Don Zolidis
donzolidis@gmail.com

I Heard You Were Dead

A play in two acts

By Don Zolidis

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Full-Length Drama

5w, 7m, 6 any gender

Constantine Wright spent his sophomore year in high school surviving lymphocytic leukemia. But going back to school for his junior year might be harder than beating cancer. Especially since the girl of his dreams, Chloe Jimenez, doesn't realize she inadvertently saved his life. With the help of his best friend Piper, who specializes in writing steamy werewolf fan fiction, he tries to formulate a plan to win her over. But Piper has issues of her own, and needs Constantine's help as much as he needs hers. A play about love, friendship, trauma, and recovery.

Cast of Characters

The Friends:

PIPER, a junior, a little funky, probably dyed hair, wants to be a writer. (she/her)

CONSTANTINE, a junior, recovering from leukemia, doesn't know what he wants to be (he/him)

The Love Interest

CHLOE JIMENEZ, a junior, a theater person

The Chorus:

THE CHORUS – the Chorus wears all grey – when a member of the Chorus enters a scene, they grab a piece of colored clothing (a scarf, a hat, a sweater, a boa, anything) to signify that they are now in the scene. Feel free to doublecast roles out of the Chorus as you see fit.

Gender of the Characters: Any actor of any gender may play any role. I think it's probably best if the parents are played as the gender of their characters. It makes more sense for Constantine to be played as male-identifying as well. Piper may be played as any gender.

Werewolf fan faction: You may tone down the queer werewolf fan fiction if it's necessary for your community.

Constantine's Hair: After recovering from chemo, Constantine's hair follicles have been permanently damaged. This could take the form of simply having him be bald, or having his hair be kind of patchy or thin. A bald cap is probably a bad idea. (Ideally, an actor would shave his head for the role, but if that's not possible, then go with the actor's natural hair.)

Using the Chorus: The Chorus should create all of the locations for the various scenes – feel free to have them become characters in any scene that might be in public (the cafeteria, for instance) – I envision the Chorus moving in a stylized manner, not unlike a Greek chorus, and drawing focus to different parts of the story. Please be creative with them.

Act One

Music.
Lights up on the Chorus, frozen, dressed as nurses and doctors.

CHORUS

PART ONE.
CONSTANTINE.
The Chorus separates to reveal a hospital room with a bed.
The Chorus creates soft beeping of machines. Some of the Chorus members hold up a white curtain around the bed.
Lots of flowers in lots of vases.

CONSTANTINE, 16, lies in the bed, reading a printed out story. He wears a hospital gown – bald.
PIPER, 16, sits nearby, in a chair, on her phone.
Constantine laughs from something in the story.

PIPER

Which part?

CONSTANTINE

`I want to howl with you. No more cages. No more shackles.' Oh yeah.
He chuckles –

PIPER

You like that?

CONSTANTINE

Your brain is so disturbing. Uh oh here we go. ` It's too dangerous. My blood runs too hot.'
He laughs –
Oh the moon's coming out.
He reaches the end, flips over the page.
That's it?

PIPER

I'll have the next part tomorrow.

CONSTANTINE

You are killing me.

PIPER

That's all I got so far.

CONSTANTINE
It is an actual crime to end at this part of the story. I need some werewolf on werewolf action.

PIPER
Working on it.

CONSTANTINE
My parents keep bringing me flowers – you bring me horny werewolf stories and that's why I love you best.

PIPER
I aim to please.

CONSTANTINE
Can you explain to me the point of flowers? Like, `hey look it's something beautiful! Let me rip it out of the ground with a dozen of its friends, and then trap it in a glass vase so you can watch it slowly die in front of you.' Thanks. Thank you.

PIPER
Somebody's feeling morbid.
Constantine coughs. It's a fit.
You okay? You need some water?
Constantine is still coughing.
Ice?
He nods through the coughing.
Piper finds a paper cup and hands it to him.
He takes it gratefully. Puts a piece of ice in his mouth. He's in pain.
Your stomach?
Just breathe.
Constantine tries.
You need to throw up?

CONSTANTINE
I'm okay.

PIPER
I can go if you need me to.

CONSTANTINE
I'm all right. Just – you know – the anticipation of the story is driving me crazy.

PIPER *(joking)*
Shut up.
Piper freezes.
Constantine speaks to the audience and climbs out of the bed.

CONSTANTINE *(to the audience)*

This is our sophomore year. Day 11 of chemo. I'm in the middle of a delicious bout of acute lymphocytic leukemia. 0 stars. Not recommended. But this isn't a play about cancer. This is a play about recovery. And Piper. That's Piper over there. She's my neighbor and my best friend. It's her highly disturbing werewolf erotica* that I've been reading. One of the many adorable things the chemo has done is mess with my eyes, so I have a hard time reading off a phone – which is why she prints out the pages every time she visits me. I will be spending 17 more days in the Children's Oncology Wing.

**Throughout the play the word "erotica" can be replaced with "romance".*

PIPER *(to Constantine, unfreezing)*

And then you go home.

CONSTANTINE

Right. Then I go home.

PIPER

You totally made it sound like you were gonna die here.

CONSTANTINE

No I didn't.

PIPER

100% everyone thought you were dead.

CONSTANTINE

It's not that kind of show.

PIPER

I know that. I'm just telling you that when we see a kid in the cancer ward, 100% chance the kid is going to die. There's gonna be like a sad clown and then a therapy dog/ and -

CONSTANTINE

There's like an 89% survival rate to my kind of leukemia –

PIPER

I know that.

CONSTANTINE

Do you mind? This is my part of the play. We'll get to you.

PIPER

Fine.

CONSTANTINE

In 17 days I go home. In remission. Over the next four months I will get twenty-two more chemo treatments, lose 19 pounds, most of my hair, my fingernails, and vomit five hundred million times. But I live.

CLAIRE and TRENT enter with a wheelchair.

These are my parents. I was a cross-country runner before I got diagnosed. I leave in a wheelchair.

The Chorus removes the hospital setting as Constantine gets into the wheelchair.
Trent helps him to another part of the stage.

Seven months to the day after my diagnosis, I am ready for the first day of school - junior year.

Piper moves to her side of the stage, texting.

PIPER

You want to walk to school tomorrow?

CONSTANTINE

I thought your Mom was giving you a ride.

PIPER

You want a ride with my Mom? You survived cancer, you want to chance a ride with the worst driver in the history of humanity?

CONSTANTINE

My Mom's giving me a ride anyway. She's like – hovering – she's already picked out my clothes for tomorrow – forty feet of bubble wrap. I'm gonna look like a sphere.

PIPER

That's hot. No seriously that's the new thing. Everyone wears bubble wrap.

CONSTANTINE

School has changed a lot in six months.

PIPER

You won't even recognize it. We have jet-packs now. We're living in the future.

CONSTANTINE

Figures. I'm not supposed to use jet packs.

PIPER

They're experimental anyway.

CONSTANTINE

I gotta get there early. Cause I'm slow now.

PIPER

Do you get to park in the handicapped spot?

CONSTANTINE

That's the only reason I got cancer in the first place.

PIPER

Sweet. I'll see you tomorrow.

CONSTANTINE

Yeah you will.

PIPER

School sucked without you. I mean it.

Claire enters Constantine's room.

CLAIRE

Sweetie, I think it's time for bed.

CONSTANTINE

I'm sixteen years old, Mom.

CLAIRE

And Dr. Chu said you needed more sleep now than you used to. No more staying up till the middle of night texting Piper –

CONSTANTINE

I'm not texting Piper –

CLAIRE

Phone. Now. Bed.

Constantine hands over his phone.

CONSTANTINE

If I was texting Piper, I'd be saying how my Mom was being overprotective.

CLAIRE

It's a big day tomorrow.

CONSTANTINE

I know.

She stops to look at him. Tears up.

He notices.

Mom.

CLAIRE

I can't look at my baby?

CONSTANTINE

Mom.

CLAIRE

I just wasn't sure we'd make it here.

Lights change.

The Chorus sets up the school.

CONSTANTINE *(to the audience)*

Day 1. Junior year.

I feel like an alien.

Constantine steps into the space. Puts on a hat.

The CHORUS becomes high school students.

They rush around him – everyone has places to go. Everyone is laughing and having a great time silently.

I am in slow motion.

He moves very slowly as the Chorus rushes around him.

My feet hurt. My muscles hurt. And then I see her. Chloe Jimenez*

CHLOE walks through the scrum, not seeing Constantine.

**If you do not have a Hispanic actor to play Chloe, please change Chloe's last name to match the ethnicity of your actress (Jackson, Wu, Patel, etc…)*

The Chorus parts suddenly to highlight Chloe. Perhaps angelic humming. Maybe a spotlight.

The girl who saved my life. The person/ who

TRIPP, emerging from the Chorus with a baseball cap, approaches Constantine from the Chorus.

TRIPP

Constantine Wright!

The spell is broken. Chloe moves on. Everyone moves.

CONSTANTINE *(to the audience)*

I have no idea who this is.

Tripp grabs him by the shoulders.

TRIPP

Are you serious right now, bro?

CONSTANTINE

Hey… man.

TRIPP

I heard you were dead.

CONSTANTINE

Um… no.

TRIPP

No I heard it. It was in the paper and everything I swear.

CONSTANTINE

Oh. I'm not dead.

TRIPP

Bro. That's awesome. Did they have like a funeral?

CONSTANTINE

I think maybe it was just a mistake –

TRIPP

You shoulda totally showed up at your own funeral. Like hang out in the coffin? Then when they're like trying to bury you or whatever, you just like *explode* out of the coffin and you're like, `not today, suckers! Aaaaaaah!" Bro that woulda been awesome. You totally shoulda done that.

CONSTANTINE

Yeah I guess I didn't think of it.

TRIPP

Next time. Super glad you're not dead bro, I gotta go.

Tripp heads off, talks to SPIRO, who has also emerged from the chorus.

TRIPP

Didn't you tell me Constantine Wright died?

SPIRO

Oh yeah. Super tragic. Cancer.

TRIPP

He's right there, bro.

SPIRO

Shut up. Seriously.

He gawks at Constantine.

Is he like a zombie now?

CONSTANTINE

The rest of the day kind of goes like that.

Constantine walks – everyone in the Chorus swivels to watch him.

CHORUS *(amongst themselves, overlapping)*

That's the kid who…
I thought he was dead…
Leukemia…
That's so awesome –

The Chorus freezes as Teachers emerge.

TEACHER 1

We have a special student with us today. Constantine, can you stand up please?

A second teacher comes forward.

TEACHER 2

So brave. I just want to say… so brave.

A third teacher comes forward.

TEACHER 3

No hats.

Constantine takes off his hat

Oh. Um… sorry uh –

STUDENT

Dude that kid had cancer.

A fourth teacher comes forward.

TEACHER 4

Let's give him a round of applause.

Half-hearted round of applause from the chorus.

