

# Mercedes

By Carly Beyer  
A One-Act Play



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**Mercedes**, by Carly Beyer  
A One-Act Play

1(M), 1(F), Single Interior, 30 Minutes.

Synopsis:

Two siblings are under the care of their aunt in quarantine. While their aunt is at mass, the sister is attempting to clean her brother's mess, knowing she'll ultimately be blamed for it.

Characters:

**SOPHIE (F 22-23):** A college student in quarantine with her Aunt Maria. Gage's sister, who nicknamed her "Sapphie" because she "acts pretty gay". Very anxious and secretive; a stress cleaner.

**GAGE (M 24-26):** An unemployed college dropout in quarantine with his Aunt Maria. Depressed, but puts on a carefree front; would rather be "lazy" than come to terms with his mental illness.

*(An extremely messy living room. Food, dishes, soda cans and bottles are scattered around the floor and on end tables. A couch sits C with a coffee table D of it, a TV implied to be beyond the fourth wall. GAGE is sitting on the couch, in pajamas/underwear, playing videogames. Hair isn't brushed, he clearly hasn't showered or shaved in a loooooong time. SOPHIE enters, typing at her laptop while she walks. She is in full dress and makeup, perfectly tidy.)*

GAGE

*(Imitating a Skyrim character)* Hey, you there, you're finally awake.

SOPHIE

*(Not looking up)* Thank you, Ralof.

*(She trips on some trash and crashes into the coffee table)*

SOPHIE

Ow, shit!

GAGE

Careful, there's a table there.

SOPHIE

Real helpful, Gage.

GAGE

Aren't I always?

SOPHIE

What happened in here? *(Pause)* Gage.

GAGE

What?

SOPHIE

What's with the mess?

GAGE

Hm? Looks fine to me.

SOPHIE

Ok, fine. Nothing new here. Maria will have my head if she sees this. *(As she begins cleaning.)* She's not awake yet, is she?

GAGE

Who?

SOPHIE

Our aunt, you aloof shit.

GAGE

You know what day it is, right, Sapphie?

SOPHIE

I don't know, man. Lockdown for months. Days bleed together.

GAGE

Aunt Maria's at the 10 a.m. mass. It's Sunday.

SOPHIE

The dumbass actually went out?

GAGE

She turned off the 5G connection and said she'd be fine.

SOPHIE

She went without us, though. That doesn't seem like her. Why didn't she drag us with?

GAGE

I told her I didn't feel like it, and she didn't want you to come anyway.

SOPHIE

Well, I'm not exactly the St. Sophie she wanted.

GAGE

Something, something, "haughty liberal trash".

SOPHIE

She expected anything less from her sister's child? (*Pause*) Her sister. Mom... God, it's been a month already.

GAGE

Try not to think about it too much. It won't bring her back.

SOPHIE

I know. But the house is locked up now because someone died in there from COVID. All our stuff and hers is gathering dust and bacteria...

GAGE

Stop walking in front of the TV, will you?

SOPHIE

Stop sitting in front of the TV, then. What time is Maria done?

GAGE

Eleven, same as usual.

SOPHIE

Gage. It's ten-fifty.

GAGE

Hm. So it is.

SOPHIE

No. No, no, no, no, there's no way I'm going to get all this cleaned in time! *(Pause)*  
Will you get off your ass?

GAGE

Sapphie, chill.

SOPHIE

Will you stop calling me that? I'm not gay. *(Pause)* You're not even doing anything in-game. That's the idle animation.

*(GAGE shrugs.)*

SOPHIE

Okay, this isn't going to get done. Shifting gears... *(She opens her laptop and begins typing furiously)*

GAGE

Why have you been working on that so much lately?

SOPHIE

Wouldn't hurt to finish classes and take odd jobs, would it? All we have is time.

GAGE

Didn't Aunt Maria tell you to drop out?

SOPHIE

Maria tells me a lot of things. Shut up, I'm busy.

