

The Book Club
by Olivia Galligan

Cast of Characters

MOLLY: 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22. Modern day something yet to be determined. Lesbian.

AMELIA: Early 20s. Mid-19th century novelist. Lesbian.

FRANCES: Early 20s. Late 19th century poet. Lesbian.

DEMETRIA: Early 20s. 6th century poet. Lesbian.

BETTY: Late 20s. Mid 20th century memoirist. Lesbian.

EVELYN: Late 20s. Early 20th century novelist. Anna's lover. Lesbian.

ANNA: Late 20s. Early 20th century poet. Evelyn's lover. Lesbian.

JACK: Late 20s. 21st century essayist. Lesbian.

Place

PARTS 1-2, 7: Molly's bedroom. Suburban Ohio.
PARTS 3-6: Molly's college dorm. Chicago, Illinois.

Time

Present day and the surrounding time.

Notes on style:

A slash (/) denotes a moment of overlap in the dialogue.

Regular quotation marks (“”) denote quotes directly from the authors' writing being read aloud.

These quotes will sometimes continue from one line of dialogue to another.

Single quotation marks (‘’) denote ‘air quotes’

THE BOOK CLUB made its world premiere in Long Island University’s Lab Theatre on March 1, 2025. It was produced by Post Theatre Company. The show had four performances between March 1st and 2nd, 2025. Olivia Galligan, Director; Analía Piloto, Assistant Director; Set by Olivia Galligan; Lighting Design by TK; Costumes by Gwendolyn Ihde; Sound Design by Ash Hernandez; Fight Choreographer, Analía Piloto; Intimacy Choreographer, Tina Mitchell; Stage Manager; Alexandra Theodoracopoulos; Assistant Stage Manager, Cameron Smith. Cast:

MOLLY Andy Ruggeri
AMELIA Delia Hartman
FRANCES Ava Gardner
DEMETRIA Nadia Yliniemi
BETTY Robyn Bernard
EVELYN Kennedy Walsh
ANNA Abby Manfredi
JACK Morgan Feinstein

Part One: Amelia

(A teenage girl's bedroom. Molly's bedroom. A space representative of someone who has no idea who she is. The middle of the night. MOLLY is sitting in bed, reading AMELIA's book by lamplight. She is bored. Bored. Booooooored. Until...)

MOLLY

“As my sister spun around the room in our mother's old white dress, I quickly became aware of a looming expectation that nobody had told me about, but everybody held: That someday I would put that dress on, and when I did, I would be as delighted to wear it as she was.

(AMELIA enters.)

MOLLY

I was struck with the realization that I would never marry. Not by my will. I was not meant to be a wife. Moreover, I was not meant to be a man's.

AMELIA

I was struck with the realization that I would never marry. Not by my will. I was not meant to be a wife. Moreover, I was not meant to be a man's.

(MOLLY notices AMELIA. AMELIA notices MOLLY.)

AMELIA

That night, I closed my eyes and wished that I would wake up the next day still myself, but in a world entirely unlike my own. A world I could move through as a man did, celebrated for the freedoms afforded to me by my independence rather than ridiculed for the faults that led me to it.”

(Beat. Understanding. You see me? I see you. They erupt into giddy, girlish, pure excitement. ohmygodyes!ohmygodiknowright!
ohmygodohmygodohmygod!)

MOLLY

You know how I feel!

AMELIA

You know what I mean!

MOLLY

Yes!

AMELIA
Yes!

MOLLY
I didn't think anybody understood!

AMELIA
I do! Oh, I do-I didn't think anybody else felt/like

MOLLY
/I do! I mean really, wow, it's like you read my mind, /because everyone is always asking me if I've got a boyfriend, and I try to tell them I don't want one

AMELIA
/Really?

MOLLY
But they say "oh but you will"-Yes!
Exactly!

AMELIA
But they say "oh but you will"-Yes!
Exactly!

MOLLY
Did you-ever?

AMELIA
Oh, never!

MOLLY
Good-good, because I don't know if I ever/will

AMELIA
/That's okay! You don't have/to

MOLLY
/Was there, like, a moment when you realized you didn't want to...date...or marry...or whatever?
Or was it more of a gradual sort of thing-and then it was like- "Oh! No I definitely don't! But mayyyyybe I do-No!" Or was it-

AMELIA
There was a moment.

MOLLY

What was it? Was it like the dress thing, in the book?

AMELIA

Sort of. When I was, oh, I don't know, five-

MOLLY

Five?

AMELIA

Yes?

MOLLY

You were *five*?

AMELIA

Yes.

MOLLY

That's so young.

AMELIA

I suppose.

MOLLY

And you *knew*? That soon?

AMELIA

Yes.

MOLLY

How, though?

AMELIA

If you would let me finish-

MOLLY

Oh! Sorry.

AMELIA

I was five-or, I could have been six-and I was at my cousin's wedding, and the ceremony had been going on so long that I thought I might die sitting there in that church, I was so bored. So I closed my eyes as tight as I could and tried to picture what I would look like standing at the altar on my wedding day.

(Beat. AMELIA sits in decisive silence.)

MOLLY

And?

AMELIA

Nothing. My mind was completely blank.

MOLLY

Wow.

AMELIA

Right then I decided-No, no-I just knew. I would never marry.

MOLLY

That's heavy.

AMELIA

I don't think so. You don't want to get married either.

MOLLY

I didn't say that, I said I didn't want a boyfriend.

AMELIA

How do you plan on getting married, exactly?

MOLLY

Well, I-I don't know. But I've always wanted to. Someday.

AMELIA

How does that work?

MOLLY

I mean, I think about my *wedding* all the time. My dress, the guests, the cake-lemon, with vanilla

MOLLY (cont.)

buttercream-the music, and the dancing-the *dancing* Amelia! I mean, it's just so romantic, don't you think?

AMELIA

But not the groom.

MOLLY (daydreaming)

Hm?

AMELIA

You don't think about the groom.

MOLLY

Huh. No, I guess not.

AMELIA

A wedding's one thing, Molly. A marriage is another.

(Beat. AMELIA is right. But what about the lemon cake with vanilla buttercream? What about the dancing?)

MOLLY

Right. Well, I should get to bed, I have school in the morning, so

AMELIA

I suppose I should go?

MOLLY

What? No! I didn't mean-Stay! Please!

AMELIA

Are you sure?

MOLLY

Yes!

AMELIA

I'd hate to intrude

You aren't!

MOLLY

But where would I/sleep?

AMELIA

/Sleep? You can sleep on the floor-or I can take the floor, if you want!

MOLLY

Oh, don't be silly

AMELIA

No, really, I don't mind

MOLLY

It's quite alright, Molly, really, the floor is perfectly fine with me

AMELIA

Are you sure?

MOLLY

Yes.

AMELIA

Okay.

MOLLY

(MOLLY and AMELIA set up a makeshift bed on the floor. AMELIA gets in, trying to make herself comfortable.)

Thank you.

AMELIA

You're welcome.

MOLLY

Goodnight, Molly.

AMELIA

MOLLY

Goodnight, Amelia.

(MOLLY shuts the light out and the pair go to bed. AMELIA tosses and turns, a good night's sleep impeded by her period attire. MOLLY jolts up in bed.)

MOLLY

Do you want to borrow pajamas? I can't imagine that's very comfortable to sleep in.

AMELIA

I'm-It's fine, this is fine.

MOLLY

No, really, I'm sure I have something you can borrow.

(MOLLY rummages around in her closet and pulls out pajamas for AMELIA.)

MOLLY

Here.

AMELIA

Thank you.

(AMELIA starts to undress, struggling to do so alone, before realizing that for the first time in a long time, she doesn't have to.)

AMELIA

Hey Molly?

MOLLY

Yeah?

AMELIA

Could you help me get out of this?

(Beat. Is Molly allowed to do that? Why shouldn't she be? Why does it feel like she isn't? Why is her face so hot?)

MOLLY

Oh...Yes, yes! Of course.

(MOLLY helps AMELIA out of her dress. AMELIA puts the pajamas on and walks around like a mermaid who's just been granted her wish for human legs.)

MOLLY

Better?

AMELIA

Much better. Thank you.

(MOLLY and AMELIA get back in bed.)

MOLLY

Okay, goodnight for real this time.

AMELIA

Goodnight. For real.

(AMELIA starts to doze off, but is interrupted by MOLLY leaning over her from the end of bed.)

MOLLY

Were you lonely, ever?

AMELIA (groggy)

Huh?

MOLLY

You never got married, right? Was that lonely?

AMELIA

What?

MOLLY

Because my mom, she always asks me which boys at school I think are 'cute' and I tell her every time that I don't want anything to do with them because they're weird and gross and annoying

MOLLY (cont.)

and then she says I'd better be careful with that attitude because one day I'll wake up and all my friends will be married, and there won't be anybody left for me

AMELIA

That's silly, Molly. You have plenty of time. There are other boys-men, rather, that's-I don't think all hope is lost just because the only boys you know are...um...

MOLLY

A bunch of animals?

AMELIA

Sure.

MOLLY

But what if I don't want any of those other...men-boys?

AMELIA

I'm sure there will be/someone

MOLLY

You didn't.

AMELIA

That's true.

MOLLY

Were you lonely?

AMELIA

It's not that/simple.

MOLLY

/Ever, at any point while you were out and about being *not married*, did you feel lonely?

AMELIA (exasperated)

Yes! Of course I did!

MOLLY

Thank you!

AMELIA (gentle)

I'm tired, Molly. Can we talk about this in the morning?

MOLLY

I-Sure.

AMELIA

Thank you. Goodnight.

MOLLY

Goodnight.

(MOLLY gets back in bed but doesn't sleep. Is she destined for loneliness too? AMELIA drifts off but is awoken shortly by the sound of a digital alarm clock. She shrieks. MOLLY scrambles to shut it off.)

AMELIA

What is that?!

MOLLY

It's my alarm

AMELIA

It's *very* loud.

MOLLY

Sorry, I-jeez, I didn't even realize how late, or early? it was, I have to get ready

(MOLLY gets out of bed and gets ready for school, gathering her clothes, packing her bag. While she's distracted, AMELIA picks up a magazine from MOLLY's desk with a beautiful woman on the cover and examines it closely.)

MOLLY

So was it lonely, like, all the time, or what?

AMELIA

No, not all the time.

(MOLLY turns to AMELIA and notices the magazine in her hand.)

MOLLY (ashamed)

What are you doing with that? Put that down.

(MOLLY snatches the magazine and hides it, returning to the previous conversation as if it hadn't been interrupted at all.)

Most of the time?

AMELIA

No;

(AMELIA pauses, choosing her words carefully.)

Not forever. In the beginning, though, it was. It felt as if one day we had all just been girls and the next, everyone had blossomed into women and wives and I'd...rotted.

MOLLY

Rotted?

AMELIA

I became something no one wanted. Something must have been wrong with me, at least I believed so. Every woman I knew was so capable of loving a man. It must have been me, I must not have practiced enough in my childhood or done something horrible in a past life that cursed me with this-this sickness. And everyone treated me like I chose it, but if I could have been happy with a man, any man, I would have done it. I wasn't so different from them. I didn't want to be alone either.

MOLLY

Last night, though, it didn't seem like it upset you so much.

AMELIA

It stopped, eventually.

MOLLY

How?

AMELIA

I would have been just as lonely with a husband as without. There's no company to be had with someone you can't love.

MOLLY

But how did it stop feeling so lonely?

AMELIA

Just because I couldn't love a man didn't mean I couldn't *love*. I loved to write, and I loved the people who I knew would read my writing someday. So I wrote, and I wrote, and I wrote, and they kept me company. You did. It was good, really good, to have that. You'll find it, if you need it.

MOLLY

Well, I'm not much of a writer

AMELIA

Doesn't have to be writing

MOLLY

Okay. Thank you. For being honest.

AMELIA

I wouldn't lie to you.

MOLLY

I should get going.

AMELIA

Of course. Have a good day.

MOLLY

I'll see you later. Make yourself at home. You can sleep in my bed, if you want.

AMELIA

Will do.

(MOLLY exits. AMELIA gets in bed and finally gets some sleep, but is startled awake a few hours later by MOLLY storming into the room and throwing her book at the bed.)

MOLLY

How could you?

How could I- AMELIA

How *could* you? MOLLY

What are you talking about? AMELIA

The book, Amelia! The end! MOLLY

Oh. AMELIA

I-I thought you understood me. MOLLY

(AMELIA gets out of bed and approaches MOLLY, who backs away like a wounded animal.)

I do. AMELIA

No you don't. MOLLY

Molly AMELIA

You made her get married, Amelia! What-I don't-how? Why? MOLLY

I had to. AMELIA

You "had to"? MOLLY

AMELIA

Yes!

MOLLY

What does that even mean/you “had to”?

AMELIA

/She had to end up married or they wouldn’t have published it.

MOLLY

They? Who’s they?

AMELIA

The men in charge of the publishers’ house

MOLLY

And you didn’t fight them on it?

AMELIA

Of course I did, Molly, how dare you? I tried. So hard. I told them over and over she wasn’t meant to be married, but they told me there wasn’t any appeal in that. It was a risk as it was, publishing a woman’s work.

MOLLY

So that’s it, then? This story, *your* story, it’s just about another “untamed woman” who’s domesticated by the perfect man? All these women who prefer to be alone, they just haven’t found “Mr. Right”? That’s some moral. I can’t even look at you, I/can’t believe-

AMELIA

/That is not my story.

MOLLY (smug)

Sounds like it.

AMELIA

Then you didn’t read it close enough.

MOLLY

Oh, I read it plenty close. Martha realizes how miserable her life will be without a husband and goes out in search of the first man she can stand to marry.

AMELIA

It isn't like that, not at all. William, the man she meets, he isn't like the men either of us know. He-he sees her, and he understands her, and he-

MOLLY

But that's not real! That's not true! That didn't happen, "William" doesn't exist! Everything else about this book is so personal, so *you*. It's yours! But this? This isn't yours.

AMELIA

Would you rather I not have published it at all?

(Beat. Molly considers what she stands to lose had it never been published.)

MOLLY (sheepish)

No.

AMELIA

I thought so.

MOLLY

I'm sorry.

AMELIA

It's alright.

MOLLY

Can I ask you something?

AMELIA

Anything.

MOLLY

Do you think, if you could make up a man as perfect as you think the one in your book is and bring him to life, would you marry him? Could you love him?

(Beat. Amelia considers this.)

AMELIA

Maybe.

(More consideration.)

Yes, I think I could.

MOLLY

And what would he be like?

