

# **ELGAAANT!**

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A hand hovers over an open sketchpad with a doodle of a bunny laying on its back and butterflies bursting out of its stomach. The hand belongs to --

AMARA WRIGHT, a sweet looking 11-year-old, musing over her schedule with MRS. SCHWARZ, a dour and impersonal Guidance Counselor in her 50s, who sits behind her nondescript desk.

SCHWARZ  
Everything look okay?

Amara silently nods.

SCHWARZ (CONT'D)  
Can I get a verbal confirmation,  
Amara?

AMARA  
Yes.

SCHWARZ  
Good. Your art class is in room 110  
with Mrs. Quell. Do you know how to  
get there?

Amara shakes her head. Schwarz shoots her a look.

AMARA  
No.

SCHWARZ  
Go down this hallway. The room will  
be on your left. If you see the  
golden bear with a gaping hole in  
its mouth, then you've gone too  
far.  
(immense displeasure)  
It's the school's mascot.

AMARA  
Thank you. That's very helpful.

SCHWARZ  
That's my job. Can I help you with  
anything else?

AMARA  
Could you do me a favor?

SCHWARZ (CONT'D)  
That depends.

AMARA (CONT'D)  
Call me Bethany.

Mrs. Schwarz leans into the name on the schedule: **Amara Wright**. She looks up.

SCHWARZ

Bethany?

AMARA

I'm trying out a name. Bethany fits here.

SCHWARZ

If you're looking for dull and uninspired, you found the right fit.

AMARA

I knew you'd understand.

SCHWARZ

I imagine you've thought long and hard about this.

AMARA

I did. Over a bowl of cereal and after brushing my teeth.

SCHWARZ

Of course.

A hush hangs in the air. They study each other.

AMARA

The strange thing about starting fresh is, people's initial thoughts matter. And In middle school, I presume, you are who people say you are. Until you're not.

SCHWARZ

(not buying it)

It's only 6th grade, kid. You're still on the same team. Wait until 8th grade and you can call yourself Mary Beth for all I care.

AMARA

That's... wow, I like that one. Can you change it to Mary Beth? Please.

An awkward pregnant pause. They stare at each other.

Mrs. Schwarz moves to her computer. She types and prints. The sound of the PRINTER disrupts the silence. Schwarz impassively hands Amara a new copy of her schedule.

2 INT. MRS. QUELL'S CLASSROOM - DAY

2

The classroom is adorned with Halloween decorations and art made by students. Amara walks in just as the young and vibrant MRS. QUELL finishes roll call.

Amara hands her schedule to Quell. Quell looks at the name:  
**AMARA "MARY BETH" WRIGHT**

QUELL  
(smiling)  
You're right where you're supposed  
to be. What do you go by?

AMARA  
Mary Beth.

Quell hands Amara a LARGE MANILA ENVELOPE with the word **QUELLCOME** written across. Amara looks at it indifferent.

QUELL  
Wonderful. Here's a welcome packet  
to get you started. You can start  
with your nameplate and work on  
your mask later.  
(to class)  
Class, please welcome...

Amara hastily walks off and finds her seat. The students chuckle.

HOLLY WORTHINGTON, 11, watches Amara blissfully. Holly does her best impression of the all-American aristocratic look.

Her red hair is well-coiffed, she sits in a poised, upright manner and her posh outfit exudes authority in a falsified way.

Amara catches Holly's hardline gaze. She uncomfortably forces a smile back, then looks ahead.

3 INT. MRS. QUELL'S CLASSROOM - LATER

3

As Amara works on her nameplate, the rest of the students personalize their Halloween mask. Ms. Quell paces between desk, giving glowing compliments to each student.

Holly, holding her nameplate, walks towards Amara's desk.

HOLLY  
Hey, you new here?

AMARA  
Yeah, but I'm trying not to  
make it a big deal.

A corner smile creeps on Holly's face.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
No offense--

AMARA (CONT'D)  
You're going to say something  
offensive.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
No. I was going to say that you're  
the only Black person here. So,  
it's kinda hard to blend in, don't  
ya think?  
(beat)  
Where you from?

AMARA  
Baltimore.

HOLLY  
Why here? It's so boring.

AMARA  
Uh... I don't know. My dad got a  
better job. It's also cheaper here  
than Baltimore.

HOLLY  
(chuckles)  
I wouldn't say cheap. My nanny  
drives a Lexus.

