

Spring 2022

## When I Grow Up, Everyone Will Love Me.

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*WHEN I GROW UP, EVERYONE WILL LOVE ME.*

Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of the Arts  
of Bard College

By  
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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To my family and friends for their immeasurable support and encouragement.

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## *INTRODUCTION*

I started dreaming up SPROJ ideas sometime during the first semester of junior year. From the beginning I knew two things to be certain: I wanted to direct a play, and I wanted to collaborate with someone else. I started by reaching out to a few other rising seniors that were playwrights, asking if they would be interested in working together. Unfortunately, most people already had collaborators or had decided that they wanted to work alone. Hannah Eisendrath, a senior in T&P and a very good friend of mine, suggested that we work together. I was hesitant for some time for a couple of reasons. First, Hannah and I were very close and had worked together before, and I was looking for an opportunity to work with someone new. Second, Hannah is an incredibly smart, talented, and outgoing human being. They are also a natural leader with strong opinions and ideas. These are all reasons why I love Hannah as a friend, but at the time made me worried that if we worked together, that the collaboration would be imbalanced.

When spring rolled around, and these concerns were still in my head, I had a feeling that it might be best to go solo. I tossed around a few ideas, mostly adaptations of plays that already exist, but after a few months still felt pretty uninspired. I met with Miriam, who was my advisor at the time, and she recommended I reconsider working with someone else. I totally agreed. I was frustrated and really in my head about the whole thing, and knew from the start that I wanted a collaborator. So, I thought some more about the positives and negatives of working with Hannah. Although we had done shows together we had never made one from scratch, and we both wanted to explore similar ideas and themes related to gender and performance. I decided that I had been getting ahead of myself– working with them had more potential than I was giving it credit for. I asked them in the tea aisle at Hannaford, and they said yes.



## *THE BEGINNING: THEORIES AND INSPIRATIONS*

When Hannah and I got together, we both wanted to create an original piece about gender; more specifically, femininity and womanhood. Our very first entry point was academic writing. As a sociology major, I had taken Intro to Sociology my first year and Bard and became fascinated with the concept of performance in everyday life. In that class was the first time that I read sociologist Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, where Goffman analyzes social interactions using the metaphor of a theatrical performance. Goffman uses the term 'performance', to refer to "all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continued presence before a particular set of observers"<sup>1</sup>. His theory posits that all social interactions require individuals to perform for one another in social settings, and to sometimes alter their performance depending on the situation. When I first read Goffman, I was excited to have found a theory that allowed a flow of dialogue between my two majors. I also connected with it on a personal level, as I started thinking more about the different ways that I was performing when I was not on stage. I realized that I was performing during class discussions, at the restaurant I worked at, on social media, and in most scenarios where I was not simply existing by myself. The discovery was strange and exciting, and gave me a way to articulate something that I had felt was true for so much of my life.

In my junior year I took a course on the Sociology of Gender, where I was introduced to the seminal work of sociologists Candace West and Don Zimmerman, and their theory of "doing gender". West and Zimmerman wrote about how gender is something that we 'accomplish' through constant interaction with other people and institutions<sup>2</sup>. Similar to Goffman, it is about how performance is a social tool that we use every day to establish and maintain our identities.

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<sup>1</sup> Erving Goffman. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. pp.22

<sup>2</sup> Candance West & Don Zimmerman. 1987. *Doing Gender*.

After revisiting these theories, I started thinking deeper about the popular culture that I consumed growing up and continue to consume today. I thought in particular about the women that I watched on television—from the Disney princesses to Britney Spears, and how their performances shaped my perceptions of how I should perform as a young woman. My early infatuation with popstars was one of the reasons that I got into theater in the first place. Hannah had their own journey that connected them to the topic, and our discussions made it clear that it was something we were both passionate about exploring. We talked more about how our experiences growing up in the theater and being type-cast as one thing or the other were formative to our understanding of our own gendered accomplishments, and how being a theater kid growing up was both affirming and destructive to our sense of self. So the question that we started with was, “How did I learn how to be a woman?” It is intentionally vague, but gave us a way to explore femininity more specifically—as a performance, as an ongoing accomplishment, and as something that is learned and copied from others.

Hannah and I were apart during the summer, so we spent that time reading on our own and collecting different plays, speeches, interviews, and testimonies from and by the iconic women of theater, television, and social media to bring in as source text. The source texts were our starting point in the writing process, as they helped us understand what material was already out there that spoke to the themes we wanted to explore. In considering where and who the source text was coming from, we also felt it important to explore media and celebrity culture, and how it controls and exploits young women by reproducing beauty and behavioral standards. I grew up watching Disney princess movies, MTV music videos, reality TV, Youtube, and, when I was sick and my mom wasn't home, the Kardashians. I was obsessed with Britney Spears, and remember being eight years old in the line at the grocery store with my mom and seeing the

photo of her shaving her head plastered on the cover of every gossip magazine. The ideas of how I should be as a young girl and as a woman were highly influenced by what I saw in those spaces.