AMELIA

He would be kind, very kind. And not arrogant like men always are. He would be a good man, and he would know it, but he wouldn't go around announcing it to people as if he might win some prize if enough people knew it. He would be smart, but never think he was any smarter than me. He would talk enough not to be boring, but not too much-not over me. And he'd listen, men don't usually do that. But he would really listen, as if every single thing I had to say might be the most important thing he'd ever hear. I'd do the same for him, of course, but he'd appreciate it, he wouldn't just expect it from me. Oh, and his skin would be soft. I never liked how rough men's skin was. And if I were being particular about it, he might have long eyelashes and shiny hair, though I wouldn't care much about his appearance if everything else about him was so lovely. And we wouldn't be 'man and wife' as everyone always says. We would just be. Together.

MOLLY

That's funny.

AMELIA (defensive)

What's funny?

MOLLY

No, nothing you said, it just sounds sort of like-no, never mind.

AMELIA

What is it?

MOLLY

No, it's ridiculous, it doesn't make any sense.

AMELIA

I want to know!

MOLLY

No, no.

AMELIA

Please?

MOLLY

No!

AMELIA

Pleeeeeeeeeeease?

MOLLY

Okay! I was just going to say that, for a second, it almost sounded like you were describing a woman.

(Beat. That *is* ridiculous. Right?)

AMELIA

Well, I'd really better be going, I've overstayed my welcome/ten times over

MOLLY

/No, please stay!

AMELIA

I-

MOLLY

Please, I still have so much I want to ask you

AMELIA

Well, okay-

MOLLY

Good-great! Where were we?

(Beat. Oh, that.)

Part Two: Frances

(Molly's bedroom. One year later. The space has evolved to reflect a version of Molly who is still lost but beginning to know herself better. AMELIA and MOLLY are sitting on Molly's bed, a book between them. AMELIA stares quizzically at the cover.)

MOLLY

It really doesn't ring a bell?

AMELIA

No, I'm telling you, I've never heard of a Frances Taylor.

MOLLY

But the woman at the library told me she was only a few years younger than you

AMELIA

Still doesn't ring a bell.

MOLLY

Okay, okay.

(MOLLY opens the book)

MOLLY

"There are not words enough to say, rooms enough to house, floors strong enough to bear my admiration.

(FRANCES enters)

MOLLY

I could hold you in the highest esteem,
and that would still insult your true
place. Only god could stand before
you, and even he would waver in your
presence.

FRANCES

I could hold you in the highest
esteem, and that would still insult
your true place. Only god could stand
before you, and even he would waver
in your presence.

(With the next line, FRANCES realizes that someone, who isn't her, is
reading her poetry. She is horrified.)

FRANCES

Godlike, and yet so divinely human, I could laugh with you forever." What are you doing with that?

(FRANCES snatches the book from Molly.)

MOLLY

Reading?

FRANCES

Where did you get it?

MOLLY

The library...?

FRANCES

How could you get it at the library? This is my diary! I kept it locked in a drawer, I-how-

AMELIA

That is not your diary.

FRANCES

Yes, it most certainly is, I never wrote that anywhere else.

AMELIA

Can I see it?

FRANCES

No!

AMELIA

But-

FRANCES

Absolutely not-

AMELIA

If you'd just let me-

FRANCES

I don't even know you

AMELIA

Amelia Conway, nice to meet you.

FRANCES

Amelia Conway? As in *the* Amelia Conway?

AMELIA

I presume?

FRANCES

Oh my goodness, I'm a huge fan, your work changed my life.

(AMELIA grabs the book from FRANCES while her guard is down.)

AMELIA

Thank you.

FRANCES

Hey!

AMELIA

Look! "The Collected Poems of Frances Taylor". Like I said, not your diary.

FRANCES

That's impossible, I never published any poetry.

AMELIA

Clearly you did.

FRANCES

No, I absolutely did not.

MOLLY

Maybe someone else published it?

FRANCES

That is so strange-who would do that?

(MOLLY takes the book from FRANCES and flips to the first page)

MOLLY

"The poetry in this edition was first compiled for publication by Mrs. Alice Haverly."

FRANCES

What? Give me that.

(FRANCES grabs the book back from MOLLY)

MOLLY

Hey, be careful that's a/library book

FRANCES

/Oh no.

MOLLY

What?

FRANCES

No, no, no!

AMELIA

What?

FRANCES

Alice can't have read this-Oh no

AMELIA

Who's Alice?

FRANCES

She is-she was-my best friend.

MOLLY

Was?

FRANCES

We had a falling out, of sorts.

AMELIA

Maybe this was her way of saying sorry?

FRANCES

No, it couldn't be.

MOLLY

Frances, if Alice was really your *best* friend, I don't understand what could possibly be so bad about her reading a poem you wrote about some guy. Unless, oh no, don't tell me, did she like the same guy/or was he

FRANCES (inaudible)

It's not about a guy.

MOLLY

What?

FRANCES (still quiet)

It's not about a guy.

AMELIA

Frances, you're going to have to speak up, we can't understand-

FRANCES

It's not about a guy! It's about Alice!

(Beat. FRANCES looks as if she has just confessed to a murder.)

MOLLY

What's so bad about that?

FRANCES

It's all a little...affectionate, don't you think?

MOLLY

So?

FRANCES

People don't write about their friends that way.

AMELIA

That is not true/

FRANCES

/Yes it is/

AMELIA

/Every other play Shakespeare wrote was like ohhhhhh I love my best friend sooooo much he's just the best he's the most important person in the world I wish I could marry him

FRANCES (harsh)

Women don't.

MOLLY

That's not true-And even so, what does it matter? Not writing it doesn't mean they don't...feel it.

FRANCES

Do you? Feel...it'?

MOLLY

Of course. I don't see what's so shameful about caring about your friends.

FRANCES

I'm not ashamed. It's just...personal. If you wrote that about someone, would you want her reading it?

AMELIA

I would! It's brilliant.

FRANCES

Brilliant? You think it's brilliant?

AMELIA

I do. And bold, too. I mean-you compared her to *god*.

FRANCES

Thank you. That's very kind, especially coming from you. Still, nobody was meant to read it, especially not Alice. Oh, she was probably so furious with me when she did.

MOLLY

She was probably flattered, Frances.

AMELIA

If she had any idea it was about her.

MOLLY

That too. It's not exactly obvious.

FRANCES

Alice would know. She always knew exactly what I was writing about, even better than I did.

MOLLY

Okay but even if she knew, I don't see why it would bother her so much. It's nice.

FRANCES

It just would, alright? Can you leave it alone? Please?

MOLLY (wounded)

Okay.

(MOLLY turns away and flips through FRANCES'S book absentmindedly)

AMELIA

Don't be mean.

FRANCES

I'm not.

(Beat. FRANCES searches for something she can say to redeem herself.)

FRANCES

Can I ask you something?

AMELIA

Go for it.

FRANCES

Why does she get married at the end?

AMELIA

Oh my god-I had to do that or they wouldn't publish it, okay?

FRANCES

I was just curious.

I'm so sorry.

AMELIA

What for?

FRANCES

The marriage?

AMELIA

Why are you sorry? I loved it.

FRANCES

You did? MOLLY

You did? AMELIA

Yes. I thought it was sweet. Just wasn't expecting it is all.

FRANCES

Oh.

AMELIA

You didn't intend it to end that way?

FRANCES

No.

AMELIA

How would it have ended then?

FRANCES

She would have spent the rest of her life happily unmarried.

AMELIA

Happily.

FRANCES

Yes.

AMELIA

FRANCES
How? That's a miserable way to live.

AMELIA
I don't think so.

FRANCES
You never married, then?

AMELIA
No.

FRANCES
And you were happy with that?

AMELIA
Yes.

FRANCES
I can't imagine.

AMELIA
You were married, then?

FRANCES
I was.

AMELIA
And you were happy?

(Beat. Happy?)

FRANCES
Yes

AMELIA
Tell me about him.

FRANCES
What about him?

AMELIA
His name?

FRANCES
Henry.

(Beat. That's all?)

AMELIA
And...what was he like?

FRANCES
Oh, he was great. Sweet, a hard worker...good looking.

AMELIA
Are you sure about that?

FRANCES (defensive)
Yes!

AMELIA
Did you write poetry about him?

FRANCES
No

AMELIA
Why not?

FRANCES
He wasn't the type of person you write poetry about. He was simple. Nothing to compare him to but himself.

AMELIA
But Alice?

FRANCES
Alice belonged in poetry like the moon and stars did. It was invented to make sense of people like her.

AMELIA

What was she like?

FRANCES

Alice was the most joyous person I ever knew. She was like the sun breaking through the curtains in the morning. It's a wonder we remained friends as long as we did. She used to tell me I was making myself miserable, that I spent too much time looking back on my life and not enough living it. She was right, of course, but I never got the chance to tell her. She was always right. In the springtime we would sneak off to these rolling hills outside of town and Alice would lay down among the blooming flowers, and it might as well have been winter then-she was so beautiful, it seemed as if the flowers collapsed back in on themselves-How could you look at anything but her?

AMELIA

She sounds pretty special.

FRANCES

She was.

(Beat. MOLLY understands now why FRANCES wanted to drop it so badly.)

MOLLY (to FRANCES)

You're welcome to stay. If you want.

FRANCES

I am?

MOLLY

Mhm.

FRANCES

Thank you. I think I will.

(FRANCES tries to settle into MOLLY'S room, unsure of where she fits. A few days later, AMELIA is reading FRANCES'S poetry while FRANCES hovers nervously, awaiting her opinion.)

AMELIA

I can't believe you never published any of this.

FRANCES
It's nothing special

AMELIA
Frances

FRANCES
What?

AMELIA
It is so good.

FRANCES
Oh, stop it

AMELIA
I mean it!

FRANCES (playful)
You're too kind

AMELIA
Oh, please

(They laugh, finally getting along until they are interrupted by the shouting of one extremely worked up MOLLY, who enters in a panic.)

MOLLY
Frances!

FRANCES (startled)
Molly, you're home!

MOLLY
You and Alice had a falling out, right?

FRANCES
What?

Why?
MOLLY

Molly
FRANCES

What was it about?
MOLLY

I
FRANCES

Did you ever make up?
MOLLY

Um
FRANCES

Frances, please!
MOLLY

Molly! I'm trying, okay? It's not so easy to talk about.
FRANCES

MOLLY
It's just that my best friend and I got into this horrible fight, and I don't know if I can fix it and I thought maybe you would know what to do but maybe you don't and that's okay and if you don't want to talk about it that's fine I just

FRANCES
Slow down. Tell me what happened.

MOLLY
Ivy and I were supposed to get dinner tonight—Ivy is like *my* Alice—and we haven't spent so much time together since she got together with her boyfriend Stephen.

AMELIA (rolling her eyes)
Stephen...

MOLLY

But I got to English today and she told me Stephen really needed help studying for his ‘big math test’ and she was gonna have to reschedule.

AMELIA (disgusted)

Is Stephen five years old?

MOLLY

I know, right? But anyway, I said that wasn’t fair and that she and Stephen could find another time, and she insisted that *we’d* find another time, and I told her that *we don’t* but then the teacher came by and shushed us and so I sat there for the rest of class thinking about what to say to her. And I thought and I thought, and I kept thinking of all the things I had to say and so as soon class ended, I went right to her and told her that I hate Stephen, and I always have!

FRANCES (scolding)

Molly.

MOLLY

No, Frances, we have gone to school with this guy forever and he has always been a massive jerk, and Ivy swears he’s changed, but that’s bullshit, and I told her that it’s bullshit and he was flirting with Katie Moore in chemistry *this morning* and she should break up with him because it’s not fair that she keeps blowing me off for him when he doesn’t even care about her at all and I care *so much*. And do you know what she said to me?

AMELIA

What?

FRANCES

What?

MOLLY

She said I was *jealous*.

AMELIA

No she didn’t.

MOLLY

Oh, yes, she did! She said I was ‘jealous’ because I don’t know how to talk to guys and she figured it out and got herself a boyfriend, and when I say I don’t want one I’m just ‘deflecting’.

(Beat. Is she?)

AMELIA

What did you say?

MOLLY

Nothing. I went to my next class and I haven't spoken to her since.

(FRANCES, lost in thought, does not respond)

AMELIA

Frances?

FRANCES

What? Sorry, that's just-it's almost exactly what happened between Alice and I.

MOLLY

It is?

FRANCES

Yes. With Alice, like I said, she was the most beautiful girl you could ever lay eyes on, and so of course every man around was trying to win her over. They brought these extravagant gifts and professed their love in these ridiculous speeches at her door, or sometimes they would just go after her in the middle of town! Not since Helen had such wars been waged over a woman. She always found it funny and foolish and swore that she would always prefer my company to theirs. And then

(Beat. Everything comes back to FRANCES.)

MOLLY

And then?

FRANCES

And then came George.

MOLLY

George

FRANCES

George Haverly

(AMELIA gasps.)

AMELIA

As in-

FRANCES

Mrs. Alice Haverly. George brought nothing but a small bouquet of daffodils from the hills outside town-*our* hills outside town-to Alice's house and made no great speech. All he said was that he'd always thought she was beautiful, and that he'd like it if she would sit by him in church on Sunday. Then he left. Alice was smitten.

MOLLY

You didn't like him, though.

FRANCES

There was nothing wrong with him, but I found him terribly boring. And yet he became the subject of every conversation Alice and I had, conversations which were becoming less and less frequent. For six months, Alice spent days that used to be ours at tea parties and horse races and the opera-She used to loathe all of that, but if George loved it so did she.

MOLLY

Ivy does the same thing!

FRANCES

Ridiculous, isn't it?

MOLLY

So ridiculous!

FRANCES

I can't understand why she changed so much about herself for a man who was supposed to love her as she was. Alice and I used to think we were the only people in the world who understood one another. And really, nobody else ever understood me. As kids we planned on packing up our lives one day and running off to the hills or the woods or the sea and living a quiet life where no one could bother us ever again.

MOLLY

Ivy and I used to say we were going to move to Paris together.

FRANCES

I held out hope for a little while, that one day she'd come to me in the middle of the night and say let's go right now-but soon reality crashed in. Alice and George were set to marry. I saw less

FRANCES (cont.)

of her than I ever had, and I was so lonely without her. I wrote pages and pages of angry, regretful poetry, most of which I burned. But the night before the wedding, she slept at my house one last time, and while we were laying her things out on the floor, she found a crumpled-up piece of paper under my desk and

(FRANCES grabs her book and flips through it, finding what she's looking for on the very last page)

FRANCES

How could she?

AMELIA

What?

FRANCES

She published it.

MOLLY

Can I read it...?

FRANCES (defeated)

Go ahead.

