Emmie and the Enchanted Orchid: Portraying Positive Disability Representation in Children's Media

Adrianna Waters
Western Kentucky University, adrianna.waters406@topper.wku.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_theses

Part of the Creative Writing Commons, English Language and Literature Commons, and the Playwriting Commons

Recommended Citation

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mahurin Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.
EMMIE AND THE ENCHANTED ORCHID: PORTRAYING POSITIVE DISABILITY REPRESENTATION IN CHILDREN’S MEDIA

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Arts with Mahurin Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By
Adrianna Waters

May 2021

*****

CE/T Committee:
Prof. Jessica Folk, Chair
Prof. Carol Jordan
Dr. Ted Hovet
Copyright by
Adrianna Waters
2021
ABSTRACT

Disability representation in media and storytelling is often negative or inaccurate, with disability narratives equating disability to evil or lesser than abled bodies. The harmful representation is especially prevalent and dangerous in children’s media as the depiction of characters with disabilities may be children’s first introduction to disability, and thus the portrayal is likely to stay with them, especially as stories for adults continue to perpetuate the inaccurate representation of disabilities. “Emmie and the Enchanted Orchid”: Portraying Positive Disability Representation in Children’s Media seeks to examine the harmful portrayal of disabilities in children’s media while also recognizing how disability can be represented positively and accurately. In addition to the research, the project provides an example of a children’s story that positively represents disability with an original stage play titled Emmie and the Enchanted Orchid. The purpose of the play is not to tell the disabled experience but to provide a whimsical and entertaining story that shows the intended audience—primarily children—a positive example of disability representation while also teaching them about disability.
I dedicate this thesis to my family, who has fostered my love of storytelling and supported me my entire life. Most importantly, I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Doris Waters. From reading to me at night when I was little to encouraging me to let my inner child remain, she has been a constant source of inspiration to me. Since her diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis in 2006, I have become more aware of disability and its representation in the media. I never would have fostered my love of children’s stories and my advocacy for disability representation if it weren’t for her.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my CE/T Committee for their help and insights throughout this project, especially my first reader, Prof. Jessica Folk, who provided important insights and feedback to strengthen my play. I would like to thank the WKU English Department for fostering my love of stories and giving me a place to grow these past four years. I would like to thank Dr. Trini Stickley; I took her English Language class my freshman year, and the class made me realize I could critically examine stories I love and find a way to academically discuss children’s media when I researched language use in children’s animated films, specifically Aladdin. I thank the Mahurin Honors College for giving me the opportunity to explore a topic that was both important and new to me. Finally, I thank my family for supporting me on this long journey, answering all my questions, and listening to me ramble on particularly stressful days.
VITA

EDUCATION

Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY May 2021
B.A. in English: Creative Writing Concentration, Professional Writing/Psychology Minors – Mahurin Honors College Graduate Honors CE/T: “Emmie and the Enchanted Orchid”: Portraying Positive Disability Representation in Children’s Media

Boone County High School, Florence, KY May 2017

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

American Institute for Foreign Study Aug. 2020-
Alumni Ambassador Present

The Writing Center, WKU Jan. 2019-
Tutor Present

Global Learning and International Affairs, WKU Jan. 2019-
Ambassador Present

Dept. of Theatre & Dance, WKU Aug. 2020-
Communications Intern Dec. 2020

English Dept., WKU Aug. 2018-
ENG 299 Teaching Assistant Dec. 2018

AWARDS & HONORS

Summa Cum Laude, WKU, May 2021


Finalist in Marry Ellen and Jim Wayne Miller Celebration of Writing Fiction Contest. 2019.
PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Sigma Tau Delta

PUBLICATIONS


INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Richmond, the American International University
American Institute for Foreign Study

June 2019-July 2019
CONTENTS

Abstract.............................................................................................................................. ii
Acknowledgements........................................................................................................ iv
Vita....................................................................................................................................... v
Children’s Storytelling and Disability Representation Research................................. 1
Works Cited ....................................................................................................................... 50
Appendix: Emmie and the Enchanted Orchid .................................................................. 54
CHILDREN’S STORYTELLING AND DISABILITY REPRESENTATION RESEARCH

“Emmie and the Enchanted Orchid”: Portraying Positive Disability Representation in Children’s Media aims to positively represent disability in a children’s play. The project includes in-depth research on disability representation and children’s media and an original full-length children’s play that aims to include an example of positive disability representation (see Appendix). The play is about 15-year-old Emmie, the princess of the Kingdom of Paxton. Emmie has congenital amputation on her left leg, which means she was born with no left leg. After a magical object is stolen from the royal family, Emmie is tasked with retrieving the item and restoring balance to her kingdom. The purpose of the play is not to tell the disabled experience but to provide a whimsical and entertaining story that shows the audience—primarily children—a positive example of disability representation while also teaching them about disability.

I acknowledge that as an abled-bodied writer, I will never understand the disabled experience, and it is important that I do not try to take away from the perspectives of individuals with disabilities. I conducted research on disability and children’s media, including: literature about disability representation in all media with a focus on children’s media, examples of positive and negative disability representation in children’s media, research about congenital disability, research about children with disabilities, etc. That being said, while research is imperative for positive and accurate disability representation, it will never equate to the disability experience, and I acknowledge this limitation. Additionally, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the play was unable to be presented as an in-person staged reading or performance. While efforts were made to
hold a virtual staged reading, this idea was scrapped when I was unable to find a disabled actress to read for Emmie.

The following paper will detail the process of researching, writing, and presenting the contents of *Emmie and the Enchanted Orchid: Portraying Positive Disability Representation in Children’s Media*, including: a discussion on successful storytelling elements in children’s media, an examination of disability representation in all media, an examination of disability representation in children’s media, research about congenital disability and the disability experience, a discussion of my writing process, and a discussion on presentations and the efforts to schedule a staged reading.

**Storytelling Elements in Children’s Media**

Positive disability representation is one goal of *Emmie and the Enchanted Orchid*, but an effective story for children is equally as important. Children will not enjoy the play if the story is not entertaining; thus, they will not learn about disability if they are too bored to pay attention to the story. Writing for children is a difficult and complex task, with the main risk being a story that talks down to children or does not speak to their interests. Observing successful children’s stories and reading about the elements of children’s stories provides insights and guidelines on writing a story for children, particularly on creating interesting characters and plot.

Children need stories that fulfill their wishes, interests, and goals, and one of the most effective ways to meet children’s storytelling needs is through characters. Whether they are magical creatures, kids with superpowers, or familiar archetypes, characters are one of the most important and creative tools used to create a satisfying story for children.
Children want plots that show characters doing what they want to do: being freer, older, and more independent. Children are constantly being told by adults that they can’t do certain things, so they want to see themselves reflected in a story where characters are doing those things—and much more. Because “children live in a world limited by their size, their knowledge, and rules made by adults,” they need to “live vicariously through characters who can break some of these bonds” (Klems). Whether it’s saving the world or exploring their imagination, characters in children’s stories must be doing things that children want to do.

As a result, characters in children’s stories are typically a little bit older than their target audience (MasterClass). In children’s books, movies, or TV shows such as the Harry Potter series, the Lizzie McGuire TV show, or Big Hero 6, the central characters are a few years older than the main target audience, and thus are acting like how children want to act—older, freer, and smarter. Children dream of exploring without the supervision of adults or doing things restricted to older children, whether that is something as simple as riding a roller coaster or something more complex like dating (or thinking about dating). It’s important to note that children may not always want to do these specific things (like dating), but they like thinking about them (like giggling over crushes). Seeing older children in stories participate in the activities they are curious about fulfills children’s constant desire to be older and more independent.

Age isn’t the only way to create characters that meet children’s interests and needs. In the imaginative and creative worlds of children’s storytelling, characters can be more independent and interesting by adopting characteristics impossible in the real world. This can be accomplished with the fantastical, like superpowers or magic; it can also be
accomplished by simply taking skills that real children may already have, amplifying those talents, and placing the characters in situations usually reserved for adults. For example, book series like *The Magic Treehouse, Harry Potter,* and *Percy Jackson* use fantasy to give their characters more power and independence, but they also place the characters in situations where they are the ones saving the day, not adults. On the other hand, book series like *Nancy Drew* or TV shows like *Carmen Sandiego* use real talents or skills but stretch the probability of children/teen’s ability to use those skills to save the day, a feat that can be accomplished in children’s literature where there are not the constraints of the adult world. Seeing characters their age or older take on adult roles by saving the day or defeating villains fulfills children’s wishes to be more like adults. Overall, children want characters who push the boundaries of what they can and cannot do at the age of both the character and the children—saving the world, dramatically falling in love at 13, traveling the country, etc.

However, especially for younger audiences, characters in children’s storytelling have to be interesting without being too complex. Characters “must immediately jump off the page” because “there’s no time to delve into long backstories” (Lopez). This is especially evident for side characters in series. While children want to see characters doing something fascinating, they cannot be bogged down with the heavy backstories or complicated emotions of adult storytelling.

This isn’t to say that all characters should be flat; in fact, children do like to be surprised when it comes to main characters. However, minor characters often follow similar archetypes that children can recognize, and these characters “can usually be described in a sentence or two” (Aviram). Children’s storytelling uses common imagery
associated with prototypes of archetypical characters, so using consistent imagery helps children understand and remember characters. Whether you always describe a character with a certain object/accessory or rely on how animated characters always wear the same outfit, how characters look is tied into how they act. Stories—especially series—often use archetypes like the bully, the smart one, the athlete, etc., and they match these characters with recognizable imagery, like glasses, jerseys, etc.

One example of a character archetype is the mean character who antagonizes the main character (Draco Malfoy from *Harry Potter*, Angelica from *Rugrats*, Tattletale May from *Junie B. Jones*, etc.). These characters may create the main conflict, or they may be a sub-conflict. While these characters (and others) can become more complex as the series furthers (and, notably, as the original audience gets older), there are still recognizable traits for each. Although using archetypes is not required for successful children’s stories, keeping in mind the recognizable personalities and imagery for characters can heighten the reading experience for children. Knowing archetypes is also important if the purpose is to deviate away from common characters or stereotypes in children’s literature.

The types of characters used in children’s literature are affected by the type of world in each story, and world-building provides a unique opportunity to cater content to children’s interests and needs. While stories about school, families, etc. reflect children’s lives and are relatable, stories that include fantastical elements such as magic, talking animals, etc. are creative, reflecting children’s imagination. According to Aviram, there are 25 “worlds of content” that appear most often in children’s storytelling: worlds of animals; worlds of dragons; worlds of dinosaurs; worlds of witches and wizards; fairy
tales; tales of castles/kings/princesses/knights; tales of family and family events; circus
tales; children with superpowers; smart children (usually smarter than the adults); tales of
adults who fail; children’s pranks and tricks; absurd world; tall tales; etiological stories;
stories about empowering the weak; detective stories; treasure hunts; stories of travel;
heroes; little people (fairies, elves, etc.); stories in the sea; stories in between celestial
bodies of clouds; stories at school; and stories of monsters (229-230). Often, children’s
stories include several of these worlds, like a story about children with superpowers that
also has creatures like dragons.

A benefit to fantasy or sci-fi stories is that children love characters that are
magical, whether they be human/mostly human characters who have magical powers,
fantastical creatures like fairies or elves, or animals/non-human characters who are
personified. According to Jean Piaget’s developmental stages, children ages 4 to 12 are in
the preoperational stage of cognitive development. One of the defining features of the
preoperational stage is animism, which is the thought that inanimate objects have
thoughts, feelings, and intentions (McLeod). Animism factors into children’s imagination
as they play pretend with toys or tuck their stuffed animals into sleep; as such, stories that
feature animism interest children, which is why stories like the Toy Story franchise or
Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland are both successful and timeless.

Because children enjoy fantastical stories, plots that incorporate magic or fantasy
into their plots are more captivating. Having magical characters is one way to create a
compelling plot, and stemming the main conflict based on the fantastical keeps children
invested in the story. Most children’s movies include a fantastical conflict: talking
animals battling for control in The Lion King, a war between humans and dragons in How
*To Train Your Dragon*, a shape-shifting demigod who steals a magical object in *Moana*, etc. Fantasy in children’s stories allows them to expand their imagination, which is especially important in their stage of play pretend.

Like how characters don’t need to be magical to be enjoyable, plots don’t have to be fantastical or improbable to gain children’s attention; plot that reflects conflicts that children are curious about or frustrations that they face are also successful. There is nothing magical about the *Junie B. Jones* series, but the hassles of school, friendships, and Tattletale May represent the same struggles children face. If they can see their own experiences reflected in the conflict, magical or not, children will be more invested in the story.

Additionally, because children like stories that feature characters slightly older than themselves, children’s TV networks like Disney Channel and Nickelodeon often feature middle schools or high schools. A ten-year-old girl watching *Lizzie McGuire* probably still relates to some of the conflicts in the show, like mean classmates or fights with parents. However, she may also be curious about the coveted older life of middle school, and she can explore this curiosity by watching the conflicts Lizzie experiences, like crushes, locker programs, more advanced classes, etc.

Of course, fantastical and realistic content areas are not mutually exclusive; in fact, successful children’s storytelling often pulls from multiple content worlds, like a school for wizards and witches with magical creatures and animals (*Harry Potter*), a camp for children heroes and mythical creatures (*Percy Jackson*), or a high school for teen superheroes with colorful costumes (*Sky High*). Children’s stories don’t need to include multiple categories from Aviram’s list to be successful, but combining the two
main areas (relatable and imaginative content) is an effective way to create stories and characters that children want to learn more about. The *Percy Jackson* series uses several pieces of content with which children are familiar: summer camp, annoying teachers or adult supervisors, friendships, crushes, and teen enemies, all of which children can relate to. Children and teens enjoy reading about Percy Jackson, Annabeth Chase, Grover, Tyson, etc. because they have experienced similar emotions or feelings as them. The story also intrigues children with the magical content and characters. Percy and Annabeth are relatable preteens/teens, but they also have magical objects and fight monsters. Grover may act like children/teens at times, but he is also a centaur. The combination of realism and fantasy grabs children’s attention and encourages them to stay invested in the story.

Disney Channel, one of the strongest producers of stories for children, preadolescents, and tweens, is another example of combining the relatable with the fantastical. TV shows or movies like *Wizards of Waverly Place*, *Descendants*, *Kim Possible*, or *Phil of the Future* use fantasy to add extra excitement to stories that mostly take place in school. Disney Channel also uses storylines that aren’t fantastical but are slightly impractical to cater to children’s needs for relatable and imaginative content. There’s a reason why so many TV shows and movies are about tweens/teens-turned pop stars, actors, dancers, spies, etc.

The plot in children’s stories can be fantastical, improbable, or realistic; however, it should not be too above or below children’s cognition, and this is a difficult tightrope to walk. Although the conflict and plot of children’s stories should be appropriate for their level of cognition, a common mistake in writing for children is simplifying the plot.
It is tempting to “write down” to children in an attempt to create content that is relatable and understandable. However, children don’t need to be spoken down to or belittled, and they can tell if you are (Lopez); in fact, “children are actually pretty tough, and they’re a lot smarter than adults often expect them to be” (Klem).

A plot shouldn’t contain cognitive thought processes that would be difficult to grasp or experiences that children wouldn’t relate to, but that does not mean stories can’t tackle complex subjects. Children are not going to understand or be entertained by a plot revolving around taxes, and extreme hypothetical or abstract concepts might not land if they are not connected to imagery children do understand. For example, the movie *Inside Out* deals with complex and abstract psychology, but the plot boils it down to ideas children can understand, like emotions and memories; furthermore, creating characters and recognizable imagery to associate with abstract topics (e.g. the emotions as lead characters, islands to demonstrate personalities, etc.) allows *Inside Out* to take a complex topic and present it in a way for children to grasp and enjoy. Children’s stories dealing with “simpler” conflicts like studying for a test or making friends can and still are successful, but writers shouldn’t shy away from unique topics because they believe children won’t grasp the concept.

There are several storytelling elements that are helpful in creating a plot and conflict that children will enjoy and understand. One technique that appears in several stories and I find particularly beneficial in children’s stories is Chekhov’s gun, or as I like to call a more kid-friendly version, Mike Wazowski’s Laugh. According to Chekhov’s gun, if there something is presented at the beginning of the story, it must play a role at the end of the story; in other words, a gun on stage during Act I of a play will go off during
Act II. While this technique is common in all stories, it is especially prevalent in children’s media. In *Monsters Inc.*, Mike Wazowski accidentally makes Boo laugh when he hurts himself, and her laughter fixes the power problem. This minute detail is a humorous moment for children and adults, but it plays an important part in the conflict resolution. First, Mike and Sully make Boo laugh right during the climactic fight with Randall, which powers open all the doors. Second, the realization that laughter also powers electricity fixes the morality problems with scaring children as the monsters can make them laugh instead. Seeing a character, setting, object, etc. come back around at the end of the play is entertaining and satisfying for children, but it also helps them understand plot twists or solutions to conflicts. Additionally, using “Mike Wazowski’s Laugh” creates an effective ending for children’s stories because you can “answer a question the audience has probably forgotten or hadn’t even thought about but should have” (Movshovitz 89).

Of course, there are more strategies to creating a successful children’s story; however, all the techniques boil down to this: the plot and characters must speak to children’s imagination and desires. The best way to understand children’s imagination and desires is by watching them and taking notes of the stories they tell, the jokes they find funny, etc. Additionally, studying successful children’s stories provides a framework for tools writers can adapt in their own writing. That being said, successful stories, especially those for children, tend to reuse tropes. Unfortunately, these tropes can come at the expense of other individuals. Media, both for adults and children, has a history of using disability to further the plot or create characterization.
Disability Representation in Media

Disability is scarcely represented in movies, TV shows, books, video games, or other forms of media, and when we do see disability, it often falls under one of four categories: antagonists with disabilities, the narrative that disability will be “cured” at the end of the protagonist’s journey, the trope of disability leading to advanced senses, or the implication that characters with disabilities don’t receive the same “happily ever after” as characters without disabilities. Within these categories, we see reflections of three models of disability: the social model, in which “the disability of individuals is, in fact, maintained by systemic barriers, exclusion, and negative attitudes toward these disabilities more than physical limitations of the conditions themselves;” the medical model, in which there is “emphasis on the intervention of medicine as a way of solving or eradicating the particular disability or condition” (Leduc 36); and the charity model, in which disability is “to be pitied and saved by both the medical and social establishments” through cures or “magnanimous good deeds” (Leduc 55). The negative portrayal of disability in children’s media is especially concerning considering the media that children consume shapes their experiences, knowledge, and beliefs. On the other hand, there are several examples of positive disability representation in children’s media, and these stories lead to advocacy.

Antagonists with Disabilities

Disability and/or scars are not often represented in media, but when they are, they are usually given to the antagonist, either as a trait to make the antagonist seem different from the rest of the characters and the intended audience—a technique called “othering”—or as a consequence for the antagonist’s behavior; sometimes, the disability
does both. Author Amanda Leduc, who has Cerebral Palsy, examined the trends of
disability representation in all forms of media, especially fairy or folk tales, in her book
*Disfigured: On Fairy Tales, Disability, and Making Space*. According to Leduc, fairy
tales—which led to several storytelling elements we see in both children’s and adult’s
media—have a “fascination with disfigurement and death as *punishment*” (69). This
“punishment” can be the association between disability and evil represented in stories, or
it can be a consequence of the antagonist’s action; either way, the narrative being pushed
is disability=bad.

Fairy tales employed this narrative relentlessly: a version of *Hansel and Gretel* in
which the witch uses a crutch (Leduc 91), the presence of the conniving Rumpelstiltskin
who also happens to be an “evil dwarf,” the stepsisters in the Grimms’ *Cinderella* “who
willingly cut off their toes and parts of their feet so they might fit into the glass slipper
and thereby win the prince” (80). This narrative was “first in stories told for adults, then
in stories told for children, then in stories repackaged and repurposed and told for adults
again on posters and in film, broadcast across a country” (80).

For example, superhero stories, which are like fairy tales geared toward adults and
children, constantly create villains with disabilities or scarring. There are the Joker and
Two-Face from *Batman*, Red Skull in *Captain America*, Dr. Poison in *Wonder Women*,
The Thinker in *The Flash*, and more (Leduc 152). Superhero villains aren’t the only
antagonists to feature disability; action, horror, or adventure films employ the same trope:
several villains from the *James Bond* movies, Darth Vader, Freddy Krueger, Richard
Harrow in *Boardwalk Empire*, Snake Eyes in the *G. I. Joe* franchise, Gregor and Sandor
Clegane in *Game of Thrones*, Leatherface in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, (152-153),
Dr. Arliss Loveless in *Wild Wild West*, and more. The prevalence of disability with villainy is so pronounced that we see “a crooked nose and green skin and horns, and we know, instantly, who we have to root for, and who must be defeated” (99-100).

Although the imagery of disability equals villainy is harmful, so too is the common narrative that the disability is “permanent and somehow warranted” by the antagonist’s actions, making them “bitter and angry, because of their disability and also disabled because of their bitterness and anger” (216). *Peter Pan* is one of the oldest children’s stories in its prose, play, and Disney movie form, and it has inspired a plethora of adaptations. The villainous Captain Hook’s missing hand signals the audience to his villainy based on the audience’s previous associations with disability and villainy. Furthermore, he lost his hand to the crocodile because he battled against Peter Pan, the story’s hero, and his vendetta against Peter Pan and his friends stems from the vengeance against losing his hand.

*Peter Pan* is far from the only children’s story to feature a villain with a disability. There’s Scar from *The Lion King* who, like Captain Hook, is named after his disability/scarring. In the *Harry Potter* franchise, one of the most successful children’s stories of all time, Peter Pettigrew chops off his finger and then his hand to fulfill a villainous agenda and later receive a prosthetic silver hand that ends up strangling him. Considering several superhero stories are geared toward the family—whether they are the comics, animated or live-action TV shows or movies—children are also watching the multiple supervillains who have disabilities and picking up the same implicit association: if a character has a disability, they are probably bad. If a character does not have a disability—and is often attractive based on western beauty standards—then they are
good. The danger in these associations is that they leak beyond the story and into our real life. If children’s main exposure to scars, missing limbs, wheelchairs, etc. is through the villains in their favorite stories, how will they treat individuals with disabilities when they grow up?

*The Cured Disability*

Commonly seen in fairy tales or superhero stories, another disability narrative presented in media is the cured disability, in which both the medical and charity models are present. Whether they start with a disability or acquire it along the way, the protagonist’s disability is cured through magical or advanced scientific—if not magical in a way—means, usually as a reward for the protagonist’s good behavior. The trouble with this narrative is two-fold: first, it robs audiences with disabilities of the opportunity to see themselves truly and accurately represented in stories; second, it gives the subliminal message that if you try hard enough, pray hard enough, succeed hard enough, the disability—which is automatically associated with something that needs to be overcome—will cease to exist. This narrative exists to inspire the able-bodied viewer and pushes the narrative that disability is only accepted once it is cured.

Action series, such as superhero stories in comics and TV or movie adaptations, are very guilty of curing the disability of their protagonists, whether the disability is there to begin with or acquired along the way. In the fourth season of the television series *Arrow*, one of the main characters, Felicity Smoak, is shot. She survives the attack but is paralyzed from the waist down due to the injuries she sustained, and she starts using a wheelchair (“Blood Debts”). This storyline—for that’s all Felicity’s temporary disability is, a storyline—lasts five episodes (including the episode she is shot in) before she
regains the ability to move after the scientific geniuses of the show (herself included) create a prototype microchip that works in a somewhat magical way (“Taken”). The race to cure Felicity of her paralysis is a true depiction of the medical model. Little attention is given to how she might learn to navigate a superhero story with a disability, and nearly all attention is given to the far-fetched medical device to magically make her walk again. Felicity’s temporary disability is treated only as an obstacle the protagonists must defeat.