As a kid, when I wasn't staring at a glowing screen or taking the personality quiz in the most recent issue of Teen Vogue, I was doing school musicals and plays. Using the performance skills that I had learned from my favorite TV personalities and pop stars, I was often cast in the high energy, ditzy, sexy character roles whose whole personalities were typically their obsession with the male lead. And from thirteen to seventeen I was fine with that. It was fun to play those roles because I felt as though I was living the fantasy that I saw on TV, the fantasy of being a woman before actually growing into one. At the time, it felt positive and affirming. What was confusing and frustrating were the times when people treated me as though I was just like those characters in real life. I knew that I was smart, and I knew that I could sing well, so when the lines demanded that I mispronounce a word or sing off-key, I was afraid that people would think that I was not doing it on purpose. Hannah and I spoke a lot about our backgrounds in theater, and how having those experiences at a young age warped our gendered sense of self. Social media (particularly Youtube, Instagram and more recently, TikTok) was another vortex that had a huge impact on me growing up, and was another major source of inspiration for this piece.

When Hannah and I came back in the fall of our senior year, we started having weekly meetings right away to discuss different source texts and ideas that we had about the piece. For the first few meetings, we each brought in pieces of text that we had found over the summer that felt connected to this theme of learning and performing femininity in a modern contemporary culture. I brought in the sociology readings, a monologue from *The Most Massive Woman Wins* by Madeleine George, and the song "16 Going on 17" from *The Sound of Music*. Hannah

brought in a monologue from the play *Dance Nation* by Clare Barron, quotes from interviews with famous actresses, and the full court testimony from Britney Spears' conservatorship hearing. Summer of 2021 was the summer of #FreeBritney, where Spears finally had the opportunity to share a 24-minute statement about her experience of limited freedom under her father's conservatorship. The speech was both fresh in the popular discourse and already felt like an important piece of history, speaking to larger themes of surveillance, celebrity culture, and gendered exploitation, all of which we were interested in exploring. I had listened to the testimony live back in June, and when Hannah re-read it it felt like something that wanted to stick around for a bit. We brought in more and more each week—old plays, new plays, movies, television, YouTube videos, TikToks, characters and feminine character tropes, music, and musicals. It was only after we opened that door that I realized how much there was out there, too much ground to cover in a 25-minute piece. So mid-way through September we slowed down on the research and started talking more about what all of this stuff had in common. A journal entry from September 13th reads as follows:

After reading through everything, we realized a commonality that most of the material we were first drawn to focuses on the duality/tension of the gendered experience of womanhood. Wanting to challenge expectations of conformity because we are confident in our abilities and selfhood, while needing to fit into the patriarchy to achieve material success and upward mobility.

The entry above summarizes what became the anchoring principle for the piece. We shared our inspirations with Jack, who first advised us to pare down and explore the materials

that scared us and made us laugh the most. They also recommended that we consider what container could hold some of these bigger ideas. Early in the process, Hannah and I had talked about moments in our lives where we felt the most on display. The moments where we felt most consciously judged for our appearance and our performance. The audition was one of the first things that came up. As theater kids, Hannah and I both have a lot of experience with auditions. Not just the audition itself, but everything that leads up to that moment—the mental preparation, the competition, the nerves, the self-doubt. In a lot of ways it felt like a metaphor for performing gender, as well as a metaphor for what we were experiencing as seniors about to graduate and free-fall into “the real world”. We decided that the play would be about a woman, played by Hannah, and her emotional journey preparing for an audition.

#### *MAKING IT PT 1: ON WRITING*

The next step after the research period was to get into a rehearsal space and just start trying out different things. We had divided up our roles for the project at the beginning; Hannah would be the main performer, I would direct, and we would write collaboratively. The collaborative writing felt like a risk because I had never done it before, but knowing Hannah’s creativity, work ethic, and that they shared similar interests and goals for the piece, I trusted that we would figure it out. By the end of the first month, after reading out the different source texts and playing with this idea of the main character getting ready for an audition, I wrote out a rough structure of what it could look like. It felt important to get a visual sense of what we wanted to create, so inspired by the concept of five frames that I learned in Directing Seminar, I drew little pictures in my journal to frame what each scene/moment could be. In order to break up the 25 minutes of allotted time, it felt like a good idea to separate the piece into five smaller scenes. One

of our earliest ideas was that we would first see the main character (aptly named ‘Woman’ at the time) get rejected at the audition at the start of the piece. Then she would do some sort of monologue (the box I drew for this moment in the cartoon just said ‘emotional response’), leading into a sequence where she receives a phone call from her mother or friend while a news broadcast plays in the background. After that, there would be a scene where the main character meets a boy, and then there is the final moment of self-recognition, which is depicted in my journal as a big ball of squiggly lines. We used this framework as a starting point in the writing and exploration process.

In the following weeks, we continued to pull inspiration from movies, musicals, television, and the internet, looking for different women and feminine tropes that Hannah’s character could explore and potentially embody throughout the piece. At first I was excited by the idea of exploring a bunch of different versions of womanhood that were contemporary, political, and sometimes controversial. I had watched and read some of Anna Deavere Smith’s work, and loved the idea of working with one actor to bring a variety of different nonfictional characters to life onstage. But again we ran into the same dilemma. There were simply too many to choose from, and I felt like I was losing my grasp on what the piece was really about in the first place. What were these women saying and doing that it felt so important to embody them onstage? Why is it so important for us to explore these particular feminine tropes? What are we trying to say?

