

Drawing the Line: Defining Consent in Cosplay

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A thesis presented to the Honors College of Middle Tennessee State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the University Honors College.

Fall 2020

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this project to my fellow cosplayers. Keep making costumes and keep that creativity alive.

Also, anyone who has ever experienced sexual harassment, this one is for you.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my friends and family for their support and encouragement throughout the duration of this project.

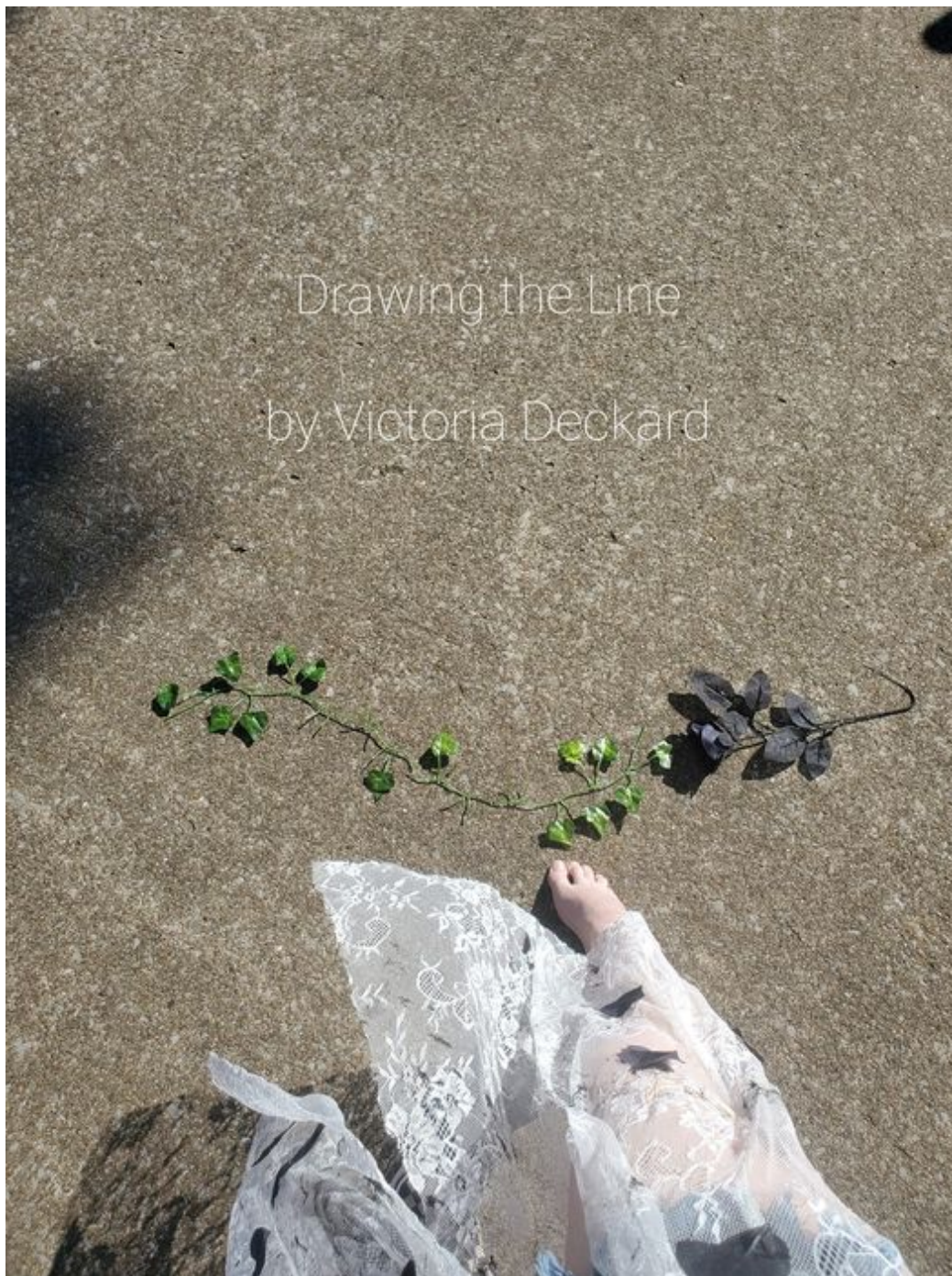
Abstract

Sexual harassment is an all-too-common issue in many parts of life. When it becomes a part of an environment that is solely meant for joy and amusement, a line needs to be drawn. Cosplay is a wonderfully exciting hobby. The fact that there is sexual harassment in cosplay at all tarnishes the positivity that the activity centers around. Misunderstanding does not excuse such behavior, and in fact, is sometimes at the root of the problem. I have written a play in which characters experience such harassment. Cosplayers should support each other, and with the introduction of the “Cosplay Is Not Consent” movement, the door is opened for them to do just that. Thinking about consent on these terms will hopefully inspire further thought of the importance of consent in general. Pure and simple, no should always mean no. Furthermore, permission is always necessary when it comes to touching. The way to tackle a problem is to first admit that there is one.

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Cover Page for Play



Drawing the Line
by Victoria Deckard

Drawing the Line—A Play

Characters:

NALIA/LYNNE- Female, 20s, Con Director's Assistant

HOLLY/ROSE- Female, Teens

BLUE/ELI- Male, 30s

STAN/BALHORN- Male, 40s, Con Director

THAYER- Male, 20s

KEIRAN- Male, Teens

OLLIE- Male, 20s, Con Volunteer

Time: Now

Setting: Granville's Create Your Own Cosplay Convention

