

STRAIGHT LACED

WRITING SAMPLE

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FADE IN:

INT. JANE'S BEDROOM - DAY

A song similar to "Neighborhood" by American Authors begins to play.

JANE McDAVIS (17), a proper and sophisticated, yet slightly socially inept teen, sits in front of the mirror in her room.

Jane's mother REBECCA McDAVIS (48), loving yet overprotective, stands behind Jane, pulling her hair into a tight, painful ponytail.

The brush in Rebecca's hands yanks through Jane's hair again. Jane grimaces, but doesn't say anything.

INT. MCDAVIS CAR - DAY

Rebecca and her husband JAMES McDAVIS (50), a man with a good heart but pressuring high expectations for his daughter, talk animatedly in the front seats of the car.

In the backseat, Jane has music playing loudly through her headphones, wrapped up in her own world. As the world passes by quickly through Jane's window, she pays no mind to what her parents are talking about.

The car stops at a stoplight.

A group of SKATEBOARDING KIDS ride on the sidewalk opposite the car. Jane watches them, how carefree they are.

The group of kids mess with each other playfully, having a good time. They don't notice Jane staring out her window, part of her longing to join them.

The light turns green and the car begins to move again. Jane's eyes follow the group until they're out of sight.

INT. KING'S CROSS CHURCH - SANCTUARY - DAY

Fingers dance effortlessly across an old grand piano.

Jane is lost in the music as she plays her piano solo. She holds all the attention in the room, drawing everyone in with her grace.

Jane leans towards the microphone in front of the piano, leading the CHURCH CHOIR, filled with adults and children, behind her in to singing a song similar to "You Say" by Lauren Diagle.

Sitting on a stool beside the piano is KENNEDY (18), Jane's stubborn, impulsive, and "no good" best friend, playing along on an acoustic guitar and singing into her own microphone.

Kennedy adds a guitar riff into the song, putting her own spin on the song. It's risky, but blends well.

The voices echo gloriously throughout the church as sunlight streams in through the stained glass windows, illuminating the faces of the PRAISING CHURCH ATTENDEES in the audience.

Hands catch rays of sunlight as they're raised into the air in praise.

Rebecca and James watch Jane play, but they don't seem particularly impressed.

The song finishes. The final chords resonate throughout the sanctuary and slowly fade away. Jane's eyes gleam as she revels in the applause of the attendees.

Kennedy watches her closely, seeing how happy Jane is.

INT. KING'S CROSS CHURCH - SANCTUARY - DAYG

The service has ended and Jane and Kennedy are alone in front of the piano. Jane dabbles on the keyboard while Kennedy stares at a sheet of paper in front of her, flicking a pocket knife open and closed repeatedly.

Kennedy looks at Jane playing. Attempting to concentrate, she goes back to her paper, slightly annoyed.

Oblivious to this, Jane continues to play, humming to herself.

Kennedy reaches over to stop Jane's hands, resulting in a CLANG as Jane's hands rest on many keys at once.

JANE

Sorry.

KENNEDY

You said you'd help me with this.

JANE

You haven't asked me any questions yet.

KENNEDY

Why do I have to take a goddamn science class if I'm going to Lee for vocal performance?

Jane shoots Kennedy a look for swearing. Kennedy may roll her eyes as she does the sign of the cross.

JANE

You could've picked a different school.

KENNEDY

Says the girl with the grades to get in anywhere. I suck at this school stuff, it's a miracle Lee accepted me.

JANE

The Lord works in mysterious ways.

KENNEDY

I've had enough preaching for one day, thank you.

Kennedy goes back to her sheet, setting the pocket knife on the piano.

Jane leans over to look at the sheet.

JANE

You hate chemistry.

KENNEDY

It was this or life science, and I figured I'd have less of a chance of falling asleep in chemistry.

JANE

And you've been staring at the periodic table of elements because...?

KENNEDY

I need to know all of them before school starts.

JANE

Your career is literally made up of memorizing things.

KENNEDY

These are different than song lyrics. Those have a rhythm and make sense. These are just letters.

Jane takes the paper and places it in front of her, as if it was sheet music. She begins to play a tune similar to "Do-Re-Mi" from The Sound of Music.

JANE

(singing)

H it stands for Hydrogen. Li is lithium. Na is sodium, K is for potassium. Rb is rubidium, Ca is Cesium. Fr is francium. And that finishes up group 1.

