

THE S.O.S. MARQUEE

Written by

Amelie Elmquist

INT. SLOANE'S LIVING ROOM - day

SLOANE O'SULLIVAN, in her early 20's, doodles a poem, surrounded by stuffed animals. She catches one pointed at her, a radioactive sound from its stare, and she turns it around. Then she turns them all around.

XAVIER O'SULLIVAN, Sloane's dad, is fixing a CRT TV.

On her laptop, a notification pops up: "Franchesckaar's Blog - New Post." The post is a snapshot of a poem, with Franchesckaar asking "Anyone know who the mystery writer is?"

SLOANE

Oh no.

XAVIER

What's wrong?

SLOANE

(to self)

How'd she get that?

(to Xavier)

One of my poem's is on-

The view count ticks up menacingly. Sloane freezes.

INT. BEDROOM 1 - DAY

STUDENT 1 reads Franchesckaar's blog.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - DAY

STUDENT 2 reads Franchesckaar's blog.

INT. BEDROOM 3 - DAY

STUDENT 3 reads Franchesckaar's blog.

INT. SLOANE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sloane attempts a breathing exercise.

Xavier peeks at the screen.

XAVIER

The Franchesckaar? Wow, that's a lot of views.

Sloane hits "Report" on the web page.

SLOANE

Must be some way to take it down?

XAVIER
Don't you want people to see your
work?

SLOANE
I do. But uh. After I'm dead. Like
any great poet.

The view count ticks up.

SLOANE (CONT'D)
They should really hide that
ticker.

Xavier shuts the laptop screen.

XAVIER
There. I hid it.

Xavier carries the laptop into the bedroom.

INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - DAY

At a vanity, SONNY O'SULLIVAN's face lathered in lotion.

Xavier points a camcorder at her.

Sonny snaps her neck, smiles at his camera.

XAVIER
You look like a ghost.

SONNY
Yeah, well. You look like a zombie,
dude.

Xavier sets down the camera.

XAVIER
I thought they had a dressing room
there.

SONNY
You need to get ready to get ready.

XAVIER
That Marquee Theater. Don't think
it's good for your head.

Xavier points the camera at her again.

XAVIER (CONT'D)
You could quit. Become a full time
star in my productions.

SONNY

You mean your home movies? What kind of number you got for an audience?

XAVIER

Sloane, how many stuffed animals do you have?

SLOANE (O.S.)

Hey.

Xavier hugs Sonny from behind, kissing her head.

XAVIER

Let me know how the show goes.

SONNY

I'll probably be home late.

Xavier's grasp loosens.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

In front of the vanity, HERB UNDERWOOD creeps up behind Sonny.

HERB

I'm sure you'll knock 'em dead.
Definitely knocked me down last night.

Herb pushes a HUNDRED DOLLAR BILL into Sonny's bra.

HELENA, Marqueen's director, shoots Sonny a thumbs up.

HERB (CONT'D)

See you after the show.

Sonny and Helena head towards the stage.

SONNY

(to Helena)

I can't see him tonight.

INT. THE MARQUEEN HALLWAY - DAY

HELENA

I understand. But you know how important it is to--

INT. STAGE - DAY

SONNY

I know.

Helena pulls the bill out of Sonny's bra.

HELENA

He's the sole reason we have enough
money to light up the place.

Helena fixes Sonny's hair.

HELENA (CONT'D)

And you're the sole reason he does
it.

ASTER

Hey, Helena...

Helena stares blankly.

ASTER (CONT'D)

I set up the harness. Was there
anything else you needed?

HELENA

Oh right, you're the intern.

Helena puts the bill into her own bra.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Just make sure Herb is happy. Get
him popcorn or something.

Aster leaves as Sonny attempts putting on the harness.

SONNY

Or actually, I could use some help-

HELENA

You've got this. Just remember.
Back middle. Keep your gaze on the
back middle.

The curtains race open.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Herb sits in the back middle.

Aster offers a carton of popcorn. Herb takes one kernel at a
time, licking his fingers.

INT. STAGE - DAY

Sonny is strapped to a lit-up star.

SONNY

(sings)

All eyes are on you, lashes lift
you up.

The star rises.

SONNY (CONT'D)

(sings)

All eyes are on you, staring at the
stars and the moon.

