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LABELED

A DRAMEDY IN ONE ACT BY
Lindsay Price



Labeled

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Characters

3M + 6W + 15 Any Gender + 1 Trans M, Doubling Possible

It is possible to perform *Labeled* with individual actors for each scene (total of 25) or with extensive doubling (6-7). Each scene has a detailed character breakdown.

Setting

This play takes place in three scenes. Each scene needs eight stackable chairs. The chairs are placed in a stack for *THEN*, staggered in lines for *SOON* and in a semicircle for *NOW*.

Each scene is set in a different time period. *THEN* takes place in the past – I picture the 80's – a time without easily-accessible / handheld technology. No laptops, no cellphones, no tablets.

SOON takes place in the future. There is no visible technology because all of the devices are implanted in our bodies. Have fun inventing a technology protocol for this time period.

NOW takes place in the present day.

Transitions

The play takes place in the past, the present, and the future. Visualize the time shifts in your scene transitions.

Use music to help establish the time period. Use light. Create a movement piece or a tableaux. Use projections, slides, or images.

If you're using the fewest number of actors possible, your transitions will need to help cover the costume changes. If you're using a larger cast, these transitions should feature everyone.

In either case, don't just go to black. Make the transitions theatrical and part of the world of the play

Labeled was first performed on December 5, 2017 by Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic High School in Guelph, Ontario with the following cast:

THEN

Mr. Simon: Jose Reynoso
Ms. Stanislawek: Destiny Thompson
Christy: Kaitlyn Whetstone
Dawn: Jayden Tarantino
Kenneth: Vincent Garcia
Angela: Emma Beamish

SOON

Fenell: Daniel Aleman
Storm: Kaitlyn Whetstone
Castella: Taneisha Sciluna
Adby: Laura Cuthbert
Vertie: Sabrina Bourget
Coron: Jose Reynoso
Mercury: Garry Taniskishayinew
Neriah: Jacob Patterson
Coley: Vincent Garcia
Narat: Destiny Thompson
Rye: Cindy Hoang
Embel: Jessica Clark

NOW

Poe: John Okun
Oli: Lorenzo Avila
Kee: Joachim Sarmiento
Claudia: Sabrina Bourget
Mr. D.: Jonathan Reis
Ms.(Mr.) Zink: Logan Hattle

THEN

Mr. Simon: Arrogant, dramatic, condescending

Ms. Stanislawek: (a.k.a. Stapleneck) High strung, on edge, wants to be liked

Christy: In middle school she would have been a bully. But there's an insecurity to her

Dawn: Always late, always disorganized, has the best intentions

Kenneth: left of centre and curious. Mellow. Very mellow.

Angela: Has always followed the rules. Until today.

When does this play take place? Any time in the past before accessible technology. No cell phones, no tablets, no laptops. I picture the 80's.

The classroom known as Detention B. There are no desks. Only a tall stack of chairs. Ms. Stanislawek, also known as STAPLENECK walks in the classroom with purpose and comes to a dead halt. KENNETH sits cross-legged on the floor in the middle of the room. He looks at STAPLENECK but doesn't react.

STAPLENECK: What? What? What is this?

KENNETH: A classroom.

STAPLENECK: I know that. Where are the desks?

KENNETH: Not here.

STAPLENECK: I know that! Have you seen Mr. Simon lurking around?

KENNETH: Simon says lurk.

STAPLENECK: What?

KENNETH: Simon Says. It's a popular children's game. (*beat, STAPLENECK stares at him*) Everyone stands in a line and one person –

STAPLENECK: I know the game. I just don't know – never mind. Stay here. Unstack the chairs. If you see Mr. Simon, scream. (*exits*)

KENNETH: Glad to be of service. (*He looks at the stack of chairs. He gets up, circles the chairs. Leans against the stack.*) Interesting.

ANGELA enters the room. She is silent and unhappy. She has her arms folded across her body. She stops when she sees KENNETH.

KENNETH: Greetings and salutations.

*ANGELA moves to the other side of the room and stands, looking off with her back to the room.
CHRISTY enters. She stops when she sees KENNETH.*

CHRISTY: What are you doing? Where's Stapleneck?

KENNETH: Which question would you like answered first?

CHRISTY: Who cares.

CHRISTY grabs a chair from the stack and sits, slouching.

KENNETH: (*referring to the chairs*) Don't you find this interesting? Stapleneck told me to unstack them, but I kinda like it. Something new.