Lights Up: The set consists of two tall ladders, one with a folded banner on top, set to one side, and several folded-up tables and chairs next to a box. NALIA enters with a clipboard. OLLIE is standing by one of the ladders.

NALIA

I need these tables set up!

(Pause.)

Ollie!

OLLIE

Where do you want 'em?

NALIA

One over here for Registration, one next to it for Preregistered Badge Pickup, and two over there for the raffle and con merch.

OLLIE

Got it.

(OLLIE scurries toward the folded tables.)

NALIA

Each table needs two chairs!

(Pause.)

Have you seen Stan?

Nope. Sorry, Boss.

OLLIE

All right. After the tables, I need you to—

NALIA

Put the panel signs up.

OLLIE

Yes.

NALIA

(NALIA begins to pace.)

We open soon, and our banner isn't even—

(HOLLY enters and almost runs into NALIA.)

Sorry.

HOLLY

That's all right, but the con isn't open yet.

NALIA

I'm actually hoping to volunteer.

HOLLY

Oh.

NALIA

What she means to say is we need the help!

OLLIE

Right. Ollie, show...?

NALIA

Holly.

HOLLY

It's nice to meet you. Normally, I would need more information, but he's right. We could use the help.

NALIA

Just show me what needs done, and I'll do my best.

HOLLY

NALIA

Ollie, show Holly how the tables need to go and then go put the panel signs up.

(Pause.)

I'm Nalia by the way...I like your costume.

HOLLY

I like yours too.

(HOLLY walks over to where OLLIE is setting up a table as STAN enters.)

STAN

Were you looking for me?

NALIA

Yes, we're running behind schedule.

STAN

I made you Second in Command for a reason, remember? You live for "behind schedule."

NALIA

Ha.

STAN

I'm just saying I trust you, and I do my best to never be wrong in that regard.

NALIA

I sincerely appreciate that...Will you help me hang the—

STAN

Is that another volunteer?

NALIA

She wants to be.

(STAN's phone rings.)

STAN

Have her help you with the banner.

(STAN exits as he answers his phone.)

OLLIE

Uhh, Boss? Where are the signs for the tables?

NALIA

In the hall closet. Next to the bathroom.

HOLLY

I can get them.

(HOLLY starts to exit.)

OLLIE

Holly, it's this way. I'll show you, and then I'll get the panel signs set up.

HOLLY

Thanks.

(HOLLY and OLLIE exit.)