(belts)

All eyes are on you until the

(hushes)

night falls. You're lit up but
their eyes slowly shut. You're lit
up but the lashes fall one by one.
You're lit up but you're a comet
when their eyes are shut. When
their lashes fall... I... do...
too!

Sonny falls high speed. Thud.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1 gasps. AUDIENCE MEMBER 2 shrieks.

INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY

HELENA

Shit!

Helena squints at Herb.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Herb claps. He takes a handful of popcorn now.

Aster runs backstage.

INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY

ASTER

Should I call an ambulance?

Helena lights a cigarette.

HELENA

Fucking call my retirement fund.

ASTER

What?

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

AUDIENCE MEMBERS crowd the edge of the stage.

INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY

HELENA

Take care of the body before those
zombies get to it.

Aster draws the curtains.

INT. STAGE - DAY

Aster rushes to Sonny's body, taking her pulse.

ASTER

Sonny?

INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY

Helena's cigarette lights a rope. Aster rushes in, spraying
with a fire extinguisher.

HELENA

We're ruined.

ASTER

I can't believe he thought it was
part of the show.

HELENA

Who?

ASTER

The guy you keep telling me to
serve.

HELENA

Herb thinks Sonny's still alive?

ASTER

Seemed like it. Unless he wanted
her dead. He was clapping.

HELENA

Oh... This might work.

ASTER

What might work?

HELENA
He likes the back row. How well can
you see from back there?

ASTER
You want to trick him?

Helena walks out towards crowd.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

HELENA
Hope to see you all for next
Saturday's show.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1
Is she alright?

HELENA
Who?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1
Sonny O'Sullivan.

HELENA
Oh, of course! No, that was just.
(whispers)
We had an increase in budget.
Thought we'd really get those
special effects going.

HERB
Helena!

HELENA
Herb!

HERB
What a wonderful show tonight. You
know I love it when you make her
the star.

HELENA
I sure do.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1
You might want to give a warning
next time. Think of the children.

Audience Member 1 leaves.

HELENA
Herb, actually, I was meaning to mention. That 2,000's due next Saturday.

HERB
Oh, don't worry. Next time I see Sonny.

HELENA
Right...

INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY

Helena walks towards her office, Aster starts to follow.

HELENA
Not trick. Just. Find a new star that looks and sounds exactly like Sonny.

INT. HELENA'S OFFICE - DAY

ASTER
If she had a twin sister, sure.

Helena types on her computer.

HELENA
She has a daughter.

ASTER
You think he won't notice her de-age 20 years?

HELENA
Stage makeup. Back row. And why would a guy complain a woman looked younger? Just need to find out how similar her voice sounds.

Helena looks up "Sloane O'Sullivan singing" and gets no relevant results. She then looks up Sloane's Instagram and sees it's mostly re-posts of poems.

HELENA (CONT'D)
Must be an English major.

Helena further researches Sloane, finding she goes to Tenebris College.

HELENA (CONT'D)
Wait a second.

Helena pulls open a file on Aster Yarosh, seeing "Tenebris College".

ASTER
(excited)
You have a file on me?

HELENA
She goes to your college! This is perfect. Find her tomorrow at school, okay? Send me a recording of her voice.

ASTER
I graduated last semester.

Helena stares at Aster blankly.

HELENA
It also says here your visa is contingent on this employment.

ASTER
You'd fire me?

HELENA
I'm not saying that. Just that, there may not be a job for you to come to soon.

Helena slides a paper across the desk, an Electric Disconnection Notice. "The Marqueen's failed to comply with the set amount. If no payment is received by Saturday, October 4, we have no choice but to cut off electric."

HELENA (CONT'D)
No lights. The Marqueen can't be open without a marquee.

Aster looks at Helena's screen with Sloane O'Sullivan's name.

ASTER
I could go back for my masters?

EXT. ENGLISH BUILDING - DAY

Sloane walks towards the building, editing one of her poems. She places the pencil behind her ear.

Sloane's hand pauses over the door handle.

Students loom behind the glass. Their gazes all drift towards Sloane.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

A full audience all stares at Sloane.

EXT. ENGLISH BUILDING - DAY

The students behind the glass don't even notice Sloane.

Sloane pulls in a breath, then pulls open the door.

INT. ENGLISH BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

Sloane notices FRANCHESCKAAR UNDERWOOD is surrounded by KNEELING GUYS reciting the poem from her blog.