GAGE

What classes could possibly be offered right now?

SOPHIE

Advanced Sociology, Introductory Musicology, Jazz Composition, Psychology Research Methods...

GAGE

How are you paying for the books?

SOPHIE

The odd jobs.

GAGE

What kind of jobs are being offered?

SOPHIE

You, interested in my life? That's new.

GAGE

Well, I'm unemployed. I think it would be nice to know what I could be doing to make a little extra money for-

SOPHIE

More games?

GAGE

I mean, the only jobs that are available in most of the online postings are... Wait. You haven't been...

SOPHIE

Writing and drawing erotica.

GAGE

What the *fuck*, Sophie?

SOPHIE

It's where the money is. Not my fault. (*Pause*)

GAGE

Can I see them?

SOPHIE

No!

GAGE

Then I'll tell Aunt Maria you've been making porn.

SOPHIE

Might as well tell her I'm a figure model, too. It isn't porn, but I'm still in a Zoom conference full of people staring at me naked.

GAGE

*Dude. Gross.*

SOPHIE

You asked. You can't be picky about employment at this point. It wouldn't kill you to apply for some stuff yourself, y'know.

GAGE

There's nothing.

SOPHIE

What do you mean "there's nothing"?

GAGE

I mean there are no jobs for me. My grammar sucks, I have no idea how to work power tools, I can barely count on two hands...

SOPHIE

Mom was all for the art classes you wanted to take.

GAGE

I didn't go through with them. Aunt Maria said they were too girly.

SOPHIE

Well, that was stupid of her.

GAGE

Yeah, it was. None of the "manly" jobs can be done remotely now. Not that she could've known this would-

SOPHIE

Here. Let me pull up the site I found all my job listings on. (*She sits next to him with a second tab open*)

GAGE

Sophie, this isn't going to help.

SOPHIE

Shut up and work with me. What are some skills we can put down on your file?

GAGE

Bold of you to assume I have skills.

SOPHIE

What a bundle of joy. Let's start with videogames... electronics, modding... you've done some rewiring before, right?

GAGE

Yeah.

SOPHIE

How about tech support? You do plenty of that around here.

GAGE

Does explaining the function of a spacebar to Aunt Maria really qualify as a skill?

SOPHIE

You'd be surprised at how many people need that much help. It's work. It pays well.

GAGE

I don't know...

SOPHIE

Gage, it's 10:57, I don't have time for you to be indecisive. There. Six hundred listings for remote tech support. Even before COVID hit, this was easily a work-at-home profession.

GAGE

You're being too optimistic, Sophie.

SOPHIE

I think that's your depression talking.

GAGE

I don't have depression. That's not even a thing.



SOPHIE

So my Bupropion is just placebo, huh?

GAGE

Smaller words.

SOPHIE

My depression meds. If depression isn't a thing, why am I taking pills for it?

GAGE

Aunt Maria said we don't need to take drugs just because we get sad sometimes.

SOPHIE

You should really stop taking medical advice from a woman who consistently attends large gatherings without a mask and gloves.

GAGE

Would it kill you to be a little less critical?

SOPHIE

One of these days, not being critical enough will kill you.

GAGE

Ouch. Harsh, much?

SOPHIE

Troy might not have been seized if the citizens had listened to Cassandra's prophecy before the wooden horse was brought in. (*Pause*)

GAGE

Who's Troy?

SOPHIE

Never mind. Here, check this first listing... "Tech Support Consultant; Urgently Hiring".

GAGE

Urgently?

SOPHIE

Always look for those first. Their hiring windows are very short, but they're fast responders.

GAGE

Are you sure this is for me?

SOPHIE

See for yourself. “Seeking friendly individuals with tech proficiency and patience with customers of all ages and experiences. Once employed, must remain on call for at least twenty hours a week. Regardless of number of calls, employees will receive a \$300 stipend weekly.”

GAGE

It sounds good, but...

