

# The Creators

by Alexander Attea

## Characters:

DEIRDRE	A go-getter type. (W, 20s-30s)
PIPER	A go-with-the-flow type. (W/NB, 20-30s)
WILL	A go-it-alone type. (M, 20s-30s)
JESS	New and idealistic. (W/NB, 20-30s)
THE INTERN	An intern. (W/NB, 20s)
ANOTHER INTERN	Another intern. (W/NB, 20s)

**Time:** The present.

**Place:** An office; four desks and four chairs.

## Notes on the text:

- This play must be cast with diversity in mind.
- The Intern and Another Intern can (and maybe should) be played by the same actor.
- Transitions between scenes can represent minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, etc. All that matters is time has passed. Feel free to represent this through movement, stillness, or any other device that conveys time passing.
- This play may be performed with or without an intermission.

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### One

*An office space. There is one door leading to a private office, labeled "PRIVATE" and, under that, "Gene." The office kitchen is offstage. In the main space are four desks and four chairs; one desk is empty and piling with papers. At the other desks, in various stages of disarray, sit DEIRDRE, PIPER, and WILL. DEIRDRE is working, PIPER and WILL sleep. Heads on desks, laid back in their office chairs, that sort of thing. They've been here a while.*

*After a few moments, THE INTERN enters from the kitchen, carrying a buzzer. THE INTERN rings the buzzer, waking PIPER and WILL. DEIRDRE is unfazed by the noise. THE INTERN exits. PIPER and WILL yawn, stretch, rub eyes, etc, then get to work. PIPER turns on a handheld video camera, which she uses intermittently to record her surroundings or herself. They work in silence for a bit.*

*After another few moments, WILL stands and exits to the kitchen. He returns with a mug of coffee and a banana, then plops in his chair and puts his head back on his desk with a groan.*

DEIRDRE

Maybe you should try waking up on your own. You wouldn't be so tired.

WILL *head down*

I hate that bell.

DEIRDRE

Maybe you should try waking up on your own.

WILL *head down*

Don't you hate that bell?

DEIRDRE

That's what I do. I wake up on my own.

WILL *head down*

I'm aware.

DEIRDRE

I've trained my internal clock to wake up when the sun rises.

WILL *head down*

You're an inspiration.

DEIRDRE

I could teach you.

PIPER

He's being sarcastic.

DEIRDRE

What?

WILL *head down*

I'm being sarcastic.

PIPER

I don't know how you do it.

WILL *sitting up*  
Be sarcastic?

PIPER  
I don't know how you get up so early.

DEIRDRE  
I've trained my internal clock —

WILL  
Yeah, we know.

*Pause.*

PIPER  
I just don't have the energy in the morning.

DEIRDRE  
Once you get used to it, it's not too bad.

*Pause.*

WILL *to PIPER*  
Want some coffee?

PIPER  
I think you already know the answer to that.

WILL  
Fair enough.

*WILL exits to kitchen.*

PIPER  
Getting a lot done?

DEIRDRE  
The morning's usually a productive time for me.

PIPER  
Do you get *any* sleep?

DEIRDRE  
I get enough.

PIPER  
I don't think I've ever seen you sleep.

DEIRDRE  
You're exaggerating.

PIPER  
Maybe you sleep with your eyes open. That's so cool.  
Would you tell me if you did? If you slept with your eyes open?

DEIRDRE

I don't sleep with my eyes open.

*WILL enters with a mug of coffee, hands it to PIPER.*

WILL

How would you know? If you did or not?

DEIRDRE

I think I'd know.

WILL *to PIPER*

If she ever does, don't tell her.

PIPER

What, just leave her *in the dark*?

— Ha ha. See what I did there?

WILL

That's funny. Love it. I'm adding it to the act.

DEIRDRE

I don't sleep with my eyes open.

PIPER

We're just teasing, Deirdre. Geez.

DEIRDRE

Actually, call me Deedee. I want you guys to call me Deedee.

PIPER

— Why?

DEIRDRE

I want Gene to see me as more carefree, more fun. That way he might give me better assignments.

So, Deedee.

WILL

That doesn't sound like Gene.

DEIRDRE

It's worth a shot.

PIPER

Sure, if you think so.

DEIRDRE

I do. I think so.

*Pause. They work.*

— Can you guys say it? Just once? I want to see how it sounds.

WILL

What? Deedee?

DEIRDRE

Yeah, like in a conversational way. Like it's an everyday thing.

WILL

Okay, yeah, this is weird.

PIPER

What are you working on today, Deedee?  
— How was that?

DEIRDRE

Seemed a little forced. Catch me off guard with it.

PIPER

But you asked me to — you'll be expecting it now.

DEIRDRE

Well, you'll have to surprise me.

WILL

Yeah, Piper, come on. Surprise her.

PIPER

How about I do it later, so you'll forget and won't be expecting it.

DEIRDRE

Okay. That works.  
— Do you like it, though? Deedee? Does it sound like me?

PIPER

Sure. Yeah, it suits you, I guess.

DEIRDRE

You guess?

PIPER

It's different. I'll need to get used to it.

DEIRDRE.

I like it.  
Will?

WILL

I'm holding judgment until I hear it in context.

DEIRDRE

We should get back to work anyway.

*They do. After a few moments, THE INTERN enters again and approaches the empty desk. THE INTERN looks through the papers on the desk. PIPER and WILL watch, curious.*

WILL

What's going on?

THE INTERN

Nothing.

WILL

Doesn't look like nothing.

THE INTERN

Just gathering some papers.

WILL

He might be coming back.

THE INTERN

Gene told me to gather these up, so I'm gathering.

PIPER

Does that mean he's not coming back?

THE INTERN

I don't know.

WILL

He might be coming back.

PIPER

Yeah, it's only been — how long has it been?

WILL

It doesn't feel like it's been too long.

THE INTERN

It's been months.

WILL

Already? Wow. Okay, so it's been a while.

PIPER

We get unlimited vacation days, though. I bet he's just taking a — a really long vacation.

THE INTERN

Craig did not get his time approved.

WILL

Yeah, but our time off requests never get approved.

THE INTERN

I'm just doing what Gene told me to.

WILL

Gathering.

THE INTERN

Gathering.

WILL

And if he comes back? What then?

THE INTERN

That's up to Gene.

PIPER

I hope Craig takes photos to show us, when he's back.

*They look at her.*

What? I want to see where he went on vacation.

*THE INTERN exits into Gene's office with the papers.*

DEIRDRE

He's not coming back. Craig.

PIPER

How do you know?

WILL

One of these days, I'm going to leave too.

PIPER

On vacation?

WILL

No, for good.

DEIRDRE

Do you think his projects will be reassigned to us?

PIPER

Whose, Craig's? Or Will's, when he leaves?

WILL

Anyway, he'll come back. It's just a vacation.

PIPER

Yeah, he was happy here, with us. Right?

WILL

Ha. None of us are happy here.

Deirdre, you happy?

DEIRDRE

Deedee.

PIPER

I wonder where he's traveling. Somewhere beautiful, I hope. Warm.

My family used to spend winters on the Mediterranean, we couldn't stand the cold. Those were simpler times, before I had to do all this — work.

*Pause.*

WILL

Do you think he left any snacks in his desk?

DEIRDRE

There are snacks in the kitchen.

WILL

Yeah, but they stopped getting those fruit bars I like.

PIPER

You could ask the intern to get more.

WILL *looking through the empty desk*

Right, like that would work.

*WILL finds a fruit bar.*

Aha!

DEIRDRE

What if he was saving that?

WILL

For months? He probably forgot it was here.

PIPER

I bet it's stale.

WILL

No way.

*WILL takes a bite, then spits it out.*

Damn it.

PIPER

Was I right? Tell me I'm right.

WILL

I'm not giving you the satisfaction.

PIPER

I was right.

WILL

Want a bite? You can see for yourself.

PIPER

Ew, no.

WILL

Come on, just taste it. I think you'll like it.

DEIRDRE

We should be working.

WILL

What's the point, if Gene's just going to reassign Craig's projects to us?



PIPER

Yeah, it's okay to have a little fun, Deedee.

DEIRDRE

I hope I get the fox book. I'd love to write that.

WILL

— Why?

PIPER

How did that sound, though? Natural?

DEIRDRE

What?

PIPER

You didn't even notice!

WILL *taking another bite of the fruit bar*

She called you Deedee.

DEIRDRE

Oh! Did you really?

PIPER

Ha. Yeah.

DEIRDRE

It felt very natural! Thank you!

PIPER

Any time, Deedee.

WILL

Okay, don't overdo it.

PIPER

Deedee, Deedee, Deedee, Deedee, Deedee.

WILL

Great. Just great.

DEIRDRE

Have I told you about the Dmitri Belyayev experiment, the one where they domesticated foxes by breeding only the nicest ones?

PIPER

Probably. Sounds familiar.

DEIRDRE

Oh.

Well, did you also know that Arctic foxes don't start shivering until the temperature reaches below 70 degrees Celsius?

WILL

I guess we do now.

PIPER

Why do you know that?

DEIRDRE

I like foxes.

*THE INTERN enters from Gene's office. No papers.*

Well? Are Craig's projects being reassigned?

THE INTERN

No. Gene decided we're hiring a new employee. They will take over Craig's remaining projects.

DEIRDRE

Oh. A new employee. Okay.

— Wait, even the fox book?

PIPER

And what if Craig comes back?

THE INTERN

Gene's not worried about that becoming an issue.

WILL

Why not?

THE INTERN *exiting to the kitchen*

Because that's what he said.

WILL

But why not?

— Oh, and can we get those fruit bars again?

*THE INTERN is gone.*

Hello?

PIPER

Do you think she didn't hear you, or ignored you?

WILL

Which is better?

PIPER

— Neither?

DEIRDRE

Let's just get back to work.

WILL

Fine.

*They do. A few moments of silence.*

PIPER

I wonder who the new employee will be.

*DEIRDRE, PIPER, and WILL continue working. Silence.  
Transition.*

**Two**

*The office. Same as before. Some time has passed. Days, or weeks, probably. DEIRDRE, PIPER, and WILL should be working, but instead stare at the new employee, JESS. JESS writes. Silence.*

WILL

Look at her go.

PIPER

So focused.

WILL

She's making me feel bad about myself.

PIPER

She's making me feel bad about you too.

WILL

Great. Thanks.

DEIRDRE

How's the book coming, Jess?

JESS

Hm?

DEIRDRE

The book. The fox book.

JESS

Oh — fine, thanks.

DEIRDRE

I bet.