Oh come on, we can do better than that. Let's let him hear it.

Slightly less half-hearted round of applause

Do you want to say something, Constantine?

CONSTANTINE

What.

TEACHER 4

Do you have some words for us?

CONSTANTINE

About what.

TEACHER 4

About, you know, life? How lucky we are to be here. How important it is to live every day like it could be your last. Because think about that, guys. You think you're immortal. You think

nothing bad is going to happen to you, but one day you could wake up like Constantine here and it's like, your life's over. Get used to it.

CONSTANTINE

You want me to say that?

TEACHER 4

Or whatever you want to say. But something like that would be great.

CONSTANTINE

I survive until lunch.

The Chorus sets up the cafeteria.
Piper plops down next to him.

PIPER

What did your Mom make me for lunch today?

CONSTANTINE

Uh…

PIPER

You wanna see what I got?

She holds up several packets of Cheez-its.

Behold.

CONSTANTINE

I didn't realize you liked cheez-its that much.

PIPER

Not a fan, actually. My Mom is just throwing whatever into a bag –

CONSTANTINE

Here's a thought – I mean, this may be impossible, but maybe you could like make your own lunch?

PIPER

Have you seen what's in the pantry at my house? There's like pre-pandemic Mac and Cheese in there. I swear my parents have gone from passively trying to ruin my life to actively trying to ruin my life. The divorce has turned them into children. I want trees to fall on all of them.

CONSTANTINE

What happened this morning?

PIPER

Skipping Forward

I can't imagine how this is embarrassing.

CONSTANTINE

So uh… we talked and… I was in pretty bad shape – like really bad – this is not the moment you want to see your crush, you know? You're not sleeping, you can't eat anything, you haven't been outside in like a week – not cute, right?

Piper nods.

So… she leaned over and gave me a hug and um…

He's having trouble saying the words

PIPER

What?

CONSTANTINE

It moved.

PIPER

What moved?

CONSTANTINE

Me.

Piper almost gets it.

PIPER

I'm sorry?

CONSTANTINE

Like I felt something… in my… loins.

Piper bursts out laughing.

No no no it's a big deal!

PIPER

Oh *is* it?!

CONSTANTINE

Because it's like blood flow – I had a *blood* disease - That's one of the symptoms that you can't like… get aroused… and that reaction –

PIPER

Hold on hold on are you telling me that Chloe Jimenez saved your life by giving you a magic erection?

CONSTANTINE

No –

PIPER

Your manhood *awoke* and with it, your will to live!

CONSTANTINE

This is why I don't tell you things.

PIPER

I'm sorry, please continue your story about your life-saving boner.*

**If this section would give your community fits, please see the alternate lines at the end of the play.*

CONSTANTINE

It was proof I was getting better. You don't understand – until that point, I didn't think I was going to make it. But then… I know it's stupid and ridiculous, but at that moment, I could see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Chloe loses it.

Don't make jokes!

PIPER

Was Chloe aware that she had that… effect on you?

CONSTANTINE

I mean I was wearing like a cotton dress that was open at the back –

PIPER

Hot.

CONSTANTINE

But I vowed that if I lived I would… ask her out. And let her know how much she meant to me.

PIPER

Funny. Cause she's right here.

Chloe is behind him.

Hey Chloe.

Constantine reacts.

CHLOE

Oh my God it so good to see you!

Constantine stands awkwardly as Chloe gives him a hug.

Piper snickers.

CONSTANTINE

Hi! Oh my gosh hi.

CHLOE

So is that it? Are you cured?

CONSTANTINE

Um… well… so like I'm in remission, you're not actually officially cured until you're five years out –

PIPER

Constantine was just telling me how he has to answer the same questions all day long.

CHLOE

Oh my gosh I'm so sorry I didn't mean to harass you -

CONSTANTINE

You're totally not harassing you it's fine it's fine Piper's just weird –

PIPER

Like all day long. Same questions.

CONSTANTINE

I'm good. I'm okay. It's weird being back.

CHLOE

I'm so glad you're back. And I totally want to catch up but I am here on a mission. Ms. Kluber is giving us a choice for the fall show this year, and I know you're not big into theater, but the choice is between *The Crucible* and *Twelfth Night* which is ridiculous.

CONSTANTINE

Right. Yes. Absolutely. Completely ridiculous.

PIPER

Why is it ridiculous, Constantine?

CONSTANTINE

Because um…

CHLOE

Because one show is a patriarchal nightmare.

CONSTANTINE

Yes. Yes it is. Um… Shakespeare is –

CHLOE

Great.

CONSTANTINE

Thank you, yes. I was just going to say that.

CHLOE

And *The Crucible* is a nightmare. You read it in English class last year, right?

CONSTANTINE

Um… you know I was doing a lot of virtual school so –

PIPER

Did not read it.

CHLOE

Okay so the hero of the show is this guy John Proctor – who's like married and thirty-five years old, and he sleeps with a teenage girl – and she's basically the villain. Right? The *hero* is the dude who just happened to be seduced by this temptress – a temptress who was like a kid whose existence in Puritan society was to be married off and pump out babies for a guy thirty years older than her. She's the freaking *hero* but we're supposed to hate her. Like oh no I'm so sad for that pedophile being led off to his death if only that harlot were killed instead.

CONSTANTINE

Wow. Yeah.

PIPER

I hadn't thought of it like that. I just thought it was boring.

CHLOE

So you'll sign this?

CONSTANTINE

Yes. Definitely. I was actually thinking about getting into theater this year.

PIPER

You were?

CHLOE

You should totally try out. We need men.

Piper snickers.

CONSTANTINE

Well I am a man.

PIPER

I don't know that I would go that far.

CHLOE

Seriously – if you're male-identifying, you'll get cast. We always have a million women trying out for the show and not enough dudes – which is why Twelfth Night is awesome because it's a bunch of girls dressing up like guys anyway – not like a bunch of them – one – but – that's the whole plot.

CONSTANTINE

I would love to see you dressed up like a dude.

CHLOE

You should try out too, Piper.

PIPER

No thanks. I'm just a snarky voice in the darkness. I don't appreciate people, or applause, or people watching me, or people judging me, or memorizing things.

CHLOE

Right.

She snatches up the clipboard.

It's so awesome seeing you I gotta go but we should catch up later okay?

CONSTANTINE

Yes. Yes. Definitely.

She goes.

PIPER

"I would love to see you dressed up like a dude." *That's* your flirting?

CONSTANTINE

I don't know! I wasn't prepared! I hadn't thought of anything!

PIPER

You are so bad at this.

CONSTANTINE

Help me – you're like a girl* –

**This can be replaced with "you're like a writer"*

PIPER

Oh gee thanks I'm like a girl nice* -

**This can be replaced with "oh gee thank I'm* like *a writer nice"*

CONSTANTINE

No but you're like a *writer* – you write amazing things –

PIPER

I write queer werewolf fan fiction –

CONSTANTINE

Which is amazing! You could write my dialogue for me. Make me sound smart.

PIPER

There's a lot of howling in my work, Constantine.

CONSTANTINE

Cut out the howling part then. See this food? I can bring more food. My Mom makes amazing everything – I will feed you/, I will –

PIPER

Okay okay okay fine. I don't need you to feed me. I mean yes I need you to feed me, but I don't need payment. I will help you with Chloe.

CONSTANTINE

Thank you.

PIPER

And audition for the show.

CONSTANTINE

I'm doing what now?

The chorus changes out the cafeteria as Constantine steps out to talk to the audience.

Over the next week I see Chloe nine more times in the hall.

The chorus becomes students again, moving quickly, as Constantine moves slowly.
Chloe comes from one direction, smiles at Constantine as she walks past.

She smiles at me every time. I try to think of something to say each time – total blank.

Chloe walks back the other way – Constantine fails.

I forget how to smile. I think I make an expression like this every time I see her –

Constantine makes a weird expression

And then I try to –

He's interrupted by RAISA emerging from the Chorus.
Chloe walks off-stage.

RAISA

Oh my gosh are you Constantine Wright?

CONSTANTINE

I think so.

RAISA

You are such an inspiration.

CONSTANTINE

Oh. Thanks.

RAISA

Seriously. I mean I don't want to get cancer or anything, but if you can do it, I can do it. That's kind of how I look at it.

CONSTANTINE

Great.

MARQUIS, a jock, emerges from the chorus and yells at him.

MARQUIS

Dude! You kicked cancer's ass! YES! WOOO!

Gives him a thumb's up.

To a friend with him

That's the guy. That's the guy.

FRIEND

BRO YES!

RAISA

What was it like? Almost dying?

CONSTANTINE

Um… It's kind of hard to describe.

RAISA

The reason I ask is I'm entering a short story contest, and I really wanted to do something about this kid who almost dies. And I thought that you would be an awesome person to talk to, because, you know, you've been there.

He looks for Chloe. She's gone.

CONSTANTINE

You want to use me for a story you're writing?

RAISA

Just as like one source.

CONSTANTINE

No thanks?

RAISA

Rude.

She exits.

Constantine steps out to talk to the audience as the Chorus brings on his room.

CONSTANTINE

The day of the audition. I still do not have a script from Piper. Or any clue whatsoever.

Piper enters.

I think she's flirting with me.

PIPER

How is she flirting with you?

CONSTANTINE

She smiles at me in the hallway.

PIPER

How is that flirting?

CONSTANTINE

It's like a smile – like you don't smile at people you don't like.

PIPER

So everyone she smiles at she's flirting with?

CONSTANTINE

Well no but – she's not not flirting with me.

PIPER

You need help.

CONSTANTINE

I know! That's why you're over here. I need lines.

PIPER

I'm not giving you lines –

CONSTANTINE

How am I supposed to/ talk to Chloe if -

PIPER *(overlapping)*

You're going to memorize all the lines between/ now and five o'clock?

CONSTANTINE *(overlapping)*

You said you were writing/ out my dialogue -

PIPER *(overlapping)*

Hey hey hey shut up. I'm not writing your lines. That's stupid.

CONSTANTINE

You're the writer.

PIPER

You want to do seductive howling? Compliment her on her fangs? No. But I promised I was going to help you and I will. Let's start with your clothes.

CONSTANTINE

Do you think my clothes/ are important?

PIPER *(mocking him, overlapping)*

`Do I think your clothes are important?' YES.

She puts her hand over his eyes.

Tell me what you are wearing right now.

CONSTANTINE

Jeans.

PIPER

What color is your shirt?

CONSTANTINE

Crap. Um… Blue?

Piper releases him.

Constantine looks. His shirt is not blue.

Dang it.

PIPER

So let me guess about the amount of effort you put into your wardrobe today. Zero.

CONSTANTINE

Right.

PIPER

So my point is this: Step one: give a crap.

CONSTANTINE

So what should I wear?

PIPER

Something better than what you have on.

Piper starts looking through his clothes.

She holds things up to him.

No. No. No. Did your Mom buy all these clothes?

