

HOPEFULLY: AN ETHNODRAMA

A one-act dramedy by
Ashley P. DiLorenzo

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

CECILIA, high school senior, female.

BOBBI, high school senior.

JORDAN, high school senior.

JESS, high school senior.

SAM, high school senior.

AJ, high school senior.

ALEX, high school senior.

NICKY, high school senior.

TAYLOR, high school senior.

KENNEDY, high school senior (highly recommended doubling with Bobbi).

CAMERON, high school senior (highly recommended doubling with Jordan).

The actress who plays Cecilia can only play Cecilia. All other characters are genderless, and actors can/should play multiple roles at the director's discretion.

PRODUCTION NOTE

All technologies/social media (e.g., Instagram) should be updated to maintain cultural relevance.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Producers/Creative Team: Jess Balick Goodman, Meghan Landon, Emma Sue Harris, Ethan Estrem, Olivia Merryman, Rynn Deegan

Director: Cory Sapienza

The Cast:

Bryanna Batts, Nicole Bernal, Brandon Bolick, Elycia, Zoey Hackemer, Melissa Manrique, Ally Milder, Tabitha Setari, Adelaide Young

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SCENE 1

(CECILIA, 17, is center, sitting in an odd, yet comfortable position and staring at her laptop. Her cell phone is on speaker and on the floor next to her. BOBBI joins her onstage. Bobbi's own world is much more put together than that of their counterpart. Cecilia's space, however small, is likely littered with snacks, laundry and other items a teenager says they'll put away but won't.)

CECILIA: What the heck? This is like – the millionth question, and they want 700 words.

BOBBI: What are they asking?

CECILIA: "Where do you see yourself in ten years?"

BOBBI: That's standard for a college application.

CECILIA: But it's so vague.

BOBBI: They wanna know what your goals are, how their university will help you achieve them –

CECILIA: And what if I don't know what my goals are?

BOBBI: You have to have goals.

CECILIA: Okay, what are yours?

BOBBI: Let's see... Ten years... I'll be almost graduating medical school, either Johns Hopkins or NYU...and I'll –

CECILIA: Wait, hold on – that's so specific.

BOBBI: It's not that hard – just name one thing you wanna be doing when you're 27.

CECILIA: Breathing!

BOBBI: Bare necessities, I guess.

CECILIA: But seriously, this school gets 13,000 applications. What do other people even write?

BOBBI: Well, I wrote—

CECILIA: I know, medical school. (*Beat.*) I know I don't wanna do that. Can I just write "not medical school"?

BOBBI: It would definitely be a unique approach to the question.

CECILIA: Yes! An outside-of-the-box—

BOBBI: But it would be wrong.

CECILIA: Argh! I can't be the only one who hates this question.

BOBBI: Maybe try to like—speak it out loud. Complete the sentence.

CECILIA: In ten years, I wanna be... In ten years, I wanna...

(All other actors enter. Note: If your casting would cause an actor to have back-to-back lines in this section or elsewhere, please reassign the line(s) to avoid this.)

NICKY: I wanna be doing something I love—and have some sort of financial security.

ALEX: I wanna have at least one thing I'm proud of.

SAM: Environmental lawyer or child psychiatrist... Also...running a vegan bakery?

AJ: I'm studying to be a vet, ya know, just in case.

JESS: Hopefully...

NICKY: I / hope...

ALEX: Hopefully...

TAYLOR: I'll be managing a theatre company with the goal of making theatre accessible for low-income youth!

NICKY: I plan to be the lead marketing manager for an arts non-profit or record label—any company that emphasizes collaboration and creativity.

SAM: Somewhere around the globe learning international relations.

AJ: (*Somewhat like a young child:*) I wish to become an FBI agent.

JESS: Stage managing a fucking [killer] musical!

TAYLOR: Criminal justice lawyer.

SAM: More adult-like.

KENNEDY: More mature.

JESS: More sane.