JESS

Hm?

DEIRDRE

I said I — never mind.

Did you know that foxes hunt on their own, rather than in packs?

JESS

— Yes. I'm writing the book on them, remember?

DEIRDRE

Right, of course. I'm sure you're doing great with that.

JESS

Thanks.

DEIRDRE

But let me know if you want any help. Or guidance. I love foxes. So, use me as a resource if you need. Okay?

PIPER

She *loves* foxes. She won't talk about anything else.

DEIRDRE

I talk about other things.

WILL

Like what?

DEIRDRE

Like — well, lots of things.

WILL

Give us one example.

DEIRDRE

Um — I talk about coffee. Sometimes. Does anyone want some?

PIPER

Ooo, yes please.

DEIRDRE

Coming right up. When I get back, we can talk about it, because I talk about plenty of other things besides foxes.

WILL

Very convincing.

DEIRDRE

I know.

*DEIRDRE exits to the kitchen. JESS notices that PIPER has been filming them.*

JESS

— Are you filming me again?

PIPER

No.

JESS

You are.

PIPER

Just pretend it isn't here.

JESS

But it is here.  
I don't know how I'm supposed to act.

PIPER

Act like yourself.

JESS

But if I'm aware of it, how can I act naturally?

PIPER

You pretend it isn't here.

JESS

Are you even going to use this footage?

PIPER

Maybe. I don't know yet. It's experimental.

WILL

Some self-referential stuff in there would be interesting. Meta.

PIPER

It's a deconstruction of the environments in which we create art! We talk about the making of the film in the film itself!

*To the camera:*

Hello, look at me, I am making a film.

WILL

Meta.

JESS

Is that going to be watchable?

PIPER

It's art. It doesn't have to be watchable.

What was your life like? Before this?

JESS

Um — normal? I don't know.

PIPER

Ooo, boring, I love it. People are going to think this is brilliant.

WILL

People are going to think *Gene* is brilliant for making it.

PIPER

Ugh, true.

*DEIRDRE enters with two coffees, gives one to PIPER.*

DEIRDRE

To be fair, he *was* the one who assigned it to you.

PIPER

I guess.

JESS

But she's making it. You'll get credited, at least.

PIPER

Ha. No.

JESS

I thought we get credited for our work.

WILL

Jess missed the fine print.

DEIRDRE

Gene takes all credit for everything we make here.

JESS

Really? How did I miss that?

WILL

It's very fine print.

JESS

Oh.

I guess I did always think it was interesting how prolific his output is. How varied.

WILL

Yeah, that's all us. We are: The Creators!

PIPER

We make everything, and it's all brilliant, and Gene wouldn't have a career if it weren't for us, and you're welcome.

DEIRDRE

He'd have a career.

PIPER

Not a successful one.

JESS

But in interviews, he always says it's his work. I remember hearing him say that.

PIPER

You trust interviews?

WILL

His responses are: Created!

— Someone please laugh at this bit. I'm trying so hard.

DEIRDRE

It's just the way it is.

JESS

And you're okay with that?

DEIRDRE

It's good experience. Exposure.

WILL

It's paid.

PIPER

It's something to do.

*For the camera's benefit:*

Mmm, coffee.

DEIRDRE

Plus, it's experience in all sorts of disciplines. Like, Piper, if it weren't for Gene, would you be making a film like this?

PIPER

I don't know. Probably not.

*Filming JESS.*

How normal is normal?

JESS

What?

PIPER

You said your life before this was normal. How normal is normal?  
The world wants to know.

JESS

I don't know if I feel comfortable with this.

DEIRDRE

Were you a writer? Before?

JESS

I mean, kind of. How did you — ?

DEIRDRE

They gave you the fox book.

WILL

Did you do it as a job? Or did you have a different job and write for fun?

JESS

I had a different job, and —

DEIRDRE

So you're not a very *good* writer.

JESS

Yeah, I'm going to talk to Gene about giving us credit.

*JESS starts toward Gene's door.*

DEIRDRE

Oh, he's not *here*. Did you think he was actually here in the office?

PIPER

He does a lot of traveling.

Ooo, I wonder if we'll see any pictures! I want to see where he goes!



JESS

Is he ever here?

DEIRDRE

Not really.

WILL

The intern handles everything. Except getting the *fruit bars I want!*

PIPER

He likes fruit bars.

JESS

— Okay.

WILL

But other than that. A place to live, a fully stocked kitchen, being paid to make art?  
It's a pretty sweet setup.

JESS

Yeah. Yeah.

*Pause.*

PIPER

Is she upset?

JESS

I'm fine.

DEIRDRE

If you don't like the way things work, you can leave. And don't worry about the fox book project, they'll just reassign it to one of us.

JESS

I'm fine. I'm not leaving.

PIPER

Good. I like you better than Craig already. And look at it this way: even if you don't get credit, at least you're actually making something. That's more than a lot of people can say.

WILL

Plus, we're all in it together.

PIPER

Right! We support each other, like a pack of foxes out hunting.

DEIRDRE

Foxes are solitary hunters.

PIPER

Still.

DEIRDRE

But if you want to leave, that's your decision.

PIPER

Deirdre.

DEIRDRE

What?

And it's Deedee.

JESS

I'm not going anywhere. Maybe you have a point. It's a good opportunity.

*Pause. They work.*

WILL

One of these days, I'm going to leave. Once I have enough saved up, I'm getting out of here. I'll make art with my own name on it.

JESS

What's keeping you from doing it now?

WILL

I need to plan.

PIPER *to JESS*

You ask a lot of questions.

JESS

Is that a bad thing?

PIPER

Ha. You just proved my point.

How boring was your normal life before this? One a scale of one to ten?

JESS

I don't know how to answer that.

PIPER

One is the least boring, ten is the most boring.

JESS

I'm getting back to work.

PIPER

Uh oh.

WILL

I think you upset her. Again.

PIPER

Looks like it.

Sorry, Jess.

*DEIRDRE, PIPER, and WILL watch JESS work. Then one by one, as they lose interest, they get back to work too. After a few moments, THE INTERN enters.*

THE INTERN

How is everyone doing in here?

JESS

I actually have a question.

DEIRDRE

Don't ask the intern.

THE INTERN

Ask me what?

DEIRDRE

Nothing.

JESS

I had a question about my project.  
Should I be using Craig's work to supplement my own, or —?

THE INTERN

Let me see.

*JESS hands THE INTERN some papers from her desk.*

Right.

*THE INTERN tears the papers up.*

You won't be needing this.

JESS

Won't it be helpful, though?

THE INTERN

The project should be your own.

JESS

How do you feel about Gene taking credit for everything?

DEIRDRE

Jess.

THE INTERN

Gene's the artist.

JESS

Right. Of course. Silly me.

*THE INTERN starts to exit towards the kitchen.*

Hey, by the way, I'm sorry but I never caught your name.

THE INTERN

Right.

JESS

— So, what is it?

THE INTERN *ignoring JESS*

I'm going out. Does anyone need anything?

WILL

Fruit bars?

THE INTERN

They're out. They don't have any more.

WILL

Maybe they've restocked?

THE INTERN

I doubt it.

PIPER

Can you at least check, so he shuts up about it?

JESS

If it's easier, I can go with you. An extra pair of hands.

THE INTERN

— No.

JESS

I'm sorry if I upset you.

THE INTERN

I have to go.

*THE INTERN exits.*

JESS

— Did I say something wrong?

WILL

I bet there *are* fruit bars.

JESS

I don't think the intern likes me.

PIPER

The intern doesn't like anyone.

DEIRDRE

They like me.

WILL

I bet there are fruit bars and the intern purposefully doesn't buy them, to spite me.

DEIRDRE

They're actually really nice, if you're nice to them.

WILL

To fruit bars?

DEIRDRE

To the intern.  
Everything's easier if you're nice to people.

JESS

Is that my lesson for the day?

DEIRDRE

What? I don't —

JESS

I should be nice to people, I shouldn't make waves. Keep my head down.

PIPER

Ooo, waves. Good idea.

*PIPER gently shakes her coffee cup and films the inside of it.*

DEIRDRE

This job can be a really good opportunity, if you're patient.

JESS

— Why do you like foxes so much, Deedee?

DEIRDRE

I just do. I guess. Always have. Why?

JESS

I was curious. I wanted to ask.

WILL

You do ask a lot of questions. Not in a bad way. Sorry. I'll shut up.

PIPER

Yeah, Will, shut up.

WILL

Done and done.

JESS

Sorry. I know I ask a lot of questions.

DEIRDRE

You like working here, though, right? With us?

JESS

Yes, I like you all. Of course I like you all.

DEIRDRE

Good. That's good.

*Pause. One by one, they all get back to work. Silence.  
Transition.*

**Three**

*Later. JESS is writing. DEIRDRE, PIPER, and WILL are all asleep at their desks. After a few moments of silence, THE INTERN enters carrying bags full of granola bars. THE INTERN is very disheveled. They take a few moments to compose themselves, then start toward the kitchen.*

JESS

Hi there.

THE INTERN

You're awake.

JESS

I don't need a lot of sleep.  
You were gone for a while.

THE INTERN

I had a lot to do.

JESS

Lots of — granola bars to buy?

THE INTERN

Gene tells me to buy granola bars, I buy granola bars.

JESS

Right.  
— Are you hurt?

THE INTERN

No.

JESS

You look like you've been through hell.

THE INTERN

I ran errands.

JESS

Got it.  
Why didn't you let me help you?

THE INTERN

Gene doesn't want any of you going outside. Only me.

JESS

Why not?

THE INTERN

It is what it is.

JESS

Yeah.  
Why won't you tell me your name?

THE INTERN

I don't have one.

JESS

Everyone has a name.

THE INTERN

Not me.

JESS

So, what, just "the intern," then?

THE INTERN

Right.

— I have to go put these away.

JESS

Is Gene making you do it?

THE INTERN

Put these away? I guess.

JESS

Hide your name.

THE INTERN

I'm not hiding anything.

JESS

Fine.

How long have you been here?

THE INTERN

Long enough.

You should work on your project.

JESS

Do you like working here?

THE INTERN

You ask a lot of questions.

Excuse me.

*THE INTERN starts to leave again.*

JESS

Wait.

Do you think we should be credited for our work?

THE INTERN

It doesn't matter what I think.

JESS

It matters what Gene thinks.

THE INTERN

It's his art.

JESS

Is it, though?

THE INTERN

I shouldn't be discussing this with you.

JESS

Everything here is so secretive. I don't get it.