Piper keeps finding things.

CONSTANTINE

Who else is going to pick out my clothes?

PIPER

You.

CONSTANTINE

I had leukemia! I wasn't going shopping.

Piper has picked out some pants and a shirt.

PIPER

Here. Put this on it's not horrible. All right while you're doing that let's talk about how you talk to another human being.

Constantine starts changing, as modestly as he can.

CONSTANTINE

I talk to you.

PIPER

Right. How you talk to another human being that isn't me. First: Ask questions. Listen to what she says and ask more questions.

CONSTANTINE

Like… If you could be any animal, what kind of animal would you be?

PIPER

Not stupid questions. *Actual* questions that you would like to know answers to. Find out about her. More than just fantasy hot girl who stirred my loins. What does she like?

CONSTANTINE

Theater.

PIPER

What bands does she listen to? What is her family like? Does she have brothers and sisters? What does she do when she's not visiting hospitals like an erection fairy? How about find out if you actually like her or if you're just a horny dork who's obsessed from afar.

CONSTANTINE

What if it turns out I'm just a horny dork?

Claire enters at that exact moment. Constantine is mid-change.

CLAIRE

Hey sweetie I – oh!

Constantine trips over himself to hide.

CONSTANTINE

Ah!

CLAIRE

Um… what is going on here?

CONSTANTINE

Knock please!

CLAIRE

This is my house!

PIPER

No worries, Mrs. Wright, I'm just helping your son get ready for the audition.

CLAIRE

Audition for what?

PIPER

Dance troupe.

CLAIRE *(alarmed)*

Dance troupe?!

CONSTANTINE *(finally getting his clothes on)*

No, Mom I'm trying out for the school play.

CLAIRE

Since when are you interested in plays?

CONSTANTINE

Always. Always interested but couldn't do it cause of cross country.

CLAIRE

Dr. Chu said you needed to take it easy.

CONSTANTINE

This is easy.

CLAIRE

What are you supposed to be doing in this play?

CONSTANTINE

I don't know, it's like Shakespeare. It's probably standing around and talking or whatever.

CLAIRE
I don't think this is a good idea. This is supposed to be after school?

CONSTANTINE
Yes, like two hours a day.

PIPER
Mrs. Wright, they need men. I don't know how that relates to your son here, but I've been told.

CLAIRE
Do you have a bathroom plan?

CONSTANTINE *(mortified)*
Mom.

CLAIRE
You need a bathroom plan.

CONSTANTINE
I have a bathroom plan.

CLAIRE
Do they know that you aren't supposed to stand up for long periods of time?

CONSTANTINE
I will tell them.
TRENT, Constantine's Dad, enters.

TRENT
Sounds like there's a party going up here! Hey Piper.

CLAIRE
Did you know Constantine was trying out for the school play?

TRENT
Fantastic.

CLAIRE
No it's not fantastic.

TRENT
It is not fantastic. Why is it not fantastic?

CLAIRE

Skipping Forward

CLAIRE

All right.

CONSTANTINE

Thank you.

TRENT

I wonder if we could make this more embarrassing for Constantine right now.

PIPER

Do you have any baby pictures I could look at while I'm here? Preferably ones where he's dressed up in some kind of humiliating outfit?

CLAIRE

All right, we'll leave you alone to finish… dressing our son.

PIPER

It's only because he's hopeless.

CONSTANTINE

Thank you. Thank you everyone. This has been great.

TRENT

All right let's go.

Trent escorts Claire out.

A moment.

PIPER

I promise you I'm not going to ask about the bathroom plan.

CONSTANTINE

I have a very weak stomach because of chemo. I puke all the time.

PIPER

I know.

CONSTANTINE

I can also get overwhelmed and can pass out if I stand too long.

PIPER

Okay.

CONSTANTINE

I have to have a lot of strategies.

PIPER

Got it.

CONSTANTINE

Maybe I shouldn't tell that to Chloe.

PIPER

Why?

CONSTANTINE

Cause she would think I wasn't… you know… worth it -

PIPER

If she thinks that, then she's a terrible person and you don't want to go out with her anyway. There's no point in hiding who you are.

CONSTANTINE

But isn't that what we're doing with clothes?

PIPER

No, we're putting the best version of you forward. That's not lying about who you are, that's revealing who you want to be.

CONSTANTINE

…I want to be a person that people love.

Piper is touched.

PIPER

People do love you.

CONSTANTINE

No I mean – not for like the whole `he survived leukemia' thing, but for like *me*, you know? I feel like I've been this *project*, you know – there's been a team of forty people keeping me alive and I just – I wish I could go back to who I was before.

PIPER

I don't think it works that way.

CONSTANTINE

And I'm still a project. Sometimes I get so wrapped up in my own stuff – how are you doing?

PIPER

How am I doing?

CONSTANTINE

Yeah.

PIPER

I'm fine.

CONSTANTINE

No I mean like how are you really?

PIPER

It is what it is.

CONSTANTINE

And what is it?

PIPER

…horrible. I just go in my room and write my stuff and – shut it out.

CONSTANTINE

You know what you should do?

PIPER

Oh you're giving me advice now?

CONSTANTINE

Send it out. Your writing. It is *so* good –

PIPER

Oh yeah okay –

CONSTANTINE

I am so serious right now. You are like the most talented person I know –

PIPER

You don't know many talented people –

CONSTANTINE

I know you.

PIPER

Yeah okay the world needs werewolf erotica that would solve everything –

CONSTANTINE

So write from your heart, write something personal. Try. Isn't that what you're telling me to do? Try? You should totally get an agent and write books and change lives –

Piper can't even look at him. Constantine gets her attention.

Hey. Hey. Hey. If I can do this crazy audition and chase after the girl of my dreams, you can do this. Promise?

PIPER

Promise.

Lights change.

Constantine steps out to talk to the audience.

CONSTANTINE *(to the audience)*

I decided to wear a hat to the audition.

He puts on a hat.

Piper puts a different one on him.

A better hat.

The Chorus sets up the theater. One of them becomes MS. KLUBER, the theater teacher. The others become the students. They start preparing themselves, doing vocal warm-ups.

MS. KLUBER

Let's engage our instruments.

Everyone starts doing lip trills.

That's right. I want you to feel the energy. I want to let it flow through you. I want you to loosen your bodies. Let the tension flow out of you.

Constantine enters slowly – the actors are moving around him.

CONSTANTINE *(to the audience)*

It was like walking into a zoo or pre-school. Or a zoo pre-school.

MS. KLUBER

That's right, I want you to explore. If you feel the need to make noises, I want you to allow them to pass through your body. But not farting.

Chloe emerges from the scrum of actors, spots Constantine.

CHLOE

You made it!

CONSTANTINE *(more awkward than clever)*

Hey. I heard you needed – men.

CHLOE

What?

CONSTANTINE

Men. Of which I am one.

Chloe catches on

CHLOE
Oh! Well actually Ms. Kluber said we're doing gender-blind casting which is amazing.

CONSTANTINE
Yay! Great. I love gender-blind – everything – that's wonderful.

CHLOE
But I am so glad you're here!

CONSTANTINE
Me too.

CHLOE
I need to get ready but you're going to do awesome.
She runs off.
Constantine speaks to the audience.

CONSTANTINE *(to the audience)*
Flirting. Definitely.
Probably.
Maybe.
The Chorus circles up as theater kids – Ms. Kluber barks commands to them and they react instantly.
Constantine tries to follow along, but it's fast, confusing, and weird as heck.

CONSTANTINE *(to the audience)*
And then… the weirdness intensifies…

MS. KLUBER *(to the rest of the actors, continuous)*
Big Face
Little Face
Big Face
Little Face
Big Body
Little Body
Big Body
Little Body
Reach up for the sky – reach – reach for it – reach high high high high you're almost there you can reach –
Crumple up in a ball! You're a tiny ball you're little little little you're big you're BIG you're so BIG. You're BIG you're TINY you're BIG you're TINY! Okay now we're going to walk… like PIGEONS!

CONSTANTINE *(to the audience)*

My stomach was boiling. My legs felt like they were going to snap. I was sweating in terrible ways –

CLAIRE *(off-stage)*
Do they know that you aren't supposed to stand up for long periods of time?

CONSTANTINE *(to the audience)*
This was so much harder than being a rock. And then I noticed –
Everyone has stopped to stare at Constantine, waiting.

MS. KLUBER
Whenever you're ready.
Chloe smiles at him.

CHLOE
You're going to do great.

CONSTANTINE *(to the audience)*
And I took a leap.
Lights change suddenly.
We're somewhere else.

CHORUS
PART 2.
PIPER.
Piper enters as the Chorus changes the set to her house.

PIPER *(to the audience)*
My turn.
About three years ago I stopped sleeping. Around the time my brother died. I would try to sleep, but I'd end up just laying there, with my brain going a million miles an hour. I could never shake the feeling that something was wrong - some imminent disaster that I couldn't quite see –
And then the disasters came for real, one after the other.
KEITH and JANINE, her parents enter.

KEITH
You're gonna want to sit down for this.

JANINE
We have some bad news –

KEITH
About your brother –

JANINE

About your friend Constantine –

KEITH

About us –

PIPER *(to the audience)*

Terrible things always happen on the most beautiful days. I found out about Constantine on a fall day so perfect that it felt like it was out of a movie. He collapsed during a cross country meet. The news about my brother came two years earlier – in the middle of summer, on a night when there were so many fireflies they were their own constellations. And my parents told me they were getting divorced on the first snowfall of my sophomore year. So what do you do with that?

You mostly lose your mind.

Or start writing queer werewolf erotica.*

**(This line may be changed to "werewolf love stories")*

Or both.

Two Chorus members become JOHAN and BALTHAZAR – regular teenage boys who are also probably werewolves.

Balthazar is putting himself into the cage.

BALTHAZAR

It's a full moon, Johan. You have to leave me.

JOHAN

I'm not leaving you. I want to see who you really are.

BALTHAZAR

You won't love me – when I'm hairy.

JOHAN

I want you to bite me.

BALTHAZAR

No. I can't do that. It's a curse.

JOHAN

I want to join you. I want to howl with you. No more cages. No more shackles. We can finally be free.

BALTHAZAR

It's too dangerous. My blood runs too hot.

JOHAN

Feel my skin. My blood is as hot as yours. My desire is just as –

JANINE *(off-stage)*

What are you working on up there?

Piper slams her laptop shut.

PIPER

Nothing!

She steps out to speak to the audience.

Day 1 of junior year.

As before, the chorus creates the school. Moves quickly. Constantine is moving slowly.

PIPER *(to the audience)*

In second period my mother texts me to let me know that my father has stolen the Yeti cooler out of our garage.

JANINE enters, on the phone, texting.

JANINE

He just took it. Just walked in and took it.

PIPER

Mom I'm in school.

JANINE

Tell him he can't do that.

KEITH enters, opposite, on his phone, texting.