DAWN runs in. She carries a backpack stuffed to bursting.

DAWN: Sorry, I'm late. I'm late – (*she gulps in air, bending over*)

CHRISTY: You're always late.

KENNETH: Relax Sunrise, she's not here.

DAWN: (*looking up*) Where is she? (*looking at the chairs*) What's this?

KENNETH: Which question would you like answered first?

MR. SIMON enters. He is dramatic, bossy, and condescending. This causes DAWN to get away from him.

SIMON: What are you doing in here?

KENNETH: It's Detention. We're always here.

SIMON: Not anymore. This classroom is officially, officially the property of the Mountain Ridge High School Drama Department. Get out.

CHRISTY: (*getting up*) Don't need to tell me twice.

DAWN: Where do we go?

SIMON: I don't care so long as it's not here.

STAPLENECK enters. She is frazzled.

STAPLENECK: Mr. Simon, I want the – Christy, where are you going?

KENNETH: (*to ANGELA*) Simon says lurk. (*ANGELA does not respond*)

CHRISTY: He said get out. I'm getting out.

STAPLENECK: Sit down. (*she takes a breath*) Mr. Simon, this is my classroom.

SIMON: It's not your classroom, you don't own the room.

STAPLENECK: It is my classroom to conduct my detention. It has been used for Detention B long before I arrived here and it will be used for Detention B long after I go.

SIMON: Things change.

STAPLENECK: I want those desks back. Where are they?

SIMON: The drama department does not need desks.

STAPLENECK: This is not your classroom.

SIMON: What are you fighting for? They're losers.

CHRISTY: Hey...

STAPLENECK: You can't intimidate me.

SIMON: They laugh at you in the staff room.

STAPLENECK: Mr. Simon. Step outside. Now.

SIMON: You're a loser, just like they are.

STAPLENECK: I'm going to Mr. Daley. (*she exits on the run*)

SIMON: Not if I get to him first! (*he exits on the run*)

KENNETH: Interesting.

CHRISTY: Who is he calling a loser?

DAWN: We are in detention.

CHRISTY: You're the losers, not me.

ANGELA: (*Still turned from group. With purpose.*) Detention does not define me. School does not define me. The rules of this institution do not define me.

DAWN and KENNETH look at ANGELA. ANGELA does not look back.

DAWN: (*getting a chair*) I wish detention didn't define me.

KENNETH: Then why are you always late?

DAWN: I don't know. Everything gets in my way.

CHRISTY: That's something a loser would say.

KENNETH: So why are you here?

CHRISTY: Mrs. Delatorre hates me. All the teachers hate me. It's not my fault.

KENNETH: Ah...

CHRISTY: (*standing*) Are you saying I'm a loser?

KENNETH: (*scampering away*) I'd never do that.

DAWN: So do we stay or go?

KENNETH: I'm staying. This is going to get epic.

DAWN: How?

KENNETH: Don't you want to see our adult minders in a state of disarray?

CHRISTY: I have better things to do.

She's out the door and STAPLENECK is immediately dragging her back in.

CHRISTY: Ow! Let go of me!

STAPLENECK: You will not leave this room until I tell you or you will be spending so much time here you'll know me better than my kid does. (*to KENNETH*) Hide the chairs. Do not let Simon take the chairs. (*exits on the run*)

KENNETH: Did you know Stapleneck had a kid?

CHRISTY: (*to herself*) She can't keep me here. (*she does not leave but sits and slouches*)

DAWN: How are you going to hide the chairs?

KENNETH: Easy peasy.

KENNETH moves to stand in front of the chairs.

CHRISTY: You're standing in front of them.

KENNETH: What chairs?

DAWN: The ones behind you.

KENNETH: I see no chairs.

CHRISTY: I hate this place. Why can a teacher tell me what to do?

KENNETH: It's their job, I think.

CHRISTY: (*this is what's really bothering her*) Why can a teacher call me a loser to my face?

DAWN: They do it all the time. Mr. Willard is always calling out the stoners.

KENNETH: He does indeed. (*to CHRISTY*) Why does it bother you?

CHRISTY: Huh?

KENNETH: You seem bothered.

CHRISTY: Don't be stupid.

DAWN hauls up her backpack on to a chair.

DAWN: I don't want to be a loser.

KENNETH: And yet, you're always late.

