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WANDA RE-WRITES THE WORLD

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WANDA RE-WRITES THE WORLD

written by

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Synopsis

Wanda often loses herself in the fantastical stories she writes. But as the lines between reality and fantasy begin to blur, will Wanda be able to face the truth that haunting her? A high energy high school comedy with lots of heart and creative staging.

Cast of Characters

All parts can be played as any gender, with slight name/line changes. Additional non-speaking student roles can be added as desired, or doubled with existing minor roles.

WANDA	a high school female who lives vicariously through her writings
TIA	Wanda's best friend
JEROME	Wanda's other best friend
JAMISON	another student in detention
MARK	a handsome male junior
EVE	another student in detention
MS. WHITLOCK	the toughest teacher a freshman ever knew
GROUND	Ground Control
FRESHMAN 1	
TEACHER	
SOPHOMORE 1	
JUNIOR 1	
ZOMBIES	
STUDENTS	

Set

Desks, simple lockers that can be put in place to denote various locations in a school.

Director Notes

The action flows through the scenes without breaks for scenery. For the scenes that Wanda writes, when possible, set them apart with a sound effect or genre music and simply shift whatever props and actors are in the scene to create the imagined sequence. If possible, utilize lighting effects as well. Get creative!

Dedication

For the real Ms. Whitlock— on your retirement after 50 years… Thank you for recognizing the potential in a shy, nervous boy hiding at the very back of the class. Though I am far removed from a freshman, I am still filled with terror and inspiration. DHS will never be the same.

Props

WANDA's journal
Pen or pencil
Hoodie for WANDA
Notebooks
Bookbags
Desks
Ruler for MS. WHITLOCK
Money for JUNIOR 1
Chocolate bar for MS. WHITLOCK
Paper for MS. WHITLOCK to read
Schoolbooks
Thick manilla envelope full of stolen tests
Car keys
Tote bag
Drink for MARK
Story document for MS. WHITLOCK
Hospital bed

ACT I

Scene 1

Setting: The setting changes as Wanda shifts in and out of her reality, but the base location is that of her school.

At Rise: The stage is dark. A soundscape of space plays, along with a rhythmic beeping reminiscent of life support. WANDA stands onstage, unseen. From offstage GROUND can be heard, a tinny voice as though a million miles away.

GROUND *(offstage)*

Ground control to Captain Smith. Come in Smith. Over.

(a tight spotlight on WANDA, her hood pulled up tight around her face like an astronaut)

WANDA

Smith to ground control. I'm coming out from behind Europa and re-establishing contact. Good to hear you, control. Over.

GROUND

Good to hear you too, Captain. 3 months is a long time to not hear from you. Can you provide a systems update? Over.

WANDA

All systems green, control. O^2 filter needs replacing again, may need to run a diagnostic soon. Fuel is at acceptable levels. Water is slightly below projected level, but within acceptable levels. On a personal note, the cushion in my seat is nearly worn out and my butt hurts. Over.

GROUND

Understood, Captain. How are you feeling? Three months of solitude is a long time. It had to be lonely out there. Over.

WANDA

It was… quiet. And dark. Of all the amazing things I've seen on this voyage, of all I've experienced, this is the strangest realization.

(TEACHER's voice begins softly calling "Wanda" in the background, getting louder and more intense.)

WANDA

On Earth, I'm among the best of my generation.

TEACHER *(softly)*

Wanda.

WANDA

I'm a hero.

TEACHER *(a little louder)*

Wanda!

WANDA

But out here, all alone…

TEACHER *(louder)*

WANDA.

WANDA

…among the planets and stars…

TEACHER

WANDA!!!!

(breaking into the daydream, the soundscape stops abruptly, lights come up revealing that WANDA is actually in class and the other STUDENTS are staring at her)

TEACHER

Please stop daydreaming! You can figure that out in detention.

(the CLASS snickers)

WANDA

(to herself)

Out here… I'm the alien…

(The bell rings; WANDA closes her decorated composition book she has been writing in and clutches it close to her chest. As the class files out, WANDA is joined by her friends, TIA and JEROME.)

JEROME

Seriously? Detention again?

WANDA

I know…

TIA

If you ever do graduate, they're going to keep your desk in detention as a memorial.

(WANDA is collecting her stuff and standing, CAST has shifted the class into a crowded hallway)

WANDA

Tia, seriously, not now…

JEROME

This desk stands a memoria… to Wanda Smith, who spent more time in detention than all other students… combined!

TIA

Most people get detention for skipping class…

JEROME

…or fighting…

TIA

…or smoking…

JEROME

…or bullying…

TIA

But only you get detention for day dreaming…

JEROME

…every day…

WANDA

Sorry guys.

JEROME

So where were you this time?

WANDA

…Space…

TIA

Ooooh, Captain Smith? I like her…

JEROME

So brave…

TIA

So daring…

JEROME

So fashionable.