This narrative persists in fairy tales, and there are inklings of it in the adaptations. In the fairy tale “The Maiden Without Hans,” a miller’s daughter’s hands are caught off as a consequence of the miller accidentally making a bargain with the devil. The girl marries a king, who pities her and gives her silver hands. After the devil tries to trick them into killing their child whom he lies and says is a changeling, the girl runs away. Before they are reunited after seven years, the girl’s hands grow back, “as hands in fairy tales are wont to do if you pray hard enough” (Leduc 53). The girl’s disability is a result of her father’s poor actions, her weeping over her missing hands leads to sympathy from the king, and her good deeds result in the hands returning. The charity model shines in this fairy tale, as the king pities the poor maiden who has no hands and gifts her with silver hands, and though she receives her hands back because of magic and not medicine, the narrative of a fixed disability being the desired outcome exists.

In the more well-known Grimm’s fairytale “Rapunzel,” the prince is blinded by thorns caused by the witch, but when he reunites with Rapunzel, she cries, and her tears cure him of his blindness. Since fairytales are often told and retold to children in schools, libraries, etc., the cured disability trope weaves its way into their minds. Additionally,
adaptations of fairytales are popular in children’s media. On a positive note, the most popular adaptation of “Rapunzel” is Disney’s *Tangled*, in which the plot is changed so Rapunzel’s tears bring her love interest back to life instead of curing a disability. However, other adaptations keep the cured disability tope, such as Marissa Meyer’s Young Adult *Lunar Chronicle* series or the satirical *Into the Woods* that may criticize fairy tales but still reinforced the cured disability narrative with Rapunzel’s story.

The narrative is persistent, and “it is never society that changes” but “the protagonists themselves who transform…to fit into the mould of society” with “the intervention [being] magical rather than surgical” (41). In non-magical lands, disability in the medical model is cured with “the *life-saving* surgery, where *life* is synonymous with social standing and regard” and the child who receives surgery correlates to the fairy tale child who “would likely be visited by a fairy godmother or an evil witch, the gift of able-bodiedness dangled in front of them in a way that’s entirely irresistible” (41-42). The narrative pushes that a cured disability should be one of triumph for the characters and the audience, able-bodied or disabled. However, the cured disability fails to acknowledge that many disabilities cannot be cured, and seeing oneself represented in the media only to have their identity “fixed” at the end is a poor way to represent disability. Moreover, this narrative assumes that all disabled individuals want to be cured, but this is not the case. Although it ranges from disability and person, several individuals don’t see anything wrong with their disability and do not want to be “cured.” For example, individuals who are Deaf have a community and identity tied to their being Deaf, and to assume that they would celebrate an individual suddenly receiving their hearing is to assume that they would celebrate someone’s identity and community radically shifting.
Disability and the Advanced Senses

Another common disability narrative is the advanced sense or superpower disability trope—as a result of their disability, the character gains power. In “realistic” stories, the character usually has enhanced senses or capabilities in the area that is not disabled (e.g. someone who is blind has incredible hearing). In fantastical stories, the protagonist gains a superpower. This narrative makes several appearances in superhero stories, like Daredevil’s blindness paired with supersonic hearing or Charles Xavier’s inability to walk paired with psychic mind powers. The harm done by this narrative is clear: it does not accurately represent the disability experience. Most individuals with disabilities do not develop hyper-senses, and they definitely don’t gain superpowers.

This narrative is an advanced and fictionalized version of plasticity, which is the brain’s ability to adapt based on experience. For example, a child who loses her eyesight when she is young will learn to use her other senses differently and may develop slightly stronger hearing capabilities as a result of plasticity, but these changes aren’t as advanced as to become a superpower like Daredevil’s supersonic hearing. This trope is also based on “real examples,” like successful blind musicians such as Stevie Wonder or Ray Charles, with the narrative claiming that their blindness led to advanced hearing and musical talent. These narratives, whether they are fictional tales or glamorized adaptation stories of real people, make the individual out to be a sort of inspirational figure, one that is meant to inspire the able-bodied rather than tell the disability experience. While we don’t see the medical model, the reasoning is not because the individual is seen as worthy even with their disability; rather, the focus is on the power, or ability, of another sense.
The only reason the disability is accepted and celebrated is because it is tied to an advanced capability.

This narrative makes its way into children’s media, though it may not be obvious at first. In the 2012 Disney film *Wreck-It-Ralph*, Vanellope has the video-game version of a disability. She glitches, and her glitch causes her to be outcasted by her society and unable to play the game (social model of disability). While she isn’t cured of her disability, it becomes a powerup for the video game character because she can “glitch” ahead of other characters in the race. Thus, her disability is finally accepted and celebrated in the video game—but only because of the superpower it now presents in addition to the reveal of Vanellope’s royal status. Though he is not the main character, Mad-Eye Moody in *Harry Potter* has a magical eye that can see in all directions and through solid objects to replace his missing eye. Toph, from *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, is blind, and one of the reasons why she is a great Earthbender is because she uses vibrations in the earth to sense her surroundings (though it should be noted that Toph teaches the same Earthbending techniques to characters who are not blind, the implication that Toph’s blindness has made her a stronger Earthbender is there).

This narrative may not seem harmful at first. After all, isn’t Vanellope’s glitch a clever use of storytelling, Toph a powerful fighter? The problem isn’t that this narrative happens; the problem is that it happens more often than accurate disability representation. The trouble with the advanced disability narrative is not that an individual story is bad but that it’s one of the caveats storytellers seem to have when representing disability. If the character’s disability makes them better in some other capacity, then they are now an inspirational character, and to the able-bodied, a more interesting character. However,
disability representation shouldn’t exist to make characters interesting or inspirational to the able-bodied. It should exist to show all individuals that those with disabilities deserve to have their stories told.

_Disability and the Different Happily Ever After_

Finally, the different Happily Ever After is portrayed often with supporting characters who have disabilities, though protagonists face the same fate as well. In these stories, the character receives a happy ending; however, the ending is “less” than what most characters receive in the particular genre. For example, Quasimodo in Disney’s _The Hunchback of Notre Dame_ receives his happy ending, like most Disney protagonists—but his happy ending is different than what male characters usually receive: he “finds friends at the end of his story and is happy about it, because that is the only kind of happiness he is allowed to have” (Leduc 82). It could be argued that _The Hunchback of Notre Dame_ doesn’t need to have romance—despite Disney films, especially earlier ones, being a staple for the romantic relationship. Yet, the movie does have a love story between the able-bodied and beautiful Esmeralda and Captain Phoebus. To add insult to further injury, Quasimodo had feelings for Esmeralda, but he gives Esmeralda and Phoebus his blessing anyway.

Why would the story pair Esmeralda and Phoebus together instead of Quasimodo—the central protagonist—and Esmeralda together like they normally treat their main characters? Leduc’s analysis explains it:

Quasimodo had friends at the end of his tale, but he didn’t have a romantic love. After all, how could he? Would Quasimodo fit in a Disney Princes line of merchandise if ever
there was such a thing? Wouldn’t he spoil the effect sticking out as he does in a line of princes all so bland and boring? (88)

This narrative persists. Crutchie—yes, nicknamed for his disability—has a happy ending like the rest of the characters in *Newsies*, but no love interest like Jack. Perhaps this is because he is not the main character, as Jack is the only one to get a love story, but Crutchie (often played in in the theatre adaptation by an able-bodied actor) is still a character with a disability whose happy ending doesn’t check all the boxes of Disney’s expectations. The dwarfs in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* are meant to assist Snow White and be happy that she receives her happily ever after—and that’s it. This trope hints at the social model, where the character’s disability prevents them from having the typical happily ever after; though we’re never specifically told this, we can infer it.

*Other Negative Disability Representations*

Of course, these four categories are not the only way disability is poorly represented in the media. Disability that is represented inaccurately or offensively is also dangerous, and poor disability representation is often a result of limited to no research or few if any disabled individuals’ involvement. According to disability rights advocate Annie Segarra, “characters with disabilities are either portrayed as being tragic and depressed, or they exist only to further the narrative of the (typically able-bodied) main character” (qtd. in McDevitt). Disabled characters may not be villains, advanced, cured, or robbed of the happily ever after, but they still are not represented correctly. For example, in Jojo Moyes book *Me Before You*—and the movie adaptation—Will Traynor is paralyzed after an accident, and as a result, is “portrayed as a bitter, miserable man
because he has a disability - sending a message that people with disabilities are incapable of living happy and successful lives” (McDevitt). However, the story isn’t really about Will; it’s about Louisa Clark, who becomes his caretaker and falls in love with him. Moreover, the main conflict of the story is that Will is unhappy with his life—read, his disability—and wants to complete assisted suicide. At the end of the story, despite the messages about living life to the fullest, Will dies by assisted suicide because it wasn’t the disabled Will who should be living life to the fullest and exploring life’s possibilities, but the able-bodied Louisa. In this sense, *Me Before You* may also fall into the twisted happily-ever-after trope, though it’s unclear whether the point of the story is that Will’s “happily ever after” as a disabled individual is death—a message that is extremely problematic and dangerous. Not only does this story negatively portray disability, but it shifts the narrative to the able-bodied.

A more recent example is Sia’s movie *Music*, a film that, despite its heavy criticism from disability rights organizations, critics, and the general population, was nominated for two Golden Globes. The movie is about an autistic girl named Music and her recently sober half-sister Zu. Music is played by the able-bodied Maddie Ziegler, which is already controversial considering there are several autistic actors who would not only give a stronger representation/portrayal of autism but who are not represented in entertainment for both able-bodied and disabled roles. Additionally, trailers of the movie show Maddie depicting stereotypical and offensive caricatures of autism. Musical scenes that are supposed to highlight Music’s thoughts use flashing lights and strobes that would be sensitive and triggering to those with autism, making the film targeted toward an audience that is not on the spectrum. The narrative of Zu’s life changing for the better
after meeting Music makes the story about her—and enforces the trope that a disabled individual is meant to inspire the lives of the able-bodied. Music is treated as “a catalyst to help Zu on her journey to become a better person” (Spencer). As Charlie Hancock, who is autistic and a student at Oxford University, put it, this representation pushes that disabled individuals “exist in order to inspire the nondisabled people in our lives and, by extension, the audience” (Hancock qtd. in Spencer). The recent release of Music and its nominations for two Golden Globes proves that harmful disability representation is still a problem in media.

It's important to note that acknowledging stories with disability tropes and the specific stories mentioned throughout this research doesn’t mean we should “cancel” all stories, never watch or read them again, or claim they are terrible writing—though some, like Music, are more harmful than others and should be avoided. Depending on the situation, it is possible to both critique repetitive and harmful disability representation and enjoy the story. The problem isn’t that some disability stories follow these tropes; the problem is that nearly all disability stories follow these tropes.

In general, disability representation in adult’s and children’s media is lacking and not just in the stories themselves. Creators or artists with disabilities are often left out of the storytelling process, and most films, television shows, or theatrical performances feature able-bodied actors playing disabled characters, an act that is becoming more criticized and controversial today. It is important to include disability in the media conversation to break down stereotypes about disability.
The Importance of Disability Representation in Children’s Media

All stories with disability representation should feature accurate and positive portrayals, but this is especially important in children’s media. The depiction of characters with disabilities may be children’s first introduction to disability, and thus the portrayal is likely to stay with them, especially as stories for adults continue to perpetuate the inaccurate representation of disabilities. When children read or watch stories about disability and have a conversation about the story, they learn about disability. Moreover, children with disabilities can see themselves reflected in their favorite stories.

Representation in general is important because “providing space and time for discussions about multicultural literature brings the wider perspectives of society into the classroom and allows children to create democratic communities in which to consider diversity” (Adomat). By being exposed to diverse literature, children can apply the stories to their lives “and they gain multiple perspectives on complex issues such as stereotypes and prejudice” (Adomat). Disability representation in children’s literature has become more positive in the past decade, but there are still stereotypes within stories. It’s important to find positive disability representation in children’s media because “just as children's texts have the potential for creating change in attitudes about disability, they also have the potential for preserving and reflecting negative cultural attitudes” (Adomat). When children are exposed to disability representation, they learn about the definition of disability, the effect of disability on the character’s interactions, and how the character is treated (Adomat). Additionally, children learn how the medical model of disability plays a role in both children’s literature and children’s understanding of disability and how this model impacts those with disabilities (Adomat).
Moreover, there aren’t a lot of studies examining children’s reactions to disability representation (Adomat). In a study conducted by Donna Sayers Adomat, a classroom was analyzed to learn about the effect of disability representation in children’s literature. An elementary teacher read a variety of children’s stories that featured disability and discussed disability with her students.

In the study, children learned about the fluidity of the definitions of disability and normality and that disability is defined differently to each individual. When learning about characters or individuals with disabilities, children examined “disability as part of a complex set of individual characteristics, and they viewed the characters with disabilities as people who have many traits in common with themselves” (Adomat). When children understood and sympathized with characters who have disabilities, they “became aware of the larger social implications of the stories they read, such as fair and equitable treatment, judging or making fun of others, and educational placements” (Adomat).

For example, one student commented that people with disabilities might be “labeled by others out of ignorance and rudeness,” and they both examined why and disapproved of unfair treatment (Adomat). In a hypothetical scenario, the children discussed that if they had a blind student in their class, “they would make sure the child got what she needed” (Adomat). After reading children’s stories about disability, the students “are developing an inner stance towards advocacy; not only do they feel and think that children with disabilities should be treated fairly, but they would be willing to welcome and support children in their own classroom” (Adomat).

Importantlly, there was a shift in the interactions between students with and without disabilities. Before the study, children without disabilities disliked that a student
with developmental disabilities had an aide because they thought she got extra help, but after the study, they understood why the student had more assistance and were not angry about it. Additionally, a student with autism who usually did not speak “participated actively in the book discussions and could identify with some of the characters in the stories,” even saying “That’s like me. I have autism—a little bit” (Adomat). A parent said her daughter’s attitude toward disability has shifted and that when they see an individual with a disability in public, she will talk to the person, and she does not have negative attitudes about classmates with ADHD anymore (Adomat).

Overall, the study showed that after exposing children to disability through stories, they not only learned about disability but understood that “characters with disabilities as full and complex beings” (Adomat). Children with disabilities saw themselves “represented, and therefore valued, in literature” (Adomat). If children’s media starts to feature disability in a positive manner more, and if parents, educators, etc. talk to children about disability, then children’s perceptions about disabilities will change, leading to advocacy and positive interactions.

Positive Examples of Disability Representation in Children’s Media

Although several stories represent disability through harmful tropes, there are examples of positive disability representation in children’s media. Dreamworks’ How to Train Your Dragon series is one example of positive disability representation. At the beginning of the first movie, the use of prosthetics for missing limbs is established as normal. The movie takes place against the backdrop of a war between humans and dragons. Hiccup, the main character, works for Gobber, an amputee and blacksmith. After his invention captures and injures a dragon named Toothless, Hiccup is unable to
kill him and develops a friendship with Toothless, whose injury cost him half of his tail fin. Hiccup uses his tools with his blacksmith apprenticeship to create a prosthetic fin to help Toothless fly. The process is one of trial and error, and at first, Toothless needs Hiccup’s help with the prosthetic to fly; eventually, though, Toothless is able to fly on his own with the prosthetic and even saves Hiccup’s life toward the end of the movie.

The series’ representation furthers at the end of the first movie and continues with the sequels. Toothless saves Hiccup after the giant dragon Red Death attacks, but Hiccup is injured in the fight. We don’t see that Hiccup is injured at first, only that Toothless has saved his life. The scene cuts to Hiccup waking up in bed with Toothless in his room. When Hiccup throws off his blankets to stand up, he pauses. There is a small moment of surprise and perhaps discouragement on his face, but it quickly morphs into acceptance. We see a closeup of the edge of the bed as Hiccup places first his leg and then his prosthetic over the bed. Hiccup stands up, a little off-balanced at first, and Toothless helps him similar to how Hiccup helped Toothless while making the dragon’s prosthetic. Once he gets his balance, Hiccup and Toothless walk outside, and the scene lingers on the imagery of both characters wearing a prosthetic on their lower limb.

The disability representation succeeds for several reasons. First, the movie portrays Hiccup’s injury as a change but not a tragedy, avoiding the idea that disability equates to suffering. Additionally, the movie gives enough attention to the injury and the prosthetic so that neither are brushed off, but the emphasis of the movie is still on the relationships between humans and the dragons, showing that movies can have a “typical” children’s story while still representing disability. In other words, you don’t have to create a disability story to represent disability; it can be shown in any story. Finally, the
other characters’ reactions are supportive but not pitying, perhaps because prosthetic limbs are common in the Viking village of Berk. Moreover, in the sequels of *How to Train Your Dragon*, Hiccup and Toothless still wear their prosthetics, and their disability is worked into the story.

While there are complexities within the plot—such as the fact that it’s Hiccup’s device that captures and injures Toothless in the first place—*How to Train Your Dragon* avoids the tropes of poor disability representation. Neither character is a villain, both are still disabled at the end of the franchise, their prosthetics help them move but don’t make them super, and they both receive their happily-ever-after at the end.

Positive reactions to the movie, especially from those with disabilities, demonstrate the importance of representation. Disability interest group praised the movie because Hiccup is still successful with his disability (Cavna). Former Army Sergeant Joe Kashnow, whose right leg was amputated during his time in the military, said Toothless’ and Hiccup’s disabilities were “incredibly well-represented” and the prostheses both characters use were “special to his family” (qtd. in Cavna). Gabriel Cardier, an athlete with a lower left leg prosthetic like Hiccup’s, notes that Hiccup “happens to have a physical ‘disability,’ but is never portrayed as someone who has limitations or is at a disadvantage” (qtd. in Cavna). Positive disability representation means worlds for individuals who get to see themselves reflected in their stories, especially if those individuals are children who are still learning so much about themselves.

In the literary world, Merrie Haskell’s middle-grade book *Handbook for Dragon Slayers* is another example of positive disability representation. Similar to *How to Train Your Dragon*, *Handbook for Dragon Slayers* aims to provide an adventurous story for
children that happens to have a protagonist with a disability. In contrast to Hiccup, our heroine Matilda—nicknamed Tilda—is a princess who was born with her disability, a club foot. Unlike the land of Berk, Tilda’s home is not accepting of her or her disability. The story takes place before modern medicine and when superstitions or myths were commonplace for individuals with disabilities. These problems are incorporated in Tilda’s narrative, with several characters showing disrespect or rudeness to her because of her disability, despite the fact that she is a princess. Additionally, we see Tilda’s frustrations when other people, such as her parents or guards, are overprotective of her because of her disability.

However, Tilda shows the other characters—and the audience—that she is both disabled and strong. The story does a good job weaving in realistic portrayals of disability and Tilda’s strength. Some stories with disability representations show the character with a form of magical or medical enhancement allowing them to complete strenuous tasks with no problem—a play on the disability with superpowers trope that risks erasing the disability by refusing to show its effect on everyday life. *Handbook for Dragon Slayers*, however, has moments in which Tilda’s foot hurts or she needs rest. Importantly, these moments do not comprise most of the book because the story is not about disability but a protagonist who has a disability. In addition to Tilda’s life as a princess with a disability, we see her interactions with her friends and family, her intelligence in defeating the story’s villains, and her heroic deeds as she saves her mother and her home.

*How to Train Your Dragon* and *Handbook for Dragon Slayers* are primarily entertaining forms of media, but educational children’s media can and should represent
disability as well. “Sesame Street,” one of the leading producers of children’s content that strives to be inclusive, has represented several different disabilities. While positive disability representation is improving today, “Sesame Street” was including characters or guests with disabilities as early as the 1970s. Emily Kingsley was a writer for the show; her son Jason Kingsley has Down Syndrome, and he appeared in 55 episodes of “Sesame Street” (Pitman). Kingsley advocated for more disability inclusion in general, and in the ‘90s, the show cast Tarah Schaeffer, a girl with osteogenesis imperfecta who uses a wheelchair; in the show, she sings to the tune of “The Wheels on the Bus” to talk about her wheelchair parts (Pitman). The inclusion of disabilities is important because “children in the audience get validation when they see others like themselves” (Riley qtd. in Pitman). Moreover, disability representation is an opportunity to teach other children about disabilities.

When “Sesame Street” recognized the impact that representation had on children, the creators decided to introduce Julia, a puppet with autism. They began the process in 2010 by talking to educators, psychologists, and activists to create an autism initiative. The team did their research: talking to experts, visiting clinics and schools, and more (Suskind). The importance of “Sesame Street’s” Julia isn’t just that she provides positive disability representation but that the creators took the representation seriously, doing copious research to make sure autism was represented both accurately and positively. The Georgetown Center for Child and Human Development studied the impact of Sesame Street’s autism initiative on parents with and without children who had ASD and stated that the autism initiative can “reduce biases and stigma, increase acceptance and
inclusion, and empower ASD children with knowledge and positive information about themselves” (Anthony qtd. in Suskind).

Although Julia and “Sesame Street’s” Autism representation has been praised, it is important to note that in 2019, “Sesame Street” used Public Service Announcements with Julia to promote the “Screen for Autism” initiative of Autism Speaks along with resources for parents with newly-diagnosed autistic children. Autism Speaks, and “Sesame Street’s” decision to promote the organization, has been heavily criticized because it uses “the language of acceptance and understanding to push resources that further stigma and treat autistic people as burdens on our families” (Autistic Self Advocacy Network). The Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN), which was previously partnered with “Sesame Street,” brought up their concerns to the show, and although ASAN’s contacts with “Sesame Street” “acknowledged that the Autism Speaks resources were harmful and portrayed autistic children in a negative light,” the show did not end the promotional materials; as a result, ASAN terminated their partnership with the show (Autistic Self Advocacy Network). This shows that media can start off by conducting accurate research and positively representing disability; however, if at any point the research or representation becomes harmful, media must be held accountable for their actions. While “Sesame Street” had the opportunity to acknowledge and correct their mistakes, the show chose to continue to work with Autism Speaks.

There are other examples of positive disability representation in children’s media; websites such as Disability in Kid Lit and the Iris Center’s page on children’s books with disability portrayal provide examples of children’s stories with disability representation and discussions on the portrayal of these disabilities. It’s important to note that because
the disability experience is different for each individual, their reaction to disability representation will also differ; thus, any thoughts or complaints about disability representation in media should be acknowledged, even if a specific story is genuinely regarding as having strong disability representation.

**Creating *Emmie and the Enchanted Orchid***

After researching children’s storytelling techniques and disability representation in media, I started the process of creating my play, *Emmie and the Enchanted Orchid*. To create the play, I had to first research the specific disability I wanted to represent—congenital amputation. While drafting, writing, and revising the play, I incorporated techniques for successful children’s stories and used disability theory to create a story with positive representation.

*Congenital Amputation and Prosthetics Research*

My main character, Emmie, has congenital amputation on her left leg, and she wears a prosthetic leg. There are many reasons why an individual’s limb may be amputated, such as illness or accident, but with congenital amputation, the individual was born without most or all of the limb. There is not a singular cause of congenital limb disabilities, though exposure to some viruses or chemicals during pregnancy may be a cause (“Congenital Limb Defect in Children”).

Children with congenital amputation may not mourn the loss of a limb like an individual who loses a limb during life because their body is the only body they’ve known. When they get older, though, there may be grief or conflicted feelings about being viewed as different. Occasionally, parents—particularly the mothers—may feel as
though congenital disability is their fault, leading to guilt that can result in overprotection or encouragement of wearing a prosthetic (Smith).

