into pre-med---

MRS KODAMA

*When she is accepted!*

PROFESSOR MCNEAL

---she will still have to take a more-advanced course, regardless.

Neglected nearby, a girl of about ten draws set of kawaii eyes on the chalkboard. She has a Hello Kitty™ backpack.

As Jaye sits down at the lab bench, MICHU is folding notebook paper diagonally in half and ripping off the extra, turning each page into a square.

JAYE

What's your mom doing here?

MICHU

She talks to professor about the syllabus. She and my father say it is not rigorous enough.

JAYE

What, do they think we should be dissecting cows?

MICHU laughs. From the front of the classroom, we can suddenly hear Michi's mother again.

MRS KODAMA

Toshiko! Leave those alone. It's not respectful.

The little girl had been examining a tray of surgical instruments on the professor's desk. She looks them over again before moving away from the desk and lurking by the classroom door, silently begging to leave.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL

I'd be more worried about safety. That scalpel is the real deal.

Michi quietly beckons the younger girl over. While we were watching the front of the classroom, Michi has managed to

fold an angelfish out of a square of notebook paper. This isn't some 'fly straight to the trash can' paper airplane. It's artfully made, with the ruled lines forming a lovely pattern on the fins. She hands it to Toshiko. The little girl's eyes glow like the ones she drew on the chalkboard.

MICHI

For your aquarium.

TOSHIKO

I love it! It's my new favorite.

MICHI

(laughing)

Every new one is your new favorite. Go tell mama you need to go home right now and put him in some water before he drowns.

TOSHIKO

You can't *drown* in air.

MICHI

(poking Toshiko's cheek)

The fish tell each other that we can't drown in water.

TOSHIKO

Fish can't talk, either!

JAYE

That girl's got sense.

NOTEBOOK ANGELFISH

Girl's got craft.

JAYE

(to Toshiko, while  
glaring at the fish)

Your sister's right though. You should get that fish out of here.

Toshiko turns to leave, but then turns back.

TOSHIKO

When you get home will you help me make more cheetahs for my zoo?

MICHI

Maybe, Toshi. It depends on how much homework I have.

TOSHIKO

Please?

MRS KODAMA  
Toshi! Your sister has class now!

MICHI  
I said maybe!

Toshiko pouts, then quietly follows her mother from the classroom. As she leaves, Professor McNeal begins to weave through the lab benches with a cart, delivering a large tray covered with aluminum foil to every pair of students.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
Here they are, folks!

Some students start trying to unwrap the trays as soon as they get them, while others move as far away as possible.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
Freddie, put those tweezers down until I tell you what to tweeze.

A boy in the other corner stops plucking his dead cat's whiskers, and drops his tweezers back on the tray.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
If one of you is more comfortable with dissection and your partner wishes to take notes, that's ok. Just remember, your partner won't be available during the midterm, so make sure both of you acquire the knowledge.

CAT CLOCK  
Hit the books, find the answers.

JAYE  
The answers aren't in the books. They're in a cat.

CAT CLOCK  
Hit the books.

JAYE  
Ugh. *Whatever.*

CUT TO BLACK

END ACT ONE

## ACT TWO

1. INT. WONDERFALLS - MORNING

1

Jaye has just finished ringing up a wide-eyed housewife when we hear the store bells jingle. SHARON walks in. She browses idly, making Jaye wait.

JAYE  
(loudly)  
Well, hello, blackmailer. Brought  
any new mail today, blackmailer?

Sharon reaches the counter and shoves a lidded styrofoam cup at Jaye, as well as a small paper sack. Jaye peers into the sack, as though checking for a booby trap.

JAYE  
You never bring me donuts.

Jaye sniffs the coffee, skeptical. Sharon rolls her eyes.

SHARON  
I didn't think you'd actually say  
yes to this whole college thing.

JAYE  
Why? I'm taking a 'vested interest  
in my future.'

SHARON  
Any normal person would've taken  
credit for the paper.  
(beat)  
(desperately)  
Will you just explain to me why  
you're protecting him?

JAYE  
You heard Dad when he sprung me  
from jail; 'the first principle is  
always family.'

SHARON  
Jaye, This is not what he meant by  
that... This is what a *mob boss*  
means by that.

JAYE  
So, here's what I don't get...

Jaye finally takes a small sip of the coffee and sits it down, leaning forward on her elbows.

JAYE (CONT'D)

If you're so concerned with outing Aaron, why aren't you doing it? It'd be easy. And if I deny it, you probably have my original paper sitting in a folder of evidence you collect for exactly these occasions. What's to lose?

SHARON

What's to gain?

JAYE

I don't know. Revenge? Delight?

SHARON

And both of you sitting around blaming me for everything!

JAYE

We do that anyway.

SHARON

(earnestly)

I don't want to see Aaron fail.

(bluntly)

I want you to want to see him fail.

Sharon whirls around and *click-clacks* her way out of the store. Jaye watches her leave.

CUT TO:

2. INT. ANATOMY CLASSROOM - EVENING

2

JAYE and MICHI are taking a quiz on the endocrine system. The CAT CLOCK's tail swings back and forth as the seconds tick past in silence. We see Jaye's quiz: a complicated diagram with blank lines where the labels belong. Most are still blank. She steals a glance at Michi, who is furiously scribbling labels, then sighs and returns to her own quiz.

CAT CLOCK

Hit the books; find the answers.

JAYE

(muttered)

Yeah, it's a little late for that.

Jaye absently traces the outline of a gland with her pen.

CAT CLOCK

Pituitary.

JAYE  
 (under her breath)  
 I don't need your pity, or  
 whatever the hell you just said.

CAT CLOCK  
 Pituitary.

