

Alexandria: A famous retired environmental activist, who is wallowing in the death of her ex-partner.

Clarke: An unsuccessful human-rights activist who doesn't have a way with words.

Olivia: A waitress at a café and Clarke's friend.

Act 1

(The stage is dark. A forlorn figure (Alexandria) enters stage left and walks up to sit on a bench in the middle of the stage. When she sits, a projection of a woman who is gracefully dancing appears behind her, and distant echoes of cheers and laughter are heard. Alexandria suddenly covers her ears in agitation. After a while the noise fades and the stage lights up and the former projection is replaced with that of yellow leaves; a perky blonde woman waltzes up to the bench, plops down ungracefully on it, and lets out a long sigh of relief. Her bag is discarded somewhere on the side. Nothing is said until the blonde woman finally speaks up.)

Clarke *(muttering to herself)*: What an annoying day... *(She glances toward the other woman)*

Alexandria *(in a low voice)*: Yet, every day is an annoying day...

(At this answer, Clarke visibly lightens up and turns in a swift motion to look at the woman. She is now smiling.)

Clarke: I beg to differ, that's definitely not true! So many things are achieved every day! If you paid attention to your surroundings, you'd notice that – Oh! I didn't mean to assume that you aren't paying attention to your surroundings... that would be rude... I mean... *(She stops and turns her eyes back to the floor, visibly embarrassed)*

Alexandria *(gazes at the woman after a few seconds of silence)*: Well, aren't you going to finish your sentence?

Clarke *(looks up and their eyes meet for a split seconds)*: Oh... I don't want to bother you... okay, yes, I bother people all day as part of my job... But! *(Suddenly changing voice tempo)* It's for a greater cause, you see! I advocate for human rights! I'm sure you've heard about All for Human Rights? *(Silence, she continues when she doesn't get any answer)* Well we try to find people that will help us gather non-perishable goods and money to send to people who are in need; we search new activists that will either help us or work in field... and, well, I only stop people in the streets to talk to them about that basically... Ok... yes... I'm not very successful... But! *(she stops herself again)* I'm sorry, I'm rambling, that's not fun, *(hesitating)* I'm Clarke by the way, nice to meet you. *(She proffers her right hand to the other woman, who appears confused.)*

Alexandria *(taking the hand and shaking it)*: My name is Alexandria. Nice to meet you, Clarke. You surely seem elated about your work.

(She looks back to her feet, sighing softly) But, I'm sorry, I should get going, I have duties to attend to. *(She wipes non-existent dust from her lap before standing)* Take care, Clarke. *(She stands up and walks stage right)*

Clarke follows her rapidly and grabs Alexandria's hand before she's gone.

Clarke (*suddenly unsure*): Don't leave! I mean... not yet! We could have a chat? At least I would like to and then you could sign up for my charity and help too, since nobody ever does... (*Mutters under her breath*) I shouldn't have said that.

Alexandria (*turns round to face Clarke, looking at their joined hands and back to Clarke*): I...

Clarke: Please! Let me talk to you! I'm sure you'd be interested to hear more about our field of action or how we wish to expand our charity further so that we can reach out to and save more people that have it harder than we do? By we, I mean us – you and me... I don't mean to assume that you don't have it bad but... wait, hold on! (*Quickly steps back to the bench, retrieves her bag and shoves a flyer in Alexandria's hands*)

Alexandria (*looking from the flyer to Clarke, trying to speak up*): I'm not sure if I...

Clarke: Don't you think it'd be nice if everyone got to live in better conditions? What if everyone had access to school and wait, no! More importantly, water! We don't want people to get thirsty! Just think about those kids who are starving and yet have to walk miles and miles to get to school and sometimes without water, how horrible that is while we're here and we have access to water 24/7 almost everywhere without even thinking about it...

Alexandria (*pocketing the flyer*): This is not what I...

Clarke: Like we're so blessed to be born Americans, but we don't even think for a single second about those kids struggling in Africa? Then if we expanded, we could even try to help children and families in warzones and rescue them... and even if most likely we never experience anything of the like ourselves, it's...

Alexandria (*rises her voice suddenly and interrupts Clarke*): Enough. I've heard enough. (*looks resolutely at Clarke*) Would you just please stop?