Reactions to using or wanting a prosthetic vary based on the limb disability and the child. Because prosthetics can’t “provide the sensory feedback and sensation of a child’s bare skin,” those with upper extremity limb deficiencies usually do not want to use a prosthetic until they are older compared to those with lower extremity limb loss (“Limb Loss: Adapting to the Challenges and Reaching Milestones”).

While children’s reactions to prosthetics vary, the prosthetic can be hot, itchy, or uncomfortable, causing the child to reject the prosthetic or require a new one (Smith). Additionally, there may be difficulty with sizing as children must get new prosthetics regularly. As they age, grow, and develop, children’s needs with their prosthetics change. Because of this, their prosthetics will be modified before a new prosthetic is made (“Prosthetics”). In addition to the prosthetic, children may need physical therapy (if the limb was amputated because of illness or an accident) to get used to the prosthetic, and they may use Pylon, which is a temporary prosthetic to help a child after surgery (“Your Child’s Prosthetic Leg”).

For example, Ezra, a child who was born with a shorter left leg and one finger on his left hand, had surgery to amputate the foot on this leg and use a toe on the amputated foot for another finger on his left hand. Ezra said in a video interview that he doesn’t know how many legs he has had because he used to get about two new legs every year and now gets a new one every year: “You grow half an inch, you get another leg. You grow an inch, you get another leg.” Additionally, Ezra says he sometimes breaks his prosthetics because of his active lifestyle; while the “mechanics are getting better and
they can raise [his] leg and make it taller to how tall [he is],” he “blow[s] out legs really fast” (“Growing Up with a Prosthetic Leg”).

Ezra said that walking with his prosthetic was “hard at first but you get used to it. It becomes normal” (“How to Walk with a Prosthetic Leg”). He described the motions of walking with the prosthetic:

The way I move my leg is I have a shorter leg but I can't control this bottom part. So the way I move my leg is with this. When the knee is bent, it doesn't lock so it’s hard to go upstairs and lot of stuff but you have to figure it out. When you push on the heel, say when I am walking I push the heel, it will lock and then I hit the toe, it will bend. Ok so that's how I walk. And when you're walking back, you don't have to think about it but when I'm walking back, I have to make sure my foot is at the right spot so that I don't trip and fall. On my cheetah leg, I have no heel, so when I try to lean back, I'll just fall backwards (“How to Walk with a Prosthetic Leg”).

When talking about his relationships with others, Ezra says he likes it when other kids ask him about his leg rather than when he sees kids “whispering to their friends,” because “it’s not the best feeling” (“Asking Kids about Physical Disabilities”). Ezra said that he wants friends who treat him like normal kids and don’t pity him because Ezra likes being different:

Being different is really special to me and I am happy to be this way because there are so many things that I won't be able to do if I wasn't different and I won't have as many
friends, people come up and talk to me and so really, I love being different. The way that I like to be treated from being different is I like to be treated - I don't want to be treated like, "Oh, I'm so sorry for you. You have a different leg or you're missing three fingers or that and that…" I want to be treated normally. If I can do the things that normal kids can do, I'd like to be treated normal and my friends at school, they stand up for me for everything that I do…And they treat me like I'm a normal kid and that's what I really like about them. ("Good Friend of Kid with Physical Disabilities").

Congenital amputation and prosthetic use are different for every child. When creating Emmie’s character and representing her disability, I drew upon my research while also acknowledging the fairy tale setting of the play. As I created Emmie and the Enchanted Orchid, I used my research to create an accurate and respectful representation of congenital amputation while also presenting an imaginative children’s play.

*Reflecting the Disability Models and Disability Conversations*

Throughout the play, Emmie shows that she is capable of traveling across villages and saving her kingdom. While her disability is part of her character, it is not her only characteristic, and there are scenes showing Emmie’s instinct and bravery along with her doubt and mistakes. There are moments in which Emmie talks about her disability, especially as she confronts discrimination or harmful thoughts by others when they exhibit doubt about Emmie and her capabilities. While the antagonists of the story are one source of discriminatory dialogue toward Emmie, some of the protagonists are ignorant as well, showing that it’s not just the villains who are capable of stereotypes. For example, after Emmie is chosen to save her kingdom, some of the adults are worried
about her lack of experience and age, to which the witch Quinn says “Destiny knows no experience” and “Destiny knows no age.” Council Member Travis makes a snide comment, saying “Emmie’s…well…” while looking at her prosthetic leg. In response, Emmie tells him that “Destiny knows no body,” taking ownership of her destiny and disputing Travis’s unspoken and offensive thoughts (Appendix A).

The antagonists, Corentin and Griffin, also make snide comments hinting at her disability, expressing shock and glee that the kingdom has chosen “that princess” to retrieve the enchanted orchid. When the words are spoken directly to Emmie and the kids, she and her friends stick up for Emmie while also not lingering on the moment or turning Emmie into an inspirational figure. For example, when Corentin calls Emmie “that princess,” Emmie calls him out by stepping forward and asking, “That princess? What does that mean?” and Olive sticks up for her by saying “Listen, dude. Just because you grew up in a poor place doesn't mean you can be a royal jerk.” Later on, Corentin asks Emmie what she knows about fairness, to which she responds with “A lot more than you would think. I may be the princess, but I am not what people expect a princess to look like” (Appendix A). Emmie and her friends’ reactions to Corentin and Griffin’s remarks highlight an important message: the discrimination and stereotypes are untrue and unacceptable. However, this conversation occurs against the background of the conflict, preventing the narrative from becoming the trope of a disabled hero. Emmie is not presented as an inspirational character who battled against the external and internal challenges of disability; she is a strong princess who encounters several challenges in order to save her kingdom, while also experiencing and shooting down unkind remarks about her disability.
Olive’s character goes through a change in the story as she begins with an attitude similar to those of Travis and the antagonists. Olive exemplifies the charity model of disability when speaking to Emmie, acting as if she needs to be pitied or carefully moderated. She makes comments to Emmie that suggest she believes the princess is weaker or incapable; for example, Olive asks how Emmie is doing or if she needs to rest, both of which are connected to Emmie’s disability. When Emmie tries to answer Olive, the girl needs several hints before she lets the issue go.

Toward the beginning of the journey, the kids encounter a cliff they must climb over to make their journey. Olive immediately jumps to the conclusion that not only can Emmie not climb the cliff but that the only way to get across is if she is carried. Emmie says:

I don't know if I could climb up the cliff, just like that. Maybe on a different day? I don't know. But after days of not getting out much or walking around and then hours of doing nothing but walking...I'm worried that I won't find out whether it would be too much until after I've already started climbing. And I don't want to risk it. (Appendix A).

Again, Olive does not let the issue go easily, causing Emmie to call her out: “I set my own limits. I don't need you to decide for me what I can or cannot do… Do you really not get it, Olive? I'm the one who knows my body, so I know what I am capable of. Not you. Not Aiden or Asher. Not my parents. But me (Appendix A).

Olive’s comments to Emmie, while not purposefully harmful, demonstrate the common belief that individuals with disabilities are less capable and that those with abled
bodies should be the ones to decide what they can/cannot do and how they can solve the problem. Emmie’s reactions are important. First, she acknowledges that the cliff might be hard for her to navigate, preventing a narrative in which the character with a disability doesn’t face any physical challenges (disability erasure). However, Emmie emphasizes that it is not up to other individuals to decide what her body is capable of. This moment is important because it chips away at poor disability representation that shows the character as passive; children who view the scene would understand challenges that go along with disability while also learning that although they can help disabled individuals, it isn’t their place to dictate what a disabled individual can or cannot do.

Emmie eventually figures out a solution, one that Olive doubts until she sees Emmie use a vine to pull herself up as if she is climbing a rope. Emmie’s solution is important; although she needs some help from Aiden, who must climb up the cliff first to tie the vine around a rock, Emmie is the one who discovers the idea and does the work herself. After seeing Emmie’s strength, Olive has doubts about her preconceptions, leading to the following conversation between the two girls:

OLIVE

(a bit awkwardly)

So. Um. That was a good idea with the vine.

EMMIE

Thanks.

OLIVE

You must be really strong to have pulled yourself up.

EMMIE
Aiden's wanted to be a guard for years, so sometimes I help him practice since he's too young for official training. I guess it's made me stronger.

OLIVE

You and Aiden are really close, huh?

EMMIE

Best friends since we were little.

(pause.)

Look, Olive, was there something else you wanted to say?

OLIVE

I think I owe you an apology. I didn't know much about you before I moved to the Royal Village. A lot of us in the other villages don't. All we know is that you're-um- well all we know is about your leg. Even when I moved here, I didn't really know anything about you. I guess I assumed that you were...

(OLIVE trails off)

EMMIE

Helpless?

OLIVE

No! Well, maybe a little bit? It sounds bad when you put it like that.

EMMIE

But it's what you thought.

OLIVE

I just assumed that you couldn't walk very well or do much. That's why I kept asking if you needed to rest. And that's why I thought it would have been easier to just carry you. And then I saw you pull yourself up and, well, I guess I'm having second thoughts.

EMMIE

It shouldn't have taken me pulling myself up for you to have seen me as something other than helpless.

OLIVE
No. It shouldn't have.

EMMIE sighs and looks at OLIVE for a moment.

EMMIE

I appreciate this though. You're not the only one to think that about me and most people don't apologize or even realize it.

OLIVE

That must be hard.

EMMIE

It is. I get used to it, but then I don't.

OLIVE

Is it always like this? I mean, are you always dealing with people like me?

EMMIE

Not always. Nobody's perfect, but people like Aiden and Asher are pretty good about it. They've known me my whole life though.

OLIVE

What about your parents? Are they?

EMMIE

 Mostly. They worry, like most parents. And I can tell that they're...hesitant...about a lot of things. They certainly were about this whole journey. But I know they are always trying to be better. I was born this way, and apparently lots of people thought my mom or I were cursed because of it. Superstition and whatnot. A few people still do, I think. But my whole life, my parents wanted to help me. They got Daniel Johnson, the woodworker, to make me this prosthetic. I've seen him a lot throughout the years because he has to make a new one every time I grow.

Spotlight on EMMIE and her prosthetic as she shows Olive—and the audience—her prosthetic. She points to different parts of her prosthetic as she is speaking.
He mostly uses wood. There's a bit of metal at the end though. And here, there are leather straps to keep it attached.

OLIVE

Is it hard to make?

EMMIE

(wryly)
I wouldn't know. I don't make them.

OLIVE

Right.

(pause)
Do you ever wish that you were born norm-sorry. Do you ever wish that you were born with both your legs?

EMMIE

I used to sometimes when I was little. Usually when I saw other little kids running around without worry or when I got frustrated at how people treated me. But now...I don't know. I guess I wish that people treated me differently. But I don't know if I wish I were any different. I've always been this way. I don't know any different. This-

(EMMIE gestures to her body)

-is me. Imagining someone who looks different is like imagining someone who is different.

OLIVE

I'm sorry.

EMMIE looks at OLIVE, waiting for more. OLIVE appears uncomfortable with the silence and the stare at first, but she eventually keeps talking.

OLIVE (CONT.)

I was one of the people who treated you differently.
(pause)

I am one of those people. But I was—am wrong. I'm sorry.

EMMIE

Thank you.

OLIVE

I'll try to be better. But if I ever start to act like a jerk, call me out, princess.

EMMIE

(smiling)

You can count on that.

EMMIE moves to give OLIVE a hug. OLIVE, a little tense at first, warms up to the hug. After they break apart, the two girls, now friends, smile at each other.

EMMIE

(to AIDEN and ASHER offstage)

Hey, Aiden! Asher! Wait up! We're coming now (Appendix A).

The conversation is a learning moment for Olive and the audience. Emmie accepts and appreciates Olive’s apology, but she doesn’t let the girl get away with her stereotypes easily, telling her that it shouldn’t have taken Emmie climbing up a vine for Olive to realize Emmie was strong and knows her body. Moreover, when Olive is uncomfortable, Emmie pushes this discomfort, making Olive admit some of her stereotypical thoughts before talking them through with her. The scene shows children that sometimes conversations about disability may feel uncomfortable—but that does not mean the conversations shouldn’t be held; in fact, the girls’ reconciliation at the end and
their friendship throughout the play demonstrate that having difficult or uncomfortable conversations can lead to a healthier relationship.

Emmie also indirectly acknowledges and debunks the medical model of disability. When Olive asks if she wishes she was born with both legs (after almost asking if she wishes she were born normal before correcting herself), Emmie tells her that for the most part, she doesn’t, because her body is the only body she’s known, and she loves her body. This was modeled after Ezra’s statement in which he said that he doesn’t like being pitied because “being different is really special to [him]” and he is “happy to be this way” (“Good Friend of Kid with Physical Disabilities”). Unlike the cured disability narrative that presumes that curing disability is the ultimate goal, Emmie shows Olive that her disability and her body are not the problem—society is. The conversations Emmie has with others about her disability are important as they mirror real mistakes people make when thinking about disability and conversations that should be had to acknowledge and apologize for these mistakes.

Writing about Prosthetics

Incorporating Emmie’s prosthetic leg was an important piece of my play. In the opening stage directions for Emmie, I clearly state that her outfit must show her prosthetic leg in a way that is clear to the audience. I do not want any costume to conceal or hide her disability in some way. This should remain throughout the play; while we do not need to draw a flashing arrow to Emmie’s prosthetic leg, there should never be a moment in which we can’t see it. This is to prevent any disability erasure that could cause the audience to think—if even more a moment—that Emmie does not have a disability.
Additionally, the conversation between Olive and Emmie serves as a teaching moment on prosthetics. Emmie shows Olive her prosthetic and tells her about the different parts, and she explains how she has to get a new prosthetic when she grows. The description of the prosthetic and the process of getting prosthetics was pulled from research on children with prosthetics. As Olive learns about prosthetics, so does the audience; this is why the stage directions specify that the lighting should focus on the prosthetic, and Emmie’s body language should angle it toward the audience, allowing them to clearly see it.

_Casting and Staging_

Although COVID-19 concerns prevented an in-person reading of the play, there was the possibility for unique benefits to holding a virtual staged reading. A large conversation in disability and media is that abled actors often play disabled characters. My original plan was to do a staged reading for my thesis (rather than an in-person performance), and I wanted to find an actress with Emmie’s disability to read her part during my staged-reading. I did not want my play to contribute to the narrative of abled actors performing for disabled characters, so I reached out to Gregg Mozgala of The Apotheae, a theatre that focuses on working with disabled and able-bodied creators to tell disabled stories. Mr. Mozgala offered to send information to actresses he knew who could read for Emmie with the hope that interested actresses would reach out to me. While this was exciting, it ultimately did not pan out because I did not receive any emails from interested actresses. Another challenge was the difficulty in finding interested WKU students to stage read for the other characters as busy schedules, Zoom fatigue, and the drain of the pandemic affected student participation. Most importantly, though, because I
did not have an actress with Emmie’s disability, I decided to forgo a staged reading. Casting an able-bodied individual to read for Emmie would contradict my research and purpose, and while a staged reading would have been a nice way to present my play, it was not necessary to portray my purpose. Because my capstone focuses on research, representation, and writing rather than directing and performing, I made the decision to focus the remainder of my project on revising *Emmie and the Enchanted Orchid* and compiling my research and analysis into an in-depth essay.

In the future, if *Emmie and the Enchanted Orchid* were to be performed or stage-read, I would make it a criterion that Emmie’s actress is played by a character with her disability. Some leeway would be acceptable (e.g. if the actress lost her leg in an accident as opposed to having congenital amputation or if it’s her right leg as opposed to her left), but the actress should match Emmie and her disability as closely as possible. Moreover, I would heavily encourage the inclusion of more individuals with disabilities in the play’s process, including stage crew, designers, accountability readers/viewers, etc. This would bring more disability experience and knowledge to the play so it can be a more authentic and positive representation. If during the process, anyone suggests a modification to the play to make it more accessible or accurate to disability representation, I would have a conversation with Emmie’s actress and other disabled individuals involved in the process to make the change.

I included stage directions in my play to move the plot forward, but when it came to all the characters—including Emmie—I left open-ended instructions for the action scenes. It’s important for the audience to know that individuals with prosthetics can still move actively—they can run, fight, etc. However, I did not write any specifics for the
action so the director, performers, choreographers, etc. could decide how a character moves—for example, if they jump, duck, roll, etc. While part of the reasoning behind this was to leave artistic freedom to others, I was also conscious of disability and the actress playing Emmie. Since the disability experience is different for everyone, I can’t decide what stage directions are or are not accessible. As a result, the stage directions are specific enough to drive the plot but vague enough for the actress playing Emmie—along with other creatives involved in the process—to decide what movement she should do.

Presentations

To fulfill the presentation requirement for the Honors CE/T, I presented my research at the Kentucky Honors Roundtable on February 27. Since the presentation was only twelve minutes, I condensed my research. I focused my presentation on my research about disability representation in media, with an emphasis on children’s media, including topics such as general poor disability representation, disability and antagonism (Captain Hook as an example), the cured disability (the original “Rapunzel” as an example), and disability and the advanced sense (Daredevil as an example). I discussed conflicting ideas about stories with poor disability representation, the importance of disability representation, and some examples of positive disability representation (How to Train Your Dragon, “Sesame Street,” and Handbook for Dragon Slayers). I ended with a brief discussion about how my research affected my creative process when writing Emmie and the Enchanted Orchid.

The presentation was followed by a Q&A session in which it became apparent that disability representation is still a new field for several people. I was asked three questions, all of which expressed doubt as to the consequences of disability
representation. The first question asked how I felt about disability as a symbol for need or consequence. Specifically, the individual thought that Captain Hook’s lost hand was a consequence of his actions and doubted that this would make a child feel bad or lead to negative implications; she also asked about the blind man trope that’s apparent in classic literature in which physical blindness is meant to symbolize a spiritual visibility. In my answer, I emphasized that Captain Hook by himself or a particular story with the blind man trope by itself isn’t necessarily harmful; however, having several stories with disability plus antagonism or the blind man trope is what leads to the collective association between disability and either villainy or symbolism. Additionally, I posed an important question: How would you feel if part of your identity was only represented in the media as a symbol? While we don’t need to erase or ignore stories like *Peter Pan* or the blind man trope, we can do better to represent disability in a way that isn’t connected to symbolism or storytelling techniques.

The second individual first thanked me for my presentation. He said that he has disabilities (anxiety, ADHD, and OCD) and agrees that media representation is often inaccurate. However, he said he disagreed about the cured disability point and the “Rapunzel” example, saying that wouldn’t individuals see the moment as one of triumph. In my response, I reiterated that the moment is often not perceived by disabled individuals as one of triumph. While it ranges based on disability and individual, several disabilities cannot be cured, and some individuals don’t want that. For example, individuals who are Deaf or on the autism spectrum are proud of their identity and the community they’ve built; “curing” their disability would not be triumphant because they would be losing a part of their identity. Moreover, the cured disability trope gives the
message that disability is never accepted, so the best route is to cure it rather than to accommodate it. Because it’s protagonists who are often cured, there is also the subliminal message that good behavior will result in a cured disability.

The last question asked if I thought overrepresentation could be a problem—if disabled individuals would be represented so much that they feel as if they are being stared at. I was unsure as to the point of this question, but I did my best to address it. I acknowledged that sometimes media wants to seem “woke” and will try too hard to represent disability to the point that it feels stilted, unauthentic, or fake; usually, though, these scenarios treat representation as a box on a checklist rather than as the accurate representation I advocated for in my presentation. Additionally, I emphasized that overrepresentation is hard to fathom when there is such underrepresentation. I acknowledged that sometimes disabled individuals are stared at by able-bodied people, and while this can be awkward, the awkwardness stems from the staring coming without a conversation. Proper representation adds a conversation to the staring, which is what several disabled individuals want. To provide an example, I gave a story about my mother, who has secondary progressive Multiple Sclerosis. I said that when buildings or organizations she is a member of are thinking about making spaces more accessible, she would much rather be a part of that conversation and speak out, knowing that some individuals may stare at her and her disability, than not be included in the conversation at all. The same goes for media representation: it is much more important to emphasize positive representation because the awkwardness of “being stared at” only persists when disabled individuals are not given the space to speak.
All individuals thanked me for my responses and confirmed my answers made sense, though it’s impossible to be completely sure if they had an impact on their perceptions of disability representation in the media. Although I was not thrilled by the questions, I did my best to use them as an opportunity to respectfully educate others about my research with the hope that people now have a more critical eye toward disability representation.

**Limitations**

While I worked hard to conduct research and have accountability with my project, I acknowledge that being able-bodied means I lack the experience to fully tell a disabled story. The purpose of *Emmie and the Enchanted Orchid* is to represent disability rather than to provide a disability narrative, but since Emmie’s disability is featured in the story, it is important that its representation is positive. In the future, if an individual with a disability informs me that Emmie’s disability is not represented accurately or positively in any way, I will listen to their comments and revise that portion accordingly, making sure that I address all their concerns and only move forward with the play once they inform me the representation is accurate.

**Conclusion**

Researching disability and disability representation taught me a lot about the portrayal of disabled individuals in the media. Although I was aware that disability representation was lacking, it wasn’t until I dived into this subject that I learned how troubling disability tropes in the media are, especially in children’s media. I, and others, still have much work to do when it comes to understanding disability and its representation in the media. After researching the topic and writing *Emmie and the*
Enchanted Orchid, my goal is that I and my readers now have a more critical eye to how disability is portrayed in the media and that in the future, older media is scrutinized for its representation and new media is more inclusive and positive in its representation.
WORKS CITED


“Good Friend of Kid with Physical Disabilities.” Kids in the House,

“Growing Up with a Prosthetic Leg.” Kids in the House,


How to Train Your Dragon. Directed by Dean DeBlois and Chris Sanders, DreamWorks, 2010.

“How to Walk with a Prosthetic Leg.” Kids in the House,

Klems, Brian A. “6 Tips on Writing for Children.” Writer’s Digest, 2 July 2015,
https://www.writersdigest.com/write-better-fiction/6-tips-on-writing-for-children.


Lopez, Silvia. “How to Write for Children.” The Writer’s Cookbook, 13 Feb. 2015,


Pittman, Taylor. “The Moments on ‘Sesame Street’ That Championed Diversity and Inclusion.” Huffington Post, 24 March 2017, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/moments-on-sesame-street-that-championed-diversity-and-inclusion_n_58d5257ae4b03787d3576ba9?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAFC2JAUd3OOsgSUg6dgMOUfHxkVFOC7zCjSrwa2FVPQ50ThL8OfWR44oEqwiwDJSBDtTuZ69PnShVcIKVvvQTvS8Andc-WFTlyEDdSa9eS7-o9iXYmrYS94QFH56dcD2cUwgFEEBH3AosW--
This week, "Sesame Street," the series’ many groundbreaking moments.


“Taken.” *Arrow*, written by Marc Guggenheim and Wendy Mericle, directed by Thor Freudenthal, CW 2015.

APPENDIX: EMMIE AND THE ENCHANTED ORCHID

(Emmie and the Enchanted Orchid)

by

(Adrianna Waters)
CORENTIN BRONE  The villain of the story. He is motivated by revenge and control. He does not trust anyone, including his sidekick GRIZZIN. He is also judgmental and underestimates people, which is his downfall.  30's MALE

GRIZZIN VOELL  He is sneaky and determined but a little goofy as well. CORENTIN's sidekick.  30's MALE

EMMIE DORIAN  The 15-year-old princess of the Kingdom of Paxton. Emmie is emotionally intelligent, good at reading people, kind, and determined. She has congenital disability with a prosthetic on her leg. She sometimes feels like people treat her differently, baby her, etc. because of her disability.  15 FEMALE

AIDEN EVANS  EMMIE'S best friend. Twin to ASHER. He wants to be a guard one day, and he is very serious and determined. He treats EMMIE as capable and is a good listener.  16 MALE

ASHER EVANS  AIDEN'S fraternal twin who is very different from AIDEN. ASHER is a jokester, but he also has great instinct. He is friends with EMMIE too but not as close as AIDEN.  16 MALE

OLIVE TANUL  Daughter of jewelry makers who later becomes friends with EMMIE, AIDEN, and ASHER. She is originally from Faran. OLIVE is candid and doubtful but also strong and loyal.  16 FEMALE

QUINN  Witch who helps Paxton. Known for being wise and helpful. Can do magical things, but only for those she thinks are worth it. Fair and balanced.  30's FEMALE

NOTE: As indicated, the following characters should be played by the same actor for convenience or to show similarities across personality types.