THE INTERN

Uncertainty breeds better art.

JESS

— Uncertainty?

THE INTERN

Yes.

JESS

Fine. Why do you still work here? You clearly don't like it.

THE INTERN

I like it just fine.

JESS

All I'm saying is, maybe we can help each other.

THE INTERN

I don't need help.

JESS

Are you sure?

THE INTERN

I have to go.

JESS

Can I have a granola bar?

THE INTERN

— No.

JESS

Why not?

*THE INTERN exits. JESS stands and tries to follow.*  
Come on, we're coworkers now, we're on the same team!

*DEIRDRE wakes up.*

DEIRDRE

What? What's going on?



JESS

Sorry. Nothing. Sorry.

DEIRDRE

You're awake.

JESS

Yeah, um, I couldn't sleep, so I figured I'd try to at least work.

DEIRDRE

Usually I'm the first one up. It's nice to have some company!  
How are you doing with the foxes?

JESS

What's the deal with the intern? How did she start working here?

DEIRDRE

She was just here one day. I don't know, Gene handles all that sort of thing.  
You didn't answer my question.

JESS

What?

DEIRDRE

How are you doing with the foxes?

JESS

Oh. It's a lot to do, but I'm handling it.

DEIRDRE

Must be overwhelming.

JESS

I'm handling it.

DEIRDRE

I can always help you with it, if you need.

JESS

I think I'll be okay.

DEIRDRE

You can ask for a different assignment, too.

JESS

Is that allowed?

DEIRDRE

Gene doesn't have to know.

JESS

So it's not allowed.

DEIRDRE

It's not *not* allowed.

JESS

I'm confused.

DEIRDRE

You mind if I take a look?  
Just a peek.

JESS

— Okay, fine. Sure.

*JESS tucks away a handful of papers that she's been writing. DEIRDRE moves over to JESS' desk and starts reading the other papers on the desk.*

DEIRDRE

What was that?

JESS

What?

DEIRDRE

You just put some stuff away.

JESS

Oh, it's nothing. Really rough first draft writing. Not ready for anyone to see that yet. It's crap. Ha.

DEIRDRE

I don't mind.

JESS

I'll let you know when it's ready.

DEIRDRE

— Okay.

JESS

Promise.

DEIRDRE

I'm not bothering you, am I?

JESS

No, no.

DEIRDRE

Okay, good. I don't want to be distracting.

JESS

You aren't.

DEIRDRE

You're already adjusting to a new environment, I don't need to give you any more distractions. Ha.

JESS

Don't worry, you're fine.

DEIRDRE

You know, I always thought Craig was a weird choice for this project. I mean, I'm sure you'll do a great job with it, though.

JESS

Thanks.

DEIRDRE

He never seemed to really care about foxes. Which, obviously, you need to for a project like this. Just my opinion, though.

JESS

Right, of course.

DEIRDRE

And not much of a distinct voice, stylistically. I read his stuff on occasion, and it always came off as a bit bland. Your syntax here is weird.

JESS

Where?

DEIRDRE

Bottom of page fourteen.

JESS

I'll take a look.

DEIRDRE

Do you have much writing experience? From before?

JESS

This paragraph here? Page fourteen?

DEIRDRE

Yes.

JESS

Yeah, I'm still playing with that. Seeing what works.

DEIRDRE

I see that. Let me write down a few alternate options for you.

JESS

I thought you were just taking a peek.

DEIRDRE

Right, of course. I'll write them down anyway, in case you need inspiration.

*DEIRDRE writes.*

For example, did you know that in the Middle Ages, foxes were sometimes burned as symbols of the Devil?

JESS

Great. I can take it from here, though.

DEIRDRE

I don't know if I'd call burning foxes "great."

JESS

That's not what I meant.

DEIRDRE

— What sort of writing did you do before?

JESS

All sorts.

DEIRDRE

But you weren't paid to do it.

JESS

Does it matter?

DEIRDRE

I'm only curious. You're an interesting person.

JESS

Don't you have to work on your project?

DEIRDRE

I'll get to it.

JESS

If you don't mind, I'm going to try to focus.

DEIRDRE

Sure, sure, go ahead. Don't mind me.

*JESS works. DEIRDRE hovers.*

JESS

— Do you need something?

DEIRDRE

You don't mind if I watch, do you?

JESS

Yes, actually.

DEIRDRE

I'll be quiet.

JESS

I don't like people looking over my shoulder.

DEIRDRE

I'm looking over your arm.

JESS

It's the same thing.

DEIRDRE

I promise, I won't be a bother.

JESS

Please, just let me work in peace.

DEIRDRE

I am. I'm being peaceful.

*THE INTERN enters with the buzzer, notices DEIRDRE.*

THE INTERN

Do you need something, Deirdre?

DEIRDRE

Deedee. And I was talking with Jess.

JESS

I'm trying to work.

THE INTERN

You can talk from your desk.

DEIRDRE

She asked me to come over here.

THE INTERN

That's fine. But Gene wants you all at your own desks.

*DEIRDRE reluctantly returns to her desk.*

Thank you.

*THE INTERN presses the buzzer. WILL and PIPER jolt awake.*

WILL

I swear to god —

THE INTERN

Good morning.

*THE INTERN exits.*

WILL

One of these days, I'm going to take that buzzer and throw it in the ocean.

THE INTERN *off*

I heard that.

WILL

Anyway, how's the morning going for you early birds?

*DEIRDRE and JESS sit in silence, working.*

— Oookay.

PIPER

Ominous.

WILL

Seriously.

I'm getting coffee, anyone want some?

*PIPER gives WILL a look.*

Besides Piper.

PIPER

Thank youuu.

*Silence from DEIRDRE and JESS.*

WILL

Suit yourselves.

*WILL exits.*

PIPER

— You guys okay?

JESS

Just working.

PIPER

Got it, cool, cool, cool.

DEIRDRE

The intern does like me, right?

I've always thought of myself as a likable person.

WILL *off*

GRANOLA BARS ARE NOT THE SAME AS FRUIT BARS! THEY'RE NOT THE SAME!!!

*Transition.*

**Four**

*Later. JESS is filming PIPER in various poses. WILL and DEIRDRE at their desks.*

PIPER

How's this? I'm going for sultry, but threatening.

JESS

Okay, yeah.

PIPER

Maybe try a lower angle.

JESS

So what are you trying to say with this film? Is there a message?

PIPER

My message is — I don't know. I'll decide later, I guess.

JESS

Shouldn't there be a reason, though?

DEIRDRE

Ideally.

PIPER

Maybe it's art for art's sake.

JESS

But is that what you want to do, or what Gene wants you to do?

PIPER

Does it matter?

Once I get a bunch of footage, maybe I'll find a message hidden somewhere, and pull it out.

JESS

Got it.

Is that your usual process?

PIPER

Come in for a close up.

*JESS comes closer to PIPER. WILL bangs his head on his desk.*

WILL

Damn it, damn it.

JESS

— What?

WILL

Nothing's funny. There isn't a single funny thing.

JESS

I'm sure it's better than you think.

PIPER

He gets like this.

WILL

What am I even doing?

I should just leave. I'm going to leave. Just like Craig. That's it.

PIPER

You don't mean that.

WILL

I do. I really do.

PIPER

You don't.

WILL

I do.

PIPER

Don't.

WILL

Do!

DEIRDRE

Oh my god.

JESS

Can we hear what you've been working on? Maybe saying it out loud will help.

WILL

No thanks. It's not ready yet. It's not funny.

JESS

But stand-up is supposed to be heard, not just read.

DEIRDRE

That's debatable.

JESS

— Is it?

WILL

Why does he even want to do a stand-up set? Why? Why?

*WILL bangs his head on the desk again.*

Damn it!

JESS

— Do you need anything?

WILL

No, no, no, no.



JESS

Just let us know if you do, okay?  
*WILL stands up and exits into the kitchen.*  
 Um. Alright.

DEIRDRE

Let him be.

PIPER

Yeah, he'll be fine.  
 Do you have the close-up?

JESS

Yes.

PIPER

Good. Now closer. I want to be able to see my awful, awful pores.

JESS

Your pores are fine.

PIPER

Then you're not close enough.  
*JESS gets closer.*  
 Pore status?

JESS

— Awful?

PIPER

Excellent.  
*PIPER speaks directly into the camera, deadpan.*  
 When I was a child I was a child, and when I was a child I was already grown. I grew so tall, Jack and the Beanstalk, I grew so beanstalk tall I could be climbed. Boy did I climb myself, up every tree I could get my arms halfway around. I climbed myself up into nooks and crannies, surrounded by leaves and branches, and gazed out like I was bird watching grey winter clouds roll in, thinking of the inevitable trip south to warmer skies. How I wanted to be a bird, only with feathers rough like bark. The skin on my knuckles and knees was calloused — I called the marks feathers. I ruined so many pretty dresses, my family spending too much money on these dresses that I would invariably muddy and tear on knots and bark, too much money on these dresses that I would invariably grow out of, though I was already beanstalk grown. They put me in these dresses, I guess, to mark me still young, still theirs, still home, though I was already winter-bird flown. Chirp, chirp.

*PIPER takes the camera from JESS and goes to her desk.*

JESS

I wouldn't have guessed you to be the tree-climbing type.

PIPER

Who says I was?

JESS

I guess I thought that — never mind.

PIPER

It's not like it's an autobiographical movie. Ha.

JESS

What was your life like? Before this?

*WILL enters eating a banana, laughing.*

PIPER

Oh boy.

*PIPER films WILL.*

JESS

What's going on?

PIPER

Just a part of his process.

WILL

What even *is* funny? Is anything? Is "funny" anything? Or is "funny" a made up concept? A state of being we strive for, distracting us from the larger and more tragic realities in the outside world?

PIPER

Oh, this is good stuff.

WILL

Funny?

PIPER

You better believe it.

WILL

Funny is never permanent, there is never a guarantee of funny. Something that was once funny may never be funny again. It depends on who's laughing.

JESS

Shouldn't we help him?

PIPER

He'll tire himself out.

WILL

But no, funny is instead temporary, fleeting, a mirage in the desert of despair.

JESS

Are you sure?

WILL

The desert of despair is filled with the sands of time, sands which cover everything that has been and everything that will never be funny.

PIPER

His metaphor's going off the rails.

JESS

He's going off the rails.

PIPER

I know, it's great.

WILL

Despair is funny, however. As long as the despair is someone else's, and not one's own.

*WILL places the banana peel on the floor, classic splayed banana peel, ready for someone to slip on it. WILL stares at it, commands it:*

Do a flip.