NALIA

Let's see, we need tables with signs, signs by each panel room, the banner needs to be put up...

(NALIA consults her list.)

Each panel room's sound needs to be adjusted.

HOLLY
(Offstage)

Leave me alone!

(HOLLY hurriedly enters followed by KEIRAN.)

KEIRAN

What's the matter, baby?

HOLLY

Do not call me baby. Look, I already told you...

KEIRAN

No? To a picture? Why?

HOLLY

Just...the way you're looking at me.

KEIRAN

Like you're beautiful?

HOLLY

Don't touch me.

(HOLLY backs away as KEIRAN reaches for her.)

And you...you...the way you look at me makes me feel—Please just leave me alone.

KEIRAN

But—

NALIA

I think you should do as she says.

KEIRAN

What? Why don't you just...

NALIA

You should leave.

KEIRAN

But we were just...

NALIA

Boy, if you say you were “just talking,” you and I are gonna have a problem.

KEIRAN

I was just...

NALIA

Stop.

KEIRAN

Look, gorgeous, your costume is great, and I get why you would want to stand up for her, but I wasn't—

NALIA

I said Stop. People aren't allowed in here yet. The con isn't officially open. You need to leave.

KEIRAN

What about—

NALIA

She is my assistant. Now go...and maybe find some decency or manners while you're out there.

(KEIRAN exits.)

HOLLY

Decency, pfft. Yeah, right. Thank you for saying I'm your assistant.

NALIA

Are you all right?

HOLLY

Oh, God. I'm sorry you had to see all that.

NALIA

Why are you apologizing? There's no reason for you to be ashamed, you know.

HOLLY

He's the asshole, right?

(Pause.)

But I just can't help thinking that if I were wearing a different outfit, maybe he wouldn't have...

NALIA

No, no, no. Do not do that. Thinking that way justifies what he did, and in no way, shape, or form will it ever be okay. Clothes should never be...look, you created Holly for a reason, right?

HOLLY

Yes.

NALIA

So, what do you love about Holly? Why did you create her?

HOLLY

Because she does what she wants. Her family abandoned her in the wilderness...but she adapted, and she can control plants...make them grow at her chosen speed...make flowers grow on plant species which wouldn't usually have flowers. Plus, her kiss poisons people...that would have come in handy if that guy had tried to go any further.

NALIA

And if you knew someone was going to give you unwanted attention today, would that have changed your mind about who to cosplay?

HOLLY

No.

NALIA

Why not?

HOLLY

Because...because I get to choose who I want to be or portray myself as. Cosplay is a form of self-expression, right? Well, I am Holly, damn it.

NALIA

Yes, abso—

(STAN enters.)

STAN

That banner still isn't up?...Ahh, hello.

NALIA

Stan, this is Holly.

STAN

Nice to meet you.

HOLLY

So, you run this show?

STAN

I do.

HOLLY

You know what this is called, right? A Cosplay Con, but you're not cosplaying.

(Pause.)

Even the showrunner should cosplay, right?

STAN

I think you're bypassing everything the words showrunner or boss mean. I am the showrunner and the boss. I do what I want. I make the rules.

HOLLY

I love that. So, as the boss, you can kick people out, or not let someone in?

STAN

Who are we talking about here?

HOLLY

There was this guy who wanted a picture, and I said no, and he didn't like that...I just really don't want him coming back.

NALIA

I told him we aren't open yet, just to get him to leave, but he will probably be back.

STAN

What's his name?

HOLLY

I—we don't know.

STAN

Unfortunately, there isn't much I can do without a name. If we had that, I could check the Pre-reg list to see if he is on it, and if not, I could flag his name for the Registration table.

NALIA

That's it? Is there nothing else we can do?

(OLLIE enters.)

OLLIE

Is everything all right? I thought I heard Holly yell. I went into the back of Panel 1 to see how the sound was carrying because it's a big space.

HOLLY

I'm okay.

STAN

Ollie oversees Registration, so he needs a description of this guy. I'll also give your description to Security.