We met a few times again with Jack and I was again reminded about our promise to ourselves to keep this experience pleasurable. I could feel myself creeping back up into my head, worrying about political correctness and the possibility that we were making fun of these women rather than uplifting them. It was at that point that I finally realized that this piece of work was an

opportunity to create something very personal to Hannah and I. So we kept the source text that felt the most close to our hearts and started writing our own material. At this point we would go our separate ways to write, and would come in with something new to read for each other at each session. We continued writing and researching on our own while starting to try things on their feet in the rehearsal space. Hannah came in with a piece of text from a YouTube video by internet icon Trisha Paytas, where she sits on her kitchen floor and talks about waking up in the morning and feeling like a chicken nugget. When Hannah read it out loud for the first time, I was immediately obsessed. It was whiny and self-pitying, but was also a raw commentary on a woman's experience with approval-seeking and self-esteem issues as a result of too much time spent on social media. After spending the past two years completely sucked into my phone due to a combination of boredom, escapism, and the desire for some form of connectivity during a long period of isolation, I felt connected to the monologue on a personal level. I suggested to Hannah that it could be a good way to start the piece. I then offered that the next moment could be the character getting ready for the audition to the song Mood Ring by Lorde. The song, which is also about losing one's sense of self through a constant immersion in the online world, felt like a new and different approach to creating a dramatic scene that was not based on writing spoken by the actor. We knew at this point that Hannah would be the only performer on stage for the majority of the piece, so it felt generative to consider other ways that we could move the story along without using dialogue.

By early-mid October, Hannah and I had both written some complete scenes on our own. We were still very much in the experimental phase, so the cohesiveness between texts did not feel like it mattered as much. Hannah brought in a great monologue where they spoke candidly about being rejected by a guy and oscillating between self-hatred and extreme self-confidence. It

was personal and honest, which I loved. The monologue ends with Hannah's character trying to calm herself down by speaking a variety of self-reassuring mantras, with one in particular that had gone viral on TikTok at the time ("I do not chase, I attract. What is meant for me will simply find me.").

I wrote a scene for a moment when Hannah's character is waiting in the audition room and meets another boy her age. In the beginning, I was invested in the idea that this guy was some version of a stereotypical leading man character whose masculinity, confidence and arrogance would throw Hannah's character off her game. I was again trying to figure out how that could be represented physically instead of the character just spewing misogynist language. Hannah and I had talked about the concept of phallogocentrism (the centering of the masculine perspective in discourse, coined by philosopher Jacques Derrida) during our research phase, which reminded me of the phallic dances from ancient greek theater that we had learned about in theater history. My first attempt at inserting this concept into the scene was that the man would be wearing a giant fake penis that would draw the audience's attention and symbolize the space being taken up by the character. I ordered one from an online Halloween store that was made out of pale panty hose stuffed with cotton. When we worked with it it kind of fell flat and did not really add anything substantive. Jack suggested that we experiment with the man taking it off and Hannah putting it on, which reminded me that the whole point of the phallus being in the piece is that it is a symbol of power and control. Hannah's character had talked about needing control earlier piece, so it made sense to have the phallus be its own object that the two characters would fight over. This choice was reflected when we switched out the costumey wearable penis for a modern, sleek, light blue dildo.



I rewrote the scene a few more times, considering how the male character that Hannah interacts with is also indicted in the theater space and the patriarchy at large, and how the two of them work with and against each other to regain control. It was around this time that we asked a good friend, Andrew Roberge, if he would be interested in playing the role of the man (marked as ‘M’ in the script), and he agreed (I will come back to this later). When Hannah and Andrew read the scene for the first time, it was sweet and playful. Watching them do it made me realize that it did not make sense anymore to try to villainize the male character, because it prevented any sort of vulnerability or complexity that would allow him and Hannah’s character to connect through their shared experience of preparing to go into an audition.

In the weeks leading up to the midway showing, we worked with all of these moments one by one in rehearsal. I created notecards to get a better visual of the sections that we had, and experimented with moving things around to get a better sense of the pacing of the piece as a whole. At this point, we had fifteen minutes of material to show for midways. The most challenging part of the early writing process for me was deciding what source materials we loved and connected with the most, and finding ways to build off of them to develop an equal amount of original writing. By the midway performance, we had a solid idea of the text and the staging for the first fifteen minutes of the piece.

After midways, we began working on the second half of the piece. At that point we decided that the audition itself would be a final musical number at the very end, and that we just needed to work on filling the space in between. I was a bit disappointed that we had to cut the Mood Ring sequence from the beginning for time, and was looking for another moment in the piece to explore using music instead of dialogue. I decided that it would be both fun and terrifying for Hannah and Andrew’s characters to have to participate in a dance call as part of the

scene before Hannah's final audition. For a song, I chose Piece of Me by Britney Spears, a bass-heavy pop anthem with lyrics that speak to feminine exploitation in the entertainment industry. Not only was it on-theme, but provided us with an opportunity to choreograph and dance, things that I am not great at but enjoy doing very much.