*The banana peel does nothing.*

JESS

I don't like this. We should do something?

DEIRDRE

Like what?

PIPER

Shhh. Watch.

*They all watch the banana peel.*

WILL

We wait. It does not flip. It does nothing. The banana peel in itself is not funny. It is the expectation of what follows that is funny. We await the fall.

*WILL hovers his foot over the peel.*

Ah, the unknowable future.

JESS

Will. Stop.

WILL

You're right. I don't know what I'm doing.

JESS

Thank you.

WILL

I need a running start.

JESS

Not what I meant —

*WILL backs up, prepares to run at the peel. THE INTERN enters, notices the peel.*

THE INTERN

Will, clean that up before someone trips and hurts themselves.

*THE INTERN, distracted by the peel, walks into a desk and falls over it. WILL claps and laughs.*

WILL

Would you look at that!

JESS *going to THE INTERN*

Are you okay?

THE INTERN

I'm fine, I'm fine.

WILL

Now that's funny.

JESS

Do you need anything? An ice pack?

— Do we have ice packs?

THE INTERN

Really, I'm okay.

WILL

I'm putting that in the act. Desk, fall, laugh! Ha!

*WILL goes to his desk and writes.*

PIPER

— How are you feeling, bud?

WILL

I'm great, why?

PIPER *to JESS*

See? Nothing to worry about.

DEIRDRE

Back to normal, back to work.

JESS *to THE INTERN*

Are you sure you're not hurt?

THE INTERN *standing*

Yes. Thank you.

JESS

Don't mention it. When you work together, you look out for each other.

PIPER

If we'd really been looking out, no one would've run into the desk.

THE INTERN

It's not a problem.

JESS

Okay. I'm glad you're not hurt.

Hey, by the way, I have a question for Gene — is there a number I can call him at, or something?

THE INTERN

Any questions for Gene can go through me.

JESS

I promise I won't take too much of his time.

THE INTERN

What's your question?

JESS

Never mind, it's no big deal. I'll figure it out.

THE INTERN

Good to hear.

*THE INTERN starts to leave.*

WILL

Hey, watch out for the desk! Ha!

THE INTERN

Good one.

*THE INTERN exits.*

WILL

Ha. Comedy is so easy.

*Pause. They all work in silence for a while.*

DEIRDRE

— Can you guys call me Dee?

PIPER

Deedee?

DEIRDRE

No, just Dee.

WILL

What happened to Deedee?

DEIRDRE

It didn't really catch on the way I wanted it to. Plus, I think I like Dee better.

PIPER *condescending*

Really? Why?

*Catching herself.*

I mean, really? Why?

DEIRDRE

Never mind.

JESS

We can call you Dee if you want.

WILL

I mean, I might forget for a while, but yeah, if you want us to.

DEIRDRE

I think it sounds more authoritative. Deedee was too childish, but Dee is — I don't know, commanding. It's sure of itself. A childish name like Deedee was never going to help me get better assignments from Gene. I need an authoritative name.

PIPER

So — Dee.

Yeah, totally. Great.

DEIRDRE

Do you not like it?

PIPER

I love it. Now whenever I talk to you, I can say I'm getting the Dee.

WILL

Ha! That's going in the act.

DEIRDRE

If you're just going to make fun of me, then forget about it.

PIPER

Not in a bad way. Promise.

WILL

If it'll make you feel better, we can do the same thing with my name. Everyone, start calling me Willy.

PIPER

Gross.

WILL

Ha. It really is.

PIPER

Dee isn't *nearly* as bad as Willy.

DEIRDRE

You think so?

PIPER

I've never been more sure of anything in my life.

DEIRDRE

Ha. Thank you. That's a relief.

I was worried you wouldn't like it.

PIPER *to WILL*

I'm never calling you Willy, by the way.  
But no, I can get on board with Dee. It's good.

DEIRDRE *standing*

I'm going to go tell the intern to tell Gene the news. I'm excited!

*DEIRDRE exits.*

PIPER

Wow, the intern's about to get the Dee with no warning at all.

*Pause. No response from WILL or JESS.*

Oh come on, that was funny.

— Wasn't it?

WILL

What? Sorry, I stopped listening.

JESS

It was very funny, Piper.

PIPER

Then why did no one laugh? Have I lost my edge?

WILL

Happens to the best of us.

PIPER

Let me try again.

Wow, the intern's about to get the Dee with no warning at all.

Ha!

JESS

Ha!

WILL

Ha ha!

PIPER

Ha!

This isn't forced, is it?

WILL

It's the most natural laugh I've had in my life.

PIPER

That makes me feel better.

You know what?

WILL

What?

PIPER

Comedy is so easy.

WILL

It really truly is.

PIPER

Isn't that right, banana peel? Isn't comedy easy? Wouldn't you say so? Wouldn't you say comedy is easy? If someone had a gun to your head, banana peel? Or should I say stem? If someone had a gun to your stem, would you say comedy is easy? I bet you would, banana peel. Oh, how I bet you would.

Now do a flip.

*The banana peel does nothing. They watch.  
Transition.*



**Five**

*Later. The banana peel is still on the floor. DEIRDRE, PIPER, WILL, and JESS are working in silence. After a few moments, JESS stands.*

JESS

I'm so sick of foxes. I can't do it anymore. I need a break.  
Anyone want anything from the kitchen?

WILL

I'm all good.

JESS

Dee?

DEIRDRE

I can go myself.

JESS

Are you sure? I'm already up and —

DEIRDRE

I can go myself.

JESS

— Okay.

*JESS exits. DEIRDRE goes to JESS' desk and takes a few papers, then returns to her own desk.*

PIPER

— What are you doing?

DEIRDRE

Jess asked me to proofread some of this.

PIPER

When?

DEIRDRE

Before you woke up.

PIPER

Are you allowed to do that?

DEIRDRE

I'm allowed to do what I want, okay? I've been here the longest, I'm allowed to do what I want.

PIPER

You alright, Dee?

DEIRDRE

Don't call me that.

PIPER

Why not? I thought you wanted us to start calling you Dee.

DEIRDRE

That was a stupid idea. I don't need a name. It doesn't matter. Call me Nothing.

PIPER

Did I imagine that whole thing?

WILL

Imagine what?

PIPER

Dee asking us to call her Dee.

DEIRDRE

Don't call me that name.

WILL

I remember that.

PIPER

So I'm not making things up.

WILL

Unless we both imagined the same thing happening at the same time.

PIPER

Ooo.

WILL

Right? Maybe we're all simultaneously hallucinating.

DEIRDRE

Stop it.

WILL

Did you hear her say "Stop it"?

PIPER

I did!

WILL

Woah.

*DEIRDRE puts her head on her desk and cries. PIPER gets a box of tissues from her desk and lobs it toward DEIRDRE. DEIRDRE doesn't react.*

PIPER

Hallucination or not, she's not acting like herself.

DEIRDRE

Just forget about it.

Also please don't throw things at me.

WILL

Do you need a hug?

DEIRDRE

No.

WILL

A hug would probably help you feel better.

DEIRDRE

I said no.

WILL

Fine, I didn't want to hug you anyway.

PIPER

Will you tell us? Why you're acting like this?

DEIRDRE

I said forget about it. I'm getting back to work.

*Looking through JESS' papers.*

— This isn't about foxes. This is about —

*JESS enters with a granola bar, sits at her desk.*

PIPER

What? What is it?

DEIRDRE

Never mind.

JESS

What are we talking about?

PIPER

Dee's not acting like herself. She just took —

DEIRDRE

I said don't call me Dee.

WILL

She needs a hug.

DEIRDRE

No I don't. Can't we just work in peace for once?

JESS

You told the intern the news about calling you Dee, right?

DEIRDRE

It doesn't matter.

JESS

— Why, what happened?

PIPER

She won't say.

JESS

Why won't she say?

DEIRDRE

Why does it matter so much?

JESS

We want to make sure you're okay.

DEIRDRE

Ha. Do you really? Or are you just trying to get on my good side?

JESS

I'm concerned about you.

DEIRDRE

Don't be. I've been here a long time, I know how it all works. I don't need your concern.

JESS

Did the intern tell Gene to call you Dee, like you want?

DEIRDRE

I want to be called Nothing.

JESS

— Got it. Okay.

*They work in silence. JESS notices something.*

I think I'm missing some of my writing.

DEIRDRE *cutting in quickly*

The intern took them. I saw them do it.

JESS

But why?

DEIRDRE

To check on your progress. Since you're new.

PIPER

That's not true.

DEIRDRE

It is. Maybe your memory has just been wiped.

WILL

Ooo, a wiped memory.

PIPER

No, it's not true, because Dee —

DEIRDRE

I said don't call me that name!

PIPER

What is going on with you??

*DEIRDRE stands and takes the video camera from PIPER's desk.*

Hey, give that back!

*DEIRDRE starts recording herself.*

DEIRDRE

I said, "I want to be called Dee, I want you and Gene to start calling me Dee, from now on."

The intern said, "Why? Your name is Deirdre."

I said, "I want to be taken seriously."

The intern said, "Deirdre is a serious name."

I said, "I like Dee better. I want to try it. Can you please tell Gene?"

The intern said, "I don't have a name."

I said, "I know. I'm asking about my name."

The intern said, "Then you tell Gene that I want a name too. I am worth a name."

I said, "But you are the intern."

The intern said, "You are not worth so many names. You should be happy to have one."

I said, "I want a different one."

The intern said, "No. You are not even worth one name."

I said, "Aren't I?"

The intern did not say anything else. The intern left.

*DEIRDRE looks at the video camera. Then she deletes the video she just recorded.*

That's over now.

PIPER

Over?

DEIRDRE

The memory. Gone. It doesn't exist.

WILL

Maybe it never did.

*THE INTERN enters, looking bloodied, disheveled, and exhausted. They are carrying a large Folgers coffee tin. They go to a corner and cry. PIPER starts filming.*

THE INTERN

I don't want to talk about it.

JESS to PIPER

Don't film.

PIPER

It'll make good footage.

JESS

What happened to you?

DEIRDRE

They don't want to talk about it.

WILL

Or maybe they don't remember. Maybe their memory was wiped.  
Or we're all hallucinating this right now.

*To THE INTERN.*

Are you really here or are we all hallucinating?

*THE INTERN glares at WILL.*

— Okay, sorry, sorry.

THE INTERN

I got the coffee, that's all that matters.

JESS

If you need help with anything —

THE INTERN

Please stop offering.

*THE INTERN stands.*

You didn't see me crying here.