SOPHIE

Come on, this is perfect for you. \$300 stipend for telling people to try turning it off and on again.

GAGE

Great, but...

SOPHIE

What is it now?

GAGE

What are the requirements?

SOPHIE

Hm?

GAGE

How much experience do I need to have? How much education? (*Silence*)

SOPHIE

Here, why don't we look at something else-

GAGE

Please. Tell me what they want.

SOPHIE

They want at least five years of similar experience, a cover letter, and a bachelor's degree. (*Silence*) Urgent, my ass.

GAGE

Why don't I just help you clean?

SOPHIE

Gage, we don't have time. It's almost eleven. She's on her way back.

GAGE

What difference does it make? Cleaning is cleaning.

SOPHIE

You know how Maria is. Keeping house is the woman's job, since she can't be any more archaic. What do you think she'll do to me if she sees you?

GAGE

Well, what use am I, then? I can't be the man of the house and put food on the table. I'm not qualified for any jobs because I wouldn't have the experience. Even if I hadn't flunked out of school after seven years. I shouldn't have changed my major last minute. We're already a hundred thousand in the hole because I spent it all to fail my gen-eds and quit.

SOPHIE

We both know that isn't entirely true.

GAGE

What do you mean? I failed my gen-eds and dropped out because I lost my financial aid and we couldn't pay anymore.

SOPHIE

And why did you fail your gen-eds? *(Pause)*

GAGE

I lost all my assignments and was too stupid to finish the ones I didn't.

SOPHIE

And what happened to the money from your personal account?

*(Pause)*

GAGE

Don't bring her up now. Please.

SOPHIE

You're still hung up about that? It's been three years.

GAGE

Why not?

SOPHIE

Reba was an absolute bitch to you!

GAGE

No, she wasn't. I just didn't do enough for her.

SOPHIE

What more could you have done? You changed your major on your seventh year of a B.A. program to study astrophysics.

GAGE

I wanted to.

SOPHIE

You wanted Reba to marry you, and she said she'd only marry an astronaut.

GAGE

I would've made more money.

SOPHIE

Yeah, and you would've spent it all on Reba again.

GAGE

I cared about her!

SOPHIE

And she cared about your wallet. And Logan's. And Kyle's. And Anthony's, and Matthew's, and Elijah's and-

GAGE

It must've been because I didn't deserve her.

SOPHIE

No, you didn't. You didn't deserve a piece of shit like Reba.

GAGE

Then I deserve nothing. *(Pause)* Even if she was in the wrong, I'd have to deal with the consequences. It doesn't make a difference.

SOPHIE

You can make a difference now. You've worked without Reba before, and you can do it again.

GAGE

I told you, there's nothing I can do.

SOPHIE

Will you stop it? You gave up after I read the first notice. There's 599 more we haven't looked at.

GAGE

Refresh the page. (*She does*) Half the jobs are taken.

SOPHIE

But 300 is still a lot.

GAGE

Do you have any idea how many people are unemployed and applying for jobs right now? Twenty-five million received unemployment pay. I didn't bother applying for that because the virtual line is uncounted but probably just as long. With such a small amount of people on the other end to read and accept them, I couldn't get hired even if I *had* a degree. I'm useless in a normal world. What makes you think I'd be worth any more in an infected one? (*Pause*)

SOPHIE

The odds of getting hired are slim. Especially without a degree. But you know who else doesn't have a degree yet? Me. I'm a term away from graduating, but a normal world would wait until I've walked to employ me. An infected world won't let me walk, and that's okay. We're the same in terms of job requirements to fulfill. This virus is something bigger than both of us. But you have something I don't. You don't have to be as secretive about applying for work as me.

GAGE

At least you're getting work.

SOPHIE

It's hardly enough to get by.

GAGE

But it's something. That's miles ahead of me.

SOPHIE

Why don't you ask Maria to help you? God knows she'd be more than willing to help the man of the house find work. I'm on my own here.