Jane hands the paper back.

JANE (CONT'D)

They're song lyrics now.

Kennedy stares at Jane, like she's the only thing worth looking at. She snaps out of it and takes the paper back.

KENNEDY

You're amazing. I can't believe you turned down Juilliard.

JANE

There's just other things I should focus on.

KENNEDY

What'd your parents say about your playing today? They like the new song?

JANE

They told me it was nice.

KENNEDY

That's it? Nice?

(beat)

Jane, you're amazing!

(off Jane's look)

Don't give me that look. You're playing is more than nice, it's more than beautiful, it's incredible. And I know you love all that attention.

JANE  
(protesting)  
I do not--

KENNEDY  
Hey, I'm not judging! I love it  
too.

Kennedy's phone CHIMES and she takes it out of her pocket.  
She reads a text message.

KENNEDY (CONT'D)  
Damn it.

Jane gives her another look, but Kennedy ignores it.

KENNEDY (CONT'D)  
I swear if Melinda doesn't get her  
shit -- stuff sorted out before  
tomorrow--

JANE  
You guys still haven't found a new  
keyboardist? You put the ads up  
weeks ago.

KENNEDY  
Everyone who applied sucked, and  
now we're out of time.  
(beat)  
Unless...

Kennedy looks at Jane, hopeful.

JANE  
No, I'm off limits.

KENNEDY  
(to herself)  
Trust me, I know.

Jane looks at the time on her phone. She gets up from the  
piano.

JANE  
Keep me updated, I wanna know how  
the tour goes.

KENNEDY  
I'll call you all the time,  
promise.

JANE  
Not too much though, I've got  
classes.

Kennedy holds out her pinky.

KENNEDY  
I've got your back.

Jane wraps her pinky with Kennedy's; a pinky swear.

JANE  
And I've got yours. Make good  
decisions, be safe.

KENNEDY  
(sarcastically)  
Yes, mother. Go cram your brain all  
summer for NASA. Make mom and dad  
proud.

Jane walks out of the sanctuary. Kennedy watches her until she can't see her anymore.

INT. JANE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A mostly empty suitcase sits on the floor, clothes strewn all around it. The FAINT SOUNDS OF A PIANO can be heard.

Jane stands at her keyboard, headphones plugged in, blocking out the world as she plays.

There's a knock on her door. Jane throws off her headphones and dashes to the suitcase, pretending like she's packing.

Rebecca walks in, still dressed in her police uniform. Her sheriff badge gleams, in pristine condition.

Rebecca looks over at the keyboard, seeing the headphones still swinging slightly from where they were abandoned in haste. She turns towards her daughter and the suitcase.

REBECCA  
Being productive?

JANE  
I thought you were working late.

REBECCA  
Got off early. Dinner's ready.

Rebecca leaves and closes the door behind her.

Jane looks over to her keyboard, but starts folding clothes to put in the suitcase instead.

INT. MCDAVIS HOUSE - KITCHEN TABLE - NIGHT

The family is sitting down for dinner, Rebecca missing from her seat next to James on one side of the table.

JAMES

And you've got your textbooks?

JANE

They'll have copies there for me.

JAMES

But you've annotated yours, made important notes in them.

JANE

Well, yeah, but--

JAMES

Bring them, just in case.

Rebecca into the room, getting off the phone.

REBECCA

The world needs Jesus, I'll tell you that.

JAMES

Amen.

JANE

Everything okay?

Rebecca leans closer to James, trying to keep her voice down so Jane doesn't hear.

REBECCA

We brought some more in today - underage. Lord, I swear none of them can resist the bottle.

JANE

Underage drinking?

REBECCA

It's nothing you need to worry about.

Silence as everyone eats.



James takes out a stack of flashcards.

JANE

Can't we take a break for one night?

JAMES

I won't be there to quiz you at the academy and you need to be ready for Rensselaer.

JANE

I am ready. They wouldn't have accepted me if they didn't think I was.

JAMES

Jane, college will surround you with people just as intelligent as you, more intelligent even. You can't fall behind.

James takes out the first flashcard.

JAMES (CONT'D)

A saturation state is a state from which a change of phase may occur...

Jane knows these answers like the notes on a keyboard.

JANE

Without a change of pressure or temperature.

JAMES

True or false: The triple point is a line on the p-V diagram, where all the three phases, solid, liquid and gas exist.

