

2018 YOUNG PEOPLE'S Creative Writing Contest

FOR AGES 10-18

“The Way of the Universe” by Hana Saad
3rd Place, Short Play 16-18

Poems ● Essays ● Comix
Short Plays ● Short Stories

CASH PRIZES!

Entries Accepted Feb. 1-March 3

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The Way of the Universe

Cast of Characters

Amelie: 17 years old. Destined for Harvard. Wickedly smart but not vain about it. Loves astronomy.

Khalid: 17 years old. A senior in Amelie's class. They've been friends since ninth grade. Soft-spoken; he's a songwriter.

Mom: Amelie's mother, who is overbearing and always has pushed Amelie to be the greatest.

Adam: 15 years old. Khalid's younger brother. Loves to tease Khalid anytime he can.

Scene

Khalid's bedroom and Amelie's bedroom, simultaneously.

Time

The present.

ACT I

SCENE 1

SETTING: The conversation between KHALID and AMELIE happens over text. Therefore, the stage will be split in half: one side is Khalid's bedroom, the other is Amelie's. Khalid's room is neat; guitar in one corner, band posters neatly tacked to the walls. In Amelie's room, there is a desk cluttered with pens, science books, and trophies from debate. A beanbag is in the corner.

AT RISE: On the right side of the stage, AMELIE is lying on the floor, furiously scribbling in a sketchbook. KHALID enters his room, sits in his swivel chair and pulls a laptop from his organized desk. He quickly types and waits for an answer.

KHALID

I saw the meteor shower last night.

(Amelie's phone buzzes and she glances at it. Smiles big. She picks up the phone, typing as she sits in the beanbag chair.)

AMELIE

The Gamma Normids. Amazing, right?

KHALID

(says this out loud—clearly not typing)

Not as half amazing as you.

(begins typing again)

To be honest, I only watched for about ten minutes.

AMELIE

Wimp! I stayed up the whole night.

KHALID

You are so supportive, Amelie.

AMELIE

It's what I'm known for.

(Leans back in the bean bag, smug smile.)

KHALID

That's **exactly** what I thought when I met you in bio.

AMELIE

Hey, I was wayyyy nicer then.

KHALID

You berated me after I accidentally—repeat accidentally—broke the beaker during our lab.

AMELIE

We were so close to beating Kyle! You didn't know how much I always wanted to beat that kid. Always though he was a science god.

KHALID

Yeah, who's the science god now, Kyle??

AMELIE

Yeah! (beat) After all, I'm going to Harvard!

(KHALID stops laughing. All the happiness drains out of him.)

KHALID

You're going to Harvard?

(AMELIE walks to her desk and picks up her acceptance letter. Doesn't look as happy as you might imagine.)

AMELIE

(puts letter back down and types.)

Scholarships and all. I've done it. Four years of hard work and my mother breathing down my back, all worth it.

KHALID

Why u didn't tell me?

(KHALID has a pained expression on his face. He looks torn between saying everything or slamming his laptop shut in anger.)

AMELIE

Wanted to do it in person. Been busy with Stuco and volunteering lately. And Friday debates.

(she rubs her temple. A dog barks faintly offstage.)

KHALID

Yeah, well I got something to say too.

AMELIE

Bracing myself for the genius...

(KHALID's hands hover over the keyboard. He starts to type, then stops. Breathing heavily, he stares at the screen, deep in thought.)

AMELIE

Waiting...Come on bro, I got a dog to feed.

KHALID

(says this out loud)

I just really like you, Ames. Always have, and I think you...

(types)

Never mind. Feed your dog. (beat) Bye.

(Lights out on KHALID'S side of the stage.)

AMELIE

K Bye.

(AMELIE looks slightly confused, but shrugs and EXITS stage to feed that dog.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I

Scene 2

SETTING: Same as scene 1, but a month later. AMELIE'S room is a little cleaner. Both wear different clothes.

AT RISE: KHALID is already in his swivel chair. He's wearing headphones and writing in a journal. The guitar is on the floor. AMELIE is reading her Harvard letter again. Throws it on the desk and picks up her phone.

AMELIE

(she types and paces back and forth at the same time)
Did you finish that new song?

(KHALID looks at his phone, writes one last thing down, and removes his headphones. He types on his laptop.)
Working on it now. It's still a piece of crap.

AMELIE

(stops pacing and sits on the floor.)
I believe that. (beat) Kidding. Your songs are amazing. You'll be writing for the big shots one day, and I'll be..

KHALID

Famed astronomer, the first person to discover aliens.

AMELIE

Heyyyy astronomy is serious man. (beat) But how are things?

KHALID

I hate her. Sorry. Confidential.

AMELIE

Vent away, I'll delete as I go. She who must not be named was never a friend of mine.

KHALID

Technically, I broke up with her.

AMELIE

Whatever, she was still rude.
(says this out loud—clearly not typing)
I would never treat you like that.

KHALID

I'm done with that. With her. But I..

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(He starts to type. This time, he is sure of his feelings.)

(ADAM bursts into the room. His camera is whipped out, flash shining. Meanwhile, AMELIE is growing more anxious as she waits)

ADAM

Ladies and gents, presenting my brother. Never before seen in-

KHALID

Get out of here Adam!