Jaye looks at the clock, then at her paper. Scowling, she writes the answer, then moves the pen to the next line.

CAT CLOCK  
 Pinneal Body.

Jaye writes that too, but then stops and puts her pen down.

CAT CLOCK  
 Hypothalamus.

JAYE  
 No! I'll just fail the damn thing.

MICHI  
 Jaye?

Michi is done with her quiz and is halfway through folding an origami cat. Her fingers have paused mid-fold.

JAYE  
 Sorry.

Michi grins and goes back to folding. Jaye sighs, then picks up her pen and writes 'Hypothalamus'.

CAT CLOCK  
 Hit the books.

JAYE  
 Why bother? With you around I  
 don't even need to.

CUT TO:

3. INT. ANATOMY CLASSROOM - EVENING

3

JAYE and MICHI are in the midst of dissecting their cat. Michi appears tired, distracted. She reaches in with her scalpel and forceps and removes a random piece of cat.

JAYE  
 (wincing)  
 I don't think that was the spleen.

Michi looks at her acquisition and sighs, dropping it onto

the tray. She pokes around inside the animal, trying again for the spleen, but her movements seem atypically clumsy, and reckless. Ultimately, she slices her latex glove open instead. Jaye intervenes.

JAYE

How about I use the pointy things.

MICHI

No that's okay. I'm fine.

JAYE

I am not pulling your fingers out of this thing when you lose them.

Michi settles down on the stool, defeated. She lets her surgical instruments clatter upon the tray.

JAYE

Too many hours moonlighting as a paper star?

MICHI

(laughing)

No, I wish. I have many college essays to write. Mama says I must finish one each night this week.

JAYE

What happens if you just don't?

Michi comes out of her fog and blinks at Jaye.

MICHI

What do you mean? Mama and Papa---

JAYE

Oh please, you know the last time I did anything my Mom or Dad told me to do? Cause I sure don't. And I certainly get more sleep.

Michi begins folding a PAPER CRANE.

MICHI

And you work in knick-knack shop.

JAYE

(irritated)

If I didn't, there would be nobody to sell things to your relatives when they show up on busses with their cameras. I serve a valuable purpose to society!

MICHI

We all have a path in life.

JAYE

We have many paths! And we can follow whichever one we want.

MICHI

No; this path was set before me by all those who have invested in me! I am the one who has the gifts to go to medical school, and I must honor those gifts. Don't you have gifts to honor?

JAYE

Not beyond allowing people to return them for store credit within 30 days of purchase.

Michi laughs, sitting down the paper crane and frowning at it. It's rather sloppy compared to her usual work.

MICHI

A crane symbolizes peace. If I follow the right path, I follow the crane and will find peace. Do you have peace, Jaye?

The PAPER CRANE lifts its wings, examining itself. It seems far more impressed than Michi had been.

PAPER CRANE

(seductively)

Hey. Check out all the angles!

JAYE

Ew!

Michi looks up at Jaye in surprise.

MICHI

Don't you want peace?

PAPER CRANE

Hit the books, find the answers!

JAYE

Oh, boy, do I want peace. But I'm telling you, kid, it doesn't come from following a crane.

PAPER CRANE

Check out all the---

*SPLAT.* Jaye reaches over and squashes the paper crane beneath her palm. Michi's eyes widen. Before she can something, PROFESSOR MCNEAL arrives, holding their quizzes.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
 Excellent work, both of you! Let's aim for more of the same on the midterm, ok?

Professor McNeal hands Jaye her quiz. She got all the answers correct. She glances at Michi, to find the younger girl staring with blank misery at her own quiz.

JAYE  
 Time to follow a different crane?

Michi says nothing. She rapidly packs her things and bolts, leaving Jaye alone with the cat and the squashed crane.

CUT TO:

4. EXT. WONDERFALLS FOUNTAIN - DAY

4

JAYE  
 I can't believe your parents freaked out because you missed two answers. Weren't there like, a million and a half questions?

MICHI  
 Papa say, if you make one mistake you are human; if you make two mistake you are careless.

JAYE  
 Or just more human than the rest of us. Isn't that a good thing?

Michi laughs and takes a bite of her sandwich, taking time to chew before she talks again.

MICHI  
 Well, I guess the *maneki neko* listened to you, since you did perfect!

JAYE  
 The what?

MICHI  
 The clock. In Japan we call these cats *maneki neko*, bringers of good fortune. I thought I saw you talk to it during the quiz... This

probably seems silly to you.

JAYE

(suddenly fascinated)

No! Well, clearly I wouldn't talk to a clock.

(beat)

But these *maneki neko*: do you have to ask them for luck, or do they just, you know, *give* it?

MICHI

I think they bring luck whether you ask or not.

JAYE

Do they bring other things? Like, advice? Or answers?

(beat)

Or psychological abuse?

MICHI

I don't know. In Japan some people believe all things have souls. All souls are different, right? So why not a *maneki neko* who gives advice? Or bad luck instead?

Jaye smiles too widely: a smile filled with dread.

JAYE

Yeah, sure. Why not?

CUT TO:

5. INT. AARON'S BEDROOM - DAY

5

AARON is lounging on his bed with a stack of risqué magazines (ignored) a scattering of books (opened to various pages) and the ceramic cow creamer (subject of intense scrutiny). Without warning, JAYE throws open the door. Aaron shoves the cow beneath a pillow and knocks the books off his bed. The magazines stay put.

AARON

Jesus! Have you heard of knocking?

JAYE

That would be playing fair.

AARON

Touché.

He flops back upon his bed, gazing idly at the ceiling.

AARON (CONT'D)

What do you want.

JAYE

... So, do you know anything about theology? Or is it all a hoax.

AARON

(indignant)

I do have a bachelor's and a master's, you know.