Clarke (*tries to speak up*): But you...I...

Alexandria (*takes a deep breath, exasperated*): I don't think that giving pity money to charities such as yours would make a striking difference, Clarke. I understand your enthusiasm about wanting people to sign up for your charity, but let's face it (*she turns to face Clarke*) if we, and everyone else, do not change the way we live, inequalities between people will further increase, which means poverty will increase. People in our country need your money, but your charity sends it to Africa; by all means I respect that, but shouldn't you focus on your own country first, before thinking about others? It's because we don't think enough about our own situation that charities keep swarming. Do you even know for a fact where all of this money goes? We need to save our environment, Clarke.

(*Clarke, dejected, plops back on the left side of the bench, next to her bag. Alexandria pays no heed to the action and continues her rant.*)

Alexandria: These solutions that you are advocating for are temporary at best! It's a waste of energy and a waste of time. I do not wish to sign up for your charity, and I do not want to advocate anymore. Don't you see that you (*gesturing to Clarke*), we (*gesturing to herself and back to Clarke*), they (*gesturing to the audience*) have been doing all of this for nothing? We try to make things right, but we only focus on things that will improve the situation in a foreseeable future, without thinking about future generations. The people that your charity helps today might not even survive until tomorrow. That's the sad hard truth. Arguing about all of this only causes more feuds and more problems! Just

look at your personal experience: people are annoyed and they obviously ignore what you, what we have to say anyway! No matter what great causes you're advocating, Clarke, *nobody* cares in the end! People are more focused on doing things for themselves! *(Alexandria stops. She sits back on the right side of the bench, looking as defeated as Clarke does.)*

(During the moment of silence, the lights go out and the projection from the beginning appears once again behind Alexandria who brings a hand to her head, seemingly in pain. On the other side of the bench, Clarke is sulking and fidgeting. After a while, the lights are back on.)

Alexandria *(speaks up again looking straight at Clarke)*: I won't sign up for your pity charity, I believe I've made my point. I'm not interested in these activities anymore; I want peace. I'd appreciate you could refrain from approaching me if you ever see me again around here...and I believe you should think twice before talking to strangers... even though it appears to be what you are paid for.

(Without giving Clarke time to answer, Alexandria, turns around and goes back from where she came, leaving the gob-smacked Clarke behind, who simply plops back on the bench, visibly deterred from doing anything else. She drops her bag once again and the light goes out)

Act 2

(The stage lights up as soon as Alexandria enters stage right. Projections of orange-colored leaves have now replaced the previously yellow ones. Alexandria sits at the terrace of a café. A waitress comes up to her, her tag reads Olivia)

Olivia *(hands the menu)*: Here is our menu, I'll be back when you're ready to order.

Alexandria *(takes the menu and nods)*: Thank you.

(While Olivia is busying herself, Alexandria, after briefly checking the menu, takes out the flyer she's received from Clarke a few days ago and sighs. She fidgets it quite a few times, reading and re-reading the content. After a bit Olivia comes back to take the order).

Olivia: Are you ready to order, Ma'am?

Alexandria: Yes, I would like a cup of tea please...a soothing one if possible. I'll leave the choice to your discretion.

Olivia: Alright. Anything else?

Alexandria: That will be all, thank you.

(Olivia leaves the table again and busies herself with the order. Alexandria resumes fidgeting with the flyer. As she does, the projection of the woman appears behind Alexandria once again, and this time we can hear a woman calling Alexandria in the distance. Giggles, both from the mysterious woman and from another voice that we recognize as Alexandria's, are echoing. Suddenly a scream and the sound of a crash break the peaceful moment, as the projection flashes red. The orange leaves are back and Alexandria is holding her head with a grimace)

Olivia *(puts the tea in front of Alexandria, who looks startled)*: Here is your tea, Ma'am. *(she pauses, clearly noticing the Alexandria's predicament but decides to talk about the flyer instead)* It's funny that you have such a flyer; my friend actually advocates for All for Human Rights *(she giggles)* she's pretty bad at this.

Alexandria *(looks around)*: Would you like to sit? Judging by the number of clients, you could take a break.