At this point in the process, I started to feel a bit stuck. Hannah and I were still trying to figure out what needed to happen between the dance and the finale. We knew that the emotions of their character needed to build somehow, but were unsure of how or why. We still hadn't used the Britney court testimony and the monologue from Dance Nation, so we kept working with them, editing down and adding our own words as we went. There were a lot of moments where I felt like I had no idea where we were going with it, but was reassured by Hannah time and time again that we would figure it out. We were constantly fighting the urge to just stare at the script on our laptops, as working on our feet and improvising was less depressing and far more fun.

I was also journaling a lot during that time, reflecting on being in college during the pandemic, and trying to make sense of the future and what I want to do with my life after graduation. I pulled some of that text, Hannah wrote some more, and we wove it all in alongside the final snippets of source text. After about a month, we had a completed draft of the script.

### *MAKING IT PT 2: ON DIRECTING*

My first directing experience ever occurred in the fall of my sophomore year, when I directed Bard Musical Theater Company's production of The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee. My experience directing that show is still one of my most cherished memories from my four years at Bard. It was also the last in-person show that I was a part of before the pandemic took away the ability to safely gather in a rehearsal space and create live theater for an

audience. When we were all sent home that spring, I directed my moderation piece on zoom, adapting a piece created by artist Margaret Qualley and actor Miranda July that I came across on Instagram. As much as we groan about ‘zoom theater’ now, doing rehearsals and creating a piece on video chat at the time felt like a new and exciting challenge. I chose to work with just two actors instead of a bigger cast, which felt both more economical and a good exercise in going in-depth to develop the different worldviews of the characters. It was also during this time that I became more curious about how social media has changed the ways that we interact with one another, particularly in relation to making theater.

When Hannah and I initially partnered up for our senior project, we talked a bit about performing it together. After some consideration, I decided against it. I have always loved to perform, but I wanted to take this special opportunity to develop my skills outside of acting by focusing on directing and writing. Hannah was supportive of my choice, and was game to star in a solo piece. This was the first on a long list of reasons why I loved working with Hannah. Hannah and I met when we were cast in the spring main stage show as first years. I was very intimidated by them at first. If you know Hannah, you know. But if you don’t, they are wildly outgoing, whip-smart, chatty, and arguably the most technically-trained theatrical performer in our graduating class. We were roommates our sophomore year, and grew to be close friends. When I first agreed to work with them, I was very open with Hannah about my concerns about us working together. They suggested that we both write a list of personal needs for the project, which was the first way that we established a safe environment with open communication. I told Hannah that I needed to feel that my ideas were being heard and received, and Hannah told me it was okay to tell them to shut up if they were talking too much during rehearsals. Reflecting on that moment, which happened at one of our first rehearsals, I think reading and hearing those

lists was one of the most important things we did for this piece. It allowed me to let go of the concerns I had previously, and reminded me that open communication is imperative for a successful collaborative effort.

In rehearsals, it was usually just the two of us. In the beginning, we would meet once or twice a week for a few hours, and then we picked things up closer to the weekend of the performance. Before we started, I went back and read the notes I had taken in directing seminar about preparing a rehearsal space. It was really important to me that Hannah (and the other actors who joined later) felt comfortable, especially since a lot of the material was sensitive and personal. At the beginning of every rehearsal we would check in with each other, then dance around and stretch together before getting into whatever we were working on that day. Normally, side talk in rehearsals is something that I prefer to keep to a minimum as a director, but in this piece where we were pulling so much from our present and past experiences, many of our first rehearsals fell into long, but productive conversations about internet memes, celebrity gossip, and childhood trauma.

I kept the staging process very simple. Unlike *Spelling Bee*, I was not creating any elaborate tableaux or shaping big musical numbers that required lots of moving parts. Hannah would simply read the text that we were working with that day, move about the space in response to it, and then I would ask them leading questions, suggesting new things to try and then making adjustments. When certain moments felt dry or stagnant, I would ask them to do different tasks like making a TikTok or putting on an entirely new outfit while reading the lines to see if anything different emerged. It was really cool to just play and experiment while we had the time, and Hannah's willingness to try anything opened up many exciting avenues for exploration in rehearsals.

Towards the final months of this process, I was reminded that one of the most important skills to have as a director is the ability to problem-solve. As soon as we returned from winter break at the beginning of February, our other actor Andrew notified us that he was scheduled to travel for a baseball tournament the week of our show. After sharing this disappointing news with Jack, we began brainstorming what this meant for the piece moving forward. My initial reaction was to simply replace Andrew with another cis male actor. Jack pushed back, encouraging us to question what it would mean if we removed the male body from the performance entirely, where maybe Hannah would read all of his lines or just do their part of the scene to a pile of script pages on the floor. The idea was intriguing, but I still felt in my gut like this scene was meant to happen between two real, physically present actors onstage. Because the scene was no longer about Hannah's character being haunted by the patriarchy, but instead about how we are all indicted by it, it was hard at that point to think about other options that would change the intention and the message. However, I still remain curious about what would have happened had we decided to take another direction at that point.