MOLLY

“For a moment, I held gold in my hands and stars in my eyes. Caught in their brilliance, I was too foolish to remember they did not belong to me. The gold was the earth’s, and the stars were the sky’s. Yet when they were taken from me, it was not by earth nor sky. They were ripped from me by the cruel currents of the ocean, never fighting to return to my shore. Blissfully they were swallowed by the blue, floating out of my life. You never fought to return to my shore. You let the blue swallow you whole. I loved gold, I loved stars, I loved you. I lost gold, I lost stars, I lost you. I loathe gold, I loathe stars, I loathe you.”

(Beat. Yikes.)

MOLLY

Did you mean it?

FRANCES

Of course not. I was angry, but I could never hate her. I wish I’d never written it.

MOLLY

What did she say?

FRANCES

She asked if it was about her and George. There wasn't a single thing I could tell her besides the truth. She was furious, of course, more than furious-she was devastated. Broken, almost. I'll never forget the look on her face. She said she always knew I was secretly jealous of her, of all the attention she got, but she never thought I'd be so cruel about it, and she told me that she'd always have loved me better than George if I hadn't done it. She left. I didn't try to stop her. I didn't know how. I knew better than to go to the wedding. She and George moved west two weeks later. I didn't have their new address, I couldn't write her, so-that was it. That was Alice.

MOLLY

I'm so sorry.

FRANCES

It's my fault. I should have been more careful-No, I should never have written such loathsome things.

MOLLY

But that was how you felt. She left you behind.

FRANCES

What was she meant to do? Never marry? Live with me for the rest of her life?

MOLLY

Yes!

FRANCES

That's ridiculous Molly, that's not something a person can do.

MOLLY

Why not?

FRANCES

It isn't proper.

MOLLY

Screw 'proper'! She loved you more than George!

FRANCES

It doesn't matter! It wasn't in the same way!

AMELIA

It wasn't?

FRANCES

Of course not!

AMELIA

She wanted to run away with *you*.

FRANCES

That was childish nonsense.

AMELIA

Who did you love more?

FRANCES

Excuse me?

AMELIA

Who did you love more? Alice or...um...Henry?

FRANCES

Yes.

AMELIA

Alice *or* Henry?

FRANCES

I loved them in different ways.

AMELIA

Still, you must have loved one more.

FRANCES

No.

(FRANCES takes a breath.)

FRANCES

I loved Henry very much.

AMELIA

Nobody said you didn't

FRANCES

Amelia, please. I did. But...when something funny happened, when I read a good book or had a new idea, I thought to tell her before I thought of telling Henry. Every time. And I couldn't tell you why. He was just lovely.

(Beat. He wasn't Alice.)

MOLLY

What, so Ivy and I are doomed, then?

FRANCES

There isn't any way to know for sure. Time will tell.

MOLLY

That's stupid.

FRANCES

It's true!

MOLLY

What would you suggest I do...?

FRANCES

Apologize?

MOLLY

I'm not sorry, though.

FRANCES

It might be worth acting like it if you don't want to lose her.

MOLLY

You know, I'm not so sure anymore.

AMELIA

Maybe you need some time apart.

MOLLY

Maybe.

(Beat. FRANCES is so disappointed by MOLLY'S refusal to do what she couldn't that she can't even find the words to express it.)

Part Three: Demetria

(Molly's college dorm room. Her freshman year. Decorated like her space is entirely hers for the first time in her life. AMELIA and FRANCES are in the room, waiting for Molly to return from her first day of classes.)

FRANCES

I hope she's making friends.

AMELIA

I'm sure she is.

FRANCES

After everything that happened with Ivy

AMELIA

I *know*.

FRANCES

That girl is a real piece of work.

AMELIA

Woah! Harsh words coming from you!

FRANCES

What can I say? You're rubbing off on me

(AMELIA laughs.)

AMELIA

This is good. She needed a fresh start.

(MOLLY enters the room, new book in hand. AMELIA and FRANCES pounce.)

AMELIA

So?

FRANCES

How was your first day?

MOLLY

Alright, *mom*. It was good.

FRANCES

Good! Good, I'm glad.

AMELIA (gesturing to the book)

What's that?

MOLLY

Oh this? It's the first reading assignment for this class about woman writers in the classical era- which I was only taking for the English credit, but now I'm sort of super excited about it because I sat next to this girl Alison, and she's like, *cool*, and sort of mysterious and I've never met anyone quite like her because at home everyone was exactly alike but she's just, she's laid back and so funny and she's different but good different? It feels like I know her already, like we're different in the same way, if that makes any sense. And she wears these really...interesting clothes-good interesting. And she has her hair cut in this like-mullet, sort of? You guys know what a mullet is? Business in the front, party in the back? No? Anyway, they look awful, usually, but hers was cool somehow and to be honest I don't know *that* much about her because she only had time to tell me her name before class actually started but she kept telling me which books on the syllabus were her favorites, so I guess I know that she's smart and also that she wants to be/friends? Maybe?

AMELIA

/Molly

MOLLY

What?

AMELIA

The book?

MOLLY

What book?

AMELIA

The one in your hand.

MOLLY

Oh! It's a collection of Greek poetry/by

AMELIA

/Greek? Since when can you read Greek?

MOLLY

I can't? It's translated.

AMELIA

Oh.

MOLLY

So anyway, it's by this poet named Demetria who did all this incredible writing, but she isn't spoken about nearly as much as her male contemporaries because most of her work has been 'lost to time'.

FRANCES

How'd that happen?

MOLLY

I don't know, the professor said we'd talk about it after the reading, which I really should get started on so

AMELIA

Why don't you read it out loud?

MOLLY

Yeah, sure

(MOLLY opens the book.)

MOLLY

Volume one.

(DEMETRIA enters.)

DEMETRIA

"If she is a siren, I am but her easiest prey. She needed no magnificent song to draw me to her. I would have let the sea swallow me whole upon the first word she whispered to me for only the hope that my modest lips may once touch hers."

(MOLLY stops in her tracks and looks to AMELIA and FRANCES. Is that allowed? That can't be allowed. She slams the book shut. All three turn to DEMETRIA.)

DEMETRIA (defensive)

What?

MOLLY

What does that mean?

DEMETRIA

What does what mean?

MOLLY

That poem.

DEMETRIA

It means what it says, what do *you* mean?

MOLLY

I mean, it sounds like you wrote a poem about kissing a woman.

DEMETRIA

I did.

MOLLY

And you...are...a woman.

DEMETRIA

I am.

MOLLY

Why would you do that?

DEMETRIA

I don't think I understand. Why shouldn't I?

FRANCES

Because women do not write that way about other women-they don't, they can't, *can't* feel that way about each other. It's impossible.

DEMETRIA

Impossible? How can it be/impossible if

(MOLLY, who has been flipping through the book, interrupts.)

MOLLY

Wait, no-I get it!

AMELIA

You do?

FRANCES

You do?

MOLLY

You were writing from a man's perspective!

DEMETRIA

I was not!

MOLLY

But right here, it says- "Aphrodite has cursed me to be a man whose woman is someone else's wife."

DEMETRIA

What?

MOLLY

Look.

(MOLLY shows DEMETRIA the book.)

DEMETRIA

I never wrote that.

FRANCES

Obviously you did.

DEMETRIA

No, I-I wrote that line, but that is not at all how I meant it.

MOLLY

How did you mean it?

DEMETRIA

That phrase doesn't mean 'man' in Greek, it's more like 'woman's lover'. "Aphrodite has cursed me to be the lover of a woman who has been bought by a husband." *That* is what it means. How anyone could get that from what I wrote is...unimaginable.

FRANCES

I can imagine it. The 'lover of a woman' is a man.

DEMETRIA

How can that be? I was the lover of many women, and I'm quite certain that I'm not a man.

AMELIA

You were...the lover...of *many* women? You didn't just write that?

DEMETRIA

Yes. Is that so hard to believe?

AMELIA

I didn't know women could-

FRANCES

They can't.

DEMETRIA

Of course they can.

AMELIA

Shut up, Frances. Molly, did you know that?

MOLLY

No. Yes. Sort of?

AMELIA

Sort of?

MOLLY (flustered)

I don't know!

AMELIA (to DEMETRIA)

Did you ever love men?

DEMETRIA

Absolutely not.

(Beat. MOLLY and AMELIA look to one another.)

MOLLY (sheepish)

I've never been interested in a man.

DEMETRIA (careful)

What about a woman?

MOLLY

Well, I don't know, I didn't ever think it was an option for me.

FRANCES

It isn't.

DEMETRIA

It is.

DEMETRIA

I promise, Molly. It is.

(Beat. MOLLY considers this.)

FRANCES

Molly, this is ridiculous, you are so young. You just haven't met the right man yet. I wasn't very much interested in men until I met Henry.

AMELIA (snarky)

Were you very much interested in Henry?

(FRANCES shoots AMELIA a look.)

MOLLY

Okay, if you all don't mind, I have some poetry to read, so

(MOLLY sits and reads while AMELIA and DEMETRIA look on.
MOLLY and AMELIA look to one another in disbelief of what they're reading.)

AMELIA

Frances, come look at this!

FRANCES

I'm good, thanks.

AMELIA

Suit yourself.

(MOLLY AMELIA, and DEMETRIA continue flipping through the book, giggling and gossiping amongst themselves. FRANCES pointedly ignores them. Two weeks later. 12 AM. AMELIA, FRANCES, and DEMETRIA are sitting in MOLLY's room with the lights on, braiding each other's hair. MOLLY tiptoes into the room, startled to see AMELIA, FRANCES, and DEMETRIA still awake.)

FRANCES

Where have you been?

AMELIA

We were starting to think you'd abandoned us.

FRANCES

Or that you had been murdered.

DEMETRIA

Frances-What?

FRANCES

I was worried about that!

DEMETRIA

Don't say things like that, you're gonna freak her out.

MOLLY

Sorry, I'm sorry I made you guys worry. I was out. With Alison.

DEMETRIA

Who's Alison?

MOLLY

Oh, just this girl I have class with

(Something dawns on AMELIA. She gasps.)

AMELIA

She's this 'really cool' girl Molly has class with who's smart and funny and has nice hair

(DEMETRIA gasps.)

MOLLY

What?

DEMETRIA

You like her!

MOLLY

What? No, I-

DEMETRIA

You *liiiiike* her!

MOLLY

I barely know her!

DEMETRIA

So?

AMELIA (laughing)

You should have heard her before/She couldn't stop talking about this girl-I can't believe I didn't realize

MOLLY (whiny)

/Amelia!

FRANCES

Would you leave her alone?

AMELIA

She's fine!

DEMETRIA

So what did you do with *Alison*?

MOLLY (flustered)

I-um-we got our first big assignment today-an essay tracing the influence of one of the writers we're studying through later works. Alison asked me if I wanted to go to the library and get started on research and I said yes, obviously, and we went to get coffee first, and she paid for mine even though I tried to/tell her

DEMETRIA

She paid?

MOLLY

Yeah, isn't that nice?

DEMETRIA

Very

MOLLY

What's that supposed to mean?

DEMETRIA

It sounds like she likes you too, but what do I know?

MOLLY

What? I don't even know if I-y'know-I mean, I think I do, maybe, probably, but

DEMETRIA

I knew it!

MOLLY

But! I don't have any reason to think she's into girls, let alone me.

DEMETRIA

She asked you to hang out, alone, to read *women's literature* together, and then paid for your coffee? Come on.

AMELIA

What was that thing you said? That you two were...different, in the same way?

MOLLY

Yeah, so?

AMELIA

So maybe this is that same way.

MOLLY

I-Maybe? I don't know. I don't know.

DEMETRIA

What else happened?

MOLLY

Right, so, we got the coffee and the whole way to the library we were talking about books and our favorite authors and whatnot-she loves-actually, never mind, you guys wouldn't know her-and she took me on a shortcut but we got lost and it took like an extra 15 minutes to get there-not that I minded-and when we finally did get to the library we were trying to be quiet but the girl behind the circulation desk kept giving us these dirty looks because we kept getting so excited about how many of the same books we'd read-and then, Frances, this was crazy-She said that she was thinking of taking your poetry and tying it back to Demetria's for her essay!

FRANCES

What?

DEMETRIA

What?

DEMETRIA

You write poetry?

FRANCES

Yes, but I have no idea what it could *possibly* have to do with yours.

MOLLY

Well

FRANCES

Well?

MOLLY

I thought the same thing, at first-

FRANCES

At first?!

MOLLY

But then, Alison read some of them to me

DEMETRIA (teasing)

Ooooh

FRANCES

Shut up!

MOLLY

And I heard them in a...new way.

FRANCES

In *what* way?

MOLLY

It just made me think that, maybe, if someone was reading your poems, and they had read Demetria's, they might think that your poems...were about how you were...in love...with Alice.

FRANCES

I was not in love with Alice!

DEMETRIA

Alice, who's Alice?

FRANCES

Nobody!

FRANCES (through forced laughter)

That's just too funny, Molly! You're so funny! Has anyone ever told you that? You are so! Funny!

AMELIA

She kind of has a point.

FRANCES

What? No she doesn't!

AMELIA

I'm not saying you were! But...it could definitely sound like that.

DEMETRIA

Can I read them?

MOLLY

Yeah!

AMELIA

Sure!

FRANCES

No!

(MOLLY and FRANCES lunge for FRANCES' book. MOLLY gets it first and hands it to DEMETRIA, who reads voraciously)

FRANCES

Molly!

MOLLY (laughing)

Sorry, sorry!

FRANCES

It's not funny!

MOLLY

It's a little funny

(DEMETRIA gasps obnoxiously at what she's reading.)

FRANCES

What?

DEMETRIA

You love her!

FRANCES

I do not!

DEMETRIA

You *loooooove* her!

FRANCES

That is ridiculous, she was my best friend!

DEMETRIA

So?

FRANCES

So I did not 'loooooove' her-not like that!

DEMETRIA

I had an Alice.

FRANCES (dry)

Good for you.

DEMETRIA

Her name was Cleo. We did everything together.

FRANCES

And she was your best friend?

DEMETRIA

She was. And then she was more.

FRANCES

And you loved her? *Loved her*, loved her?

DEMETRIA

Very much.

(DEMETRIA looks to FRANCES, who avoids her eyes at all costs.)

FRANCES

Okay, you loved Cleo. Yay. Congratulations.

DEMETRIA

And you loved Alice.

FRANCES

As a friend!

DEMETRIA

I loved Cleo as a friend too. And everything else.

FRANCES

Everything else?

DEMETRIA

Friend, lover, woman, man, husband, wife.

(Beat. FRANCES can't hide anymore. Of course she loved Alice. How could she not? But nobody else can know that.)