(pulls hoodie over WANDA's face)

WANDA

It's so stupid, is what it is.

TIA

It's not! Wanda, you might be a daydreamer, but the stuff you come up with and write in that notebook is AMAZING. Right, Jerome?

JEROME

I love your work. And I can barely read.

WANDA

You're supposed to say that, you're my friends.

JEROME

Wanda, look at me. Yes we are. But we also wouldn't lie to you. Your breath smells terrible and your hair could use a wash. See?

TIA

But if you published your work, I'd actually buy it.

WANDA

Really?

TIA

Well, I'd make Jerome buy it, then I'd borrow his copy.

WANDA

That still doesn't get me out of detention. Ugh, my mom is gonna freak when she finds out.

JEROME

Yeah, good luck with that.

(someone bumps into him)

JEROME

Hey! Watch out, freshman! I swear this hallway gets smaller every day.

TIA

Or you're not as tiny as you used to be.

JEROME

I was never that small…

WANDA

Dude, they stuffed you in an air vent in freshman year.

JEROME

And they put Tia in a tuba. I'm glad we don't share that predilection for stuffing people in things they ought not be in.

WANDA

Why can't a person just sit in class, pass the tests, and graduate? Why are we forced to write down every blessed word the teachers say like its holy prophecy?

JEROME

Preach, girl.

WANDA

So, I'm a little different…

TIA

Little?

WANDA

I shouldn't be punished with detention because I like to write stories!

(a STUDENT bumps her)

WANDA

OW!

TIA

Watch it, freshman or I'll stuff you in a tuba!

JEROME

I'm glad you've evolved as a senior…

TIA

Well its not fault they barrel through here like it's a jungle!

WANDA

(cocking her head and getting an idea)

A jungle…

(she opens her notebook to start writing)

JEROME

Uh-oh, Tia.

TIA

What?

JEROME

Look at Wanda. Notebook's out, faraway stare…

TIA

She's gone, isn't she? What did I say?

JEROME

Jungle?

WANDA

(her head snapping up, engrossed in her fantasy)

Explorer's log, day 432.

(a jungle soundscape fades in as the scene around them morphs into a jungle as she describes it, students using their bodies to become a tangle of trees and skulking animals)

WANDA

Deep in the wilderness, me and my associates are irrevocably lost. Brave Tia and brutish, but kind Jerome are all that are left me. Never before have I felt such peril, but I've also never felt so… alive. We come across the Gossip Bog, narrowly avoid the bog, nearly losing Tia to the grasping gossipy quicksand. Then we are set upon by a prowling pack of Jockus Maximus known for attacking weaker species with sudden and intense veracity. We use Jerome as a shield, though he is reluctant to do so. The pack spots us and begins with degrading vocalizations, which strike fear into even the stoutest heart! If one is smart, she finds a way to distract the pack before they can become physically violent. Their favorite prey? Freshmenicus Nerdalus. Our trio slips through a small herd of freshmen, Tia tripping one to give the Jock pack an easy target.

(a beat as the JOCKS set upon the FRESHMAN)

WANDA

Success! The jock pack devours the freshman, allowing us a quick escape. We hold our breath as we beat a shortcut through the Locker Room Swamp, hoping to avoid the noxious fumes, which can paralyze with a single whiff. Safely through, I stare at my destination, a place from which no explorer has returned. I must venture alone from this point.

(STUDENTS drop out from their jungle poses and resume normal activity)

WANDA

This may be my final entry, for I stand at none other than the Cave of Detention… wish me luck.

(closes her notebook)

TIA

(unaware of what just happened)

Do we even want to know what strange adventure you just went on?

WANDA

What?

JEROME

You just kind of vanished while we were talking to you.

TIA

Like, your body was with us, but your mind was… somewhere.

WANDA

I'm sorry guys. Look, can you wait for me?

TIA

Of course!

JEROME

After all, we kind of rode with you…

TIA

Good luck in there!

(TIA and JEROME exit as WANDA walks into detention, which materializes around her, with a variety of STUDENTS moving desks into place)

These pages have been removed
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WANDA

Yes ma'am. Here's my car keys, guys. So you can wait in the A/C at least.

JEROME

(as they exit)

90's boy band jamfest time!!!

(WHITLOCK and WANDA cross to the classroom setting.)

MS. WHITLOCK

Wanda, I need you to level with me. What's going on?

WANDA

There's… where do I start… it's some… some upper classmen, Jamison and Eve and Mark, they stole some master copies of some tests and I accidentally got some of them after bumping into Mark and he read my notebook and I tried being a spy to get the truth out of Mark and there was nearly a big fight showdown at lunch and now they're going to frame me for it all and I'm going to be ruined!

MS. WHITLOCK

Ok, ok, ok. Slow down. When did all this happen?

WANDA

Like, after detention, yesterday… I don't know what to do, Ms. Whitlock!