JAYE

Like that means anything.

AARON

Try me.

JAYE

What do you know about Japanese spiritual beliefs?

AARON

What, you mean like Shintoism?

JAYE

I have this classmate who says there are souls inside everything.

AARON

(grinning)

Like cow creamers.

(off Jaye's face)

Are you trying to tell me you've converted to Shintoism?

JAYE

If my choice is Shintoism or schizophrenia, I'll stick to the one that doesn't require institutionalization.

AARON

Well, you're in luck, because I actually happen to have a book on east-asian religion, right---

Aaron reaches over the side of his bed for a jettisoned book. He picks it up and smoothes some of the bent pages.

AARON (CONT'D)

---here.

JAYE

Planning to plagiarize it next?

AARON

(ignoring her)

It says, on page 267:

(clears throat)

"Shintoists worship spirits called *kami*. These spirits exist on the same plane as humans and are inextricable from them. Examples of *kami* include the qualities of wisdom and productivity, although these abstract concepts are often embodied in symbols or animals."

JAYE

Wisdom and productivity, eh?

AARON (CONT'D)

"Most *kami* have two sides: gentle and assertive, and every *kami*, despite being worshipped, is capable of acting immorally." This is good stuff, right here!

JAYE

Shocking. Maybe you should read more often. What do you have these books for? I thought you just gave your 'big lecture'.

AARON

(sheepishly)

Well yeah, but it went so well that my advisor wants me to write a follow-up article for this major theology journal.

JAYE

Good luck with that.

AARON

Maybe I should just tell him I lifted your paper.

JAYE

Oh god, please don't. Knowing my luck he'll ask me to write a paper for that journal.

AARON

Can you help me?

JAYE

Sorry. I think you've exhausted my undergraduate anthology of highbrow religious critiques.

AARON

No, I mean, maybe... maybe I could document your experiences. As a 'modern channeler of Shinto spirits' across a cultural divide.

JAYE

What? .... No! What journal would want that load of malarky?

AARON

No, really. This would be great!

Jaye rolls her eyes and turns to leave.

AARON

Come on, Jaye! Work with me here.

Jaye is already halfway down the stairs.

AARON

(yelling)

I'll make you co-author!

JAYE

That's a definite no!

CUT TO:

6. INT. VARIOUS COLLEGE CLASSROOMS - DAY

6

JAYE and MICHI are learning about the digestive system---or at least Michi is. All the different animal muses are heckling Jaye, and we get the sense that this has been going on for the entire lecture...

CAT CLOCK

Hit the books.

SQUASHED PAPER CRANE

Find the answers!

CAT CLOCK

Hit the books!

Enough. Jaye lurches out of her seat, startling everyone.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL

Jaye?

JAYE

I... I uh, I feel sick.

Jaye bolts for the exit, but catches the corner of Michi's spiral notebook in the process and sends her books crashing to the floor. Papers fly everywhere. Michi scrambles to pick up the mess. Professor McNeal rushes over to help.

MICHI

Oh no, please don't. I'm fine.

The professor continues to help Michi despite her protests, but then suddenly slows, holding up a xeroxed diagram with labels, highlighted in pink.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL

These are the answers to the midterm! How did you get these?

Gasps echo across the classroom. Michi goes white.

MICHI

I've never seen those before! I don't know how they got there!

PROFESSOR MCNEAL

Stay behind after class.

Professor McNeal stands up, dropping the paper back on Michi's pile, and returns to the front of the room. Jaye is still standing in the isle, frozen.

JAYE

(realizing)

*Hit the books, find the answers.*

Jaye turns to the clock, furious.

JAYE

Damn you!

CUT TO BLACK

END ACT TWO

## ACT THREE

1. INT. JAYE'S TRAILER - MORNING

1

JAYE washes dishes while AARON sprawls on the couch, contemplating the WAX LION.

AARON

So, these voices... sometimes they tell you to do immoral things?

JAYE

Yup. Go figure, right?

AARON

What happens if you don't listen?

Jaye puts some clean mugs away. She turns off the tap and hangs the dishtowel on its hook.

AARON

Talk to me, Jaye. What happens?

Jaye opens the refrigerator and hunts for a snack.

AARON

Jaye! Come on! Answer me!

JAYE

(munching)

---Sorry, what? I thought we were trying to figure out what happens when I don't listen.

AARON

To them, Jaye! Not to me!

JAYE

There's no difference.

A knock on the door keeps Aaron from protesting. Jaye opens it to find MICHI, distraught.

MICHI

The dean expelled me! Mom and Dad are so angry! I need your help!

JAYE

Um, I'm not exactly good at making parents less angry.

MICHI

But you are untrusting!

JAYE  
 (quickly)  
 I'm trusting! I'm very trusting!  
 (beat)  
 How does my being untrusting have  
 anything to do with your parents?

MICHI  
 To you, everyone is guilty until  
 proven innocent! You can find out  
 who really stole the test!

JAYE  
 Whoa whoa whoa. The test answers  
 fell out of your textbook, marked  
 with your highlighter. And you're  
 telling me you didn't steal them.

AARON (O.S.)  
 Is your class full of cheaters?

JAYE  
 Shut it, Aaron.  
 (to Michi)  
 Why would anyone frame you, Michi?  
 Do you even talk to anyone else in  
 class?

Aaron pulls himself up from the couch, only to lazily lean  
 upon the doorframe, leering over Jaye's shoulder.

AARON  
 Like a small ceramic cow, perhaps?

JAYE  
 Shut up, Aaron!  
 (to Michi)  
 Do you think there are more copies  
 of the test floating around?

MICHI  
 I don't know! Maybe! But if I  
 don't figure out who framed me,  
 then I can't go to med-school!

