

Progress

by Geoffrey Simon Brown

March 31st, 2023

“These children that you spit on, as they try to change their worlds, are immune to your consultations; they’re quite aware of what they’re going through.”

- David Bowie

“The eyes of all future generations are upon you. And if you choose to fail us, I say: We will never forgive you... Change is coming, whether you like it or not.”

- Greta Thunberg

Notes

*All characters are currently written gender neutral and use they/them pronouns
These should all be adjusted to reflect the pronouns of the performer playing them
Or the ones the performer thinks the character should take on
Similarly, the word “partner” can be changed to “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” for variety if appropriate*

Band lines are intended to be split between and assigned to the band members once the band is cast

*In this version of the script the action takes place in a drama room
This text should be adapted to reflect the room the play is being performed in (theatre, gymnasium, etc.)
Any references to architecture should also be shifted to exploit the distinct characteristics of the space*

The audience is invisible

Time is continuous; no scene changes or intermission

*A line break indicates a thought changing direction
A paragraph break indicates a thought unspoken
A beat indicates several thoughts unspoken
A silence indicates there is nothing to say
/ indicates the beginning of the following line*

Dramatis Personae

The keeners:

Jupiter – *The valedictorian*

Ocean – *The rich kid*

Robin – *The scientist*

Paris – *The anxious*

Fin – *The jock*

The burnouts:

Laika – *The dropout*

Mars – *The agnostic*

Boron – *The rowdy*

The rebellion:

Axehead – *The rebel*

Kris – *The revolutionary*

Sam – *The sidekick*

Tony – *The silence*

The others:

Wren – *The artist*

The Archivist – *The archivist*

Lyle – *The awkward*

Billie – *The sibling*

River – *The stranger*

Rosegold & Nyx – *The strange*

The band:

2 - 6 people who play music when the power is on and sometimes interject

*[A high school drama room
Heavily decorated for graduation
A live band plays
There is a cubby where people can go to buy snacks and pop
Some chairs along the sides
Some or all of them are made of wood
Probably other stuff too]*

*[The action begins as the audience starts entering
The band is playing big music
People are finishing up last minute decorations
Others start arriving wearing their grad outfits
Maybe some people have words painted on their clothes
Maybe someone has fake jewels covering their face
Maybe some people just look normal
But we get the sense that this is the fashion of a different time or world
They all dance
Or chat
Or just stand there
Some people probably buy and eat snacks]*

*[Every so often the lights flicker or maybe go out briefly
People notice with curiosity
But are not overly worried]*

*[The band finishes their last song
Everyone claps
The play starts]*

1. Commencement

BAND: *[On mic]* Thank you, Olamina High School!
We're *Eros and the Destructive Instinct* and this is our second show ever!
We're gonna take a quick break, but we'll be back to play in
Uh
Real soon!

BAND: *[Off mic]* Where is everyone?

BAND: *[Off mic]* I dunno

*[As the band walks from the stage
Lyle approaches them with River]*

LYLE: Hey guys
I wanted you to meet River

BAND: Hey

RIVER: Hey you were awesome!

BAND: /Thanks!

LYLE: River is my friend from camp
Like ten years ago
Or seven years ago
And we've been pen pals ever since
They're here as my date
But we're not actually "dating"
They're from Lotersan
Which is like four ish hours away
Well I guess you're not originally from there/ though

BAND: That's really awesome
Listen
I really want to make sure I get a drink before we go on again
/So

LYLE: Oh yeah sure
Hey have a great set
Or like
I mean after the break
I mean
Have a good break
Great job, pals
[The band walks away]
Not many people are here yet
But I can introduce you to pretty much everyone
I'm one of those people that's friends with everybody

BAND: Who is that?

BAND: I have no idea

LYLE: Oh and you should totally meet these folks
This is some of the student council
Who helped organize all this and set it up

*[They walk over to Fin, Ocean, Robin, and Jupiter
There is a box of decorations and general set-up supplies
Jupiter is frantically finishing setting up the space
Ocean and Robin are helping
Fin is just hanging out
They are all dressed pretty nice]*

FIN: Well not all of us helped
I'm Fin
My partner Paris is
Uh helping
Set up
They're running around somewhere

PARIS: [*From a distance*] Hi!

FIN: But I'm just
I'm Fin

RIVER: Hi!

FIN: And this is Robin
Robin's a super whiz genius
With like
Science
/Stuff

ROBIN: Hi

LYLE: And this is Ocean

RIVER: I'm /River!