Thud. Sloane runs into Aster.

SLOANE

Sorry!

Aster reaches for a dropped poem.

ASTER

You write this?

Sloane steals the poem from her hands.

SLOANE

Yeah... And I wrote that one.

They eavesdrop on the kneeling guys.

KNEELING GUY 1

Crimson waves flying, turn your
head but not your eyes, keep on
staring, powder blue hypnotize.

ASTER

So, why aren't you on your knee?

SLOANE

Is she really auditioning people to
be the writer?...

(mimicking Franchesckaar)

'Oh, it's just a coincidence that
the hottest guy here wrote it.'

ASTER

I can't believe you wrote a
serenade for that girl.

SLOANE

I didn't!

ASTER
Thought you said you wrote it?

SLOANE
Yeah. Not for her.

ASTER
Then who was it for?

Sloane shrugs.

SLOANE
No one.

Aster raises her eyebrows.

SLOANE (CONT'D)
Don't think I've seen you around.

ASTER
It's my first day.

SLOANE
Oh! (whisper) Welcome to the shadows.

Aster looks up, blinded by an overhead light.

SLOANE (CONT'D)
The English Building. Umbra is latin for shadow.

ASTER
How did I never realize that?!

SLOANE
Well, you said it was your first day?

ASTER
Right... I better get to class.

SLOANE
Good luck!

Aster walks to class.

INT. WRITING CLASS - DAY

Aster sets her things at the professor's spot.

Francheskaar sits at a desk. She posts a blog post. A notification pops up: "Francheskaar's Blog - New Post." Another notification pops up, an email from her mom.

It says "Again, I'd tell you to reconsider your major. But you're already on your last year. So instead I'll tell you you better get a book deal fast. Call me if you ever write anything longer than a blog post xox Mom P.S. You should move to Cali, it's so much nicer here." Franchesckaar copy-pastes it into a new blog post.

WRITING PROFESSOR

And the clock doesn't lie. Time to shut your lips and listen. This next week we'll be focusing on longform writing. The kind of stuff to get a book deal for.

FRANCHESCKAAR

My mom would love you.

WRITING PROFESSOR

Is she single?

FRANCHESCKAAR

I'm going to go with 'no' even though she is.

WRITING PROFESSOR

Everyday this week we'll be hosting one-on-one meetings to help guide you along. Everyone welcome our new TA which just halved my workload.

ASTER

Hi, I'm Aster.

WRITING PROFESSOR

So whenever you're ready, head on over to one of us for your first meeting.

Franchesckaar heads over to Aster, showing her The Franchesckaar blog.

FRANCHESCKAAR

Could I just string all these posts together and that'd count?

Aster looks back and forth between 'The Franchesckaar' and the attendance list.

ASTER

F-R-A-N... Hmmm I can't find you on the attendance list.

FRANCHESCKAAR
Oh, yeah, I just spell it like
this. It's Francesca on there.

Franchesckaar points at "Francesca" on the list.

ASTER
But you go by "Franchescaarrrrr?"

FRANCHESCKAAR
Adds a bit of flare.

Aster scrolls through the blog.

ASTER
Yeah, I don't think this is going
to work. Your main character
wouldn't be interesting enough.

FRANCHESCKAAR
You mean me?

ASTER
Do you just write about your day?

FRANCHESCKAAR
Yeah.

ASTER
You really don't have anyone to
talk to?

FRANCHESCKAAR
Excuse me?

ASTER
Only person interested in your day
is supposed to be your mom after
school.

Franchesckaar takes the laptop.

FRANCHESCKAAR
Here. This post isn't about me.

ASTER
It's like 2 sentences.

FRANCHESCKAAR
Then what am I supposed to do?

ASTER
Well, it's all in picking a muse.
Some things will just write
themselves.

WRITING PROFESSOR
And the clock doesn't lie. That's
it for today. Come tomorrow with a
list of possible topics for your
longform writing.

Aster packs up and heads for the door.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Thud. Aster runs into Sloane. Another poem falls.

SLOANE
Sorry again.

ASTER
Maybe I can read your whole
discography if we keep up with this
body slam thing.

Aster hands over the poem.

SLOANE
I guess I need to hold things
closer to my chest.

ASTER
(to self)
I could be one of those things.