Jaye pauses, considering. The Wax Lion speaks from where it  
 dangles in Aaron's hand, over Jaye's head.

WAX LION  
 Check out all the angles.

JAYE  
 (looking up, startled)  
 Jesus! Would you get that thing

away from me?

AARON

Why? Voices from above unsettling?

MICHI (CONT'D)

Please, help me Jaye? I don't know who else to ask...

(risking a grin)

...and you're my samurai!

JAYE

Fine. Let's track down this sucker. You're going to Harvard.

Jaye grabs her car-keys off the counter. Aaron follows her from the trailer as she and Michi head to the car.

AARON

(quietly, to Jaye)

You must really hate this girl.

JAYE

What? ... No! I don't hate anyone.

AARON

You hate ivy leagues. Shouldn't you be telling her to celebrate?

JAYE

Aaron, there may be other copies of that test out there.

They get in the car. From the back seat, Aaron lurks over Jaye's shoulder again, still holding the Wax Lion.

AARON

So?

JAYE

So those answers could end up in my textbook next, and I will not be called 'cheater' by anyone!

CUT TO:

2. INT. THE BARREL - LUNCH

2

JAYE, MICHI, and AARON sit at a table, eating cheesy fries and mulling over a class roster Jaye created from memory. Michi folds her drink napkin into a seal, and is attempting to balance a coin on its nose, unsuccessfully. MAHANDRA comes to the table to refill the water glasses.

JAYE

(to the table)

So let's get some eyes on Cobain,  
and Mini-Sharon, and Mouthbreather  
II, and maybe they'll---

MAHANDRA

What are the three of you up to?

JAYE

Trying to catch a cheater.

Mahandra throws a covert glance toward Eric at the bar.

MAHANDRA

Like, a 'bangs the bellhop on her  
wedding night' cheater?

AARON

More like an 'unfairly obtains the  
answers to an anatomy exam' sort  
of cheater.

JAYE

Banging the bellhop could be  
construed as 'unfairly obtaining  
answers to an anatomy exam'...

(beat)

Y'think we can accuse Eric's wife?

MAHANDRA

Well, I'd start with the kids who  
don't seem like they'd need to  
cheat. They're the ones who'd  
think of it. It never occurs to  
the ones who actually need to.

JAYE

(glaring at Aaron)

I couldn't agree more.

MICHI

There is one boy. Sits in front?

JAYE

The 'can I take the formaldehyde  
home to do extra credit?' boy?

AARON

Somebody asked that?

MAHANDRA

Sounds like cheating might be the  
least of that boy's crimes.

MICHI

Ok so! We have some suspects!

AARON

But you're sorely lacking evidence.

JAYE

Yeah? Well, so is your thesis.

MICHI

Maybe the cheater still has the test? And my pink highlighter!

AARON

It would make sense. The prof wouldn't suspect anyone else.

JAYE

But that means we have to go through these kids' backpacks without them noticing.

(beat)

Does anybody else smell burning?

As if to answer, ERIC suddenly arrives at the table holding a bar rag over his nose and coughing.

ERIC

(apologetically)

New cook; set buffalo wings on fire.

AARON

It does say 'smoking hot wings' on the menu.

Smoke pours from the kitchen, as well as a few wheezing cooks. Jaye takes it all in, then turns back to the group.

JAYE

I have an idea.

CUT TO:

3. INT. ANATOMY CLASSROOM - EVENING

3

With Michi expelled, JAYE is alone with her cat. PROFESSOR MCNEAL paces, giving new dissection advice.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL

Once you remove the liver, you should note the small, bead-like

gall-bladder. You'll also have a better view of the colon...

Jaye picks up a bottle of isopropanol (rubbing alcohol) and quietly slides a Bunsen burner off a nearby shelf. As the class struggles to extract cat livers, Jaye ducks beneath her bench to hook the Bunsen burner to the gas valve and turn it on. Rising again, she douses her lab bench (and the cat) with liberal amounts of alcohol.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL (CONT'D)  
You'll note that the feline liver is comprised of six lobes, whereas the human liver only has four...

Jaye pulls out a lighter, holds it to the cat and flicks it. The lab bench spontaneously combusts. Jaye leaps away.

JAYE  
Oh my god!

Professor McNeal rushes toward Jaye's lab bench, while the rest of the students flee to the opposite side of the room. He rips off his lab coat and tries to smother the blaze.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
What the hell happened?

JAYE  
(feigned panic)  
I have no idea. I just had wiped off my bench because it was looking crusty, and then---

As the flames die down, Professor McNeal notices the bunsen burner and dives beneath the bench to turn off the gas.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
What was that doing on?!

Jaye shakes her head wildly: the picture of innocence.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
I keep telling Alex to make sure his O-chem students put away their equipment! We're lucky the whole room didn't explode! Are you OK?

Jaye nods quickly.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL (CONT'D)  
At least we managed to put out the blaze before---

The fire alarm begins to scream.

JAYE  
Oh, I am so sorry!

Professor McNeal sighs and turns to the rest of the class.

PROFESSOR MCNEAL  
Ok, everyone out! Let's go!

Jaye exits the class with the other students, only to lose herself in the mass exodus and double back.

CUT TO:

4. INT. ANATOMY CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS 4

JAYE darts from backpack to backpack, searching frantically for evidence. In one backpack she finds a highlighter. It's blue. Damn it. She unzips 'Cobain's plaid backpack, pauses, then reaches for a pair of tweezers from the nearest lab bench. She uses them to remove a pair of lace panties. Her face suggests that a cat liver would have been preferable.

CAT CLOCK  
Check out all the angles.

Jaye turns slowly to give the clock another glare.

JAYE  
You know how all these cats ended up cadavers?

CAT CLOCK  
Check out all the---

JAYE  
Curiosity.