ALEX: U.S. Secretary of State.

JESS: Big house, stable career, loving family —

TAYLOR: I see myself with billions.

NICKY: Helping those around me at all costs. I want to help people who feel lost and unheard. That's a part of my mission.

SAM: Living in a house.

JESS: Having a family.

TAYLOR: I see myself being happy.

ALEX: Happy.

CAMERON: Happy.

CECILIA: Happy.

(Cecilia looks out, then back at her computer: She's had an epiphany. She begins to type until the lights fade. Only the light of her laptop illuminates her. She will remain where she is for the remainder of the show. Sometimes she's typing, sometimes she's on her phone, sometimes she's sitting in unconventional positions. Maybe she has snacks or a large tumbler of coffee from which she sips periodically. Probably both.)

SCENE 2

(JORDAN sits at a guidance counselor's desk. An actor may sit in for the counselor if desired.)

JORDAN: You don't get it. I have a plan. I just need to go off and have this really interesting life and then write a memoir. You know, capitalize on my shit [capitalize on *me*]. Family trauma? Memoir. Money is tight? Memoir. Cat dies? Memoir! People eat those stories up. I'll admit, they are usually done by celebrities. (*Beat; new idea:*) I'll just become internet famous. It can't be that hard—idiots do it all the time. YouTube, TikTok, Instagram... At this point, it's harder to avoid internet fame. And maybe I'll have some big controversy— (*Beat; another idea:*) What if I get myself cancelled?

(*They check in with the counselor.*)

You know what that means, right? Yeah, I'll get myself cancelled! And then, maybe I'll go off to a small French village and live off nothing but baguettes and the residual appreciation from my once adoring fans. I'll meet someone beautiful who knows nothing of the internet or of me, and we'll ride horses together at dusk—that sounds dangerous—OK, we will ride horses together at a reasonable time in the afternoon. And then I'll write the damn [dang] memoir! I gotta make sure to sprinkle in some BS [lies] about how I've grown as a person and how living in isolation and finding romance in the hills of Europe saved my life. (*Beat.*) And then I'll get a shit ton [buttload] of money, move back to the States, dump the French lover, and I'll be super rich with three cars and a mansion. Yeah. That's the dream. So that's why I haven't actually—you know—*applied* to college yet or whatever. My master plan goes far beyond the next four minuscule years of my life. I'm thinking big here. Maybe *you* should be taking *my* advice. I mean—*my* plan doesn't involve me sitting behind a desk five days a week

listening to acne-ridden kids talk about their problems. Seems like a better deal if you ask me. (*Beat; a final revelation:*) My horse's name is gonna be Pierre.

SCENE 3

(*Jess and Sam sit together in Sam's house.*)

JESS: So, you're not applying to Ivies?

SAM: Still no.

JESS: You say that like you don't have one of the highest GPAs in the class.

SAM: OK, fine. But I just can't see myself at some smart-kid school.

JESS: You *are* a smart kid.

SAM: Yeah, but—they just seem so stuffy. And pretentious. I wouldn't last a week.

JESS: Sure you would!

SAM: What makes you think that?

JESS: You're determined as hell [anything], dude.

SAM: Sure, but the classes are supposed to be unnecessarily difficult. I'd probably fail.

JESS: No, you wouldn't. You wouldn't let yourself.

SAM: You don't know that.

JESS: I've known you for three years. You wouldn't skip a homework assignment if your life depended on it.

SAM: OK, so I'd force myself to stay somewhere I don't like, push myself to get the highest grades possible because that's just what I do, and then be absolutely miserable.

JESS: Say what you want, but if I had your grades I'd be

applying everywhere.

SAM: Sorry to disappoint, I guess.

JESS: That's not what I—

SAM: You sound like my counselor— and my parents— sorry I just wanna be happy in college. It's not like— I'm not dropping out and fleeing the country or something.

JESS: Yeah, that's something I would do.

SAM: Seriously?

