

ECHOES OF EMILY

AN ORIGINAL STAGE PRODUCTION
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CHARACTERS AND CAST

Emily.....Taylor Sheehan
Emily D.....Gabrielle Leo
Chad.....Andrew Vertucci
Jeremy.....Michael Flanagan
Brittany.....Madison Sedlor
Brutal Bunch.....3 Audience Members
Obituary Reader.....Teacher
Facebookers.....3 Audience Members
Ms. Todd.....Jessica Ames
Mrs. Adams.....Sarah Schlesinger
Dad.....James Drake

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Echoes of Emily

SCENE 1

Classroom. Everyone is leaving. Emily Norcross is gathering up her stuff from her desk; quiet and somewhat timid, she is bumped aside by her classmates making their way out the door. She attempts to apologize to some, especially Chad, but is ignored. Emily D. watches over her at a distance. The other characters are unaware of Emily D's presence.

Emily D.: "I'm Nobody! Who are you?
 Are you--Nobody--Too?
 Then there's a pair of us?
 Don't tell! they'd advertise--you know!
 How dreary--to be--Somebody!
 How public--like a Frog--
 To tell one's name--the livelong June--
 To an admiring Bog!"

Emily is finally left alone in the room with Ms. Todd. Ms. Todd is grading papers at her desk. Emily walks up to Ms. Todd. There is a book of the Bronte sisters' poems in her hand.

Emily: Hi Ms. Todd.

Ms. Todd looks up and smiles.

Ms. Todd: Oh, hello Emily! What can I help you with?

Emily: Nothing really, I'm just returning the book of poems. Thanks for letting me borrow it.
 (hands book to Ms. Todd)

Ms. Todd: Oh you're welcome! And how'd you like the Bronte sisters?

Emily: I liked them. Kind of sad, but beautiful. I really liked "Evening Solace" by Charlotte Bronte.

Emily D.: "Soft fall the sounds of Eden upon her puzzled ear. Oh what an afternoon for Heaven, when "Bronte" entered there..."

Ms. Todd: I'm glad. I loved reading their works back in high school. They really inspired a lot of writers, you know, then and now.

Ms. Todd takes book. Emily starts to leave.

Ms. Todd: Oh, by the way, I didn't get a chance to say it, but wonderful job on your writing

assignment. Your poetry is beautiful.

Emily: (turning) Oh, thank you.

Ms. Todd: Have you ever thought of posting them online?

Emily: Online?

Ms. Todd: : Like maybe to a blog or Facebook?

Emily: Well, not really...

Ms. Todd: You should try it. Take a chance! Inspire someone! Life is short, you know. You should make the most of it... Besides, what have you got to lose?

Emily: Well, nothing I guess..

Ms. Todd: Believe it or not, people could really benefit from reading them. They're very down to Earth and relatable. In fact, they're very similar to one of my favorite poets. Maybe I can bring some of her poems in for you to read.(Emily smiles at the offer)

Emily: I'd like that...

Ms. Todd: It's a promise then. As soon as I find that book, I'll bring it in. Who knows, maybe it'll inspire you...(looks at the clock) Well, I'd better get going. Think about what I said about posting your poems. It'd be a good experience for you.

Emily: Yeah, maybe. Anyway, I'll see you later Ms. Todd. (Mrs. Todd coughs?)

Emily D.: In this short Life that lasts only an hour
How much--how little--is within our power. (gives a sad glance to Ms. Todd)

SCENE 2

Emily is walking home. Runs into popular crowd. The group is screwing around, oblivious of their surroundings. Emily tries to move out of the way but is unsuccessful. Chad ends up running into Emily, causing her to drop her books and fall down in an attempt to save them. She remains on her knees, moonstruck.

Chad: Oh, sorry, didn't see you there.

Emily: (stuttering) O-oh, tha--

Chad quickly and reluctantly helps Emily with her books (they have a history)

Brittany: (yells) Chad! Come on! (Chad turns away from Emily; then leaves with the rest of the group, leaving a disheveled Emily to stare after him)

Emily: That's okay....I...

Emily looks down and sighs. She picks herself up, and brushes herself off, giving one last longing glance to the now gone popular crowd.

Emily D.: "It's such a little thing to weep--
So short a thing to sigh--
And yet--by Trades--the size of these
We men and women die!"

Emily gives one more look to the gone crowd, wishing to be seen, then turns and leaves.

SCENE 3

Emily's room. A bed is in the background. There is a chair and desk on stage left. the desk is fairly organized with a few books scattered here and there. A closed laptop rests on top. Meanwhile, Emily D. appears upstage or on the balcony and oversees Emily's actions and thoughts. Emily is unaware of Emily D.'s presence, and responds to Emily D.'s comments and suggestions as if they are her own thoughts. Emily walks in stage right. She begins taking out notebooks from her backpack and catches sight of her laptop. She walks over, sets the notebooks down on her desk, opens the laptop and stares at the screen. She gives a sigh of defeat.

Emily: Nothing. No friend requests, updates, messages, nothing. (jumps a little) Oh! An update (clicks on update; reads out loud.) It's from...granny.....oh. "Bingo with the girls then cocktails. #foreveryoung" (sits down to computer.)

Emily D.: ...She could be right, you know... your teacher, about your poems that is. Maybe it would be beneficial.

Emily: I don't want others to see them though...

Emily D.: You cannot keep living in fear Emily.

Emily does not respond; Emily D. sighs.

Emily D.: You are surrounded by blank paper. Why not start there?

Emily: But, what would I write?

Emily D.: Write about what you see around you. Write about something from your imagination. Write about home, write about school...write about being an outcast. We understand being an outcast...

Emily grabs one of her notebooks, a purple one, and opens to a blank page. She picks out a pencil, thinks to herself and begins to write. She speaks aloud as she writes.

Emily: Lonely the sparrow
 Hides from the storm.
 The others have left him there.
 Small and weak
 Unattractive in form,..

Emily sighs at what she thinks is her life.

Emily: (finishing the poem)...He is forever shunned.
 Emily D.: A tad bit depressing, but if that is how you feel...

Emily puts down her pencil and sadly looks at the words she has just written. Her moping is interrupted by the sound of footsteps. She turns to see Jeremy enter stage right. He is fiddling with his camera and unaware of his surroundings. Emily is amused but not surprised.

Emily: Hey Jeremy.

Jeremy: (looks up from camera) Oh, hey!

Emily: How'd you get in?

Jeremy: I opened the door. (returns to fixing his camera lense)

Emily: You know, normal people knock before they enter other people's houses.

Jeremy: (walks over and sits on bed) Yeah, well, you are not "other" people. You're my best friend, and best friend's don't berate best friends for something as trivial as knocking on their doors... So, what'ya doin'?

Emily: Oh, you know, just writing. (Closes notebook)

Jeremy: Anything exciting?

Emily: Not really (closes notebook)...just a little something that came to mind.

Jeremy: Oh! Speaking of writing, that's actually one of the reason's I came over here. Remember the poems you wrote for the photos I took a few weeks ago?

Emily: For the school paper?

Jeremy: Yes. Those ones. Well everyone liked them so much that Micah wants to incorporate them in the paper permanently. He thinks it gives the paper "culture."

Emily: So...you want more poems?

Jeremy: Please? I know you don't like other people seeing your writing, but I'm a bit desperate here.

Emily: Well can't you write them then? You write poems too.

Jeremy: For English assignments. Em, it's not that simple. I am a mediocre writer, but you? You...are a great writer. You express in words what others can only feel. Please, I'm begging you.

Emily: ...Okay, but only because it's you asking - begging.

Jeremy: I am begging -

Emily: I get it. Just make sure no one knows it's me.

Jeremy: I honestly don't get why you don't want anyone to know. If I had your talent, I'd be screaming it to the world. (Jeremy snaps picture of Emily. Emily gives Jeremy a look; Jeremy backs off) Okay, okay, fine. (Jokingly) I promise I won't tell anyone that you're a fantastic writer.