So, ultimately, we decided to look for someone to replace Andrew. We needed to find someone who would be comfortable jumping in just a month before the show, and most people we thought of on campus as potential alternates were already super busy. A friend suggested that I reach out to Tim Halvorsen, a theater and performance Bard alum who lives in New York City. Tim was in Spelling Bee, so we had worked together before and I knew his abilities as a performer, so I called him and proposed the idea of having him replace Andrew. He said yes, and we immediately started having zoom rehearsals to go over the script and chat with him about his role in the piece. When Tim read the scene with Hannah for the first time, it took on a new life. The choices that he made were very different from the ones that Andrew had made, which was

incredibly exciting as it allowed for the whole thing to be cracked open for examination yet again. Time then came up and stayed at Bard for the week leading up to the performance, and after a few rehearsals he was ready. It all happened very fast. I was so grateful that we solved the issue of an actor dropping out so quickly, which would not have been possible without Tim's professionalism and willingness to take time off of his day job to jump in at the last minute.

Many of my other responsibilities as director kicked in during the second semester as we got closer to the performance at the end of February. My experience working with the Fisher Center production team to implement the technical elements of the show was exciting and rewarding. From the beginning, I wanted to explore having some kind of live feed happening onstage. I came up with the idea of Hannah doing a live stream on Instagram during the opening monologue, and talked with Kat, the video supervisor, about different ways that we could achieve this with as little lag on the video as possible. Kat was extremely helpful, and found a method where Hannah would go live on their phone, which would then be screen-mirrored and displayed through the projector. During tech and the first performance, it went smoothly. At the matinee, when there were some technical difficulties and the live stream did not show up, Hannah stayed completely calm and kept going. Luckily, we had prepared for this. We bought a light-up phone case that Hannah had on their phone during the opening, which in the darkness of the theater cast a beautiful glow of a bright screen on their face. I loved the visual as it was, so when the live stream failed, the whole thing still looked pretty cool.

We also incorporated a voiceover sequence towards the end of the piece that Lex and Duane, the sound engineers, helped us record. When I realized during the recording session that I wanted the voice of the casting director (who calls Hannah into the audition) to be deeper and more masculine, Duane hopped on the mic and recorded his own voice for us.

When we got into LUMA for tech week, the rest of the production team were equally supportive. It was daunting at first to be working with professionals, but Hannah and I had done substantial prep beforehand so that we could be as clear as possible when sharing our vision for the piece. But when we arrived in the space for tech week, I started experiencing bouts of self-doubt; I felt unsure of what lighting to choose for one particular scene or whether or not to cut a line was not working the way it did in rehearsals. Luckily, at that point there was not enough time to second-guess myself and the thing that Hannah and I created together, leaving me no choice but to trust my instincts. Removing the pressure to be perfect, to have it ‘all figured out’, was probably one of the valuable lessons that I learned from the process, and something that I will take with me moving forward.

#### *NOT THE END: CONCLUSIONS*

Developing *When I Grow Up, Everyone Will Love Me* provided me with an opportunity to reflect as both a human and an artist, and to take multiple risks by diving headfirst into subject matter that I would have been too afraid to address in front of an audience a few years ago. By creating something so personal, I now feel like a weight has been lifted, allowing me to venture forward with patience, openness, and most importantly, a sense of humor. Looking ahead, I am left with many questions. Questions about what the future holds for all of us as we graduate and move ahead into this uncertain world, questions about what I can improve upon if I continue making work with others, and questions about how to be a part of the disruption and rebuilding of an industry and art form that has for too long reproduced dangerous environments for marginalized people. I learned in this process that when we are faced with huge questions like these, that the best thing we can do is move forward with a sense of care, curiosity, and pleasure.

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*WHEN I GROW UP, EVERYONE WILL LOVE ME.*

by Hannah Eisendrath and Madeleine Reilly

*An alarm goes off. Lights come up on W, asleep with her phone in her hand.*

*She finally wakes up, distraught. She sits up and checks her phone immediately. She grabs a hairbrush and some makeup, putting on her “natural morning face” and begins to film herself on an Instagram livestream. We see the livestream projected on the screen in real time.*

W

Hey guys. "I woke up this morning feeling like a chicken nugget. When you feel like a chicken nugget, you feel like delicious, but you also feel fried and fake in the inside. I feel like mcdonald's chicken nuggets are fake. They start out as a pink goop then become a chicken nugget. That's what I am, I'm pink goop, I started out as a pink goop, now I am a chicken nugget. While I might seem delicious, I am really unhealthy.

People say I should stop posting social media, but it makes me happy. Social media makes me happy, I love social media.

A chicken nugget doesn't feel social media impact. In fact, people love chicken nuggets on social media. That's why I feel loved. Everybody wants chicken nuggets, they want to taste chicken nuggets. However, no one really falls in love with a chicken nugget or gets married to a chicken nugget".

*[She turns around and stares at her face on the projector. She examines herself on her phone camera. She goes over to the microphone stand to speak.]*

I hate looking at myself.

I don't mind when you guys look at me though, you guys can look at me.

I think I could be a tiktok influencer. I would really really like to be a tiktok influencer. I want to be one of those girls that makes get ready with me videos, you know the ones, where they match cowboy boots with a nightgown and a vest and it somehow looks effortlessly cool.

God I wonder what that's like.

Maybe I should get more tattoos.

If I had more tattoos then people would know I'm cool without me having to say or do anything.

I want to be the cool girl.

Or at least a cool person.

I think I could be.

The problem is, you can't try.  
 Or at least, you can't look like you try.  
 And if you couldn't tell, I try really hard. All the time.