SLOANE
What?

ASTER
I said do you know where the
Henderson dorm building is?

SLOANE
Oh. Just out that door, take a
right.

ASTER
I'm horrible with directions.

SLOANE
But, it's just right--

Sloane points. Then her face morphs into a smile.

SLOANE (CONT'D)
Oh. Yeah. I can show you.

Aster follows Sloane out the door.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Aster and Sloane walk towards the dorms.

ASTER
So, what is your thought on 80
horny guys reciting your poem by
heart?

SLOANE
Stop describing my nightmares.

ASTER
It sounds kind of cool. Hard to get
people to want to read your work.

SLOANE
Here's Henderson.

ASTER
Well, that was a short walk.

SLOANE
Isn't that good? Oh, unless you
didn't want it to be a short
conversation.

ASTER
Want to show me where room 31B is?

SLOANE
Sure.

INT. ASTER'S DORM - DAY

One half of the room is cluttered, Aster's half of the room
is bare.

ASTER
This is my side.

SLOANE
Love what you've done with the
place.

ASTER
I like, just moved in, okay?
(mutters)
Not much notice.

Aster starts unboxing. Sloane points at a picture frame.

SLOANE
Is this your family?

ASTER
They're still in my home country.
Haven't seen them since I came here
for college.

SLOANE
Wow. I can't imagine. Do you want
to go back?

ASTER
NO.

Aster picks up the acceptance letter from The Marquee
Theater, then shifts it further in the box. She grabs a
white bed sheet.

ASTER (CONT'D)
Care to help me make the bed?

SLOANE
Free room service, huh?

They each take a side of the white sheet, fanning it over
the mattress.

SLOANE (CONT'D)
Oh, there's something under...

Aster ducks, inspecting. When Aster looks back up, Sloane is
standing on the mattress, covered with the white sheet like
a ghost.

SLOANE (CONT'D)
Boo!

ASTER
Oh my god.

SLOANE
OooOoOoOoh!

ASTER
Who's under there? Time for curtain
call!

Aster rips the sheet off and tackles Sloane down to the
mattress.

ASTER (CONT'D)
I guess why make the bed if we're
just going to mess it up?

ASTER'S ROOMMATE barges in.

ASTER (CONT'D)
Oh hey, Sloane.

Sloane looks at Aster, confused.

ASTER'S ROOMMATE
Hey Aster.

SLOANE
Wait. Your name's Sloane?

ASTER'S ROOMMATE
Yeah. What gives?

SLOANE
My name's Sloane.

ASTER'S ROOMMATE
Ah! You stole my name.

ASTER
(to Sloane)
Wait. Wait. Your name's Sloane?
What's your last name?

SLOANE
O'Sullivan.

Aster's eyes widen.

INT. HELENA'S OFFICE - DAY

ASTER
You placed me in the wrong dorm
room.

HELENA
What do you mean?

ASTER
My roommate's name is Sloane
O'Reilly, not Sloane O'Sullivan.

HELENA
Oh.

Helena researches Sloane on her computer.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Oh yeah. Here it says she lives at 308 Elbrich Street. Must still live at home, not in the dorms.

ASTER

Yeah. Not in the dorm that I just moved into.

Helena has a map of Sloane's street pulled up.

HELENA

Here, I can look into getting Sloane's neighbor to move out. That'd be a prime spot.

ASTER

A prime spot for what? I thought I was just supposed to ask her to be in the play?

HELENA

But before that, I need to know some things, okay? May I remind you, the entire livelihood of The Marqueen is on this girl. We don't know if she can sing. We don't know if she can dance. We don't know if she's capable of memorizing an entire script by this Saturday's performance. And most of all, we don't know if she'd agree to it. And if we ask and she says no...

ASTER

Then we'd know to not keep wasting our time with her.

HELENA

And then do what? Taxidermy her mom for Saturday's show?

ASTER

Ew. No.

Helena waits.

ASTER (CONT'D)

Fine, I'll see what info I can get tomorrow.

INT. ENGLISH BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

Aster speeds through the hallway, opening the voice recorder app on her phone. She stops in her tracks, seeing Sloane doodling a poem. Aster sits next to her on a bench.

ASTER

Hey.

SLOANE

Oh, hi.

ASTER

Are you ever not writing?

SLOANE

Nope.