OCEAN: Hi

JUPITER: Ocean, do you know where Mr. Medd is?

OCEAN: No

JUPITER: God
Where is everybody?

LYLE: And Jupiter!

JUPITER: Hi
Um
Lyle?

LYLE: Yeah!
Jupiter's the valedictorian

JUPITER: Yes
I mean
Sort of
With grad being cancelled it's not
I don't
Um

RIVER: What?

LYLE: Oh
Yeah
We were supposed to have a big ceremony thing a month and a half ago
But that was right at the beginning of the last lockdown

So they cancelled it because of the smoke and the air quality and everything
And mailed us our diplomas
So now it's this thing at the school as sort of a last day of school celebration
I mean, personally, I think that's what it should be anyway
It's always seemed weird to me to have a big event and then there's/ still school for

JUPITER: Sorry
I'm a little busy
/Could you

LYLE: And then it was supposed to be in the gym
But the gym's still damaged from the flood
So now it's in the theatre
Which is pretty cool/ in some ways

JUPITER: Anyway, it was nice meeting you

LYLE: You're still giving your speech tonight, though, right?

JUPITER: Uhhhhhhhhh
Yes
I think so?
I don't know
The night is kind of
None of the teachers are here for some reason
I don't really know what's going on
We're sort of scrambling
So
Yeah I don't know what's supposed to
Happen

LYLE: And where's Jeremy?
[*To River*] You're gonna love/ Jeremy

JUPITER: He's
I don't know
To be honest
We were supposed to meet here to finish setting up
But I don't know where anybody is
Can you excuse me for a minute?
Paris!

[*Jupiter leaves*]

LYLE: [*Yelling after them*] Sure!
[*To River*] Jeremy and Jupiter have been dating forever
They're like this cool political, activist power couple

RIVER: You know
I don't need to meet everyone right away
We could/ just

LYLE: Annnnnnd
Over here
That's Nyx and Rosegold
They're uh
They're kind of their own thing

*[Nyx and Rosegold stare at them
Then do something bizarre
Laika, Mars, and Boron enter
Not dressed for grad at all
They have bags full of stuff]*

LAIKA: God I told you we should wait a few hours
There's no one here

LYLE: That's Laika and Mars and Boron
I didn't expect them to come to be honest
I don't know if they're even graduating

BORON: It said doors at seven
I thought they might serve food
I didn't want to miss it

LAIKA: They explicitly said there was only snack food

BORON: Damn
I should have eaten

LAIKA: We look like losers

MARS: Whatever
I like this band

BORON: Hey Laika will you buy me a chips?

LAIKA: No

[Lyle and River approach them]

LYLE: Hey Boron/ this is

BORON: Hey man
You gotta
Stop
Talking
To me
I don't have time
I need to feed
Hey Mars can you
[Mars and Laika have left]

Hey!
Where are you going!?
Damn
[To Lyle] Hey
You
What's your name again?

LYLE: Lyle

BORON: Lyle
Listen
Will you buy me a chips?

LYLE: Uh
Sure
[Gives Boron money]

BORON: Sweet!
[Running away] You're the best, Kyle!

LYLE: It's Lyle

BORON: I don't caaaarrrreeeee

[The Archivist takes River's photo]

LYLE: That's the archivist
They like to be called The Archivist

RIVER: Hi!

LYLE: River's my friend from camp
Or was before it had to close cause of mudslides and fires and stuff
So now we're pen pals!
They're my date
But we're not really dating
Ha

[The Archivist takes their photo again
Wren enters
Wearing an outfit they have modified (and maybe painted on) themselves
They look very cool]

RIVER: Maybe we could just hang out for a bit
Just the two of us

LYLE: For sure!
Okay
So that's Wren
They're this really incredible artist
And they used to be in a relationship with Axehead

But now they're broken up/ and

RIVER: Axehead?

LYLE: Oh

Yeah

They're the leader of *Love & Rage*

RIVER: What is that?