GAGE

She's going to find out one way or another.

SOPHIE

That won't change anything if I'm not here to be punished. *(Pause)*

GAGE

What? *(Pause)* Sophie, what do you mean "if I'm not here"?

SOPHIE

I'm moving. After I turn in this final, I'm grabbing my things and getting out of this hellhole.

GAGE

Today?

SOPHIE

Well, if I don't gather my things in the next ten minutes or so, I'll be on the receiving end of Maria's wrath again.

GAGE

I'll help you clean. You don't need to leave like this.

SOPHIE

I already told you why you can't. Even with both of us, we're not going to fix all this in time.

GAGE

Sophie...

SOPHIE

Should I rattle off the list of times you've been able to change my mind before?

GAGE

And how many times you've gotten injured because you didn't listen to me?

SOPHIE

Hey, the scar on my thigh is badass!

GAGE

Badass as how you got it?

SOPHIE

Fruit Ninja with a katana looked easy on YouTube...

GAGE

I still don't know where you got the katana.

SOPHIE

You don't need to know.

GAGE

And you don't need to leave.

SOPHIE

Give me a good reason not to.

GAGE

What if you get arrested for violating Gov. Whitmer's stay-at-home order?

SOPHIE

You call this a home? Christ, your standards are low.

GAGE

And jail is better?

SOPHIE

Yeah, kinda.

GAGE

You can't be serious.

SOPHIE

I'm not going to jail, Gage. Whitmer says violating social distancing could result in a fine, but that's about it. Has Maria gone to jail for all the times she's gone out?

GAGE

No, but...

SOPHIE

There's much more leniency in smaller towns in terms of COVID than in the larger metro areas.

GAGE

Where are you going to live? You can't just stay out in the streets. You might get-

SOPHIE

The virus, yeah. I'll be sure to get tested and isolate myself. When I get across the state border, my fiancée will pick me up and bring us to our own place.

GAGE

Your what?

SOPHIE

My fi... shit, uh... well...

GAGE

You're engaged?

*(She nods.)*

GAGE

Why didn't you tell me?

SOPHIE

It's not really something you can work into a conversation.

GAGE

But I'm your brother. If I'm getting a brother-in-law, wouldn't you want to tell me?

SOPHIE

I wish it was that easy.

GAGE

How is it not easy? "I'm getting married." Three words. Perfectly straightforward to me. You aren't even wearing a ring.

SOPHIE

Neither of us can really afford rings right now.

GAGE

Not right now, but Mom's life insurance settlement-

SOPHIE

And when, exactly, is that coming? And how much are we getting anyway?



GAGE

I think the attorney said something like two years' worth of her salary. About a hundred grand.

SOPHIE

I also asked when we were getting it. And when we have to clean out and sell the house, for that matter, and how long that will take, and how much we're going to get from that?

GAGE

Slow down, I haven't thought that far ahead yet.

SOPHIE

I have.

GAGE

You shouldn't have to.

SOPHIE

You're right; neither of us should have to think about this. Any other year, we'd be decades off of thinking about that.

GAGE

I know.

SOPHIE

Until the house is fully disinfected, we can't go back. That's what we were told a month ago, and I doubt anything's going to be done about it soon enough.

GAGE

So you're running away from Mom?

SOPHIE

I'm sorry. This isn't something I can tackle right now.

GAGE

Uh-huh. Sure. So how long have you been keeping this from me?

SOPHIE

The engagement? How long we've been dating? Both?

GAGE

Sure, why not both.

SOPHIE

We met three years ago, started dating a year later. We've been engaged since September.

GAGE

Two years? Two years, you've kept this relationship from me?

SOPHIE

You're making a big deal out of nothing.

GAGE

A romantic relationship becoming this serious is making a big deal of nothing?

SOPHIE

Well, maybe not "nothing", but...

GAGE

Then why didn't you tell me?

SOPHIE

I did just now, didn't I?