Moving along. Here's 'Formaldehyde-Boy's backpack. She reaches in, shuffles through some papers, and pulls out what appears to be an embryonic chicken with flippers, stewing in a jar of preservatives.

CUT TO:

5. INT. THE BARREL - THE NEXT AFTERNOON, LATE 5

ERIC fetches JAYE and MICHI drinks at the bar. The younger girl sulks, running her fingers along the wood grain.

JAYE

---and I realize I've been in a room with a kid who is breeding an army of amphibious poultry.

ERIC

(smirking)

Sounds like a pretty useless army.

JAYE

Never underestimate the threat of a chick who can remain submerged longer than you can.

What does that even mean? Eric laughs and slides a beer across the bar to Jaye, then makes Michi a Shirley Temple.

JAYE

Are you sure you can't spike that? I mean, look at the girl.

ERIC

I'd better not.

Eric drops a maraschino cherry into Michi's drink, considers the misery on her face, and adds several more before passing it to her. Michi goes fishing for them with her straw. Eric turns back to Jaye.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Didn't catch your culprit, then?

JAYE

I look guiltier than half of them.

ERIC

(grinning)

Well, you did torch a lab bench, didn't you? And I never seem to fall for the innocent ones.

We can clearly see Jaye's brain and heart screech to a halt. Uh, that was direct. Eric waits for a reply, but before she can compose herself, MAHANDRA passes with a tray of salads, sees Michi, and stops.

MAHANDRA

Is she even old enough to sit at this bar?

Eric smirks and moves away to help another customer.

JAYE

If she gets booted from the bar

it'll be the least of her worries.

MAHANDRA  
Don't you have class in an hour?

JAYE  
(taking an enormous swig  
of her beer)  
Yup.

MAHANDRA  
So what are you doing here?

JAYE  
(distantly)  
Drowning in defeat.

MAHANDRA  
I just keep thinking... it seems  
like a kinda stupid plan, right?

JAYE  
(still unable to take  
her eyes off Eric)  
An unbelievably stupid plan.

Mahandra waves her free hand in Jaye's face, trying to  
bring her back to reality.

MAHANDRA  
No, Jaye, think about it. This  
culprit steals the test, plants a  
copy on Michi. Michi gets caught  
before the day of the test. What's  
the prof gonna do?

JAYE  
Um, expel Michi?

MAHANDRA  
And re-write the test. No prof in  
their right mind is gonna use the  
same test when copies might be  
floating around.

JAYE  
So, the person who framed Michi---

MAHANDRA  
--is kinda a dumbass.

JAYE  
Or isn't taking the test! Michi,  
what other classes were you in?

Michi opens her mouth to list them, but Jaye reaches into her backpack and pulls out paper and a pen.

JAYE

I want a list, with room numbers,  
professors---anyone you talked to!

Michi takes the pen and begins to scribble, hurriedly.

MAHANDRA

You can't just walk into the  
college and start an inquisition.

JAYE

Watch me.

CUT TO:

6. INT. COLLEGE HISTORY CLASS - AFTERNOON

6

We're clearly not in the anatomy lab. The walls are covered in maps (some still showing the USSR) and an OLD PROFESSOR displays transparencies on an old projector. It's a toss-up as to whether professor or projector will bite it first. JAYE sits in the back corner, analyzing the other students.

OLD PROFESSOR

We have a visitor today. This young woman asked if she could listen to the lecture, because she has a deep appreciation for the Nixon & Khrushchev kitchen debates. Isn't that right...?

Jaye slowly realizes that was probably a question for her.

JAYE

... yes! Kitchen debates are my absolute favorite. I have them every morning.

It's not entirely clear whether the professor heard her.

OLD PROFESSOR

What did you say your name was?

JAYE

Oh ... I didn't.

OLD PROFESSOR

Eh?

JAYE

(louder, while watching

the other students)  
Will there be a test on this?

CUT TO:

7. INT. VARIOUS COLLEGE CLASSROOMS - DAY 7

We follow Jaye through a handful of other classrooms. Close-ups of hands drawing lines between concepts in chalk. Close-ups of hands highlighting books and handouts. Close-up of Jaye's notebook, where she is keeping a tally of the number of pink highlighters. This is totally stupid.

CUT BACK TO:

8. INT. COLLEGE HISTORY CLASS - AFTERNOON 8

JAYE is more or less asleep in the back corner of the class while the other students pack up their belongings and file out. She snaps to attention and snatches her books, dashing for the exit.

CUT TO:

9. INT. COLLEGE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 9

JAYE finds herself walking alongside one of the girls who took notes with a pink highlighter. It's behind her ear.

JAYE  
Nice highlighter.

HIGHLIGHTER GIRL  
... Thanks?

JAYE  
Do you use that one a lot?

HIGHLIGHTER GIRL  
I just bought it last night.

JAYE  
Well. You'll probably need it,  
with the midterm coming up...

The highlighter girl wants this conversation to be over. Jaye couldn't agree more.

JAYE  
Hey. I just wanted to ask: do you  
have the answers to the midterm?  
(beat)  
I mean, like, a study guide! Or  
whatever the prof gave you. I'm

trying to get a better feel for  
the class.

Jaye watches for a change in the girl's expression, as if she's some kind of lie detector. What is she even looking for? She should've listened to Sharon and watched a few episodes of Law & Order. This is so, so stupid.

HIGHLIGHTER GIRL

Not much to get. He just talks.

The girl pulls a packet from her book and hands it to Jaye. It looks totally unhelpful--- both for passing a midterm and for solving crime. The girl abandons Jaye in the corridor, just as a pair of Michi's professors pass.

PROFESSOR X

It's really almost an epidemic.  
What is this: the fifth instance  
in the last half-year?