DAWN: (*During this, DAWN searches through her overflowing backpack for something that she does not find.*) I get up at the right time. I eat a healthy and filling breakfast. My lunch is made, my clothes are laid out the night before. I leave the house on time and everything just falls apart. Late for school. Detention. Late for class. Detention. Late. Detention. What happens between a healthy breakfast and detention? (*her backpack falls over*) I have to get my life together.

KENNETH: Why?

DAWN: Because. Losers don't have their lives together.

KENNETH: Who says that?

DAWN: Everybody! Every teacher I've ever had. My parents. If you don't get good grades, you're a loser. If you don't go to college, you're a loser. If you don't have friends, you're a loser. If you end up in detention over and over again, you're a loser. Life is unkind to losers and I'm running out of time.

There is the sound of a scuffle offstage between SIMON and STAPLENECK.

STAPLENECK: (*offstage*) No, no, I won't let you –

SIMON: (*offstage*) Let go! Don't you dare –

KENNETH: Countdown to epic.

SIMON stumbles on stage, breathing heavily and disheveled. STAPLENECK slowly follows.

SIMON: Kenneth, I need you to move those chairs.

KENNETH: What chairs?

SIMON: Kenneth.

STAPLENECK: Kenneth...

KENNETH: I see no chairs.

SIMON: (*tense*) I see chairs.

KENNETH: You are on another plane of existence.

SIMON: Christy, move the chairs.

CHRISTY: Move them yourself.

STAPLENECK: Looks like the chairs are staying. Now, if you'll return the desks...

SIMON: (*turning on her*) I am an award winning director and highly, highly, reviewed performer, Stapleneck. My students respect me. You will not win. (*exits dramatically*)

KENNETH: That should totally get an award. Do you think his students respect him?

DAWN: (*to STAPLENECK*) Are we losers?

STAPLENECK: What did he call me?

DAWN: Are we losers?

STAPLENECK: (*distracted*) I have to report this to Mr. Daley. And find the chairs. Desks. Right. (*turns to go*)

CHRISTY: You didn't answer the question.

STAPLENECK: Stay here. Ok? You're to stay here and... I don't know. Stay in the room. (*exits*)

DAWN: That was weird.

KENNETH: (*not bothered*) She thinks we're losers. (*to ANGELA*) Do you have anything to add?

DAWN: I thought she liked us.

KENNETH: Why would she? She's a teacher.

CHRISTY: (*really bothered*) I can't be a loser. People are afraid of me.

DAWN: (*aside*) That's something to be proud of.

CHRISTY: (*standing*) I have to go.

KENNETH: You'll get in trouble...

CHRISTY: I get in trouble all day. I do nothing wrong. I say nothing, I get in trouble. I say anything, I get in trouble. Every adult in this building hates me. They don't know me. They like making my life a living hell. I can't stand it. (*she sits and puts her head in her hands*)

ANGELA: (*an outburst, not to anyone in the room*) The Titanic is fake. The Titanic is fake, it wasn't hit by an iceberg. It was the government. The government took the Titanic down and all this time we've been living a lie. There was no iceberg.

Pause. ANGELA slowly turns to the group. KENNETH slowly pulls a chair from the stack and sits. He focuses on ANGELA.

KENNETH: Please. Go on.

ANGELA: Mr. Poole is teaching that the Titanic is fake in history class. History. I never say anything but this really... "The Titanic is fake," I try to keep my bubble intact. "There is no iceberg," I can't stand by and listen. The class is sitting there, they don't care if there's an iceberg or not, it's not even an important moment in history. Why do I care about the Titanic? Why this? Why now? "You're wrong. You're wrong. You're wrong and you can't tell us wrong things." "Sit down." I don't. "Sit down!" I don't. I don't sit down. I care about the Titanic. (*she stands on a chair*) The Titanic was hit by an iceberg. (*as if the teacher is pulling her leg*) Don't touch me! The Titanic was hit by an iceberg. (*pointing at the invisible teacher*) You're a liar. You're a liar. You're a... (*beat. She takes a breath. Calm.*) He shoves the desk. I fall. No one catches me. In the VP's office, when we're discussing my punishment she says... She. Says. (*She steps down and sits. Calmly.*) "You're right but you should have backed down. You should have just accepted what he said."

KENNETH: (*contemplative*) I stopped bringing books to class. If you do it enough, they give you detention. And when you keep doing it... No one has ever asked why. They just... detention. It was an experiment at first. Now, I'm the cat and curiosity is the falling piano. Destination: me.

CHRISTY: Loser.

KENNETH: Maybe.

CHRISTY: There are winners and losers. It's fact.