PIXIES  Magical creatures who attack when the weather is unbalanced. Actors who play ADULT ANY
GUARD WILLIAM, KING TOBIAS, POLKA, and TOWNSPERSON can all double as PIXIES.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Age/Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POLKA</td>
<td>EMMIE'S dog</td>
<td>ADULT ANY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUARD WILLIAM</td>
<td>Head guard for the royal family</td>
<td>30's MALE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KING TOBIAS</td>
<td>EMMIE'S father and the king of Paxton. He is a tad more overprotective of EMMIE than QUEEN ANNABETH.</td>
<td>40's MALE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOWNSPERSON</td>
<td>Innocent bystander who is attacked by PIXIES.</td>
<td>ADULT ANY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUEEN ANNABETH</td>
<td>EMMIE'S mother and the queen of Paxton. She worries about EMMIE, but she also believes in her.</td>
<td>40's FEMALE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNOWLEDGE KNOLL</td>
<td>Magical creature who knows all. Surprisingly silly and goofy. Dresses colorfully and creatively.</td>
<td>ADULT FEMALE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS</td>
<td>An adviser to the king and queen. He is doubtful, dubious, and sour, especially when it comes to the kids.</td>
<td>30's MALE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEAR</td>
<td>Attempts to attack the kids</td>
<td>ADULT MALE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ACTOR ONE**

**QUEEN ANNABETH**

**KNOWLEDGE KNOLL**

**ACTOR TWO**

**COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS**

**BEAR**
ACT I, SCENE I

CORENTIN stands in front of the curtain, center stage, holding the enchanted orchid in his hand. The lights are dim except for a spotlight on him. He turns the orchid around in his hands, eyeing it from all angles. GRIFFIN enters stage right.

CORENTIN

What did you hear?

GRIFFIN

I asked everyone I could and even went to the borders to see the other villages. It's just like you thought. Nothing but flooding rains and winds and unbearable heat or cold.

CORENTIN

Good.

And here?

GRIFFIN

Nothing but sunny skies.

CORENTIN

Spotlight on the orchid as the lights slowly dim. Blackout. End of SCENE I.

ACT I, SCENE II

EMMIE and AIDEN stand outside in the gardens near the castle, POLKA following behind them. EMMIE places one hand on a bench to balance herself while stretching her leg, keeping her prosthetic steady. Audiences must be able to see her prosthetic clearly. She fans herself in the heat.

EMMIE

Remind me again: why did I think this walk was a good idea?

AIDEN

Because the whole village has been stuck inside and we're getting restless.
EMMIE

How do kingdoms without magic weather deal with heat like this all the time? I'm over it being the Royal Village's turn for bad weather. I want to run up to the enchanted orchid and ask it to hurry up.

AIDEN

It's only been this hot for three days.

EMMIE

Only three days? Not possible, Aiden. I get all stiff when I haven't been walking enough, and trust me-

EMMIE pats her leg.

EMMIE (CONT.)

My leg says it's been more than three days.

AIDEN

It's only been three days. Believe me; I would know. Asher has complained about the heat every single day.

EMMIE

(grinning)

And then you got to escape from your oh-so-very-dreadful twin to listen to your future queen complain about the heat.

AIDEN

You? Nah, I came for Polka.

POLKA perks up at this and rubs her head against AIDEN'S leg.

EMMIE

(to both AIDEN and POLKA)

Traitor.

AIDEN

I bet it feels like longer because it stormed for a week before.

EMMIE

Ugh, the storms. Okay, what's worse: being fried in the heat or being a drowned cat from the storms.
AIDEN
At least with the heat, we can walk outside for a few minutes. You couldn't go anywhere with all that rain and wind.

EMMIE
True. It hadn't stormed this bad in ages.

EMMIE sighs and looks around before smiling as a memory comes to her.

EMMIE (CONT.)
Hey, remember a few years ago, the last time it stormed pretty badly?

AIDEN
Are you talking about the time we both fell in front of the castle and half the village saw?

EMMIE
(laughing)
It was not half the village.

(pause)
But it was a lot of people.

AIDEN
Asher thought it was hilarious.

EMMIE
Everyone did.

AIDEN
Not your parents.

EMMIE
Eh. They need to realize that one fall is not going to be the end of me.

AIDEN
Or that mud is a suitable outfit for a princess.

EMMIE
(waving AIDEN off)
I was 13 then. Mud should still have been an acceptable outfit on occasion.
AIDEN
I swear, sometimes you remind me too much of Asher.

EMMIE
(grinning)
Aw, Aiden. Too bad you got me as your lifelong best friend.

POLKA growls softly at this.

EMMIE
After you, of course, Polka.

POLKA pants, satisfied, and walks over to EMMIE.
GUARD WILLIAM enters from stage left.

GUARD WILLIAM
Princess Emmie?

EMMIE
How many times do I have to tell you people? Just call me Emmie, please.

GUARD WILLIAM
Right. Sorry Prin- Sorry Emmie. Your presence is requested in the main room by Queen Annabeth and King Tobias.

EMMIE
(quietly, to AIDEN)
Why can't they ever just say "my parents?" It's weird the other way.

AIDEN
(quietly, to EMMIE back)
Because your parents are the king and queen, Emmie.

GUARD WILLIAM
Emmie?

EMMIE
Yes, yes sorry. I'll be there in a moment.

(to AIDEN)
Princess duty calls. You and Asher will visit tomorrow?
AIDEN
If I can drag him out in the heat.

EMMIE and AIDEN wave goodbye. AIDEN stops to give POLKA a rub before exiting stage right.

GUARD
Thank you, Miss. Also, the King and Queen recommend that you leave Polka in your room.

POLKA perks up and growls at this. EMMIE pats her comfortably.

EMMIE
Polka comes.

GUARD WILLIAM
I-

EMMIE
I am choosing to not follow the recommendation.

Very well.

GUARD WILLIAM
GUARD WILLIAM exits stage left.

EMMIE
Come on, Polka. Here goes. I bet mother and father have another boring inside task for me to do. Or maybe they want to tell me that I’ll be stuck here, yet again, while they visit another village.

EMMIE and POLKA exit stage right. Curtain draws. End of scene II.

ACT I, SCENE III
The curtain opens on the main room in the palace. QUEEN ANNABETH and KING TOBIAS stand in the center with TOWNSPERSON who is covered in scratches and looking ruffled. COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS stands to the side. GUARD WILLIAM enters at stage right.
QUEEN ANNABETH

Where is Emmie?

GUARD WILLIAM

(bowing to the king and queen)
Your majesties. Princess Emmie will be arriving shortly. And, ah, she could not be
persuaded to leave Polka behind.

QUEEN ANNABETH

Of course not.

TOWNSPERSON

Polka? Is that-

KING TOBIAS

(interrupting)
I did tell you she wouldn’t leave her behind.

QUEEN ANNABETH

Yes, but I thought if we specifically requested that she not-

KING TOBIAS

Dear, I think that made her not want to leave Polka behind even more.

TOWNSPERSON looks up in concern.

TOWNSPERSON

Um, who or what exactly is Polka again?

Before anyone can answer, EMMIE and POLKA enter
from stage right. TOWNSPERSON steps back and
immediately starts sneezing.

QUEEN ANNABETH

Emmie's dog.

TOWNSPERSON

(still sneezing)

Excuse me, I'm-
QUEEN ANNABETH, KING TOBIAS, GUARD WILLIAM, AND COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS

Allergic to dogs.

QUEEN ANNABETH
Emmie, we told you to leave Polka behind.

EMMIE
Actually you just requested it. And I... chose not to comply?

EMMIE receives blank stares from everyone. TOWNSPERSON sneezes again.

EMMIE
Besides, no one told me there was someone allergic to dogs! How did you even know?

QUEEN ANNABETH
I guessed when I heard sneezing in the hallway. Polka likes to shed. And Emmie likes to look the other way while she does.

While Queen ANNABETH is talking, POLKA is shaking and shedding while EMMIE looks the other way. When they realize what QUEEN ANNABETH has said, they both stop and look at the ground guiltily.

EMMIE
Uh, Polka? Maybe you should go upstairs. I'll see you in a little bit.

POLKA looks at EMMIE in betrayal before exiting stage right. TOWNSPERSON stops sneezing.

EMMIE
Right. Sorry. Now that that's taken care of...

EMMIE pauses, noticing for the first time the state of TOWNSPERSON.

EMMIE
Wait a minute. What happened to you? Are you okay?

TOWNSPERSON
I was attacked. By pixies.
EMMIE
Pixies? But that would mean...

KING TOBIAS
The enchanted orchid has been stolen.

EMMIE stands in shock for a moment. GUARD WILLIAM walks toward her as if to comfort her, but she places a hand out to stop him.

EMMIE
I'm okay. I'm okay. But... what happened?

KING TOBIAS
A few weeks ago when the Royal Village was hit by those thunderstorms, we thought nothing of it.

EMMIE
Why would we? Every village in Paxton has bad weather sometimes.

KING TOBIAS
Exactly. We knew the enchanted orchid only brings balance to our kingdom's weather so there's never one village that's hit with bad weather for months while a different village has only sunny skies.

QUEEN ANNABETH
But the enchanted orchid was a gift. And like most gifts, it is not to be abused. Because the enchanted orchid is meant to be fair and central to all, we must keep it locked away in the central village of our kingdom: the Royal Village. All the royal families must protect it.

EMMIE
But someone stole it. Now our protection is gone.

KING TOBIAS
We didn't want to believe it at first. It hasn't happened in decades. Who would take it? What good would that do? But the worse the weather got and the longer it lasted, the more we couldn't sit in ignorance anymore. Bad weather is not supposed to last this long. That's the gift of the enchanted orchid. But still, we pretended it wasn't a problem. Then the pixies attacked.

EMMIE
(looking at the townspeople)
Pixies. And that's how we know the enchanted orchid's been stolen.
TOWNSPERSON
It happened a few hours ago. I was working in our gardens when they attacked. Dozens of the little creatures. I didn't know what they were at first. With the sun in your eye, they almost looked like huge butterflies. Until they started attacking me. Scratched me, bit me, got all up in my space. You wouldn't think tiny creatures could do so much damage. I knew what they were. Remembered learning about them in school, although they always seemed more like myths. No one really sees pixies. Lots of people claim to have seen them off in the distance, but I don't believe most of their stories.

COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS
That's the thing. Most of the time, pixies are peaceful and quiet creatures. There's only one thing that sends them into a frenzy.

QUEEN ANNABETH
Disorder. Unbalance. Especially when it comes to the weather.

EMMIE
Like the canary in the coal mine.

KING TOBIAS
Exactly like the canaries. In my fifty years, I have never heard of or seen a pixie attack. That's when we knew something wasn't right.

EMMIE
But how could it be stolen? I thought it was protected, locked away, impossible to get to. I didn't even know where it was.

KING TOBIAS
We don't know.

GUARD WILLIAM
No one can explain it. We guard it every day around the clock. I've spoken to all the guards, and no one remembers seeing anything suspicious.

EMMIE
What are we going to do? We can't just let it stay stolen, can we? It could hurt people, mess up everyone. Houses could get destroyed, and-oh, what happens if Bartalan gets hit? They're the biggest farming village. What will happen to all the food and plants?

QUEEN ANNABETH
We don't know, but we're going to find a way to fix this. That's why we called you here.
EMMIE
But...but... I'm only 15!

TOWNSPERSON
(under their breath)
She has a point.

QUEEN ANNABETH
As a member of the royal family, you needed to know. We're responsible for our people. We need to fix this.

EMMIE
But how? How are we supposed to fix it when we don't know who stole it, or why they stole it, or how they even stole it in the first place?

KING TOBIAS
We can't know. But someone else can. Someone with more knowledge and wisdom and power than we as humans can ever possess.

EMMIE
Who?

QUEEN ANNABETH
The witches. The ones who gave our kingdom the gift in the first place all those years ago.

EMMIE
Of course. They know everything. But why didn't you call on them sooner?

TOWNSPERSON
(under their breath again)
Would have been nice if I could have avoided the whole pixie attack.

QUEEN ANNABETH
(to EMMIE)
We wanted you to be here.

(to everyone)
And the witches are not called on lightly.

TOWNSPERSON
Have you ever called on them before?
KING TOBIAS
A few times, but not for a while and never for anything as serious as this.

TOWNSPERSON
How does it even work? I haven't heard of many people who have called on the witches.

KING TOBIAS
Not many do.

KING TOBIAS walks over to the side and picks up a small chest. He walks back toward everyone, opens the chest, and pulls out an iris. Some of the petals on the iris are missing.

KING TOBIAS
Long ago, the witches gifted us this magical iris.

EMMIE
Like the enchanted orchid.

KING TOBIAS
In a way. Whenever we need their help or want to see them, we pluck a petal of the iris, and they’ll come.

EMMIE
Do the petals grow back?

KING TOBIAS
Eventually, when a new ruler takes the throne.

QUEEN ANNABETH
If the iris had unlimited petals, then we would use them every day.

KING TOBIAS stares at the iris and readies his hand to pluck a petal.

KING TOBIAS
I don’t know what they will say or what will happen next. If anyone wants to leave now, I wouldn’t blame them.

There is a silence as everyone looks around the room.

GUARD WILLIAM
I’m the head guard. I’m not going anywhere.
COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS
I'm not either. Someone has to help you figure out what to do.

TOWNSPERSON
If it wasn't for me, you wouldn't have known for sure that something was wrong.

EMMIE
You asked me to be here. I'm part of the royal family. I have to stay and help.

Then there's no time to waste.

QUEEN ANNABETH

KING TOBIAS
It's time to help our kingdom.

KING TOBIAS plucks a petal and lets it float to the ground. For a moment, nothing happens, and everyone waits and looks around in anticipation.

EMMIE
Uh, is something supposed to-

As EMMIE is speaking, QUINN appears, entering from stage right. There should be some type of effect to indicate the supernatural/magic of her appearance, such as purple smoke or fog. There should also be a sound cue, like a ding or magical trill, every time Quinn appears/disappears or magic is used.

QUINN
King Tobias. Queen Annabeth. We were wondering when you would call for us.

EMMIE
You're here. You're really here.

QUINN

(amused)
Yes... I am here.

EMMIE
Sorry, it's just, I've never seen a witch in real life before. And the iris thing was kind of strange... I wasn't sure if it was going to work or not.
QUEEN ANNABETH

Emmie.

EMMIE

Right, ah, sorry. I didn't mean to be rude or cause offense. I think I'm still a little shocked.

QUINN

My name is Quinn. It is nice to meet you, Princess Emmie.

EMMIE

Nice to meet you too.

QUINN

King Tobias, Queen Annabeth. It is nice to see you again.

QUEEN ANNABETH

You as well.

EMMIE

You've met Quinn before?

QUEEN ANNABETH

Emmie, you know that we have called on the witches before.

EMMIE

Yes, I know, but there's more than one witch, isn't there?

(looking at Quinn)

Isn't there? I'm sort of new to this whole meeting-witches thing.

QUINN

Yes, there is more than one witch. Many of us, actually. But your kingdom isn't the only one in need of our help. We try to stick to the same kingdoms. Makes it a little less overwhelming and confusing for you humans.

KING TOBIAS

Quinn, thank you for coming. We need your help.

QUEEN ANNABETH

The enchanted orchid. It's gone. We think it's been stolen.
QUINN

(somberly)
I know.

TOWNSPERSON
Wait a second, you knew it was missing?

QUINN
All the witches did. We knew it was stolen the second it was taken from its rightful place because we are connected to the enchanted orchid. I still remember the day we gave it to King Kader and Queen Dalia.

EMMIE
Wait a minute. You remember when...but that was...so you must be...

QUINN
Old. Very old. We live long lives.

Well you look fantastic.

QUINN

(smiling, amused at Emmie.)
Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS
I still have one question. If you knew, then why didn't you say anything? We didn't find out until today.

QUINN
It is not the witches' responsibility to protect the object. We can only counsel and help you. And we are glad you decided to ask for our help.

KING TOBIAS
We should have asked for it sooner. We wanted to believe that nothing was wrong, but I fear our ignorance may have cost us.

QUINN
Asking for help a little late is still better than never asking.

QUEEN ANNABETH
Can you help us, Quinn? What happened?
QUINN
It happened two weeks ago when everyone was celebrating the summer solstice.

KING TOBIAS
We held it in the town square because the weather was so nice, and we wanted everyone to attend that could-

QUEEN ANNABETH
(dawning on her)
Leaving the castle much less guarded than usual.

QUINN
You shouldn't blame yourselves for that. The celebration is never held in the castle, and nothing like this has happened before.

EMMIE
What did happen this year?

As QUINN and the others discuss what happened, the lighting dims slightly on them. CORENTIN enters from stage right off to the side and in front of them. Spotlight on CORENTIN. Everything from his posture to his facial expressions suggests anger.

QUINN
His name is Corentin Brone. He lives in the outermost village, Faran. And he stole the enchanted orchid during the solstice.

GUARD WILLIAM
But how? Even with the celebration occurring elsewhere, my men and women were still protecting the castle. And we always make sure the enchanted orchid is guarded.

QUINN
Corentin wasn't acting alone. He had help.

GRiffin enters from stage right and stands next to CORENTIN. They pantomime discussing their plans.

QUINN
Do you remember your newest recruit who didn't last very long, couldn't handle the pressure of the job? Was sent home last week, actually, for falling asleep on the job?
GUARD WILLIAM
You mean Anthony Winston? Strangest recruit I've had. Exelled during training, failed his posts.

QUINN
His real name isn't Anthony Winston. It's Griffin Vogel. And while he may have failed at being a guard, he excelled at what he really signed up to do.

GUARD WILLIAM
He was in league with Corentin?

GRIFFIN acts out stealing the enchanted orchid while CORENTIN looks on.

QUINN
During the celebration, he was "guarding" the castle, close to where the enchanted orchid was held. It wasn't hard for him to sneak closer and slip it in his pocket. After all, he didn't excel during training for nothing.

GUARD WILLIAM
And the next day, I dismissed him for falling asleep on the job.

QUEEN ANNABETH
And he took the enchanted orchid with him when he left.

QUINN
Straight to Corentin's home.

CORENTIN and GRIFFIN exit stage right. The dim lighting lifts off of the main stage.

EMMIE
But why? Why steal something that's supposed to protect us all from horrid weather?

QUINN
Because the enchanted orchid's powers are limited. Bad storms still happen. Even witches can't prevent that. The orchid only makes sure storms will never destroy an entire village.

EMMIE
(the realization striking her)
But they can still destroy homes, can't they?
QUINN

(sadly)

Yes.

EMMIE

Is that what this is about?

QUINN

Eleven years ago, Faran was hit by one of the worst storms this kingdom has seen. Winds ransacked the place, and although they have never seen a storm anywhere close to it since, the people there suffered.

QUEEN ANNABETH

I remember that storm. It was terrible.

QUINN

It was. And some people didn't recover from it.

EMMIE

What happened to him? Corentin, I mean?

QUINN

He wasn't much older than you are now when the storm hit. Destroyed his home, left his parents poor. It wasn't a pretty picture for him or his parents.

EMMIE

What happened to them?

QUINN

His parents passed away a few years ago. It was from natural causes, but-

EMMIE

But he blames us for it, doesn't he? That's why he stole the enchanted orchid.

KING TOBIAS

Blames us? But why would he think such a thing?

QUINN

He's not the only one. After all, Griffin was more than happy to help him.

QUEEN ANNABETH

But what do we do? We must get it back and bring it here. Don't they know that the enchanted orchid must stay here in order for it to work?
COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS
The whole kingdom is in jeopardy without it. It could destroy farmlands, kill crops, flood homes.

EMMIE
But he and his village will be safe. At least that's what Corentin thinks. If he has the enchanted orchid, then no storm can touch him.

KING TOBIAS
But it doesn't work like that. That's not how the witches intended it.

QUINN
Try telling that to someone who's been grieving their entire life.

EMMIE
But we have to go after it. You said Corentin lives in Faran, so that must be where he is keeping it.

KING TOBIAS
So we'll go after it.

(to GUARD)
Gather up your best men and women and assemble a team. We leave immediately.

QUINN
Faran may be on the outskirts of your kingdom, but it is no small land. Finding Corentin and the enchanted orchid will be a lot harder than simply traveling to Faran.

QUEEN ANNABETH
Quinn, if you knew all this about Corentin, then surely you know where he is staying.

QUINN
I do.

KING TOBIAS
Are we allowed to know?

QUINN
You are.

(to GUARD WILLIAM)
But it won't be your men and women who go after it.

GUARD WILLIAM
Sorry?
QUINN
Traveling to Faran is no easy feat. It's the farthest away from the Royal Village, and with storms passing every village and the pixies in a frenzy, it's not a journey that can be completed by just anyone.

GUARD WILLIAM
Are you saying my men and women aren't strong enough?

QUINN
They're plenty strong. I'm saying they aren't destined to do it.

QUEEN ANNABETH
What do you mean?

QUINN
All those decades ago when we first gifted King Kader and Queen Dalia the enchanted orchid, we were able to do so because they were worthy of it. This isn't something that happens to just anyone; very few people are deemed worthy of our most extreme magic.

COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS
None of the kings or queens before them were worthy of magic?

QUINN
It's not as if they weren't good people, but our magic only works when given to those who will be able to use it properly—those who are not only kind, but wise and aware. And even then, the kindest, wisest, and most aware person may still not receive our magic simply because it's not in their destiny. That's why it is so rare for someone to receive our most powerful magic and help.

(pause)
I can help whoever goes on the journey. The pixies are harder to control, but I can guarantee their path is free from the weather that is ravaging the kingdom. And I can tell them where Corentin is lying in wait. I can direct them to the place where they will save this kingdom.

KING TOBIAS
Who is it? Do we need to go fetch them?

QUINN
No, you don't. Because that person is standing in the room with us.

(turning to EMMIE)
You, my dear, are destined to find Corentin and save your kingdom.
Silence as everyone looks from QUINN to EMMIE in shock. EMMIE stands still, a surprised look on her face.

EMMIE

Me? But why?

QUINN

We don't pretend to know every reason why someone is fated to receive our magic, but know that it is because you are worthy.

EMMIE

But I don’t know the answer to this problem! I don’t know what to do. I can’t possibly be the answer.

QUINN

And why not?

EMMIE

Well...I'm fifteen.

QUINN

Destiny knows no age.

EMMIE

I’ve never been to Faran before.

QUINN

Destiny knows no experience.

EMMIE opens her mouth to speak, but COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS steps in.

COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS

And, forgive me, but Emmie's...well...

COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS takes a subtle look at EMMIE'S prosthetic leg, a look which is noticed by everyone in the room, including EMMIE. EMMIE stares at COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS for a moment before walking closer to QUINN.

EMMIE

Destiny knows no body.
EMMIE takes a deep breath, stealing herself, before looking at QUINN.

What do I need to do?

QUINN

No journey can be taken alone.

KING TOBIAS

I will go with her.

GUARD

So will I.

QUEEN ANNABETH

Quinn? Is that what you want? Is that what the magic wants?