PROFESSOR Y

I keep telling Chaz to lock-up his  
materials. Leaving a test on your  
desk is just asking for it.

Jaye discreetly follows.

PROFESSOR X

We shouldn't have to, though.  
Particularly with students like  
Michi! She has so much potential.

PROFESSOR Y

Tell me about it. I just called  
the mother to explain that I could  
no longer write her daughter a  
recommendation letter in good  
conscience. She was quiet the  
whole time. It was like all the  
pride had been sucked out of her.

Jaye can't keep listening. She stops and looks down at the packet in her hands. After a second, she rips it in half.

CUT TO:

10. INT. ANATOMY CLASSROOM - EARLY EVENING

10

JAYE storms into the anatomy lab. It is prepped for this evening's class, but she is alone, save for the CAT CLOCK.

JAYE

So what's your plan this time?

The cat clock says nothing, just ticks.

JAYE (CONT'D)

Every time I listen to you, people  
end up scarred for life!

Nothing. Jaye picks up a scalpel from one of the trays.

JAYE (CONT'D)

Do you even understand what scars  
are? That lion cousin of yours  
with the dent in his face---does  
he feel that?

Tick-tock. That tail swings idly back and forth. This cat  
isn't feeling a thing. Jaye is slowly losing it.

JAYE (CONT'D)

Is whatever happens worth the  
pain? Sure, maybe Katya met the  
man of her dreams and Yvette got  
to stay with us, but who's to say  
that they wouldn't have led happy  
lives without all the devastation  
in the middle! They wouldn't even  
know what they were missing! How  
is that not better? Why do I have  
to choose whether that's better?

Tick-tock. *SLAM*. Jaye shoves a lab bench into the wall,  
climbing onto it and raising her scalpel to the clock.

JAYE

And you won't even let me choose!  
I didn't want to find the cheater!  
I did everything in my power not  
to, and somehow I still managed to  
'hit the books'!

Finally, the cat clock's eyes come to rest on Jaye.

CAT CLOCK

Make her fold!

JAYE

I'm not making anyone do anything!  
And you're not making me do  
anything! I want a choice!

CAT CLOCK

Make her fold!

JAYE  
I WANT A CHOICE.

CAT CLOCK  
Make her fold!

Jaye rips the clock off the wall and throws it to the floor. It continues to tick, face down, but something about the way the tail moves is a little off. Jaye jumps off the bench and stomps on it.

JAYE  
How's the floor look? Do you like  
checking out that angle? Do you?!

The door opens: it's the professor, and his face says he's suddenly seeing last night's lab fire in a whole new light.

CUT TO BLACK

END ACT THREE

## ACT FOUR

1. INT. DEAN'S OFFICE - EVENING

1

JAYE sits on a stiff chair, clutching textbooks in her lap. Michi's smashed paper crane peeks between pages of the anatomy book as a placeholder. The Dean, MR. MOSELY, analyzes Jaye from across a desk covered in clock gears.

MOSELY

Let me get this straight, you entered the classroom so that you could destroy a *clock* on the wall.

JAYE

In keeping with the vocabulary of the curriculum, I'd prefer to say it was 'exploratory dissection.'

MOSELY

Well, *I'd* prefer to say you smashed a piece of school property and spread its gears across a linoleum floor.

JAYE

It's hard to be methodical when the school only teaches us the anatomy of organic felines, and not their mechanical cousins. Don't you find that outdated?

Mosely stares at Jaye, entirely unsure how to react.

JAYE (CONT'D)

As a forward-thinking institution---

MOSELY

(recovering)

You're staring at a hefty fine, Ms. Tyler, and if you don't quit playing cute, I'll make sure 'trespassing' and 'vandalism' are added to your *colorful* record.

JAYE

A hefty fine for breaking a *clock*?

MOSELY

Brown may have the funding to withstand the desecration of its property by irreverent brats like

yourself, but public education definitely doesn't.

JAYE

(sheepish)

I guess now would be a bad time to mention that our edition of the course textbook says there are only three kingdoms of life, huh?

Before Mosley can react, SHARON enters, flustered as usual.

JAYE

Oh hi.

SHARON

(ignoring Jaye)

I'm so sorry about this Mr.---

(checking the nameplate)

---Mr. Mosely. I'm Jaye's sister... also a lawyer. That's probably more relevant.

(abruptly, to Jaye)

Do you have no shame? I just pulled you out of a Canadian prison like a *week* ago!

JAYE

Didn't we decide that was dad's doing?---I mean, ultimately?

SHARON

You know, one day none of us are going to show up to speak for you, and you're going to have a hell of a rude awakening, Jaye!

JAYE

(half-aside)

Given the amount of voices 'showing up to speak for me' lately, yours *probably* won't register as a loss. Just FYI.

SHARON

(to Mosley)

Can I have a moment with her?

Mosely hesitates, then nods. Sharon grabs Jaye's arm, but Jaye shakes out of her grip as they exit. She throws her books on the vacant receptionist's desk.

CUT TO:

## 2. INT. DEAN'S WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

2

SHARON

Jaye, *why* do you keep doing this?

JAYE

(hopefully)

Would I appeal to your lawyer senses if I said it was to champion justice and absolve the innocent?

Sharon shakes her head in disbelief and begins to pace.

JAYE

It's nothing! I already owe Dad like 4500 dollars and half of my soul, so what's another 150 bucks?

SHARON

It's not nothing, Jaye! It's everything!

JAYE

I know interdisciplinary curriculums are all the rage right now, but... Dramatic?

SHARON

Every opportunity that you've ever had you just sabotage like it's absolutely worthless!

JAYE

Forgive me for underestimating the value of a community college continuing education credit.