FRANCES

Okay, well, even if that's the case for you, which is *nonsense*-it is *not* true for me. Alice was my friend. That's all.

DEMETRIA

Okay. But it is okay if you wished she was more.

(DEMETRIA steps closer to FRANCES, warm. FRANCES recoils.)

FRANCES

No. No. Just because you happen to be...unprincipled does not mean you get to corrupt the rest of us.

DEMETRIA

Corrupt?

FRANCES

Yes! We aren't meant to act on every feeling we have!

DEMETRIA

So you did have feelings for Alice!

FRANCES

No! I am not like you, and I don't appreciate that you've made Molly think she is!

DEMETRIA

I haven't done anything to Molly! Any conclusion she's come to was hers to draw.

FRANCES

Amelia? Don't you agree with me?

AMELIA

No, Frances, I don't. I wish I would've known all this when I could have done something about it.

FRANCES

Done something about it? Can you imagine the outrage?

AMELIA

It is just as outrageous to pretend to be someone you aren't, all because no one ever told you there was anything else to be!

FRANCES

I am not pretending!

AMELIA

I was talking about myself. But if the shoe fits...

FRANCES

It does not! I'm done with all this...absurdity. I'm leaving.

MOLLY

Don't leave.

FRANCES

It's quite clear I don't fit in with you all anymore.

MOLLY

Of course you do.

FRANCES

I don't want to. I want no part in this. I'm sorry, Molly. I hope you figure out what it is that you're looking for.

(FRANCES exits.)

Part Four: Betty

(Molly's dorm. Her sophomore year of college. The décor is becoming more explicitly queer, posters of attractive women and the like. It feels like the space of a teenager who has just discovered what physical attraction feels like, but is instead the space of a 20-year-old who didn't know that's what it was until now. AMELIA and DEMETRIA are sitting on the bed, an awkward tension in the air.)

AMELIA

Demetria?

DEMETRIA

Yeah?

AMELIA

How does it feel to kiss a girl?

DEMETRIA

What do you mean?

AMELIA

Is it nice?

DEMETRIA

Very nice. Really, it's just kissing, though.

AMELIA (shy)

I've never kissed anybody.

DEMETRIA

Never?

(AMELIA shakes her head.)

AMELIA

How do you even-

DEMETRIA

Um-you-

(DEMETRIA searches for the words but isn't quite sure they exist. Beat. Awkward pause. Is there a romantic spark between these two? No, not really. But they are both gay, and both curious.)

DEMETRIA

I could, um, show you, maybe.

AMELIA

Show me? Like kiss me?

DEMETRIA

I don't have to, if that's weird!

AMELIA

No, I mean, just as friends, right?

DEMETRIA

Oh, of course.

AMELIA

Of course.

DEMETRIA

So then

AMELIA

So

DEMETRIA

Usually, both people will lean their head to the right, like this, and then you-

(AMELIA and DEMETRIA lean in. AMELIA goes the wrong way and DEMETRIA adjusts, guiding her into the kiss. Just as the gap between them is about to close, MOLLY enters.)

MOLLY

Oh my god-what the fuck!

(AMELIA and DEMETRIA pull away from each other quickly.)

AMELIA

Molly! We were just-I was just curious and we were just practicing, really

DEMETRIA

Molly! It wasn't romantic or anything-I was just showing her cause she's never done it

MOLLY

You know what? I don't really want to know. Let's all three of us just forget this ever happened

AMELIA

Sounds good.

DEMETRIA

Sounds good.

(Beat. Awkward, awkward, awkward silence.)

AMELIA

How was the bookstore?

MOLLY

Um, it was good.

DEMETRIA

Get anything?

MOLLY

Oh, uh, just this.

(MOLLY fishes Betty's book out of her bag.)

MOLLY

It's a memoir by, um (checking the cover) Betty Quinn. Alison actually recommended it to me last year-you guys remember Alison?

DEMETRIA

How could we forget? What ever happened to her?

MOLLY

We didn't have any classes together after that first semester. Lost touch. But, anyway, I remembered that she liked it so I figured it must be worth a read.

AMELIA

Or you figured Alison might see you out on the lawn reading it and say 'oh Molly, you're so smart and well-read and interesting and I missed you so much will you be my girlfriend?'

Wha-no!

MOLLY

Yes.

AMELIA

I want to read it.

MOLLY

Go ahead.

DEMETRIA

(MOLLY opens the book. BETTY enters.)

BETTY

“I was ten years old when I realized I was somehow different from all the girls my age. Fourteen when I decided I’d never have a boyfriend. At sixteen, I was the only girl in my class without a date to the junior prom. The boys I went to school with disgusted me, but it was lonely, nonetheless. I was seventeen when I felt caterpillars crawling in my gut for the first time, when I heard Carol Henderson laugh one seat over from me in English, and eighteen when they grew into butterflies as she hugged me goodbye on her way to Dartmouth. I moved to New York at twenty-two, and there I learned the one word that held all the answers: Lesbian. Who I was, who I loved, who I had always been and forever would be. A lesbian.”

MOLLY
Lesbian

AMELIA
Lesbian

DEMETRIA
Lesbian

(Beat. Everyone stares at BETTY in awe.)

AMELIA

What does that mean?

BETTY

Lesbian? It means a lot of things.

AMELIA

Such as...?

BETTY

A woman who's attracted to women

AMELIA (to MOLLY and DEMETRIA)

Like us.

BETTY

And not men

AMELIA (giddy)

Yeah.

BETTY

But it's much bigger than that-

AMELIA

Molly, did you know about 'lesbian'?

MOLLY

I, um, I'd heard it before

AMELIA

Why didn't you tell us?

MOLLY

I don't know. I didn't think it-I didn't know if it was a word that really...described any of us. I always thought it was sort of...I don't know

BETTY

Sort of what?

MOLLY

I don't know. I just didn't think it was for me.

BETTY

Did you think it was a bad word?

MOLLY

No-well, not like a swear word, like I shouldn't say it because-I don't know-it was just-

BETTY

A dirty word?

MOLLY

Yeah, maybe. No offense.

BETTY

It isn't. A dirty word. Just so you know. I think it's really a very beautiful word, lesbian.

MOLLY

It's just that I only ever heard it on TV or at school, and at school I was taught that they were/'sinners'

BETTY

/Who were?

MOLLY

They were

BETTY

Who's they?

MOLLY

You know

BETTY

I'm not sure I do; can't you just tell me?

MOLLY (quiet)

Lesbians.

BETTY

Sorry?

MOLLY (annoyed)

Lesbians.

BETTY

Ohhh, that's what I thought. As you were saying?

MOLLY

I was taught they were-

BETTY

Who were?

MOLLY

That *lesbians* were sinners, and it was all very scandalous, and one time there was something on TV where they said it-they said *lesbian*, and my parents changed the channel. Every time I heard someone say it, it was like it was...slimy, like they were spitting it out, so it seemed to me like something I shouldn't be

(Beat. Something is hanging at the end of that thought.)

BETTY

But?

MOLLY (resigning)

But the word always stuck in my head. Nights when I couldn't fall asleep and I would just sit and think, there it was, flashing in my head like a fucking motel sign. Lesbian. When I was crying in the bathroom at my sophomore formal because I was the only one of my friends who hadn't brought a date.

MOLLY

Lesbian.

BETTY

Lesbian.

MOLLY

When I read Amelia's book for the first time, and I thought she might have been the only person in the world who'd ever understood how it felt not to revolve around men.

MOLLY

Lesbian.

AMELIA

Lesbian.

BETTY

Lesbian.

MOLLY

When I met Alison.

MOLLY

Lesbian.

AMELIA

Lesbian.

DEMETRIA

Lesbian.

BETTY

Lesbian.

Who's Alison?
BETTY

Nobody.
MOLLY

Molly's *giiiiirlfriend*
AMELIA

What? She's not my girlfriend-I haven't seen her in like a year! She's just a girl I had class with last year and I sort of, had a crush on her for a little while, I don't know
MOLLY

Sort of? You-
DEMETRIA

(MOLLY shushes her. She must be cool in front of BETTY.)

Is Alison queer?
BETTY

Queer?
AMELIA

Not straight.
BETTY

Straight?
DEMETRIA

Only dating the/opposite
BETTY

/Normal
MOLLY

Normal?
BETTY

MOLLY

Like, not... 'queer'.

MOLLY

Queer

AMELIA

Queer

DEMETRIA

It's not abnormal to be queer.

BETTY

...Isn't it?

MOLLY

BETTY

I guess, to some people. But if being 'normal' to them means not being a lesbian, is it so bad not to be?

MOLLY

I don't know.

BETTY

Is she? Alison?

MOLLY

She is. A lesbian.

AMELIA (hurt)

She's a *lesbian*?

MOLLY

Yeah. Sorry.

DEMETRIA

And she's definitely into Molly.

BETTY

Oh, is she?

MOLLY

Stop it!

DEMETRIA

She is!

BETTY

Go get her, tiger!

MOLLY

I haven't seen her! She could have transferred or something, who knows?

BETTY

Oh, please

AMELIA

(under her breath, beneath the past few lines of dialogue)

Lesbian. Lesbian. I am a lesbian. I, Amelia Conway, am a lesbian. Nice to meet you, I'm a lesbian

BETTY

Trying it on for size?

AMELIA (bashful)

Yeah.

BETTY

How's it feel?

AMELIA

Really good.

BETTY

I know the feeling.

DEMETRIA

I'm a lesbian too. Definitely.

AMELIA (hopeful)

Molly?

MOLLY (hesitant at first)

Yeah. I'm a lesbian. Me. Molly. I am a lesbian. Les-bi-an. Lesbian.

(AMELIA, DEMETRIA, and BETTY cheer and the four erupt into a chorus of 'lesbian'. You're a lesbian, I'm a lesbian, we're all lesbians!)

BETTY

Can I tell you guys a secret?

MOLLY

Yeah.

AMELIA

Of course.

DEMETRIA

Go for it.

BETTY (fake whisper)

I'm actually a lesbian too. I've never told anyone!

(MOLLY, AMELIA, and DEMETRIA feign shock before they all burst into laughter.)

AMELIA

I really like that there's a word for all of us-that there's so many of us that they *made* a word for it-I don't know, I think it's nice.

BETTY

It is.

AMELIA

It feels like, saying that I'm a *lesbian*, it feels like I'm telling the whole truth for the first time in my life. Like up until now, everything I've said about myself hasn't been quite right. It's like I've spent my whole life speaking a language I didn't understand. But I understand it now.

BETTY

It's one powerful word. Now Molly, circling back to Alison. Did you ever tell her you were queer?

MOLLY

No, I could never find the right time-and I thought if I told her, she'd figure out that I-y'know...

BETTY

You should tell her. If you see her again.

MOLLY

Oh yeah, that's a great icebreaker. Hi Alison, long time no see. I'm a lesbian.

BETTY

I just think you should make sure she knows. It's good to get it off your chest. Besides, I have a feeling she might have known before you did.

MOLLY

How do you figure that?

BETTY

It's just a feeling you get. You'll know it.

AMELIA

I was right.

BETTY

About what?

AMELIA

Oh, last year, when Molly first met Alison, she said that she felt like they were different in the same way, but she couldn't figure out how. I thought it might be that they both liked girls.

BETTY

There you go.

MOLLY

Why is that? I mean, how does that happen? I didn't even know *I* was a lesbian; I barely knew that was a thing you could be.

BETTY

Sometimes it's easy. The way someone dresses, the way they act. Other times, you just know.

AMELIA

Maybe all our souls already know each other.

BETTY

I like that. Maybe so.

(MOLLY and DEMETRIA nod in agreement. One week later. BETTY, DEMETRIA, and AMELIA are sitting in MOLLY's room. AMELIA looks curiously at BETTY.)

AMELIA

Betty, can I ask you something?

BETTY

Sure.

AMELIA

And don't take offense to it.

BETTY

Oh, we're off to a great start

AMELIA

No, really, it's just-you're very different from all the other lesbians I know.

BETTY

All two of them?

AMELIA

Yes. But I don't mean it in a bad way. I think it's cool that you dress like a boy.

BETTY

I/don't

AMELIA

/What made you do that?

BETTY

I never felt comfortable in 'women's' clothing. Or even calling myself a woman, really.

DEMETRIA

You said a lesbian is a woman who loves other women, though?

BETTY

Ah-I said that's one thing a lesbian could be. Sometimes a lesbian is just a lesbian.

DEMETRIA

What does that mean?

BETTY

It means that for some people, many people, being a lesbian is bigger than who they're attracted to. It's the fabric of their being, it's gender and it's politics and-it's almost like a religion, in some way.

DEMETRIA

So, you...you're not a woman. You're a lesbian.

BETTY

Yes. A butch lesbian.

AMELIA

Butch-what is 'butch'?

BETTY

A lesbian who finds power in their masculinity.

AMELIA

How did you know that you were...a *butch*?

BETTY

I mean, I had always felt more masculine somehow, but once I moved out of my parents place, I really got to try the whole thing out. The clothes, the...attitude. It just felt *right*. I finally felt whole. And I felt so *proud*.

DEMETRIA

Is there a word for the opposite of that? Like-a lesbian, just a lesbian, but in a feminine way?

BETTY

Femme. f-e-m-M-E.

DEMETRIA

Femme.

BETTY

You like it?

DEMETRIA

I do.

AMELIA

Is every lesbian 'femme' or 'butch'?

BETTY

Oh no. Lots of 'em fall somewhere in between. It's different for everyone, the whole...identity thing, but the beautiful part is there's still so much that feels the same.

(MOLLY bursts through the door.)

MOLLY

Guys

AMELIA (startled)

Huh?

MOLLY

You will never guess what just happened.

DEMETRIA

What?

MOLLY

I ran into Alison, and we were catching up and I *may* have slipped my being a lesbian into the conversation

(Celebration from AMELIA, DEMETRIA, and BETTY.)

BETTY

What did she say?

MOLLY

She said she was glad I finally figured it out for myself.

BETTY

What did I tell you?

MOLLY

I know, I know, but I was really nervous to tell her for some reason, and so I was looking away when I said it and then I looked at her and she was looking back at me with these *eyes* and it was

MOLLY (cont.)

like we were really seeing each other for the first time, and suddenly nothing that happened before that moment mattered and/nothing that came after it could ever be the same

BETTY

/nothing that came after it could ever be the same.

(BETTY and MOLLY look at each other for a beat. Understanding.)

MOLLY

You know what I mean?

BETTY

There's nothing like it.

MOLLY

Everything feels...lighter. What is that?