MS. WHITLOCK

Wanda… when did you say this happened?

WANDA

I told you! After detention yesterday!

MS. WHITLOCK

Wanda, look at me. You haven't had detention in over a week. Until today.

WANDA

What? That's impossible! It was yesterday… or the day before… it was after I wrote that prison story about you as the prison warden, and then…

MS. WHITLOCK

Wanda, that was ten minutes ago.

WANDA

What? No, you told me I was acting like Walter Mitty and then I asked who that was…

MS. WHITLOCK

Yeah, that literally just happened before you left my classroom. And this whole story about stealing test answers? I read it in your notebook earlier. Along with snippets from all those other little stories you just told me. By the way, I would prefer to be the sheriff instead of the deputy in your westerns…

WANDA

I swear, this was all real, Ms. Whitlock. Except for my story parts of course…

MS. WHITLOCK

Wanda, sit down. Listen to me. Mark transferred to a different school last year. Teachers don't keep and share master copies of tests. None of this actually happened. You wrote every bit of that. You somehow got lost in your story and mistook it for reality.

WANDA

No, that doesn't make sense… Tia and Jerome… he was about to fight!

MS. WHITLOCK

When I walked out there, Jerome was standing up for you for not giving Jamison a ride to skip school tomorrow. And you were zoned out, starting to hyperventilate. You've got some good friends out there. But, Wanda, I've talked to your other teachers and they've noticed you slipping in and out of your imagination a lot lately. Even Tia and Jerome have talked to me about it. This is getting worse. We're all starting to worry about you. Do you know what you were doing after I took your notebook from you in detention?

WANDA

Math homework?

MS. WHITLOCK

No, you stared at your desk like a zombie. I think you put a bunch of your stories into one big mash-up while you sat there and it escalated after you left. You literally imagined yourself making up stories to deal with a real life situation that wasn't happening and caused yourself to have a panic attack.

WANDA

I don't understand how I could do that and not notice.

MS. WHITLOCK

Well… I think I know what's going on.

WANDA

What do you mean?

MS. WHITLOCK

Your Language Arts teacher, Mrs. Claxton gave me this.

(She pulls a document out of her desk and hands it to WANDA.)

You turned it in a few weeks ago. Have you shown this story to anyone else?

(WANDA shakes her head no.)

MS. WHITLOCK

"The Beast of Canton Avenue." A monster sneaks out from under the bed and slowly drains its victim a little each night. The family has no clue what's happening, except the daughter, but no one seems to believe her. It's dark, very gothic… it's pretty scary actually… and some of your best work. I think I know what it's about.

WANDA

You do?

MS. WHITLOCK

(a beat)

Your dad's cancer… It came back, didn't it?

(WANDA nods as tears start to well up in her eyes.)

MS. WHITLOCK

How bad is it?

WANDA

The doctor said weeks, maybe a month or two. The chemo isn't working, it was just… destroying him from the inside. And now, it's just machines and tubes… We used to watch all these movies together all the time. We'd joke about the terrible scripts and talk about genres and directing styles, we compared books we were reading together and even wrote a few things together… now he can't even… can't even…

MS. WHITLOCK

And that's why you're disappearing into your stories. It's easier than facing reality. It's basically a coping mechanism. But it's not working anymore.

WANDA

You know, he used to make up these crazy stories when I was little at night to get me to sleep… starring a little girl named Walinda or Wandarish… just made them up on the spot, off the top of his head… and I don't know what to do, Ms. Whitlock. I'm afraid that after he's gone… all those stories… and my stories… will be too.

MS. WHITLOCK

Oh Wanda. Look at me. You're never going to lose that part of him. Yes, it might take a while to pick up a pen again, but when you do, know that your dad will be holding it right alongside you, pouring such wonderful words into your ear. And you'll have so much beauty and wonder and power to share with the world. It just takes time. But for now, can I make a suggestion?

(the scene freezes and WANDA slowly steps forward away from the classroom as it fades away and she is left alone)

WANDA

Ms. Whitlock told me I should stop writing stories about school and my friends. That those stories were pulling me away from living life itself. I know she's right, but… my friends, they just don't understand. Tia and Jerome could never… Anyways, she told me I should tell a different kind of story. That I could try coming here and… telling you a story.

(lights slowly come up behind her on a hospital bed with her father in it, the same rhythmic beeping from earlier in the show playing, life support)

WANDA

Just make it up. Like you used to do, Dad.

(She turns and approaches the bed.)

But I don't know how to do that! I have no clue how you used to create such amazing worlds from the top of your head. It

WANDA (CONT)

was… incredible. But… I'm going to try, Dad. I'm going to tell you a story to… to help you sleep. And I'll keep trying to tell you stories… for as long as you're here. So… um… I guess… once upon a time… there was a man, the bravest man who ever lived, who fought a great and fearsome beast…

(Lights fade to black.)



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