SHARON

I'm not even talking about this place, Jaye! You're beyond intelligent! Yet you find every possible way to wiggle *out* of responsibility! And the chances just fall into your lap! People just hand you opportunities, because apparently you still deserve them. Why? I don't know.

JAYE

Believe me, I try to hand back opportunities, but people are bad about accepting returns.

SHARON

(not really listening)

And Aaron is exactly the same way. You two were always the smart ones. And now he's plagiarizing his thesis! Do either of you have any notion of how much we've invested in you?

JAYE

You've invested in me...

SHARON

(hissed)

I've worked my ass off to obtain what little amount of success that I have! And I have spent my whole life trying to be a model for you! To put a path before your aimless, lazy feet!

JAYE

You did?

SHARON

Remember how I suggested you join the math league in high school?

JAYE

You mean how you approached the teacher and told him I adored asymptotic limits, leading to him stalking me relentlessly for all of junior year?

SHARON

And how I coaxed you to join the field hockey team?

JAYE

How you bought me a stick and a mouthguard and wouldn't give me a ride home after school until I tried out?

SHARON

(despairing)

I was only trying to show you how much potential you have!

JAYE

You were trying to get me to do the things that you wish you were good at but aren't! So you could,

like, vicariously do it too...

(beat)

You're like a... a creepy  
vicarious leech!

SHARON

Oh, and so now you're just going  
to sit here and do nothing  
instead. What? Just to spite me?

JAYE

I'm not doing this to spite you.  
And I'm not going to do things  
just because I'm good at them  
either! You can't just...just give  
somebody a single path and call it  
an opportunity! That's a contract!  
Some kind of devil's pact! A  
chance is only a chance if you're  
allowed not to take it!

Suddenly, the paper crane between the pages of Jaye's  
textbook squirms and sticks out a wing.

PAPER CRANE

Check out all the angles!

Jaye's eyes widen. She stares at Sharon, but is really  
looking through her, at some huge realization.

SHARON

Jaye?

JAYE

I... I have to go.

Jaye lunges for her books, grabbing them and making a  
beeline for the exit.

SHARON

You can't just... You have to  
finish talking to the dean!

JAYE

Think of it as another opportunity  
lost, Sharon!

CUT TO:

3. INT. KODAMA KITCHEN - EVENING

3

MR and MRS KODAMA are juggling steaming pots and pans,  
expertly navigating around each other. MICHI enters and

fetches chopsticks and spoons. She brings them to the table, setting it meticulously, in silence.

Suddenly, the doorbell rings. MICHI hurries to answer it.

MR KODAMA

Tell them we don't want their  
merchandise at dinner hour!

Michi opens the door cautiously, to find herself trampled by JAYE. She enters without invitation, on a mission.

JAYE

Where is Toshiko?

MR KODAMA

(apologetically)  
We ask her to come for dinner, but  
she always say, 'in a minute.'

MRS KODAMA

We are eating very soon.

JAYE

(not taking the hint)  
She's got some answering to do.

MICHI

Answering?

Jaye rushes toward the stairs and begins to climb them two at a time. Michi scurries after her.

CUT TO:

4. INT. TOSHIKO'S BEDROOM - EVENING

4

TOSHIKO sits at her extremely fuchsia wood desk, surrounded by origami animals. She is typing away (with only two fingers) at some document on her extremely fuchsia laptop. She hums as she types, and swivels in her desk chair.

JAYE (O.S.)

You!

JAYE stands in the doorway, filled with righteous fury. Toshiko squeaks and stops swiveling. MICHI arrives as well, standing on her toes to peek over Jaye's shoulder.

TOSHIKO

Me?

JAYE

Yes you! Do you think I was talking to your paper safari?

TOSHIKO

Maybe...

JAYE

Why did you steal the answers to Michi's test?

TOSHIKO

I didn't!

JAYE

You know, even if Michi had found the answers before the prof, she would've thrown them away. So, your ploy to help your big sis get into the med school of her dreams? *Kinda* a bust, if you ask me.

TOSHIKO

I wasn't trying to help her get into med school!

JAYE

Yeah, and I wasn't vandalizing public property when I disemboweled a clock today.

MICHI

... What are these?

Jaye turns. Michi is kneeling before a pile of pamphlets.

TOSHIKO

No! Don't!

MICHI

These are all college brochures...

JAYE

(to Toshiko)

Your sister's predestination aside, don't you think it's a little early for you to be this fixated on getting into college?

MICHI

... They're not for her.

JAYE

What?

MICHI

They're--- They're all for art  
schools. And look...

Michi holds up a pair of course-catalogs, revealing that the 'Paper Crafts' courses are highlighted in pink.

Jaye reaches into her bag and rips out the stolen test-answers, highlighted with the same pen. She rounds on Toshiko. The highlighter rests conspicuously by her hand on the desk, and she tries to flick it away. One by one, the ORIGAMI ANIMALS come to life and hop over it as it rolls.

PAPER CRANE

Check out all the angles!

PAPER CROCODILE

Girl's got craft.

PAPER TIGER

Make her fold. Make her fold!

JAYE

Jesus! None of you were even  
talking about Michi...

Jaye grabs the catalogue from Michi and shoves it at Toshi along with the test-answers.

JAYE (CONT'D)

We've got you red---pink---handed!  
Now fold... er, talk!

Silent tears begin to pour down Toshiko's face.

MICHI

(gently)

Toshi...

TOSHIKO

Ever since you started college you  
forgot about your origami!

MICHI

Toshi, I didn't forget! I just  
have a lot of homework!

TOSHIKO

And if you go to medical school  
you will have a lot of homework  
for the rest of your life! And you  
will never help me finish my zoo!  
Or mama's flower garden, or papa's  
monopoly pieces!