BETTY

It's finding out that you've been carrying all this love around your whole life, too much love to carry all on your own, and you've been holding onto it way too tight because you were afraid to give it to the wrong person, and you thought that the right person might never come-so you'd better keep it to yourself, keep it safe-but it weighed your heart down and you got so tense fighting to keep it inside, but now there's a person standing in front of you who, for the first time in your life, makes you realize that there is somewhere safe for all that love to go...so you let it go. You let go, Molly.

DEMETRIA

I know that feeling.

MOLLY

Cleo?

DEMETRIA

Yeah

MOLLY

Who was it for you, Betty?

BETTY

Her name was Catherine. I saw her across the bar and everyone else just disappeared.

AMELIA (shy)

I think I felt that when I met all of you. I don't know if it's the same thing, but I just feel like I was meant to know you all. Not in a romantic way, but-

BETTY

It doesn't have to be romantic. Friendship between us, between lesbians, loving each other that way? That's just as meaningful as romance.

DEMETRIA

I hate to ruin the moment, but, Molly? What happened after that?

MOLLY

We just sort of stared at each other for a long time and then she said 'Well, now that that's out in the open, do you want to go out to dinner later?'

AMELIA

Molly!

MOLLY

What?

AMELIA

She must have been crushing on you this whole time too! /'Now that that's out in the open' Come *on!*

MOLLY

/I don't know...

DEMETRIA

She's been waiting for you!

MOLLY (bashful)

Wow. That's-no that couldn't-Oh my god.

AMELIA

This is so exciting!

MOLLY

I know, I didn't think this would ever actually happen for me

DEMETRIA

Molly?

BETTY

Where are you going?

(MOLLY doesn't hear DEMETRIA)

MOLLY

Just this like, café place in town

DEMETRIA

Molly?

AMELIA

Have you been?

MOLLY

No, but Alison says it's really good

DEMETRIA

Molly!

MOLLY

Yeah?

DEMETRIA

What time *is* this date?

MOLLY

7-oh god what time is it?

DEMETRIA

6:50...

BETTY

Shit.

MOLLY

Shit!

(MOLLY sits at her desk, frantically trying to style her hair. AMELIA helps.)

MOLLY

Oh my god, I'm not ready, I'm not gonna be ready.

AMELIA

Calm down. Do you have to be there at 7 or are you leaving at 7?

MOLLY

We're leaving at 7

AMELIA

That's plenty of time!

MOLLY

What am I supposed to wear on a lesbian date? I haven't even been on a normal date-

BETTY

Normal?

MOLLY (exasperated)

You know what I mean!

BETTY

Wear something you feel good in

MOLLY

I don't know what I feel good in!

(DEMETRIA starts pulling pieces out of the closet and holds them up for MOLLY, who vetoes everything.)

AMELIA

Molly, relax! You used to see her like every other day, why put so much pressure on it?

MOLLY

Because this isn't just studying or whatever, we're going on a *date*!

AMELIA
What's the difference?

MOLLY
A lot! I have to look nice!

AMELIA
You will look nice-you do look nice!

MOLLY
I look like shit!

AMELIA
Don't say that about yourself!

DEMETRIA (still looking for clothes)
Are you gonna wear makeup?

MOLLY
I don't know, should I?

BETTY
Do you want to?

MOLLY
I don't know!

DEMETRIA
Wear a little bit-something fun! What about this?

(DEMETRIA holds up an outfit)

MOLLY
I-sure, yeah, that's perfect.

DEMETRIA
You get dressed and then I'll help you with your makeup.

(MOLLY takes the outfit and changes while DEMETRIA looks through her humble makeup collection)

DEMETRIA

You don't have a lot of makeup.

MOLLY

I don't wear it very often. (referencing the outfit) What do we think?

DEMETRIA

You look beautiful. Now sit.

(MOLLY sits and DEMETRIA does her makeup.)

MOLLY

What should we talk about?

AMELIA

What did you talk about before?

MOLLY

I don't know, school? Books?

AMELIA

Talk about that.

MOLLY

That's boring.

AMELIA

Did it bore her before?

MOLLY

No, but

DEMETRIA

You haven't seen her in like a year, Molly. Just ask how she's been.

MOLLY

What if she kisses me?

BETTY

Kiss her back?

How? MOLLY

How what? BETTY

How do I kiss her back? MOLLY

You just...kiss her? BETTY

I don't know how! I've only kissed a girl once! MOLLY

You kissed a girl?! AMELIA

For like two seconds at a sleepover in 9th grade on a dare and then I sort of bottled it up forever because I thought I was gonna go to hell MOLLY

Jeez BETTY

Molly, close your eyes. DEMETRIA

(DEMETRIA puts eye makeup on MOLLY)

Follow her lead, then. BETTY

Where? MOLLY

Oh my god, Molly BETTY

MOLLY

What? I don't know! I don't know anything!

DEMETRIA

(focused, trying to put lip gloss on MOLLY)

Stop talking.

BETTY

In the kiss!

MOLLY

What if she invites me back to her room?

BETTY

Do you want to go back to her room?

MOLLY

I think so-but I don't know, I don't know the first thing about-y'know...with a girl-

BETTY

Sex with a girl?

MOLLY (mortified)

Oh my god, yes, that!

BETTY

It's the first date, Molly, I think you're okay

MOLLY

But

BETTY

You're fine. I bet she knows less than you think.

MOLLY

No. I'm pretty sure she's been a lesbian for like, ever

BETTY

She can show you the ropes, then

MOLLY

Oh my god! Ew, Betty, that is so-EUGHHH! I can't go. I'm not going. I'm hopeless.

BETTY

Molly. I repeat. It's the First. Date. Don't worry about it.

(A knock at the door.)

MOLLY

Oh my god.

BETTY (checking the time)

She's early.

(DEMETRIA puts the finishing touches on MOLLY's makeup)

DEMETRIA

You're all set! Go! Go go go!

(MOLLY heads for the door)

BETTY

Molly!

MOLLY

What?

BETTY

Shoes!

MOLLY

Shit (calling out) Just a second!

(DEMETRIA tosses MOLLY a pair of shoes. MOLLY stumbles into them and poses awkwardly.)

MOLLY

How do I look?

AMELIA	DEMETRIA	BETTY
Beautiful	Gorgeous	Gay
	MOLLY	
Gay?	BETTY	
In a good way! Now get going!	MOLLY	
Okay, okay!		
	(MOLLY walks out the door.)	
	BETTY	
Good luck!		
	AMELIA	
Have fun!		
	DEMETRIA	
Not too much fun!		
	(BETTY elbows her. AMELIA and DEMETRIA go to bed while BETTY stays up reading. MOLLY tiptoes back into the dorm a few hours later, wearing a jacket she did not leave with. Alison's. She heads for the closet.)	
	BETTY	
So?		
	MOLLY	
So...		
	BETTY	
How did it go?		
	MOLLY	
Pretty well, I think		

You think? BETTY

Well it isn't over yet MOLLY

Oh? So what are you doing here? BETTY

Getting a change of clothes MOLLY

For? BETTY

To go watch a movie in her dorm MOLLY

Oh, I bet. BETTY

What's that supposed to mean? MOLLY

I'm sure you'll really be watching BETTY (teasing)

Betty! MOLLY

What? BETTY

I don't know, I'm nervous, I told you that MOLLY

Nervous about what? BETTY

MOLLY

I don't have experience-like that with ...*anyone*. Not guys, not girls. Not even, like, making out or anything. I'm hopeless.

BETTY

Molly. Be serious. You are not hopeless; everybody starts with no experience.

MOLLY

Yeah, but they all have it now.

BETTY

No they don't.

MOLLY

Alison does, I'm sure.

BETTY

So what? There was a point when she didn't.

MOLLY

But that was probably like, a while ago, I feel like I'm getting too old to-

BETTY

Molly. I was twenty-two before I even realized I was a lesbian. I had never so much as kissed anyone before then. Man or woman.

MOLLY

Really?

BETTY

Yes. And Alison knows that you're just now figuring things out. I'm sure she'll understand.

MOLLY

Yeah.

(MOLLY pauses to think.)

MOLLY

But what if she laughs? Or she rolls her eyes or she-I don't know, she just-thinks I'm-I don't know-lame or something?

BETTY

Then fuck her.

(MOLLY laughs in spite of herself.)

MOLLY

Thank you, Betty, really, I mean it, this has really helped, but I don't know if this is the best context in which to say 'fuck her'

BETTY

Oh my god

(They both laugh.)

BETTY

You don't have to do anything you aren't ready for. If you don't want to/have sex

MOLLY

/I do! Want to. *So* badly. Like you said, it's like I've been carrying all this stuff around that I shouldn't have all to myself and now I have somewhere to put it and I...god, Betty, I want to. But it's really scary.

BETTY

Of course it is.

MOLLY

Were you scared?

BETTY

Petrified. I didn't know the first thing about pleasing a woman/and there I was having to figure it out all on my own

MOLLY

/Ew, Betty-don't say 'pleasing a woman' please-Ew!

BETTY

Don't act so disgusted. You're just as gay as I am.

MOLLY

But do we have to talk about it like that? It's crass.

BETTY

I was actually trying to be refined about it, but if you want-

MOLLY

Betty.

BETTY

Okay, okay. I'm sorry.

MOLLY

Does it ever get...not scary?

BETTY

Of course. So go get her. If you want.

MOLLY

Yeah. Okay.

(MOLLY heads for the door and turns around.)

Wait, is it true that you-

(She haphazardly gestures scissoring.)

BETTY

Go.

(MOLLY leaves for Alison's dorm. BETTY watches her go, proud.
AMELIA and DEMETRIA wake up the next morning. MOLLY slips quietly into the room, brewing a cup of tea without saying a word, smiling to herself.)

DEMETRIA

Good morning to you too.

AMELIA

Where were you last night?

BETTY

Alison's.

Betty!

MOLLY

Ooooooooh! AMELIA Ooooooooh! DEMETRIA

Sooooooo... BETTY

Sooooooo? MOLLY

How did it go? BETTY

It went well, obviously. DEMETRIA

Obviously? MOLLY

You stayed the night, didn't you? DEMETRIA

I did...Is that bad? MOLLY

It's a rite of passage. You'll be moving into her dorm in a week. BETTY

What-No, I will not. Where would all of you go? MOLLY

True. Did you 'watch a movie'? BETTY

A show, actually. MOLLY

What show? BETTY

The L Word... MOLLY

And what *is* the L word, Molly? BETTY

(Beat. MOLLY giggles.)

Thought so. Little on the nose, no?

Oh, shut up. MOLLY

Did anything else happen? DEMETRIA

No. Not really. MOLLY (coy)

Not *really*? DEMETRIA

I don't kiss and tell. MOLLY

So you kissed! DEMETRIA

A little. MOLLY

A little? BETTY

More than a little. MOLLY

Molly!

DEMETRIA

What?

MOLLY (giddy)

Look at you!

DEMETRIA

So is she your girlfriend now?

AMELIA

Oh, I don't know.

MOLLY

Do you want her to be?

AMELIA

Yes.

MOLLY (intense)

Why don't you ask her?

AMELIA

Oh-I couldn't.

MOLLY

Why not?

AMELIA

It's not-I can't-I don't...ask people out.

MOLLY

Why?

BETTY

I don't know, because I'm-

MOLLY

A girl?
BETTY

No-because it's like-awkward-
MOLLY

Because you're a girl.
BETTY

I mean, maybe, but
MOLLY

I hate to break it to you, but lesbians don't get that excuse.
BETTY

What if she says no?
MOLLY

Then she says no. So what? What if you don't ask?
BETTY

Then nothing.
MOLLY

(BETTY gives MOLLY a knowing look.)

Okay, fine, I'll ask. If it comes up.
MOLLY

How does that 'come up' exactly?
BETTY

I don't know what you're so worried about. Obviously, she likes you.
AMELIA

What if she just feels bad for me, though? If she's just like, aw, I'd better show this poor helpless new lesbian the way of things before she goes off into the real world because *I* certainly don't want to date *her*
MOLLY

BETTY

Molly-

MOLLY

I just-I'm just scared. I'm scared it isn't gonna work out and it feels like if she says no, the whole world is gonna fall apart and I'll never come back from it and I'm just gonna..I don't know. It's scarier now that there's actually a chance.

BETTY

If you don't ask, you'll spend your whole life wondering what would have happened if you did. And then what? You do this every time? You never see anyone past a first date? Why bother?

AMELIA

Molly, you have the chance to actually *be* with someone. Don't waste that. For my sake.

MOLLY

Okay. Next time I see her, we'll...talk.

(A knock on the door. MOLLY, confused, steps out to answer it. She comes back in a few seconds later, putting her shoes on.)

AMELIA

Was that-

MOLLY

She wants to go get breakfast.

AMELIA

Yay!

MOLLY

No, I'm *scared*. What if she says it was all a mistake?

DEMETRIA

What if she says she wants to be your girlfriend?

AMELIA

It doesn't matter what happens, Molly, as long as you're brave about it. I know you can be.

BETTY

You've got this.

(MOLLY nods and grabs her bag, heading out the door.)

INTERMISSION

Part Five: Evelyn & Anna

(Molly's dorm, her junior year of college. The décor is even gayer. Lesbian iconography everywhere. She's really in it now. AMELIA, DEMETRIA, and BETTY are sitting on the floor, gossiping.)

BETTY

So, after Cleo there was

DEMETRIA

I was never too serious with anyone after that-but there was Penelope, and Phaia, and-oh, there was another Cleo, briefly

BETTY

Another Cleo?

AMELIA

My god, Demetria!

DEMETRIA

Forgive me for trying to move on! What about you? Did anything ever happen with that Carol girl?

BETTY

Oh, no. Not Carol. She married some guy from Rhode Island. I saw her in the city once though.

DEMETRIA

Did you say hello?

BETTY

She pretended not to see me.

DEMETRIA

You think she recognized you?

BETTY

I know she did.

DEMETRIA

She probably thought you were hot.

BETTY

Oh please. She absolutely did.

(Laughter. MOLLY enters the room with a bouquet and a book with a bow tied around it.)

MOLLY

Hi!

AMELIA

How was dinner?

MOLLY

It was good. Great.

BETTY

How's Alison?

MOLLY

She's good.

DEMETRIA

I can't believe it's been a year.

MOLLY

I know, it feels like it was just yesterday we went out for the first time.

AMELIA

The flowers are beautiful.

DEMETRIA

Give them to me, somebody better put them in a vase before they die.

AMELIA

What's the book?

MOLLY

It's a collection of letters between these two writers from the 20s-the 1920s-who were lovers.

DEMETRIA

That is so romantic.

AMELIA

Let's read one.

(MOLLY unties the bow and flips to the first page of the book. BETTY looks over her shoulder.)