Emily shakes her head as Jeremy hands the pictures to her from his backpack. As they walk off, Jeremy teases Emily about picture.

Music Transition - Time Passage and the feeling of All is Well

School bell rings.

SCENE 4

Jeremy and Emily just getting out of school. Both are carrying backpacks. Emily has a few books and the notebook from earlier in her arms. Jeremy has his camera hanging around his neck.

Jeremy: Congratulations, yet again, we have survived another day at school.

Emily: It wasn't that bad Jeremy.

Jeremy: You were obviously not in the same classroom then. How Mr. Gilbert became a teacher I'll never know! (Emily drags Jeremy downstage to shut him up)

Emily: He's not that horrible.

Jeremy: Well of course you would say that Em, you think every teacher we have is wonderful. That man, on the other hand, should not be allowed to teach. The last test he gave us practically killed me.

Emily: You probably did fine. (grabs backpack) We both studied the notes he gave us.

Jeremy: Exactly! We studied the notes that he gave us. That is what any smart kid would do, especially when the teacher says, "The test will cover what the notes address." The questions that he placed on the test however, had nothing to do with them!

Emily: It was kinda hard...

Jeremy: Really, the people they put in charge sometimes....

Emily laughs at Jeremy and they continue walking. Jeremy sees something on the ground, some weird quirky crack in the sidewalk, and stops.

Jeremy: Stop for a second, I want to get this. It'd look great for my portfolio.

Jeremy walks forward a bit, away from Emily, takes camera from his neck and places it up to his face, looking through the lense. He bends down, focusing the camera on something on the ground. Emily watches as he snaps a few pictures. Both are unaware of Chad, Brittany and group walking towards where Jeremy is crouched. All of them are texting away on their cell phones. Chad is busy texting on his cell phone and does not see Jeremy. Emily notices Chad at the last minute right before he trips over Jeremy. Both guys are sprawled on the ground. Emily is in the back, unsure of what to do. Chad turns on Jeremy angrily.

Chad: Yo, what the hell?

Jeremy: Seriously?

Chad: Why don't you watch where you're going?

Jeremy: Me? I'm not the one who wasn't paying attention. Last time I checked, the rest of the sidewalk was free-range.

Chad moves toward Jeremy. Brittany stops him.

Brittany: (bends down next to Jeremy) Why don't you guys find someplace you're actually wanted?(kicks camera; to Emily) Come on Chad, he's not worth it. (Chad glares at Jeremy mocks him. Brittany pulls Chad away).

Chad: (mumbling under breath) Freak...

Chad, Brittany and the rest of the group leave. Jeremy glares after them and begins brushing the dirt off his clothes. Emily approaches him. Both are bent over on ground.

Emily: Are you okay?

Jeremy: Yeah. (Picks up his camera to check if there are any scratches. Finds a scratch on the lense. Gestures to where the group left) See? That's what I'm talking about. Why are people like that placed on top of the social totem pole?

Emily: Well, you were kind of in the way...

Jeremy: Like Chad the football player couldn't stop texting for a second to see where he was going? (Emily begins to back up)

Emily: Maybe it was an important text?

Jeremy: (laughs) You're only defending him because you've had a crush on him since we were like seven.

Emily: I gotta go.

Jeremy: Em, he's not worth it. (Emily, embarrassed, turns and begins to walk away)

Emily: I told dad I'd cook dinner tonight.....Sorry about your lense.

Jeremy shakes his head at his friend; he checks his camera one more time and follows Emily off stage.

Music Transition

SCENE 5

Emily's room. She comes home from school, walks over to her desk. The laptop is closed, and the pictures that Jeremy gave her are in a pile beside it.. She takes the stack of pictures from her desk.

Emily: I should probably start working on these...

Dad: (from offstage) Honey! You home?

Emily: Yeah Dad!

Dad: Dinner in five minutes!

Emily takes out her purple notebook and goes to open it. She changes her mind and opens her laptop instead.

Emily: Still nothing. Yep, it's official, I am the invisible girl. The police could be searching for me in an open field, yet their glances would just wash right over me.(sighs.)

Emily D.: That sounds like the beginning of a poem...

Emily: Hmm....glances wash over me...

Emily grabs her purple notebook and looks for a clean page.

Emily D.: (smiles) It would not be as messy if you typed it up.

Emily looks up from her purple notebook at her laptop. Closes notebook and begins to type up the poem.

Emily: "Glances wash over me.
Like the wind ...

Emily D.: ...over a pebble...

Emily:... Like the wind over a pebble
they simply keep moving.
I am like the dead
Though I breathe in life.
The background and I are one.
Not even the" (pauses, unsure of what to write.)

Emily D.: birds...sweet minstrels of song. (Emily thinks)

Emily:birds.....
"Not even the birds---sweet minstrels of music--
note my presence.
Only the celestial beings above regard my existence.

But--unfortunately, they cannot speak..." No..that doesn't sound right...

Emily D.: Try "alas!"

Emily: "Alas"? That sounds old..

Emily D.: Just try it...

Emily: "But--alas! They cannot speak.
Only watch-- Watch
the invisible girl fight to be seen."

Emily sits back in chair and sighs. Slowly sits upright. Looks at screen.

Emily: That actually sounds nice...

Emily D.: Why not do as your teacher suggests? Why not show them?

Emily: (Considering it) ...post my poems on Facebook....(shakes head at the thought, moves away from desk) no, it would be pointless.

Emily D.: Why?

Emily: It's not like anyone will read them.

Emily D.: You don't know that.

Emily: I have one friend in the entire universe. My classmates ignore me. The world doesn't even know that I exist. (Makes as if about to leave)

Emily D.: ...Yet. We are all strangers to the world, and the world is not acquainted with us because we are not acquainted with it and her inhabitants.....How will the world ever know you if you do not make yourself known?

Emily: They're not any good...

Emily D.: What harm will it do?

Emily:.. (Considers). I guess it can't hurt (walks back to desk)...., let's see. Paste.

Dad: Emily!

Emily: (frazzled and surprised) Post! (Clicks button)

Dad: Dinner!!

Emily: Coming! (Emily leaves)

SFX: A School Bell Rings

SCENE 6

Class is ending. The students are leaving. Emily waves at Jeremy as he leaves, and stares after Chad and Brittany. Emily is the last one in the classroom. Ms. Todd notices her as she is about to leave.

Ms. Todd: Emily!

Emily: Hi Ms. Todd.

Ms. Todd: And how-(short gasp of pain) how are you today?

Emily: (shrugs) Good I guess. Mr. Gilbert handed back our tests today.

Ms. Todd: Ah, yes, the infamous Mr. Gilbert. I overheard some of the students discussing his class this morning. Specifically your friend Jeremy. (gets up and chuckles) Seems he has a very strong opinion concerning that class and it's teacher.

Emily: Oh, he didn't mean any--

Ms. Todd: Emily, don't worry. Everyone has a right to their own opinion. Besides, I understand his sentiments exactly. I had this teacher back in high school, Mr. Humphrey. Had a voice like dirt and reeked of onions. I swear his goal in life was to ruin students dreams....I thought he'd never die--I mean leave. There's always that one teacher that can make or break your high school career.

Emily smiles.

Ms. Todd: So, how is the writing coming? Any new poems?

Emily: A few.

Ms. Todd: Well the more you write, the better you'll get.

Emily: (Shrugs) Hopefully..

Ms. Todd: Trust me, you will. (Emily begins to leave) Oh, I almost forgot to ask, did you try posting any of your poems online?

Emily: Well, sort of. I posted one....

Ms. Todd: Wonderful! Did anyone say anything about it?

Emily: No...people don't usually comment on my stuff...

Ms. Todd: That's okay, you can post some tonight! You have all weekend. The more you get out there, the more people will comment on them.