PIPER *to camera*

How do we know what we see is real, and isn't an illusion?

JESS

Before you go, um — has Gene taken a look at my project yet?

THE INTERN

What? No.

JESS

For the progress report.

THE INTERN

We don't do progress reports. He'll see it when you're done.

JESS

But Dee said —

DEIRDRE

I didn't say anything.

JESS

What is going on here?

PIPER

Deirdre took the papers from your desk! It was her!

DEIRDRE

Piper!

PIPER

I had to say something!

JESS

What? Is that true?

WILL *to PIPER*

You should film this.

DEIRDRE

So what if it is?

PIPER *to WILL*

Ooo, good idea.

JESS

You can't just —

DEIRDRE *rapidly*

Did you know that starting in 1959, Dmitri Belyayev, a Russian zoologist, designed a selective breeding experiment for the domestication of foxes?

JESS

Why did you take my work?

DEIRDRE *continuing*

He selected only the foxes which were tamest, the least aggressive to humans, to breed. And it worked. Over generations, they started to resemble dogs. Lower adrenaline levels, floppier ears, all that. They even started wagging their tails like dogs. Can you believe it?

JESS

It doesn't matter!

DEIRDRE

Then why'd you write that Gene was doing the same thing to us, here?

THE INTERN

What?

DEIRDRE

You weren't writing about foxes. Not totally. You were writing about Gene.

THE INTERN

Okay, everybody out.

PIPER

Out?

THE INTERN

Out of the room.

WILL

Where do you want us to go?

THE INTERN

I don't know. The kitchen. Somewhere.  
I need to talk to Jess alone.

JESS

— But maybe everyone can stay? It'd make me feel better.

THE INTERN

No. Everyone out.

WILL

Good luck, Jess.

JESS

Good luck? Has this happened to any of you before?

THE INTERN

No more talking. Out!

*DEIRDRE, PIPER, and WILL exit.*

PIPER *as they're exiting*

What's going to happen to her?

*Everyone else is gone. THE INTERN looks at JESS.  
Transition.*

**Optional Intermission**



**Six**

*Lights up. THE INTERN is reading JESS' writing. JESS sits. Silence.*

JESS

What are you going to do with me?

THE INTERN

Shh.

JESS

How long until you're done?

THE INTERN

I'm trying to concentrate.

JESS

Fine.

*JESS stands and paces.*

THE INTERN

Sit.

JESS

I'm uncomfortable with this.

THE INTERN

It's a comfortable chair.

JESS

That's not what I —

THE INTERN

Sit. You're distracting me.

*JESS sits. Silence. THE INTERN finishes and puts down the papers.*

Okay. Yeah. Where do I start?

JESS

You can start by telling me what's going on here.

THE INTERN

Hm.

JESS

— So, what's going on here?

THE INTERN *standing*

I'll be right back.

*THE INTERN exits.*

JESS

Um — ?

*JESS waits, then tears up the papers. JESS waits some more.  
THE INTERN eventually re-enters.*

JESS

Where'd you go?

THE INTERN

First, I want to say; you're very intelligent, Jess. Don't think it hasn't been noticed.

JESS

I don't want praise  
I want to know why you're speaking to me alone.

THE INTERN

You tore up your writing.

JESS

I did. What are you going to do to me?

THE INTERN

Why, are you scared about what might happen?

JESS

I honestly don't care anymore.

ANOTHER INTERN

That's not true.  
You care about the others. About Piper, Will. Deirdre.

JESS

Whatever it is you, or Gene, are trying to do here, I'm not going to cooperate.

ANOTHER INTERN

I'm glad you mentioned Gene. Like I said, he's noticed you.

JESS

Great. I'm so glad to hear it.

ANOTHER INTERN

Gene likes intelligent, passionate people. They're hard to come by.

JESS

You mean people who he can steal from are hard to come by.  
You know what, no, I want to talk to him directly.

THE INTERN

You can talk to me directly.

JESS

No, I want to hear it straight from him, instead of from some nobody.

THE INTERN

What?

JESS

You're a nobody. You don't even have a name. You're just the intern.

THE INTERN

You can't talk to Gene.

JESS

Why? Can't you ask? Or do you not have the authority?

THE INTERN

I —

JESS *not stopping*

Oh, I forgot, you probably don't. Because you are not even worth a name. The intern.

THE INTERN

Stop.

JESS

Just the intern. Just the intern. Just the intern. Just the intern.

THE INTERN

I said stop it.

JESS

Just a no-name, nobody intern.

THE INTERN

I have a name.

JESS

No you don't. Intern.

THE INTERN

Stop.

JESS

I'm Jess, but you're just the intern, and you'll always be just the intern.

THE INTERN

Stop saying that! I have a name.

JESS

I don't believe you!

THE INTERN

It's Tia!

JESS

— What?

THE INTERN *panicking*

Oh no.

*THE INTERN exits. A long pause. JESS isn't sure what just happened. After a while, ANOTHER INTERN enters. They look eerily similar to THE INTERN, but something is off. They're not the same person. Probably.*

ANOTHER INTERN

Listen, Jess, I'm not going to play around here.

JESS

How do you know my name?

ANOTHER INTERN

I'm the intern.

Now, Gene is willing to give you an option.

JESS

An option?

ANOTHER INTERN

He knows about what you were writing in the book. His book.

JESS

Is he going to start giving his artists credit?

ANOTHER INTERN

Do I need to repeat myself? *His* book.

Gene is the artist. The others are his employees.

JESS

Do you believe that? Do you support that?

ANOTHER INTERN

It doesn't matter what I think.

JESS

Why am I not surprised you said that?

ANOTHER INTERN

Anyway, Gene is giving you a choice.

JESS

What is it?

ANOTHER INTERN

First of all. He knows you're dissatisfied, and he knows that you're trying to convince yourself and the others that you have better options elsewhere.

JESS

We do.

ANOTHER INTERN

You don't. And let me finish.

JESS

Fine. Finish.

ANOTHER INTERN

Here's your choice, Jess.  
Either you can leave, and Deirdre, Piper, and Will stay here forever —

JESS

That's unacceptable.

ANOTHER INTERN

Or you can let them leave, and you stay here forever.

JESS

You're bargaining with their lives. My life.

ANOTHER INTERN

Not too different from what you were doing already.

JESS

Why should I believe this? I don't know you.

ANOTHER INTERN

Sure you do.

*Imitating JESS from earlier.*

"Come on, we're coworkers now, we're on the same team!"

JESS

— You weren't there when I said that. I said that to the intern.

ANOTHER INTERN

I'm the intern.

JESS

To Tia.

ANOTHER INTERN

You're awfully interested in teams.  
Do you feel that way about Deirdre, Piper, and Will?

JESS

Who are you?

ANOTHER INTERN

You have a decision to make, Jess.

JESS

This is what Gene wants? To make me decide between myself and them? Why?

ANOTHER INTERN

You ask a lot of questions.  
But I'd take it as a compliment, if I were you. Gene thinks your value equals that of three people.

JESS *sarcastic*

Yeah, that makes me feel fantastic.  
— Do I have to decide now?

ANOTHER INTERN

You don't have to decide now. But you do have to decide.  
And if you talk to the others about it, you all stay.

JESS

Right, of course.

ANOTHER INTERN

Are we understood?

JESS

Crystal clear.

ANOTHER INTERN

Good. Gene looks forward to your decision.

*ANOTHER INTERN starts to exit.*

JESS

Just one more question. Sorry.  
Who are you? Where did you come from?

ANOTHER INTERN

That's two questions, Jess.

*ANOTHER INTERN exits. JESS is left alone, in silence.  
Transition.*

**Seven**

*Later. DEIRDRE is working at her desk. PIPER and WILL are asleep on their desks, same as beginning.*

*After a few moments, ANOTHER INTERN enters from the kitchen with the buzzer. ANOTHER INTERN rings the buzzer, jolting PIPER and WILL awake. ANOTHER INTERN exits into the kitchen. PIPER and WILL get to work. Silence.*

PIPER

— Well? Will?

WILL

What?

PIPER

Are you going to get coffee?

WILL

I'm trying to drink less of it.

PIPER

Oh.

WILL

I don't know, I think it'll be better for me. Help me sleep.

PIPER

I thought we were coffee buddies.

WILL

We can be just — buddies.

PIPER

Not the same, man, not the same.

*PIPER stands and exits to the kitchen.*

WILL

I still don't know how you do it.

DEIRDRE

Internal clock.

WILL

Right, but how do you start?

DEIRDRE

You just start.

WILL

And you feel good about it?

DEIRDRE

I feel good being productive.

WILL

But, like, physically you feel good when you get up so early?

DEIRDRE

There's work to do.

WILL

I guess.

DEIRDRE

I feel fine.

*PIPER enters with a cup of coffee.*

PIPER

I feel terrible. Anyone else feel terrible?

WILL

All the time. That's why I stopped drinking coffee.

PIPER

It's why I keep drinking it.

WILL

It's not good for you.

PIPER

I read that coffee helps you live longer.

WILL

That can't be true.

PIPER

It is. There was a study. Even if you drink like, eight cups a day.

DEIRDRE

Who can drink that much coffee in one day?

PIPER

Honore de Balzac drank fifty.

DEIRDRE

A day?

PIPER

Apparently. And he wrote all the time, prolifically. So it helps. I'm channeling my inner Balzac.

WILL

He died when he was about fifty, though. It didn't help him live longer.

PIPER

Maybe eight cups is the limit.



WILL

Why eight, I wonder.

PIPER

Someone should've told Balzac to cut down.

WILL

I'm sure someone did. He probably didn't listen.

PIPER

He's my hero.

DEIRDRE

You want to die when you're fifty?

PIPER

Okay, maybe not that. But his output. How much he wrote.

DEIRDRE

I'd rather have a small output of really high quality, rather than have a huge output of middling quality.

PIPER

But his stuff was all really good, that's why it's impressive.

WILL

That's debatable.

DEIRDRE

What's your favorite book of his?

PIPER

Oh, I haven't read any.

DEIRDRE

— Oh. Okay.

PIPER

But I hear they're great.  
I'll probably read one sometime.

*Pause. They all work in silence for a few moments.*

WILL

— Are we going to talk about it, or are we just going to pretend everything's normal?

PIPER

Looks like I'm out of coffee.  
Cup two, here I come!

*PIPER stands and exits to the kitchen.*

WILL

I guess I'll take that as a no.

DEIRDRE

I'm working now.

*Pause.*

WILL

I'm telling you, someday I'm going to leave too. I'm getting out of here.