BETTY

“Molly, I don't consider myself nearly good enough of a writer to write something of my own for you. Loving you is such a gift that the big lesbian powers that be must have decided it would be too much to give me the right words to express it. So instead, I'm giving you this book by two people who loved each other as much as we do but had the words for it too. Maybe the language was given to them to make up for the secrecy they had to keep their love under. Regardless, it was books that brought us together in the first place, so I thought it was only fitting. I made note of all the lines that remind me of you. I think you're more Evelyn and I'm more Anna but let me know what you think. Happy one year. Love, Alison.”

AMELIA

Wow.

DEMETRIA

Is she sure she can't write something of her own?

(MOLLY laughs and flips to the first highlighted passage.)

MOLLY

She's too hard on herself. “This reminds me of when we first met. Life was never the same. -A”

AMELIA

That's so/cute.

DEMETRIA

/Shhhhh.

MOLLY

“Anna, my dearest. Since I met you, the world has come alive,

(EVELYN enters.)

EVELYN

as if it had been hiding all its beauty from me until I had someone to share it with. Yesterday morning, I took a walk through the park we snuck into that night in September, which feels like yesterday and a lifetime ago, when you swore to me that everything that happened out there belonged to us alone. For the first time, I saw the trees for the forest. I had never noticed how many hundred colors the leaves turned in October and I felt foolish for reducing them to only red, yellow, orange, or brown for so long. They reminded me of the many hundred colors I find in your eyes in the sunlight, and I pitied every person who had never noticed them before. I never saw the way the branches of two trees intertwine like our arms linking together. I'm inclined to believe the roots underground must tangle together as our fingers do, too. I passed the river we sat by where you took my face in your hands and kissed me for the first time, where you promised that everything that happened that night belonged to us and us alone, and the water was a bright blue I thought only existed on canvas, manufactured to capture the sort of brightness only possible in one's imagination. I didn't know life had been enriching art in the way I had always thought art was meant to enrich life. Has it always been this way, and I was simply too preoccupied to see it? Did you show it to me? Or am I noticing now only because it gives me more things to speak with you about? I have no answers, and I know nothing for certain except this: The world I live in with you far surpasses any heaven a 'pure' life could provide. If living in sin brings me such happiness, then I will gladly spend a hundred eternities in hell paying for it. I cannot wait to see you again. Love, Evelyn."

(MOLLY, AMELIA, DEMETRIA, and BETTY stare at EVELYN. What a thing to say.)

DEMETRIA

Anna must be very special.

EVELYN (dazed)

She is.

BETTY

I never would have thought to put it that way. Life enriching art instead of art enriching life. That's really something.

EVELYN

Thank you.

BETTY

I feel like, in some way, the fact that your love is in danger, that you have to fight for it, makes it feel that much more alive. You may not be able to go out and explore the whole world with her, but the places you share with her feel just as big in return. You find the city skyline in the books on her shelf, you make oceans out of the tiny bathtub in her apartment, the sun shines out of the candle on her nightstand. You make the world they tell you you can't have. A lesbian is a born artist.

EVELYN

We are. (to MOLLY) Can I see that?

(MOLLY hands the book to EVELYN, who flips through it.)

EVELYN

I've never seen them all laid out before. I could barely remember that first one, and yet, as soon as I heard the beginning, it all came back to me. Still, I can't believe this exists

MOLLY

Why not?

EVELYN

It's...I mean, we were so careful. I don't mind, but it's against the law, I don't see how they could publish-

MOLLY

It isn't against the law, not anymore.

EVELYN

It isn't?

MOLLY

No. Betty made sure of that.

EVELYN

You did?

BETTY

Not personally. I did my part. Protesting. Rioting, more so.

EVELYN

Good for you.

(BETTY shrugs. There wasn't any other option.)

MOLLY

It doesn't have to be such a secret anymore. I mean, for some people it does, but plenty of people know about my girlfriend and I. Our friends, our classmates, her family, they're all cool about it.

EVELYN

Really? That's amazing.

MOLLY

She gave me this book, actually. For our one-year anniversary. She wrote all this stuff about us in the margins.

EVELYN

What'd she say about that last one?

MOLLY

That it was how she felt the day we met.

EVELYN

What's her name?

MOLLY

Alison.

EVELYN

That's a pretty name.

MOLLY

She thinks we're alike, you and I.

EVELYN

She does?

MOLLY

Yeah. I'm flattered, but I don't really think so-I mean, I understand what you were saying, about loving her so much that anything bad it caused didn't matter, and I feel that way about Alison most of the time but I'm still scared

EVELYN

It's not that I wasn't scared! It scared the daylights out of me, the idea that what I was doing could make some higher power come down on me someday. That's only human.

MOLLY

But you said you'd 'gladly' go to hell

EVELYN

And I would. Hell was scary, but not having Anna was scarier. Heaven and hell? All I could do was imagine what they might be. But Anna? Anna was real, right in front of me. Alive and turning the world into our own little heaven as we were living. How could I be concerned with anything but that?

MOLLY

But what if someone found out? Someone who wasn't supposed to.

EVELYN

We were very careful.

MOLLY

But if it had happened.

EVELYN

I don't know. I didn't think about that. It was impossible to think of anything bad happening to us when I could be thinking of her instead. Whatever happened, it would have been worth it.

MOLLY

But if your family, or-

EVELYN

I don't know, Molly. I don't know what I would have done. None of it mattered to me as much as she did.

MOLLY

So, what happened between you two?

(Beat. EVELYN sits in silence for a moment. MOLLY, AMELIA, DEMETRIA, and BETTY settle into it with her.)

EVELYN (reserved)

We were together for, god, it must have been 10 years. We were only 19 when we met. She lived a few hours from me, outside New York, but her brother had business in the city, so she would come with him when he came into town and that's when we met. We were friends first, and then...something just changed. We both knew, somehow, about this unspoken secret between us. Toward the end of our time, though, her visits and her letters grew less frequent. She was in the city every two months, then every three. I couldn't understand what was happening, and she would insist that everything was the same as it always had been, that business was just slow, until one day, right after Christmas, she told me that her father was planning on moving the family out to Chicago come February, and with no husband to keep her here, she couldn't possibly find a way to stay. I was furious that she hadn't told me sooner-If she had, I could have made a plan-something, anything to keep her closer. I begged her to just move in with me, not to worry about the money, said that I'd take care of everything, but she said that people would ask too many questions, that they might start to suspect things of us. I told her that it didn't matter what people thought. She told me she never thought I was so naive that her father would have her thrown in some kind of asylum if she so much as suggested it. There was only one other option. I hated it, but I was desperate. I begged her to find a man in the city, anyone, who she could marry and stay there with, and she told me it was dishonest. As if she hadn't been dishonest with me for months! She would have rather been completely alone than married to a man, even if it meant losing me. I was so angry I said I wasn't sure if she had ever loved me, that I was glad she was leaving because I never wanted to see her again. She ran back to her hotel in the snow. Two weeks later, I received a letter from her brother that said she'd fallen ill from the cold and died. I couldn't believe myself.

DEMETRIA

I'm so sorry.

AMELIA

That's tragic.

EVELYN

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to

MOLLY

I'm sorry for asking.

Don't be. EVELYN

I lost my first love too. BETTY

You did? EVELYN

I did. BETTY

You never told us that. MOLLY

BETTY
She was-Some guy saw her leave the bar, our bar, one night-I don't know why I wasn't there. She'd gone out to meet her friends, I think. He must have realized what kind of place it was, or he had been figuring it out for a while, but he um-he hit her. Real hard, while she was walking home and-yeah.

Oh my god. MOLLY

That was Catherine? AMELIA

(BETTY nods.)

Betty, I'm so sorry. DEMETRIA

BETTY
It just makes me so fucking angry. Her only crime was *being*. It's sick. You'd think if they were all so sure we'd suffer so much in hell they could just leave us the fuck alone until then.

Betty, if you ever want to talk about it- EVELYN

(BETTY hugs EVELYN. She hugs back, surprised.)

BETTY

Thank you. You too.

(BETTY and EVELYN hug. MOLLY, AMELIA, and DEMETRIA gather around them. A few days later. MOLLY is finishing up a homework assignment while everyone else hangs around reading books from Molly's collection. MOLLY shuts her notebook hard and opens EVELYN's book.)

AMELIA

Can we listen?

MOLLY

I mean-I don't mind but-Evelyn, is it okay if I read it out loud?

EVELYN

Yeah. It'll be nice to hear it.

(MOLLY opens the book to Anna's response to Evelyn's first letter.)

DEMETRIA

What'd Alison say about this one?

MOLLY

"I always thought I saw you in the moon, too."

DEMETRIA

What does that mean?

EVELYN (fondly)

You'll see.

MOLLY

"Evelyn, you think too highly of me.

(ANNA enters, entranced in the same way EVELYN was when everyone first met her. They don't notice each other. Yet.)

ANNA

I too was clueless to the beauty that surrounded me until I first met you. I'm sure I could not have shown you something I never knew existed myself. Maybe our meeting made the world so.

ANNA (cont.)

It has been torture not seeing you, and I am wishing every day away in hopes that the end of November will come sooner. I spend my days thinking of nothing but you. I smell your perfume in the garden. I feel your breath on my neck with the wind, like you sent it here to find me and remind me that you're thinking of me too. The sun's warmth feels like I have your arms around me once again. At night, I see no man in the moon, but there is a woman, and she looks, to me, a lot like you.

(EVELYN, who has been lost in the words, finally notices ANNA. ANNA notices her. They stare at each other, frozen in place for a moment.)

ANNA (to EVELYN)

Not only have you taken over my world, Evelyn, you have become it. I miss you dearly. Love, Anna.”

(EVELYN and ANNA stare at each other, confirming that they are not hallucinating before finally rushing to each other and embracing.)

Anna	EVELYN
Evelyn	ANNA
You	EVELYN
I	ANNA
You're here	EVELYN
I'm here. And you're	ANNA
I'm here. I'm here. And...you're <i>here</i> .	EVELYN

ANNA

I'm so sorry Evelyn

EVELYN

Stop it. I'm sorry. I should have listened.

ANNA

I shouldn't have left.

EVELYN

I shouldn't have let you. I should have begged you to stay-God, I should have chased you down the street.

ANNA

I was so out of sorts, I would have just kept running.

EVELYN

I should have tried.

ANNA

It doesn't matter. I'm here now, aren't I?

EVELYN

Yes. You are.

DEMETRIA

So you're the Anna we've heard so much about.

ANNA

Oh, you have?

EVELYN (bashful)

I talk about you. Sometimes.

BETTY

A lot of the time.

DEMETRIA

Almost as much as Molly talks about Alison.

Hey!

MOLLY

Who's Alison?

ANNA

Molly's girlfriend.

EVELYN

Yeah.

MOLLY (pensive)

She gave Molly a book of our letters for their anniversary.

EVELYN

She didn't want to write her own?

ANNA

(EVELYN shoots her a look.)

I mean-How sweet!

Yeah.

MOLLY (dry)

Molly? Everything okay?

EVELYN

Um-Can I ask you guys something? You and Anna?

MOLLY

Absolutely.

EVELYN

Of course.

ANNA

I'm sorry, this is really horrible timing, I-I don't want to ruin your reunion or anything, but how much did you guys..fight?

MOLLY

Um

EVELYN

Oh

ANNA

EVELYN

We'd bicker, every so often. But every couple does.

MOLLY

But like, real arguments?

ANNA

A few times. And then there was the big one, but other than that

(EVELYN cringes and ANNA trails off, comforting her.)

MOLLY

What about?

EVELYN

Little things, usually, that would turn into big things. She'd show up to visit days later than I expected her.

ANNA

She published short stories I thought might get us found out.

EVELYN

She criticized the way I dressed for being too 'obvious'.

ANNA

I apologized for that.

EVELYN

I know you did, but we still argued about it.

ANNA

Are you and Alison fighting?

MOLLY

It started yesterday.

ANNA

What about?

MOLLY

Her mom is visiting next weekend, and I've met her parents like two or three times now, and she asked when she was gonna meet my parents, and I told her she probably wouldn't.

EVELYN

Because?

MOLLY

Because they-they wouldn't-I just can't. So, she asked me if I was planning on keeping her a secret forever, which I don't think I'm doing because she's not a secret to anyone *except* my parents, and she said that we've gotten serious enough that I should think telling my parents is worth it.

BETTY

You don't think so?

MOLLY

No.

BETTY

Why not?

MOLLY

Because what if we break up?

BETTY

You're still a lesbian.

MOLLY

But it's a lot easier to hide. Whose side are you on, Betty?

BETTY

No one's! I just want to understand.

EVELYN

So what did you say?

MOLLY

I told her what I just told you, and she just stared at me in this way that made everything feel all empty and dull and heavy. When I asked if she was mad at me, she said she didn't want to talk

MOLLY (cont.)

about it anymore and maybe we should talk tomorrow and she had homework to do and she was going to go and I don't know what to do because she hasn't reached out since and I don't know what to say because I don't think she's being very fair but if I say that then she might get more angry than she already is but I just can't tell them, so I don't know. I just...don't know.

ANNA

Take another day before you try and talk to her. Let it smooth over. I think you're still too worked up to be rational about anything

EVELYN

Maybe that's when they should talk about it, though, while it's still fresh-I hated to put things off, I just got angrier and angrier

MOLLY

Thank you guys. This is really helpful and I'm not at all confused.

ANNA

Well, excuse me, I'm sorry we don't have the perfect answer to all your problems.

MOLLY

Do you guys think that's fair? For her to say I shouldn't be keeping her a 'secret'?

AMELIA	DEMETRIA	BETTY	EVELYN	ANNA
No, of course not.	No, but	It's complicated	I mean, technically	Absolutely not

MOLLY (exasperated)

You know what? Never mind.

(MOLLY gets in bed and screams into her pillow. Everyone else looks to each other for what to do. ANNA approaches MOLLY tentatively.)

ANNA

Hey Molly?

MOLLY (annoyed)

What?

ANNA

I just want to talk to you.

MOLLY (sitting up)

Fine.

ANNA

I don't think Alison's being fair. I understand you, I do. But I also think that this wouldn't upset her so much if it weren't for the fact that she really loves you.

MOLLY

I guess.

ANNA

I'm serious, Molly. I think she must feel-slighted by this.

MOLLY

But it has nothing to do with her.

ANNA

I know that.

MOLLY

Then why doesn't she?

ANNA

She might! But still, she might feel like you don't think she's worth risking something for.

(ANNA gives EVELYN an apologetic look.)

MOLLY

But it's not about that! I don't know what my parents would do, but it wouldn't be easy. I don't want to put her through that.

ANNA

Tell her that, then.

MOLLY

She won't care.

EVELYN (blunt)

Break up with her, then.