QUINN

Not quite.

KING TOBIAS

You mean to tell me you want my daughter, a 15-year-old princess, to go after our kingdom's most valued object without my help? Or my head guard's?

QUINN

Until Emmie returns home with it, the kingdom will be in a bit of disarray. It needs you here to help it.

(to GUARD WILLIAM)

And it needs you here to protect it.

KING TOBIAS

Then we'll send someone else with her. Preferably someone trained, and, well, an adult.

EMMIE

(to QUINN)

Whom do you think I need to bring? You said you somehow knew that it was my destiny to go after the enchanted orchid and save our kingdom. I don't know how you knew that. But do you know the same with who I am meant to bring? It can't just be anyone, can it?

QUINN

No, it can't. Our magic can be a fickle thing. As certain as I am that you are meant for this journey, I cannot tell you who, exactly, must accompany you.
EMMIE
So you can't tell me anything? Not even, like a hint or piece of advice or something?

GUARD WILLIAM
I'm sure I could round up some of my best men or women to accompany you.

(to KING TOBIAS and QUEEN ANNABETH)
Don't worry, your majesties. I would only send the best to look after Princess Emmie.

EMMIE

(to QUINN, imploring)
Anything? Please?

QUINN
All I know is this: You will succeed so long as you choose your company wisely. But that does not mean you'll choose the smartest or the fastest or the most experienced.

EMMIE
Then who should I bring? And how many?

QUINN
Three people will help you on your journey. Someone you trust implicitly. Someone you know who has a lot to learn but also a lot to give. And someone who is closer to Corentin than anyone else in the Royal Village.

EMMIE
That's it? That's all you can tell me?

QUEEN ANNABETH
With all due respect, these are very vague descriptions for such a risky trip.

KING TOBIAS
And what about this "someone who is closer to Corentin than anyone else?" That doesn't sit right with me.

QUINN
What does your gut tell you, Emmie? There's a reason why you were chosen for this quest. Listen to your heart.

EMMIE
Someone I trust implicitly. Someone I know who has a lot to learn but also a lot to give. Someone who is closer to Corentin than anyone else in the Royal Village.
Someone I trust-

(lighting up as she figures it out)
Someone I trust implicitly! Oh this one is obvious.

KING TOBIAS

It is?

EMMIE

Yes! Who else would I trust so implicitly but Aiden?

QUEEN ANNABETH

Of course.

KING TOBIAS

Aiden? But Emmie, he's-

COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS

Pardon me, but who is Aiden again?

AIDEN enters on the side of stage right with a spotlight on AIDEN. While he is being talked about, AIDEN acts out his personality (e.g. Acting like a guard, looking serious, etc.)

QUEEN ANNABETH

Emmie's best friend since childhood.

COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS

Oh, so we've decided on another child to go save our kingdom, have we?

EMMIE

(ignoring COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS)
I can't believe I didn't think of him first.

(to GUARD WILLIAM)
He wants to be a guard, you know? He has his whole life. His father inspired him.

GUARD WILLIAMS

Robert Evans was one of the best guards we have ever seen. As strong as he was loyal.

COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS

But surely-
EMMIE
And of course! Someone I know who has a lot to learn but a lot to give!

KING TOBIAS
Oh Emmie, please tell me you're not thinking of-

As EMMIE says "ASHER," ASHER enters stage right in a rush to stand by AIDEN, looking much less prepared and serious than AIDEN. While being spoken about, AIDEN acts goofy and messes with AIDEN.

EMMIE
Asher!

GUARD WILLIAM
Asher? Is that-

KING TOBIAS
Aidan's immature, goofier, and less serious twin? Yes. Unfortunately.

EMMIE
(As if this explains everything)
They're fraternal.

QUEEN ANNABETH
Well, he does have a lot to learn.

KING TOBIAS
(muttering)
But not much to give, in my opinion.

EMMIE
Asher may not be as mature as Aiden, but you wouldn't know how smart he is based on his personality. He has an instinct that I've never seen matched by anyone else.

QUEEN ANNABETH
Good instinct is important.

COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS
Are they at least older than Emmie?
Of course they are—

EMMIE

Thank goodness—

COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS

By seven months.

EMMIE

That doesn't really count.

COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS

GUARD WILLIAM

Emmie, are you sure they are the right choice? I'm not saying the Evans twins aren't smart or capable young men, but, well...they're young men.

As GUARD WILLIAM is speaking, AIDEN and ASHER stop messing around. They look on seriously in unity.

EMMIE

I know. I can't explain it any more than I can explain why Quinn thinks I'm the one who needs to go on this quest. But they feel right.

AIDEN and ASHER look at each other and nod. They exit stage right.

QUEEN ANNABETH

And the third person? Someone who's closer to Corentin?

EMMIE

That one I don't know. But maybe Asher or Aiden would know something. I can ask them.

(looking at QUINN)

Um, are you going to come with me? I mean, the whole thing's a little surreal: the enchanted orchid being stolen, you appearing, me being assigned the quest. Having an actual witch here may give me some credit. You know, prove that I'm not just making the whole thing up?

QUINN

Do you need my presence to prove that the whole thing is true? If so, then maybe the twins aren't the best people to take with you.
EMMIE

I-

(thinking out loud)
Someone I trust implicitly.
No, I guess not.

COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS
Do you need help getting there? Someone to come with you.

EMMIE
Please. It's just Aiden and Asher. I've been to their place a million times since I was a kid.
I think I can manage.

EMMIE walks away, but just before exiting, she looks back.

EMMIE (CONT'D)
You know, I was just chosen by one of the wisest and most powerful creatures out there to lead a quest that will save our kingdom. You're going to have to treat me as more capable someday. Today seems like a good day to start.

EMMIE exits stage right.

QUEEN ANNABETH

She's right, you know.

GUARD WILLIAM
Yes, I suppose she is. But still-

QUEEN ANNABETH

Still what?

GUARD WILLIAM
Well, the fate of our kingdom is resting in the hands of a bunch of teenagers...

Everyone looks around and makes gestures in agreement as if to say "Well, he has a point." During this, QUINN exits stage right without any of them noticing.

QUEEN ANNABETH

Well, I supposed it's a good thing we have a witch on our side. Right, Quinn-
QUEEN ANNABETH looks to QUINN, only to realize she is no longer there. Everyone else realizes QUINN is gone and looks around in confusion and surprise.

QUEEN ANNABETH (CONT.)

Quinn?

Everyone continues to look around and mutter among themselves. Lights slowly dim until blackout. End of scene III.

ACT I, SCENE IV

Lights up on AIDEN and ASHER. They are in the sitting room of their house, lounging around. AIDEN is reading and ASHER is bored.

ASHER

I am so bored.

AIDEN

You're always bored, Asher.

ASHER

No, I'm always looking for something more interesting to do. But since there is nothing interesting in this heat, I am bored. And don't even try to suggest something. It's always boring.

AIDEN

There's nothing boring about reading about the kingdom and its history. I have several books you could borrow.

ASHER

Aiden, no one finds that interesting except for you.

AIDEN

(muttering, but loud enough for ASHER to hear)

What's the point of having a twin if he's the complete opposite?

ASHER

(sarcastically)

You wound me. And besides-
AIDEN AND ASHER

We're fraternal.

EMMIE enters stage left. AIDEN and ASHER jump up to greet her.

AIDEN

Emmie!

ASHER

Please tell me you have something interesting for us to do.

EMMIE

Actually...I do.

ASHER

Really? Pray tell, Princess Emmie. What extravagant adventure do you have planned for us today?

EMMIE

(rolling her eyes at ASHER)

Well, it's definitely an extravagant adventure. But it may last more than just today.

AIDEN

What do you mean?

EMMIE

The enchanted orchid. It's been stolen.

AIDEN AND ASHER

What?

AIDEN

Stolen?

EMMIE

And I've been tasked with getting it back.

AIDEN AND ASHER

What?

ASHER

But Emmie. You're fifteen.
EMMIE

(frustrated)
Yes, I know I'm only fifteen and highly unqualified, and I would appreciate it if everyone would stop bringing that up! I didn't ask to be chosen to save the kingdom.

ASHER
Sorry. But why would your parents choose you? No offense, but don't they have guards for that?

EMMIE
My parents didn't choose me. Neither did the guards.

AIDEN
Then who did?

ASHER
(dawning on him)
The witches did. Your parents summoned them to ask for help, and they said you had to get the enchanted orchid back, didn't they?

EMMIE
(shrugging)
Surprise?

ASHER
And you're here because...because...

AIDEN
You want us to help you?

EMMIE nods.

ASHER
But Emmie... We're only sixteen.

EMMIE glares at him.

ASHER (CONT.)
Which you have already been told. Okay, okay, shutting up now.

AIDEN
Emmie, what's going on? Why are we going on this mission and not someone actually experienced or trained?
EMMIE
Well, it's kind of a long story.

ASHER
I get the sense that this is sort of an urgent matter.

EMMIE
Right. Um. Summary version: We called for the witches to help-

ASHER
Was it cool? I've always wanted to see a witch.

EMMIE
Urgent matter. No interrupting.

Right. Sorry.

ASHER

EMMIE
Quinn came—that's one of the witches. An older one, too, though you wouldn't know it by looking at her. I mean, seriously, they don't age-

AIDEN

EMMIE
Emmie.

Sorry. Focusing now.

The lights dim, and EMMIE'S voice gets quieter. EMMIE pantomimes telling the story to ASHER and AIDEN. As she is explaining, TOWNSPERSON walks in front, swatting away at pixies. TOWNSPERSON exits, and the lights come up as EMMIE finishes talking to AIDEN and ASHER.

EMMIE
Quinn said someone was fated to go get the enchanted orchid back, and she could help them by clearing the path to Faran of bad weather. And that person is apparently me. No, I don't know why, and yes I know I'm only 15. Anyway, Quinn said I needed help, and the only guidance she gave me was this: someone I trust implicitly, someone who has a lot to learn but a lot to give, and someone who is closer to Corentin than anyone else in the Royal Village.
So...here I am.

(pause)

Silence as AIDEN and ASHER let this sink in. ASHER walks over to EMMIE and places a hand on her shoulder.

ASHER

Emmie, I'm touched.

EMMIE

Oh, um. I'm glad?

ASHER

Well, obviously I am the person you trust implicitly.

EMMIE

Uhhhh.

AIDEN

No, doofus, that's obviously me.

EMMIE looks up at ASHER apologetically. His hand falls away from her shoulder and he looks at her, betrayed and confused.

ASHER

But I'm not close to Corentin in any way so that means...hey! What do you mean by "lots to learn?"

EMMIE

I think you're skipping over the "lots to give" portion.

ASHER

How come no one else has a caveat to their warm and fuzzy description?

AIDEN

I wouldn't exactly call being close to Corentin warm and fuzzy.

ASHER

Yeah, whatever.

EMMIE

Anyway... I need your guys' help. I know you're young—we all are—but I felt in my gut that you're meant to help me. Can you help? I know it's a lot to ask, and it's really sudden, but-
AIDEN
Of course we'll help.

EMMIE
You will?

AIDEN
I want to be a guard one day because I want to protect this kingdom. If we don't get the enchanted orchid back, who knows what will happen?

ASHER
You'd be hopeless without me. Even if I do have "a lot to learn."

EMMIE
Thank you, guys. There's just one problem.

AIDEN
What?

EMMIE
I don't know who the third person is.

AIDEN
The person who's close to Corentin.

EMMIE
Not just close to him. Closer than anyone else in our village. What does that even mean?

ASHER
Did he have any family members? Someone who might live here?

EMMIE
Quinn said his parents died. She didn't mention anyone else, so maybe, but...well, if there was someone else, I think she would have mentioned them.

AIDEN
Maybe a friend?

EMMIE
Maybe? But how would I know where to start to find them? Just walk around asking everyone if they know Corentin? That would take forever. Besides, how would someone from Faran get here? It's not often people switch villages, and if they do, it's usually just to the nearby village. And Faran is as far away as you can get in this kingdom.
ASHER

That's it!

EMMIE

It is?

ASHER

If it's not often people switch villages, then that means that someone who did switch villages, someone who did move from Faran to here, is closer to Corentin than anyone else here—even if they don't know him.

EMMIE

Great, but I don't know of anyone who's done that.

AIDEN

(dawning on him)

We do.

EMMIE

You do?

ASHER

Her name is Olive Tanul. She and her family moved here a few months ago. I think her parents got some fancy job making fancy clothing and jewelry for rich people—actually, they probably make the type of clothing you and your family would wear.

AIDEN

We know her because she and her parents visit our mother's shop a lot. They don't always buy something, but I think they like looking at all the jewelry, though mother always feels embarrassed because they make jewelry for rich people and she makes jewelry for, well, everyone else. Mother asked Olive if she was interested in becoming a jeweler, and she said wasn't any good but liked looking at all the design anyway.

EMMIE

Her parents must be really good if they moved all the way from Faran to here.

AIDEN

I guess so. She doesn't talk about it a lot.

EMMIE

Do you know where we can find her now?

AIDEN

They don't live too far away from us. We can go there now and see if she's home.
ASHER
To adventure and something interesting to do?

AIDEN
Asher, this is something serious.

ASHER
Emmie?

EMMIE
(sighing)
To adventure and something interesting to do.

EMMIE, ASHER, and AIDEN exist stage left. End of Scene IV.

ACT I, SCENE V

OLIVE sits at a chair and table, attempting to sew an article of clothing. She is not very good at it, and the worse the sewing gets, the more frustrated she is.

OLIVE
Useless thread. I can't even tell what this is supposed to be anymore.

EMMIE, ASHER, and AIDEN enter from stage left. OLIVE looks up and tries to hide her failed sewing attempts. She stands.

OLIVE
Oh! Um. Hi. What are-

OLIVE notices EMMIE for the first time.

OLIVE (CONT.)

Oh! Princess Emmie.

OLIVE bows.

EMMIE
Just Emmie is okay. But thank you.
OLIVE

What can I do for you...Emmie?

EMMIE

It's a little complicated. You see-

ASHER

(noticing OLIVE'S sewing attempts)

What is that?

OLIVE

Nothing.

ASHER

Is it... a hat?

ASHER dives forward to grab the item, but OLIVE easily moves out of his way and blocks his attempt, pushing him away.

ASHER

(rubbing his shoulder)

Ow.

OLIVE

What are you even doing here?

ASHER

I have been chosen by royalty to go on an epic quest to save this kingdom.

OLIVE

Right. And I'm Emmie's long-lost sister.

EMMIE

Well...actually. He's right.

(hurriedly)

About the first part.

OLIVE

What?

AIDEN

I wouldn't have put it in quite those terms, but yes, that's the gist of it.
OLIVE
Have you been chosen on this weird quest too?

AIDEN
Yes.

OLIVE
So remind me why you're all here again.

ASHER, AIDEN, and EMMIE all look at each other before looking at OLIVE. The realization hits her.

OLIVE
Wait. Have I also been chosen on this weird quest?

EMMIE
Yes? Maybe? I think so?

OLIVE
That's encouraging.

EMMIE
I don't quite know yet, so that's why I'm here.

OLIVE
Are you the royalty who is choosing people for this quest?

EMMIE
Yes.

OLIVE
Well that explains why Asher and Aiden were chosen.

AIDEN AND ASHER
Hey!

OLIVE
You're still kids.

ASHER
It's not like you're any older.

OLIVE
Right. Which is why it can't be possible that I should be chosen to go on some quest to--what was it--save the kingdom? Do you want to elaborate on that?
EMMIE

It's kind of a long story.

OLIVE

You keep saying that.

EMMIE

You see, it all has to do with the enchanted orchid...

The lights dim, and EMMIE'S voice gets quieter. EMMIE again pantomimes telling the story to OLIVE. As she is explaining, TOWNSPERSON runs in front, this time coming from the opposite side, swatting away pixies again. TOWNSPERSON exits, and the lights come up as EMMIE finishes talking to OLIVE.

OLIVE

So let me get this straight: Some guy from my old village stole the enchanted orchid, a witch said a 15-year-old princess was the key to our entire kingdom's survival, and a weird, cryptic riddle points to me and a pair of twins as the other saviors?

EMMIE

That about covers it.

OLIVE

Yeah, I'm out.

AIDEN

Olive!

OLIVE

I can't be the only person who thinks this plan makes no sense.

EMMIE

Quinn says we are meant to go on this quest. She will help us along the way.

OLIVE

No, Quinn told you, Emmie, that you were fated, and then gave you some clues that you think point to us. Point to me?

EMMIE

And what's wrong with that?

OLIVE

You don't even know me, Emmie. I don't know you.
EMMIE
Maybe not. But I know a few things about you.

OLIVE
Like what? That I'm from the same village as Corentin so therefore I must be an expert on everything Faran has suffered? Or that my family is lucky because we somehow moved to this fancy place?

EMMIE
I know that your parents are talented seamstresses and jewelry makers. I know that you go with them to Asher and Aiden's market not because you actually like jewelry or are interested in how it's made but because you can't sew and you can't make jewelry, so you try to go with your parents and pretend to like jewelry as a compromise. I know that you try to sew, but you're not very good at it.

OLIVE
Thanks for the compliments.

EMMIE
I wasn't finished. I know that you don't sugarcoat. You're honest, and you're fierce, and I respect that. I know that you have quick instincts, which is why Asher never could have stolen your, um, hat? Scarf? Anyway. I know that you have something to offer beyond where you were born or where you live now. I know that you can help us get the enchanted orchid back...and maybe help me understand why it was taken in the first place.

OLIVE
You seem to "know" a lot about me considering you didn't know I existed until today.

EMMIE
I'm a quick study.

(pause)

Well? Am I right?

OLIVE looks away, playing with her latest sewing attempts. After a few moments of deliberation, she tosses the fabric in a nearby trash bin.

OLIVE
When do we leave?

EMMIE, AIDEN, and ASHER all smile. Slowly, OLIVE grins too. Blackout. End of ACT I.
ACT II, SCENE I

The lights are dim. Spotlight on CORENTIN as he enters stage right. The enchanted orchid is nowhere in sight. CORENTIN is wearing a large brooch with a stone, gem, or etc. in the center that can be opened by a clasp. He is hiding the enchanted orchid here, though no one knows this (including the audience). The brooch must be large enough so that the audience can see it. CORENTIN should always be wearing the brooch from now on. GRIFFIN enters stage right.

CORENTIN

Nothing's changed?

GRiffin

Not that I can see.

CORENTIN

Good.

GRiffin looks at CORENTIN, studying him.

GRiffin

You've hidden it then? The enchanted orchid.

CORENTIN

Yes, and I've done a much better job than those royal fools. Less obvious anyhow.

GRiffin

Good. You'll want to be as inconspicuous as possible.

CORENTIN

Why? Is there something you're not telling me? Did someone see you?

GRiffin

No, no! They wouldn't suspect a thing. But...

CORENTIN

But what?

GRiffin

But the witches. They know everything, and they favor the royalty.
CORENTIN
I'm not afraid of the witches. Supernatural myths.

GRIFFIN
Myths? But sir, you do realize the witches are the ones who gave our kingdom the enchanted orchid in the first place?

CORENTIN
They appeared once, a long time ago, to help out royalty. I don't care about the witches.

GRIFFIN
But the enchanted orchid?

CORENTIN
And what good did that do us? Was the enchanted orchid a gift to you? That magical flower made the Royal Village cocky and unconcerned. Meanwhile, our homes were destroyed in a storm that the king and queen didn't care about because nothing terrible could ever happen with their precious flower at play.

GRIFFIN
But-

CORENTIN
And our families? Would your brother still be alive if your family had enough money to keep well these past years? Would my parents?

GRIFFIN
I don't like the witches or the Royal Village any more than you do. Just don't underestimate them is all I'm saying.

CORENTIN
I won't. I don't underestimate anything.

GRIFFIN notices CORENTIN'S brooch and stares at it.

GRIFFIN
That brooch. Where did you get it? It looks familiar.

CORENTIN
This brooch is the key to everything. It belonged to my parents. I don't want to forget why I am doing this.

BLACKOUT. End of scene I.
ACT II, SCENE II

Curtains open and lights up. EMMIE, OLIVE, ASHER, and AIDEN enter stage right, walking along a worn path of a forest. They should all look as if they are prepared for a journey, i.e. have backpacks on, sturdy shoes, wearing cloaks, etc.

OLIVE
So I guess that Quinn lady was right.

EMMIE
That Quinn lady?

OLIVE
Yeah. We've been out for, what, an hour now? Maybe longer? Weather feels fine to me. No storms, no heat.

EMMIE
Did you have doubts?

OLIVE
I met you like an hour before we left, and I met Quinn ten minutes before we left. My brain has a lot to process still.

AIDEN
The magically packed bags didn't make you trust Quinn?

OLIVE
No, that was weird. Like she knew we were all going to be at the castle and ready to go at that precise moment.

EMMIE
Well, she did know. Because she's a witch.

OLIVE
Most people haven't met witches, Emmie.

EMMIE
I just met one today for the first time, and I'm royalty!

OLIVE
Still.
OLIVE stops and attempts to subtly take a look at EMMIE and her prosthetic leg.

OLIVE (CONT.)
So, uh, Emmie. Are you doing alright?

EMMIE does not catch OLIVE’S look.

EMMIE
Well it is a bit overwhelming, finding out that you're destined to save a kingdom when you've only left the Royal Village a few times.

OLIVE
Wait, really? But don't your parents visit the other villages often?

EMMIE
They do. But I only sometimes go with them.

EMMIE shrugs

EMMIE (CONT'D.)
They worry. Everyone does.

OLIVE
Right. Yeah. So...are you doing alright?

EMMIE'S expression changes as she realizes what OLIVE is referring to.

EMMIE
I'm fine.

OLIVE
Because we can rest if-

AIDEN
Listen to Emmie.

EMMIE
I'm fine, Olive. I will let everyone know if I need to rest.

OLIVE
Sorry.
There's an awkward silence for a moment. AIDEN tries to catch EMMIE'S eye, but she ignores it. ASHER tries to break the silence.

ASHER
So Emmie. What do you like to do for fun?

EMMIE
We've known each other since we were babies, Asher.

ASHER
Yeah, but you were always hanging out with my much-less impressive twin. Can't figure out why. He's such a bore.

AIDEN
Thanks buddy.

OLIVE
Wait a minute. You're twins?

AIDEN AND ASHER
We're fraternal

EMMIE
You didn't know?

OLIVE
Well...no. I thought they were just brothers. They don't look or act like they're twins.

AIDEN
Fraternal.

ASHER
Who'd you think was older?

OLIVE AND EMMIE
Obviously Aiden.

ASHER
Rude.

OLIVE
Since you were babies, huh? How did you meet the twins?
AIDEN
Our father used to be one of the best guards for the castle. They let us come over a lot since we were around Emmie's age.

OLIVE
That's nice.

(pause)
I don't think I've ever mentioned this, but I'm sorry about your dad.

ASHER
(quietly)
Thanks. I wish you could have met him. I think you'd have liked him.

AIDEN
(smiling)
He was always straight up with people. He never sugarcoated anything. It was annoying at times, but you could always count on him.

He was a good dad.

ASHER
And a good guard.

AIDEN
Did he...

ASHER
Die on duty? No. It was an illness. Happened four years ago.

EMMIE
He would be so proud of both of you. Saving the kingdom when you're only 16.

AIDEN
We haven't saved it yet.

EMMIE places a comforting hand on AIDEN'S shoulder.

EMMIE
But you will.
ASHER notices something in the distance.

ASHER

Stop.

EMMIE

What? No? I'm trying to have a heartfelt moment with you guys.

ASHER

No, that's not what I meant. Stop. Listen. Do you hear something? Notice anything?

EMMIE, ASHER, AIDEN, and OLIVE all stop to listen. One by one, they start to hear something like a faint buzzing.