ANGELA: And how are you winning?

CHRISTY: How are you? What did you win standing on that desk?

ANGELA: I found out the truth. (*she leans in*) Everyone's a loser. The teachers, too. They're not better, they don't have it all figured out.

DAWN: If everyone's a loser doesn't that also mean that...

CHRISTY: No.

KENNETH: (*like a statement*) No one's a loser.

CHRISTY: You can't say that. You can't. (*standing*) I'm better than you.

DAWN: Maybe there's a reason teachers hate you. Huh? Maybe you're impossible. You're always pushing. You never listen. You are a loser.

CHRISTY stares at DAWN for a moment and runs from the room.

KENNETH: Did you just make Christy cry?

DAWN: No. No... (*sincere*) She's just preparing to beat the crap out of me. She has to warm up or something.

KENNETH: Maybe we should give the room to Mr. Simon.

DAWN: Why?

ANGELA: They'll just put us in another detention.

KENNETH: Symbolically. We release the room. If it's gone maybe... the room will release us.

STAPLENECK enters in a bit of a daze, pulls out a chair, and sits. She puts her head in her hands. She says nothing. The others look at each other.

DAWN: Are you ...ok?

STAPLENECK: Everyone calls me Stapleneck.

DAWN: It's just... cause of your name. It's hard to say?

STAPLENECK: (*looking up*) I thought – aren't I approachable? Aren't I a fun teacher?

DAWN: You teach English.

STAPLENECK: I work hard to make my classes fun. And still, still I end up with Stapleneck. Why don't you like me?

ANGELA: Why do you care if we like you?

STAPLENECK: Because! That's what makes a good teacher.

DAWN: I have a hard enough time liking myself.

STAPLENECK: The other teachers don't like me either. (*beat*) I have to find the desks.

KENNETH: They can't be far. It's hard to hide one desk let alone a gaggle of them.

STAPLENECK: Yeah. Why don't we call this a day. Where's Christy?

DAWN: Washroom?

STAPLENECK: Sure. Ok, I'll see you tomorrow. (*she exits*)

DAWN: (*with pride*) I won't be here tomorrow. (*she exits*)

KENNETH: So. How long are you in here for?

ANGELA: The end of time.

KENNETH: What should we do?

ANGELA: Something productive.

KENNETH: Like pushups? I'm exercise challenged.

ANGELA: Something. Solve world hunger? Time travel? Something bigger than this room.

KENNETH: We should lose the desks more often.

They exit.

—THE END—

SOON

Fenell: A student in charge of detention. A leader with some extra knowledge.

Storm: An extremely smart student who, until recently, has been banned from detention. Determined to prove their intelligence.

Vertie/Castella: Castella is an extremely smart student who hasn't been approved for detention for years. They have reached the end of their rope and is determined to get into detention.

Adby/Mercury/Neriah: Neriah is a typical detention student.

Coron/Coley/Rye: Rye is a nervous, anxious, smart student.

Narat/Asra/Embel: Embel is confident. Thinks quickly but has no creativity.

This play can be done with six actors of any gender doubling the students who come in and out of Detention (hence the sunglasses suggestion above). Or you can expand the cast and have all the students played individually.

Technology Protocol

A couple of students throughout the piece wear sunglasses. The sunglasses are their computers. Some students' computers are embedded in contact lenses. No one should have handheld devices. No one "mimes" typing. Create a vocabulary of five gestures that everyone uses (whether they're wearing sunglasses or not) for touching the "screen" in front of them. Swiping left or right. Drawing with the finger. Tapping the forehead or the space near the forehead. Then, when anyone comes to sit in the chairs to do their work, they should use those gestures independently. It should never be in unison.

Vocabulary

Defectum: (Dee-fect-um) a failure

Crash me: end my project

Kill-9: erase a project

Praemi: (PRAY-me) prize

Desum: (Dess-um) to fall short

Lidded: halted

The Janitors: a type of school security

Blinkin': I'm fast

Counsel: an official

When does this play take place? Far enough in the future that there are no handheld devices and detention has evolved into a positive experience.

Futuristic music plays. Seven chairs are staggered on stage – three in front, three in back.

STUDENTS enter in a stylized fashion. All STUDENTS are dressed the same. Not "out there" future, but it's clearly different. And not jeans and t-shirts.

FENELL remains standing behind the row of chairs. They are the Detention Counsel, a student official. The others sit and start to work.

FENELL touches STORM on the shoulder.