GAGE

Why didn't you tell me *earlier*?

SOPHIE

I didn't want Maria to find out.

GAGE

You think I would've told her?

SOPHIE

You said yourself she'd find things out one way or another.

GAGE

She wouldn't be upset about you getting married. Look, I'm sorry I got upset. I'm surprised, obviously, but I'm happy for you. This is wonderful news!

SOPHIE

I doubt it would be to her.

GAGE

Okay. You give Aunt Maria a hard time, and you're embarrassed to introduce him to us.

SOPHIE

It's much more complicated than that.

GAGE

How is she going to attend your wedding if she doesn't know?

SOPHIE

She isn't. We're eloping.

GAGE

How am *I* going to attend, then? Hating your aunt is one thing, but what did I do?

SOPHIE

Nothing.

GAGE

Then why are you leaving?

*(SOPHIE shakes her head)*

GAGE

You can at least tell me that much.

SOPHIE

I don't have to.

GAGE

I want to know. Don't you love me?

SOPHIE

Gage-

GAGE

Don't you care about your only brother?

SOPHIE

That's not what this is-

GAGE

After Mom died, it was just us. We only moved in because I can't afford to keep us going until the life insurance settlement comes in, and now you're leaving? You're leaving me to pack up everything in our house by myself? After everything I did for you, you're angry with me even though I did nothing...

SOPHIE

Exactly that. You did nothing. When Maria screamed at me for spilling milk on her, you kept eating. When you broke a plate, I cleaned it up. When I dared to season our dinner, she dumped the whole pot of soup down my shirt. When I was covering the burns with Maria's makeup, you were sleeping. Didn't you give a shit? Weren't you worried?

GAGE

Of course I was worried, but... She told me that was normal. It's not like I have anyone else's opinion to go off of...

SOPHIE

Untreated third-degree burns are normal?

GAGE

How do you know they're third-degree?

SOPHIE

How do you know they aren't?

GAGE

They healed, didn't they?

SOPHIE

Well, my whole body is scarred, and I'm taking pills and regular therapy sessions to cope with the trauma, but I'm perfectly healthy otherwise.

GAGE

You seem better now. You said your burns don't hurt anymore...

SOPHIE

It's not just the burns, Gage. It's how Maria always treats me.

GAGE

Maybe it's a generational thing?

SOPHIE

“Generational” is just an excuse old people use to get out of trouble for breaking the law and making everyone else miserable. Hate to break it to you, but it’s 2020.

GAGE

I don’t see how Maria’s age is a problem.

SOPHIE

It’s not her age that bothers me. All age means is that you’ve had more time on earth to learn and reflect on what the world gives you. It’s what she’s been doing *despite* her age and experiences that pisses me off.

GAGE

I don’t understand.

SOPHIE

Let me give you an example, then. Have you heard of Hedda Nussbaum?

GAGE

Who-da Nussbaum? That one of your old lady books or something?

SOPHIE

Hedda Nussbaum. Domestic violence activist. By the time she decided to stand up to her abusive husband, he had already killed her daughter and almost killed her.

GAGE

You couldn’t keep this PG, could you?

SOPHIE

*(ignoring him)* She wrote her intimate terrorism story in 1987, when Maria would’ve been, what, my age?

GAGE

About that age. But-

SOPHIE

She lived through one of the largest pushes towards ending this kind of horror, and she’s being selectively deaf to it to pass it off as ignorance so that she’s a sweet, innocent old lady. So that while Mom was alive, Maria could make shit up about me. About how ungrateful I was to the woman who’d given me a roof over my head since middle school. Mom never believed me. She died thinking *I* was the bad guy.

GAGE

So it's Mom's fault that she died and Aunt Maria's grieving?

SOPHIE

That's not what I'm saying, dumbass.

GAGE

People grieve differently. Be patient with her.