JANE

True. At triple point, all three phases exist in equilibrium.

James continues to ask questions and Jane answers.

INT. MCDAVIS CAR - DAY

The early morning sun sneaks above the clouds. A song similar to "Maybe IDK" by Haley Klinkhammer plays.

Jane watches the sunrise through the car window, earbuds in her ears. In her hands she holds the flashcards from last night. After a moment of debating, she puts them in her pocket.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- The car drives on the highway.
- Jane sleeps in the car, her head resting right near the window.
- James driving the car, looking back in the rearview mirror at Jane, who is staring out the window.
- Rebecca tsks disapprovingly at a car speeding by.
- The car turns off the highway.

END SERIES OF SHOTS.

INT. MCDAVIS CAR - DAY

The car passes a sign for Washington D.C.'S Science College Preparatory Academy. Behind it, a large, plain building rises to the sky.

Jane sees the facility. It's not exactly what she was expecting.

James meets her eyes through the review mirror - he's obviously impressed.

Jane fakes a smile back at him.

EXT. SCIENCE COLLEGE PREPARATORY ACADEMY - DAY

James hauls the last of Jane's bags out of the trunk.

REBECCA

Call us if you need to.

JANE

I will.

JAMES

Make us proud, kiddo. We've worked hard for this.

Jane looks at the building. Suddenly it seems a little too big. She walks towards it.

Jane turns to look back at her parents.

Rebecca and James are conversing with each other. James sees her and gives her an encouraging thumbs up.

Jane continues towards the building.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

A song similar to "A Head Full of Dreams" by Coldplay plays.

INT. SCIENCE COLLEGE PREPARATORY ACADEMY - DAY

Jane stands at the check-in desk. A STONE FACED CAMP ORGANIZER checks her in and hands Jane a uniform.

Jane takes the uniform skeptically.

INT. DORM ROOM - DAY

Jane, now in her uniform, finishes putting her things down on her bed.

Her roommate NORA (18), a serious but friendly girl who won't hide the truth from you, comes over to introduce herself. She shakes Jane's hand vigorously.

INT. SCIENCE COLLEGE PREPARATORY ACADEMY - COMPUTER LAB - DAY

Jane and a small group of fellow CAMPERS, all in the same uniform, are being led on a tour around the facility. Their TOUR GUIDE (35) walks quickly, almost too fast for Jane.

Jane's phone BUZZES. She takes it out and sees it's Kennedy calling. Jane, hesitates, then puts it back in her pocket.

INT. SCIENCE COLLEGE PREPARATORY ACADEMY - LUNCHROOM - DAY

Jane eats lunch around a few other CAMPERS, including Nora. Jane opens her mouth, as if to start a conversation, then notices all the others are studying.

Jane closes her mouth and goes back to eating quietly.

INT. SCIENCE COLLEGE PREPARATORY ACADEMY - CLASSROOM - DAY

A pencil writes furtively on a sheet of notebook paper.

Jane sits in her first physics class, exhausted from to her PROFESSOR (60) speak far too fast in front of a whiteboard.

Other STUDENTS are doing the same, the whole class trying to not miss a word of what's being said.

Jane's cell phone BUZZES against her leg. She takes it out -- it's Kennedy again. Jane switches the phone to silent, declines the call, and puts it back in her pocket.

She starts to write again, stressed she's not getting everything down.

END OF MONTAGE.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Kennedy stands at a microphone, singing with the band behind her. CASPER (19), a ray of sunshine almost 24/7, is on guitar while his twin brother JASPER (19), who has a strong faux aura of "I don't care" vibes to protect his true empathetic sensibility, is on bass. On drums is MO (18), the band's strong and silent drummer. The keyboard is unmanned.

JASPER

Alright, stop.

The band stops. He points to the empty keyboard.

JASPER (CONT'D)

(to Kennedy)

Where's our new keyboardist? I thought you said you could change her mind.

KENNEDY

I thought I could.

CASPER

Do you know anyone else?

KENNEDY

Not off the top of my head.

JASPER

We're not playing in some shitty bar, Kennedy. This is a tour. We fail, and we never play again.

KENNEDY

(sarcastic)

Thank you, Jasper, for the  
reminder. I had completely  
forgotten.

Kennedy takes a moment, thinking.

KENNEDY (CONT'D)

I have an idea. But I need the van.

She holds out her hand for the keys, looking at Jasper.