DEIRDRE

Just like Craig.

WILL

Exactly.

DEIRDRE

Then do it.

WILL

I'm going to.

DEIRDRE

No, do it now.

WILL

— I need time. To plan. Jess would probably know what to do.

DEIRDRE

I was looking out for all of us.

WILL

Yeah.

You know, when I was first hired, Gene sent me a note saying how much potential he saw in me.

DEIRDRE

— So?

WILL

Do you think I have potential?

DEIRDRE

Depends on what for.

*Pause.*

WILL

Maybe when I'm done writing this damn stand-up act. That's when I'm out.

DEIRDRE

Can I hear some of it?

*PIPER enters with her new cup of coffee.*

PIPER

Ooo, is Will finally doing the act?

WILL

No, no, I'm not ready yet.

DEIRDRE

We'll go easy on you.

PIPER

Speak for yourself. I'm ready to judge you so hard.

WILL

Yeah, no thanks.

PIPER

Come on! It'll be great!

WILL

You guys aren't going to like it.

DEIRDRE

Why, are there jokes about us in there?

PIPER

Even better. Bring it on, roast me, I can take it.

Woah, roast like coffee.

*Turns her camera on and records herself.*

Roast me like coffee.

WILL

Gross.

There aren't jokes about you, I'm just not sure if you'll like the act.

DEIRDRE

I'm sure we will.

PIPER

I can film you doing it, if you want! That way you can watch yourself later!

WILL

Somehow that makes it worse?

PIPER

Fine, I won't film you.

WILL

Thank you.

PIPER

But you have to do it.

WILL

How about tomorrow?

PIPER

Today.

WILL

I'm nervous. I don't like public speaking.

DEIRDRE

It's just us.

PIPER

You like regular speaking at us.

*WILL puts his head on his desk.*

WILL *head down*

Tomorrow.

PIPER

No, because you'll say no tomorrow too! It has to be today!

WILL *head down*

Tomorrow.

PIPER

Don't be lame. Today.

*No response from WILL. PIPER tries harder.*

Today.

Today.

Today.

Today.

Today. Today.

Today.

Today.

Today. Today. Today. Today.

DEIRDRE *overlapping*

Oh my god.

Will, just do it so she'll stop.

PIPER *overlapping*

Today.

Today?

Today.

Today. Today. Today. Today.

Today?

Today?

Today?

WILL

Okay! Fine! Okay! Stop saying today!

PIPER

You'll do it?

WILL

Yes, whatever, I'll do it. I'll do it.

Are you happy?

PIPER

So happy.

*WILL grabs some papers and stands facing DEIRDRE and PIPER.*

WILL

I'm so uncomfortable.

DEIRDRE

Just breathe.

*WILL takes a deep breath.*

WILL

Okay. Um. This is the first few minutes.  
And imagine Gene is saying all this. Obviously.  
Ready?

PIPER

Yes!

WILL

I'm not.

Okay. Cool Okay.

*WILL takes another deep breath, clears his throat, reads.*

Hello! Thank you for coming! Look at this crowd! Wow!

I love crowds that make you say "wow, look at this crowd," because the people who are actually in the crowd can't see the entire thing, so they have no perspective on how impressive it is. I can see the entire thing, though, so I know how impressive of a crowd you really are. "Wow, look at this crowd!"

You know, I suppose a bird would be able to say it, too, looking down at a crowd like this. That is, if a bird knew what a crowd was, and knew to be impressed by the size of one, and knew enough human language to be able to express that thought in English. "Wow, look at that crowd!" In truth, though, birds are probably just confused by us gathering in crowds like this. "Aren't they uncomfortable, all smushed together like that?" Yes, yes we are, bird, but don't judge our unorganized blobs of people and we won't judge your beautifully choreographed and executed flying V shapes!

Okay, I guess that doesn't quite work. It's hard to hate something beautiful. Anyone who's dated me can tell you that; I've had so many exes tell me they just can't bring themselves to hate me because I just have such an attractive face.

Ha. That's not true *at all*.

I don't think I have enough exes, though. Really. I don't think so. I want more. Especially exes where things ended really badly. I want more of those. And I want them all to be in one city. Hundreds — no, thousands — of them. All in the same place. Wouldn't that be so much fun? I think it would be. Every time I get on the train, every trip to the grocery store, every time I turn a corner, just:

*WILL jolts back, fake surprised.*

"Woah! Where'd you come from? Get out of here!" You know, that reaction that you have when you see an ex you aren't expecting to see? "Jesus Christ!" Your heart stops, your stomach drops, your mouth gets all dry, your ass clenches up. It's true! Tell me it's not true. It's the exact same reaction as when you come home from vacation and realize you'd left food on the kitchen counter. You turn on the light, and roaches go running everywhere. "Jesus Christ!" It's the same reaction as seeing an ex in the wild.

*JESS enters from the kitchen, eating a banana, and stands to listen.*

Yeah, my life would be so much better if I had thousands of exes roaming the streets at all times. I think my days would be much more interesting and exciting. I could give up coffee! Really! I wouldn't need to drink it anymore, running into an ex would wake me up even better. Can you imagine? You're on your way to work, all groggy, then: bam! Your ex! "Jesus Christ!" You're awake for the rest of the day.

*WILL falters and stops.*

— Sorry, this is so bad. I have no idea what I'm doing.

DEIRDRE

You're doing great.

PIPER

You're doing okay.

WILL

Be honest. It's awful.

*JESS takes the banana peel and places it on the floor near WILL.*

JESS

Try again.

WILL

It's not funny.

JESS

Try to stand up and keep falling on the banana peel.

WILL

— What?

JESS

Just try it. The last section.

Don't worry about making it funny. Standing up is the most important thing.

*WILL gets on the floor, and as he's speaking tries to stand. He intentionally keeps slipping and falling because of the banana peel. Big, desperate, hilarious flailing. He's trying so hard.*

WILL

My life would be so much better if I had thousands of exes roaming the streets at all times. I think my days would be much more interesting and exciting. I could give up coffee! Really! I wouldn't need to drink it anymore, running into an ex would wake me up even better. Can you imagine? You're on your way to work, all groggy, then: bam! Your ex! "Jesus Christ!" You're awake for the rest of the day.

*WILL collapses on the floor. PIPER claps.*

PIPER

That was pretty funny!

WILL

You think so?

JESS

It's a start.

DEIRDRE

You're still here.

JESS

I'm still here.

PIPER

I told them you weren't a quitter.

WILL

No you didn't.

PIPER

Well, I thought it.

DEIRDRE

I thought you'd have gone by now.

JESS

I have to finish the work I started.

DEIRDRE

— You don't mean the fox book.

*ANOTHER INTERN enters.*

JESS

I do. I mean the fox book.

ANOTHER INTERN

Is everyone okay in here? I heard a noise.

WILL *still on the ground*

— I fell.

JESS

We're all fine.

ANOTHER INTERN

Great. Then let's get back to work.

I'm going to the store.

*ANOTHER INTERN exits.*

DEIRDRE

You're not fooling anyone, Jess.

JESS

I don't know what you're talking about.

DEIRDRE

Okay, now you're really not fooling anyone.

JESS

— I think the new intern's probably gone now. Right?

WILL

Shoot, I forgot to ask for fruit bars.

JESS

So we all need to figure out a way out of here. Together.

PIPER

— The door?

DEIRDRE

Why? Because of the whole "not getting credit" thing?

JESS

That's part of it.

DEIRDRE

When are you going to figure out that things don't change around here?

JESS

They could, if we work together. We need to have a united front.  
Don't you guys want to actually realize your dreams? Live your own lives, make your own art,  
instead of somebody else's?

WILL

I mean, it would be nice.

PIPER

Our names in lights!

JESS

Exactly. What do you say?

PIPER

I do. I want that.

DEIRDRE

You're not being realistic here.

JESS

We need to have a little faith if we're going to make this work.

PIPER

I believe in you, Jess. If you can make Will funny, anything's possible.

WILL

I want to object to that, but she has a point.

JESS

So you're with me?



DEIRDRE

I don't know about this.

PIPER

Yes!

JESS

Great.

So — what are we going to do?

*Pause. They think.  
Transition.*

**Eight**

*Later. DEIRDRE PIPER, WILL, and JESS are working. ANOTHER INTERN is there, watching and taking notes.*

PIPER

Can I film you?

ANOTHER INTERN

No.

PIPER

You have a cinematic face.

ANOTHER INTERN

Great.

PIPER

So can I film it?

ANOTHER INTERN

No.

WILL

Do I have a cinematic face?

PIPER

I haven't really thought about it.

WILL

Well — think about it now.

PIPER

Nah, I don't really want to.

WILL

Oh. Um. Okay.

*Pause.*

JESS

Is anyone getting anything from the kitchen?

DEIRDRE

Are you offering?

PIPER

Unlike Will, I will always say yes to coffee.

JESS

I thought the intern could go get us something.

ANOTHER INTERN

No, I'll stay here.

JESS

Isn't making sure we're supported part of your job, though?

ANOTHER INTERN

My job right now is to observe.

JESS

We're only working. Nothing remarkable.

ANOTHER INTERN

Well, it's what Gene wants.

DEIRDRE

Why, does he think we aren't capable?

ANOTHER INTERN

It's what I was told to do.

PIPER *standing*

Okay, I don't want to listen to this anymore.  
Will. Coffee? I don't want to be the only one.

WILL

Sorry, Piper.

PIPER

Lame.

DEIRDRE

I'll have a cup.

PIPER

Coming right up, Dee.

DEIRDRE

Deirdre. I decided it's Deirdre.

PIPER

Deirdre. Okay. Cool.

JESS

I'll go with you.

PIPER

Why?

JESS

To help.

PIPER

I don't need help.

JESS

Just — shh. I'm coming with you.

PIPER

Okay, weirdo.

*PIPER and JESS exit.*

WILL

How many times are you going to change your name?

DEIRDRE

This is the last time, I swear. I realized Deirdre is what suited me best all along.

WILL

— So we went through all that for nothing.

DEIRDRE

You didn't like when I changed my name *from* Deirdre, now you're upset that I'm changing it back *to* Deirdre?

WILL

I guess I don't like change.

ANOTHER INTERN *writing something*

Hm.

DEIRDRE

What are you writing?

ANOTHER INTERN

Just observing.

Don't let me distract you?

WILL

Are you writing anything about me? Put down "Will's very funny," so Gene sees it.

*PIPER and JESS re-enter. PIPER carries two cups of coffee, JESS carries one.*

PIPER

Here's yours, *Deirdre*.