Emily: I don't think so, I'm not exactly what you would call popular, whether it be on the Internet or in real life. It's really not that big of a deal. Not that many people would see them anyway.

Ms. Todd: (Gently) All the greats started off as unknowns. Posting them could be the first step. Who knows, maybe you'll end up with a fan base sooner than you think. (Smiles)

Emily looks unconvinced.

Ms. Todd: Why don't you read one of your poems in class next week? You know, the one you just handed in. Then at least you'll have a few days to memorize it and fix it if you want to.

Emily: (Adamantly) I really don't like speaking in front of people.

Ms. Todd: As I always say, "Break the barriers and rise above." It'll give you a chance to share your poetry with your peers.(Emily looks unconvinced) Think of it as an extra credit project.

Emily: Okay...I guess I could.

Ms. Todd: Excellent! You will do great! (retrieves flyer from desk) Actually, while we're on the topic, here. I want you to take a look at this. (hands Emily flyer) It's a poetry contest the school hosts every four years. Believe it or not, I actually won back in the age of the dinosaurs. It's a great opportunity. I really encourage you to take it.

Emily: (Looking nervously at the flyer) I don't know....

Ms. Todd: You're a talented girl, Emily. Don't let your gift go to waste.

Emily: But what if they don't like it?

Ms. Todd: Well you'll never know if you don't try. (Smiles and hands contest paper.)
At least send something in. I know you have a poem lying around
somewhere...maybe one that found it's way into the school paper...perhaps?

Emily: Wait, how did--?

Ms. Todd: The application date is in a couple weeks, so you have loads of time to
prepare.

Emily: (Reluctantly) Okay, I guess I could send one in. Have a nice weekend Ms. Todd.
(Begins to leave. Turns back to Ms. Todd) Thank you. (Ms. Todd smiles at Emily as she
leaves.)

Ms. Todd: Anytime (watches as Emily leaves)

Spotlight on Ms. Todd. Ms. Todd smiles knowingly

SCENE 7

Bedroom. Emily walks in and sets backpack down. Sees laptop and contemplates writing
another poem. Emily D. looks on. Emily takes the flyer out of her backpack and looks at it.

Emily: I don't even know what I would send in...

Emily D.: Inspiration will reveal itself to you...the first step is choosing to find it and accept it.

Emily: What if they reject it?

Emily D.: And what if they don't?

Emily: But what if Ms. Todd's wrong and I'm not a good writer?

Emily D.: "We grow accustomed to the Dark--
When Light is put away--
As when the old Lamp
To witness her Goodbye--
A Moment--We uncertain step
For newness of the night--
Then--fit our Vision to the Dark--
And meet the Road--erect--
And so of larger--Darknesses--
Those Evenings of the Brain--
When not a Moon disclose a sign--

Or Star--come out--within--
 The Bravest--grope a little--
 And sometimes hit a Tree
 Directly in the Forehead--
 But as they learn to see--
 Either the Darkness alters--
 Or something in the sight
 Adjusts itself to Midnight--
 And Life steps almost straight."....

Emily D.: You will never know if you refuse to take a chance. Fortune befriends the bold. Rarely does she entertain the timid...

Emily: Maybe I could just send one in. No one has to know..

Emily D.: You have nothing to lose.

Emily D.: The world has many doors...this could be your chance.

Emily: Maybe later...not yet. I'll do it when I'm ready.

Emily D.: And when will that be?

Emily: Sometime...just not now....

Emily is about to walk away.

Emily D.: Just write something!

Emily changes her mind and walks to the laptop. Begins speaking poem as she walks back to desk.

Emily: The world has many doors.
 Where dreams come true
 Is the land of mystery.
 Daydreams are nature's curse.
 But destination of that land,
 And location of fantasy,
 This land of fortune
 Is lost to me.

Emily stops typing. Goes to click on the post button. Emily D. nods and Emily clicks. Dad walks in. He appears to have just come back from work.

Dad: Hey muffin, how was school? (Places big kiss on top of head)

Emily: (Laughs and turns around to give dad big hug.) It was good. Did you have dinner?

Dad: (Mockingly) Dinner? How could you suggest such a thing! Me, have dinner when my daughter has promised to make her famous homemade bread and lasagna?! You, child, must be joking.

Emily: (Rolls eyes) I was just wondering. I'll go make it now.

Dad: So, anything new happen today?

Emily: Not really. Well, Ms. Todd asked me to recite a poem in class on Tuesday.

Dad: Oh? That sounds exciting. Let's hear it.

Emily: (Grabs purple notebook from beside laptop) Okay. Don't laugh.

Dad: (Mock offense) Never.

Music.

Emily: A mermaid ascended from the sea
 Glistening beauty be.
 But that creature and her scales
 Hid her radiance from me.
 Had I but searched insisently
 Had I but trapped her then and there,
 But she only breathes in water,
 And I but only air.
 If I could only follow
 That siren and her song
 Then maybe I could find that place
 Where my soul belongs.

Dad: (In awe) It's wonderful...

Emily: I guess. I just wish I didn't have to say it in front of everyone else.

Dad: But why? It's a great poem! And you should be proud.

Emily: Remember the last time I gave a speech?

Dad: Oh honey, it's not your fault that that boy couldn't move out of the way fast enough.

Emily: Dad, it was beyond mortifying! I spewed...bile on the most popular guy in school! What if that happens again?

Dad: Well just make sure he sits in the the back then. (Chuckles at joke)

Emily: Dad!

Dad: I should write a book--"Everyone pukes." Maybe it would help you.

Emily: Dad! I'm serious.

Dad comes over and places hands on Emily's shoulders.

Dad: You will be fine. All you have to do is think about what you are going to say, take a deep breath, and just...read...and imagine everyone else in the room is naked.

Emily: Dad!

Dad: Now go make food, I'm hungry. (Emily shakes her head and leaves)

SCENE 8

Classroom, Brittany is flirting with Chad. Both surrounded by audience members. Jeremy at desk trying to balance pencil on one finger. For the first time, his camera is not around his neck. Emily walks in, stands next to Jeremy.

Jeremy: Hey, how's it going?

Emily: Good. Oh, I have the poems for your photos. (digs in backpack and takes out stack of papers; hands them to Jeremy)

Jeremy picks out one and reads the poem on it. He starts out still mad about when Emily defended Chad, but slowly softens as he reads the poem.

Jeremy: In spring thou comest,
 Shooting forth from the frozen ground,
 Petals reaching for the sun,
 Love emanating with no sound.
 The cold is gone,
 Beauty will no longer be hidden
 In the bitter depths that kept you
 From reuniting with me.

Emily: Do you like it? (Emily sits)

Jeremy: Like it? This is perfect! This poem with that picture I took of the flowers in front of the school will be a great piece for the front page! Micah wanted the main story to be about spring anyway. Like always, you, my friend are a life-saver.

Emily: Glad I could help.

Jeremy: (Placing papers in backpack) Are you sure you don't want to be mentioned for the poems? The guys on the school paper are beginning to think that I'm writing these. They seem to think I'm hiding some literary talent behind my camera lense and keep trying to recruit me. You know how hard it is to find good writers for the paper nowadays?

Emily: As tempting as that sounds, I'd rather remain anonymous. Besides, I like writing for your photos. It gives me something to do. (Jeremy smiles)

Jeremy: Oh, hey, speaking of poetry, I happened to glance at the poems you've been posting on your page lately. Depressing, but wonderful.

Emily: Ms. Todd said maybe I should start posting my poems on Facebook or something.

Jeremy: And I agree wholeheartedly. Other people will finally see just how talented you are!

Emily: ...yeah..sure.

Jeremy: What I don't understand is why when I told you to do stuff like that in the past, all I got was a shrug?

Emily shrugs

Jeremy: See? I am your best friend, and yet do you take my advice? No. You just shrug! I mean, it was hard enough to get you to write for my photography.

Emily: Okay, whatever Jeremy.