ASTER

Ever?

Sloane smiles.

ASTER (CONT'D)

Actually, do you ever-- go onto the next stage?

SLOANE

The next stage?

ASTER

Perform. Your poems. Like, you could read one out loud to me.

Aster starts recording on her phone, out of sight.

SLOANE

What was that sound?

ASTER

Nothing.

Sloane bends over Aster. Aster tries pushing her away.

SLOANE

Are you recording me?

Sloane packs up her things and walks away.

ASTER

Wait, no. Sloane. See? I'm not recording.

SLOANE
You can't just go around recording
people.

ASTER
I know. It's actually illegal in my
country.

SLOANE
Yet you're still.

Sloane goes to class.

INT. HELENA'S OFFICE - DAY

Helena points at the address on Sonny's file, then finds it
on an online map. She zooms into a window.

HELENA
This is Sloane's bedroom. So...

Helena turns view to the neighbor's house.

HELENA (CONT'D)
This house.

EXT. FRANCHESKAAR'S BEDROOM - DAY

A curtain covers the window from inside.

INT. FRANCHESKAAR'S BEDROOM - DAY

A curtain covers the wall facing Sloane's house.

Francheskaar starts a blog post, but deletes it.

INT. ENGLISH BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

Aster answers phone.

HELENA
Gas leak or garden shed explosion?

ASTER
Excuse me?

HELENA
To get rid of the neighbors...
Unless you already got the voice
recording?

ASTER
No.

HELENA
Alright, I'll send someone over to
The Underwoods.

ASTER
Underwood? Wait.

Aster rummages through her things, then finds attendance
sheet.

ASTER (CONT'D)
Francheskaar Underwood? Actually,
just leave her unit there. Already
hired her.

HELENA
Really? Wow, you're ahead of me.
Just remember you have to get
Sloane on board by Saturday. It's
Tuesday.

ASTER
I know.

INT. WRITING CLASS - DAY

Francheskaar and Aster sit at the professor's desk.

FRANCHESKAAR
Here's my list.

ASTER
Of what?

FRANCHESKAAR
Possible topics.

Aster brushes the list off the desk.

ASTER
I know who wrote the poem.

FRANCHESKAAR
Poem?

ASTER
The one on your blog.

FRANCHESKAAR
Who?

ASTER
Sloane O'Sullivan.

FRANCHESCKAAR
Is that some famous author I'm
supposed to know?

Franchesckaar looks up Sloane O'Sullivan on Instagram,
finding a photo of her in tagged photos.

FRANCHESCKAAR (CONT'D)
Sloane's a girl?

ASTER
You don't know her?

FRANCHESCKAAR
I don't think so.

ASTER
Really? Well, she's actually an
English major too. So, I figured
you would've seen her in the
hallway.
(to self)
Or the fact your neighbors.

FRANCHESCKAAR
So you're saying she should be my
topic?

ASTER
I don't know, does that intrigue
you?

Franchesckaar reaches for the list on the ground.

FRANCHESCKAAR
I'll think about it.

Franchesckaar starts to get up.

ASTER
I mean you might not want to think
about it too long. Just remember
you have to... write an entire book
by Saturday. It's Tuesday.

FRANCHESCKAAR
An entire book? Wait, where's the
assignment instructions?

ASTER
As long as you have at least 200
pages you should be good.

FRANCHESCKAAR
Is that even possible?

ASTER
If you start now.

FRANCHESCKAAR
And you said she goes to this school?

ASTER
Mm-hmm.

Franchesckaaar leaves. The next student sits by Aster.

STUDENT 4
Sorry, I thought I overheard. We have to write 200 pages by Saturday?

WRITING PROFESSOR
Huh? No, 20 pages due at the end of the semester.

ASTER
Yeah, that was for something else. Don't worry.

INT. ENGLISH BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

Franchesckaar searches the hallways. She looks between people's faces and the photo on her phone. When she finally sees Sloane, she struts after her.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

A poem drifts to the ground behind Sloane. Franchesckaar picks it up and reads it. She stares after Sloane.

Sloane juts to a stop.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

AUDIENCE MEMBER'S eyes staring with a radioactive sound.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Sloane swings her head around.

SLOANE
(mumble)
Oh. Just you.

FRANCHESCKAAR
Sloane O'Sullivan. I like your
work. I'm Franchesckaar Underwood.