LYLE: It's like a gang

*[Axehead, Sam, Kris, and Tony have approached while they were talking
They wear similar outfits that have nothing to do with graduation
Maybe torn jackets with patches and words painted on
Kris' jacket says "war" across the back]*

AXEHEAD: We're a non-hierarchical collective dedicated to disruptive civil-disobedience
And we don't have a leader

WREN: *[Coming over]* They're jerk offs who commit terrorism because they want to look badass

AXEHEAD: Actually, we commit acts of vandalism to drive down property value
So that we can one day afford somewhere to live
As well as bringing attention to global inaction on ecological annihilation and the privatization/ of
fundamental human rights

WREN: Ugghhhhhhh
Shut up with your manifesto
You light houses on fire because you think it makes you cool
You're just/ an asshole

AXEHEAD: Hey!
We don't start fires
The premier is blaming fires on activists so he doesn't have to put them out

WREN: He says it's to save on water

AXEHEAD: Save on water?
He has a pool

[Laika shouts from across the room]

LAIKA: Shut up!
Shut up!
Bleh!
Bleh!
Just make out already

AXEHEAD: You shut up, Laika

LAIKA: [*Trying to start a chant*]
Make out!
Make out!
Make out!
Nobody?

[*Boron tackles Laika*
They wrassle]

KRIS: It doesn't matter if we light them or not
People will keep driving ATVs and having gender reveal parties and throwing cigarette butts
And the world will keep burning and they're not going to do anything about it
And the people who get hurt are never the ones with power
And that's the point
That's the joke
No matter what happens they're going to say it's us who started it
So it might as well be us
Because then we'd have some power over who suffers
Because the fact is they aren't ever going to do anything about it
Everything is going to have to burn before anything changes

[*Beat*]

AXEHEAD: Right
The point is we're not starting the fires

KRIS: No!
That's not the point!
You're not even listening to me!
Why are you even talking to them they don't get it

[*Kris walks away*]

WREN: What's their problem?

AXEHEAD: I don't know
They've been doing that a lot lately

RIVER: [*To the group*] Hi, I'm River

LYLE: River's my friend from camp
They're my "date"
But we're not really dating
We're just friends

RIVER: You know you don't have to introduce me that way every time

[*Lyle blushes*]

AXEHEAD: [*Putting their arm around Sam's shoulder*] This is Sam
My comrade in arms since we were six

Practically lived together/

*[Sam shrugs Axehead's arm off
And extends their hand]*

SAM: I mean
They don't need to know the whole
Anyway
Hi
I'm Sam
This is Tony

[Tony nods]

SAM: They've taken an oath of silence
In protest of privatized drinking water

[Tony nods again]

AXEHEAD: My name is Axehead

WREN: Oh my god shut up your name is Taylor

AXEHEAD: NO ONE IS TALKING TO YOU

SAM: *[To Axehead]* I'm gonna go check on Kris

AXEHEAD: We good?

SAM: Yeah

[Wren extends their hand to Lyle as Sam wanders off]

WREN: *[To Lyle]* I'm Wren

LYLE: I know
We've known each other for like six years

WREN: Oh
Sorry

RIVER: *[To Lyle]* Hey can I talk to you for a second

LYLE: Sure!

RIVER: Can we go over
Uh

*[They walk away from the group, trying to find a private spot
Meanwhile, Paris walks over to where Fin, Ocean, and Robin are hanging]*

PARIS: Hey
Can you help me hang this?

FIN: I'm in the middle of a conversation

OCEAN: No
It's okay

PARIS: It's just up high
I can't reach it

FIN: So stand on a chair

PARIS: I tried that

FIN: Well then what do you want me to do about it?

PARIS: Okay!
Nevermind!

[Paris walks off]

OCEAN: What's that about?

FIN: I dunno
They've been freaking out about this grad dance all week
It dominates like every part of
Like
I dunno if I can handle it anymore

ROBIN: What does that mean?

FIN: I dunno

[Elsewhere, Mars and Laika are playing a game balancing a card on their hands]

MARS: Actually, can we stop for a minute
I just have to...
BOO!

[Laika drops the card]

MARS: You /flinched!

LAIKA: I didn't flinch!

MARS: You have to take yer swig

LAIKA: You cheated

MARS: Dems da rules, I didn't make em baby

*[Laika looks around
Subtly takes a swig of something from Mars' backpack]*

LAIKA: You're a dork

MARS: You're a yellow belly snakeskin suit

LAIKA: You're weird

*[They have a coupley moment
Boron is there]*

BORON: Hey can I have some?

LAIKA: Uhhhh

MARS: Sure

LAIKA: I dunno
We're just trying to

BORON: What?

LAIKA: Um
Nevermind

[Alone, River pulls Lyle aside]

LYLE: So what's up?

RIVER: Listen
Do you like me?

LYLE: What do you mean?

RIVER: Like/ do

LYLE: Oh!
I mean
No!
Of course not!
I mean
No I do
I mean
Like
No
I mean
You know
In a way
Like

As a friend
Of course
You're my friend
We're friends
We're friendly
But we're not
Ew
Gross
You know?
Because you were asking
About
Like
You were asking
What were you asking?