FENELL: Welcome back Storm.

STORM: (*remains looking out*) Thank you, Fenell.

FENELL: It's been a while.

STORM: A couple of small setbacks. Nothing detrimental.

FENELL: Are you sure?

STORM: Positive. It's a pleasure to return.

FENELL: I look forward to seeing your results.

STORM: Thank you, Fenell.

VERTIE: (*standing*) Detention complete.

FENELL: Good work.

VERTIE exits.

ADBY: (*standing*) Detention complete.

FENELL: Excellent, Adby. You're really coming along.

ADBY: Detention has totally changed my learning methodology.

FENELL: Back tomorrow?

ADBY: I've been approved for the rest of the month.

FENELL: A month? Impressive.

ADBY: Thank you, Fenell.

ADBY exits. CASTELLA enters.

CASTELLA: Hi Fenell...

FENELL: What are you doing here?

CORON: (*standing*) Detention complete.

FENELL: Good work, Coron.

CORON: Thank you, Fenell.

CORON exits.

FENELL: What do you want, Castella? We're busy.

CASTELLA: Exactly! I'm here to work. Go Detention!

NARAT: (*standing*) Detention complete.

FENELL: Excellent, Narat.

NARAT exits at the same time as MERCURY enters and takes a seat.

CASTELLA: This is exciting!

CASTELLA moves forward and FENELL gets in the way.

FENELL: (*to CASTELLA*) Are you approved?

CASTELLA: Of course I am. Would I show up to Detention if I wasn't approved? That's something a total defectum would do.

FENELL: (*raising finger*) I'll just check.

CASTELLA: Ok, ok. So I'm not approved. Dr. Wolfric has it in for me. They hate me, they totally hate me.

FENELL: Goodbye Castella.

CASTELLA: I belong in Detention. It's not fair!

FENELL: Goodbye.

CASTELLA: Nothing good happens in class.

CASTELLA exits as COLEY enters and takes a seat.

MERCURY: (*standing*) Detention complete.

FENELL: See you tomorrow, Mercury.

MERCURY exits. STORM makes a frustrated noise.

FENELL: Little slow, Storm?

STORM: Just rusty. It's not a problem. I'll get back in stride.

FENELL: What are you working on?

STORM: Time Travel.

FENELL: That's a big project for one Detention period.

STORM: I have to show I deserve this. They're watching me.

FENELL: They're always watching. Don't flame out, Storm.

STORM: I won't.

EMBEL enters and sits, followed closely by CASTELLA. CASTELLA is wearing a hat and sunglasses.

EMBEL: Praemi student, coming through.

FENELL: Welcome, Embel. Castella, get out.

CASTELLA: Castella? Who's that?

FENELL: Do I have to call the janitors?

CASTELLA: Five seconds. If I could just have five seconds.

FENELL: They won't be half as nice as I am.

CASTELLA: Don't I get points for trying?

FENELL: Go.

CASTELLA exits as NERIAH enters and sits.

EMBEL: Total defectum.

FENELL: Finished, Embel?

EMBEL: *(aside)* Quicker than you'd be.

COLEY: *(standing)* Detention complete.

STORM: *(frustrated, to self)* Come on.

FENELL: Good work, Coley.

COLEY exits. All of a sudden FENELL stands up straight, as if getting a message. They hold a finger to their temple.

FENELL: I have to go to Detention C. There's an... I'll be right back. Stay here, even if you complete.

FENELL exits. Those on stage relax a little.

EMBEL: Hey Storm.

STORM: Hey.

EMBEL: Haven't seen you here in a while. Weren't you classified as desum? You failed to complete, didn't you?

NERIAH: Working here...

EMBEL: Oh come on. Aren't you finished? (*gloating*) I am blinkin'.

STORM: What's your project?

EMBEL: It's passcoded. Something for the board.

STORM: You're doing projects for the board?

NERIAH: Working here...

EMBEL: What's yours?

STORM: Time Travel.

This makes both EMBEL and NERIAH turn.

NERIAH: That's a big project for a desum.

EMBEL: How long have you been working on it?

STORM: Don't worry about me.

RYE enters and stops.

RYE: Where's Fenell? Why aren't you working? Is it a breach? (*starts tapping forehead frantically*) Is it a meltdown? Why don't I know about this? Why? Why?

EMBEL: Relaxo, Rye. Fenell's in Detention C.

NERIAH: Some of us are working.

RYE: Should I come back? I should come back. Or are they watching... (*looking around*) They're always watching...