SOPHIE

The result of my "patience" is marked on my body, you-

GAGE

Stop talking like a book. Aunt Maria's older than us. What was considered okay back then-

SOPHIE

You cannot tell me kindness is a "generational" concept, especially when Nussbaum's story was published thirty-three years ago and very little seems to have been done about it. Victims are given ways to cope *after* it happens. Victims are expected to change *their* lives so they don't get hurt.

GAGE

But-

SOPHIE

I'm. Not. DONE. (*Pause*) There has been absolutely no effort in teaching people not to hurt or hate other people in the first place.

GAGE

How are people supposed to help if victims wait so long to ask for it?

SOPHIE

Because there are just enough people that lied or are said to have lied about their experiences that made me afraid of telling the truth about mine.

GAGE

Sophie, aren't you being a bit dramatic? You can't expect everyone to read the same things you do.

SOPHIE

That's not what I'm saying. I'm not making a book recommendation; I'm making a point. Would it kill you to read between the lines a little?

GAGE

Maybe if you didn't speak like a thesis-driven paper, people would listen to you.

SOPHIE

Maybe if people listened to me, I wouldn't *have* to prepare an entire thesis-driven argument per conversation.

GAGE

Maybe you should try talking to us like we're five.

SOPHIE

Maybe I shouldn't have to. You two have phones. It takes seconds to inform your damn selves.

GAGE

Maybe we don't have the money or time for the education opportunities you have.

SOPHIE

Maybe that's why I'm giving you the knowledge for free.

GAGE

Maybe if you weren't so sensitive and argumentative, you could be happy with what you have.

SOPHIE

Maybe if you weren't so passive and pathetic, I wouldn't have to run for my life. *(Pause)* I'm sorry. That wasn't very ladylike of me, was it.

GAGE

It's fine. Really. *(Pause)* What's his name?

SOPHIE

Who?

GAGE

Your fiancé. What's his name? *(Pause)*

SOPHIE

Mercedes. *(Pause)*

GAGE

That's a unique name for a guy.

SOPHIE

Really?

GAGE

I mean, I suppose if you name your kid after a vehicle...

SOPHIE

Mercedes isn't... *(Pause)*

GAGE

Mercedes isn't what? *(Pause)* I don't actually believe he's a vehicle. I'm stupid, but I'm not that stupid. I mean, people have married weirder things... If you really love him-

SOPHIE

Her.

GAGE

What?

SOPHIE

You heard me.

GAGE

Mercedes is a woman?

SOPHIE

No, she's a fucking car.

GAGE

So let me get this straight-

SOPHIE

I'd rather you didn't.

GAGE

You know what I mean. You've been posing nude and writing and drawing porn for money so you can run away from home and abandon your family for some experimental fling?



SOPHIE

It's not an experiment, Gage. I'm gay. Your little nickname wasn't off the mark. Sapphie is Sapphic. I knew Maria wouldn't approve, and I guess you don't either.

GAGE

Of course I don't agree with it.

SOPHIE

You were much more prepared for me to have a car fetish than for me to be in a relationship with a woman.

GAGE

I didn't say "fetish". That's disgusting.

SOPHIE

I'm just saying it's a little beyond disagreeing with my sexuality. Which is just as ridiculous as having a vehicle as a sibling-in-law.

GAGE

How is it ridiculous?

SOPHIE

*(Constructing her argument as she goes)* How can I explain this to you... You wouldn't disagree with someone's... eyes, would you? "I disagree with your eyes. Having green eyes is a choice. Go to confession and beg for Jesus to fix your eyes. Just have blue eyes; it's not that hard. Green eyes are weird. Having green eyes should be illegal. God made Adam and Marine, not Adam and Green."

GAGE

What the hell are you talking about? You're born with your eye color. You can't change it. *(Pause. Sophie gives him a look.)* I'm sorry, I guess? I still don't really understand.

SOPHIE

Still, you have a right to know.

GAGE

And Aunt Maria doesn't?

SOPHIE

She has no right to know anything about me that she thinks would warrant another beating.