RIVER: I
Wow
Okay
I guess I was just getting some mixed signals
From the way we were writing to each other
And then I thought you had asked me on a date
When you asked me to come
And I was excited
Because I really
I like you
But that's
That's a very definite
Um
Answer
So
I'm going to go get a pepsi or something

[Leaves]

LYLE: Why

Whywhywhywhy
I
Yes
I am
In love with you
How hard is that?
Why can't I just
Why?
Why?

[River comes back]

RIVER: Sorry did you say something?

LYLE: NO OKAY?!

I wasn't talking to you!

RIVER: Okay, easy

[Leaves again]

LYLE: *[To herself]* What is wrong with you?!

[Elsewhere, Boron and Laika are fighting over the backpack]

BORON: Stop treating me like I'm a little kid

LAIKA: You're going to let everybody see

BORON: I can be subtle

LAIKA: You always do this
Where we have a fun low key thing happening
And you just take it too far

BORON: Oh my god
You always bring up that stupid party
I told you/ I was sorry

LAIKA: I'm not talking about the party
I'm talking about everything

BORON: *[Taking a bottle of vodka out of the backpack]* You're a baby

LAIKA: *[Trying to take it from them]* See?
This is why we didn't invite you on the heist

MARS: God
Stop it
Both of you
It's my vodka
Okay?
You can both have some
Just keep it DL
And stop screaming about it
We can keep it right here
Yeah?

BORON: *[To Mars]* See, you're cool
[To Laika] And you're a dick

*[Rosegold and Nyx start banging on the drums
Really aggressively and loud]*

BAND: Hey!
Stop it!

[They don't stop]

BAND: Stop it!

*[A band member (or a few) moves to stop them
Maybe Nyx or Rosegold move to the edge of the stage and stop them from getting up
Maybe poking them with a drum stick, while the other keeps playing drums
The drummer returns
Rosegold and Nyx stop
Look at the drummer
Hand them their sticks
Bow
And then roll away laughing]*

[Note: if there isn't a drumkit, this could be a different instrument and different musician]

BAND: *[On mic]* Okay
Well
I guess we're back!
Thank you both for that lovely rendition

ROSEGOLD: Blehh!

NYX: Blehhhhh!

ROSEGOLD & NYX: Blehhhhhhhhh!

BAND: *[On mic]* This is a song we wrote ourselves
Hope you dig it
Either way it's happening
So
You know
Get into it

[The band plays End of Time]

BAND: *This isn't the end of time
This isn't the end of time
This might be the end of us
But it isn't the end of time
The end of time*

*This might be the end of tenderness
This might be the end of the back seat kiss
This might be the end of Halloween
The end of magazines
The end of family*

*This might be the end of orange juice
This might be the end of terms of use*

*This might be the end of holy days
The end of mayonnaise
The end of one act plays*

*This isn't the end of time
This isn't the end of time
This might be the end of us
But it isn't the end of time
The end of time*

*This might be the end of grades
This might be the end of maids
This might be the end of libraries
The end of raspberries
The end of charity*

*This might be the end of electric lights
This might be the end of satellites
This might be the end of aeroplanes
The end of cellophane
The end of whooping cranes*

*This might be the end of trees
And the end of seeds
And the end of bees
And the end of me*

*This isn't the end of time
This isn't the end of time
This might be the end of us
But it isn't the end of time
The end of time*

*Ne c'est pas le fin de temp
Ne c'est pas le fin de temp*

*This isn't the end of time
This isn't the end of time
This might be the end of us
But it isn't the end of time
The end of time*

*This might be the end of dogs
This might be the end of the song/*

*[The song is cut off by the power going off
Someone screams
Someone else laughs at the scream
Some people groan or boo]*

BORON: Come on!

*[The emergency power system kicks in
The lights are different than before
Maybe a little dimmer and more florescent]*

BORON: I'm magic
Ha!
Laika, did you hear that?
I said come on and the lights came on

*[A chime plays over the loudspeaker
Then a voice comes on]*

ANNOUNCEMENT: Attention
Staff
Students
We are currently experiencing an extreme meteorological event
For your safety, doors throughout the school have been locked
And will remain locked until the event passes
This is temporary
We still anticipate being able to continue with the graduation dance as planned
Until then we ask that you please stay calm and stay where you are
We will follow with more information shortly

*[The chime plays again
Beat]*

LAIKA: What the hell does that mean?

BAND: Are we seriously just locked in here?