Jeremy: Just try entering some of your stuff, Em. You're always writing anyway. Don't you ever get tired of no one else seeing them?

Emily: No.

Jeremy: Liar. People would pay to read some of your stuff. They're easy to relate to.

Emily: That's what Ms. Todd said. She wants me to enter this poetry contest.

Emily takes out flyer from her backpack and hands it to Jeremy. Jeremy glances over it.

Jeremy: Wow! This sounds amazing. So why don't you?

Emily: Enter? I mean, I kind of want to, I just, I don't know, I'm not really into showing my poetry to the world. Not yet anyways. The two poems I posted online were kind of spontaneous

-

Emily is interrupted by Mrs. Adams walking in from stage left.

Mrs. Adams: Alright everyone, settle down (Looks down at clipboard.) I will be filling in for Ms. Todd today.

Jeremy: (Loud whisper) Where's Ms. Todd?

Emily: I don't know, maybe she's sick? She said she'd be here.

Mrs. Adams: Now it says here that Emily Norcross? will be giving an extra credit presentation today. Is Emily here? (Looks around classroom; Jeremy points to Emily, Emily shoves his hand down.) Ah, perfect. Go ahead.

Emily reluctantly gets up, hearing the snickers of classmates.

Brittany: (Loudly) Hey Chad, good thing you are back here. She might barf on you again. (Class laughs; Emily tries to ignore them)

Chad: Can we not talk about that? (Grumbles) That's all I need.

Emily: (approaches Mrs. Adams) um, where is Ms. To-----

Mrs. Adams: (To class) Silence! (To Emily) Go right up front. Everyone else, quiet!

Emily goes to front of class nervously. Hands shaking, she brings the piece of paper up to her face. The class goes silent. Though Emily can't see her, Emily D. nods subtly in encouragement.

Emily: "A mermaid ascended from the sea, um, it
Uhm, Listening be-, I mean, um, Glistening beau-
(clears throat) Glistening b-b-beauty be.
B-but that creature hid, um, the creature..."

Brittany: (raises hand) Excuse me, but could you start again? I'm not fluent in stuttering.

(laughter grows)

Emily: I, uh--

The snickering begins to get louder till it is outright laughter. Emily places her hand over her mouth as if she is about to puke again, Chad cowers. She drops her head and rushes “out of room” and downstage right. She leans up against the proscenium arch right, attempting to calm herself down. Jeremy casts a worried glance at Emily as she runs out, but is stopped by Mrs. Adams who is attempting to settle down the class.

SCENE 9

Starts off at proscenium arch right and moves to Emily’s room. She walks inside, agitated and still embarrassed over her failed attempt to speak in public. She drops her backpack on the ground and plops on her bed. The laptop is open at her desk. The scene is charged and has a sharp edge.

Emily: What was I thinking? I’m a complete and utter failure! Why’d I even pretend that I could do this?

Emily D.: Because deep down you know that you are capable of it.

Emily: I told her I hated speaking in front of others! Why would she make me do that?

Emily begins to pace the room.

Emily D.: Perhaps she sees greatness that is yet unknown to yourself.

Emily: (Scoffs) Greatness? What greatness? Washington was great, Gandhi was great, my dad is great, my teachers are great, even Jeremy is great!

Emily D.: Everyone has greatness in them. The secret is in finding out where that greatness lies.

Emily sits down at her desk and faces her laptop. She stares at the screen.

Emily D.: For some it lies in sports. Others in music or science. For some it’s photography. Sometimes it lies in things without form, like kindness, or wisdom. Sometimes it comes in the form of a gentle push or encouragement...sometimes, it’s the ability to express oneself on what starts as a blank page or computer screen...

Emily stares once more at the computer screen. Her hands move toward the keyboard, then stop. With a sigh of frustration she slams the laptop shut. She gets up to go but is stopped short when her dad enters. He looks concerned.

Emily: Oh, hey dad.

Dad: Emily, the school just called...

Emily: What'd they want?

Dad: ...it's about Ms. Todd.

Emily: What about her? (to self) She wasn't at school today. (Begins to worry. Back to dad) Is she okay?

Dad: Sweetie, something's...happened.

[In the world of the play Ms. Todd has been sick, was admitted to the hospital, and now has died there]

TRANSITION: Teacher from audience reading of obituary on stage. "Ms. Jessica Todd, 32, passed away (each night of performance). The family will be holding the wake this Saturday at 10 am at the Fairport Cemetery. All are welcome to attend."

SCENE 10

Jeremy and Emily walk in stage left all in black. Both are devastated.

Emily: I can't believe she's gone....

Jeremy: Yeah, I know...she really influenced a lot of people--the place was packed!
(pause)....

Emily D.: "Parting is all we know of heaven, and all we need of hell..."

Jeremy: ...I wonder who our teacher will be now? (Emily doesn't respond) Probably Mrs. Adams....

Emily: She was going to let me borrow a book. She said I reminded her of her favorite poet....

Emily stares at the ground, lost in her sorrow. Jeremy gently places his hand on her shoulder and pulls her into a hug. They have a moment of silence to let Ms. Todd's death sink in. Emily lets go of emotions and weeps. After a few minutes, Jeremy pulls away..

Jeremy: Em?

Emily: What?

Jeremy: I...I think she would have wanted you to enter that competition.

Emily: (Cleaning herself up and in disbelief) Huh?

Jeremy: The poetry competition. Ms. Todd; she would've told you to enter.

Emily: You're bringing this up now? Our teacher just died!

Jeremy: (Trying to calm Emily down) Yes, but listen, she thought you should submit a poem to that competition.

Emily: I don't want to talk about it.

Jeremy: Em, she believed in you. Your dad believes in you. I believe in you. Why can't you believe in you?

Emily remains silent, refusing to look at Jeremy.

Jeremy: Come on Emily, you are a great writer. Stop letting other people determine your strengths and weaknesses.

Emily doesn't look at Jeremy and walks off stage right. Jeremy pulls out the flyer from his pocket, looks down at it, then looks to where Emily left.

SCENE 11

Emily enters bedroom, sits at computer and opens it. She makes as if she is about to write, hesitates, then sits back. Emily D. overlooks the entire thing.

Emily D.: "Too happy Time dissolves itself and leaves no remnant by-- Tis Anguish not a Feather hath or too much weight to fly--". Loss is a horrible thing... You should write. No moment should be lost when the heart is breaking.

Emily: Write? What would I write about?

Emily D.: Anything. Everything. Write because you feel lonely and some of your friends are sleeping the churchyard sleep. The teacher has gone to rest, and the open leaf of the book, and the scholar at school alone make the tears come. Do not brush them away, and pray do not stem the words threatening to erupt from your soul. Let both flow from you as tribute to her, your Ms. Todd.

Emily: It's too hard....

Emily D.: You have not even tried yet...

Emily: And what am I supposed to do? Just pour out my feelings onto my laptop?

Emily D.: ...Yes.

Emily thinks to herself. Turns to laptop and, still tortured, begins to write. Emily D. smiles.

Time passage lights and music.

SCENE 12

Transition: Mrs. Adam's and students have a scene in classroom to show time passing. Papers are being handed into Mrs. Adams as follows: Brittany, audience members, Chad, Emily and Jeremy. Class sits. One audience member has a football that he tosses around with Chad.

PROPS: FOOTBALL, SNACKS, PAPERS

There is a music transition and a bell rings.

Emily's Bedroom. Jeremy and Emily cross stage into bedroom. Jeremy walks with a stack of textbooks in his arms.

Jeremy: I truly believe Mr. Gilbert is out to get me. Okay, as of right now we have about nineteen hours to study for this Chem test. Subtracting time spent snacking, mindless chatter, and distracting ourselves with hysterical YouTube videos, we have about... three and a half hours? Give or take a little?