JESS: No, of course not. You know, I used to be one of the smart kids.

SAM: Really?

JESS: Yeah. I had an eleventh-grade reading level in like fourth grade.

SAM: What is it now?

JESS: I don't know. Probably less.

SAM: Less? You're kidding.

JESS: I am a former-gifted-kid burnout. SparkNotes is my best friend.

SAM: Wow, then what am I?

JESS: Sorry, chapter summaries come first. I probably couldn't read a full book right now if I tried.

SAM: Did you even read *Of Mice and Men*?

JESS: What was that, freshman year?

SAM: Yeah.

JESS: I don't think so. Last book I read was in seventh grade.

SAM: But that book was light work.

JESS: So was the movie.

SAM: You didn't!

JESS: What? I found out Lenny killed George, so—

SAM: George killed Lenny!

JESS: You sure? (*Beat.*) Oh yeah, I remember now. And then they had bunnies/or whatever.

SAM: Rabbits.

JESS: Sure, rabbits. (*Beat.*) You know, this is exactly why you should be applying to more competitive schools.

SAM: If you say so.

JESS: We have an English test tomorrow, don't we?

SAM: Yeah.

JESS: So, like, does Hamlet figure it out?

SAM: What?

JESS: Like, the question..."to be or not to be"?

SAM: You actually paid attention!

JESS: Only to that one line. *Hamlet* has like ten movies— one of the guys from *Harry Potter* was in one, I think—

SAM: OK, you're gonna fail.

JESS: I don't doubt it. (*Beat.*) If we both wind up at the same college, you're tutoring me.

SAM: I'm already tutoring you.

JESS: Yeah, this is another reason why you should apply to better schools. So you won't get stuck with me for another four.

SAM: In your case, maybe five.

JESS: Ouch!

SAM: You're denying it?

JESS: No... No, I don't think I can. (*Beat.*) You know what— lemme have a little faith in myself.

SAM: As you should!

JESS: I'll finish after a strong four and a half.

SAM: OK!

JESS: Four and a half or nothin', bay-be!

SAM: You really need to go study for the *Hamlet* final.

JESS: Why would I do that when you can just tutor me for the rest of my life?

SAM: What about that half year?

JESS: You're absolutely right.

SAM: Guess you'll just have to graduate on time.

JESS: Bummer. (*Beat.*) "To graduate or not to graduate, that is the question."

SAM: Oh my...

(They both erupt into laughter as the scene shifts.)

SCENE 4

(AJ stands alone, holding their phone out in front of them. As the lights come back up, we hear the ever-so-disappointing "please leave your message at the tone," followed by an obnoxious beeping noise.)

AJ: (*Mumbling:*) Wow, OK, umm, voicemail. Cool. (*A beat for composure, then:*) I rather would have said this— you know— in person, but...I got in. My top choice. I'm sure you're wondering why I'm not bouncing off the walls. The truth is, I found out last month. I've been figuring out how I was gonna tell you. (*Beat.*) I know you don't want me to leave. I know you don't think I'm

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ready and that this is stupid and a waste of time, but—pardon my language—I worked my ass off [(Cut "pardon my language") I worked like crazy] to get in there. This is prestigious—it is an *honor*. And I refuse to just throw it all away because you don't believe in it. Because you don't trust me enough to live in a different state and not be just a few blocks away from you. I haven't been your little kid for a very long time now. I don't think you ever realized that. (*Beat.*) In four months and two days, I'm going away. And I wish you'd be happy for me—I know you won't. I'm sure you being proud is just too much to ask. It's just music school, right? There's nothing to be proud of if you still don't think this will get me anywhere. Even though I've told you a million times that this is what's gonna make me happy. And this is a step in the right direction toward a "real" future, whatever that means. (*Beat.*) I just, you know, wanted to tell you that all this was going on. And that I know where I'll be for the next four years. I guess I'm just calling to give you time to process that I won't be here. You should know that I am happy—I guess I don't sound like it right now, but this wasn't an easy call to make. (*Beat.*) I love you, Grandpa. Talk to you soon. Bye.