OLIVE

Is that-

Pixies!

ASHER

Quinn can't zap these away. Run!

EMMIE, OLIVE, AIDEN, and ASHER start to run, but they are interrupted by the PIXIES, who run in from stage right. The PIXIES surround them, preventing them from running away or leaving.

OLIVE

Hey!

AIDEN

How do we get rid of them?

EMMIE

I don't know if we can!

ASHER and EMMIE attempt to fight the PIXIES by slashing at them, but this only makes them angrier. The PIXIES move closer, tearing at their clothing, pulling their hair, etc. AIDEN moves in front of EMMIE to protect her from the PIXIES.
AIDEN

Great, now they're angrier.

EMMIE

It's not like I know what to do!

ASHER

Why are they even attacking us?

(to the PIXIES)

You do know we're trying to get the enchanted orchid back, don't you!

Suddenly, the PIXIES stop attacking, though they don't move away. ASHER looks to EMMIE, who straightens to look braver and more confident.

EMMIE

That's—that's right. I'm Princess Emmie. The witches, well Quinn in particular—we're on a mission from them. To bring back the enchanted orchid and save the kingdom.

The PIXIES remain still, but they look around at each other as if unconvinced.

EMMIE

To restore balance and order to the weather.

The PIXIES look at EMMIE, intrigued. They move closer to EMMIE as if examining her to make sure she is telling the truth.

EMMIE

I promise. I'm going to lead this kingdom one day. And I would do anything to protect it.

Convinced, the PIXIES move away from EMMIE. They give one last look at the group before exiting stage left.

OLIVE

I guess that solves that.

AIDEN

Do you think they'll leave us alone now?

ASHER

They will. Thanks to me.
AIDEN
Emmie’s the one who convinced them to leave us alone.

ASHER
Yes, but I was the one who mentioned the enchanted orchid and got them to stop attacking us in the first place.

EMMIE

(Exasperated)
Yes, Asher. You're a life-saver.

(to the group)
We should keep going. We lost some time dealing with the pixies.

OLIVE
Don't you need to rest?

EMMIE
No, Olive. I told you already.

AIDEN
Let's go.

EMMIE, OLIVE, AIDEN, and ASHER exit stage left.
End of scene II.

ACT II, SCENE III

The forest setting continues. There are several trees, a few of which are covered with long vines, but at the end of the stage is a cliff. There are rocks or other placeholders that make the cliff climbable. There is no way around the cliff. EMMIE, OLIVE, AIDEN, and ASHER enter from stage right. They are all obviously fatigued. As they notice the cliff, they all stop and stare at it.

ASHER
I don't suppose Quinn can zap her magic powers and make that cliff go away? Knock it down or something?

AIDEN
No, Asher. She's a good witch.
ASHER
What are we supposed to do?

EMMIE
Climb it, I guess?

OLIVE
What?

EMMIE walks closer to the cliff.

EMMIE
It's not so bad. There are little ledges and places we can use to climb up on. And it's not that tall.

EMMIE pauses, staring up at the cliff for a while. She moves a hand on the ledge as if testing it out, then removes her hand. Tentatively, AIDEN joins her.

AIDEN
Emmie?

EMMIE snaps out of it.

EMMIE
Sorry, I, um. I need a moment. To think.

EMMIE walks away from the cliff and leans against a tree, thinking. The elephant in the room hangs in the air.

OLIVE
Maybe we could carry you?

EMMIE's head snaps toward OLIVE.

EMMIE
What?

OLIVE
Maybe if one or two of us carried you...you know, up the cliff?
EMMIE

(firmly)

No.

OLIVE

Well if it's the only way to get up.

EMMIE

It's not the only way to get up. Just give me a moment to think.

OLIVE

Emmie, I don't want to sound mean, but you've been walking a long time. You're tired-
well, we all are tired. And that cliff is going to be hard enough for us to get up, so it
would be especially hard for-

AIDEN

Olive.

OLIVE looks away, embarrassed. They sit in quiet for a
second before EMMIE breaks the silence.

EMMIE

I don't know if I could climb up the cliff, just like that. Maybe on a different day? I don't
know. But after days of not getting out much or walking around and then hours of doing
nothing but walking...I'm worried that I won't find out whether it would be too much until
after I've already started climbing. And I don't want to risk it.

(pause)

But I don't want to be carried. At least unless it's the only option.

OLIVE

But-

EMMIE

I set my own limits. I don't need you to decide for me what I can or cannot do.

OLIVE

(awkwardly)

Sorry.
EMMIE
If anyone has an idea, I'm all ears.

(cutting her eyes to Olive)
An idea that doesn't involve being carried.

ASHER

(clearing his throat uncomfortably)
Maybe... What if you climbed a tree, and then leaned all the way over on a branch, and then moved toward the cliff and then, you know, got off?

EMMIE, OLIVE, and AIDEN look at ASHER dubiously.
ASHER laughs nervously and walks toward a tree.

ASHER (CONT'D.)
Maybe this one? It's kind of close.

EMMIE
Asher... what about that plan makes you think it would be easier than climbing up the cliff?

ASHER
I was just trying to help.

EMMIE
I know.

AIDEN
What if we found something to move against it? Something that might be easier to climb, like a step almost?

OLIVE
Where are we going to find something like that? There's nothing but trees here.

EMMIE
Olive's right.

OLIVE
So maybe the best choice is-

EMMIE
No.
EMMIE looks around thinking. Her eyes land on some long vines on one of the trees. She walks over to the vines pulls, testing them out. Finding them sturdy, she brightens.

EMMIE (CONT'D.)

I got it. Does anyone have something sharp to cut this vine?

AIDEN ruffles in his backpack and pulls out a short sword.

ASHER

What? Since when did you have a sword?

AIDEN

Since Quinn decided I should have one, I guess?

Why do you get a sword?

ASHER

Because I want to be a guard.

AIDEN

ASHER rolls his eyes. AIDEN walks over to EMMIE, and she uses the sword to cut the vine off. She hands it to him.

EMMIE

(to AIDEN)

If you climb up first and tie this vine around something at the top, then toss it over, I can use it to pull myself up.

OLIVE

With the vine?

EMMIE

Yes. It will make it easier for you guys to climb up too.

OLIVE

Wouldn't that be hard?

EMMIE

No. I just said it would be it easier for-
OLIVE

I meant hard for you.

EMMIE

Do you really not get it, Olive? I'm the one who knows my body, so I know what I am capable of. Not you. Not Aiden or Asher. Not my parents. But me.

OLIVE

(quietly)

Okay.

EMMIE nods at AIDEN. Holding the vine, AIDEN climbs up the cliff. At the top, he ties the rope around a large rock and tosses it down to EMMIE. She grabs a hold of the vine and pulls herself up, occasionally bracing her leg against the cliff for stability. OLIVE looks up at EMMIE, a little surprised.

OLIVE

Huh.

OLIVE and ASHER climb up the cliff after her. ASHER moves to untie the vine from the stub.

EMMIE

Wait. Maybe we should leave it.

AIDEN

Leave it? Why?

EMMIE

In case someone else needs it.

AIDEN

Good idea.

EMMIE

ASHER

What about Corentin or Griffin? We shouldn't make it easier for them to get to us.

EMMIE

We're following them, not the other way around.

ASHER

True. We better get going.
Um, actually...

OLIVE

OLIVE turns to EMMIE.

OLIVE (CONT'D.)

(quietly)

Can I talk to you?

EMMIE

Sure.

(to AIDEN and ASHER)

You guys go on ahead. I'm going to hang back with Olive for a moment.

AIDEN and ASHER exit stage left.

OLIVE

(a bit awkwardly)

So. Um. That was a good idea with the vine.

EMMIE

Thanks.

OLIVE

You must be really strong to have pulled yourself up.

EMMIE

Aiden's wanted to be a guard for years, so sometimes I help him practice since he's too young for official training. I guess it's made me stronger.

OLIVE

You and Aiden are really close, huh?

EMMIE

Best friends since we were little.

(pause.)

Look, Olive, was there something else you wanted to say?

OLIVE

I think I owe you an apology. I didn't know much about you before I moved to the Royal Village. A lot of us in the other villages don't. All we know is that you're-um- well all we know is about your leg.
Even when I moved here, I didn't really know anything about you. I guess I assumed that you were...

(OLIVE trails off)

EMMIE

Helpless?

OLIVE

No! Well, maybe a little bit? It sounds bad when you put it like that.

EMMIE

But it's what you thought.

OLIVE

I just assumed that you couldn't walk very well or do much. That's why I kept asking if you needed to rest. And that's why I thought it would have been easier to just carry you. And then I saw you pull yourself up and, well, I guess I'm having second thoughts.

EMMIE

It shouldn't have taken me pulling myself up for you to have seen me as something other than helpless.

OLIVE

No. It shouldn't have.

EMMIE sighs and looks at OLIVE for a moment.

EMMIE

I appreciate this though. You're not the only one to think that about me and most people don't apologize or even realize it.

OLIVE

That must be hard.

EMMIE

It is. I get used to it, but then I don't.

OLIVE

Is it always like this? I mean, are you always dealing with people like me?

EMMIE

Not always. Nobody's perfect, but people like Aiden and Asher are pretty good about it. They've known me my whole life though.
OLIVE
What about your parents? Are they?

EMMIE
Mostly. They worry, like most parents. And I can tell that they're...hesitant...about a lot of things. They certainly were about this whole journey. But I know they are always trying to be better. I was born this way, and apparently lots of people thought my mom or I were cursed because of it. Superstition and whatnot. A few people still do, I think. But my whole life, my parents wanted to help me. They got Daniel Johnson, the woodworker, to make me this prosthetic. I've seen him a lot throughout the years because he has to make a new one every time I grow.

Spotlight on EMMIE and her prosthetic as she shows Olive—and the audience—her prosthetic. She points to different parts of her prosthetic as she is speaking.

He mostly uses wood. There’s a bit of metal at the end though. And here, there are leather straps to keep it attached.

OLIVE
Is it hard to make?

EMMIE
(wryly)
I wouldn't know. I don't make them.

OLIVE
Right.

(pause)
Do you ever wish that you were born norm-sorry. Do you ever wish that you were born with both your legs?

EMMIE
I used to sometimes when I was little. Usually when I saw other little kids running around without worry or when I got frustrated at how people treated me. But now...I don't know. I guess I wish that people treated me differently. But I don't know if I wish I were any different. I've always been this way. I don't know any different. This-

(EMMIE gestures to her body)
-is me. Imagining someone who looks different is like imagining someone who is different.

OLIVE

I'm sorry.

EMMIE looks at OLIVE, waiting for more. OLIVE appears uncomfortable with the silence and the stare at first, but she eventually keeps talking.

OLIVE (CONT.)

I was one of the people who treated you differently.

(pause)

I am one of those people. But I was—am wrong. I'm sorry.

EMMIE

Thank you.

OLIVE

I'll try to be better. But if I ever start to act like a jerk, call me out, princess.

EMMIE

(smiling)

You can count on that.

EMMIE moves to give OLIVE a hug. OLIVE, a little tense at first, warms up to the hug. After they break apart, the two girls, now friends, smile at each other.

EMMIE

(to AIDEN and ASHER offstage)

Hey, Aiden! Asher! Wait up! We're coming now.

EMMIE and OLIVE exit stage left. Curtains close. End of scene III.

ACT II SCENE IV

CORENTIN and GRIFFIN enter stage right and stand in front of the curtains. Both appear to be frustrated and confused.
CORENTIN
Tell me what's going on, Griffin.

GRIFFIN
I've been keeping an eye on the weather, like you asked. And something's not right.

What is it?

GRIFFIN
I've been hearing that most villages are in turmoil with the weather. Nonstop rain, icy winds, you name it. But there are rumors spreading, rumors that there are some places that seem to be doing fine sometimes. No bad weather at all.

What places?

GRIFFIN
See, that's the thing. No one really knows. At first, it was one of the forests in Bayser. But I know for a fact that the forest was nearly flooded because I heard a group of travelers complaining about all the mud. And then I heard that the hills in Kenston were unbearable to be around because of the heat, but the next day, people reported that the weather was fine, at least for a little bit.

That doesn't make any sense.

GRIFFIN
Is this perhaps just how the enchanted orchid works? Maybe the bad weather comes and goes.

CORENTIN
No. Once it's removed from the Royal Village, it's supposed to bring disorder to everywhere it isn't. There's no reason why some places should be having sunny skies, even for a little bit...Unless...unless you were right, Griffin.

GRIFFIN
I was?

CORENTIN
The witches. I never should have underestimated them. This is their doing.

GRIFFIN
The witches are messing with the weather? If that's the case, then why not change the weather everywhere? Why only choose a few places for a small amount of time?
CORENTIN
Because even the witches are not powerful enough to completely change the weather everywhere forever.

GRIFFIN
Then why those places? And why during those times?

CORENTIN
(the answer dawning on him)
Because the witches must be helping the royals. The witches told them everything, or at least something. Someone is coming after us, and I bet you the witches are clearing the path for them.

GRIFFIN
Of course! What should we do?

CORENTIN
We'll get a map.

GRIFFIN
A map?

CORENTIN
Yes. Can you remember all the places that had good weather recently?

GRIFFIN
Whatever I can't remember I can surely ask around and find out.

CORENTIN
Good. If we mark all those places on a map, we'll find a pattern. A path.

GRIFFIN
(catching on to the plan)
And using the path, we can figure out where they are coming from and how they are getting here.

CORENTIN
And with that, we can predict where they'll be next.

GRIFFIN
It's genius.
CORENTIN
I'm sure the kingdom's guards are ready to have a rematch with you. Are you prepared to take them down this time, for good?

GRiffin
Of course. Anything to keep the enchanted orchid safe here.

CORENTIN and GRIFFIN share a malicious look and exit stage right. End of scene IV.

ACT II SCENE V

Curtains open on a setting filled with trees, bushes, etc. The bushes must be big enough that people could hide behind them. BEAR enters stage left. He yawns and walks over to one of the bushes on stage left. Curling up behind the bush, he falls asleep. BEAR should be at least somewhat visible to the audience but out of sight of the characters when they enter stage right. GRIFFIN is hiding in a tree on downstage right, but he should be hidden from everyone, audience included. Whenever GRIFFIN acts or speaks in a way that the audience should see but not the actors, the lighting should focus on him. AIDEN, ASHER, EMMIE, and OLIVE enter stage right, chattering excitedly.

OLIVE
You know I have to admit: I think we got a handle on this. I had my doubts, but we've made so much progress. I think we're getting close to Faran.

ASHER
Wait a minute. Is Olive being optimistic?

ASHER walks over to OLIVE and places a hand on her forehead as if checking for a fever. OLIVE pushes him away, annoyed.

OLIVE
Funny. I'm just saying. I didn't think we would be able to do this, but other than a few hiccups, this has been much easier than I thought.

ASHER
Olive, no! Don't jinx it!
OLIVE

Jinxing it isn't a real thing.

ASHER walks over as if to check for a fever again, but OLIVE easily sidesteps him. While they are joking around, a spotlight on GRIFFIN as he slowly pokes his head out from where the leaves are covering him so that the audience can see him, but OLIVE, EMMIE, ASHER, and AIDEN do not see him. GRIFFIN looks at the kids, shocked.

GRIFFIN

(whispering, loud enough for the audience to hear)
Children? The witches and kingdom sent children to get the enchanted orchid? What is wrong with them?

(noticing EMMIE)
They sent their princess? Well, this shouldn't be hard.

GRIFFIN retreats slightly, the top of his head still poking out, and listens to the kids.

EMMIE
Olive's right. We have made good progress. Maybe we should take a rest now. We'll need our energy when we finally find Corentin.

GRIFFIN'S head perks up at the mention of Corentin.

AIDEN
Yeah, and his sidekick. Griffin.

GRIFFIN mouths "sidekick" in offense.

AIDEN
We shouldn't underestimate him. He fooled all our guards.

GRIFFIN smiles smugly.

ASHER
I don't know. He kind of seems like a doof to me.
GRiffin reacts in offense and has to stop himself from revealing his presence.

AIDEN
Why on earth would you think he's a doof?

ASHER
Not sure. Just a feeling. I think that whole fooling the guards thing was a stroke of luck.

AIDEN
(annoyed and confused)
That literally makes no sense.

OLIVE
(to EMMIE)
I still can't believe that they're twins.

GRiffin mouths "twins?" in surprise.

AIDEN AND ASHER
Fraternal!

GRiffin nods and shrugs as if that explains everything. EMMIE rolls her eyes and looks around for a place to sleep.

EMMIE
While you keep bickering, I'm going to find a place to sleep.

OLIVE looks with her and points to an area under some trees near stage right, far away from BEAR although no one sees BEAR yet.

OLIVE
What about here? We could get some cover under these trees.

EMMIE shrugs and walks to an area of grass not far away from where BEAR is sleeping, though she still doesn't see BEAR. She plops down, ready to sleep.
EMMIE
Since Quinn is taking care of the weather, we don’t need cover from rain or heat or anything, and the ground looks too bumpy under the trees. Let’s sleep here.

OLIVE

(unconvinced)
But--

AIDEN

(at the same time as OLIVE)
Should we have someone stay awake and be on guard? You know, just in case?

EMMIE

(teasing)
And I guess you would like to volunteer to be that guard?

AIDEN

(embarrassed)
Well, yeah. I do want to be a guard. Only seems natural.

ASHER

(kicking back to relax)
Do-gooder.

EMMIE
Wake us when you get tired, and someone else can take over.

OLIVE hesitates and looks at the spot under the trees.

EMMIE (CONT’D).

Olive?

OLIVE sighs, resigned, before walking over to EMMIE, and EMMIE, OLIVE, and ASHER settle down to rest. After a few seconds, they fall asleep. AIDEN stands guard, keeping a close eye on the surroundings. A few times, his eyes drift toward where GRIFFIN is hiding, but GRIFFIN moves out of sight every time before AIDEN can see him. Finally, AIDEN moves out of clear sight of GRIFFIN. GRIFFIN slowly peeks his head out.
The lighting should dim on the stage with a spotlight on GRIFFIN.

GRIFFIN
What to do, what to do? They're just children so it shouldn't be too hard.

GRIFFIN looks around. From his high vantage point, he notices BEAR sleeping. A spotlight should be on BEAR as GRIFFIN notices him. An idea dawns on GRIFFIN'S face. He looks around his tree and picks an acorn off a branch. He throws the acorn at BEAR but misses. GRIFFIN looks at AIDEN, but he does not appear to have noticed. GRIFFIN picks another acorn and misses again, this time making noise. AIDEN hears and looks around, but seeing nothing, he dismisses it. GRIFFIN picks another acorn and tries again, this time succeeding. The acorn hits BEAR on the head. BEAR, growling quietly, wakes up immediately and slowly crawls out of his hiding place. AIDEN notices BEAR and stiffens. GRIFFIN cheers in silent victory.

AIDEN

(whispering)
You've got to be kidding me.

Moving as slowly and quietly as he can, AIDEN bends down to OLIVE, EMMIE, and ASHER and wakes them up.

EMMIE
Aiden? What's going on?

AIDEN
Shh, shh. So don't be alarmed. And maybe be really really quiet. And don't make any sudden movements.

ASHER
Are you going to tell us what's happening or continue to offer vague advice?

AIDEN
There is maybe the slight possibility that a giant bear was sleeping behind us and just woke up and is only a few feet away from us now.
EMMIE and ASHER freeze in alarm. OLIVE shoots up.

OLIVE

(loudly in alarm)

What?!

BEAR growls more loudly at OLIVE'S sudden movement. He charges toward her, but she darts out of the way at the last second. Abandoning any notion of quietness and slow movement, OLIVE, EMMIE, AIDEN, and ASHER jump up and run around the stage. The following dialogue should be said while they run around the stage trying to avoid BEAR, such as jumping over bushes, hiding behind trees, etc. GRIFFIN should remain mostly hidden, occasionally popping in and out of view to avoid detection, though the audience can see his obvious overjoyed face throughout the following exchanges.

AIDEN

Olive, that is literally the exact opposite of what I said to do.

OLIVE

I'm sorry that your casual mention of a bear was a little too much for me to handle.

ASHER

Olive, I told you that you jinxed it!

OLIVE

Jinxing isn't real!

ASHER

Then explain the huge bear that now wants to eat us!

OLIVE

Gladly! Uh, it's a giant bear that was sleeping in the forest, its natural habitat, and the witches couldn't control it because it's an animal and not the weather!

BEAR

(growling)

Grrrrrr!
AIDEN
Oh look, now you made it angry!

OLIVE
Thanks, genius! And can I ask you a question? How did you not notice the giant bear until it was awake, angry, and right behind us! What kind of guard-in-training are you?

AIDEN
I'm 16! I can't actually train to be a guard for two more years!

OLIVE
Well thank goodness for that! With you as a guard, the kingdom would burn down!

EMMIE
Hey guys?! How about we stop insulting each other and figure out how to get out of this situation.

OLIVE
Easy for you to say Miss "I don't want to sleep under trees because the ground is too bumpy for the royal highness. I'd much rather sleep right next to a giant, angry bear! Much more suitable for royalty!"

EMMIE
I didn't know there was a bear there!

Evidently!

EMMIE
Sorry I can't do everything!

OLIVE
You're the one who destiny or fate or whatever chose!

EMMIE
Yeah, and I don't know why they did when clearly I don't know what to do. And if you were so hung up about not sleeping under the trees, why didn't you say anything?

OLIVE
I tried, but Mr. Guard had to show everyone how responsible he was by offering to stay awake and then not seeing a bear until the last minute!

AIDEN
I already told you-
ASHER

Everyone shut up!

For a moment, everyone on stage except GRIFFIN freezes. The lights dim with a spotlight on GRIFFIN.

GRIFFIN

Well, this is working out even better than I imagined. I don't even need the bear to eat them! They'll tear themselves apart!

(laughing)

Children.

Spotlight off GRIFFIN, lights come up, and everyone resumes action. OLIVE, EMMIE, AIDEN, and ASHER keep running until they are all on stage left together with BEAR on stage right, the two groups facing off.

EMMIE

Hey, Olive?

OLIVE

Yeah?

EMMIE

Next time, I'll listen to you.

OLIVE

Thanks, princess.

(pause)

And you're allowed to make mistakes sometimes, you know.

OLIVE glances at AIDEN.

OLIVE (CONT'D).

Sorry about all the guard-trashing.

AIDEN opens his mouth to speak, but ASHER cuts him to it.

ASHER

Yes, we're all sorry about the mean things we said while running away from an angry bear. Now, anyone have a genius idea?
EMMIE looks around and notices the three acorns on the
ground. She looks from the acorns to BEAR and back.

EMMIE
Why are there acorns where the bear was sleeping? He wasn't near a tree.

OLIVE
I don't know! Why don't you ask the bear?

EMMIE
Doesn't it look like-

AIDEN
(finishing her thought as he comes to the
same realization)
Someone was throwing something at the bear.

In the tree, GRIFFIN makes an "oh no" face and shifts to
hide himself more. EMMIE looks back at the acorns. She
begins to creep toward them.

What are you doing?

ASHER

Trying to save our lives.

EMMIE picks up an acorn and throws it, not at BEAR
but a few feet away from him, under the tree where
GRIFFIN is. BEAR turns his attention away from the
kids toward the acorn and takes a few steps toward it.

EMMIE
I can't believe it! That actually worked! I do that with Polka all the time, but I didn't think-

AIDEN grabs EMMIE'S arm and pulls her along.

AIDEN

Later.

While BEAR is distracted, OLIVE, ASHER, AIDEN, and
EMMIE run away. While they are running, EMMIE looks
behind her.
At the last moment, GRIFFIN peaks his head out and EMMIE notices him. The two lock eyes, and EMMIE’s eyes widen with understanding. She stops.