EMBEL: How did you get approved? I have to know. You're so cracked.

STORM: Just sit down.

RYE: (*sitting beside STORM*) Storm! Haven't seen you in a while.

STORM: (*sighing*) Yeah.

CASTELLA runs in, runs to a chair, and sits. They hunch over as if trying to make themselves invisible.

EMBEL: Hey!

CASTELLA: Shh!

EMBEL: You can't come in here.

STORM: Castella?

CASTELLA: You never saw me. (*starts working*)

RYE: That's impossible. You're sitting right – what are you doing?

NERIAH: I'm never going to get this done.

EMBEL: You can't work.

CASTELLA: I'll be two seconds.

STORM: Castella, you can't be in Detention if you're not approved.

CASTELLA: You can if you bypass the approval. (*makes a gesture*)

RYE: What?

EMBEL: (*making a gesture*) I'm calling the janitors.

RYE: This is going to put a dent in our system. This is going to devalue our Detention. (*starts to hyperventilate*) I'll never get into Harvard. My parents will devalue me!

NERIAH: The system will catch and reject the project. We're fine.

CASTELLA: Yeah, I probably thought of that too. (*makes a gesture*)

RYE: This is a disaster!

EMBEL: (*grabbing CASTELLA*) Get out, get out!

CASTELLA: Let go of me!

FENELL enters.

FENELL: What's going on?

RYE: Total disaster!

EMBEL: I've called the janitors.

RYE: Do something!

FENELL makes a gesture. There is a sound and the lights dim and come back up. CASTELLA makes a frustrated noise.

FENELL: Detention B has been Lidded.

CASTELLA: I almost had it.

RYE: (*making a gesture*) My parents already know. (*turns as if answering a call*) It wasn't me. I swear it wasn't me. Mom!

FENELL: Storm, did you complete your project?

STORM: Not quite...

FENELL: Neriah?

NERIAH: I had distractions.

RYE: *(still on call)* Why am I grounded? All right... *(makes a gesture, slouching in chair)* They never believed I'd make Detention.

EMBEL: I finished.

FENELL: Then you can go.

EMBEL: Are you kidding? I want to see you kill-9 this defectum.

FENELL: This is none of your business.

EMBEL: This is my Detention. I have a right to know what's going to happen.

FENELL: Do you want me to kill-9 your project? You know I can.

EMBEL: *(with a sneer at FENELL)* Detention Consul. You're not one of them. You're one of us. Barely more than a babysitter. Don't forget that. *(exits)*

FENELL: Ok. I'm going to re-start the system. Complete your Detention and leave.

CASTELLA: Fenell, look I can explain everything, I just –

FENELL: Stop talking. *(makes a gesture and talks to someone we can't see)* Dr. Seekpeace, please. *(beat)* Yes. Yes. Embel's coming your way. It's all under control. Oh yes. Thank you. *(sits and makes a gesture)*

NERIAH: Are you reviewing Castella's project?

FENELL: I'm just making sure the system isn't damaged.

CASTELLA: All I was doing –

FENELL: Shut up, Castella.

RYE: Detention complete. *(sigh)* My parents are going to give my room to my brother. *(RYE exits)*

FENELL: See you tomorrow.

NERIAH: Detention complete. I am so out of here. *(exits on the run)*

STORM: *(standing)* You might as well crash me.

FENELL: Sit. (*Beat. They take a breath and lean back. This is a much different attitude from what we've seen.*) So. You two make quite the pair. A defectum and a desum. (*to CASTELLA*) You tried to hack the system and (*to STORM*) you failed to finish. Again. Why would you choose something so unwieldy?

STORM: Because.

FENELL: Do better.

STORM: I don't know. That's how I think. I think big. I hate these instant projects people can get done in five seconds. When did faster mean smarter? Why am I punished because I think differently? I'm smarter than all of them.

FENELL: I agree.

STORM: (*still rolling*) And I'm sick and tired of being... what?

FENELL: I agree. You're smarter than all of them. Except Castella. (*to CASTELLA*) That was some system hack.

CASTELLA: But I didn't get in.

FENELL: No, you did. But they were waiting for you. We've all been waiting for both of you to get sick and tired.

STORM: What's going on?

CASTELLA: You knew I was going to install that virus in Detention C. You knew I was trying to break into Detention – how dare you!

FENELL: I'm just the messenger.