Emily: Great. I'll go get the survival snacks from the kitchen. (Leaves stage right)

Jeremy sets the books and his backpack down. Sees open laptop and sits down at it. Begins scrolling and clicking through the laptop when he comes across Emily's poem

Jeremy: "Forever in Our Hearts: Dedicated to Ms. Todd.." (Clicks on folder and reads poem under breath. When done, stares at screen, amazed at the poem's beauty and unsure what to do. He walks over to his backpack and takes out the folded contest flyer. He looks down at the flyer then back up to the laptop. Walks quickly over to laptop and sits down.)

Jeremy: This is for your own good Em. (quietly reads off flyer while typing on laptop.) Send. (clicks button. Makes sure the laptop and everything on it looks like it did before, grabs flyer and stuffs it back into his backpack just as Emily walks back in.)

Jeremy: (casually) So, you ready to have our brains fried with science?

Survival Snacks: Doritos, buttered popcorn, Combos

SCENE 13

School. Emily walks into classroom and sits down.

Mrs. Adams: Oh! Emily! You're here early. Just a second, I'll be right back.

Chad walks in and sits down in front of her. She is obviously unsure of what to do and begins to stare at him. An idea forms in Chad's brain. He turns.

Chad: Hey, Emma, right?

Emily: Um..

Chad: Do you have a pencil I can borrow?

Emily: (Flustered) What? Oh! Um, yeah, uh (Looks frantically over desk, not realizing that she has a pencil in her hand. Chad is obviously unamused)

Chad: (Sees Jeremy enter. Makes eye-contact and gets up. Brittany enter after him stage left) Never mind. (Turns to ask someone else)

Emily: (Finally realizes that there is a pencil in her hand.) Oh, here!

Chad: Uh, no thanks, I'm good. (Gets up and goes to sit next to Brittany and the others)

Emily: Oh, okay.....(Laughs awkwardly at her mistake. Begins to berate self for missed opportunity)

Jeremy enters and sits next to Emily. Sees her muttering to her pencil.

Jeremy: Earth to Emily! (Emily is startled and is surprised to see Jeremy next to her)

Emily: Wait what?

Jeremy: (Snickers) Oh nothing, I was just admiring your concentration.

Emily: Oh shut up.

Jeremy: Come on Em, you've daydreamed about that idiot since we were kids. And I'll say it again, "He is not worth it!" He's a complete slacker....Plus, he can't even get your name right!

Emily: That's not true!

Jeremy: Please! He's called you "Emma" for the last twelve years!

Emily: Maybe it's a nickname.

Jeremy: No it's not, it's a sign of ignorance and disinterest. Em, you can do better than that.
Why do you continue to hope?

Jeremy begins to collecting his things. Walks past Emily D. stage right, and shakes his head at her stubbornness

Emily D.: He does not know, poor boy. Hope is a thing with feathers, that perches in the soul,
and sings the tune without the words, and never stops, at all. However, your friend is
right, that boy does not deserve your affections.

Emily, annoyed, grabs her notebook and backpack and begins to get up. Chad walks over. He places hands on desk and leans in, forcing her to sit back down.

Chad: So, Emma, what're you doing later?

Emily: (Looks around to make sure he's talking to her; laughs nervously) M-me? Well, I mean I have h-hom--

Chad: (Interrupts) See, I'm having some trouble with this writing assignment, and someone told me that you're pretty good this kind of stuff....Sooo, I was wondering if you would help me.

Emily: H-help you? Yes! Absolutely!

Chad: Cool. Seven at my place then? (Emily nods) See you then.

Chad leaves. Emily waits till he leaves to express her joy. Gets out of seat and hurriedly puts books and notebook into bag. Stops before she leaves to try and compose herself. Smiles then leaves.

Chad moves to bedroom, shifts diagonal to change scene. Need light shift.

SCENE 14

Chad's bedroom. There is a desk and bed with a football on top. A few notebooks are scattered on the desk and Chad's backpack is open on the ground beside his bed.

Chad walks in with Emily, clutching her notebook, following close behind. Emily D. watches. Emily is in awe as she enters the room. She cannot believe that her wildest dreams are coming true. Chad gestures to his room and smiles at Emily.

Chad: So, this is it . Come on in.

Emily: Th-thanks.

Chad goes over and sits on his bed. Emily looks around unsure of what to do.

Emily: Um..So w-where do you want to start?

Chad: Well for starters you could sit down (motions to bed)

Emily: Oh, right (Nervously sits down at the other end of the bed; Chad looks amused)

Chad: (After an awkward pause) Okay, so like I was saying, I'm having a bit of trouble with this short story assignment. (Gets up and grabs a notebook off his desk; sits back down on bed but closer to Emily) Honestly, I don't even know where to start.

Emily: W-well, the short story is supposed to be about a mythological creature in modern times.

Chad: What, like Santa Clause or something?

Emily: Not really...more like Greek and Roman mythology. (Chad still looks confused) Okay, for example, if Zeus came to earth today, and went to..um...a movie theatre, what would he do or think.

Chad: Okay..

Emily: M-maybe you could do a character like Poseidon, or Hercules!

Chad: That's a great idea! With your help, I can get this done...(Stands up; sighs) but the thing is, I'm really busy.

Emily: Well, it's only five pag--

Chad: Yeah, but, see, there's a game coming up soon and coach said if I flunk another assignment I'm getting benched. If I get benched, the team will kill me! This game on Friday is really important...

Emily: Oh..

Chad: Maybe...(Looks at Emily, then shakes his head) No.

Emily: What?

Chad: No, never mind, it's stupid...

Emily: M-maybe I could help?

Chad: ...I know this is a lot to ask, but do you think you could, I don't know, write it for me?

Emily: (Hesitates) Like do your homework for you?

Chad: Just this once. I'm really stressing right now. I really don't want to be kicked off the football team.

Emily: I don't know, I mean--

Chad: But it's okay if you don't want to help me. (Gets up and moves downstage right) I totally understand. I'm just really bad at writing, so I thought you could help me. I mean, word is that you're pretty amazing.

Emily: W-well, maybe just this once. We wouldn't want to let the f-football team down.

Chad: Really? You'd do that for me?

Emily: Y-yeah, definitely! No problem..

Chad: I knew I could count on you.

Chad smiles and kisses Emily lightly on the lips.

SCENE 15

Emily's room. Emily returns from Chad's house in a daze.

Emily: ...he kissed me. (Hugs herself) Chad Kennedy kissed me!

Emily D.: It was not that incredible...

Emily rushes to her laptop. Opens it and begins to type.

Emily: My heart chases you--
 Dear Heart! Come back!
 Sweet heart stop singing--

Oh Sir--please answer--
 She waits your reply
 Make her wait no longer--
 Say--Perhaps--You feel the same!

Emily types in the last few lines onto her laptop.

Emily: Okay

Emily D.: Maybe you should wait to post it. It's late... Save it for later.

Emily: I might forget...what if he sees it? And he loves it? (Giggles to self at her fantasy)

Emily D. is silent. Emily returns to typing.

Emily: Alright. Here goes nothing...post.

Emily posts the poem and shuts off laptop. She gets up and goes over to her bed. Breaking into laughter, Emily hugs herself once again.

Emily: Oh my gosh Chad kissed me!.....He actually kissed (hugs pillow to her chest) me....

SCENE 16

Classroom, the bell has rung and students begin to leave. Emily sees Chad, smiles and gives a small wave. Chad smiles at her but quickly rolls his eyes when she leaves. Jeremy notices, but does not say anything, instead chooses to leave. He leaves his camera bag behind. Brittany notices the wave from Emily, and stays behind with Chad and the rest of the group.

Brittany: And what was that? Community service? (Gestures to the door)

Chad: (Smirks) Nothing. Let's just say that coach will not be benching this guy on Friday night.

Brittany: Oh? How'd you manage that? Did you finally learn how to write?

Chad: (Sarcastically) Ahahaha, you're hilarious. For your information, I found someone willing to help me.

Brittany: I thought that kid, Jeremy, refused to write your paper.