(he leaps to his feet, laptop sliding to the floor.)
For the last time, I'm not going on your stupid vlogs!

ADAM

Ohhhh, he's angry. But what's this?

(He peers at the laptop. KHALID pushes him away, but Adam is nearly as big as he is.)

KHALID

None of your business.

ADAM

Ooh, that's your girl? Amelie.

KHALID

GET OUT.

(Amelie sighs and turns her phone off. She EXITS stage. Lights out.)

ADAM

No way, brother.

(turns front-facing camera on)

This is Khalid everyone! He's a sad writer boy that can't ask out the girl he's been talking to for like four years and-

(KHALID angrily pushes Adam out of the room and slams the door.
He walks to the laptop and picks it up.)

KHALID

Amelie? You there?

(He closes his eyes and collapses in his chair, letting out a long sigh. Says to himself.)

It wouldn't have mattered anyways.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I

SCENE 3

SETTING: Same as scene 2, except a week later. The only change is the boxes in KHALID's room, neatly labeled for college. AMELIE has similar boxes, except they're all empty.

AT RISE: KHALID strums a chord progression on his guitar. It sounds sad. AMELIE is in her bean bag chair, eating a bag of chips and reading a book. She laughs at something she read, then picks up her phone.

AMELIE

I forgot how sassy Harry can be.

(KHALID's phone buzzes on his desk, and he scoots closer to pick it up.)

KHALID

Yeah! You're finally doing the reread.

AMELIE

I had to. Car's broken and my mom is driving me crazy. This is the only way I can escape.

KHALID

Packing up for Harvard?

AMELIE

Yeah. It sucks. I mean, I've paid my housing deposit. Who cares anymore?

KHALID

Right...not you. That was sarcasm, by the way.

AMELIE

Fine, I care. About more things than college though.

(AMELIE swallows and starts to type. She's confident but keeps deleting. Says out loud.)
Gotta get this right. You only have one chance.

KHALID

I'm getting ready to go to my dad's bday, so might be MIA for awhile.

AMELIE

Hold on. Got something important. Won't take long.

(to herself)

Think Amelie, think!

(she starts to type, then someone pounds on the door.)

MOM

(off)

Amelie, why is this door locked?

AMELIE

(still typing)

Busy mom! Schoolwork.

MOM

(off)

Your backpack's in the kitchen! Honey, open up, we've got lots of work to do.

(KHALID is staring at the screen, not daring to move an inch.
MOM pounds on the door.)

MOM

(off)

Now or that car is never getting fixed!

(Amelie screams in frustration and stomps over to the door.)

AMELIE

(yelling)

Do you not have a sense of romance?

(MOM manages to snatch the phone. AMELIE try to grab it back but fails. MOM looks at it, and a frown crosses her face.)

MOM

KHALID again. You know I don't like that boy, honey.

AMELIE

NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.

MOM

Say it like that again, and I'll be taking your phone and your laptop.

KHALID

Hello? Still there?

(AMELIE stops. Crosses her arms and stares at her mother.)

AMELIE

Why? Why don't you like him? He's been a good friend.

MOM

A good friend you'll never see again when you go to Harvard.
(she hands the phone back, cupping her daughter's face with the
other hand.)

Honey, I know how these romances go. You'll go off to college,
he'll do whatever he's doing, and it will be so much harder for
you.

(AMELIE looks away, not able to deny the truth in the
statement.)

KHALID

It's fine. You won't be around. I get. See you at graduation.
(KHALID slips his phone into his pocket and walks off stage.)

(Lights out on KHALID's side of the stage.)

AMELIE

So? (beat) I've been listening to you for far too long.

(At that, MOM turns colder. She removes her hand.)

MOM

Without my guidance, Harvard would have been a distant dream.

AMELIE

(coldly)

Thank you for Harvard, mother.

MOM

(sighs)

Honey, by remaining his friend you prevented a lot of heartache.
(looks around with a brighter expression. Claps her hands.)
Now! Let's start packing some of your things into boxes.

(AMELIE looks at her phone, then at the Harvard letter. All
their chances are gone. Behind her, her mother starts putting
clothes into piles. Tears fill in AMELIE'S eyes.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I

SCENE 4

SETTING: Same as scene three, minus MOM in AMELIE's room.

AT RISE: Both AMELIE and KHALID are standing, hands at their sides. There is no sign of a phone or laptop. Instead, they speak to the audience.

AMELIE

Even though I was smart enough to understand the way of the universe, I wasn't smart enough to realize I just should have told Khalid. Everything.

KHALID

I think I might have loved her then. I don't know. I still don't. But sometimes I wonder how things would have been, you know? A text wasn't the best idea, I'll admit, but I could have told her on the bus or at lunch or all those times we spent hanging out. I could have told her.

(AMELIE and KHALID speak at the same time.)

BOTH

We could have been braver. But everywhere, we found excuses. We found reasons to talk about everything **but** the idea of us.

(AMELIE and KHALID step forward to the center of their respective sides.)

BOTH

We could have been (beat) beautiful.

(KHALID and AMELIE walk offstage in opposite directions, not ever turning to look at each other.)

(END SCENE)

(BLACKOUT)