GAGE

The cooking thing wasn't really a beating, technically...

SOPHIE

And you're okay with that? Don't act like the burns were the only time she hurt me.

GAGE

We've only been here for a month. She couldn't have...

SOPHIE

She did. Live with it, since I have to.

GAGE

Will you chill-

SOPHIE

That's why I'm so obsessed with keeping everything clean. That's why I cook all your meals. That's why Maria has never raised her voice at you. I'm the girl. I'm the little doll. I'm supposed to dress nice and smile at everyone and say something cutesy when my string is pulled. I'm supposed to cook for my men. My brother. The husband she wants me to have. To clean for the same people, even if it's not my mess.

GAGE

Cleaning other people's messes is just a part of life though, isn't it? Most parents don't care who made the mess. Just that there's a mess. And messes happen. They shouldn't be something to move out of the house over.

SOPHIE

If it were any other house, yeah. I'll get a slap or two if Maria sees this sty. Finding out about the classes and the jobs, probably locked in the closet. And if she finds out I came out of that closet- well, you'll be picking up a Big Mac or two at my drive-thru funeral. Not to mention what she might do to Mercedes... I'm scared, okay? The fight response didn't work, so flight's all I have left. I'm sorry. *(Pause)*

GAGE

She scares me, too.

SOPHIE

What?

GAGE

That's why I didn't do anything. It was selfish of me, but at the time, I... Look, I get that I'm the guy, and Aunt Maria thinks women aren't supposed to hit guys, but part of me was afraid she'd make an exception for me if I spoke up, you know?

SOPHIE

So then, that night...

GAGE

I was pretending to be asleep. I couldn't protect you from her. I should be the one apologizing.

SOPHIE

Gage, I...

*(Pause. There is the sound of a car motor.)*

SOPHIE

She's back...

GAGE

So she is.

SOPHIE

Shit, I haven't touched my stuff yet. *(She sprints off, yells from offstage)* Keep her busy!!

GAGE

She's on the phone. If it's any of her friends, she'll be busy for hours without me. Can we just talk about...

*(SOPHIE comes back with a full suitcase and stuffs her laptop into it.)*

GAGE

That was fast.

SOPHIE

You can never be too prepared nowadays. *(Pause)* Look, Gage. I'm sorry I have to leave you alone like this. If there's anything I can-

GAGE

I'm not going anywhere, and neither are you.

SOPHIE

You're still not convinced.

GAGE

Of course not! My only sister up and leaving one day because she feels like it?

SOPHIE

I feel like being somewhere safe. That's not here, and that's fucking FINAL. *(Pause)*  
I want to make sure you're alright alone.

GAGE

I guess Maria and I will be...

SOPHIE

No, fuck Maria. Are *you* going to be alright?

GAGE

Yeah, sure. Whatever.

*(The motor stops.)*

SOPHIE

I need to go.

GAGE

'Kay.

SOPHIE

That's it? Aren't you going to help me out of here? I might not see you again.

GAGE

Maybe.

SOPHIE

Are you going to take care of yourself? *(Pause)* You do know after I leave, I can't take care of your problems anymore, right? Gage...

*(Pause. A door is heard opening.)*

SOPHIE

Shit! I gotta...

GAGE

Wait. *(Pause. Listens.)* It's Emily. They're talking about the homily. We have time. Sophie, don't worry about me. Take care of you. And let Mercedes take care of you, too.

SOPHIE

We'll try.

GAGE

And about the life insurance...

SOPHIE

It'll do well for Maria's mortgage. She's already said we owe her that much.

GAGE

Legally, that's for us to decide.

SOPHIE

What are you saying?

GAGE

I'm putting my half into my student loans, and I'll Venmo you the other when it comes in.

SOPHIE

Gage! That's... that's fifty thousand for each of us.

GAGE

Yep.

SOPHIE

But what if Maria finds out? She'll kill you.