DEIRDRE

Thank you.

PIPER *obviously rehearsed*

Didn't you get the intern a coffee, Jess?

JESS

I did.

ANOTHER INTERN

I didn't ask for a coffee.

PIPER

The old intern *loved* coffee.

DEIRDRE

They did?

PIPER

Yes.

ANOTHER INTERN

That's alright —

PIPER

Why don't you give it to them, Jess?

JESS

Great idea, Piper. Here you go.

*JESS spills the coffee on ANOTHER INTERN.*

ANOTHER INTERN

Oh my god! Ow!

PIPER

Oh no!

JESS

I'm so sorry. It appears that I've spilled scalding hot coffee on you.

ANOTHER INTERN

*Yes, it certainly appears that way!*

DEIRDRE

Do you need a paper towel or something?

ANOTHER INTERN

Yes!

JESS

There are some in the kitchen, I think.

*ANOTHER INTERN exits.*

PIPER

I can't believe that worked.

JESS

We have to make this quick.

DEIRDRE

Someone please explain what's happening.

WILL

Jess spilled coffee on the intern.

JESS

We need to figure out a plan.

WILL

I thought the plan was paper towels.

JESS

Not for the spilled coffee. To get out of here.

WILL

Oh, got it.  
Wait, you're leaving?

JESS

We all are.

DEIRDRE

You're back on this? If it's that big a deal, if you're this unhappy here, just go.

JESS

We all have to go together.

DEIRDRE

Why all of us?

JESS

Because Gene —

*ANOTHER INTERN enters, with paper towels.*

ANOTHER INTERN

What about Gene?

DEIRDRE

Jess is saying that we have to —

JESS

Get back to work. We have to get back to work.

ANOTHER INTERN

Hmm.

*ANOTHER INTERN walks across the room, writing something down in their notes. Distracted, they slip on Will's banana peel from earlier, which has been sitting there the entire time. ANOTHER INTERN falls to the floor, hits their head, and passes out. JESS, DEIRDRE, PIPER, and WILL look at ANOTHER INTERN on the ground.*

WILL

— Maybe I should've picked that up.

PIPER

Did the intern just die? Are they dead?

JESS *checking*

They're breathing. Okay.  
This is — serendipitous.

DEIRDRE

Serendipitous? They're out cold.

PIPER

But not dead.

DEIRDRE

Gene's not going to be happy.

JESS

It wasn't our fault.

— Okay, it was a little bit our fault.

WILL *picking up the banana peel*

Bad banana peel. Bad.

DEIRDRE *re: ANOTHER INTERN*

I wonder if he'll get a new one.

WILL

A new banana peel?

JESS *ignoring WILL*

It's serendipitous, though, because now we have a chance.

DEIRDRE

Right, how could I forget? You have a perfect chance to leave.

JESS

We're not leaving yet.

PIPER

Jess says we have to show the world what Gene is doing, how his work is made. People need to find out about *us*.

DEIRDRE

And you believe that?

PIPER

I mean, the recognition would be nice.

JESS

Not only the recognition, though, it would also be for —

DEIRDRE

Will?

WILL

You already know I want to get out of this place.

DEIRDRE

Why does telling people about ourselves matter so much, though? If you want to leave, then just leave. Easy as that.

JESS

Because it's important! People should know that there's more to this work than just Gene.

DEIRDRE

People only care about the art, not who makes it.

JESS

I don't think that's true.

Besides, don't you want people to know how much you've been responsible for over the years? It could lead to better opportunities for you, like you said. It could lead to something more.

DEIRDRE

Yes, but this feels — wrong.

JESS

Gene taking advantage of you is wrong. And I don't want him to keep doing what he's doing, and go on to take advantage of anyone else.

DEIRDRE

Right. Of course. He's "taking advantage of us."  
So Piper, you want recognition for your work?

PIPER

Can you imagine? My name in lights! *Piper!*

DEIRDRE

And if you were to stop making work for Gene, if you went off on your own, that would happen.

WILL

It's going to!

JESS

Exactly.

DEIRDRE

Would you say it's destined to be?

PIPER

Yeah, I like that word. *Destined.*

DEIRDRE

Me too. So, since it's destined to be, why didn't it happen before you started working here?

PIPER

— I don't know, things just didn't line up.

DEIRDRE

Right. How much were you creating before this job? On your own?

JESS

Deirdre.

DEIRDRE

What? It's a simple question.



PIPER

It's hard to say.

JESS

Deirdre, stop. This is mean.

DEIRDRE

Because you weren't making anything. You said it yourself, you didn't do any work before you came here. You only took vacations on the Mediterranean.

PIPER

I would've.

JESS *to PIPER*

You will.

*To DEIRDRE.*

Why are you being like this?

DEIRDRE

You're promising something impossible.

JESS

You don't know that.

DEIRDRE

Fine. Go right ahead. Do what you want. I don't care.

JESS

I thought you wanted to get out too. To move on to something better.

DEIRDRE

Not like this.

*DEIRDRE stands and exits. JESS fumes. PIPER starts filming JESS.*

WILL

Should we go after her, or — ?

JESS

— Don't film me, please.

PIPER

You have a really angry look on your face, I want to get it.

WILL

Oh, you do look really mad. That'll be a good shot.

JESS *has an idea*

Wait. The camera. That's it.

PIPER

What is?

JESS

You have all that footage of us here, just hanging out, right?

PIPER

Of course.

JESS

In some of that footage we have to be talking about how Gene doesn't make any of his own art.

PIPER

I'm pretty sure, yeah.

JESS

Keep that footage in the film. It's authentic, it's coming straight from us, it's perfect. People will see the movie and realize what's going on behind the scenes!

WILL

Do you think people will think it's staged? Like, maybe they'll think that Gene hired us as actors and is commenting on his own work.

JESS

No, because we also talk about his other projects, things that haven't even been announced yet. The fox book.

PIPER

Ohhhh. So we release this film as an inside look at Gene's process —

JESS

And it's damning. It's perfect. This'll bring the attention we want.

WILL

And we'll be in control of the narrative.

JESS

Right. It won't be immediately obvious that we've put a message in there, Gene will just think it's normal. But then, when the credits roll, the first thing he'll see is: "A film by Piper."

PIPER

Okay, I love that.

JESS

When can you have it ready?

PIPER

Gene wants it to premiere in a few months, so I can have it ready in — a few months.

JESS

Great. This is going to be huge.

WILL

A film by Piper!

PIPER

Yes!! A film by Piper!!!

JESS

And bigger and better things to come!

*DEIRDRE enters with the buzzer and rings it in ANOTHER INTERN's face. ANOTHER INTERN jolts awake.*

ANOTHER INTERN

— What happened? Why am I on the floor?

JESS

You fell asleep.

*DEIRDRE goes back to her desk, as do JESS and WILL. PIPER films ANOTHER INTERN. ANOTHER INTERN, confused, lies back down.*

ANOTHER INTERN

Don't tell Gene I fell asleep.

JESS

I think he'll have bigger things to worry about.

*Transition.*

**Nine**

*Later. The day of the film premiere. PIPER, WILL, and JESS are nervous. DEIRDRE tries to work without being distracted by them. A few moments of silence.*

PIPER

What do you think is happening?

WILL *not serious*

Probably the premiere of your movie.

PIPER

Yeah, thanks, I knew that much.

JESS

How long has it been?

WILL *checking the time*

It started about forty minutes ago.

JESS

Change is happening. That's for sure.

PIPER

Do you think he's nervous? Upset? Ashamed?  
Embarrassed? Surprised? Shocked? Outraged? Humbled?

DEIRDRE

Please stop.

WILL

We'll hear from him, right? We have to. He'll have to say something to us.  
Oh, we're going to be so fired.

JESS

Good! I can't wait for us to leave this place and start doing what we *want* to do.

WILL

It's going to be tough, getting fired. Like we let him down.

JESS

People will be on *our* side, though. It'll be good.

WILL

Did I come across well in the film? Like, did I seem like a nice person?

JESS

Of course.

PIPER

I mean, you seem like yourself.

WILL

Because people won't want to be on our side if we don't look like good people.

JESS

We look fine.

PIPER

I look great. I have excellent bone structure.

WILL

I'm sorry, I'm just tense.

JESS

It'll be great.

DEIRDRE

Can you all please sit down? You're being distracting.

PIPER

I don't know why I thought having *more* coffee would help me calm down.

WILL

That sounds so good right now.

PIPER

Do it.

WILL

I shouldn't.

PIPER

You know you want to.

WILL

I really shouldn't —

PIPER

—

WILL

Okay, fine. Just one.

*WILL exits.*

JESS *calling after him*

Will! What happened to your resolve??

WILL *off*

What resolve?

PIPER

I knew you'd come through!

WILL *off*

I'm not proud!

PIPER

That's okay, you don't have to be!

DEIRDRE

I'm trying to work here.

JESS

But soon you won't have to do that! You'll be able to make what you're actually passionate about! No more projects from Gene! Isn't that exciting?

DEIRDRE

Honestly, I'm passionate about foxes.

JESS

Then write about foxes! Take my project! I certainly won't need it anymore.

DEIRDRE

— Seriously? What'll Gene say?

JESS

It doesn't matter!

PIPER

Yeah, screw Gene!  
A film by Piper!

JESS

Exactly, screw Gene! Go for it, write about foxes!  
A book by Deirdre!

DEIRDRE

Okay. Wow. Thank you. Thank you so much.

*JESS hands DEIRDRE the papers for the fox book.*

JESS

I never understood why you like foxes so much, anyway.

*WILL enters, with coffee.*

WILL

None of us understand.

DEIRDRE

I just do. I don't know. I guess I sort of admire them. They're so beautiful, just really lovely creatures. And resilient. Like, Arctic foxes being able to live in such cold weather, and not even shiver? That's like a superpower. And the fact that they're solitary hunters astonishes me. That they can do everything they need on their own. That's impressive. I wish I was that strong. I wish I could go solo, to do things on my own like that.

JESS

You are, though.

DEIRDRE

No. No, I'm not.

JESS

You were standing up to us, by yourself. That takes strength.

DEIRDRE

— I guess so.

JESS

It does.

DEIRDRE

I just didn't want you all to — never mind.

JESS

What? Leave?

DEIRDRE

After we stop working for Gene. I thought that might be the end of — I don't know.

PIPER

Come on, Deirdre, did you really think we'd do that to you?

WILL

Yeah, we're sticking together. You're the only ones who can get me out of my creative funks.