(AJ hangs up the phone.)

SCENE 5

(Taylor paces frantically. Nicky enters, sensing the stress in the air from the second they enter, but they're not quite sure how to respond. It isn't until Nicky sits that Taylor notices their presence.)

TAYLOR: Oh, hey.

NICKY: Sorry, am I interrupting something or—

TAYLOR: No, no, I— You know that feeling where you really, really like someone?

NICKY: All the time.

TAYLOR: And you know this person likes you back?

NICKY: You lost me there.

TAYLOR: And then out of nowhere it's just: BAM! Radio silence.

NICKY: Ouch. Wait – no way – *she* stopped talking to you?!

TAYLOR: Yes! And I'm giving the whole situation way too much energy.

NICKY: I know how much you like her – I'm sorry. You have the right to be a little on edge.

TAYLOR: But I can't afford it right now.

NICKY: What else do you have going on?

TAYLOR: That big interview, remember? For Columbia –

NICKY: Wait, you got an interview?

TAYLOR: Yes, tomorrow morning! And I should be doing my last-minute research on the program, but instead I'm staring at my phone, waiting for it to go off like some kind of idiot. I sound pathetic, I'm sure.

NICKY: Let me take it.

TAYLOR: Huh?

NICKY: Your phone, I'll hold onto it. So you can focus.

TAYLOR: That's the best idea I've ever heard – yes!

(Taylor hands Nicky the cell phone; it immediately goes off.)

What was that?

NICKY: Um, you got a coupon from Chipotle.

TAYLOR: Oh.

(Beat. Uncomfortable silence as Taylor attempts to read from a computer. It's a cycle of focused, distracted, focused, distracted, focused...)

NICKY: It was for free guac, so...

TAYLOR: *(Potentially sarcastic:)* Great.

NICKY: Yeah, I'd say so.

TAYLOR: *(Trying to resist asking this question but failing miserably:)* So, are there any other notifications?

NICKY: Did you hear the phone go off?

TAYLOR: N-no.

NICKY: So no.

TAYLOR: I wasn't expecting the sass.

NICKY: I know you. If you let this idiot girl ruin your shot at this, you're gonna hate yourself.

TAYLOR: You're right. You're a good friend.

NICKY: Thanks. You want me to do a mock interview or something?

TAYLOR: Woah, you're a genius, yes.

NICKY: I guess I'm just full of ideas today.

TAYLOR: OK, hit me with a question.

NICKY: Alright. How are you this morning?

TAYLOR: Huh?

NICKY: How are you this morning?

TAYLOR: It's 3:30 in the afternoon.

NICKY: But the interview is tomorrow morning, isn't it?

TAYLOR: Yes.

NICKY: So they'll probably ask, "How are you this morning?"

TAYLOR: OK, yeah, you're right. (*Beat.*) But if we are practicing, which we are, shouldn't you just—skip to the hard questions?

NICKY: I JUST ASKED, "HOW ARE YOU?" JUST TELL ME HOW YOU ARE!

TAYLOR: Honestly?

NICKY: I mean, I guess that's the point, yeah.

TAYLOR: I just want her to text me back!

NICKY: OK, well...that is...certainly an answer.

TAYLOR: In my defense, I have no clue how I'll actually be tomorrow morning, so...like... That was kinda an unfair question. Because if we're focused on honesty being the best policy and you're asking me how I am tomorrow morning, there isn't a way I could truthfully and completely answer—

NICKY: Save the long-windedness for better questions.

TAYLOR: Point taken.

NICKY: You listed your intended major as Art History and Visual Arts. Can you articulate why?

TAYLOR: Well, ever since I was younger, I've always had a passion for visual art. It wasn't until I reached high school that I was able to—sort of—couple that with my newfound and, uh, developing interest in history, and I began to develop this dream of working in an art museum as some sort of—

(The phone dings. Taylor cringes. Nicky looks at it and immediately dismisses it.)