GAGE

Nah, worst she could do is kick me out. But 50k is more than enough for my own place as well, don't you think? If I get a cheaper place, I can probably outlast the pandemic.

SOPHIE

“If”? The housing market in this town is pennies. It’s the only reason people live here...

GAGE

And much higher where you’re going, I assume.

SOPHIE

Yeah.

GAGE

This’ll pay for your wedding, food, therapy, gas, probably get a head start on your student loans. You shouldn’t have to be in the same position as me because of something out of your control. If you divide it up evenly, twenty-five thousand just out of college for you and Mercedes is unheard of. (*Studies her face*) I wish you could see how your eyes light up when you hear her name. It’s weird as shit, but you seem to lo... to feel very strongly for her.

SOPHIE

You can say I love her. It’s really not weird.

GAGE

It’s weird for me, but...

SOPHIE

It’s not your marriage, is it? (*Pause*) Gage...

GAGE

She’s got one foot in the door.

SOPHIE

Alright. (*She throws her suitcase through the open window and begins to climb out of it.*) Wait. (*She jumps back down and grabs a marker from her backpack*) Roll up your pant leg.

GAGE

The fuck?

SOPHIE

Just hurry up and do it. (*Gage rolls up one of his pant legs. Sophie writes a 10-digit number down his calf*) There. Keep it rolled down.

GAGE

Why...?

SOPHIE

You don't show your calves, right?

GAGE

Well, I don't own any shorts, so-

SOPHIE

Exactly. Keep your legs covered, and she'll never find me.

GAGE

What is it?

SOPHIE

Mercedes bought me a cell phone because Maria never let me have one. That's my new number on your leg. I'll text you when I get there.

GAGE

Maria's going to check all my messages.

SOPHIE

Then give me a different name in your contacts.

GAGE

What name?

SOPHIE

Do we really have time to discuss this? Just pick one. Something you can remember easily. Hurry!

GAGE

She's still on the phone. No, there's another voice. Sounds like one of the neighbors. Older lady...

SOPHIE

Thank God, it's Mrs. Kyne. Never thought I'd hear myself say that.

GAGE

She's a master of the Midwest Goodbye. She just gave us another half hour at least.

SOPHIE

Name. Now.

GAGE

Helen?

SOPHIE

Something other than my middle name, please?

GAGE

I dunno, Elizabeth?

SOPHIE

Confirmation saint. Maria picked it out. No dice.

GAGE

You're not making this any easier, you know. *(They hear the door close. Two women's muffled voices are heard.)*

SOPHIE

Ok, I'll take the next one you name. Just think of something!

GAGE

Mercedes. *(Pause)*

SOPHIE

Ooooooh, that's good.

GAGE

Gratitude acknowledged.

SOPHIE

And if Maria asks, Mercedes is...

GAGE

Mercedes is you...

SOPHIE

No, Mercedes isn't me.

GAGE

Well, I know Mercedes isn't you.



SOPHIE

I'm only Mercedes in your contacts. Who is Mercedes to Maria?

GAGE

She's not anything to Aunt Maria. Aunt Maria doesn't know her.

SOPHIE

I know Maria doesn't know her. That's the point. Who are you going to say Mercedes is to Maria?

GAGE

I am so confused... Mercedes is... your fiancée?

SOPHIE

No, no, no! Pretend Mercedes is someone *you* know with no relation to *me*.

GAGE

So Mercedes is *my* fiancée?

SOPHIE

Don't push it.

GAGE

Yeah, I suppose Aunt Maria would want to meet a fiancée if I had one...

SOPHIE

College friend. There. Platonic college friend. Say you've been keeping in touch with her since you dropped out.

GAGE

That works.

*(SOPHIE puts on a mask and gloves, climbs out the window)*

SOPHIE

I'll text you when I'm home. *(She looks back in for a few seconds, shuts the window behind her, then exits. Silence. We hear a door open right before lights out.)*

**END.**