EMMIE

You! But...which one are you?

Before GRIFFIN can say or do anything, AIDEN grabs her arm and pulls. EMMIE, AIDEN, ASHER, and OLIVE exit stage left. BEAR notices that they have run out and growls.

GRIFFIN

Well that backfired.

BEAR hears GRIFFIN and looks up, noticing him. BEAR looks from GRIFFIN to the acorns on the ground where he was sleeping. He looks back at GRIFFIN and growls. BEAR camps out at the tree.

GRIFFIN

Oh boy. This is going to be a long night.

Lights dim and curtain closes. End of scene V.

ACT II SCENE VI

CORENTIN enters stage right, pacing and looking around.

CORENTIN

(muttering)

Where is he?

After a few seconds, GRIFFIN enters stage right, exhausted, limping, and ruffled.

CORENTIN

Where have you been? I didn't think it would take this long.

GRIFFIN

I'm fine, thanks for asking.
CORENTIN stares at GRIFFIN, waiting.

GRIFFIN
Long story. There was a bear. He was supposed to go after them, but next thing I know, I'm stuck in a tree for hours waiting for the bear to go away.

CORENTIN
Obviously you weren't successful.

GRIFFIN stares at CORENTIN in confusion.

You're limping?

GRIFFIN
(embarrassed)
By the time the bear left, I was tired and I sort of...fell out of the tree.

CORENTIN
My trusty sidekick who fooled the entire Royal Village couldn't sidetrack a couple of guards and fell out of a tree. Great.

GRIFFIN
About that...

CORENTIN
What now?

GRIFFIN
They didn't send guards. Or the king and queen.

CORENTIN
What? Who did they send?

GRIFFIN
Children.

CORENTIN
Children?

GRIFFIN
Yes.
CORENTIN
And you couldn't defeat them? What'd they do, cry at you?

GRIFFIN
Well, not *children* technically. Teenagers is more like it.

CORENTIN
Not much better.

GRIFFIN
They're smarter than you'd think.

CORENTIN
Please. We're talking about a bunch of 13 or 14-year-olds. I'm starting to wonder if your breakthrough earlier was just a lucky break.

GRIFFIN
I'm not a doof?

CORENTIN
What?

GRIFFIN
And the children are at least 15.

CORENTIN
How do you know that?

GRIFFIN
Because one of them was Emmie Dorian.

CORENTIN
Emmie Dorian? The princess? Why would they send her?

GRIFFIN
I don't know. But don't underestimate her--or the other kids. I think they know about us. See, at the last minute, the princess saw me-

CORENTIN
She saw you?

GRIFFIN
Yes--she figured out my plan and saw me and asked "which one" I was.
CORENTIN

What did you say?

GRiffin

She ran off right after. But the princess is a smart one.

CORENTIN

Really. What I think is that you are less capable than I thought. I'll handle this.

How?

CORENTIN

They're obviously coming after us. So we wait, and we prepare. Or should I say I will wait and prepare. You just try to be useful.

CORENTIN storms off and turns his head at the last moment.

CORENTIN (CONT.)

Doof!

CORENTIN exits stage right. GRIFFIN looks after him offended.

GRiffin

I'm not a doof! Why do people keep saying that?

GRiffin runs after CORENTIN and exits stage right.

End of scene VI.

ACT II, SCENE VII

EMMIE, OLIVE, AIDEN, and ASHER enter stage right. Blocking the path to Faran is a tunnel at stage left.

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL is hiding, unseen, in the tunnel.

ASHER

What's this?

OLIVE

Uh, a tunnel?
ASHER
Thanks, Olive. I meant, do you think it's safe?

EMMIE
It's just a tunnel. Why wouldn't it be?

ASHER
I'm just saying, stranger things have happened.

EMMIE
And stranger things are going to happen. I doubt there's anything weird lurking in there. Faran is just on the other side of the tunnel.

AIDEN
And then we'll find Corentin and Griffin?

OLIVE
Remind me again how that works?

EMMIE
I've told you a million times. Quinn said she'd make sure we found out where Corentin was once we got to Faran.

OLIVE
And how is she going to do that again?

EMMIE
(uncertain)
Like I said... I don't know yet. It will just...happen I guess?

OLIVE
I don't like that plan.

EMMIE
(frustrated)
It's the only one we've got. Come on, let's go.

EMMIE, OLIVE, AIDEN, and ASHER walk toward the tunnel. Once they get close, though, KNOWLEDGE KNOLL jumps out of the tunnel. She is wearing an elaborate costume that is covered in all sorts of nature, like flowers, leaves, grass, etc.
Her coat, specifically, has lots of leaves on it. EMMIE, OLIVE, AIDEN, and ASHER all jump and yell in shock.

ASHER

(to EMMIE, mocking)
"I doubt there's anything weird lurking in there?" What the heck is that?

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
You don't know who I am? How disappointing. Though of course, you're not the one who reads.

ASHER
I-uh-what?

AIDEN
Wait a minute. I know what you are.

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
And you are the one who reads.

ASHER
Want to explain to us cool kids who or what you are?

AIDEN
She's a Knowledge Knoll, Asher.

EMMIE

(in realization)
A Knowledge Knoll. I never dreamed I'd ever meet one. I don't think my parents have even seen one.

ASHER
Right, so I vaguely remember learning about Knowledge Trolls-

AIDEN AND EMMIE

Knolls.

ASHER
Whatever. I remembered learning about Knowledge Knolls when I was younger, something about smart people, but that's about it.
OLIVE
Seriously Asher? Even I remember learning about the Knowledge Knolls.

EMMIE
And they're not people. They're mythical creatures who live for thousands of years and know everything.

ASHER
So like the witches?

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
Oh please. We are much better than the witches.

AIDEN
Witches don't know everything.

ASHER
Then why didn't we get one of these guys to help us?

AIDEN
(to KNOWLEDGE KNOLL)
You'll have to forgive my twin. We're-

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
Fraternal. Yes, yes I know.

AIDEN
Right.

(to ASHER)
Knowledge Knolls are incredibly rare. No one knows how many there are, where they live, when they show up. Sometimes they can be found at guard before dangerous places, but you can't count on them to be there or to help you.

(whispering to ASHER)
They're a bit stingy with their knowledge.

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
All-knowing creature, definitely heard that.

ASHER
Ohhh, that all sounds vaguely familiar now.

(to KNOWLEDGE KNOLL)
So what are you doing here?
EMMIE
Asher! This is a super rare, highly intelligent creature! You need to be more polite.

(to KNOWLEDGE KNOLL, in exaggerated politeness)
Hello, ancient, wise one. We are honored that you have decided to bestow us with your otherworldly presence. May I request that you inform us of why you are here?

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
(also in exaggerated politeness)
Dearest Princess Emmie Dorian of Paxton, I have graced you with my presence for one pivotal reason.

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL pauses dramatically before dropping the polite charade

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
To help ya defeat the baddies!

EMMIE
Um, sorry?

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
Corentin? Griffin? Those dudes need to go down. And the four of you just need a push in the right direction before you're ready to defeat them.

While saying “push,” KNOWLEDGE KNOLL gives OLIVE a slight push. She recovers before falling. KNOWLEDGE KNOLL walks over to a delighted ASHER and begins doing a complicated handshake with him.

OLIVE
(whispering to EMMIE and AIDEN)
Are you sure about this one? Is she really an all-knowing Knowledge Knoll?

AIDEN
She looks exactly like the images in my books.

EMMIE
Same here.
OLIVE
But you said they're rare, and you don't know anyone who's seen one?

EMMIE
I think a few guards have before my time, but no one I know.

OLIVE
So she could be... not?

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
(without breaking a beat in the handshake)
Pipe down, Olive. I am a true Knowledge Knoll. It's so exhausting knowing lit-er-a-llly everything, and trying to be all serious is just too much. Who said you can't be smart and silly?

ASHER
I like her!

OLIVE is obviously not convinced. KNOWLEDGE KNOLL sighs and stops her handshake with ASHER, walking over to OLIVE.

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
Fine. Olive, your parents have known that you accidentally broke the necklace meant for Princess Emmie for a while now, but they don't want to confront you about it because they're still hoping you'll come clean, so it's probably best if you tell them first thing when you get back.

EMMIE
(to OLIVE)
You broke my necklace?

OLIVE
No!

OLIVE is silent while KNOWLEDGE KNOLL gives her an "Oh really?" look.

OLIVE
Okay fine, yes, but I didn't mean to!

EMMIE
No biggie. I hate jewelry anyway.
KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
Not true. You hate the jewelry your parents give you because it's too flashy and you think it makes you look weird.

OLIVE
Wait, does that include the jewelry my parents make?

EMMIE
(hurriedly)
Okay, okay—we believe you. You're the real deal, Knowledge Knoll. Can we please move on to Corentin and Griffin now?

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
But I was having so much fun. Fine. You're almost at your destination. It won't be long until it's time to face Corentin and Griffin. But before I can let you pass, you must answer a question.

OLIVE
What? Why?

EMMIE
What type of question?

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
A curious question. More of a puzzle, really.

OLIVE
Again...why?

AIDEN
Olive.

OLIVE
What? We've battled pixies, escaped from a bear, and now this mystical Knowledge Knoll says we have to answer a puzzle or else she won't let us pass? Seems kind of dumb.

EMMIE
Olive! You can't go around saying that all-knowing, rare creatures have dumb ideas. They're all-knowing.

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
Appreciate the support. But perhaps if I explain for your doubting companion?
KNOWLEDGE KNOLL looks at OLIVE. OLIVE gestures as if to say "Be my guest." KNOWLEDGE KNOLL’S goofy persona becomes slightly more serious.

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
As your friend Aiden said, we Knowledge Knolls are "stingy with our knowledge." It's not because we don't like sharing our wisdom. We love it. But knowledge is a tricky thing. Too much of it given to the wrong person at the wrong time can be very dangerous. And humans are often given one piece of knowledge and draw the wrong conclusion.

EMMIE
Like Corentin.

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
Yes. The four of you are doing a brave thing trying to retrieve the enchanted orchid and save your kingdom. You've overcome a lot of challenges. But I'm afraid your biggest challenge still lies ahead. You need knowledge to defeat this last challenge.

OLIVE
And you can't just give it to us because....

EMMIE
Because it's like the witches. The witches said we were worthy because of fate. We have to be worthy of the Knowledge Knoll too. To gain knowledge, we need to prove that we can use it right.

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
You're a smart one, Emmie. Though of course I already knew that.

ASHER
Any chance that was the puzzle?

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
No.

ASHER
Worth a shot. Okay, Knowledge Troll-

OLIVE, EMMIE, AND AIDEN

- Knoll-

ASHER
hit us with that puzzle.
KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
It's a simple puzzle. All you have to do is find something for me. A purple leaf.

OLIVE
A purple leaf?

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
A purple leaf. It's nearby. You won't have to go far to find it. Find me a purple leaf, and I will let you pass.

OLIVE
This is ridiculous. A purple leaf? Those don't exist.

EMMIE
They have to.

OLIVE
This is dumb. I'm going.

OLIVE walks toward the tunnel, but before she can walk in, she is thrown back by an invisible force.

ASHER
Nice one, Olive.

OLIVE
(rubbing her shoulder and mumbling)
I guess we gotta find a purple leaf.

EMMIE
So how do we do this? Just all look around for a purple leaf?

AIDEN
I guess. We should split up. All look in different areas.

AIDEN, ASHER, OLIVE, and EMMIE all walk to different sections of the stage to look for the purple leaf. They pick up objects, look underneath bushes, etc., but they cannot find anything. EMMIE gets increasingly frustrated.

AIDEN
Something tells me we aren't doing this right.
ASHER
You think?

EMMIE
I think we're looking at this all wrong.

OLIVE
I, also, picked up on that.

EMMIE
(grasping at straws)
Is this supposed to be abstract? Is there a such thing as a figurative purple leaf?
Something that symbolizes the uniqueness of a purple leaf?

AIDEN
(gently)
That doesn't really make sense.

EMMIE
None of this makes sense! I'm tired of all these vague, mythical problems and riddles and
destinies or whatever.

(to KNOWLEDGE KNOLL)
A witch said I was destined. I got us past the pixies and the cliff. Sure, I messed up with
the bear, but then I helped us escape. Is that not enough?

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
You know the answer to that, Emmie. You already said the answer.

EMMIE
But I'm tired of having to always prove myself? And why do I have to prove myself by
finding something as small as a purple leaf? I mean, it's like you said, Olive. Purple
leaves don't exist!

(pause)
Do they?

OLIVE
I don't know. Ask the Knowledge Knoll. She knows everything.

EMMIE
Funny.
OLIVE
Wait a minute...That's it! Let's ask the Knowledge Knoll!

EMMIE
The Knowledge Knoll isn't going to answer questions for us. That's the whole point of the riddle.

OLIVE
Do you have a better idea?

EMMIE shrugs. OLIVE walks over to KNOWLEDGE KNOLL, who has been watching the four kids with great amusement.

OLIVE (CONT'D.)

Do purple leaves exist?

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
You're asking me?

OLIVE
Yes. You know everything.

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
You're asking me for help on a puzzle that I gave you so that I can let you pass through this tunnel?

OLIVE
Yes.

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
And you think that is going to work?

OLIVE
Yes.

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
Fabulous idea! Now, you aren't going to find a bright, flashy purple leaf like I'm sure-actually know- you are all thinking. However, leaves that are shades of purple, perhaps a deep plum, do exist. Usually when the weather is changing and the leaves change colors. And they are quite pretty I may add. My favorite kind of leaf.

OLIVE
Any chance you can tell us where we might find one?
KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
Props for trying, but no. I cannot tell you the answer to the puzzle.

OLIVE
I figured.

AIDEN
So now what? That didn't really help us.

ASHER
Yeah, all we found out was that Knowledge Knoll likes purple leaves.

ASHER and OLIVE look at each other in sudden understanding.

OLIVE
Of course!

ASHER
Knowledge Knoll, you sneaky little purple-leaf, loving creature.

EMMIE
(aside to AIDEN)
Any idea what's going on?

AIDEN
No clue.

OLIVE and ASHER walk over to KNOWLEDGE KNOLL, playing along.

OLIVE
I gotta say. I love your coat.

ASHER
I do too. Mind if I try it on?

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
Well this is hardly the time for fashion advice, but I suppose it is okay.

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL takes off her coat and hands it to OLIVE and ASHER. They begin looking all over the coat.
OLIVE

It has to be here somewhere.

ASHER

Remember, it may be a darker color.

EMMIE

Still no idea what's going on.

AIDEN

(the realization coming to him.)

Oh!

EMMIE

Now you get it?

AIDEN

Emmie, look at what's on her coat.

EMMIE

Leaves?

(it dawns on her)

Leaves!

AIDEN and EMMIE join OLIVE and ASHER as they look for the purple leaf. After a few seconds, OLIVE finds it.

OLIVE

Got it!

(looking at KNOWLEDGE KNOLL)

Uh, would you like us to rip it off?

OLIVE walks over to KNOWLEDGE KNOLL holding her coat with a hand on the purple leaf. Spotlight on the leaf.

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL

That won't be necessary.
EMMIE
Soooon? Did we pass? Er, did Olive and Asher pass?

AIDEN
Hey!

EMMIE
(to AIDEN)
We didn't really do anything. I blew up, and neither of us understood the leaf thing at first.

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
You passed. You all did.

OLIVE, EMMIE, AIDEN, and ASHER whoop and cheer.

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
(indicating her coat)
If I may?

OLIVE
Oh, yes! Sorry!

OLIVE gives the coat back to KNOWLEDGE KNOLL.

EMMIE
So is that it? Can we go now?

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
You may.

EMMIE
Thank you. And, uh, I'm sorry about earlier. I know that it's important to prove we can handle knowledge and magic.

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
It can get tiring having to constantly prove yourself or do things you think pointless. But you don't have to do it alone. That is why Quinn told you to bring three others with you. And while your choices may have been unconventional, it looks like they were the right choices.
EMMIE

(smiling)
I guess they were. Thank you.

EMMIE pauses.

EMMIE
Wait. Can you tell us where exactly Corentin and Griffin are?

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL

(grinning)
I was hoping you'd think to ask that. After you walk through the tunnel, you'll be in Faran. Many of the buildings are small or shabby. Corentin and Griffin will be in the only house that looks grand. Tall, large, and with a dark blue door—though I think they should have gone with the dark green. The blue just pops too much.

EMMIE
Thank you.

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
And Emmie? Remember that sometimes, the answer is a lot closer than you may think. Good luck to you all.

EMMIE
A lot closer. Okay. I'll keep that in mind.

OLIVE, EMMIE, AIDEN, and ASHER begin to leave, but AIDEN stops and the rest stop as well.

AIDEN

(to KNOWLEDGE KNOLL)
So if you know everything...do you know if we're going to succeed or not?

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
I can't see into the future. We only collect knowledge from the past and present. We can estimate the future based on our knowledge, but if there's anything humans have proved to us over the past thousands of years, it's that you rarely do what's expected.

EMMIE
Do you think you know what may happen to us?
I have my guesses.

(to EMMIE)
Every second that passes, the future changes. It can look one way, but if only one person moves differently than we expect, the future shifts and looks the opposite. But Emmie, so long as you remember to look at what is never looked at, you'll be fine.

OLIVE
"Look what is never looked at?" What does that mean?

It's for Emmie to find out.

EMMIE
I'll figure it out. I hope.

EMMIE, OLIVE, AIDEN, and ASHER exit stage left. KNOWLEDGE KNOLL walks around and finds a flower.

EMMIE, OLIVE, AIDEN, and ASHER enter stage right into FARAN. Onstage, the setting should reflect a village that is poorer or run-down--unkempt trees, chipped painting, etc. EMMIE, AIDEN, and ASHER survey the scene with shock while OLIVE remains unfazed.

EMMIE
This is Faran?

OLIVE
Home sweet home.

EMMIE
Does the whole village look like this?
OLIVE
What, no velvet curtains or crown jewels?

EMMIE
Sorry, I didn't mean to sound rude. But it looks so...run-down.

ASHER
I'm no princess but nowhere in the Royal Village looks like this.

OLIVE
That's because it's the Royal Village.

AIDEN
Is it just Faran though? None of the villages we passed on the way here looked like this.

OLIVE
It's not all this bad. The house I grew up in was a lot nicer. But there are a lot of pockets like this. We're a smaller village, and not a lot of people work. So some of the places with fewer people or less money get a little...run-down, as you said.

EMMIE
I had no idea.

ASHER
Has it always been like this?

OLIVE
As long as I've been here. But...

AIDEN
But what?

EMMIE
But that storm, the one that Corentin and Griffin blame on us? That's the reason Faran looks like this.

OLIVE
I don't know much about it, but my parents do. I don't think it's the only cause. But it definitely didn't help.

AIDEN
We should do something about it.
ASHER

Like what?

EMMIE

Did you forget I'm the princess? I'll tell my parents about it. Maybe we can do something about it?

While EMMIE and OLIVE are talking, ASHER is looking into the distance/offstage, trying to find Corentin's house.

OLIVE

Like what?

EMMIE

I-I don't know yet. But I'll think of something.

OLIVE

(smiling)
I bet you will. You're a lot smarter than I first gave you credit for.

EMMIE

Thanks...I think?

OLIVE

Sure thing, princess.

ASHER finally finds Corentin's house. He points in the distance offstage.

ASHER

Hey, I see it!

OLIVE

See what?

ASHER

A flying horse. Corentin and Griffin's place, Olive, what do you think?

OLIVE rolls her eyes. AIDEN, OLIVE, and EMMIE crowd around ASHER and look offstage to where he is pointing. They get excited.
EMMIE
That's it! It has to be. It has a blue door and everything.

ASHER
Knowledge Knoll was right. Green would have been better. The blue just pops too much.

OLIVE
So this is it then? It's time for us to go...defeat the bad guys?

ASHER
It would help if you sounded a little more sure of yourself.

EMMIE
But she's right. We don't really know what we're getting into. We don't know how we're supposed to get the enchanted orchid back.

OLIVE
No direction from Quinn?

EMMIE
No.

ASHER
No weird little creature here to help us?

EMMIE
No.

AIDEN
No genius Emmie plan?

EMMIE
No! I don't know. Getting here was the easy part. But now, I mean what am I supposed to do? I'm a 15-year-old princess. I can't save the kingdom! I couldn't even figure out the Knowledge Knoll's riddle.

AIDEN
Of course you can save the kingdom, Emmie. Quinn wouldn't have chosen you if you couldn't.

OLIVE
And I seem to remember a certain Knowledge Knoll telling you that you didn't have to do everything yourself.
ASHER
We got this, Emmie.

EMMIE
You're right. So what do we do?

AIDEN
We sneak in. They may know we are coming, but they don't know when. If we're quiet enough, perhaps we can get in without them noticing.

EMMIE
And how are we supposed to find the enchanted orchid?

AIDEN
I don't know. We look. Search anywhere that could hide an enchanted orchid.

EMMIE
And if we can't find it?

AIDEN
Then maybe we have to confront Corentin and Griffin.

EMMIE
But how?

OLIVE
Don't sell us short, princess. After all, we go past the pixies-

AIDEN
-figured out a way to get over the cliff-

ASHER
-distracted a giant bear and escaped from Griffin or Corentin

AIDEN
-and figured out the Knowledge Knoll's puzzle.

EMMIE
(smiling and calmer)
You're right. We can do this. We may be young, but we're also strong and smart and we can do anything the adults can do.
OLIVE
Don't get gushy on us now princess.

EMMIE laughs. AIDEN rolls his eyes, but he's smiling.

AIDEN
So we go in together?

ASHER
Actually...I think one of us should stay behind.

EMMIE
What? Why?

ASHER
Well it's like we said. We don't know what's in there. Just in case something happens, it may help to have someone behind.

OLIVE
He has a point.

ASHER
I can stay behind. I'll keep a lookout in case I see someone coming in.

EMMIE
And if we're gone a while or something doesn't feel right-

ASHER
I'll think of something.

AIDEN
I trust you.

ASHER
Go show us why you're meant to be a guard.

EMMIE, OLIVE, and AIDEN hug ASHER and get ready to go.

EMMIE
Here goes nothing.

EMMIE, OLIVE, and AIDEN exit stage left in the direction of CORENTIN'S place. ASHER stays behind and finds a place to hide. Curtains close. End of scene I.
ACT III, SCENE II

Lights up on CORENTIN'S home. Everything about the setting should give off a negative tone: dark colors, shadows, etc. Strewn around the stage are different items that the kids can search looking for the enchanted orchid (boxes, under chair cushions, etc.) Toward stage left is an open door that leads into a room offstage. CORENTIN and GRIFFIN peak their heads out of the door but stay offstage.

GRIFFIN
Do you think they'll be here soon?

CORENTIN
Give it time. But I wouldn't worry. They won't find the enchanted orchid.

GRIFFIN and CORENTIN poke their heads back offstage so they are no longer visible. EMMIE, OLIVE, and AIDEN enter stage right into CORENTIN'S home.

OLIVE
So, this is it. It looks like no one is here.

EMMIE
Let's start searching. The sooner we can get out of here, the better. I don't like this place.

EMMIE, OLIVE, and AIDEN search the stage for the enchanted orchid while talking:

Anything?

AIDEN
Nothing.

OLIVE
How do we know it's even here? It could be anywhere.

EMMIE
Let's search for just a little bit more before giving up.

OLIVE
I wasn't saying to give up-
AIDEN

Less talking, more searching.

OLIVE

Aye, aye, captain of the guard.

EMMIE

Shh!