MICHI

(soothingly)

Patience, little hummingbird! You flap your wings too fast. I will finish them. But if I can be a doctor and help people, that's more important than folding paper!

TOSHIKO

(angry)

You used to say that if you could give every sick kid a paper tiger for courage and a crane for peace and a crocodile to give them magical strength, that would be more important than anything! But then you forgot! And now you're in school trying to be smart when you really should just be trying to be happy! So I had to make you be happy!

JAYE

By getting her *expelled*?

TOSHIKO

Freeing her! To do what she wants!

MICHI

Toshi, I wanted to go to med school! And now I can't!

Toshiko boggles at Michi, still full of tears.

JAYE

Not to mention she probably won't get into any college with the black mark you put on her record.

MICHI

Maybe we can talk to the dean. Maybe we can still fix it...!

Toshiko snaps, leaping off her chair and swiping all the origami animals off her desk onto the floor. She makes a beeline for her closet and slams the door.

TOSHIKO (O.S.)

I DON'T. WANT. TO FIX IT.

PAPER CRANE

Give peace a chance?

PAPER CROCODILE

Oh, snap.

PAPER TIGER

This will hurt for awhile.

JAYE

She'll get over it.

(to Michi)

We should tell your mom and dad.

MR KODAMA

We already hear everything.

Jaye and Michi look back toward the bedroom door to find Mr and Mrs Kodama standing together at the threshold, stunned.

CUT TO:

5. EXT. NIAGRA COMMUNITY COLLEGE - EARLY MORNING

5

JAYE exits the front doors of the school, and finds MR and MRS KODAMA sitting on a bench. On the grass nearby, MICHII is showing TOSHIKO a set of origami frogs that leap over each other when you push down on their backs. When Michi sees Jaye, she jumps up and runs over.

MICHI

We did it! Papa talked to dean and Toshi confessed everything. I am back in class!

JAYE

I am back out of the class! Order has been restored to the universe.

MICHI

I owe you so many thanks!

JAYE

Just as long as you don't intend to fold me one-thousand paper cranes or whatever.

MICHI

(laughing)

I don't think I will have time. I have a lot of homework to make up for the classes I missed.

JAYE

How's Toshiko taking it?

MICHI

Pretty well. I promised her that I'd help her finish her zoo this month. This weekend we are going to fold penguins.

JAYE

(dryly)

I should invite Sharon to fold penguins with me.

MICHI

In time, she will realize you care about her.

JAYE

I know, and that's horrifying.

Michi laughs.

MICHI

Are you sure you don't want my parents to talk to the dean? I'm sure he would let you back into the class as well.

JAYE

Thanks, but it's enough knowing that justice has been served, a cat has been eviscerated, and my bank account rests solidly in the red. My work here is done.

MICHI

Okay, but take this?

Michi opens her palm to reveal a white origami cat, postured exactly like the cat clock. Jaye recoils.

MICHI

It's a *maneki neko*!

JAYE

Um, thanks, but I work for free.

MICHI

(smiling)

No, really, I made especially for you. Look!

Michi tugs on the paper cat's raised paw. As she pulls down, a gap opens in the cat's belly, revealing a mess of tiny, red, paper organs.

MICHI

In case it gives you bad advice.

JAYE

(grinning wickedly)

Ok, now that's just sadistic.

(actually touched)

Thank you; I don't deserve this.

PAPER CAT

(with Jaye)

I don't deserve this.

Michi puts the cat in Jaye's hand. Just then, a nearby parked car honks its horn. SHARON rolls down the window.

SHARON

Are you done dropping out of school, or do you plan on quitting work today too?

JAYE

(yelling, to Sharon)

Depends on what you had in mind!

(to Michi)

I should go.

Michi nods, and the Kodama family waves to Jaye as she hurries over to Sharon's car and climbs in.

CUT TO:

6. INT. SHARON'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

6

Sharon pulls a sharp U-turn and begins to drive.

JAYE

Thanks for waiting.

SHARON

You're welcome.

(beat)

So... Once again you secured somebody else's future while doing nothing for your own, huh?

JAYE

Hey, maybe I can list that as a skill on my resume?

SHARON

For all those jobs you're not going to apply for?

There's a long silence. Just as it becomes a little too tense, Sharon suddenly laughs. This concerns Jaye.

SHARON  
 Sorry. I was just picturing you in  
 an anatomy class.

JAYE  
 (relaxing a bit)  
 I know, right?

Another pause.

SHARON  
 (earnestly)  
 I'm sorry I tried to push you down  
 a path you didn't want.  
 (off Jaye's face)  
 A lot of paths you didn't want.

JAYE  
 I'll let you know by the end of  
 the week if I forgive you.

Sharon rolls her eyes. Jaye rolls down the window.

JAYE (CONT'D)  
 I would apologize for not coming  
 clean about Aaron's paper, but I  
 think staying quiet has punished  
 him more. So I'm really not sorry.

SHARON  
 What do you mean?

JAYE  
 People expect more from him now,  
 and there aren't more papers to  
 steal. I intend to enjoy every  
 minute of him desperately  
 scrambling to save face...

The car turns a corner around the administrative wing of the college, and Sharon's suddenly looks horrified.

SHARON  
 ... Is that him?

Jaye looks out the window to see AARON take a dive into the college dumpster. As Sharon slows the car, he reappears, holding what appears to be---

JAYE  
 Oh, God!

SHARON

That's the clock you broke!

AARON is collecting the pieces of the cat clock: face, hands, tail and all, and placing them in a plastic bag.

JAYE

Talk about 'saving face'...

SHARON

Why would he---

JAYE

---Just keep driving.

(beat)

Go! We're going to be late!

FADE OUT

END OF SHOW