Chad: Jeremy Newton is a moron. He thinks he's too good to write my paper, so I asked his little girlfriend instead. (Jeremy walks in, hears Chad talkin)

Brittany: You asked her to write your paper, and she said yes? Just like that? I don't believe you. She can't even speak like a normal person...

Chad: Believe me, it was simple; that freak is obsessed with me. That girl is like putty in my hands.

Emily D.: It appears his heart is not as magical as she deemed his face.

Brittany: What'd you do? Wink at her? (Group laughs)

Chad: You know, I'm offended Brittany. Despite what you and others think, there is an art to what I do.

Brittany: Sure there is...

Chad: I took her to my place and told her some story about how I was SO busy and SO stressed, and that she was the ONLY one that could help me. (Smirks) And then I kissed her.

Jeremy grabs camera bag and leaves, but is stopped by Emily who has been looking for him. She sees Chad and attempts to go in to say hi. Jeremy tries to stop her from overhearing Chad and Brittany but is unsuccessful.

Brittany and Gang: What?

Chad: Hey, what can I say? Sometimes you have to make sacrifices.

Brittany: (Mockingly) It must have been some kiss if she agreed to write your paper for you!

Chad: (Scoffs) (EMILY ENTER HERE) Please, a kiss from a dog would have been amazing for that girl. Me kissing her was probably the best thing thing that ever happened in her life. I swear she's never been kissed before. You could tell. God, talk about a horrible kisser. It was like kissing a dead fish--(Group laughs along with Chad)

Emily D.: He was hardly what I would deem impressive...

Emily looks hurt but continues to listen to the conversation.

Brittany: Shut up Chad (Rolling eyes).

Chad: The entire time she was like (Mimicking Emily) "What, oh, um, I, um,". She's completely helpless and pathetic. I thought she was going to pass out on my carpet.

Brittany: Chad, stop...(She is the only one not laughing)

Chad: And that poem she tried to read in class? (Pretends to stutter) “A f-f-fish a-a-ascended (mimics gagging motions and laughs) If I told her to jump in front of a car, the girl would probably do it just to prove she loved me. (Emily leaves with Jeremy running after her)

Emily D.: “An ear can break a human heart as quickly as a spear.....

Brittany: (Disgusted) You’re really sick, you know that? (Begins gathering her stuff while Chad and group are laughing; motions to group) Come on guys...COME ON!

Emily D.: We wish the ear had not a heart so dangerously near.”

SCENE 17

Emily’s house. Emily enters and dumps her backpack on the ground and falls onto the bed, crying. Jeremy follows her from offstage, but since she ignores him, he walks off stage right.

Emily D.: “He dealt his pretty words like Blades--
 How glittering they shone--
 And every one unbarred a nerve
 Or wantoned with a bone--
 He never deemed--he hurt--
 That--is not Steel’s Affair--
 A vulgar grimace in the Flesh--
 How ill the Creatures bear--
 To Ache is human--not polite--
 The film upon the eye
 Mortality’s old Custom--
 Just locking up--to Die.”

Emily D. looks over at the crying Emily, who is clutching a stuffed animal at the head of the bed, sympathy on her face.

Emily D.: The pain goes away eventually..

Emily: (Anger is building as Emily speaks) I’m not pathetic. I’m not helpless. Ugh! I can’t believe I fell for that!

Emily D.: We all make mistakes...

Emily: I did that entire paper for him!

Emily D.: And it will not happen again.

Emily: Oh no...the poem! I-I posted that poem!

Emily rushes to her laptop, frantic.

Emily: What if he saw it?!

Emily D.: Highly doubtful. He is not friends with you in that world, so why would he befriend you in the real one?

Emily: (Near tears).....what do I do?

Emily D.: ...Writing would help.

Emily: ...How could I be so stupid?

Emily, still angry, pauses for a moment then moves to the keyboard and begins to write a poem. Emily Dickinson is over shoulder.

Emily: (hurt and angry) Heart....

Emily D.: "Heart!.....

Emily: We will dismiss him!
Together.....

Emily D: – tonight.

Emily:...hmm...together..?

Emily D.: ...tonight!

Emily: someday....

Emily D.: (Exasperated) Tonight!!

Emily: (Pauses, deletes "someday") ...as of now.

Emily D: (Shrugs) Not what I would have chosen, however, it works.

Emily: You will erase the hope we had....

Emily D.:I will forget the light! When you have done, pray tell me

Emily: So his smiles I will spurn...

Emily D.: Haste! Lest while you're lagging....

Emily: I am once again ‘

Both Emilys: hurt....

Emily sighs. Voice over of brutal bunch's laughter. Sits back.

Emily D.: He does not deserve you. They insult what they cannot compete with and hurt what they do not understand.

Emily: Well, here's to moving on...

Emily gives a small smile. Goes back to laptop and types.

Emily: Post. (Sits back and smiles; closes laptop and leaves. Emily D. looks at computer then at where Emily left and smiles.)

Music Transition - Important

SCENE 18

Emily is center stage at her house. Surrounding her are Brittany, Chad, and Jeremy, each with smartphone and distanced from each other. Emily's cellphone rings, and Emily picks it up.

Emily: Hello? Yes, this is Emily.

Jeremy: (Reading off smartphone) Dear students, we are pleased to announce...

Emily: (Still on phone) Wait, what? I'm sorry, you must be mistaken,

Brittany: ..the winner of this year's poetry competition....

Emily: I didn't submit anything to a poetry contest.

Chad:and the winning entry, Forever in Our Hearts..

Emily:...Well, yes, that's my poem but...

Jeremy: ...written by our very own Miss Emily Norcross.

Emily: I, uh, thank you, thank you so much. Um, yes, you too. Have a nice day.

Emily hangs up phone. She is in shock. She stares at phone, grabs her backpack and heads to

school.

Music Transition

SCENE 19

Emily walks into school. Classmates say hi and congrats to her. Emily is unused to the attention but smiles awkwardly. Sees Jeremy and rushes over to him. Emily D. is nearby, watching events unfold

Jeremy: Hey! Congratulations! I heard about it last night! See, told you you were an amazing writer.

Emily: Thanks, but Jeremy, I didn't enter the contest. (Jeremy looks away sheepishly)

Jeremy: I know.

Emily: You know?

Jeremy: Yeah...

Emily: (Understanding starting to dawn) What do you mean you know?!

Jeremy: I....

Emily: You what?

Jeremy: I kinda sorta might've entered you into the contest.

Emily: You entered me into the contest? Jeremy how could you?!

Jeremy: It was for your own good.

Emily: My own good?! That poem was private!

Jeremy: (Frustrated) In my defense, you left the poem on your laptop right in the open.

Emily: So that just gives you the right to enter my writing into contests? Jeremy, did you even think?

Jeremy: For your information, I did think! And you know what I thought? I thought that it was so sad that my best friend, who is an amazing writer and an even more amazing person was too scared to take a chance. That instead of seeing what her teacher, family, and friends

saw, she chose to hide behind the insults of her peers. Dammit Emily! You walk around every day, head down, as if you aren't good enough, constantly letting fear drag you down in the dirt. And you want to know the worst part? You're okay with it! You're okay with letting people step on you because somehow, you think you deserve it, you refuse to believe that maybe you are talented and that maybe, just maybe, you have something to offer this world! You're better than that Em. So forgive me if, for just a minute, I wanted others to see you the way I do. (Jeremy leaves)

Emily: I never--! (Mrs. Adams comes up behind them)

Mrs. Adams: Emily! Just the girl I was looking for! Congratulations on winning the poetry contest!

Emily: oh, th--

Mrs. Adams: The principle wanted me to come find you. You know, it's tradition that the winners read their poem in front of the entire school..

Emily: But...

Mrs. Adams: Oh don't worry Emily! We already have a copy of the poem for you to read. Come along, they will be calling the students into the auditorium soon.