KEITH

Is your mother texting you about the cooler? I BOUGHT that cooler.

JANINE

I don't have a cooler now. That's our best cooler. Did your Dad text you?

PIPER

Mom I'm not supposed to be looking at my phone right now.

KEITH

If she wants a cooler, she can buy her own cooler. She never uses it anyway.

JANINE

Can you call your father?

PIPER

No. I hate calling Dad.

JANINE

He's not answering his phone when I call.

Skipping Forward

BALTHAZAR
With what currency, Johan? You have nothing they want. You cannot place a claim on me.

JOHAN
Damn this world and its cruelty!

BALTHAZAR
I must return to my lair. Do not seek to find me.
Balthazar escapes.

JOHAN
I will come with you!
Johan heads after him.
Off-stage howling.

Janine enters, on her phone.
Piper approaches.

PIPER
You have all the time in the world to text me about the cooler but you can't write me back about the lunch account?

JANINE
Well – I'm sorry – I didn't get to it.

PIPER
I'm sitting there like an idiot waiting/ for you

JANINE
I am not on your beck and call –

PIPER
You were supposed to set up the lunch account. You had/ all summer to –

JANINE
I've been a little busy, all right? You are perfectly capable of making your own lunch.

PIPER
With what food?

JANINE
Why don't you ask your father to put money in your account? Maybe he should be the one dealing with some of this – In the meantime, you can tell him to bring our cooler/ back –

PIPER

Oh my God can you get off the cooler for five seconds?

JANINE

It's important.

PIPER

You don't use the cooler.

JANINE

So you're on his side.

PIPER

I am on no one's side! I am trying to eat lunch. That's all I want to do – I want food in the house, I want a ride to school in the morning – I just want normal.

JANINE

Normal left a while ago.

PIPER

Yeah well I would like it back please.

JANINE

Sometimes you don't get what you want. Did your Dad tell you the new schedule?

PIPER

There's a new schedule?

JANINE

He was supposed to explain it to you.

PIPER

No he was too busy whining about the cooler.

JANINE

So he did call you.

PIPER

He texted me.

JANINE

Uh huh.

PIPER

What is the new schedule?

JANINE
It's a 50/50 – so you're here Sunday Monday Tuesday, then you're over there Wednesday through Friday – and we alternate Saturdays.

PIPER
I go back and forth in the middle of the week?

JANINE
That's what the judge said.

PIPER
Ugh.

JANINE
It's ridiculous, I know. He's only doing it to hurt me.

PIPER
I don't – I don't think that's it –

JANINE
He's just trying to separate us. Just coming back here and taking things – that's all he does.

PIPER
Mom.

JANINE
You know he has a girlfriend?

PIPER
Mom I don't want to talk about this.

JANINE
He hasn't told you?

PIPER
I don't want to talk about it.

JANINE
So he has told you.

PIPER
Oh my God this is so inappropriate right now.

JANINE
He's the one who's being inappropriate.

Piper escapes, speaks to the audience

PIPER *(to the audience)*
So it was like that. The only place to escape was my room or -
Constantine enters, texting

CONSTANTINE
Are you gonna come help me with this?

PIPER
Absolutely.
Lights shift.
Piper rejoins Constantine, near the end of their previous scene together.

CONSTANTINE
You know what you should do?

PIPER
Oh you're giving me advice now?

CONSTANTINE
Send it out. Your writing. It is *so* good –

PIPER
Oh yeah okay –

CONSTANTINE
I am so serious right now. You are like the most talented person I know –

PIPER
You don't know many talented people –

CONSTANTINE
I know you.

PIPER
Yeah okay the world needs queer werewolf erotica that would solve everything –

CONSTANTINE
So write from your heart, write something personal. Try. Isn't that what you're telling me to do? Try? You should totally get an agent and write books and change lives –
Piper can't even look at him. Constantine gets her attention.
Hey. Hey. Hey. If I can do this crazy audition and chase after the girl of my dreams, you can do this. Right?

PIPER
At least your dream has a chance of succeeding.

CONSTANTINE
I *love* what you write – I laughed so hard I was probably coughing up blood –

PIPER
Maybe it wasn't supposed to be funny –

CONSTANTINE
And in the sad parts I was like weeping –

PIPER
Maybe those were supposed to be the funny parts.

CONSTANTINE
Why are you doing that?

PIPER
Doing what?

CONSTANTINE
Beating yourself up?
Piper can't answer.
I know that if I was talking about myself like that you would kick my ass.

PIPER
I'm just being realistic –

CONSTANTINE
What is the point of that?

PIPER
So I don't like – get my hopes up –

CONSTANTINE
Uh huh –

PIPER
I mean it's easy for you – things work out for you.

CONSTANTINE
Things work out for me?

PIPER

You know what I mean.

CONSTANTINE

I got cancer at fifteen.

PIPER

All right yeah okay fair -

CONSTANTINE

I literally have the worst luck of anyone I know –

PIPER

But… like… everything is not great in my life.

CONSTANTINE

So write about that.

PIPER

That's hard.

CONSTANTINE

So? You can do it. I mean it, Piper. You know much I looked forward to reading your stories? All those crazy cliffhangers? I was always like, `what's gonna happen next?' I was like hooked. You are so amazing and sometimes I think you don't know it.

PIPER

…thanks.

CONSTANTINE

So for the audition am I wearing a hat or not?

She steps out.

PIPER

I went home. I thought about what he said.
I tried to write about my brother. He was eight years older than me. I barely knew him before… before things went wrong.

She starts typing.

Dear Literary Agent, my name is Piper Lomax and I'm writing to you about my novel, which is about a boy who struggles with addiction and…

She starts over.

A boy – who forgets his little sister -

She starts over

A boy – who dies –

She starts over

A boy – who I don't know very well –

She starts over

A boy – who is probably a werewolf –
A boy… who is diagnosed with leukemia at age 15. Who has a good heart. Who is best friends with a girl who is so messed up she can't sleep at night.

Constantine enters, texting.

CONSTANTINE

I GOT IN!

PIPER

What?!

CONSTANTINE

I am a theater GOD! I have a huge part.

PIPER

That is amazing!

CONSTANTINE

At first I was like I can't do this – also we had to do this thing where we pretended to be pigeons and I totally bombed that part – but then, like, I calmed down, and I just… did it.

PIPER

I'm so happy for you.

CONSTANTINE

And Chloe was there? Incredible smile. Like a legit smile. 100% flirting. Almost certain. We even talked for like – moments.

PIPER

Wow. Moments.

CONSTANTINE

She was super encouraging.

PIPER

Great. That's great.

CONSTANTINE

Everyone was really nice.

PIPER

Fantastic. How was your bathroom plan?

CONSTANTINE

Executed to perfection. Nobody even knew I was not 100%. My feet were absolutely killing me – I was standing up at one point and basically every joint in my body was on fire. Completely worth it. Probably gonna die doing this but totally worth it.

PIPER
You're probably not gonna die from Shakespeare.

CONSTANTINE
Tons of people die from Shakespeare. It's a real problem.

PIPER
Hey I um – I sent a letter to an agent.

CONSTANTINE
For real?

PIPER
Like ten agents, actually. That's what you're supposed to do.

CONSTANTINE
You're gonna have like ten offers.

PIPER
I don't know about that but –

CONSTANTINE
HEY. No. Positive energy. You are going to destroy that getting an agent thing.

PIPER
All right.

CONSTANTINE
I didn't think I was gonna get cast, right?

PIPER
It was preordained you were gonna get cast cause you're supposedly a man.

CONSTANTINE
Guess what? That didn't even help me. Gender-blind casting and I still got in. So you can do the same thing with your like agents, right?

PIPER
Yeah.

CONSTANTINE

Piperrrrr.

PIPER

I know.

CONSTANTINE

You got this. You are like Katniss. You are like the Katniss Everdeen of werewolf erotica.

PIPER

I didn't send in the werewolf erotica. Something new.

CONSTANTINE

Great.

PIPER

I figured I needed something with less howling.

CONSTANTINE

That's a major disappointment but I'm sure it's amazing.

PIPER

Thank you for… kicking me in the butt.

CONSTANTINE

What are friends for? All right – so – when is our next session?

PIPER

What next session?

CONSTANTINE

Our next Chloe session.

PIPER

Oh. Um… I thought you were already in since she smiled at you at least twice now. She's probably secretly photoshopping your face into wedding photos.

CONSTANTINE

No I absolutely need your help. I am useless. She smiles at me and then I'm like uuuhhhhh – terrible. I am the dumbest person alive near her. Now that I'm in the show I need to strategize.

PIPER

Um… sure.

CONSTANTINE

You are the best I love you so much. There's this get together thing at Aubrey's on Friday night – we should totally go over things before then -

PIPER

Yeah. Well I gotta be at my Dad's this weekend -

CONSTANTINE

Oh that sucks –

PIPER

Yeah.

CONSTANTINE

Well maybe we could um get together at school.

PIPER

Okay.

CONSTANTINE

Cool. Hey what's your new book about? The one you're sending to agents?

PIPER

Oh um – it's a love story I think.

CONSTANTINE

Of course.

Lights change.
The chorus sets up Keith's apartment.

PIPER *(to the audience)*

My Dad lives in one of those apartment complexes where there's a gate in front of it. Maybe the gate is to keep people in instead of keeping people out. He's bought all-new furniture, tried to cook dinner, tries to do things where it's normal, but nothing is normal. Nothing will ever be normal again.

KEITH

Hey Pipe-o. How's school going?

PIPER

It's fine.

KEITH

Uh huh. Just fine, or like… ?

PIPER

Like what?

KEITH

How are your classes going?

PIPER

Fine.

KEITH

Cool.

PIPER

Yup.

To the audience

That's how it is most nights. Until Friday night.

KEITH

So… um… I need to explain something to you.

PIPER

Denise is moving in?

KEITH

What?

PIPER

Your girlfriend is moving in.

KEITH

Where did you/ hear that?

PIPER

Mom told me.

KEITH

No. She's not moving in. We're not that serious.

PIPER

Oh. I thought/ that –

KEITH

No this isn't about her. Um… I wanted to prepare you for something. So – your Mom and I… talked, and we came to an agreement… she's gonna have to sell the house.

Piper takes a moment.

PIPER

What?

KEITH

As soon as possible.

PIPER

Why?

KEITH

Well um… when people get divorced they have to split up their assets, it's a lot of numbers, and one of the biggest assets is the house, so –

PIPER

You're making me move my junior year?

KEITH

I'm not making you move, but your Mom has to sell/ the house and –

PIPER

Well we can't live in it after she sells it.

KEITH

Your Mom's gonna have to find a new place.

PIPER

Mom can't even pack a lunch, Dad.

KEITH

Well, she's gonna need to get her stuff together and –

PIPER

Are you kidding me?

KEITH

No. This is what was decided/ in the –

PIPER

Who decided?