Franchesckaar holds out her hand for a handshake.

FRANCHESCKAAR (CONT'D)
I was wondering if you'd be
interested in--

SLOANE
Can you take down that post?

FRANCHESCKAAR
Which?

SLOANE
The one of my poem. I keep dropping
these things.

Sloane takes the poem out of Franchesckaar's hand and
crumples it. Sloane walks away.

Franchesckaar looks around. She pulls out her list of
topics, walking without looking up.

FRANCHESCKAAR
Just pick a different... Lemons.
200 pages. Citrus. Sour. Yellow.
Fruit.

EXT. SLOANE'S HOUSE - DAY

Sloane steps onto her front steps.

FRANCHESCKAAR
Zest. Juice. Pucker.

Franchesckaar notices Sloane walking in. Then notices her
own house next door.

FRANCHESCKAAR (CONT'D)
Fruity.

She looks back and forth between Sloane's house and her own.
Franchesckaar heads towards her house.

INT. FRANCHESCKAAR'S ENTRYWAY - DAY

Franchesckaar heads to her room.

INT. FRANCHESKAAR'S ROOM - DAY

Francheskaar looks around at the walls. She attempts tugging at the curtain but it's stuck.

Francheskaar grabs her laptop, and heads out.

EXT. FRANCHESKAAR'S HOUSE - DAY

Francheskaar holds her laptop in one hand and drags a lawn chair with the other. She lays on it, sunbathing. She glances over at Sloane's house every few seconds, then falls asleep.

EXT. FRANCHESKAAR'S HOUSE - DAY

Sloane's front door opens.

Francheskaar juts awake, opening her laptop to a blank document.

Sloane goes to the mailbox, then goes back inside.

INT. WRITING CLASS - DAY

FRANCHESKAAR

I really think I should just pick a different topic.

ASTER

(worried)

Why's that?

FRANCHESKAAR

I can't get anything on her. She's just inside all the time. And the curtain's are closed.

Francheskaar pulls out a collage of photos of Sloane. Writing Professor looks over her shoulder.

FRANCHESKAAR (CONT'D)

This is all I have on her so far. And as you see, no words.

WRITING PROFESSOR

Wait, is this a real person? You should never use a real person as a character.

FRANCHESKAAR

I thought you told me I should-

ASTER
Just inspiration. No worries,
professor.

Writing Professor walks to the next student.

FRANCHESCKAAR
Just inspiration? So I don't need
to be like, actually stalking her?

ASTER
He's old. He doesn't understand
these things. You want facts. Think
of this as a really, really long
blog post.

FRANCHESCKAAR
But, if he's the one grading it,
then-

ASTER
I'm grading.

FRANCHESCKAAR
You're grading 30 200-page novels?

ASTER
Don't worry about me, just worry
about your story.

FRANCHESCKAAR
Which is?

ASTER
Well, you said she's always got the
curtains drawn? Then there's a
story. You've gotta get in.

EXT. SLOANE'S HOUSE - DAY

Franchesckaar knocks.

Xavier calls out from behind the door.

XAVIER
Sonny?

Xavier opens the door a crack while a ROTTWEILER barks in
the background.

XAVIER (CONT'D)
Sorry, thought you might've been my
wife. She hasn't come home.

FRANCHESCKAAR
Does she get off work around now?

XAVIER
Last Saturday.

FRANCHESCKAAR
Oh.

Franchesckaar uncaps her pen and scribbles in her notepad.

FRANCHESCKAAR (CONT'D)
Where does she work?

XAVIER
Who are you?

FRANCHESCKAAR
A neighbor.

XAVIER
A nosy one.

Xavier shuts the door.

Franchesckaar knocks.

Franchesckaar knocks again.

The door opens, the rottweiler's head sticking out.

XAVIER (CONT'D)
What do you want?

FRANCHESCKAAR
You said she hasn't come home. Is that usual?

XAVIER
I assumed she was going in for extra practices, they work her pretty hard over there.

FRANCHESCKAAR
And where is that?

XAVIER
The Marqueen.

FRANCHESCKAAR
The Marqueen.

Franchesckaar writes it down.

FRANCHESCKAAR (CONT'D)
Does she usually stay overnight for
practices?

Xavier lets out a breath.