I first started wearing makeup in the 2nd grade.

Or like the other day, I was talking with this guy and we were laying on his twin-xl dorm bed and he told me that he didn't want to kiss me because I gave off "relationship energy". That is obviously code for "if I kissed you you would expect me to do more than just sleep with you and I don't want to carry the burden of responding to your texts or saying hi to you in the hallway or having any sort of emotional human connection with you in any way". And sure, I get that. But like I didn't even want to date this one.

Like, do I have the words "Cannot Comprehend Causal Sex" written on my forehead?  
 Don't answer that.

Maybe I shouldn't talk to you guys about sex.

I don't know.

If I was the cool girl I could say whatever I wanted.

I would be a mystery to you.

I want to be a mystery.

I want to be "talented, brilliant, incredible, amazing, show stopping, spectacular, never the same, totally unique, completely not ever been done before, unafraid to reference or not reference, put it in a blender, shit on it, vomit on it, eat it, give birth to it." (Lady Gaga)

I don't chase, I attract.

What belongs to me will simply find me.

I possess the qualities needed to be extremely successful.

I floss every night, even when I'm drunk.

My ribs are wider than my hips, but that's okay because I don't want children.

My thoughts are filled with positivity and my life is plentiful with prosperity.

And I am going to kill this audition.

They will love me.

Everyone will love me!

*[She runs to her audition and enters between the chairs.]*

I'm here!!!

W

*[She finds a chair and sits. A man M enters, also carrying a bag.]*

Hey.

M

Hi.

W

Are you here for the auditions?

M

Me? Oh yeah. You?

W

Yeah.

M

Cool.

W

*[He pulls a dildo out of his bag. He rolls it around in his hands. He looks at her.]*

Why do you have that?

W

I'm holding on to it for a friend. She told me her dad was going through her stuff and she needed me to hold on to it for a little while.

M

Huh.

W

Is she your girlfriend?

M

No.

W

Can I see it for a second?

No. M

Why not? W

Because you can see it from over there. From where you're sitting. M

Fine. W

Will you at least run lines with me then? M

Sure. *[they stand and prepare to run lines.]*

How old are you? W

Seventeen. M

How long have you been seventeen? W

A while. M

I know what you are. W

Say it. Say it out loud. M

No. Ok, wait. This just feels....can I try something else? W

...okay? M

*[she reaches for the dildo.]*

I told you, you can't have this!

M

Oh my god, look over there!

W

What?

M

*[She walks over and tries to grab it out of his hand. He holds on tight. They struggle. It turns into a full-on wrestling match.]*

If she's not your girlfriend then just let me see it!

W

I told her I would look after it!

M

You can't just walk around with the most expensive dildo in the world in your backpack and not let me touch it!

W

*[After more struggling, she comes out victorious. He is on the floor, breathless.]*

Let's try this again.

Okay.

M

*[She prepares again.  
She points at him with the dildo to cue the line.]*

How old are you?

M

Seventeen.

W

How long have you been seventeen? M

A while. W

I know what you are. M

Say it. Say it out loud. W

Vampire. M

Are you afraid? W

*[She stands over him. She puts the dildo to his lips.]*

No. M

You should be. W

You're...beautiful. M

*[Their faces get closer. He leans in to kiss her, only instead he sneakily grabs the dildo out of her hand. He jumps back up to standing, They brush off and go to opposite sides of the stage.]*

Ha! M

Why are you here? W

M

What are you talking about? I'm here for the aud....the au... the... actually, I don't know.

W

Really?

M

I...

W

Then is there any reason for you to stay?

M

No...

*[W points to the door.]*

W

Then...get out.

M

But, don't you...

W

No. I don't.

M

Why are you being a bitch?

W

I don't know you. And you have no reason to be here so just...

M

Leave? You want me to leave?

W

Was I not being clear when I said get the fuck out?

M

You can't tell me to leave. This isn't your hallway—

W

You know what you're just like every other theater guy I went to highschool with. You think you are some supply in demand, but guess what, you're not. There are a hundred white people with brown hair that look just like us! YOU'RE NOT SPECIAL!



*[Determined, she walks up to the door and tries to open it. It is locked. She struggles.]*

M

Look, I'm sorry if I—Are you good?

W

Shit.

*[PIECE OF ME by Britney Spears comes on. It's loud.]*

W

*[over the music]* What is going on?

M

I think it's the dance call.

W

No one told me there was gonna be a dance call???

M

It's fine, it's fine just follow me.

*[M does a fully-choreographed dance routine a la Brit while lip syncing]*

I'M MISS AMERICAN DREAM SINCE I WAS SEVENTEEN

DON'T MATTER IF I STEP ON THE SCENE

OR SNEAK AWAY TO THE PHILIPPINES

THEY STILL GON' PUT PICTURES OF MY DERRIERE IN THE MAGAZINE

YOU WANT A PIECE OF ME?