Evelyn.

ANNA

What?

EVELYN

It'll blow over. Give her some space. She'll come around.

BETTY

What if she doesn't?

MOLLY

There will be someone else-

AMELIA

I don't want someone else.

MOLLY

Ev and I always made up.

ANNA

When something matters, and you had to fight like hell to have it, it's easier to let things go.

EVELYN

And if she doesn't let it go?

MOLLY

Then you aren't right for each other anymore.

ANNA

But I love her.

MOLLY

Then maybe *you* need to let it go.

EVELYN

It's different.

MOLLY

EVELYN

Then talk to her, Molly. I don't know what to tell you.

MOLLY

Fine. I will.

EVELYN

Good.

MOLLY

Another day.

ANNA

Good.

(MOLLY buries her face back in her pillow, knowing there's no point in keeping this conversation up. A week later. MOLLY is out, having a 'talk' with Alison. AMELIA, DEMETRIA, and BETTY are making a game plan for what to do when she gets back. EVELYN and ANNA are in major PDA mode, taking advantage of lovelorn MOLLY's absence. MOLLY enters the room, upset. Everyone drops everything and looks to her.)

MOLLY (voice breaking)

It's over.

EVELYN

Oh, Molly.

BETTY

Are you okay?

(MOLLY shakes her head. Before she can explain herself, AMELIA hugs her. MOLLY leans into her while everyone else gathers around.)

MOLLY

It's like-You know when an asteroid is supposed to hit Earth and destroy the whole world and then it burns up in the atmosphere and never actually does anything? That's what I thought this would be. I didn't think it would ever actually...

DEMETRIA

So...what/happened?

MOLLY

/She broke up with me. It was 'mutual'. But she broke up with me.

EVELYN

Do you want to talk about it?

MOLLY

No. There's nothing to say.

EVELYN

Fair enough.

BETTY

It'll get easier.

(MOLLY shakes her head.)

It will.

DEMETRIA

It does.

(MOLLY shakes her head again and pulls herself away from everyone.)

MOLLY

What am I supposed to do? I mean I see her all the time. We have all the same friends-Oh god, *she* introduced me to all my friends! Oh my god, they're all gonna hate me!

ANNA

I thought it was 'mutual'?

MOLLY

Yeah, I let her think so.

ANNA

So they won't hate you.

MOLLY

But-but even if they don't, how am I supposed to see her? I feel like the next time I do my body is gonna betray me somehow, like my heart gonna fall out of my chest and she'll know how badly I didn't want to break up and

EVELYN

Molly.

MOLLY

What?

EVELYN

Calm down.

MOLLY

Oh, yeah, sounds good, I'll just 'calm down' after the love of my life told me we can't be together because of my fucking parents

EVELYN

The love of your life?

MOLLY

Yes!

EVELYN

She's your first girlfriend.

MOLLY (forlorn)

Was

EVELYN

You're 21. You have no idea who the love of your life is.

MOLLY

But what if she's it for me? What if there's not a single other person in the whole world who's ever gonna fall in love with me ever again?

EVELYN

What if?

(MOLLY groans.)

ANNA

If Alison's it for you, then you'll find your way back to each other. Simple as that.

MOLLY

And if she's not?

EVELYN

Then you'll meet someone else.

MOLLY

You didn't.

(Beat. EVELYN almost laughs at the absurdity of the insult.)

BETTY

I did.

(MOLLY looks at BETTY, cautiously curious.)

BETTY

I didn't think I ever would, after I lost Catherine. But there I was, two years later, sitting in a diner at two o'clock in the morning wondering what the hell I was gonna do with my life, and suddenly, there was Nancy taking my order. I knew it was gonna be okay, then. I ended up staying until 5 AM. Learned something new about her every time she came to refill my coffee.

MOLLY

But, how'd you know she was a...

BETTY (shrugging)

Dyke? Like I said, we usually have a way of telling. Haven't you noticed?

EVELYN

Betty, don't say that.

BETTY

Say what?

EVELYN (whispered)

Dyke?

ANNA

What's a dyke?

BETTY

A lesbian.

EVELYN

It's a nasty, degrading word for lesbians.

BETTY

Who says?

EVELYN

The people who say it-

BETTY

I say it. If I decide that dyke is something I want to be called, nobody can use it to degrade me.

EVELYN

I hadn't thought about it like that.

MOLLY

Who *cares*? Say dyke, don't say dyke, I'm never gonna meet another dyke!

ANNA

We find each other. We have to.

EVELYN

It might take time-it *will* take time, I'm sure. But it doesn't mean that love is over for you.

MOLLY

But how can I feel so...so...deeply, so in love and so heartbroken that it feels like the world is ending over Alison and then feel that way about someone again? Isn't that how you're supposed to feel about 'the one'?

EVELYN

Lesbian love always feels like that. How couldn't it when its very existence betrays everything you've ever known? Only a feeling that intense, that special, is worth turning the world upside down over.

DEMETRIA

Besides 'the one' is a myth. We're already breaking the rules, Molly. Why should we reserve all the passion and love and goodness we have for one person our whole lives when we have so much of it to give?

ANNA

It's going to be okay, Molly.

MOLLY

I hope so.

EVELYN

It will. I promise. Whoever you need is going to find you. And you have us to keep you company until then.

(Group hug.)

Part Six: Jack

(Molly's senior year of college. Her dorm room. It's more or less the same as last year. She's figured herself out. She's away on spring break and everyone else has made themselves quite at home in her room, playing dress up with her clothes. AMELIA enters wearing a modern, somewhat androgynous outfit, complete with *pants*.)

AMELIA

How do I look?

DEMETRIA

Fabulous.

BETTY

Hold on. Here.

(BETTY takes off her jacket and puts it on AMELIA.)

BETTY

That's more like it.

(AMELIA looks in the mirror.)

AMELIA

Woah.

EVELYN

You look good, Amelia.

DEMETRIA

Really good.

AMELIA (giddy)

Thank you.

BETTY

Of course.

(Beat. AMELIA stares at herself and BETTY in the mirror.)

AMELIA

Betty, was it scary for you?

(BETTY shrugs.)

BETTY

What else could I do? I knew what I was. It'd be drag if I dressed any other way.

AMELIA

Was it worth it?

BETTY

Every day. It was hard, but if I wasn't butch, I wasn't alive.

ANNA

It doesn't have to be so hard.

BETTY

Sorry?

ANNA

It doesn't have to be so hard. If you want to dress like a man, be my guest, but I don't see why you should get to complain so much about it. You chose it.

BETTY

Oh, really?

ANNA

Yes really!

EVELYN

Anna

ANNA

No, I'm serious-I'm happy for you Betty, really, but you brought that on yourself. You don't *have* to parade it around in everyone's faces. Evelyn and I didn't, and we got on just fine.

BETTY

Oh did you? That's not how I remember it going.

ANNA

How dare you.

BETTY

How dare *you*!

ANNA

All I'm saying is- Would it kill you to wear a skirt?

BETTY

Yes.

(Beat. ANNA doubles down.)

ANNA

I just don't buy that.

BETTY

I just don't care.

ANNA

I understand that you can't choose to be a lesbian, I certainly would have chosen not to be/ but you can choose what you do about it

EVELYN

/You would have chosen not to/be?

BETTY

/You shouldn't have to. Putting on a dress feels like dying to me, okay? I feel like I'm drowning, like I'm in a fucking freak show. And I'm glad it doesn't make you feel that way, because it's torture, being at odds with what's safe and what's the truth.

ANNA

I'm very sorry it feels that way but-

BETTY

But *what*?

ANNA

Sometimes we have to make sacrifices.

BETTY

For *who*?

ANNA

Other people. The world. It's a lot to take in.

BETTY

Other people? What other people? The ones who try to make our existence a living hell-no, sorry, the ones who want our existence to be erased from every part of history, past present and future- Those people? We're making sacrifices for them? To make them comfortable? What have they ever sacrificed for us?

ANNA

A lot of them are good enough not to say anything to anyone if you just mind your business and keep quiet

BETTY

I don't want to keep quiet! I'm not doing anything wrong! I am who I am, okay? And who I am is butch. So I dress like a butch. Not like a man, by the way, like a butch.

ANNA (quiet)

Like a dyke.

BETTY

What was that?

ANNA

Like a dyke. You dress like a dyke.

BETTY

Damn right I do-I am a dyke, and so are you, in case you forgot!

ANNA

I am not! I'm a lesbian, sure, but we aren't like the rest of you.

BETTY

We?

ANNA

Evelyn and I. We know what's good for us.

EVELYN

Anna-I don't think

ANNA

/What? You disagree?

EVELYN

I think...it might have been nice to dress how I wanted. Even if it might have turned a head or two.

ANNA

You dressed how you wanted.

EVELYN

At home. Not when we were out.

ANNA

What were people going to think?

EVELYN

I don't know, that we were friends? You wouldn't let me wear *pants* Anna.

ANNA

I was worried about you!

,

EVELYN

No, you were worried about yourself!

ANNA

What, so you're taking Betty's side now?

EVELYN

I'm not taking sides! There aren't sides!

ANNA

Of course there are sides. There are the people who know what's good for them and the people who want to parade it around just so that they can complain about how much harder they have it than those of us who have the sense not to.

(AMELIA slaps ANNA. DEMETRIA pulls her back.)

BETTY

Jesus, Amelia!

AMELIA

Do you have any idea how lucky you are? To have lived in a time where you even knew what a lesbian was, to have a chance to meet someone, to fall in love with a woman? I'd give anything for that, Anna. I'd dress like Betty, like a butch, which I think is an incredibly brave thing to be, and I'd be made a laughingstock of, I'd be punished for it forever, for one moment of what you have! Being secretive doesn't make you more clever than the rest of us, it makes you a coward!

(ANNA slaps AMELIA back. AMELIA pulls her hair. The beginnings of this catfight are interrupted by MOLLY walking through the door. Everyone freezes in their tracks.)

AMELIA
Molly!

DEMETRIA
Molly!

BETTY
Molly!

EVELYN
Molly!

ANNA
Molly!

AMELIA
You're home!

BETTY
How was your trip?

ANNA
We missed you!

MOLLY

What the hell is going on in here?

(Beat. They all look around at one another, deciding who to blame. ANNA points at BETTY.)

ANNA

Betty started it

AMELIA
That is not true.

DEMETRIA
Anna started it.

BETTY
Unbelievable.

EVELYN
I don't know if
anyone started it, it
just-

MOLLY

Are you all five years old? I don't care who 'started it'. Someone tell me what happened. Calmly. And *truthfully*.

DEMETRIA

We were trying on your clothes.

MOLLY

I see that.

AMELIA

Sorry, we didn't think you would mind.

MOLLY

I don't, really, but I would like some help cleaning it up, please.

DEMETRIA

Sure-And Betty and Amelia were talking about how it wasn't easy for Betty, dressing like she did, and Anna told Betty it's her own fault that people were horrible to her because she chose to dress that way

EVELYN

That's not what she said, not exactly, she didn't say it was Betty's fault, just

DEMETRIA

She said she didn't think Betty had any right to complain

EVELYN

I know/but

BETTY

/You agree with her, then?

EVELYN

No! No, of course not!

ANNA

Of course not?

EVELYN

Anna-

MOLLY (stern)

Someone finish telling me what happened, now.

DEMETRIA

Anna called Betty a dyke, and she pretty much said that she and Evelyn were better than the rest of us because they knew well enough to stay in the closet and then/Amelia

ANNA

/Amelia slapped me.

DEMETRIA

Amelia slapped her.

ANNA

And called me a coward.

AMELIA

You are.

DEMETRIA

Then Anna slapped Amelia and then...you got here.

EVELYN

This is ridiculous. There is no reason for any of us to be fighting-*physically* fighting. That's insane.

MOLLY

Agreed.

ANNA

What do you think, Molly?

MOLLY

Anna!

ANNA

Really. I want to know.

(Beat. Molly takes a moment to figure out what sort of lesbian she's going to be.)

MOLLY

I'm with Betty.

ANNA

I thought you would be.

(MOLLY fishes for something in her bag and pulls out a new book.)

MOLLY

Listen, I think you guys should hear this-I got this book in California and I was gonna save it to read with you guys, but the plane ride was really long so I started it and

AMELIA

What's it about?

MOLLY

If you'd let me finish-

AMELIA

Oh, sorry

MOLLY

It's essays about being a lesbian today, like post gay liberation and this one I was just reading sort of very much pertains to this situation, listen

(MOLLY sits down amongst the mess and opens the book to the essay she was reading.)

MOLLY

"I find it funny, all this infighting, and its ability to pervade generation after generation.

(JACK enters.)

JACK

Saturday night butches turning their noses up at their full-time counterparts. Quasi-closet cases who shake their heads at pride marches and gay clubs. Those particular 'sapphics', who fancy themselves too high class for such nasty words as *lesbian*, too ignorant to know that both words can be traced back to one source. Isolating oneself from the only community that accepts one completely for the approval of a society that may never do the same is a dangerous thing. Sapphic, lesbian, dyke—butch, femme, or otherwise, we must always remain closer to one another than to them.

(JACK looks around, immediately tuned into the tension in the room. Everyone looks back at them, each one confused in their own way. Silence.)

JACK (playful)

Did I say something?

(Beat. More silence.)

JACK

Seriously, what happened here?

(AMELIA, DEMETRIA, BETTY, EVELYN, and ANNA launch into a chorus of disjointed accusations that fizzle out as fast as they started. No one knows who to point the finger at. There isn't anyone to point the finger at. They're in this together, after all.)

AMELIA
I-Oh you guys can go first

BETTY
Uh-Anna, you can explain

ANNA
Um-Betty, go ahead

(JACK points to EVELYN.)

JACK

Evelyn, you first. Tell me what happened.

EVELYN

How do you/know

JACK

/Tell me what happened.

EVELYN

Anna and Betty were arguing about how they dressed, because Anna said Betty shouldn't complain about how she gets treated if she chooses to dress like a man, and Betty said it isn't a choice, and Anna didn't agree and so, I don't know-um-and Anna called Betty a-a dyke and Amelia called Anna a coward and-they slapped each other, and-I don't know, that's all I've got.

JACK

That's plenty. Amelia?

What?
AMELIA

You think Anna's a coward?
JACK

Yes.
AMELIA

Why?
JACK

Because she's saying all this stupid *shit* about Betty and she's never even bothered being out of the closet.
AMELIA

Would you, if you were her?
JACK

I don't know, but-How would you know?
AMELIA

I've read her letters.
JACK

You have?
ANNA

How else would I have known who you were?
JACK

You've read mine too, then?
EVELYN

Of course. I don't know a lot of people who haven't read at least a few of them.
JACK

Really?
EVELYN

JACK

Yeah, they're everywhere. I mean they're like literature in their own way.