CASTELLA: (*shouting to the air*) How dare you! You kept me out on purpose! (*pacing*)

STORM: That's impossible. Detention is merit based.

FENELL: Keep thinking.

CASTELLA: I've been trying to get into Detention for years. Years. Do you know the abuse I take (*pointing off*) out there? Do you know what they say about me? I'm gonna, I'm gonna, I don't know what I'm gonna – (*pointing*) I'm gonna spit nails that's what I'm going to do!

FENELL: Why would you do that?

CASTELLA: (*still pacing*) I have no idea. My great grandma said it all the time when she was angry. (*to the air*) And I am mega angry. Spit and nails (*waving arms*) all over the place.

STORM: (*to FENELL*) You knew Castella should be approved. They knew.

FENELL: Keep thinking.

CASTELLA: I'm going to Dr. Seekpeace!

FENELL: That won't help.

STORM: Just wait, wait a second! Castella. Ok. So say they want you to hack the system. Say they want me to choose impossible projects. What if they're not trying to keep us out?

CASTELLA: But that would mean they want us in and that's...

STORM: Impossible. Or is it?

FENELL: You're right, there are different kinds of smart. And Detention has become a haven for the quick. But the quick aren't necessarily the most interesting thinkers. Embel finishes in the blink of an eye. Every time. But the projects are... vanilla. They want thinkers who can see around corners.

CASTELLA: Who? Us? Like us?

STORM: You mean... (*smiles for the first time*) We're right. We're the right ones.

CASTELLA: We're the anti-Embel. Oh I like that.

STORM: I can do this. I can totally do this. How long do I get to stay?

FENELL: You don't. You're back on the desum list.

STORM: Why?

FENELL: And you're not approved for Detention.

CASTELLA: But we did what they wanted.

FENELL: Mostly. There are new corners in your way now. Unless you'd rather be like Embel?

STORM: So what do we do?

FENELL: You tell me.

CASTELLA: See around corners.

STORM: That sounds like a pretty impossible project.

CASTELLA: It sounds like the best project ever.

FENELL: Don't bother telling anyone about this conversation. No one will believe you.

CASTELLA: I work better with complete disbelief. (*thinking now*) I have to go.

STORM: Me too.

CASTELLA: See you on the other side, Storm! (*exits*)

FENELL: What are you thinking?

STORM: I'm thinking that...I'm not a loser.

FENELL: I look forward to seeing what you do next. Now get out.

STORM: Thank you Fenell. Thank you! (*hugs FENELL*)

FENELL: Stop hugging me! I can't be seen hugging a desum.

ASRA enters.

STORM: You're the best. (*to ASRA*) Fenell is the best! (*exits*)

FENELL: (*calling off*) Flattery will get you nowhere. Hello Asra. Welcome to Detention.

—THE END—

NOW

Poe: A student with extreme anger issues.

Oli: A unique student with an imagination and anxiety.

Kee: A mostly silent student with a poor home life.

Claudia: A confident, smart, student who's not afraid to stand up.

Mr. D.: In charge of Detention B. Looks out for his students.

Ms. Zink: An evil guidance counsellor who is always cheerful.

Gender note: Poe and Oli can be cast as any gender. Mr. D is written as male but can be changed to Ms. D. Ms. Zink and Claudia are female. Kee is a trans male character.

Staging note: At no point should more than two characters be sitting in their chairs, unless they are using the chair in a creative manner. Keep the staging active.

When does this play take place? Now.

A semicircle of chairs. KEE enters, takes one of the chairs off to the side, and sits with his back to the semicircle. He pulls out a sketch pad and start to draw. OLI walks in.

OLI: Oh, oh. (*KEE turns*) This doesn't look good. This looks like more trouble than a moose in a swimming pool. Have you ever seen a moose in a swimming pool? (*KEE shrugs*) Not pretty. (*snaps a pic of the chairs*) Not that a dry moose is handsome. I better find Mr. D. Has Poe seen this? That's going to be more trouble than a jellyfish at a baby shower.

OLI leaves. KEE goes back to sketching. As OLI exits, CLAUDIA enters.

CLAUDIA: Excuse me is this – (*OLI is gone*) Well. (*to KEE*) Excuse me is this Detention B? (*KEE says nothing*) Hello? Are you going to say anything? (*she looks around*) I can't believe I have to stay for this. Where are the desks?

POE, OLI and MR. D enter, all talking at the same time.

MR. D: (*same as below*) All right we can deal with this, it can't be that bad but you have to give me a second. Ok? Give me a second.