YOU WANT A PIECE OF ME

I'M MISS BAD MEDIA KARMA

ANOTHER DAY ANOTHER DRAMA

GUESS I CAN'T SEE NO HARM

IN WORKING AND BEING A MAMA

AND WITH A KID ON MY ARM

I'M STILL AN EXCEPTION

AND YOU WANT A PIECE OF ME

*[Mid-song, he gestures to W. She takes her place and they finish the combination together.]*

I'M MRS. LIFESTYLES OF THE RICH AND FAMOUS

(YOU WANT A PIECE OF ME)

I'M MRS. OH MY GOD THAT BRITNEY'S SHAMELESS!

(YOU WANT A PIECE OF ME)

I'M MRS. EXTRA! EXTRA! THIS JUST IN

(YOU WANT A PIECE OF ME)

I'M MRS. SHE'S TOO BIG NOW SHE'S TOO THIN

(YOU WANT A PIECE OF ME)

*[It's hot and they kill it. The song ends and W keeps spinning. M collapses on the floor.]*

M

You were really good.

W

Thanks. So were you.

M

What do you wanna do with your life?

AW

Huh? Uh..I don't know. I mean, I've done a lot of things already. I guess I've been too busy to think about what's next. Actually that's not true. I've thought about it a lot but the more I think about it the less I'm sure about it.

I think I'm gonna be sick.

*[M offers them his bag. She throws up in it at center stage.]*

W

Thanks.

....

When I was eight my parents took me and my siblings out one time to see a movie. I can't remember what it was. All I remember is that it was one of those movies that you see as a kid and you see yourself in one of the characters and after you walk out of the theater you kinda feel like you're half them and half yourself? So anyways on the drive home I had this sudden burst of courage and I told them that I was bored of my life, that I was sick of living in the suburbs and being in third grade and I wanted something exciting to happen to me. Something as exciting as being princess of Genovia or being a pirate with a magical compass and getting to kiss Keira Knightly. I think my dad was fed up with me because out of nowhere he stopped the car and slid open the door of the minivan and said, "you want some excitement? go for it." The cold air slapped me in the face. It was dark. I had no idea where we were. And just before I could step out of the car my mom slammed the minivan door shut.

I think about that night a lot.

They are both my biggest supporters, my parents. They came to all my little school plays and talent shows. To them, I was a star. I am a star. But now the door is wide open again I can feel someone pushing me out of the car. Hard. And I know I have to go but I don't know...

*[she starts getting undressed.]*

I guess it's a question of confidence

I'm not a very confident person.

Which doesn't make any sense because I'm actually extremely talented.

I cannot even begin to describe to you guys how talented I am.

And I'm really fucking smart.

Like smarter than most people.

I actually sometimes wonder if my brain just works completely different from everyone else's because I see things that they could never see.

*[She goes over to her bag and pulls out heels and a slip and starts to get dressed.]*

I'm not trying to be self-absorbed or anything, like I'm not a selfish person.

But I'm trying to be honest.

With myself.

And you.

It's not easy. I'm actually taking a really big risk here. Because I think that you guys are gonna hate me for saying this stuff. It makes me feel guilty. Like I'm not sure I can be confident and likable at the same time.

I really want you to like me.

So I usually wouldn't say any of this.  
I mean, I've gotten really good at making myself smaller.

But the truth is.  
I'm not small.  
I'm a beast.

Like I have everything I need to be really successful in this field. And sometimes I wonder what would happen if I just really went for it. Like if I actually walked into every audition room like the talented monster that I am. Just laid it all out there in the open.  
I can feel it. This force. Just lingering right under the surface. Waiting for permission to just  
AHHHHHHH.  
FUCK.

I'm a fucking GOD. Can you feel it? "I am your god. I am your second coming. I am your mother and I'm SMARTER than you and more ATTRACTIVE than you and BETTER than you at everything that you love and you're going to get down on your knees and worship by mind, my mind and my body and I'm gonna be MOTHERFUCKING KING OF YOUR MOTHERFUCKING WORLD".  
DO YOU HEAR ME?

I'M GOOD ENOUGH.  
I'M FUCKING GOOD ENOUGH.

*[M exits at some point. Maybe he gets scared or bored or annoyed.]*

...

Where's my phone?

W

I just had it before I... where did it...did I...no....

Did I leave it at home??? There's no way I left it at home????

*[She dumps out her bag. Shit rolls everywhere. It's a mess.]*

FUCK

This is exhausting.

DON'T LOOK AT ME.

I hate this industry.

You know.... they tried to put me on lithium. They said I was crazy.

I'm not crazy.

*[looking off to M, who has disappeared.]*

Tell them I'm not crazy!

*[She starts to pick everything up, putting it back in her bag.]*

I WORK. I work seven days a week, no days off. They watch me every minute. They watch me change. They watch me eat. They want to control me. They want me to be happy.

#### AUDITIONER VOICEOVER

Number 24.

*[She puts on a red dress over the slip.]*

W

I thought maybe if I told them "I'm happy" enough then I might become happy, but I was in denial. I was in shock. I'm traumatized or whatever. "Is this what you have to go through to get what you want? Or is it just abuse? In a lot of cases, it is just abuse. But what do you do? There was nobody I could talk to. I should've walked out of rehearsal and called my agent. But I would've been fired, and I knew that. I don't understand it. I don't understand if it's because people think I can take it because I'm tough as nails. If I am, I've been made tough by this business in order to survive, in order to continue to perform, which is what I was born to do. They're not going to stop me from getting on a stage".