Mrs. Adams leads Emily offstage. Both come back onstage. Jeremy and the other students begin to gather on the stage.

Mrs. Adams: Just wait right here while I make sure everything is ready. (Leaves Emily standing off to the side. Dad enters from behind Emily)

Dad: There's my girl!

Emily: Dad! What are you doing here?!

Dad: Well a little bird told me that my girl had entered a contest, and not only that, but that she won! (Goes for a hug but is conscious of Emily's peers nearby) Uhm, Can I give you a hug? (Emily nods; dad grabs Emily into an excited hug) So I, being the wonderful father I am, came to support her. (Smiles)

Emily: (Tries to smile) Thanks Dad.

Dad: Why didn't you tell me? (Notices Emily's face) What's wrong? Most people are happy when they win something...like this.

Emily: Jeremy entered me into this contest. I didn't even know about it till now.

Dad: Ahh, I see.

Emily: (Angrily) He bared my soul to the world!

Dad: Oh, well that's -- that is --

Emily: He took my poem and sent it in without even asking me!

Dad: And would you have said yes if he had asked?

Emily: Well, no, but... he still didn't have the right.

Dad: You know, sometimes your friends are going to do things you don't like. They'll make you so mad you believe you'll never forgive them. If Jeremy is a true friend, as I believe he is, no matter what, you can trust him to have your best interest in mind. Because that's what friends do. They look out for each other. No matter what, you can count on them to have your back.

Emily looks over to where Jeremy is seated. Mrs. Adams comes rushing back.

Mrs. Adams: Emily, everything's ready. You're on!

Dad: (gives Emily one last hug) You'll do great.

Emily: Thanks dad.

Chad moves toward Emily as Mrs. Adams begins to direct Emily away from Dad.

Chad: Hey! Emma!

Emily: Chad?

Dad cuts in front of Emily and sticks out hand to Chad.

Dad: Why hello there, I'm Mr. Norcross.....Emily's father.

Emily laughs at Chad's confusion.

Chad: Oh, um, uh...

Chad: (still confused) Listen (Rubs back of neck) I never got a chance to thank you for the favor you did.

Emily: You're welcome Chad.

Dad: (turning to Emily) I'll be in the audience.

Emily: Thanks dad.

Mrs. Adams directs Emily to center stages, places the typed up poem into her hands and gives a pat on Emily's back. Gives some type of encouragement to Emily and leaves. Emily looks around nervously, hands shaking like they did the first time she recited a poem. Her classmates and Mrs. Adams are in the audience. Emily D. walks up beside Emily. Gently places her hand upon Emily's shoulder.

Emily D.: Deep breath. This is your moment. Keep your courage up and show forth those Emerald Isles till the world is blinded by the dazzling.

Emily takes a deep breath and walks forward.

Emily: T-this poem, (clears throat) This poem is dedicated to my hero, mentor, and friend, Ms. Todd. (deep breath)
 The moon will rise,
 The sun will set,
 But your smile will never fade,
 And though night come,
 The stars still shine,
 Guiding us on our way.
 You taught us to climb mountains
 And battle the giants of life,
 Armed with just a promise
 Of a future shining bright.
 Heads filled with dreams
 And eyes with hope,
 With passion in our hearts.
 We raise our heads to heaven
 Defying the growing dark.
 For dawn will come,
 The sun return,
 And life will move on.
 And though your seat be empty
 And your body gone from us,
 Your voice will stay,
 Forever calling,
 "Break the barriers, Rise above."

Silence. Then applause from Emily's peers. Emily is surprised at the reception but smiles. Mrs. Adams, wiping away tears comes over to her.

Emily D.: You were wonderful.

Mrs. Adams: That was beautiful Emily. Ms. Todd would've loved that.

Dad walks over to her, cutting in front of Mrs. Adams.

Dad: I'm so proud of you, muffin (hugs Emily.)

Emily sees Jeremy coming up from where dad entered. He hangs back. Emily Pulls away from Dad.

Emily: Dad? I'll see you at home, I just need to do something real quick.

Dad looks over at Jeremy then back at Emily and smiles. Nods and leaves. Emily walks to Jeremy. Jeremy is silent and doesn't make eye contact with Emily. Emily hugs him--

Emily: Thank you. You were right.

Jeremy smiles and hugs her back; Brittany comes over and taps Emily's shoulder.

Brittany: Um, hey. Emily, right?

Emily: (Shocked) uh, yeah. Hi.

Brittany: Hey. (Smiles) Listen, that poem you wrote, it was amazing.

Emily: Thank you.

Brittany: No, really. I've been having a hard time since Ms. Todd died. I'm not exactly a star student here; most of the teachers think I'm a joke. Ms. Todd was one of the only teachers that actually cared about what I did with my life. She was always encouraging me and asking how I was doing. Always offering help or advice of some sort..It was nice ya know?...Anyway, I just came over to tell you that your poem really helped me. Thank you.

Emily D.: Grief can bring together those once segregated by status. Friendships can grow from the most unlikely circumstances...

Emily: You're welcome. I'm glad you liked it.

Brittany: Are you going to write any more poems?

Jeremy: (cutting in) As a matter of fact, Emily sometimes posts her poems on her Facebook page.

Brittany: (Impressed) Really?

Jeremy: Aaaaand, she's even thinking about starting her own blog.

Brittany: I'll definitely check it out. Thanks.

Brittany leaves; Emily and Jeremy watch her go, shocked by what just happened.

Jeremy: Would you look at that....(Turns to Emily) Congrats Em. That was great.

Emily: My own blog?

Jeremy: Yeah -- sounds like you're gonna be pretty busy. Ya' think you'll still have time to write those anonymous poems for the newspaper?

Emily: Jeremy, I never said anything about a blo--

Jeremy: We'll say, "We knew her when she was just an awkward little girl... (Fades out as he continues as they exit, mimicking what he'll do in big interviews)

They exit.

SCENE 20

Emily's room. Emily is returning from speaking. She is still ecstatic from the reception she received. Emily looks over at her open laptop.

Emily: That was amazing.. All those people, and...it was so...

Emily D.: ...wonderful. As if you could be anyone and do anything....

Emily: They actually like them...

Emily D.: They caught a glimpse of your heart and it captured them.

Emily: I wonder..

Emily goes to computer and turns it on. Two audience members speak the messages.

Emily: Forty-seven friend requests, fifty likes, and twenty messages?

Person #1: "To Emily, keep writing. This stuff is amazing."

Person #2: "Emily, love this stuff! Cannot believe I'm just seeing this now!"

Person #3: "Such poetry. Very wow. #nofilter"

Emily: Wow, I can't believe this...

Emily D.: You had it in you all along...

Emily smiles; Emily D. watches from behind, smiling and nodding her approval.

Emily: (THINKS ALOUD OR PURPLE NOTEBOOK)The stage, the applause,
 Drunk off admiration.
 What once was her bane
 Became her glory.
 No longer hidden
 Finally seen.
 This must be what living is.

Emily posts the poem, and smiles. Dad is heard calling from offstage.

Dad: Emily! Dinner's ready.

Emily: Coming!

Emily takes one more look at the computer screen, gets up and leaves the stage. Emily D. stays behind, looking at Emily as she leaves, pride emanating from her face.

Emily D.: "This was a Poet-- It is That
 Distills amazing sense
 From ordinary Meanings--
 And Attar so immense
 From the familiar species
 That perished by the Door-
 We wonder it was not Ourselves
 Arrested it- before--
 Of pictures, the discloser-
 The Poet-- it is He--
 Entitles us-- by Contrast--
 To ceaseless Poverty--
 Of Portion--so unconscious--
 The Robbing--could not harm--
 Himself--to Him--a Fortune--
 Exterior--to Time--"

School Bell sounds.

SCENE 21

School. Class is over. Emily is walking with Brittany. They are talking and smiling, apparently getting along. Jeremy is ahead of them, taking a picture of something off in the distance. Emily sees him and motions to Brittany that she has to go. Both girls say their goodbyes and Brittany leaves while Emily goes to Jeremy.