KEITH

Me and your mother and the mediator –

PIPER

She agreed to this?!

KEITH
Sweetie, there's not really another way to split up the assets –

PIPER
Oh my God are you some kinda businessman now? Listen to you – assets and money and –

KEITH
That's what divorce is.

PIPER
What about my college money? Is that an *asset* for you guys to fight over?
Keith takes a moment.

KEITH
This isn't how I wanted to do this.

PIPER
Do what.

KEITH
I just want to have a nice weekend/ with you-

PIPER
What.

KEITH
Look. Neither of us have a lot of money – we don't have family that's giving us money – and the lawyers –

PIPER
What are you talking about?

KEITH
There's not a lot of money for you to go to college –

PIPER
Define "not a lot."

KEITH
You know we spent a lot of money on treatment for your brother –

PIPER
Don't bring him into it. How much is there?

KEITH

I think about eighteen hundred dollars.

PIPER

For college.

KEITH

Yeah.

PIPER

Eighteen *hundred* dollars – for college.

KEITH

Right.

PIPER

I know for a fact that grandma gave me/ two thousand to –

KEITH

I owe you some money.

PIPER

You took money *out* to – ?

KEITH

Listen to me - the retainer for the lawyer –

PIPER

Are you telling me you robbed my college savings to pay for your divorce lawyer?!

KEITH

Sweetie –

PIPER

Don't touch me!

KEITH

Look –

PIPER

And now you're like Mom has to sell the house and you're going to divvy that up because it's *assets* and I have to move and I have no college savings. You couldn't wait two years to do this?! You had to blow everything up right now?!

KEITH

I'm sorry.

PIPER

Mom is a disaster. She cries all the time –

KEITH

I know that, but –

PIPER

All the time. I mean she barely makes it out the door in the morning. Neither of us sleep. I wasn't even worried about this, I was worried about other stuff and now – oh my god oh my god what am I gonna do what are we gonna do?

KEITH

You're going to be okay.

PIPER

Are you serious right now?!

KEITH

We're gonna get through this –

PIPER

We?! Who is *we*?!

The Chorus changes the scene.

PIPER *(to the audience)*

I left. I walk to my Mom's house. It's a beautiful night. Full moon. The air is so clear and perfect – I imagine somewhere there are werewolves falling in love.

Howling off-stage.

There's this flock of little birds that lives near my house. They seem to congregate in a bush. They're fat little finches, round and sweet-looking, always chirping. And whenever I go near them they fly up together, like a cloud, and they re-gather somewhere else. I want to be one of those birds. Living together in a big group, friends, loving each other, caring for each other. When I was little there were four of us, and it was noisy and bright and wonderful. And now, wherever I go, there's an emptiness where my brother used to be, there's a chasm where my parents were – everyone is in their own room, with their earbuds in, and it's so so empty and I am so so alone.

And I think about the person who makes me feel not alone.

She takes out her phone, texts

You home yet?

She waits.

I'm walking home can I come over?

She waits.

Lights up on Constantine and Chloe, walking together.
They stop in front of Constantine's house.

PIPER *(to the audience)*

And I see them.

Chloe kisses Constantine.

And I remember - terrible things always happen on the most beautiful days.

Lights fade

End of Act One

Act Two

CHORUS

PART THREE.
CONSTANTINE.
The Chorus sets up Constantine's room.
He speaks to the audience.

CONSTANTINE

The voice message I leave for Piper is the picture of restraint.
Into phone
AAAAAAAAAAHHHH PIPER AHHHHHHHHHH! IT HAS HAPPENED!
AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH!
Call me back.
This is Constantine, by the way.
He speaks to the audience again.
I don't sleep the night after the "incident", as I am beginning to refer to it.
Piper enters.

PIPER

Hey.

CONSTANTINE

Did you get my message?
Piper holds up her phone and plays the message.

CONSTANTINE *(recording)*

AAAAAAAAAAHHHH PIPER AHHHHHHHHHH! IT HAS HAPPENED!
AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH!
Call me back.
This is Constantine, by the way.

PIPER

Yeah I got it.

CONSTANTINE

Okay so – you want to know what happened?

PIPER

I think I'm going to find out.

CONSTANTINE

First of all, like dream come true right? Amazing. Everything. I'm probably doing irreparable harm to my recovery right now just because of the adrenaline but it is WORTH IT. All right: details.

PIPER

You kissed her.

CONSTANTINE

She kissed me. THREE TIMES. But they were all sort of at the same time so I don't know if that qualifies as three kisses or one kiss – I mean it was all like in one sequence of kisses, so I'm not sure just how many there were. But immediately after the first kiss she wasn't like, `that was terrible', so I'm guessing that it was acceptable. All right all right here's how it went down: We were at Aubrey's.

The Chorus sets up AUBREY'S living room.

The theater kids are lounging.

Okay, I'm there – I got the hat on –

PIPER

Your phone dies –

CONSTANTINE

Yes my phone dies – how did you know that?

PIPER

I tried to call you.

CONSTANTINE

Right. Yeah. It died later, but anyway we're at Aubrey's – and I'm, you know, fitting in…

Constantine adjusts his hat and stands apart from the other theater kids. They are all laughing and talking with each other.

He waves sheepishly.

These snacks… are great.

He has a snack.

The theater kids stare at him, then go back to talking to each other.

Just killing it. And then I hear two people talking.

Victoria and Bryce step forward, right in front of Constantine.

VICTORIA

You totally should've been Orsino.

BRYCE

Yeah well – we all know why Kluber picked Constantine Wright.

VICTORIA

He just walks in and gets a lead -

BRYCE

Think about it: Cancer survivor stars in high school play. They're gonna do an article on it in the paper. It's like a financial decision. It doesn't matter if he sucks or not.

Chloe approaches them.

CHLOE

He's right here, Bryce.

CONSTANTINE *(waving, awkward)*

Hey.

BRYCE

Oh. You should let people know when you're behind them.

CHLOE

Or maybe you shouldn't talk crap about people.

VICTORIA

Bryce was just talking, Chloe. You don't have to take it personal.

CHLOE

You guys are odious.

They stare at her blankly, not knowing what the word means

It's a Shakespeare word, look it up.

To Constantine

Come on, let's go.

CONSTANTINE

Where are we going?

CHLOE

We're leaving. It's a little too obnoxious here.

CONSTANTINE

Okay.

He calls out

Tell your Mom thanks for the snacks!

He grabs some more as they leave

CHLOE *(as they're leaving)*

That's right, take them all, you get all the snacks.

The Chorus changes the scene.

Constantine talks to Piper as the Chorus up a street. Stars.

CONSANTINE

Skipping Forward

Constantine and Chloe run in. Chloe is laughing.
Constantine is completely out of breath.

CHLOE

That was amazing!

Constantine has his hands on his knees, gasping for breath.

You okay?

CONSTANTINE

Hold on.

He doubles over.

CHLOE

Do you need some water or something?

Constantine sits on the ground.

CONSTANTINE

I'm okay. I'm all right. I just can't um… I can't run very far.

CHLOE

Oh. I'm sorry I didn't know -

CONSTANTINE

I didn't tell you.

CHLOE

Are you okay to walk?

CONSTANTINE *(still out of breath, not moving)*

Yeah. Sure of course.

CHLOE

I can walk you home.

CONSTANTINE

I should walk you home.

CHLOE

Yeah well I live farther away. You're only like a mile.

CONSTANTINE

You know where I live?

CHLOE

Your address was on the petition thing.

CONSTANTINE

You remembered my address.

CHLOE

Yeah I guess.

CONSTANTINE

Cool.

Constantine struggles to get up. He's having trouble.

CHLOE

Maybe we should get a car. I've got Uber for emergencies.

CONSTANTINE

No I'm okay. I can do it.

He gets up.

CHLOE

You sure?

CONSTANTINE

I guess the braying at the moon took a lot out of me.

He chuckles

CHLOE

What?

CONSTANTINE

You know Piper? She writes these stories about werewolves and…

CHLOE

Oh.

CONSTANTINE

They're amazing. And really like gloriously filthy. So like the braying at the moon thing… made me think of… something she would do. There would be a lot of werewolf-on-werewolf action after that.

CHLOE

Sounds brilliant.

They walk a moment. Constantine is slow.

CONSTANTINE

So um… If you were an animal, what kind of animal would you be?

CHLOE

What?

CONSTANTINE

Never mind.

CHLOE

What kind of animal would I be?

CONSTANTINE

I'm sorry that was a stupid question –

CHLOE

Kind of random –

CONSTANTINE

Um… so uh… what is your family like?

CHLOE

My family?

CONSTANTINE

You have a family, right?

CHLOE

No I'm an orphan. I spend my free time hunting criminals in a rubber suit.

CONSTANTINE

Oh I thought/ your dad –

CHLOE

I'm kidding. My dad is a firefighter.

CONSTANTINE

What's your Mom do?

CHLOE

Nothing.

CONSTANTINE

She stays at home?

CHLOE

She's dead.

CONSTANTINE

Oh – I'm sorry. What did she die of?

CHLOE

Cancer.

Constantine nods.

That's why my Dad helps out –

CONSTANTINE

Oh. Um… How long ago did she die?

CHLOE

Five years.

CONSTANTINE

That sucks.

CHLOE

Yeah so – I mean – you understand what it's like – cancer -

CONSTANTINE

Yeah.

CHLOE

Sorry I didn't mean to bring us down –

CONSTANTINE

No I asked –

CHLOE

It's just such a massive thing, you know? To have your world upended? And then it remains this massive thing even after… after it's over. I mean I didn't even understand what was happening, not really, I was too young. So… so you bray at the moon.

CONSTANTINE *(to the audience)*

We talked all the way home. I tried to keep up with her – the radiation from the chemo gave me something called peripheral neuropathy – the nerve endings in my feet and hands were fried – it means you can have shooting pain in your fingers and toes, or they can go numb at awkward moments –

He stumbles.

Like when you're walking with a girl. And you can't put one foot in front of the other. Somehow we made it to my house.

Chloe and Constantine walk in – the same spot Piper saw them at the end of act 1.

CHLOE

Con-Stan-Tine. I mean you've got a real name, you know? You have to really want to say it. *Con-Stan-Tine.* That takes effort.

CONSTANTINE

My name is weird. I'm named after like the least cool Roman Emperor.

CHLOE

I'm named after the worst Kardashian.

CONSTANTINE

Is there a worst Kardashian?

CHLOE

Yes. And I'm named after her.

CONSTANTINE

Do you know what the nicknames are for Constantine? In Grade school, I was called Connie. Not great. In middle school they mixed that up to Constance, which was worse.

CHLOE

I like Constance.

CONSTANTINE

There's also Teeny. Not a great nickname.

CHLOE

What if it was ironic? You know like all those really big guys named Tiny?

CONSTANTINE

Like from 1950s gangster movies or something?

CHLOE

There are big guys named Tiny. They have like pet chickens or small dogs or something.