Holly sits and places her nameplate down on a nearby desk.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
I moved, too. My daddy downsized  
and moved me into his condo, which  
is practically mine since he's  
never there. I would stay with my  
mom, but that house, at night, you  
never know with how big it is, who  
comes in and out.

AMARA  
You're handling your parents'  
divorce very well.

HOLLY  
What do you mean? They didn't.  
That's a weird thing to assume. My  
daddy found a home he wanted to die  
in and my mom found hers.  
Everyone's happy with their  
decisions.

AMARA

Oh, that makes sense. In my experience, parents live together. But I've heard some marriages do better when they live apart.

Holly gives Amara a look. She's in disbelief.

Amara desperately glances at Holly's nameplate: flowers on the corner with vines sprouting out.

AMARA (CONT'D)

Cool design.

HOLLY

Want me to make you one? Everyone says I'm the best artist in class.

Holly points to the strings of art hanging in the room.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

They're mostly all mine.

AMARA

Wow, they're lovely.

(a thoughtful beat)

My art was once in the Baltimore museum. I think yours belong there, too.

Silence. Amara catches Holly's irate glare. They both failed to impress one another.

The bell rings. Amara casts down her gaze and gathers her things. Holly stands.

HOLLY

Who are you sitting with at lunch?

Amara stops packing.

AMARA

No one.

HOLLY

I figured. You can sit with me. No need to thank me. No one should sit alone.

SASHI, bi-racial, and ASHLEY, white, stand in front of the mirror, chatting. They both won the genetic lottery.

Sashi, all grace and poise, dresses as posh as Holly but with minimal efforts. Ashley feigns "cool girl" aesthetic with mom jeans and a vintage Nirvana T-shirt.

Holly and Amara walk in. Sashi and Ashley step aside and go silent.

HOLLY  
Hey Ashley. Hey Sashi.

A strange charge in the air. Amara stands idly as Holly surgically cleans food stains on her shirt by the sink/mirror.

SASHI  
...Hey. My mom wanted me to ask if you're coming to my birthday party.

HOLLY  
Of course. I wouldn't miss that.

Sashi and Ashley share a discrete look. Amara notices it, Holly doesn't.

SASHI It'll be at my dad's this year.	HOLLY (CONT'D) Dad's?
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SASHI (CONT'D) Dad got caught with the lady who sold our last house.	HOLLY (CONT'D) Woah.
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ASHLEY At least it wasn't a cliché...	HOLLY (CONT'D) It hasn't affected your skin. It's glowing. (turns to Amara) This is Mary Beth. Her parents are still together.
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Amara moves her mouth open, itching but hesitant to correct the assumption --

SASHI  
-- It's not your fault. It gets better with time.

The girls chuckle. Amara looks at Ashley's NIRVANA T-SHIRT with a smile.

AMARA Kurt has this quote --	ASHLEY -- Who's Kurt?
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A brief beat. Amara stares and gestures at Ashley's shirt.

AMARA (CONT'D)

Nirvana was his band. Anyways, he said, "I had a really good childhood, then a classic case of divorce affected me." I think the opposite will happen for you.

ASHLEY

Wait, so he's not in the band?

AMARA (CONT'D)

What? Yeah he --

Amara mimics a gun to her mouth and fires. Sashi and Ashley share another coy look. This time Holly notices, mortified.

AMARA (CONT'D)

Wait... Maybe it was like this --

Now Amara has the mimed gun to her head. She fires.

The silence is deafening. Holly is fairly successful at concealing her reaction with a laugh:

HOLLY

Sorry, she can be weird sometimes.

Amara looks at Holly, visibly offended. Sashi and Ashley slowly pull away and exit without saying anything.

The two girls watch them leave. Holly's eyes swells up.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Great. How do you expect me to show up to her party after that?

AMARA

You can still go.

HOLLY

You don't understand. You're from Baltimore, all your friends are probably dead from stupid shootings.

AMARA

John Hopkins is one of the best hospitals in the country. If my friends did get shot, they had the best medical care --

HOLLY

-- There's like no way everyone doesn't know by now.

AMARA

Maybe you're overestimating the amount of people who care.

HOLLY

I'm just gonna kill myself and get it over with. You probably should, too. No one's gonna be friends with you if they find out how weird you are.

AMARA

I haven't known you for too long, but it doesn't sound like you have a plan. I know I don't, but I guess that makes me weird.

Holly looks at Amara with disturbed confusion, then exits.

5 INT. MRS. QUELL'S CLASSROOM - MORNING

5

The start of school bell rings.