POE: (*same as above*) She's crazy, she's going to drag us all down into the crazy. My head is going to explode, I'm telling you.

OLI: (*same as above*) This is how it starts. First no desks and then no brains. Mark my word she is going to suck out all our brains.

POE: (*turning on OLI*) You make no sense.

OLI: I'm saying how it is. How it starts. First no desks and then no brains. (*makes a sucking noise*)

MR. D: Hey! Where are the desks?

POE: (*yelling*) That's what I'm trying to tell you!

MR. D: Poe.

POE: Sorry. I'm just – this is just – (*puts their head between their knees.*)

OLI: More trouble than a ferret at a cheese factory.

MR. D: (*kneeling beside POE*) Hey. Talk to me.

POE: (*standing*) I forgot to breathe. I'm okay.

MR. D: Really okay? (*POE nods*) Where are the desks?

POE: She took them.

MR. D: Who?

OLI: The Prince of Darkness.

MR. D: Oli.

OLI: Actually, the Duchess of Darkness.

POE: El Diablo.

OLI: Ole.

CLAUDIA: (*has had enough*) Mr. Diamantopoulos? I am Claudia Sergeant Sandoval. Can you confirm this is Detention B? If I have to fulfill this obligation I want to make sure I'm in the right place and I've never been in the basement let alone – what are you looking at?

OLI: Have you ever talked someone to death? (*snaps her picture*)

CLAUDIA: I was expecting more structure.

MR. D: Yes. Let's get back on track.

CLAUDIA: Exactly.

POE: Nobody asked you.

MR. D: Poe. Who took the desks?

POE: Ms. Zink.

MR. D: Oh crap.

POE: Well not her, her little student council minions.

OLI: Did they come from beyond in a fireball and a puff of smoke?

CLAUDIA: I have homework. I need a desk.

MS. ZINK enters. MS. ZINK, no matter what she says, is always cheerful.

MS. ZINK: Ah ha!

No one has seen her come in and they all react with surprise.

EVERYONE ELSE: Ah!

MS. ZINK: Good, good, good! Now we can be productive.

POE: (*hissing to MR. D*) What does she want?

MS. ZINK: (*cheerful*) Mr. Diamantopoulos. You didn't respond to my emails.

MR. D: You write long emails, Ms. Zink.

MS. ZINK: There's a lot to say. But I decided I wasn't going to wait for your response.

OLI: More trouble than a wombat in a – (*POE hits OLI*)

MS. ZINK: Education is moving in a new direction; you'll have to keep up. Oh! I forgot my tablet. This will not do, I want to record everything you say. Don't go anywhere!

MS. ZINK exits. POE turns on MR. D.

POE: You knew about this?

MR. D: I don't read her emails. No one does. No one emails!

OLI: This is more trouble than a layer cake at an optometrist convention.

CLAUDIA: That makes no sense.

POE: Nobody asked you.

OLI: Still, a valid point. I'm in a fragile state. (*takes a selfie*)

POE: We need to stall her.

OLI: How about a photocopier emergency? She's always bragging about her copier expertise.

MR. D: Do you think it would work?

CLAUDIA: Are you considering deceiving a member of the guidance department?

POE: (*aggressive*) Who are you? Who are you and what are you doing here?

MR. D: Easy, Poe.

OLI: Think of the puppies!

POE: (*moving forward*) Who sent you? Are you part of this? Are you –

MR. D: (*pulling POE back*) Back off.

CLAUDIA: (*not fazed*) Get real. Why would I come to detention if I didn't have to?

MS. ZINK: (*entering*) I'm back!

EVERYONE ELSE: (*they all jump*) Ah!

MS. ZINK: Now we're ready. Take a seat, don't be shy. This is not a punishment. Think of it as a conversation station. A place to open up. Go deep with what's going on (*thumps chest*) in here.

POE: (*through gritted teeth at MR. D*) Open. Up?

MR. D: Ms. Zink. We do things in a specific way in Detention B. With desks.

MS. ZINK: (*tapping KEE on the shoulder*) Excuse me. Join the circle please.

OLI: Kee doesn't like to be bothered.

MS. ZINK: (*cheerful*) She needs to join the conversation.

OLI: (*muttering*) He.

POE: Mr. D.

MR. D: Ms. Zink. Can I speak to you in the hall?

MS. ZINK: Of course. After our session.

MR. D: We have procedures and you can't just change them.

MS. ZINK: Then you should have responded to my emails.



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