CONSTANTINE

Outside of the movies, how many guys named Tiny have you met?

CHLOE

A few.

CONSTANTINE

Liar.

CHLOE

You're calling me a liar?

CONSTANTINE
I want to look in your phone and see any contacts named Tiny.

CHLOE
I didn't get their numbers. It was more just like passing in the dark –

CONSTANTINE
Oh that seems likely.

CHLOE
Definitely happened. They would whisper to me in the dark – my name is Tiny, just so you know.

CONSTANTINE
How many men are you whispering to in the dark?

CHLOE
Quite a few. It's a hobby.

CONSTANTINE
Me too, honestly.

CHLOE
I figured. I always thought you were a whispering in the night kind of person.

CONSTANTINE
Oh so you were thinking about me?

CHLOE *(sarcastic, flirty)*
All the time. Almost constant. Every page in my diary. And you've been thinking about me?

CONSTANTINE
Um… yes?

CHLOE
Really?

CONSTANTINE
Well I mean… we are in a few scenes together.

CHLOE
We are. There's a lot of lines we have to memorize.

CONSTANTINE

We do. It's very difficult mentally.

CHLOE

All the Shakespeare.

CONSTANTINE

Right. Right. The Shakespeare. The… Can I ask you another question? I've been told I should ask questions.

CHLOE

Who is telling you to ask questions?

CONSTANTINE

I guess you could call her my mentor.

CHLOE

Piper. She told you to ask questions?

CONSTANTINE

I feel like I've been captured by the FBI and am surrendering information now.

CHLOE

You would be a terrible spy.

CONSTANTINE

The worst.

CHLOE

So Piper – told you to ask me questions?

CONSTANTINE

Yes?

CHLOE

And why were you supposed to do that?

CONSTANTINE

Um…

CHLOE *(flirty)*

Oh now we're getting somewhere.

CONSTANTINE

Can I ask my question?

CHLOE
You've asked like nine questions trying to ask this question.

CONSTANTINE
Right. This is a big question though.

CHLOE
I guess I have to have a big answer.

CONSTANTINE
Can I kiss you?
Would you like it if I kissed you?
Should I try to kiss you?
If I kissed you, would you appreciate it?
She kisses him.
The scene changes.

PIPER
That's awesome. That's great – yeah.

CONSTANTINE
Thank you. I mean it – I never would've thought of asking questions if it wasn't for you.
Piper laughs.
Seriously.

PIPER
No worries. I'm happy for you.

CONSTANTINE
So why did you want to come over Friday night?

PIPER
Huh?

CONSTANTINE
The texts you sent me. I got `em when my phone came back to life.

PIPER
Oh. Um… it's cool.

CONSTANTINE
Everything all right?

PIPER

Of course.

The scene changes.

CONSTANTINE *(to the audience)*

My relationship with Chloe mostly existed in theater rehearsal. Which was awesome.

The Chorus sets up the rehearsal area, appearing as theater people.

MS. KLUBER

Big face
Little face
Big face
Little face

Everyone freezes on little face.

CONSTANTINE

To be honest, I had no idea what was going on most of the time because it was all theater weirdness except… I got to hang out with Chloe.

MS. KLUBER

You have a line.

CONSTANTINE

If music be the food of love, play on!

Everyone turns to look at him.

No idea what that means.

Music begins. Something pop and highly energetic, like the Beach Boys "So Happy Together"

The chorus begins circling around Chloe and Constantine, alternating between "Big face" and "little face" – perhaps they quietly chant that in the background.

Constantine and Chloe take hands.

Ms. Kluber comes up behind Chloe.

MS. KLUBER

Okay you are in love with him. Everything about him. He's a snack. He's a big snack.

CHLOE

Got it.

CONSTANTINE

What about me?

MS. KLUBER

You are intrigued, but he's also a boy.

CONSTANTINE

I can't love boys?

MS. KLUBER

In Shakespeare's time, this role was played by a boy dressed up as a girl dressed up as a boy. Totally clear. And you're obsessed with somebody else anyway.

Victoria steps out of the chorus.

But you're more in love with the idea of her than the reality of her.

The chorus circles – and moves Chloe and Constantine to different positions.

CHORUS

Big face
Little face
Big face
Little face

CHLOE

I am all the daughters of my father's house
And all the sons too.

CONSTANTINE

Sweet.

MS. KLUBER

That's not your line!

CONSTANTINE

But died thy sister of her love?

MS. KLUBER

That's still not your line!

The chorus circles and moves them again.

CHORUS

Big face
Little face
Big face
Little face

CHLOE

I'm just a girl – standing in front of a guy – while I'm dressed like a guy – who is helping that guy seduce another girl – who is in love with me because I'm dressed like a guy – who happens to mistake me for my twin brother because Shakespeare doesn't understand twins.

MS. KLUBER

Can we stick to the actual lines please?

The chorus circles again and moves them again.

CHORUS

Big face
Little face
Big face
Little face

CONSTANTINE *(to the audience)*

It's day seventeen of my relationship with Chloe when it happens.

The music stops abruptly.

The Chorus splits chaotically, everyone moving in different directions.

I felt it in my stomach first, and then all of a sudden I was sweating. I thought of my bathroom plan. I knew where the nearest bathroom was – I could make it to the nearest bathroom –

The Chorus continues to swirl around him –

Dark spots flared in front of my eyes. I didn't know where I was – I went to the bathroom and there were -

Tripp and Spiro are in there.

TRIPP

And then I was like, bro – noooo…

SPIRO

Oh man.

TRIPP

Like what are you doing, you know? He's in there, and he's got like the thing, and he's doing the thing –

SPIRO

Bro, shut up.

TRIPP *(to Constantine)*

Yo my man.

SPIRO

You okay?

CONSTANTINE

What?

SPIRO

You okay you look –

CONSTANTINE

I'm…

He passes out.
Spiro and Tripp look at him.

TRIPP

That's Constantine Wright.

SPIRO

Bro, I know that.

TRIPP

Are you okay bro?

No response from Constantine.

SPIRO

Did he just like die?

TRIPP

No you can't – people don't die like that.

SPIRO

People totally drop dead, what are you talking about?

TRIPP

Yo Connie! Connie!

Tripp gets down to check him.

SPIRO

Is he dead?

TRIPP

Nah bro he's breathing.

SPIRO

How do you know?

TRIPP

Cause I can figure it out, dingus.

SPIRO

I think we should call somebody.

Tripp and Spiro help Constantine to his feet.

CONSTANTINE *(to the audience)*

My Mom takes me to the Hospital. I ride in the back, like when I was a little kid. I'm still in and out. My Mom is saying something but I can't understand what it is.

CLAIRE

You can do this… you can do this… you can be strong… you're going to be okay – you did this before, you can do it again. It's going to be okay – it's going to be okay –

CONSTANTINE *(to the audience)*

And then I realize – she's talking to herself.

The chorus sets up the hospital room from the first scene. Holds up the curtains. There are flowers.

Piper enters.

PIPER

Is this the cool person wing of the Hospital?

CONSTANTINE

I must be in the wrong place then.

PIPER

No I mean for me.

CONSTANTINE

You're planning on checking in?

PIPER

No I just need to maintain a certain aura wherever I am.

CONSTANTINE

Oh I get it. Like VIP.

PIPER

Totally VIP. You okay?

CONSTANTINE

I almost hit a urinal when I passed out. In front of two bros.

PIPER

That sounds amazing.

CONSTANTINE

Yeah. Definite highlight of the year so far.

PIPER

Are you okay though?

CONSTANTINE

Yes. Still in remission. They took my blood. I'm normal.

PIPER

I wouldn't go that far.

CONSTANTINE

They're just keeping me for observation cause my blood pressure's too low. I should go home tomorrow.

PIPER

That's so great. I freaked out when I got your text.

CONSTANTINE

Are you okay? You haven't been in school.

PIPER

Nah it's cool I'm just pretending to have Covid.

CONSTANTINE

Oh. Nice. I'm sure glad you're here in the hospital breathing on me then.

PIPER

So did your girlfriend come to see you?

He laughs.

CONSTANTINE

Why do you ask?

PIPER

I'm just wondering.

CONSTANTINE

I didn't tell her.

PIPER

You didn't tell her you were in the Hospital?

CONSTANTINE

No.

Piper gives him a look

What?

Skipping Forward

CONSTANTINE

Acting?

TRENT

In the show.

CONSTANTINE

I don't think Shakespeare tried to kill me.

TRENT

Maybe you need to listen to your mother and take it easy.

CONSTANTINE

No thanks.

TRENT

Just pull it back a bit. Rest here and there. Take time for yourself.

CONSTANTINE

Uh-huh.

TRENT

I mean look, I want to see you in this show, but you can't kill yourself to do it.

CONSANTINE

I'm not trying to do that.

TRENT

All right. Brought you some flowers.

CONSTANTINE

Fantastic.

Trent settles in.

TRENT

You know I was in a show when I was a kid. Oh God it was different then. I mean – people were *mean*.

CONSTANTINE

I think people are still mean.

TRENT

If I had gotten leukemia in middle school, kids would've thrown a party. I mean it. They would have made flyers. Now everybody cares and is nice to you. Let me put it this way: I got cut from stuff. I got cut from the junior junior varsity soccer team in 9th grade. They cut me. They said

there wasn't enough room on the bus for me. I weighed like 80 pounds and I was the shape of a Twizzler, I did not take up a lot of space! I could've fit underneath the seats in the bus, but no, they did not have enough space for me. Basically they said, `your services will not be needed on this B team freshman soccer squad.'

CONSTANTINE

I'm not sure if this is comforting or not.

TRENT

When I was in T-ball as a kid, I struck out. Think about that. They called you out and sent you back to the bench in tears. That's what life was like. I mean all these people who are telling you these are the best years of your life are *liars*. These are the worst years of your life. It definitely gets better after this.

CONSTANTINE

Thanks.

TRENT

Growing up sucks.

CONSTANTINE

The alternative is worse.

TRENT

Yeah. Yeah it is… aw jeez bud I wanted things to be easier for you. I had a hard time of it growing up – I really did, and I thought – you know… if there's one thing I can do, I can make it better for my kid. I promised it would be easier. And then…

He gestures around

Then it wasn't so easy, was it?

CONSTANTINE

It's okay.

TRENT

You know, that first house we had – on Clover, you probably don't remember it. I think we moved when you were three. Neither me or your Mom was making much money, but we were able to get this little dinky house… You know sometimes those cheap places are cheap for a reason. And I knew that there was… I knew it was too close to an old industrial area… I have spent so much time looking to see if there was a cancer cluster in that area, cause I think, what if we hadn't moved there? What if I hadn't chosen to live in that house? They tell you in therapy that you can't think that way, because there's no way to know, you know? But I tried to make things easier and maybe I made them so much harder.

He takes a moment.

Sometimes – people will make you promises they can't keep.

Lights change.