Amara, head down, decorates her (Mary Beth) nameplate as Quell does roll call. She's in her element.

The drawing: an elephant stands center stage with a flower crown on its head. The flowers on the crown are similar to Holly's flower design.

QUELL (O.C.)

Lesley Oldman.

LESLEY (O.C.)

Here.

QUELL (O.C.)

Lesley, do you have an older brother?

LESLEY (O.C.)

No, I'm an only child.

QUELL (O.C.)

Cousin by the name of Mike?

LESLEY

Yeah!

QUELL

I had him last year. Will you tell him I said hi?

Lesley nods as Quell smiles and proceeds to walk down the aisle.

QUELL (CONT'D)  
Daniel Truman.

DANIEL  
Here.

QUELL  
Aw Daniel, is that a new haircut?

Hair particles falls from Daniel's patchy head as he shakes his head no. His hair has clearly been attacked by a pair of scissors.

QUELL (CONT'D)  
No? Okay. Well, you look great.  
Holly Worthington. Holly? Holly,  
Worthington?

AMARA  
(nonchalant)  
She's not gonna show up 'cause she  
killed herself.

The class collapse into shock. Quell's jaw drops, rattled. Amara never picks her head up, but feels eyeballs glaring.

6 INT. MRS. SCHWARZ'S OFFICE - DAY

6

Schwarz is behind her desk doing crossword puzzles. Quell barges in, Schwarz ignores her.

QUELL  
I hate to be the one to tell you  
this.

Long beat as Quell fiddles.

SCHWARZ  
Well, could you find someone who'd  
love to tell me... whatever this  
is.

Quell sits.

QUELL  
Can I trust you with this  
information?

SCHWARZ  
No, why?

QUELL

I found out that one of my students  
killed themselves.

SCHWARZ

How?

QUELL

A student told me.

SCHWARZ

No, how did they do it?

QUELL

Does it matter?

SCHWARZ

Who found the body?

QUELL

She didn't go into any details. The  
dead student happens to be Holly  
Worthington.

SCHWARZ

Oh, a Worthington?

Schwarz puts her crossword puzzle down.

SCHWARZ (CONT'D)

You've called her mom?

QUELL

Yes, several times. Guess she's  
occupied right now.

SCHWARZ

Are you sure about all of this?

7

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

7

Quell and Schwarz sit facing PRINCIPAL THOMAS, 36. He paces  
the floor. Thomas desperately scrolls through his phone,  
looking for articles with the school's name on it.

THOMAS

(softly)

How does this keep happening? This  
is not good.

QUELL  
 (to Schwarz)  
 You know, her behavior did  
 change. Understandably. Ever  
 since... the father... left -

SCHWARZ  
 Killed himself. Just say it.

QUELL (CONT'D)  
 I wanted to be respectful.

SCHWARZ  
 To who? His corpse? Surely he'd  
 appreciate his absence be  
 attributed correctly.

QUELL  
 You're being very crass right now.  
 Someone died, Schwarz.  
 (beat)  
 What I meant to say is, all the  
 signs were there. What's much worse  
 is that I could've prevented it.

SCHWARZ  
 No you couldn't --

THOMAS  
 Well. Okay, as of 11:41, there's no  
 mention of the school in relation  
 to this.

QUELL  
 What about Holly?

THOMAS  
 Uh... As of 11:42... other than  
 this article from Teen Vogue about  
 her favorite eyeshadow, there's  
 nothing.

QUELL  
 That's so sad. Her dad made the  
 news.

THOMAS  
 Yeah, it is. We could honor her by  
 getting a new scoreboard. The gym  
 hasn't been renovated since her  
 grandfather played.

QUELL  
 (grimace)  
 So, have the Worthingtons donate to  
 the school?

THOMAS

Yes, but I don't like how you said that, like it was a bad idea.

SCHWARZ

No, it's one of your brightest ideas. Now the family can keep track of the next member who offs themselves.

Thomas stops smiling, shoots daggers at Schwarz.

SCHWARZ (CONT'D)

I'm still not convinced.

(to Quell)

Who told you Holly killed herself?

8 INT. WORTHINGTON'S CAR - DAY

8

MARY WORTHINGTON, a refined beauty, 40s, pulls into the drop off area of the MIDDLE SCHOOL. She draws the sun visor down and checks herself in the mirror.

MARY

We're here.