PIPER

And I'll need people to film.

JESS

See? You're not going to get rid of us that easily.

DEIRDRE

I'm — I'm really glad to hear that.

JESS

So, do you still think this is all going to be a disaster?

DEIRDRE

Maybe. But it'll be a worthwhile disaster.

WILL

"A Worthwhile Disaster." Name of my autobiography, I'm calling it.

PIPER

Ooo, I'd for sure read that.

DEIRDRE

I wonder how much of a disaster it'll be.

*ANOTHER INTERN enters, with a letter and a bag.*

JESS

I guess we're about to find out.

PIPER

Was Gene at the premiere of the film?

ANOTHER INTERN

He was there.

PIPER

— Well? What did he think?

WILL

What did he say?

ANOTHER INTERN

He couldn't come back here himself, so he sent a letter.

*ANOTHER INTERN reads the letter.*

"To Piper, the creator of this film, but also to Deirdre, Will, and Jess."

PIPER

I'm nervous.

JESS

It'll be okay.

ANOTHER INTERN

"First of all, I want to congratulate you all on an excellent work of art. Piper — not only is your film a superb slice-of-life piece of cinema, but it is also exquisitely composed, well-edited, interspersed with intriguing quotidian imagery, and plays with the ideas of linear, circular, and meta-narratives in fascinating ways. Especially with the most obvious touch of self-aware commentary at the end, 'A film by Piper.' Lovely. I received many compliments about that small moment. Anyway, I could have easily watched ten more hours of this piece. The rest of the audience at the premiere seemed to be of the same mind as myself. They were enraptured from beginning to end. I look forward to assigning you more films in the future."

PIPER

— Wow. He loved it!

JESS

What? Did he miss the whole point?

PIPER

I'm excited to make more films, too.

JESS

Not for him, though, right?

ANOTHER INTERN

"To Deirdre — or Deedee, Dee, Nothing, or whatever you'd prefer to be called — your knowledge of and passion for foxes is remarkable. I don't know how I missed it when I assigned Craig, and later Jess, the project. I will officially be assigning it to solely you going forward. I suspect this will not be the last time you work on a project about foxes, either. Perhaps a fox 'film by Piper' can be



put in the works sometime. Something about the Belyayev experiment, maybe? You'll have to tell me more about that sometime."

DEIRDRE

I get the fox book. Officially.

JESS

Hopefully he'll actually give you credit for it —

ANOTHER INTERN

"Jess — what a force of nature you are. I know you have not been with us long, but I want to say how lucky I am to have you aboard. It's rare to find someone who challenges others to think critically the way you do —

JESS

No, I'm not listening to this.

DEIRDRE

He gave me the fox book. He cares.

JESS

No he doesn't! He's just trying to get you to stay!

PIPER

Well, he liked the "film by Piper" thing, he wasn't mad about me doing that. So maybe he's open to giving us credit.

JESS

But he didn't give you credit, he thought it was an artistic choice and he took credit for it!

PIPER

I don't know.

WILL

— Did he write anything to me?

ANOTHER INTERN

"To Will — I should let you know that many people approached me after the premiere, asking where I found such a funny person to star in the film. The woman who sat behind me seemed very entertained indeed, every other sentence from you seemed to elicit a hearty guffaw from her. I knew I had entrusted the writing of my stand-up act to the correct person. You're certainly living up to your potential here."

PIPER

Wow. That's nice of him.

WILL

He thinks that about me?

JESS

Will. He doesn't mean it.

WILL

Right. He doesn't mean it.

JESS

Let's go. It's clear he's completely missed the point of what we were trying to say, or he's blatantly ignoring it. Either way, we should leave. Forget about taking down his reputation, we'll just make better art than him!

WILL

Yes. Yes! We can make our own art! We're going to be in charge of our own fates!

JESS

Exactly!

WILL

It's a little scary to think about, but it'll be good.

JESS

It'll be great!  
Piper? Deirdre? Are you coming?

DEIRDRE

It sounds like he wants to treat us better.

JESS

No, don't fall for it! This is just a few nice words, but then nothing will change. Let's all go, and really prove our point to him.

WILL

Let's prove a point, y'all!

ANOTHER INTERN

Oh, I almost forgot. He had more for Will.

JESS

That's fine. We're going anyway.

WILL

Yeah. We're going.  
— What if I don't live up to my potential in the real world?

ANOTHER INTERN

"I also heard your request loud and clear. I don't know how or why this was overlooked for so long."

*ANOTHER INTERN pulls fruit bars out the bag.*

WILL

— Fruit bars.

JESS

You can buy those for yourself once we're gone. That'll be nice, right?

WILL

The intern said they were out, that no one had them anymore. But Gene does. Gene has them.

JESS

I'm sure we can find them somewhere. Come with me.

WILL

But they're right here. They're here, right now.

*WILL takes some fruit bars from ANOTHER INTERN.*

PIPER

Jess, let him enjoy this.

*WILL opens a fruit bar and takes a bite.*

WILL

Oh, it's not stale. It's so good.

JESS

Okay. Great. Now let's all leave.

Time to prove a point and make our own art, art with our own names on it. Right?

WILL

— I think I'm going to stay here.

JESS

What?

ANOTHER INTERN

There are more fruit bars to come, Will.

PIPER

Me too. I'll stay too. I think things are turning around.

JESS

But — they aren't. They aren't turning around.

PIPER

You never know.

He liked 'A film by Piper'!

JESS

Deirdre, come on. You've been here the longest. You know things don't change.

DEIRDRE

They might.

JESS

I can't let you all stay here and waste away like this! Please, come with me.

We're there for each other, remember?

WILL

So you should stay.

JESS

That's not the point, though. The point is we go and we make it on our own.

PIPER

But we can make it here.

DEIRDRE

All the hard work is starting to pay off!

JESS

Listen —

PIPER *to DEIRDRE*

Do you want to start brainstorming ideas for the fox movie?

DEIRDRE

Ooo, yes!

WILL

Maybe I could star in it! Make it a comedy, and I play a funny fox, you know? Something like that? You think people would like that?

PIPER

Ha. That's an — interesting idea. It might be cute.

JESS

Are you all really okay with this?

PIPER

I mean, I'm sure there are better ideas than Will in a fox costume.

WILL

You could help us think critically!

JESS

No, I can't — we shouldn't be here. We should be leaving.

DEIRDRE

But it's all getting better now.

PIPER

And you were the one to start the change!

JESS

It's not changing, it's — he's —

WILL

Do you want a fruit bar?

JESS

— No. No, I don't want a fruit bar.

ANOTHER INTERN

Jess. Remember your decision?

JESS

Don't start me with that right now.

ANOTHER INTERN

Have you made up your mind yet? It's time to decide.

JESS

You can't make me do this.

ANOTHER INTERN

Try me.

JESS

Guys, we're a united front, remember? So let's make a statement and all leave together.

PIPER

Why? You got what you wanted. You made things change.

WILL

You made Gene change.

JESS

This place never changes. Right, Deirdre?

DEIRDRE

I guess you proved me wrong.

PIPER

You should stay with us, Jess. We're a team!

ANOTHER INTERN

I think Jess is actually going to be leaving.

WILL

Wait, really?

PIPER

Without us?

JESS

— I have to.

WILL

Have to?

ANOTHER INTERN

Yes. She has to.

PIPER

I'm going to film you saying goodbye. For my next project!

*PIPER gets her camera and films.*

JESS

Please. You can still change your minds.

PIPER

Make it a happy goodbye, though. I hate sad goodbyes.

JESS

I wish I was a fox and not a person. I wish I had fur and whiskers and could be okay on my own. To be okay doing everything just for myself. I think all of us wish that sometimes.

*Eyes closed.*

Come on now, damn it. Turn into a fox.

PIPER

— I don't think people can turn into foxes, Jess.

JESS

I thought if I did it, you all could too.

DEIRDRE

I'd want to turn into a fox.

WILL

We know, Deirdre.

PIPER

Well, Jess, that was weird. Was that your goodbye?

JESS

I guess so.

ANOTHER INTERN

Alright, let's get going.

PIPER

Let us hug you goodbye.

*PIPER and WILL hug JESS.*

Get in here, Deirdre.

DEIRDRE

Fine, fine.

*DEIRDRE joins the hug.*

JESS

It doesn't have to be like this. You can come with me.

ANOTHER INTERN *breaking up the hug*

Time to go, Jess.

*JESS punches ANOTHER INTERN.*

Ow! Goddamn it!

JESS

Please. Piper. Will. Come on.

Deirdre.

You know deep down that there are better options than this. Just come with me. Please.

ANOTHER INTERN

Time to go. Now.

I'm being courteous by not hitting you back, so don't give me an excuse.

JESS *to ANOTHER INTERN*

I'm going, I'm going.

*To DEIRDRE, PIPER, and WILL.*

— Last chance.

*They don't respond.*

Well. I guess my decision has been made for me.

ANOTHER INTERN

Gene appreciates all your hard work. I'll show you out.

*JESS exits, hesitating before leaving for good. ANOTHER INTERN exits, following.*

DEIRDRE

You know, I had a bad feeling about her from the beginning.

PIPER

We're making the right choice, right?

WILL

Of course. There are fruit bars.

And none of us are going to hit each other.

DEIRDRE

I think it is the right choice. It's amazing. Change really is happening.

We're going to have so many opportunities.

*Pause. They all think about the opportunities awaiting them. Silence.  
Transition.*

**Ten**

*Later. Same as beginning of play. DEIRDRE is working, PIPER and WILL sleep. After a few moments, ANOTHER INTERN enters from the kitchen, carrying the buzzer. THE INTERN rings the buzzer, waking PIPER and WILL. DEIRDRE is unfazed by the noise. THE INTERN exits. PIPER and WILL yawn, stretch, rub eyes, etc, then get to work. PIPER turns on a handheld video camera, which she uses intermittently to record her surroundings or herself. They work in silence for a bit. After another few moments, WILL stands and exits to the kitchen. He returns with a mug of coffee and a fruit bar, then plops in his chair and puts his head back on his desk with a groan.*

PIPER

No coffee for me?

WILL *head down*

Too tired.

PIPER

Boo.

DEIRDRE

You should try waking up on your own. You wouldn't be so tired.

WILL *lifting his head*

What?

DEIRDRE

Maybe you should try waking up on your own. You wouldn't be so tired.

WILL

Oh — yeah. Maybe I should.

Maybe I should.

*DEIRDRE, PIPER, and WILL work in silence for a long time.*

*Blackout.*

**END OF PLAY.**