The Chorus removes the hospital room.
Constantine steps out to talk to the audience.

CONSTANTINE *(to the audience)*
I thought about what Piper said. What my Dad said. Maybe I'd spent so much time pretending to be okay I forgot to actually be myself? Maybe my way of dealing with almost dying was just to lock myself in a box and stop thinking about it. Maybe that's not the right way to be.
The chorus sets up the school.
Constantine stands in the middle of the students as everyone rushes around him again.
Maybe I needed to tell Chloe the truth.
Chloe emerges from the crowd.
The bell rings.

CONSTANTINE
I'm sorry I didn't text you last night.

CHLOE
No worries.

CONSTANTINE
Did you wonder why I wasn't in rehearsal?

CHLOE
I figured you were just sick.
Constantine takes a moment.
Is everything cool?

CONSTANTINE
I'm trying to figure out how to say this.

CHLOE
What's going on?

CONSTANTINE
The reason I didn't text you is because I was in the Hospital.

CHLOE
Oh.

CONSTANTINE
I passed out and went to the Hospital.

CHLOE
Are you okay?

CONSTANTINE

Yeah.

CHLOE

I'm sorry I didn't –

CONSTANTINE

You don't have to be sorry I just wanted you to know.

CHLOE

All right.

CONSTANTINE

I guess I just… I don't know maybe this is stupid – I was hoping you would text me. I mean I can't like send out a bat signal or something, but…

CHLOE

I didn't realize we were a texting every day kind of thing.

CONSTANTINE

I'd like to be. I thought that's what we were doing. With the kissing and everything.

CHLOE

Right.

CONSTANTINE

So that's like… that's like a really big deal for me. Maybe it's not for you –

CHLOE

No it's a big deal for me.

CONSTANTINE

Okay. So I guess… that's what I want to be.

CHLOE

Like boyfriend-girlfriend?

CONSTANTINE

Yeah.

CHLOE

I would be cool with that.

CONSTANTINE

Seriously?

CHLOE

Yeah.

CONSTANTINE

Cool. Very cool. I mean, awesome.

Constantine is shaking out his hands.

I get the tingles. When I get nervous.

CHLOE

It's so cute you're nervous.

CONSTANTINE

Amazing. This is amazing. Woo! I have to tell you something. Okay all right this is stupid but… I've been actually thinking about this for a while - ever since that time when you came to the Hospital.

CHLOE

I came to see you in the Hospital?

CONSTANTINE

Yes! You were like – you were doing something with your Dad –

CHLOE

Oh. Ohhhhhh.

CONSTANTINE

And you hugged me?

CHLOE

Right yes.

CONSTANTINE

Right then I was like – she's the one.

Chloe takes a moment.

CHLOE

The "one"?

CONSTANTINE

Okay I mean it's kind of crazy. But like – you saved my life.

CHLOE

How did I save your life?

CONSTANTINE

Just… you did.

CHLOE

Huh.

CONSTANTINE

Is that weird?

CHLOE

A little bit. Like I –

CONSTANTINE

I just – it meant a lot to me and I was… you know I was basically in love with you after that point. Not that I'm like – obsessed with you or anything – I mean, Piper would probably say that, but – it was just… I don't know, I'm just saying things now, I just… I think I fell in love with you then. I want to say that. I feel like I can say that.

CHLOE

Constantine.

CONSTANTINE

I guess I've always thought you were amazing, and now, like, it's like a dream come true, I have to pinch myself sometimes – and maybe that's why I didn't text you yesterday because I was terrified you'd feel like I had too much baggage or you didn't want to get involved in someone who wasn't completely healthy – which I know is messed up, and I know that's my thing, not yours, but I was like, if she thinks I have cancer is she going to break up with me, and then have I like ruined the best thing in my life –

CHLOE

I'm not the best thing in your life.

CONSTANTINE

Right. I know that.

CHLOE

But you just said that.

CONSTANTINE

Yeah but like – you know I get… dramatic.

CHLOE

I don't know what to do with this.

CONSTANTINE

With what?

CHLOE
You're in love with me? You've been in love with me for like a year?

CONSTANTINE
You saved my life.

CHLOE
I didn't save your life. I just – I didn't even know you.

CONSTANTINE
We were in freshman algebra together. You didn't – you didn't know I existed.

CHLOE
Right. But – I mean we've been together two weeks, we're just getting to know each other -

CONSTANTINE
And I am loving what I've discovered so far.

CHLOE
But – this is too much. You can't do this. I'm sorry – this isn't fair.

CONSTANTINE
What are you talking about?

CHLOE
You can't put this on me. You can't say I saved your life, you can't say you're in love with me, we BARELY KNOW EACH OTHER.

CONSTANTINE
But we can get to know each other –

CHLOE
But now there's going to be this whole thing – where I'm worried you're obsessed and you're like – taking everything way too seriously, and – let's take it slow, let's not rush things -

CONSTANTINE
I thought I was going to die last year YES I AM RUSHING THINGS. I didn't think I was ever going to be able to do this! I thought that was it! I thought it was over and I was going to die never having fallen in love, never having… experienced anything so YES YES YES I AM GOING FAST I AM SORRY I DON'T KNOW IF I HAVE ANY TIME. I thought I was going to die last night! Again! I have been pretending like I am cool but I am TERRIFIED! I passed out in the bathroom and in the car on the way to the Hospital I was convinced the cancer had come back and I was going back into chemo and this time it was going to kill me! And what

scared me more than anything was the thought that you were going to abandon me as soon as you learned that!

CHLOE
I barely know you. We have been doing this for Two. Weeks.

CONSTANTINE
Eighteen days.

CHLOE
What?

CONSTANTINE
Eighteen days, that's more like two and a half weeks.

CHLOE
I can't do this.

CONSTANTINE
What are you talking about?

CHLOE
This. I can't do *this*. Us. I can't. You're just… I really like you, but –

CONSTANTINE
Oh my God I just screwed this up didn't I?

CHLOE
No I just – I can't be in love with you right now. I can't – be this ideal for you –

CONSTANTINE
I'm not saying that –

CHLOE
Yes you are. You've got me up on this pedestal and it's not okay.

CONSTANTINE
I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

CHLOE
I'm just trying to get through the day. Like – I am a mess – I'm not perfect, I'm not your savior, I'm not your dream, I'm just like a barely functioning disaster. And I just thought we could be barely functioning disasters together and have some fun and maybe get to know each other –

CONSTANTINE

We could do that.

CHLOE

I am so messed up from my Mom dying. You need to know this. I am not okay. I'm not ready for this.

CONSTANTINE

Are we breaking up?

CHLOE

I'm sorry. I really like you.

It sinks in.

But I can't do this.

Lights fade.

THE CHORUS

PART 4.

PIPER.

Lights up on Piper in her room, writing.

PIPER *(to the audience)*

I tried not to think about it.

She plays the message again

CONSTANTINE *(recorded)*

AAAAAAAAAAHHHH PIPER AHHHHHHHHHH! IT HAS HAPPENED!
AAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH!
Call me back.
This is Constantine, by the way.

PIPER *(to the audience)*

Honestly that was the least of my worries.

Elsewhere on the stage Janine enters with a stack of boxes. Piper watches and speaks to the audience.

Just to recap: My parents got divorced, my Mom has to sell the house, my Dad traded my college money for magic beans and I haven't slept in three years.

JANINE

Are you gonna stand there and watch or are you gonna help?

PIPER

Did you have to get the boxes from the grocery store?

JANINE

Oh we get to be picky about where we get our boxes now?

PIPER
They smell like food – that we don't even have.

JANINE
Are you going to help?

PIPER
Maybe if I had some calories in me I would/ have the strength to –

JANINE
Here we go again.

PIPER
Yeah it's weird how I'm all into like food and shelter. Kids these days, right?

JANINE
This isn't easy for me either, Piper.

PIPER
You weren't going to tell me that Dad raided my college savings/ to pay for his lawyer?

JANINE
How am I supposed to know that?!

PIPER
Or that now we need to move in the middle of my junior year and –

JANINE
EVERYTHING IS NOT ABOUT YOU.
Short pause
I'm going to go look at some apartments later if you want to come with me. Or you can just sit here and get mad cause everyone's against you.
Janine exits.

PIPER
I don't know what felt worse, the argument, or the fact that my Mom had a point.
I started packing.
She starts packing things up.
I went into my brother's room – it had been kept pretty much the same since he died – little soccer trophies, medals from flag football participation, a drawing somebody made of him at Disney World – the stuff my Dad hadn't bothered to steal. When is it time to throw this stuff out? Or do you take it with you – forever?
Janine is watching from the doorway.
She comes to help Piper pack.

Elsewhere, the Chorus is forming a line. They become LITERARY AGENTS (and ROSEMARY).

LITERARY AGENT

Dear Ms. Lomax – I am not taking on new clients at this time.

Lights begin to change.

PIPER

The emails started to come in over the next few days.

LITERARY AGENT 2

I'm sorry but it sounds too similar to other projects I am working on –

LITERARY AGENT 3

I did not connect with the main character –

LITERARY AGENT 4

I'm sorry –

LITERARY AGENT 5

So terribly sorry –

LITERARY AGENT 6

Someone else might connect with this –

Piper steps out, is surrounded by the agents.

PIPER *(to the audience)*

I wanted to write back. "Dear Literary Agent, welcome to the greatest mistake of your life."

LITERARY AGENT 2

I wish you the best of luck –

LITERARY AGENT 3

I am not the right agent for this project –

PIPER *(fake response)*

You know who is the right agent? A good agent!

LITERARY AGENT 4

This is just one person's opinion –

PIPER

A terrible agent!

LITERARY AGENT 6
Perhaps if you had some kind of queer werewolf erotica I would be –

PIPER
What?

LITERARY AGENT 6
Just kidding. I wouldn't like that either.

ROSEMARY
I am intrigued by your premise. Please send me the full manuscript at your earliest convenience.

PIPER *(still in the fake response mode)*
Intrigued? How about I intrigue your face?!
Wait.
Hold on what.

ROSEMARY
I am intrigued by your premise. Please send me the full manuscript at your earliest convenience.

PIPER
I'm sorry what.

ROSEMARY
I am intrigued

PIPER
She's intrigued, she's intrigued –

ROSEMARY
By your premise –

PIPER
YES.

ROSEMARY
Please send me –
Piper falls over.

PIPER
It begins to dawn on me that perhaps I should have finished the book before I sent those emails.

ROSEMARY
At your earliest convenience.

PIPER

Oh crap oh crap oh crap.
I look at what I've gotten written so far.

Piper opens her laptop.

A light shines on PIPER'S MANUSCRIPT. It lumbers about, hideously. It speaks in a loud, monotone voice.

PIPER'S MANUSCRIPT

I AM YOUR MANUSCRIPT AND I AM TERRIBLE.

PIPER

It can't be that bad.

PIPER'S MANUSCRIPT

I AM REALLY BAD.