#### AUDITIONER VOICEOVER

Number 24.

W

But I'm not happy. I'm tired. And I cry every day.

## AUDITIONER VOICEOVER

Number 24.

W

NO. Shit. Okay

Don't look at me right now.

I just...I can't

*She slaps herself a few times.*

## AUDITIONER VOICEOVER

Number 24. Last call.

*[Another voice, H, comes from the voiceover void.]*

H

Hey.

W

What?

H

Hey.

W

..hi

H

You look like shit.

W

That's...so helpful right now. Thanks.

H

I'm just being honest. You look like you got hit by a bus. Did you get hit by a bus?

W

Shut up. Seriously shut up!

H

*[laughs]* okay, okay.

Is this a good idea?

W

Are you kidding me right now?

...

Did you lock the door?

H

No...

W

Yes you totally did.

H

No, I did not.

W

Yes you did.

H

Nuhuh.

W

Yuhuh!

H

Nuhuh!

W

This is such a waste of time! Such a waste of your time, my time, OUR time...

AUDITIONER VOICEOVER

Number 24.

H

You can't do this. You'll embarrass yourself! Trust me you'll thank me later.

W

I don't have a choice at this point.

H

Yes you do. You could just leave right now.

Walk offstage. Do it.

I dare you.

W

Shut up.

H

They're gonna see right through you.

W



Stop. I've worked too hard. You think you built me, built this but you didn't! You weren't trying to build me, you were just building yourself. Like some fucked up carbon copy. And you told me I was special. But only because you knew that I would do anything you told me to.

YOU'RE AN EMBARRASSMENT. I'VE SPENT MY WHOLE LIFE TRYING TO GET AWAY FROM YOU! TRYING TO BUILD MY OWN PERSON, MY OWN LIFE SEPARATE FROM YOU. BUT FROM THE SECOND I WAS BORN YOU HAD TO SINK YOURSELF INTO ME. AND NOW EVERY TIME I LOOK IN THE MIRROR I SEE YOU. I CAN HEAR YOU IN THE BACK OF MY MIND, IN MY THOUGHTS, IN MY DREAMS. I SEE YOU, RUNNING LIKE A LITTLE HAMSTER ON A LITTLE TINY WHEEL BEHIND MY EYE SOCKETS. THE TASTE OF YOUR VOICE IS IN MY MOUTH AND MY THROAT AND I WANT TO THROW YOU UP SO BAD BUT EVERY TIME I TRY TO I JUST DRY HEAVE. YOU'VE NEVER TOLD ME YOU LOVE ME. NONE OF YOU EVER LOVED ME.

I'M A STAR GODDAMMIT.

DO YOU HEAR ME? I'M A STAR!

*[instrumental for ROSE'S TURN plays.]*

*Curtain up!*

H

Tits up. Big smile.

*Light the lights!*

H

Did you get hit by a bus?

*Play it, boys!*

*Ya either got it, or ya ain't.*

*And, boys, I got it!*

*Ya like it?*

H

They're gonna see right through you.

W

SHUT UP.

*Well, I got it!*

*Some people got it and make it pay.*

*Some people can't even give it away.*

*This people's got it*

*and this people's spreadin' it around!*

H

Don't do that.

*You either have it*

*or you've had it!*

W

Hello, everybody! My name is Number 24! What's yours?

How do you like that, Mr. Director??

*Hold your hats and hallelujah.*

*Mama's gonna show it to you.*

H

You're not what they're looking for, but maybe it will work out this time.

Or else, why did you even come here?

You can't even walk through the door.

What are you looking for?

Why are you here?

W

I swear to god I'm going to fucking...

*Mama's talkin' loud.*

*Mama's doin' fine.*  
*Mama's gettin' hot.*  
*Mama's goin' strong.*  
*Mama's movin' on.*  
*Mama's all alone.*  
*Mama doesn't care.*  
*Mama's lettin' loose.*  
*Mama's got the stuff.*  
*Mama's lettin' go.*  
*Mama?*

H

Walk offstage. Do it. I dare you.

*Mama's got the stuff.*  
*Mama's gotta move.*  
*Mama's gotta go.*  
*Mama?*

H

They're gonna see right through you.

*Why did I do it?*  
*What did it get me?*  
*Scrapbooks full of me in the background.*  
*Give 'em love and what does it get ya?*  
*What does it get ya?*  
*One quick look as each of 'em leaves you.*  
*All your life and what does it get ya?*  
*Thanks a lot and out with the garbage,*  
*They take bows and you're battin' zero.*

*I had a dream.  
I dreamed it for you,  
It wasn't for me,  
And if it wasn't for me  
then where would you be,  
No, you needed me!*

*Well, someone tell me, when is it my turn?  
Don't I get a dream for myself?  
Starting now it's gonna be my turn.  
Gangway, world, get off of my runway!  
Starting now I bat a thousand!  
This time, boys, I'm taking the bows and  
Everything's coming up Rose!  
Everything's coming up roses!  
Everything's coming up roses  
this time for me!  
For me! For me! For me! For me! For me!  
For me!*

*[The lights turn off, leaving W in basic work lights.]*

AUDITIONER VOICE

Next!

*[She opens the door and exits.]*

*End of play.*