Olivia *(looks around as well and then peeks at her watch)*: I guess I could. *(She sits in front of Alexandria)* So, what's the big deal? I don't often get asked to sit with a hot shot? Because mind you, you're very hot and...worth the shot.

Alexandria: Could you tell me more about your friend?

Olivia *(lets out an over dramatic sigh)*: And the woman doesn't even want to learn more about me *(she rolls her eyes)* anyway, just kidding. My friend, right? She's bad, as I've told you. The kind of bad that just makes you want to stay away at first? I swear to god, I don't understand why the hell she even started to advocate. Her mouth has a will of its own, literally. I mean I do understand her because she kind of wanted to do something with her life, her dad was a doc, he saved lives; now she's trying to become a doc and advocates to save lives. I don't think I should have told you that, but like hey, why would you care, you don't know her...wait...do you? *(she squints her eyes and leans over the table)* I mean, do you know her? *(she pauses, and watches Alexandria take a sip)* Do I know you from

somewhere? Because you look hella familiar, damn. I totally feel like I could have seen you model for some brand (*looks at Alexandria's figure from her side of the table*) In fact, aren't you a model? You do have the body for it. (*she makes faces as if trying to recall something*)

Alexandria (*delicately puts the tea cup on the plate*): I'm afraid you're mistaken, but I do think it was your friend that I met a few days ago. (*She looks at the cup, her eyebrows furrowed*) I was rude and I meant to apologize. I've gone back to the spot where we met more than once, but I couldn't find her. It appears this flyer is the only thing I have left ...and I would rather not call the Charity simply to get in touch with...your friend.

Olivia (*suddenly slams her palm on the table*): I remember! You're Alexandria Woods! Wow, you're sitting in front of me, in the flesh, I guess you do exist! (*she produces her order notepad and a pen from the front of her apron and hands it over to Alexandria*) Can you give me an autograph? I mean, I've told you about my friend, so now you have to give me something back! After all, that's the way of the world.

Alexandria (*takes the pen and the notepad and briefly signs her name*): In the flesh... (*she sighs*)

Olivia (*retrieving her pen and notepad*): Sorry about what happened though, a tragic story indeed. Kinda sad that you retired, but it's nice to have you here today. (*she pauses to get her phone out, browsing something*) You know what I'll even call Clarke over; the one that you met, OK? (*She doesn't wait for an answer and makes the call*) Hey Princess, guess what, I've met your friend from the other day!

Alexandria (*in a loud whisper*): We're not-

Olivia (*shushing Alexandria with a finger, talking to the phone*): Yeah, the almighty Alexandria! (*she pauses*) Well get here now and you'll understand, I can't believe you sometimes. Of course she's famous, she's like the most famous activist-

Alexandria: Was.

Olivia (*continues in the phone*): Was the most famous activist out there. Environment? Rings a bell? No? Hurry, walk faster. Ah, there I can see you (*she turns and waves toward stage left*) Here, d'you see me? At my work the usual, just sitting, not usual, I'm hanging up now!

Alexandria: I'm not sure if that was necessary...

Olivia: Well, too late. Now she's here, and you wanted to apologize. It must've been some form of divine retribution that you've met me who knows the very person you wanted to apologize to? Not that I believe in god anyway.

(*Clarke enters stage left, her bag loosely hanging on her shoulders and walks to the table*)

Olivia: Ah, here you are Clarke! Good thing you weren't working far from here; are you going to be okay though? Ah, wait, I don't care (*she looks at her watch*) What I care about right now is getting back to work, so uh, Miss Alexandria if you want to order anything more, just let me know!

Alexandria: Just tea, please, the same one.

(*Clarke sits in front of Alexandria as Olivia takes off to make her tea. Clarke is fidgeting, visibly unsure whether she should start the conversation or not.*)

Alexandria (*slides the flyer over to Clarke*): I wanted to apologize for my outburst the other day. It was unbecoming of me and rude. You were only doing your job and I got mad. I'd like to make up for it.

Clarke (*opens and closes her mouth many times*): Olivia said you were famous? Maybe... you could tell me more about yourself?