[Paris and others start trying the doors]

ROBIN: That's the mandated locking system the school district implemented

LAIKA: They can't just lock people up

ROBIN: The idea is to isolate groups when identifying a threat
So they can direct people away from it

PARIS: But what if something happens in here
We're locked in!

ROBIN: Yes
I mean
It's not very well thought out

WREN: So that's it?
We're just locked in here?

[Paris is running between the doors and shaking them as hard as they can]

PARIS: God
God
God
God
No
NO!

[The Archivist takes a photo]

JUPITER: *[To the Archivist]* Do you really have to do that right now?

PARIS: *[Banging on a door]* LET US OUT
LET US OUT

JUPITER: Paris!
They'll let us know what is going on soon
We just have to be patient

FIN: There's a door up on the landing

PARIS: I tried it
It's locked

FIN: How hard did you shake it?

PARIS: I shook it

FIN: I'm gonna go/ try

PARIS: I SHOOK IT

[Fin goes up onto the balcony anyway]

LYLE: Has anyone tried this door?

PARIS: YES OBVIOUSLY I'M NOT AN IDIOT

JUPITER: Paris
It's okay

PARIS: No, you don't understand

WREN: What about this garage door?
Here help me try to lift this

*[Axehead helps lift
Laika and Boron and River maybe also try to help
Nothing]*

AXEHEAD: Sam?

*[Sam looks at Kris
Kris shrugs
Sam helps try to lift it
It doesn't move
Tony helps
It doesn't budge]*

PARIS: I can't
I can't
I can't be locked
I can't be locked in here
I can't
I can'tIcan'tIcan'tIcan't

[Fin is on the balcony out of sight from the audience]

FIN: *[Offstage]* Hey!
There's a window up here!

[Ocean and Robin run up the stairs]

FIN: *[Offstage]* Ocean, boost me up there

OCEAN: *[Offstage]* I don't think I can boost you that high

FIN: *[Offstage]* If you both throw me I could grab hold of that pipe

OCEAN: *[Offstage]* Just to look out the window?

FIN: *[Offstage]* Or bust through it

ROBIN: *[Offstage]* You would probably break your/ ankle

OCEAN: *[Offstage]* You won't be able to fit through there

FIN: *[Offstage]* We can try

ROBIN: *[Offstage]* It's wired glass

FIN: *[Offstage]* So?

ROBIN: *[Offstage]* So the shards would rip into your hands and arms
And even then you wouldn't be able to get out without/ cutting through the wires

FIN: *[Entering]* Okay okay okay
I get it

*[Beat
The three of them descend the stairs
Ocean is eating from a snack size chips]*

JUPITER: Does anyone have a cellphone?

[Beat]

Anyone?

AXEHEAD: Are you kidding?

SAM: I've never even seen one

[Beat]

JUPITER: Ocean?

Ocean

OCEAN: Okay

Yeah

I do

SAM: Are you serious?

AXEHEAD: You've gotta be/ kidding me

SAM: I knew your family was rich, but god/ damn

OCEAN: It's not as big a deal as everyone makes it out to be

It's just for emergencies

I've only used it like

Twice

SAM: Those two calls probably cost more than my house

OCEAN: Come on

I doubt it's that much

SAM: You don't even know!

AXEHEAD: There's one cell phone company now

They charge whatever they like

OCEAN: Yeah well it sucks anyway

There's barely any cell towers left so it doesn't even work half the time

Listen I know you think we're super rich

I mean we have a big house

But my dad won't even let us turn up the heat

It's freezing in there

KRIS: You better cut it out

You're making me cry in front of all these people

OCEAN: Shut up
You're
Whatever
It doesn't cost as much as your house

KRIS: How much do you think a house costs?

OCEAN: I don't know!

KRIS: Jesus, it's all meaningless to you
You probably put down a hundred dollars for that bag of chips without noticing

OCEAN: No!
Of course I
What are you talking about?

JUPITER: So are you gonna use it?

OCEAN: I can't
My dad would kill me

PARIS: I think this constitutes as an emergency

OCEAN: They told us to wait
We'll probably be out in five minutes

PARIS: WE'RE LOCKED IN A ROOM DURING SOME KIND OF WEATHER DISASTER

OCEAN: Everybody shut up, okay
I have to think

I'm

Okay
Okay
I'll try it

Who should I call?

PARIS: I don't know!
Anybody!

*[Ocean puts away their chips
Dials a number
Puts it to their ear]*

OCEAN: It's not gonna/ work

PARIS: Shh!