

# Side of Stage

## Amelia Nelson

~Opening night~

I poked my head around the door, my ponytail bobbing in time with my foot movements. I skipped into the room and sat down silently next to the brown-haired girl. Gracie sat still for a few moments before noticing me and promptly falling off her seat and onto the floor.

“Hey” I muttered, reaching my hand down to help Gracie up. Gracie gratefully took my hand but didn’t have time to respond before a loud cough came from the front of the room.

“As I was saying” Jay began, “Mrs Martin’s daughter has gone into labour, meaning she cannot be here for opening night, meaning that I am effectively in charge”. She finished up her pre-show a few speech minutes early, leaving the cast and crew to chat between themselves.

“So,” said Jay, walking up to me, “Why are you so late?”.

“My car broke down.”

Jay nodded before engaging in conversation with Gracie about Make-Up. I turned away to wander around the room. Jay was our resident Stage manager, the student with the most responsibility. The main cast was there, all 12 of us along with the 8 stage crew members -sound, lighting, curtains, their assistants, and the two runners. There were also two teachers who looked a bit lost without Ms Martin. But Gracie shone the brightest. She stood in the centre of the room, her smile radiating off the walls, the nerves of being the lead not seeming to get to her.

“Samantha!” a voice behind me called. I turned around and internally groaned. *Jack.*

“How does it feel not being important?” he said with a smirk. Ok, so maybe he got the part I wanted, but he didn’t have to rub it in my face.

“Oh shut up,” I muttered, walking out of the room.

I stood onstage, my hands raised above my head, as the curtain went down. The ensemble started streaming towards the wings, eager to get home and tell their friends and parents about all the *amazing acting* they did. They did, what, three dances each? And they barely even knew the dances.

Whereas *she* had spent two full terms learning her dance solos, doing three singing lessons a week, *and* spending every free moment learning her lines. I lowered my arms, realising the stage was empty. I turned away, heading towards the green room, before realising there was still someone there. I walked over to Gracie, her ragged breathing cutting through the silence.

“Gracie...” I whispered. She spun around, lowering her hands as she did so. I opened my arms and she fell into them.

“It’s the end,” she whispered.

“After this... there’s nothing”

Gracie and I had become friends when we had been cast as Ali and Lisa during our year nine performance of Mamma Mia. As the only year nines in a cast full of year twelves and thirteens, we instantly became Gracie-and-Samantha, as we were always needed for the same things. After that, we got cast as leads in all the school productions. Apart from last year.

~Matinee~

The second, third, and fourth performances passed quickly. Ms Martin was back in time for the fifth - and penultimate - performance, the Matinee, after flying back up from Christchurch.

“She’s so cute!” exclaimed Gracie, handing the phone back to Ms Martin.

“I know” replied Ms Martin, “I keep trying to tell Rebecca she looks like Dave, but she insists Laura has my eyes”. Ms Martin, otherwise known as Maisie, had spent the past fifteen minutes showing anyone and everyone pictures of her new granddaughter.

“Five Minutes!” yelled Jay, poking her head around the wall, “everyone shut up unless you want to be solely on cleaning up”. That shut everyone up. Ms Martin walked into the green room while Gracie and I stayed in the classroom littered with students.

“I-I kinda want to tell you about something,” began Gracie, looking down at her feet, a pink blush spreading across her cheeks and her ears turning red.

“Yes,” I responded, trying not to stare at her perfectly heart-shaped lips.

“What’s up ladies” yelled Jack, ruining the moment.

“We’re just having a conversation,” I replied through gritted teeth. He nodded, unaware that he’d ruined what could be a life-changing chapter in the saga of Gracie and Samantha. I’m not completely sure why I don’t like Jack. Is the fact that he’s a huge dick a contributing factor? Yes. Is the fact that he got the part I wanted a big part of it? Yes. Is the fact that he’s Gracie’s Ex-boyfriend also a contributing factor? Also yes.

“Jack and Gracie, silently in greenroom” yelled one of the annoying runners from the doorway. Gracie didn’t look back as she walked through the stage doors.

~Intermission~

Gracie and I sat alone in the green room while the ensemble was being scolded for being too loud. Gracie was curling her hair, I was making two-minute noodles in the microwave. I sat down next to her.

“Gracie,” I began. She tried to say something but I shushed her. *It’s now or never.*

“I just want you to know that I like you, like, a lot. And I’ve been thinking about this for a while and I think I’ll burst from pressure If I don’t say anything and You’ve kinda been giving me signals but maybe I’ve been reading them wrong..” I trailed off as she started to cry. “I-I’m sorry” I stammered. “I think I just ruined our friendship, I-I’m so, so, sorry” She started to laugh, tears still streaming down her face.

“It’s not that!” She placed the curling iron down.

“I like you! But you wouldn’t want to date me”

“Why not”

“I-”

“Gracie and Samantha side of stage!” Yelled one of Jay’s assistants. The other leads started entering the green room.

“No, no, no” cried Jay, catching sight of Gracie’s tear-streaked face. I ran through the stage doors to the wings leaving Jay to clean up Samantha.

~Act 2~

Although Jay had managed to clean up Gracie, there was something very off about her performance. It was a mistake telling her I liked her. The small flutter I got in my heart when she hugged me? Non-existent. Gracie was one of my best friends, despite the fact that we hung out during the show seasons, and afterwards, we barely acknowledged each other. Well, we *did* acknowledge each other.



Gracie pulled out of last year's production of Grease with only a month to go, leaving me, her understudy, to play Sandy. We barely saw each other until the start of this year. She still won't tell me why she pulled out. It's one of her many closely guarded secrets.

~Closing night~

I jump as an ice-cold hand grips my arm. I turn and face Gracie. I start to talk but she beats me to it.

"I just want to say I like you, like, like like you. But we can't be together. I'm not dating anyone, and it's not my parents, and it's not the gay thing either. I just don't want to date you, and I don't want to talk about why. Is that okay?" I nod, trying not to cry. As well as just finishing my last college show, I was also getting my heart broken. She turned and walked towards the lobby of the school theatre. I sat alone in the empty classroom, thinking about her. Her smile, her empathy, her *entire personality*. I ran out into the hallway, dodging around audience members and students as I ran. I ducked out of the main doors.

"Gracie!" I yelled, the harsh rain streaming down my face and hair. She was 10 metres or so ahead of me, with four other people. She turned to look at me and my throbbing heart felt like it was going to burst out of my chest. She muttered something to the tall women beside her. The woman nodded and continued walking towards the car park.

"Hey" she said, walking closer and pulling her raincoat hood off.

"Hey yourself" she was now standing in front of me. I stood up on my tiptoes and kissed her on the lips. She drew back, gaping at me.



“Fuck, you like me and I like you, why can’t we just be together” I practically screamed. To my surprise, she grabbed my face and pressed it against hers. It felt like someone had set off a firework in my heart, the sparks radiating through every part of my body, from my fingertips to my toes. This time I pulled away first.

“Why are you kissing me?” I cried. She looked confused.

“Because I love you, silly”

“But you won’t date me”

“Kissing you may have changed my mind. And I’m a terrible girlfriend”

“Well you’re a damn brilliant best friend and that’s enough for me”

And we kissed, and didn’t worry about anything other than that kiss.