(*Olivia waltzes in and puts the tea in front of Alexandria, and another cup in front of Clarke, then leaves just as quickly. Taking the cup between her hands, Alexandria stays purposefully silent a little longer until she lets a sigh.*)

Alexandria (*looking back at Clarke*): I do owe you that much, don't I? (*Pauses*) I... was an activist, I advocated for Environment First, and as you may know, the organization has a lot of influence. I wasn't always famous; I actually started quite low, and it was when I met my partner that, with her at my side, we started to gain visibility; she had the ideas and I knew how to speak. The thing is that those who speak usually get recognition, whereas those who give ideas... are cast to the shadows. Nobody knows them, yet their ideas resonate in speeches; her ideas resonated in my speeches. People started to rally to our cause, and we managed to double the number of patrons the organization originally had in only a few months. The more travels and the more speeches meant that we enrolled more people; that became our routine. A year in, we, my partner and I, got engaged. The whole thing was covered; as a matter of fact I'm pretty sure you could find articles about us on the internet (*she gestures toward Clarke's phone which lies on the table*). Everything was going well until another organization – or company nobody could ever figure what nor who they were- emerged and started this very virulent advertisement campaign showing wastelands and ruining the credibility of our own organization; people started getting harassed in the street just so that they would register to help this charity. (*She utters her words slowly her carefully*) Our numbers started to go down; more was asked of us, more traveling, until one day, a few days before our second anniversary (*she hesitates*) my partner's bus crashed in one of the most random places when she was on her way to see me. It was a disaster and while many people survived the crash, my partner wasn't that lucky. I decided to stay away from activism that day, realizing that it was only a game of power and money.

Clarke: I... wow... I don't know how to react to that. Nothing I can say now can top your story... My condolences though; it's awkward but I think I should say that I'm sorry? I had no idea.

Alexandria (*addresses a weak smile to Clarke*): That's okay. Anyway, when I heard you trying to convince me to sign up... memories flooded in, my partner was... clumsy like you, to say the least. Yet, she never gave up and followed her ideals even if it meant giving up part of her comfort, just so she would feel at ease while advocating for something that required people to make sacrifices. I too made sacrifices... And we also worked with human rights charities.

Clarke (*she beams*): Save it All! The campaign! It was held by Environment First and All for Human Rights! And (*she gasps suddenly*) Olivia was right, I do remember your face now... you were the head figure of the campaign! Man... those campaigns were really great compared to now... But you know what? I think that you were right when you said that nobody seems to care anymore. That or I'm just a disaster. Probably both, really.

Alexandria (*suddenly blurts*): I could help you?

Clarke: What?

Alexandria: I said I could help you.

Clarke: I- umh, I'm confused, why me?

Alexandria: You seem very faithful to your ideals...though you clearly have a problem with putting your ideas into words. I hope you do not feel offended by my words.

Clarke (*ponders for a few seconds*): Ummh...No offence taken, I am bad at talking. So are you suggesting you'd coach me?

Alexandria: I could, it would be my way of apologizing.

Clarke: What for?

Alexandria: Being...rude?

Clarke: Oh yeah that part. Well, everyone is always so rude to me. I just try to let it bounce back from my outer shell... It is hard though. But I try! (She suddenly stops speaking, playing with her fingers) Truth is, I would really appreciate that. (She giggles nervously, rubbing her hand behind her head sheepishly) You were honest with me so I should be honest with you too. (She brings her hands back to the table and interlaces her fingers) My father passed away not so long ago. He was quite famous in the medical world. He actually started as a surgeon in warzones, operating on trauma cases, and when he moved back to the States, he helped so many people by doing pro-bono surgeries whenever the hospital allowed it; people travelled from far to have him as their surgeon. When he passed away (she lets out a small sob) –a car accident of all things– I felt that it was my duty to perdure his legacy. I'm well aware that I'm bad with words, and that I barely reach anyone, but I try my best (she lets out a strangled sob and whips a tear away) Being positive all the time's hard.

Alexandria (hesitant): If I taught you how to speak to people and get your words in order...perhaps you would reach more people?

Clarke (slowly): I guess... but how would you benefit from all of this?

Alexandria: Company I guess...I feel quite lonely.

Clarke: Oh...I understand.