While the kids continue to bicker in soft whispers and search, CORENTIN and GRIFFIN slowly and quietly enter from stage left. The kids have their backs turned, searching, and do not see either CORENTIN or GRIFFIN. They stand there, amused and threatening, for a moment until CORENTIN speaks.

CORENTIN

What a delightful surprise.

EMMIE, OLIVE, and AIDEN jump or yell in shock and turn around. Seeing CORENTIN and GRIFFIN, they take a few steps back. Both AIDEN and OLIVE instinctively step in front of EMMIE.

EMMIE

Corentin.

CORENTIN

I see you've learned who is who.

GRiffin

Question: Why do you think that he's Corentin and I'm not?

OLIVE

Because you scream sidekick. It's obvious now next to Mr. Attitude.

CORENTIN

For someone who is about to be defeated, you have quite a temper. Tell me: who exactly are you?

(turning to AIDEN)

And you?
AIDEN

We're-

CORENTIN

No, stop. I don't actually care. You're all children and

(gesturing to EMMIE)

this one is that princess.

EMMIE steps in front of AIDEN and OLIVE.

EMMIE

That princess? What does that mean?

CORENTIN scoffs. OLIVE steps forward.

OLIVE

Listen, dude. Just because you grew up in a poor place doesn't mean you can be a royal jerk.

While CORENTIN and GRIFFIN are distracted by OLIVE, EMMIE steps back and creeps over to look for the enchanted orchid. She catches AIDEN'S eye and gestures for him to do the same.

CORENTIN

How noble of you. I'm sure you understand, coming from piles of gold in the Royal Village.

OLIVE

Actually, I didn't grow up in the Royal Village. I grew up here, in Faran.

CORENTIN and GRIFFIN look at OLIVE in shock and betrayal. They now have a laser focus on her, and EMMIE and AIDEN continue to search for the enchanted orchid quietly.

GRIFFIN

What?

OLIVE

You wouldn't know me. Probably because I was "a child" when we left not too long ago, and you're too self-absorbed to see anything beyond the clothes and jewelry you wear. But I think you'd remember my parents? Merida and Josh Tanul? The seamstresses and jewelry makers?
CORENTIN

The traitors who moved to the Royal Village to make clothing and jewelry for the family. Filth.

OLIVE

If that's what you think, then I'm proud to come from a family of filth.

CORENTIN

You're too young to understand. The Royal Village doesn't care about us. The Royal family doesn't even look at us. I lost everything because of that storm. And I'm not the only one.

GRiffin

And the Royal family did nothing.

Hearing this and unable to say nothing, EMMIE looks at CORENTIN and Griffin.

EMMIE

You're wrong.

CORENTIN and Griffin look at EMMIE and AIDEN’s searching attempts in shock. CORENTIN glares at Griffin.

CORENTIN

You didn't see them searching?

GRiffin

Neither did you!

EMMIE

I don't know the whole story of what happened, but I know my family and I know my kingdom. Not giving Faran enough help all those years ago was a mistake, but it wasn't on purpose. We know now that we are wrong, and we can do something about it.

GRiffin

Like what?

EMMIE

We can ask people from Faran--you even--what we can do. We can send teams to rebuild homes or clear paths that are run-down. We can make sure you are receiving enough food and supplies. We can do something. But we can't do it while the rest of the kingdom is being destroyed by the storms, and the longer the enchanted orchid is away from the Royal Village, the worse it's going to get.
CORENTIN
I don't care about the kingdom. As long as the enchanted orchid is on me, my village is safe.

EMMIE
But other people are going through what you did all those years ago! Having the enchanted orchid in the Royal Village doesn't mean everyone else suffers while we prosper. It restores balance and fairness.

CORENTIN
And what would you know about fairness?

EMMIE
A lot more than you would think. I may be the princess, but I am not what people expect a princess to look like.

GRIFFIN
And yet you still love your kingdom.

EMMIE
Loving my kingdom doesn't mean I love everything about it. But I will always fight for my people.

CORENTIN
And I will always fight for my control.

OLIVE
There's no convincing him, Emmie. He's too self-absorbed and controlling to trust anyone but himself. We need to find the enchanted orchid and get out of here.

GRIFFIN
(laughing)
Good luck finding it.

CORENTIN
And good luck getting past us.

EMMIE
We've faced bigger animals than you to get here.

(looking at GRIFFIN)
Literally.
Suddenly, CORENTIN and GRIFFIN run at EMMIE. OLIVE and AIDEN jump in front of her and begin fighting CORENTIN and GRIFFIN.

AIDEN
Emmie! Look for the enchanted orchid.

OLIVE
You're the smartest of all of us. We'll hold them off.

EMMIE
Remind me to thank you for the compliment later.

CORENTIN and GRIFFIN fight OLIVE and AIDEN. AIDEN pulls out his sword while OLIVE grabs nearby objects to throw at CORENTIN AND GRIFFIN. Although CORENTIN and GRIFFIN are stronger, OLIVE and AIDEN are faster and they continuously dodge them. While they are fighting, EMMIE frantically searches for the enchanted orchid. The fight moves from stage right to stage left, and EMMIE moves her search to stage right. While the fighters are busy looking the other way, ASHER pokes his head out on stage right.

ASHER
Psst. Emmie!

EMMIE'S head whips toward ASHER in surprise. She looks toward the fighters, who are engaged in their fight and don't notice ASHER. She waves ASHER inside and gestures for him to hide behind something, perhaps a chair or a large chest.

EMMIE
Asher! What are you doing?

ASHER
I got worried. It'd been a while, and I thought I heard yelling.

EMMIE
We can't find the enchanted orchid, and I don't think Aiden and Olive can hold off Corentin and Griffin for long. I don't know what to do.

ASHER
Have you searched everywhere here?
EMMIE

Yes! No? I don't know!

ASHER

Emmie, remember what everyone has told you. I don't think Corentin is going to hide the enchanted orchid under a pillow or an unlocked box.

EMMIE

But where would he hide it?

ASHER

I don't know.

EMMIE

Then how-

ASHER

Watch him.

EMMIE

Corentin?

ASHER

Yes. Watch him and see if he gives anything away.

EMMIE

Like what?

ASHER

Like-

The fighting gets louder and starts to move toward EMMIE and ASHER. EMMIE looks toward the fight and gestures for ASHER to hide, who complies.

EMMIE

I'll watch him. Stay hidden.

EMMIE watches OLIVE and AIDEN fight against CORENTIN and GRIFFIN. CORENTIN and GRIFFIN easily dodge OLIVE and AIDEN.
EMMIE

(quietly, to herself)
Come on, Emmie. Think. Wait, did Corentin look over there?

EMMIE glances toward a spot on stage in between herself and CORENTIN.

EMMIE (CONT'D).
So maybe he's hidden the enchanted orchid there?

She glances back at CORENTIN who is not looking at the place EMMIE had indicated.

EMMIE (CONT'D).
No, he wasn't looking over there at all. This is impossible.

EMMIE looks back at the fight. Spotlight on OLIVE and CORENTIN fighting. OLIVE tries to strike CORENTIN in his right shoulder, which is near his brooch, and succeeds. CORENTIN jumps back and instinctively places a hand on the brooch. From here on, CORENTIN heavily protects his right side.

EMMIE
Wait a minute. What was that?

EMMIE briefly looks around the worn-down setting of CORENTIN'S home.

EMMIE
Corentin doesn't care about fancy things. So why is he now focusing on protecting that brooch?

As EMMIE is pondering this, the realization slowly dawns on her. The next few moments should be portrayed as if we are seeing inside EMMIE'S head. OLIVE, AIDEN, GRIFFIN, CORENTIN, and ASHER all freeze in place. The lights dim with a spotlight on EMMIE. KNOWLEDGE KNOLL enters stage right.

KNOWLEDGE KNOLL
Always remember that sometimes, the answer is a lot closer than you may think. So long as you remember to look at what is never looked at, you'll be fine.
KNOWLEDGE KNOLL exits stage right. OLIVE unfreezes and walks toward EMMIE.

OLIVE
He's too self-absorbed and controlling to trust anyone but himself.

OLIVE resumes her earlier position and freezes again. ASHER stands up from his hiding spot and looks at EMMIE

ASHER
Emmie, remember what everyone has told you. I don't think Coretin is going to hide the enchanted orchid under a pillow or an unlocked box. Watch him and see if he gives anything away.

ASHER resumes his previous position and freezes. The lights come back up and everyone resumes movement. The realization dawns on EMMIE'S face.

EMMIE
That's it!

EMMIE runs over to AIDEN. GRIFFIN is about to punch AIDEN, but EMMIE pulls him out of the way.

AIDEN
Emmie! Thanks but-

EMMIE
No time.

EMMIE whispers something in AIDEN'S ear. The realization dawns on him as well. He grabs OLIVE and whispers the same to her. While AIDEN and OLIVE whisper, EMMIE fights off GRIFFIN and CORENTIN.

OLIVE
Hey, doof!

GRIFFIN and CORENTIN stop. CORENTIN looks at GRIFFIN.

CORENTIN
She's talking to you.
OLIVE
Did Corentin ever tell you where he hid the enchanted orchid?

GRiffin
(nervous, obviously lying)
Of...of course he did.

AIDEN
Likely story.

EMMIE
Corentin doesn't trust anyone.

CORENTIN
A very astute observation.

EMMIE
You also are obsessed with control. That's what this whole thing has been about, really. Your need to control something. And a mistrustful, controlling person wouldn't hide the most valuable object in the kingdom under a pillow or in an unlocked box. He doesn't trust anything or anyone...except himself.

The realization dawns on CORENTIN, but before he can do anything, AIDEN and OLIVE lung at him, holding him back.

CORENTIN
Griffin! Do something.

GRiffin
Why didn't you tell me where you hid it?

CORENTIN
Because...because...because you couldn't even stop a bunch of children!

EMMIE
And neither could you, Corentin.

EMMIE walks over to CORENTIN, who struggles but cannot break free of OLIVE and AIDEN'S hold. She takes the brooch off of CORENTIN and opens the clasp, revealing the enchanted orchid.
GRiffin
The enchanted orchid has been on you the whole time?

EMMIE
Of course it has been. He would never let his control out of sight.

GRiffin
That makes two of us.

GRiffin lunges at EMMIE to grab the enchanted orchid, but before he can grab it, EMMIE throws it toward where ASHER is hiding. Everyone except EMMIE yells in shock because they do not know ASHER is there. ASHER pops up from his hiding spot and catches the enchanted orchid.

AIDEN
Asher?

CORENTIN
(to GRIFFIN)
You didn't notice that one of the kids wasn't even here?

GRiffin
I...well...it all happened so fast.

EMMIE
Asher, run! We'll catch up with you.

ASHER runs and exits stage right.

CORENTIN
(to GRIFFIN)
Don’t just stand there. Go after him!

GRiffin starts to run, but EMMIE trips him and keeps her foot on his back, preventing him from standing.

AIDEN
Emmie, go. We'll hold them off.
OLIVE
Yeah, there's no way we can trust Asher to hold an important object by himself.

EMMIE
We'll come back for you.

AIDEN AND OLIVE
Go!

EMMIE releases GRIFFIN and runs off stage right.

OLIVE
Still just a bunch of kids, are we?

Filled with anger, CORENTIN yells and finally releases himself from AIDEN and OLIVE'S hold.

AIDEN
We can do this all day.

OLIVE and AIDEN fight CORENTIN and GRIFFIN. The fight moves closer to stage left. OLIVE notices the doorway where CORENTIN and GRIFFIN came from and lights up with an idea. She takes a quick look behind her toward stage right, pretending to see something.

OLIVE
(to stage right)
Hey! Why are you here?

Distracted, CORENTIN and GRIFFIN look to stage right. While they are distracted, OLIVE shoves them through the doorway and offstage. AIDEN catches on to her plan and helps her shove them in. They shove the door closed while CORENTIN and GRIFFIN shout in surprise. AIDEN holds the door closed.

AIDEN
Quick, find stuff to put in front of it.

OLIVE moves various items (chests, chairs, etc.) in front of the door to keep it closed. They step back, and seeing that CORENTIN and GRIFFIN haven't gotten free yet, they grin, satisfied.
AIDEN (CONT'D).

Good thinking.

OLIVE
Thanks, but it won't hold them for long. Let's go.

To the background of CORENTIN and GRIFFIN's muffled shouts, OLIVE and AIDEN exit stage right. Lights dim and curtain closes. End of Scene II.

ACT III SCENE III

EMMIE and ASHER enter stage right running. They are panting, out of breath, and obviously tired.

EMMIE
Still got it?

ASHER holds up the enchanted orchid.

ASHER
Yup. But maybe you should take it for now. I trust you more with it.

ASHER gives EMMIE the enchanted orchid. She tucks it away.

ASHER
How long do you think Olive and Aiden can hold them off?

EMMIE
Not that long. We've got to get back to the Royal Village.

As EMMIE and ASHER begin to run off stage left, OLIVE and AIDEN enter stage right, running and out of breath. Everyone freezes for a moment when ASHER and EMMIE notice OLIVE and AIDEN and vice versa. Then they start to whoop and talk over each other.

EMMIE
Aiden! Olive!

OLIVE
Why are you here?
AIDEN
I gotta say, Asher, I never even noticed you were there.

ASHER
What can I say?

They all give quick embraces.

EMMIE
What happened? Why are you both here and not with Corentin and Griffin?

OLIVE
We'll tell you about it on the way home. I don't think they'll stay trapped for long, and we need to get going. Got the enchanted orchid?

Emmie pats her bag.

EMMIE
Got it. Let's go.

EMMIE, AIDEN, OLIVE, and ASHER exit stage left, running. End of SCENE III.

ACT III SCENE IV

Curtains open on the setting of the castle. QUEEN ANNABETH, KING TOBIAS, GUARD WILLIAM, and COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS are there, anxiously awaiting the kids.

COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS
Do you think it means anything?

QUEEN ANNABETH
It has to mean something. Out of the blue, the weather clears up?

COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS
It could be a false lead.

KING TOBIAS
It could be, or they could have gotten the enchanted orchid, and they're on their way here now.
GUARD WILLIAM
But wouldn’t they have to be in the Royal Village for it to stay balanced and work?

QUEEN ANNABETH
It is a rather big village, so maybe-

EMMIE, OLIVE, AIDEN, and ASHER enter stage right, running. When they get to the castle, they stop, panting and out of breath.

QUEEN ANNABETH AND KING TOBIAS

Emmie!

EMMIE runs over to her parents. The three hug.

QUEEN ANNABETH
You’re back! You’re safe.

EMMIE
(smiling)
I’m a lot tougher than you think.

QUEEN ANNABETH looks beyond EMMIE to see OLIVE, ASHER, and AIDEN. She smiles.

QUEEN ANNABETH
You’re all safe and here.

KING TOBIAS
That’s what’s most important.

COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS
(clearing his throat)
Um, is anyone going to mention the elephant in the room? The whole reason the children left in the first place?

OLIVE
Oh, give up your superiority complex already.

ASHER
It’s a little exhausting, and I thought I was used to it from Aiden.
AIDEN

(ignoring ASHER)

It's also just rude.

COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS

(under his breath)

Children.

EMMIE

Well, you have nothing to worry about.

EMMIE pulls out the enchanted orchid, cradling it. Everyone on stage gasps and takes a step closer.

KING TOBIAS

Emmie! You did it!

QUEEN ANNABETH

But how? Was it hard?

EMMIE

It's a very long story.

The following dialogue should be said in quick succession.

EMMIE (CONT'D.)

There were pixies-

OLIVE

And this giant cliff—and by the way, Emmie is super strong.

Thanks, Olive.

EMMIE

OLIVE

Anytime princess.

ASHER

Griffin tried to kill us with a bear.
ALL ADULTS
What?!

AIDEN
But he didn't succeed.

EMMIE
And we didn't know it was Griffin at the time.

ASHER
You know, he really is a doof. I don't know how he fooled everyone.

GUARD WILLIAM
Uh...

AIDEN
Anyway, we met a Knowledge Knoll.

ALL ADULTS
What?

KING TOBIAS
You met a Knowledge Knoll?

QUEEN ANNABELLE
We haven't even seen one.

EMMIE
Yeah, and she was very strange. Not one of my shining moments.

ASHER
Olive figured out the riddle.

OLIVE
You helped.

AIDEN
Emmie and I sort of stood there.

EMMIE
(very quickly)
And then we got to Corentin's place but Asher stayed behind, and we fought them off until we realized he was mistrustful and obsessed with control and that the enchanted orchid was in his brooch so I grabbed it and threw it to Asher and we ran and Olive and Aiden trapped them in a room and ran too and now we're here.
EMMIE takes a deep breath. Everyone sits in silence for a moment, processing EMMIE’S words.

GUARD WILLIAM
Can you repeat that last part again?

KING TOBIAS
Later. Now, we need to figure out what to do with the enchanted orchid. And about Corentin and Griffin.

OLIVE
We trapped them in a room, but I don't think it will last for long.

Purple smoke and music onstage to signal the arrival of a witch. During this, QUINN enters stage left.

QUINN
You're right. It won't.

(to the four kids)
Congratulations, you four. Though I never doubted you could do it. It was your destiny.

EMMIE
It was definitely an adventure. But, Quinn...what now?

OLIVE
We brought back the enchanted orchid, so everything is fixed, right?

EMMIE
Well, almost everything. We have to do something about Corentin and Griffin.

KING TOBIAS
Now that we have the enchanted orchid back, we can send our guards out to Faran to bring back Corentin and Griffin and lock them up.

EMMIE
Actually, I'm not sure that's the best choice.

KING TOBIAS
What?
EMMIE
It's just that... well... Corentin and Griffin were in the wrong. And there should be consequences for that. But I don't know if locking them up in a small cell for the rest of their life is the best answer.

QUEEN ANNABETH
Why?

EMMIE looks to OLIVE.

OLIVE
Because of Faran. My parents and I came from a cleaner part of the village, but it was still hard. Not a lot of food, the buildings run-down.

AIDEN
Olive's right. I couldn't believe it when I saw what Faran was like.

ASHER
It's not the best place to live in.

KING TOBIAS
But we've been to Faran before. It's a smaller village, but it was alright.

OLIVE
Some parts of Faran are better than others-the parts that have more jobs. I bet those were the parts you were visiting.

QUEEN ANNABETH
We'll look into this immediately. If any of our people are unhappy, there it's our responsibility to help them.

KING TOBIAS
Of course. But what does this have to do with Corentin and Griffin not being put in jail?

EMMIE
What they did was awful. But it was because they thought they were neglected. I don't think they would have stolen the enchanted orchid if Faran was kept better.

QUEEN ANNABETH
I see. But we can't do nothing.

QUINN
No, but I may have a solution. Paxton is a unique kingdom. Most kingdoms don't have enchanted orchids or magical objects. They're a gift, but also a responsibility.
Corentin and Griffin have proved that they do not have the responsibility to live in a kingdom blessed with a magical object.

EMMIE
Banishment? Is that the answer?

QUINN
They wouldn't leave with nothing.

KING TOBIAS
And there are plenty of wonderful kingdoms surrounding us.

GUARD WILLIAM
I can round up my best guards and leave immediately-

QUINN
Oh, no. That won't be necessary.

QUINN snaps her fingers, and the purple fog comes on stage as Corentin and Griffin enter stage right, befuddled. While the fog starts to clear, they notice EMMIE, OLIVE, AIDEN, and ASHER. Angry, they start to run toward them. ASHER looks on in bewilderment.

QUINN
I'd think long and hard before you try anything.

CORENTIN and GRIFFIN freeze, noticing everyone else on stage for the first time.

GRIFFIN
A witch!

CORENTIN
So this is how those kids got away.

OLIVE
Actually, we got away because we are smarter than you. But please, feel free to blame all your problems on magic. That seems to be a reoccurring theme for you.

EMMIE
(to OLIVE)
True, but maybe not now Olive.
OLIVE

Right. Sorry.

CORENTIN

What's going on?

ASHER

Okay, I'm just gonna say it.

(to QUINN)

 Couldn't you have just done that in the first place?

AIDEN

Have you not been paying attention? We didn't know at first that Corentin was hiding the enchanted orchid on him, and we can't play with magic lightly.

ASHER

But still-

AIDEN

Ignore him. I don't know how we're twins. But we're-

ALL

Fraternal.

KING TOBIAS

Anyway... Corentin and Griffin. You have done a great crime against our kingdom. But we have come to realize that we may have done a crime to you first.

QUEEN ANNABETH

We are sorry that we neglected Faran. We're going to do better.

CORENTIN

It's a little late for that.

QUEEN ANNABETH

In some ways, yes. But it's never too late to do good.

KING TOBIAS

In recognition of the circumstances that led to your crime, we have decided to banish you.

GRIFFIN

Banishment?
KING TOBIAS
Perhaps starting over will give you another chance.

CORENTIN
Abandoning us, once again.

QUEEN ANNABETH
When you stole the enchanted orchid, neglecting how it works and endangering our entire kingdom, you have to face the consequences.

KING TOBIAS
You have until the end of the day to gather your things and leave. Quinn will make sure you leave.

QUEEN ANNABETH
That is all.

CORENTIN
You can’t keep me away forever. One day, I’ll come back and-

Quinn snaps her fingers, and the purple fog comes on stage. QUINN, CORENTIN, and GRIFFIN exit stage right.

QUEEN ANNABETH
It always helps to have a witch on your side.

OLIVE
So that’s it then? We saved the kingdom, and now what?

KING TOBIAS
Now things can go back to normal.

OLIVE
Normal? Yeah.

OLIVE, AIDEN, and ASHER all look disappointed. Emmie, who is also upset, notices this.

EMMIE
Normal until something else happens, you mean.

KING TOBIAS
What do you mean?
COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS
Do you plan on something else happening?

EMMIE
No, but something else will happen. That's just life.

COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS
Yes, but next time the adults will handle it.

EMMIE
Or we could help! I know there are some things we can't do, but we proved there's a lot of things we can do.

OLIVE
(to COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS)
I’d like to see you try escaping from a bear.

QUEEN ANNABETH
But what do you want to do?

AIDEN
Whatever we can do.

OLIVE
We can't really plan for these things.

ASHER
The enchanted orchid thing sort of came out of nowhere.

EMMIE
But give us a chance.

The adults look at each other and shrug. COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS sighs loudly. QUEEN ANNABETH ignores him and looks at the kids, smiling.

QUEEN ANNABETH
We'll see what happens.

A bark is heard offstage. EMMIE perks up and smiles.

EMMIE
Polka!
POLKA runs in stage left. EMMIE greets her and gives her rubs.

EMMIE
Yes, I missed you too. Next time, maybe you can come with us.

GUARD WILLIAM
Oh dear.

While the kids are playing with POLKA, TOWNSPERSON enters stage right in a rush.

TOWNSPERSON
Queen Annabeth! King Tobias! I'm terribly sorry to enter so quickly, but we've got a problem.

QUEEN ANNABETH
What kind of problem?

TOWNSPERSON
It's the children's school. No one can get in.

KING TOBIAS
Why not?

TOWNSPERSON
There's a Knowledge Knoll guarding it. She won't let anyone in, and no one knows why.

A pause while everyone takes in the information. The adults (except for TOWNSPERSON) look at the kids, who grin.

EMMIE
A Knowledge Knoll, you say?

ASHER
Why, we've faced one of those before, haven't we?

AIDEN
I believe we have.

OLIVE
And I believe we got past her.
TOWNSPERSON stares at them in confusion before noticing POLKA. A pained look comes across their face, and they start sneezing. The adults look between each other and the kids, who look at them triumphantly.

COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS sighs in resignation.

COUNCIL MEMBER TRAVIS

Oh, boy. Here we go again.

The lights start to dim as the kids turn to each other to begin their next adventure. TOWNSPERSON sneezes one last time before

BLACKOUT. End of play.