

Writing Sample II: THE SANDBOX

Written by

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INT. CRUZ HOUSE/HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The front door is wide open.

GAMMA

Al?

Gamma peeks in the hallway bathroom. Shakes her head at the MESS of tools still on the floor, the toilet taken apart.

GAMMA (CONT'D)

Al... Avelino?

EXT. CRUZ HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Gamma darts across the yard, peers down the empty street. Nothing.

INT. DYLAN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Dylan pushes off a flip-flopped foot to roll his chair to the desk. He grabs a tablet and launches himself back to conductor position in front of the class.

Keidra spins a pen around her thumb under the desk. Dylan glances at his tablet, makes eye contact with Keidra. Pen spins out of control, CLINKS to the floor.

DYLAN

Let's pause the presentations for a minute. Have you asked yourselves why you're here? Look around you. What does it mean to be part of this group of unsung heroes?

Dylan stands, shifting persona to the formal Dr. Hackworth.

The class shares looks. Keidra discreetly retrieves her pen.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

Advanced. Product. Design. Does that mean you make shit people want to buy? Maybe. Maybe you'll make a killing in the tech industry. Maybe you'll just kill.

(beat)

We in here exalt what's yet to be built.

All eyes on Dylan, except Solaja, who furiously takes notes.

DYLAN (CONT'D)
 You make bright the candle of
 tomorrow. And tomorrow and
 tomorrow. Your sound and fury
 signifies everything.

CHRIS
 (under his breath)
 Out, spot. Damn you!

KEIDRA
 (correcting)
 Out damn'd spot. Out.

CHRIS
 Oh. I never was good with The Bard.

SOLAJA
 (to Teke)
 Was that on the reading list?

Dylan pauses, looks at a textbook on his desk.

DYLAN
 Everyone take out your books and
 turn to the copyright page.

Bags unzip. Giant hardcover books THUD on tables. Pages flip.

Keidra's phone RINGS. ALL eyes on her.

DYLAN (CONT'D)
 In the future, the rule is if it
 rings in my class, you answer it on
 speakerphone.

Keidra turns the phone to silent and dismisses the call.

ON PHONE SCREEN: Gamma

Dylan points to a bored-looking Teke.

DYLAN (CONT'D)
 Ahmed. You go by, Teke?
 (off Teke's nod)
 Read what it says on the opposite
 page.

TEKE
 Um. "For Alma, who made me see the
 wavelength."

DYLAN

For Alma.
 (looks around the room)
Who is Alma?

Keidra's phone lights up: Gamma calling again.

Chris half-raises a hand. Dylan nods for him to proceed.

CHRIS

The girl he was sleeping with?

Snort chuckles and half-covered snarky sounds.

DYLAN

Or maybe she was his daughter. Born with spinal bifida.

The class: total silence.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

He made neurologically enhanced leg braces that moved at her brain's command.

Dylan picks up Solaja's textbook.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

Purpose. Of this book's 849 pages, this one--the reason he wrote it--is the most important. You may not know it right now, but I guarantee, by the end of this class, you will know the reason you're here. And if you don't, you won't be here.

Keidra's phone lights up again: 1 new voicemail.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

I picked you not because you did the best on the test.
 (looks at Keidra)
 Some of you barely passed.

Keidra slowly pushes her phone under her test.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

I picked you because each of you has something to offer... What, you have yet to understand. You may think you know. But you don't.

Dr. Hackworth sits down. He's Dylan again.

DYLAN (CONT'D)
Keidra Cruz. Why are you here?

Off Keidra--

INT. CRUZ HOUSE/GARAGE - DAY

Gamma stands at the nanolab security door. The lavatory light is a stomach-dropping VACANT.

She resorts to texting.

ON GAMMA'S PHONE

Keidra, this is your--

She types: G-a-m-m-

The phone autocorrects to display "Hamm," which Gamma immediately tries to delete, but accidentally SENDS instead.

GAMMA
DAMMIT!

INT. DYLAN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Keidra's phone lights up. She lifts the test to peek:

ON PHONE: Keidra, this is your Hamm

Chris and Teke have been casually observing the light show that is Keidra's phone. They see the text message, shrug.

DYLAN
Miss Cruz? Tell us about your product that's so amazing it can't be contained within the bounds of my test question.

Keidra searches the room. Possibly for a paper bag to hyperventilate in. She spins her pen under the desk as Dylan's expectant face kaleidoscopes to a pinpoint.

Dylan walks toward Keidra, a towering figure. Shows everyone the blank space under the last question of her test.

DYLAN (CONT'D)
Not even so much as a pencil mark--

Her phone lights up again. With Dylan's death-by-a-thousand-cuts stare, Keidra doesn't dare look at it.

Dylan flips the test to show Keidra's diagrams and calculations to the class.

DYLAN (CONT'D)
But then I saw this.

His demeanor instantly changes. What was once impersonal arrogance is now borderline idolization.

DYLAN (CONT'D)
Have you published this?

KEIDRA
Um...some of it. On OpenNano.com--

DYLAN
Oh please, nobody reads that trite. I mean published. In a peer-reviewed journal. Some of the calculations you've made here are... I've not seen them before. Molecular assembly and disassembly using a modified DNA encoding scheme. Talk us through it, Keidra.

Dylan returns to his seat. A well-deserved smile crosses Keidra's face. She stands. Surveys the class.

All eyes on Keidra, envious, expectant. She glances down to the desk, sees the text message--

ON PHONE

KEIDRA, THIS IS YOUR GRANDMOTHER. YOUR FATHER IS MISSING!

DYLAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Miss Cruz? If you will--

ON CLASS

Keidra packs her things.

KEIDRA
I can't... I'm sorry. My father...
I have to go.

Like a whirlwind, Keidra is gone.

Dylan's recovery is so quick, one barely notices the punched in the gut look on his face before--

Pity. DYLAN