XAVIER
She's beautiful. A lot of people
can see she's beautiful. At what
point do people stop being
satisfied with just seeing beauty?

Franchesckaar stops writing.

FRANCHESCKAAR
Uh.

The dog stares at Franchesckaar, restrained by the door.

XAVIER
She's been out overnight before.

Franchesckaar caps her pen.

FRANCHESCKAAR
I know it's hard to take in, but.
My parents are divorced. I've seen
this. Mom staying out later and
later each night.

XAVIER
It's not that.

FRANCHESCKAAR
Motel rooms being charged to my
dad's credit card.

Xavier shakes his head.

FRANCHESCKAAR (CONT'D)
Mom sneaking in just to pack her
things and leave for good.

XAVIER
IT'S NOT THAT.

The dog reacts.

XAVIER (CONT'D)
I don't know what, but something
happened Saturday.

Xavier shuts the door.

Franchesckaar stares at her notes. She struts to her car.

INT. FRANCHESCKAAR'S CAR - DAY

She pulls up outside The Marquee. She hesitates. Picking up her phone, she starts voice recording.

FRANCHESCKAAR
It's a sunny day, but Day 4 of
Sonny O'Sullivan being missing.

She stops recording.

EXT. THE MARQUEEN - DAY

She steps out and walks to the door.

Trying the door, it's locked. Franchesckaar scratches her head, but then feels a bobby pin. She inspects it.

FRANCHESCKAAR
Well, can't write 200 pages about
lemons.

Franchesckaar lock picks the door.

INT. THE MARQUEEN HALLWAY - DAY

Franchesckaar peers around. She walks the hallways, inspecting picture frames. A photo of Sonny.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

The lights are off besides S, O, and S marquee letter lights on the stage. Franchesckaar creeps up onto the stage. Her left foot slides suddenly. She regains balance. Inspecting the spot on the stage, it's slippery compared to the rest of the stage. Franchesckaar looks up, and sees a hook dangling. She follows the rope to the rope controls, tugging them. A distant door closes. She hides in the shadows, but the footsteps are going the other way.

INT. THE MARQUEEN HALLWAY - DAY

Franchesckaar sneaks to the outside of Helena's office.

HELENA (O.S.)
Really? She didn't show up Saturday night? Well, I'm sorry to hear that. No, she didn't mention that. But, I'm sure if you just sent the amount straight to the office. Oh, okay. Yes, I understand.

Franchesckaar stops the voice recording.

INT. WRITING CLASS - DAY

FRANCHESCKAAR
I'm at 40 pages.

ASTER
40?

FRANCHESCKAAR
I know it's not enough. I'm trying.
Just need to get 160 done in the
next 2 days.

ASTER
40's great.

Aster skims through the pages on Franchesckaar's laptop. She sees the word "Marqueen" and stops smiling. She skims faster.

ASTER (CONT'D)
Why, uh, why are you writing about
her mom? Thought Sloane was your
topic.

FRANCHESCKAAR
She is. But I need the family tree,
right? Helps back up Sloane's
actions. And the thing is...
there's a story here. Something
happened to Sloane's mom during
Saturday's performance. She's been
missing since. I think the Marqueen
is hiding something. I even have a
recording.

Franchesckaar takes out her phone, playing the recording.

Aster scrolls to the bottom of the document.

ASTER
40 pages in and not a word about
the main character. Might want to
bring her into the story.

FRANCHESCKAAR
Well, I think this is more related
to Sonny, I don't know how Sloane
is relevant.

ASTER
You said Sonny's a performer?

FRANCHESCKAAR

Yeah.

ASTER

So what's the story to the performer's daughter? Has she never gotten a chance at the limelight, her mom usually taking up all the attention? Is her voice never heard? Her singing?

FRANCHESCKAAR

She sings?

ASTER

I don't know. That's for you to find out. You're handy with the voice recorder app I see.

FRANCHESCKAAR

That would be an interesting angle.

ASTER

A voice recording would be perfect actually. If you want to get published under creative nonfiction, the publishing house wants to know you're not just making everything up.

FRANCHESCKAAR

A publishing house would want a voice recording of Sloane singing?

ASTER

Everything backed up by evidence. It's on the rubric for this assignment actually.

FRANCHESCKAAR

I don't think I got one.

Franchesckaar looks around.

ASTER

Next!

Franchesckaar stands to leave.