NICKY: Continue.

TAYLOR: No! What was that? Was it—

NICKY: You were in the middle of a sentence.

TAYLOR: But—

NICKY: Focus!

TAYLOR: I—

NICKY: Working in an art museum...

TAYLOR: Yes, um. Obviously, you being located in New York City would place me, uh, in close proximity to many opportunities—

NICKY: Did I ask you about that?

TAYLOR: Huh?

NICKY: When did I ask you about New York City?

TAYLOR: I—

NICKY: I didn't!

TAYLOR: I've never been this distracted. It's just—the feeling you get when you like someone and you know they like you back and you know there's a chance—look, I've had feelings for this girl since I was like 14. And I always pushed them aside because I never thought anything could happen. And then something did. And I know I'd be stupid to say we would be perfect together, but you know more than anyone how much I wanted to give it a shot. And now—now, I don't even know what I did wrong. And I want to ace this interview, but life just keeps getting in the way.

NICKY: I don't really know what there is to say. I—I mean you definitely deserve better.

TAYLOR: No, no, we aren't at the "I hate her" stage yet. There could be a perfectly good reason she's been ignoring me...all week.

NICKY: Like straight up leaving you on delivered or—

TAYLOR: No, but lame excuses.

NICKY: OK.

TAYLOR: You know, I used to think I was too mature for this romantic stuff—crushes and all that. That's really just what someone says before anyone starts to flirt with them, isn't it?

NICKY: Sounds about right, yeah.

TAYLOR: What am I supposed to do about this interview tomorrow if I can't even answer a single question without stammering or bringing up irrelevant fluff?

NICKY: Look—and I may be totally off here—but you shouldn't really be studying for an interview anyway. I'd say just don't pull an all-nighter and you're A-OK.

TAYLOR: (*Absolutely dripping in sarcasm:*) Wow, thanks.

NICKY: I'm serious. They asked for an interview because they obviously want to get to know you, a teenager—right?

TAYLOR: Yeah.

NICKY: And teenagers go through relationship stages! And teenagers get ghosted—

TAYLOR: I've actually refrained from using the term "ghosted," because I'm not quite sure I'd say it's at that point.

NICKY: Whatever. The point is—if they wanted someone who has quote-unquote "correct" answers all the time, they would be interviewing a supercomputer.

TAYLOR: You give some great advice, you know that?

NICKY: Maybe I should be the one with the Columbia interview tomorrow.

TAYLOR: Now can you please tell me what that notification was from before?

NICKY: Your grandma posted on Facebook.

TAYLOR: My grandma has Facebook?

NICKY: Apparently she does now.

TAYLOR: What did she post? What did she post?

NICKY: OK, her status update says: "I just got this text to speech thing to work period period period why won't it end the sentence it's just typing the word period I need punctuation OK well I don't know how to stop you now stop stop stop Facebook no stop how do I get out of here why is it still listening oh my God this is ridiculous I need to call the kids oh look a stop button."

TAYLOR: That's so funny.

NICKY: It goes on...

TAYLOR: No!

NICKY: Your grandma uses some, uh, *colorful* language.

TAYLOR: What exactly did she say?

NICKY: Let's just say I wouldn't quote any of this in your interview.

(Nicky hands Taylor the phone, and they read the rest of the post together. The lights fade.)

SCENE 6

(Kennedy and Cameron walk across the stage on their phones: scrolling, taking selfies, typing, talking, etc. They are decked head-to-toe in college "merch" of their choice. Note: Kennedy and Cameron are representative of an online "army," more than just themselves, and should be larger-than-life as a result.)

CAMERON: *(Typing:)* After many long months —

KENNEDY: And grueling supplemental essays —

CAMERON: I have finally found the place for me! Walking onto campus for the first time, I knew —

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