PIPER

How fast can I write 200 pages of a book? Five days, right? I can do it in five days.

Janine knocks and rushes in, a mess.

JANINE

Oh crap I forgot you have school today!

PIPER

It's like Tuesday, Mom.

JANINE

We're only twenty minutes late, let's go.

PIPER

I can't.

JANINE

Why not?

PIPER

I have Covid.*

**(You may change this to "the flu" if you'd like.)*

JANINE

You have Covid?!

PIPER

Oh yeah. Totally Covid. Cough. I can't smell anything anymore. You should probably get away from me I'm contagious –

JANINE

Do you need to see the doctor –

PIPER

Nope nope it's fine cough I've got Covid if you could just slide food under the door for the next five days that would be great.

Janine spots the Manuscript. The Manuscript makes ugly sounds.

JANINE

What is that - ?

PIPER

Don't look at it! I'm serious Mom I'm really sick but not sick enough to go to the doctor so if you don't mind I just need to be in my room alone for a while.

JANINE

O-kay.

She backs out.

Piper circles her manuscript.

I can do this. I have coffee. I don't sleep anyway. I'm supposed to be going to school but who cares is that ever going to come in useful in my life? Doubtful.

PIPER'S MANUSCRIPT

I AM YOUR MANUSCRIPT AND I AM HIDEOUS.

PIPER

I can fix this.

PIPER'S MANUSCRIPT

YOU ARE RIDDLED WITH ANXIETY JUST OPENING MY FILE. YOU SPELLED BUREAUCRAT WRONG SEVENTEEN TIMES.

PIPER

Why did I write about health insurance bureaucracy so much?

PIPER'S MANUSCRIPT

THAT'S ONLY ONE OF YOUR MANY, MANY POOR CHOICES.

PIPER

I start working. My heart is pounding in my chest. From the caffeine most likely.

She starts typing – The manuscript recoils in pain.

PIPER'S MANUSCRIPT

YOU'RE CHANGING ME. STOP IT.

PIPER

It gets better. I start pouring out my feelings. I start actually liking what I've written, I start –

Johan and Balthazar enter, on the side of the stage.

JOHAN

The moon is nearly full. I feel it in my veins.

PIPER

I am not writing about you right now!

BALTHAZAR

I feel it as well, Johan. And yet… I feel adrift. As if no one were guiding our erotic adventures.

JOHAN

I must apologize, Balthazar. For what I might do if I was ever guided again. The savagery of my passion.

PIPER *(interrupting them)*

Y'all. Can you stop please? I am trying to focus on something else!

BALTHAZAR

I try as well. My eyes wish to look anywhere but upon Johan, and yet, like the pull of an ancient curse, I am drawn back to him –

PIPER

No. OFF.

She shoves them off-stage.

PIPER'S MANUSCRIPT

I AM SLIGHTLY LESS HIDEOUS THAN I WAS BEFORE. BUT STILL PRETTY HIDEOUS IF WE'RE BEING HONEST HERE.

PIPER

And then it starts working. And I try to figure out how to say what I need to say.

Chorus members become PIPER STAND-IN and CONSTANTINE STAND-IN
They are in a hospital. The Constantine Stand-in is very sick and in a wheelchair.

PIPER STAND-IN

I had to see you. Before you went in there.

CONSTANTINE STAND-IN

Why?

PIPER STAND-IN

Because every time I see you… my heart feels like it's gonna burst. And I can't stand the thought that there might be a day when I don't get to see you again. When we don't get to eat lunch together. When I won't hear you laughing at my jokes. Oh God I don't know that I can do this.

CONSTANTINE STAND-IN

You have to. There's no other choice.

PIPER STAND-IN

I know.

CONSTANTINE STAND-IN

You know what? After all this, I think I'm grateful I got sick.

PIPER STAND-IN

You're grateful you got cancer?

CONSTANTINE STAND-IN

Because if it wasn't for this, I never would've felt the courage to say what's in my heart. I don't know how long I'm going to live, but as long as I'm here, I want to love you.

PIPER STAND-IN

You're going to be here a long time.

CONSTANTINE STAND-IN

I don't think any of us know that.

A NURSE enters.

NURSE

It's time to go.

CONSTANTINE STAND-IN

Be strong.

PIPER STAND-IN

I think that's what I'm supposed to say to you.

CONSTANTINE STAND-IN

You be strong for both of us.

PIPER STAND-IN

I love you.

The Nurse wheels Constantine Stand-In Away.

Piper (the real one's) phone bloops.

CONSTANTINE *(texting)*
Hey FYI I'm in the hospital. Probably not a big deal.

The Chorus sets up the Hospital room again.
Constantine is in the bed.

Piper enters.

PIPER
Is this the cool person wing of the Hospital?

CONSTANTINE
I must be in the wrong place then.

PIPER
No I mean for me.

CONSTANTINE
You're planning on checking in?

PIPER
No I just need to maintain a certain aura wherever I am.

CONSTANTINE
Oh I get it. Like VIP.

PIPER
Totally VIP. You okay?

CONSTANTINE
I almost hit a urinal when I passed out. In front of two bros.

PIPER
That sounds amazing.

CONSTANTINE
Yeah. Definite highlight of the year so far.

PIPER
Are you okay though?

CONSTANTINE
Yes. Still in remission. They took my blood. I'm normal.

Piper steps out.

PIPER

How do you tell you someone that your heart bursts every time you see them? How do you tell them that when you get a text that says "I'm in the Hospital" it feels like an earthquake? You can't say any of that. We argue about something stupid. I go home. I don't sleep.

Piper's Manuscript returns.

I want to put it all in the book I'm writing. I try. Nothing comes out the way I want it to.

PIPER'S MANUSCRIPT

I AM FEELING SLIGHTLY BETTER ABOUT MYSELF.

PIPER

I send it in. I go back to school. I don't know how many days I have left before my Mom sells the house and we move. She still hasn't set up the lunch account.

The Chorus sets up the Cafeteria.

Piper sits, with a bag of cheez-its.

Constantine approaches with food in a Tupperware.

CONSTANTINE

Here.

PIPER

What's this?

CONSTANTINE

My Mom made you lunch.

PIPER

Oh. That was nice. I thought you were eating with the theater kids now.

CONSTANTINE

Yeah, well… not so much anymore. They don't like me.

PIPER

What is this?

CONSTANTINE

Lamb stew. My Mom is going through a Greek phase.

PIPER

You're feeding me baby lambs?

CONSTANTINE

They're not *baby* lambs.

PIPER

That's what lambs are, dude. Otherwise they'd be *sheep*. You're feeding me baby flesh.

CONSTANTINE

Delicious baby flesh.

Piper pushes it back to him.

PIPER

So why aren't you um… dining with your significant other?

CONSTANTINE

Not… significant anymore.

PIPER

Oh.

Pause.

CONSTANTINE

Yeah.

He exhales.

PIPER

I'm sorry about that.

CONSTANTINE

It is what it is.

PIPER

What happened? If you don't want to talk about it, it's cool, but I just thought –

CONSTANTINE

No um… basically… I was an idiot and you were right.

PIPER

I mean that's usually the case so I'm not surprised.

Constantine elbows her.

CONSTANTINE

Shut up.

PIPER

Well I am sorry to hear that. For real.

CONSTANTINE

Yeah.

PIPER

She sucks.

CONSTANTINE

No.

PIPER

Okay.
Kind of though, yeah?

CONSTANTINE

Sometimes I can be a lot, so –

PIPER

What are you talking about?

CONSTANTINE

You know I asked her what kind of animal she would be?

PIPER

You did not.

CONSTANTINE

I did.

PIPER

What kind of animal would she be?

CONSTANTINE

I never even found that out!

PIPER

I'd be a bird.

CONSTANTINE

So you could fly away?
A moment

PIPER

No.
Piper can't say something.
Hey – hey – this will cheer you up. Guess who got contacted by a big name agent?

CONSTANTINE

What?

PIPER

This girl.

CONSTANTINE

Are you for real right now?!

PIPER

Yes! This agent wrote to me and says she was intrigued!

CONSTANTINE

Aaaah that's awesome!

PIPER

I know!

CONSTANTINE

I mean of course right?

Constantine tries to step up on the table.

CAN I HAVE EVERYONE'S ATTENTION PLEASE? PIPER LOMAX IS A FAMOUS AUTHOR.

CHORUS MEMBER

PLEASE DO NOT MAKE ANNOUNCEMENTS BY STANDING ON THE TABLE.

OTHER CHORUS MEMBER

THAT, IN ITSELF, WAS AN ANNOUNCEMENT.

CHORUS MEMBER

NO FURTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS OTHER THAN THE ONE I JUST MADE.

CONSTANTINE

BUT SHE'S TOTALLY FAMOUS.

Piper pulls him down.

PIPER

How `bout let's not pass out in the cafeteria today?

CONSTANTINE

For real Piper that is amazing.

PIPER

Check it out!

Piper shows him the email on her phone.

CONSTANTINE
So when you're rich and famous are you gonna remember me?

PIPER
First of all, she just wants to look at it, there are like nine hundred other steps to getting something published -

CONSTANTINE
You are not answering the question.

PIPER
Of course I am going to remember you.

CONSTANTINE
I am *intrigued* by your premise. Nice.

PIPER
Right?
Constantine sees something on the phone.
He stops.

CONSTANTINE
What is this?
He keeps reading.
"About a boy who is diagnosed with leukemia at age 15…"
Pause.
You wrote about me?

PIPER
Well um…

CONSTANTINE
I didn't know you were writing about me.

PIPER
It's not *you*, it's like you -

CONSTANTINE
You know any other kids who had leukemia?

PIPER
I don't think you'd hate it –
Constantine is hurt
I'm sorry.

CONSTANTINE
I told you about… the people who try and use me for things -

PIPER
I'm not using you –

CONSTANTINE
It's like every time I turn around somebody is trying to make an inspirational story out of me and –

PIPER
This isn't that!

CONSTANTINE
Then what is it?
Piper can't answer.
I told you to write about what's in your heart.

PIPER
You *are* what's in my heart.
Pause.

CONSTANTINE
I have to go.
The Chorus changes the scene as Piper steps out to talk to the audience.

PIPER *(to the audience)*
I walked home. I didn't even go to the rest of my classes. It was a perfect fall day – the leaves had already started turning red, but the sun was warm on my skin. I had to go by his house to get to my house.
The Chorus puts up a "For Sale" sign on one side of the stage.
They moved in when I was five, I think. I couldn't even remember a time when my best friend didn't live next to me, when it felt like I had two homes. What hurt the worst, I think, was that he was right. I didn't ask.
She gathers up a large stack of papers – (several hundred) tied together with a ribbon.
I left it on his doorstep with a note that said, "I'm sorry." Then I had to go to my Dad's.
Keith enters.

End of Excerpt.
To purchase this play, visit www.concordtheatricals.com