Emily: Hey Jeremy!

Jeremy: (turns with camera still attached to face and snaps a picture of Emily) If it isn't the famous poet. Hey.

Emily: Jeremy, you are never going to believe this. People love the poetry I've been posting! I've been getting friends requests from everyone, even people that I don't know but their friends have showed them my poems! I've even gotten requests to write poems for events! Brittany just asked me if I could write a poem as a gift to her sister!

Jeremy: (laughs) Looks like you've got quite a following.

Emily: It's so weird. It's like there is this voice in my head just pushing me to write more and more.

Chad enters. He sees Emily and makes his way to her, cutting in front of Jeremy.

Chad: Hey, Emma-a...ly?

Emily: Hi Chad

Jeremy: Hi Chad.

Chad: (still ignoring Jeremy) You know, I never got a chance to say congrats on winning the poetry contest.

Emily: Oh, than--

Chad: Anyway, I was thinking of catching a movie tonight with a few friends. Wanna come?

Emily: You're asking me to the movies?

Chad: Well yeah,

Emily: Oh we--

Chad: I mean, there are some pretty awesome benefits by going with a guy like me. (Laughs at

joke) Um, I'm just kidding.

Emily takes a moment to think about it. Emily D. shakes her head.

Emily: Sorry Chad, as tempting as that sounds, I think I'm gonna have to pass. So thanks, but no thanks.

Emily D.: (Addressing Chad) Alas you are too late. She no longer needs your approval nor your affection...

Chad: (a bit surprised at the refusal) Oh, okay. Well, I guess I'll see you around then Emma-ly.

Emily: Oh, sorry, I didn't hear you. What was that?

Chad: What?

Emily: What you just said. What did you call me?

Jeremy: Yeah, what did you call her? (chuckles) 'Cause I could've sworn I heard "Emma"

Chad: (Now embarrassed) Oh, um, I meant Em- I meant Emily. Yeah, Emily.

Emily: (smiles) Yeah, it's Emily. See ya Chad. (turns away from Chad. as Chad walks away, jeremy punches the air in triumph)

Jeremy: Bravo! Where did that come from?

Emily: I don't know. Someone once told me that I could do better; I guess I wanted to see if that person was right. (smile at each other)

Jeremy: Emily Norcross refusing a date with Chad Kennedy, now I've seen it all. (Laughs) Well, I better get going. I gotta get home, Mom's started her spring cleaning and I'm apparently obligated to help. I'll see you tomorrow.

Emily: Okay, bye!

Emily watches Jeremy leave. She thinks about what just happened with Chad and smiles.

Emily D.: Every day life feels mightier, and what we have the power to be, more stupendous.

Emily looks around at her school, thinking to herself. Leaves stage.

SCENE 22

Emily's room. Emily walks in, drops her bag and goes straight to her open laptop.

Emily D.: No longer contemplating?

Emily: No

Emily D.: Why the change?

Emily smiles.

Emily: I found where I belong...it was within my grasp the entire time. My passion was the key to finding myself. I was just too scared to realize it.

Emily D.: Scared?

Emily: Of everything;

Emily D...failure?

Emily:... ridicule,

Emily D:...weakness.

Emily: I was scared that

Emily D.: ...by showing the world the words you wrote, they would use them to hurt you....And now?

Emily: (After a moment) It doesn't scare me anymore. For the first time in a long time, I'm happy with who I am. I didn't need the approval of my peers. I didn't need to be popular, or liked, ...just confident... confident that I had talent. Confident that I was worth it...I just wish it hadn't taken so long to figure that out.

Ms. Todd enters USL and watches as Emily begins to type, this time with confidence.

Emily: The stars once looked
 Out of my reach.
 So far above me
 A dream unfulfilled.
 Then to my surprise,
 I found I had wings--
 To carry me from these hills.
 Higher and higher.

I rose t'wards the sky--
 Body no longer held down.
 Away fell my fears
 Those torturous chains--
 I leave them behind on the ground.

Emily posts the poem. Get up and begins to leave room. She stops right before she leaves and looks up.

Emily: Thanks Ms. Todd, wherever you are. Thank you.

Emily leaves with a smile and walks directly into the next scene.

SCENE 23

Classroom. Everyone is seated. Mrs. Adams is finishing teaching. Brittany is now sitting near Jeremy and Emily, no longer sticking with Chad and the rest of the group.

Mrs. Adams: Alright class, next week we will be going over the works of Emily Dickinson. Also, please keep in mind that your response paper is due next class. For those of you that have been shirking your reading assignments, (Glares at Chad, who sinks a bit in his chair) I suggest that you clear your schedule tonight and catch up.

The class begins to leave

Brittany: Hey, Emily. Did you want to hang out later?

Emily: Maybe not tonight. I have some stuff I need to finish.

Brittany: Okay, how 'bout tomorrow?

Emily: Yeah, sure.

Brittany: Alright, cool, I'll text you okay?

Emily: Yeah, let me give you my number.

Brittany: Oh, I got it from Jeremy. I thought he told you.

Emily: Jeremy?

Emily glances over at Jeremy who pretends to busy himself with his backpack.

Brittany: Um...Well, I need to go. I'll text you tonight!

Brittany leaves but not before waving at Jeremy. Jeremy waves back, embarrassed. Emily chuckles at this exchange. She turns to Jeremy.

Emily: So, you and Brittany?

Jeremy: (defensively) We just hung out a few times! Nothing to be interrogated over. (pauses and looks back) She likes my body. You know, my camera body.

Emily laughs. Jeremy picks up backpack and goes to leave.

Emily: Hey, Jeremy!

Jeremy: What?

Emily: Do you have a meeting for the school paper today?

Jeremy: Yeah, why?

Emily: Could I come with you? I'm thinking about asking Micah if he needs any more help with the paper.

Jeremy: (smiles) Definitely. 2 o'clock. I'll see you later Em.

Emily: 2 o'clock. See ya.

Jeremy turns and leaves; Emily smiles as he leaves and returns to grabbing her books. She is in the act of getting her stuff together from her desk when Mrs. Adams stops her.

Mrs. Adams: Oh, Emily. Just a second.

Emily stops as Mrs. Adams presents her with a book. The book is worn but distinguished.

Mrs. Adams: Ms. Todd's family was going through her things and they found this. It had your name in it. I thought you'd want to have it as soon as possible. (Smiles and hands it to Emily) You know, she used to carry that book everywhere when we were kids.

Emily: You knew Ms. Todd when you were little?

Mrs. Adams: Better than anyone else. She was my best friend; in fact, I'm the one who got her the job here at the high school.

Emily: Really?

Mrs. Adams: Really. All she wanted was to be a teacher, but she was too scared to apply. She was scared she'd be rejected.

Emily: So what happened?

Mrs. Adams: I applied for her. (laughs at memory) She showed up on my porch a few weeks later, face red with anger. The school had called, impressed with her resume, and wanted an interview. Boy was she mad...I miss her everyday (wipes eyes). Anyway I better get going. Take care Emily. (leaves Emily alone)

Emily opens books and reads. Though Emily begins reading, it fades into Ms. Todd's voice as Ms. Todd walks back onstage.

Emily: To Emily...

Ms. Todd: To Emily, this is for you. We loved this poet and I hope that she inspires you to reach above and beyond. Love, Ms. Todd. P.S. I leave you with this quote by her. (Emily D. enters)"We cherish all the past, we glide a-down the present, awake yet dreaming; but the future of ours together -- there the bird sings loudest, and the sun shines always there." Emily Dickinson.

Emily raises her head from book, as if trying to remember something. Emily Dickinson crosses in front of Emily. Emily looks up and senses a familiar presence. A hint of recognition flashes across her face. Emily Dickinson turns and smiles at Emily and walks off stage with Ms. Todd.

End