EVELYN

Everywhere? Now? Today?

JACK

Mhm. I know all of you. All of your writing. You aren't exactly Molly's little secret.

MOLLY

I found Jack's essays in a gay bookstore.

ANNA

What's a 'gay' bookstore?

MOLLY

It's a bookstore that sells gay books. Books with queer authors or characters or themes. They had all your books. I checked.

AMELIA (giddy)

My book...*my* book-is in a *gay* bookstore?

JACK

That book was the first step to figuring it out for so many people, Amelia.

AMELIA

I sort of thought it was just Molly.

JACK

No way. I can tell you for sure it was me too. You just...knew how I felt.

AMELIA

You knew what I meant.

JACK

I wouldn't be a writer if it weren't for you-For all of you.

BETTY

I have a bit of a confession. A peace offering, if you will.

JACK

Please.

BETTY

I, um, I was always a big fan of your poetry, Anna.

ANNA

You were?

BETTY

Still am. I always thought you, uh, you could really put into words how I was feeling. You always made me feel understood, knowing I wasn't like everyone else. There was this one poem, it started like "I am a star amongst streetlamps, burning just as bright

BETTY

but too far away not to be outshined, my fire fueled by something entirely different than theirs."

ANNA

but too far away not to be outshined, my fire fueled by something entirely different than theirs."

BETTY

I tore that out of a book and hung it out on my wall as a teenager.

ANNA

How come you never told me?

BETTY

Didn't want to give you the satisfaction.

(ANNA laughs.)

ANNA

I'm sorry for making you feel less than understood just now. I don't know if I understand, but I'd like to.

BETTY

Let me put it this way. Being yourself, completely yourself, is what's right, and good, and safe. And it's the person who makes a world where that can't happen that's choosing to incite a revolution, not the person who's just trying to be what they are.

ANNA

Of course. I'm sorry, Betty. I forget myself.

BETTY

You're forgiven. But don't pull that shit again.

ANNA

Never.

AMELIA (half-genuine)

I'm sorry, too. I shouldn't have called you a coward.

ANNA

I am a coward.

AMELIA (begrudgingly)

No, you aren't

ANNA

Yes, I am. To say that I would choose not to be a lesbian-to choose not to be the very thing that shaped everything I wrote, that gave me Evelyn, that gave so much to all these people I never even knew? That is cowardly.

EVELYN

You take it back, then?

ANNA

Of course I take it back.

JACK

That's pretty brave to me.

ANNA

Thank you.

AMELIA

So we're okay?

ANNA

We're okay.

DEMETRIA

Thank god for Jack.

BETTY

No kidding.

JACK

You're all very welcome.

(Collective eyeroll. Laughter breaks up any remaining tension in the room as they embrace Jack as a part of their group. One month later. Just before graduation. Everyone is packing up Molly's dorm together, packing her new self away as she prepares to return home.)

MOLLY

Jack?

JACK

Yeah?

MOLLY

What was it like when you told your family?

JACK

Told them...I was a lesbian?

MOLLY

Yeah

JACK

It was...fine.

MOLLY

Fine? Fine how?

JACK

I mean, it wasn't terrible or anything. Awkward, weird for a little while, but not bad. Not really.

MOLLY

How did you...tell them?

JACK

Oh, in the most cliché way imaginable. I sat everyone down one year while I was home for Christmas and I said “I have something to tell you guys, and I’m sure it will be shocking, but I hope you won’t think of me any differently.”

BETTY (laughing)

As if that’s possible.

MOLLY

What is?

BETTY

People not, y’know, seeing you differently.

MOLLY

It isn’t?

BETTY

Of course not.

JACK

But that’s not a bad thing.

MOLLY

No?

JACK

No. You *are* different from who they thought you were. But they have to get used to that.

MOLLY

What if they don’t?

JACK

Someone else will.

MOLLY

What did they say?

JACK

My mother, she looked like she was going to faint at first. Just sort of stared at me like she hadn't heard me at all. My sisters didn't say anything at first, they just sort of nodded – but they were the first to say they didn't care. When my mom finally came to, she told me she was surprised/which I already knew

BETTY

/Surprised?

JACK

Yes

BETTY

You?

JACK

I didn't always look like this. She said she was surprised, but that she loved me no matter what and that we would “get through this together”, whatever that meant. It seemed like she meant well.

EVELYN

What about your dad?

JACK

He was...speechless. Really speechless.

BETTY

Mine too. Never spoke to me again.

AMELIA

Your family knew?

BETTY

Not by choice. I didn't really speak to them after I moved away, but I ran into some guy from home in the city once and by some horrible luck he recognized me and told my parents I'd gone out and become a dyke. Got a real angry letter in the mail and that was that.

DEMETRIA

Betty, I'm so sorry.

BETTY

What for? I didn't need them, in the end. I had a family. In New York. One that I chose, one that chose me. If my parents couldn't love me anymore over who I was and always would have been, why should I be upset about it?

ANNA

Because they're your family.

BETTY

They aren't, though. A family is supposed to care about each other, and they certainly didn't care about me. The people I met in New York, who taught me there was a name for what I was, and a whole bunch of people just like me, the people whose apartments I slept in, who I protested with and sat with in holding cells in the aftermath...the people I fell in love with, who made me laugh even when everything had gone to absolute shit, who got me to start writing my way through, who took care of me when...Those people fought for me-and I fought for them. They knew me, for all I was, and loved me for all of it. That's family.

ANNA

Oh.

(Beat. Everyone takes in the family they've built with one another, seeing it for what it truly is for the first time.)

BETTY

So how about your dad, Jack?

JACK

Oh, yeah. Like I said, he didn't say anything. Let everyone else do the talking. And then it was...weird. We didn't talk about it, I don't think he knew what to say-He wasn't the kind of guy who ever expected to have a gay kid. He didn't cut me off or anything, but I could tell it was giving him a hard time.

MOLLY

And that was it?

JACK

No. No, it got better, with both of them, with time. They came around, started asking questions. And after a while they actually started to listen to my answers, if you can believe it. It's like I can see them wrapping their heads around it more every time we talk about it. It's good now, it's really good. They're big "allies". Their words. Dress up for pride and everything. I guess there's

JACK (cont.)

stuff they still don't really get, but I can bring people home for the holidays, I don't have to hide what I'm writing about. I lucked out, for sure.

(Beat. MOLLY considers the possibility of this future for her.)

Were you thinking of telling your family, Molly?

MOLLY

I don't know. I mean, I think maybe it's time.

BETTY

You do?

MOLLY

Yeah. Maybe. I don't know. I think they have their suspicions. They've finally stopped asking where my boyfriend is, so...But I was thinking that I'm moving out soon anyway, so. It's not like they can really kick me out.

JACK

You think they'd kick you out?

MOLLY

No-I-I don't know. That's the problem, I've barely heard them say *anything* about gay people, we just-didn't talk about it. Didn't want me getting any ideas, I suppose. They won't be thrilled, I'm sure of that.

JACK

Not thrilled is okay.

MOLLY

But it'll probably be way worse

JACK

Worse how? Like...dangerous?

MOLLY

Dangerous how?

JACK

Like they might...hurt you?

MOLLY

Hurt me, like, hit me? No, I don't think they would, but...they-they might disown me or something, who knows

JACK

If they do-And that's a big if, Molly-are you ready for that?

MOLLY

I don't-I don't think so, I mean that would change everything.

AMELIA

Would it, though?

MOLLY

Of course it would.

AMELIA

I just feel like ever since you've been at school, it isn't like you're that close to them anymore. You share most of your life with other people instead.

MOLLY

They're still my parents.

AMELIA

Of course they are, but they aren't all you have.

MOLLY

I know, but-y'know what, maybe I shouldn't tell them. I mean, I've been able to hide it for this long/how bad could it

JACK

/Molly-

MOLLY

No, really, it'll be easier that way.

BETTY

Molly.

MOLLY

What?

BETTY

You hate going home.

MOLLY

No I don't.

BETTY

You do. You always get all mopey.

MOLLY

I mean it's not easy! It's like I'm living a double life. There's me at home, where they don't know me, and then there's me, lesbian me, everywhere else.

BETTY

And you're okay with feeling that way for the rest of your life?

MOLLY

I mean, I'm not thrilled about it but... (defeated) No. No I'm not.

JACK

You should go for it Molly. I think so, anyway. It's freeing no matter what. If your parents are okay with it, you get to be yourself at home, and if they aren't you don't have to go.

MOLLY

I guess that's true.

JACK

I'm not telling you to do anything you aren't ready for. But I think you're ready.

BETTY

We'll be here for you. No matter what.

DEMETRIA

Whatever happens, you'll still have us.

MOLLY

Promise?

DEMETRIA

Always.

MOLLY

Okay. I'll tell them after graduation. I'll tell them.

AMELIA

I'm so proud of you Molly.

JACK

Me too.

MOLLY

Thank you. All of you.

(Everyone goes back to packing. MOLLY sits in the middle of it, soaking in these last moments before everything changes again.)

Part Seven: Molly

(Molly's childhood bedroom. One last time. It's missing the parts of Molly that she found while she was away at school. Everyone is waiting for Molly to return to her room. MOLLY enters, visibly upset.)

MOLLY

All of you need to go.

JACK

What?

MOLLY

Go! Get out of here! I don't want to see you anymore!

DEMETRIA

Molly...

EVELYN

Molly, what happened?

MOLLY

I can't-you all need to go, we can't talk about this anymore.

AMELIA

About what?

MOLLY

You know

AMELIA

No, I don't

MOLLY

I'm not, I can't

BETTY

About what, Molly? Being a lesbian?

MOLLY

Yes!

JACK

Molly-

MOLLY (to JACK)

This-this is your fault!

JACK

My fault?

MOLLY

You're the one who told me/to

AMELIA

/Molly, what happened?

MOLLY

I told my mom and dad! (to JACK) Like you told me to. You-you made it seem like it would be fine.

JACK

It will.

MOLLY

How could it possibly/be

DEMETRIA

/Molly, what did they say?

MOLLY

They told me that I was wrong. That college had rotted my brain and that-that I wasn't a lesbian because that's not how they raised me and that I'm choosing and I'm making the wrong choice. And that I couldn't be a lesbian because if I was, then how could I be their daughter?

BETTY

Oh, Molly.

MOLLY

Maybe they're right. Maybe I'm not.

DEMETRIA

You are. You know you are.

MOLLY

Maybe I don't have to be. I can change.

BETTY

If you could, wouldn't you have done it by now?

MOLLY

Look, maybe I could do this if I were someone else, if my family were different or if I was braver, if I were living another life, if I could make the world be better and kinder to us, but I'm not, and I can't, and I can't take that. I'm glad you all could tough it out, but I think I have to just make it go away.

AMELIA

Molly.

MOLLY

What?

AMELIA

It's no easier to change yourself than it is to change the world. This is who you are. You know that.

(Beat. She knows.)

MOLLY

Then I'll pretend.

BETTY

And that's going to make you happy?

MOLLY

Yes.

JACK

No it won't. Please, Molly, just listen to us. I know it's so hard. I know it hurts. But the hurt's already happened and nothing you do to try and "fix" yourself is going to undo that. It's only going to make it worse.

MOLLY

I don't want my parents to hate me forever.

JACK

They might come around.

MOLLY

They might not.

BETTY

Then fuck them.

(MOLLY laughs in spite of herself.)

MOLLY

I just-I can't. I'm sorry. Thank you guys, for everything, but I-I didn't know how not ready for this I was until it happened.

BETTY

Of course you're ready for it.

MOLLY

I'm not.

EVELYN

Why not?

MOLLY

Because it isn't-It was one thing when I was at school, when I was only imagining how bad this might be, but I'm not ready for my whole life to change.

JACK

It already changed.

MOLLY

I'll change it back.

BETTY

You'll just be lying to yourself.

MOLLY
Then I'll lie!

(FRANCES enters.)

FRANCES
Molly.

MOLLY
Frances.

FRANCES
Don't do this.

MOLLY
Frances-

FRANCES
You're a lesbian, Molly. You are, and you know it, and I knew it-and I wish I'd-god-Molly.
Please, don't do this. For me.

MOLLY
I can't-

FRANCES
You deserve to be happy, and free, and yourself. And I know it seems impossible, but so is
spending your whole life pretending your heart belongs somewhere it doesn't. I wish I'd done it,
Molly, I wish I had told Alice, I wish I would have even let myself believe that I loved her in the
way I wasn't supposed to. Because I *was* supposed to. I should have loved her that way. I
shouldn't have wasted my life trying not to. But I did. You don't have to, Molly. Please. Don't.

MOLLY
I-

FRANCES
You deserve the world, Molly. Don't shut yourself out of it.

(MOLLY hugs FRANCES. FRANCES hugs her back, even tighter.)

FRANCES

I'm sorry I left.

MOLLY

You're here now.

(Beat. They hug long enough to start making up for years of lost time.)

I'm really scared.

FRANCES

I know.

JACK

You're gonna find your way, Molly, whatever it is.

EVELYN

We wouldn't all be here with you if we hadn't found a way to exist *despite*.

DEMETRIA

It's true. We all existed and kept on existing/and

AMELIA

/and we wrote it down, wrote about it/so that

MOLLY

/So that I could exist.

DEMETRIA

So that you could exist.

AMELIA

So that you could exist.

ANNA

And you do. You're here, and you're alive, and you're a lesbian.

BETTY

You have so much lesbianism to look forward to, Molly.

(Everyone laughs.)

MOLLY

I do, don't I?

BETTY

I know that it's not always easy. I won't pretend that ever goes away. But we're all here because it's possible to live through it. And if you choose to go on being a lesbian as proudly, as joyfully as you have in all the time I've known you-Someday there's going to be some little lesbian out there who carries on existing because of *you*.

MOLLY

And because of all of you.

AMELIA

All of us?

MOLLY

Without all of you, there'd be no me. Not the me I am now, the person, the lesbian I am, the one I *get* to be. I want to-I need to leave a mark on someone the way you all did on me, I don't know how but I'm going to, I/maybe I

AMELIA

/Write it down.

MOLLY

What?

AMELIA

Write it, Molly.

MOLLY

I'm not much of a writer.

AMELIA

Aren't you?

(AMELIA looks to everyone else for support. Everyone agrees. If they're all writers, then MOLLY must be too. They're a part of her, after all. MOLLY sits down and begins to write. Everyone watches on with pride. Then, one by one, in reverse order of their entering Molly's life, each author takes notice of the audience. AMELIA takes it in, then directs MOLLY's attention to the audience as well. She's done it.)

CURTAIN