Holly awakes. She begrudgingly pulls out a compact mirror and fixes her appearance. Mary leans over and spritz Holly's face to freshen up.

As she leans over, Mary sees a fresh cut on Holly's left wrist. She lifts Holly's cut wrist as if she's holding up stinky socks to uncover a bloodstained seat.

MARY (CONT'D)

Oh, honey... I just got this detailed.

9 INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

9

Amara sits opposite Principal Thomas who leans against his desk. Schwarz and Quell stand behind him.

THOMAS

Could you repeat what you told Mrs. Quell this morning?

AMARA

Two dollar bills aren't that rare, they're still printing them in Fort Worth.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

(overlapping)

No. No. No. The other thing - about Holly Worthington.

AMARA (CONT'D)  
 (monotonous, deadpan tone)  
 Oh, uh—that Holly is not going to  
 show up today because she killed  
 herself.

The adults pull back and look at each other.

THOMAS  
 Do you understand what you're  
 saying?

Amara nods. Schwarz shoots her a look.

AMARA  
 Yes.

The RECEPTIONIST is at the door, doesn't knock --

RECEPTIONIST  
 Mr. Thomas, the Worthingtons are  
 here.

THOMAS  
 (mildly stunned)  
 Uh, yeah. Bring them in.

Holly and Mary emerge through the door. Holly and Amara share  
 a confused look.

The receptionist exits but leaves the door ajar. Mother and  
 daughter stand behind Amara. Quell's jaw drops.

MARY  
 What's going on? Why am I here?

<p>QUELL          So sorry Mrs. Worthington, I          tried to call you a few          times...</p>	<p>THOMAS          We're trying to come to a          conclusion.</p>
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MARY  
 About what?

THOMAS  
 This young lady here says Holly is,  
 uh...  
 (to Amara)  
 Why don't you tell us what you  
 think Holly said?

Amara eyes the room.



THOMAS

Come again?

AMARA

She told me her dad found a condo to die in. I don't know, that's all I know about him.

SCHWARZ

Did you give Amara any indication that you had suicidal ideation?

HOLLY

I don't know what that means.

QUELL

It means that you thought about ending your life.

Holly looks to her mom and tears up. Mary moves to shut the door.

MARY

Okay, alright. This has gone far enough. I am not interested in what anyone thinks they heard. We ought to fix this, now. Because of this made up story people will think Holly is unstable and that she's inches away from death. That's a problem. I'd say you owe us an apology, a very public one at that. Wouldn't you say?

QUELL

We're so sorry.

MARY (CONT'D)

That's not public enough.

Everyone turns to Amara.

AMARA

These suggestions are wonderful. But with respect, can I make an alternative suggestion... How about I get an apology.

MARY

An apology?

AMARA

Yes, I'm not lying and I don't want people to think that I'm a liar.

SCHWARZ  
 Why not, Amara? This is a  
 good time as any to try being  
 someone you're not --

QUELL  
 -- It's so early in the  
 semester. You'll find that a  
 bigger scandal will replace  
 this.

HOLLY  
 Why do you keep calling her Amara?

AMARA  
 Because it's my name.

HOLLY  
 Weird cause you told me your name  
 was Mary Beth.

Everyone, except Schwarz, has a stunned look.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
 I did think it was an odd name for  
 someone from Baltimore.

THOMAS  
 Okay let's walk it back. Amara, I  
 can tell you are a bright young  
 woman. So, it's pertinent you  
 understand that a false flag  
 suicide isn't good for anyone's  
 reputation. See where I'm going  
 with this?

Amara stares off. Everyone hangs by her silence.

AMARA  
 I'm sorry about your dad...  
 (pregnant pause)  
 And that I repeated what you told  
 me.

The adults grimace and groan. Holly has a pained look.

10

INT. MRS. QUELL'S CLASSROOM - MORNING

10

The next morning, Quell greets each student as they file in. Holly walks in and sits behind PHIL COOK, 11, a feather-haired boy with a grin that seems permanently etched on his face.

PHIL COOK  
 You sad, bro?

HOLLY

(chuckles)

Goodness no. I have ticket to see Hamilton. Would I miss that? People make up rumors when they're jealous of your blessings.

A few students nearby shower Holly with attention over mutual love for Hamilton. Holly smiles, loving every minute of it.

Amara disgustingly watches from her desk. On her desk is a blank mask and her nameplate that she spent hours working on. She flips the nameplate that reads Mary Beth inside out and draws her name (Amara) in bold letters.

FADE TO BLACK.