(*Olivia re-enters the stage, she walks to the table. She throws a suspicious glance between Alexandria and Clarke, then simply takes Clarke's empty cup and puts it on her trail, noting that Alexandria's is barely touched.*)

Olivia: What about that tea?

Alexandria: Oh, I'll finish it, don't worry.

Clarke: Ah, Olivia. (*She clears her throat*) Can lend me your pen and give me some paper, please?

Olivia: Here you go, priiiiincess. (*Careful not to drop anything, she bows to Clarke, and gives Clark a pen and her notebook*)

Clarke (*breaks a slight smile and swats Olivia's hand playfully*): Stop calling me that (*writes something on the paper and slides it to Alexandria*) That's my number; call me whenever you want, alright? (*She looks at her watch*) I should get going. (*She gathers her belongings and stands. She hesitates before taking one of Alexandria's hand in her own.*) Please, call me, okay?

Alexandria (*putting her other hand on top of their already linked hands*): I will. See you soon, Clarke.

Clarke: See you soon Alexandria! (*She disentangles her hands then carefully hugs Olivia*) See you Olivia! (*She walks away waving back at the two remaining women, who are waving back*)

(*Alexandria fidgets with the piece of paper that she received from Clarke before she finishes her tea in a swig.*)

Olivia (*grins at the seated woman*): That didn't turn out so bad, didn't it?

Alexandria (*abruptly*): Thank you (*pauses*) for helping me out. I better get going as well. (*She retrieves her wallet from her bag*) How much do I owe you? (*Takes out a twenty-dollar bill*) Will this be enough?

(*Olivia nods and digs into her uniform's purse to produce change before a hand on her wrist interrupts her*)

Alexandria: Keep the change.

Olivia: Thanks.

(*Alexandria fixes her appearance before exiting from stage right. Blackout*)

Act 3

(To symbolize the passing of time, Alexandria, Clarke and Olivia, talk together walking around the stage for a little while, entering and exiting a few times, while the previously yellow leaves slowly turn dark orange. Once the leaves are red, Olivia is sitting on the top of the backrest of the bench, her feet on it. Clarke is next to her, down on the bench, her bag between her legs.)

Clarke *(annoyed and loud)*: I don't get it, ok? I just don't! Olive, she's just so weird sometimes, a good weird okay but still weird! Like when she's just looking at me when I'm writing for my speeches without saying anything. Yeah she just stares! Okay maybe that's not weird, but she's strange. Her super lengthy talk on the first day dragged on forever and I couldn't get a word in edgeways I swear... and I'm usually the one that rambles on for hours! *(She groans, and Olivia laughs but makes a sign for her to go on)* She's being so nice to me, Olive, and I don't understand why. Okay we've been on good terms for a little while now, but it's almost like we're dating... *(She gasps)* Oh, my god *(she puts her hand on top of Olivia's)* Olivia, are we? Are we dating? Do you think we're an item? Wait, no, that can't be right. I mean obviously I think she's attractive; I mean hell you think she's attractive, what was it that you called her again?

Olivia: A hot shot.

Clarke: Yeah, that, well it fits. You know what, she makes me nervous. I never know what to think of her antics; she's super cute and then super dorky, and then super sad... I mean she lost her partner a while back. I get the sense loss, I mean, of a close person, you know that anyway. Ugh, I just wish we talked about other things than environment and human rights now. I want to, I mean, I'd like to. *(She sighs and lazily drops onto the bench, slouching)*

(Olivia notices Alexandria entering stage left. Alexandria walks up quietly to the bench until she's behind Clarke. Olivia doesn't say a thing.)

Clarke: These aren't the only these things in the world that matter... I mean in a way they are... but I also want to talk about personal stuff! I know we should take one step at a time, but we've taken so many steps already! I just want to get to know her better! *(She makes a broad gesture, almost hitting Olivia at her side)*

Olivia: Take it easy, Princess.

Alexandria giggles lightly and leans over the bench until she looking down on Clarke.

Alexandria: One step at a Time, Clarke.

(The lights go out, the projection of the woman appears behind Alexandria one last time; it changes from red to white before it gently fades away and the stage goes dark.)

CURTAIN