HOLLY

He was slightly taller than me with shaggy blonde hair. He was wearing a suit, which may or may not have been a costume. Grey. The suit was grey. He was maybe a year or two older than me.

STAN

I'll let Security know.

HOLLY

Thank you, Stan. Come on, Nalia, let's go get that banner up.

(STAN exits. NALIA and HOLLY hurry toward one of the ladders as OLLIE follows.)

OLLIE

Are you sure you're ok?

HOLLY

I'm fine. Guy just walked up to me and asked if he could have a picture, but he was looking at me in a creepy way. I didn't even notice him until he was right there next to me. Maybe he was here for the con.

NALIA

Ollie, why don't you go finish with the panel rooms. Cue the videos and media up so they're ready to go.

OLLIE

Sure thing.

(OLLIE exits.)

HOLLY

Has anyone ever asked you for a picture and not taken no for an answer?

NALIA

Thankfully, no. But I do hear the occasional comment when I'm walking past about how I look.

HOLLY

Depending on the types of comments, that's not something you want, but at least they're not in your face obnoxiously ignoring you when you tell them to leave you alone.

NALIA

Yeah, I'd say up to this point, I've been rather lucky...Although, I did have someone tell me I was too big to cosplay a character once.

HOLLY

You are not—

NALIA

I know, but words still hurt. Anyway, I have a friend who wasn't so lucky. She was cosplaying a character whose only pieces of clothing were a very tiny bikini, and this guy came out of nowhere and manhandled her chest. There was no, "Hey, can I take a picture?" or "Hi, how are you doing? I really like your cosplay."

HOLLY

People see others in costume, and it's like they become bold with no sense of right or wrong. It's like they see us—the people in costumes—as fictional characters rather than human beings.

NALIA

Earlier, when you said cosplay is a form of self-expression, that is a fact. The world of cosplay is built around fun and bonding with like-minded people. The tragic truth that there are those who come in and turn beautiful creativity into something dark and ugly pisses me off. I said I'm *lucky* nothing like that has happened to me. I shouldn't have to think that way.

HOLLY

Counting your blessings that nothing has happened, secretly wondering if anything *will* happen.

NALIA

Ridiculous.

HOLLY

Very.

NALIA

So, let's—

(BLUE stumbles onstage while adjusting his skirt.)

BLUE

Does *no one* have respect?

HOLLY

What happened?

BLUE

Oh, just some no-good asshole trying to bring the man in women's clothing down. *Women's* clothing. Ha. As if it is predetermined from conception who it will belong to. Well, I have news for the closeminded. I made this outfit myself. Clearly in a man's size.

NALIA

Well, I think you look gorgeous. Steampunk is badass.

HOLLY

What's your character's name?

BLUE

You are looking at Blue.

NALIA

That I could've guessed.

BLUE

Well, I don't do subtle. When I like something, I go all out, and I love blue.

HOLLY

Was the guy who verbally assaulted you a teenager?

BLUE

Verbally assaulted...I like you. No, this guy was in his twenties if I had to guess. Why? Did something happen to you?

HOLLY

I...yeah. This guy wanted a picture, but the concept of "no" was foreign to him.

BLUE

Of course, it was. Some young men think they can have anything they want.

HOLLY

Understatement...I'm Holly, and this is Nalia.

BLUE

Pleasure. Is one of you in charge?

HOLLY

That'd be her.

BLUE

I would like to volunteer.

NALIA

Are you willing to start now?

BLUE

Whatever you need.

NALIA

There should be a box of schedules near the tables.

(BLUE grabs the box.)

Make sure each table has a pile of schedules on it.

BLUE

Can do.

HOLLY

So, Blue, what is your experience as far as negative or unappreciated attention when cosplaying?

BLUE

How much time have you got?

NALIA

That bad?

BLUE

We're all one thing pretending to be another, no? Alas, I do it on a different level. And while there are those who embrace the person that is me, still others would question and judge.

(Pause.)

Even in a creative environment, I am the odd man out.

HOLLY

Give us the bullet points then?

BLUE

I have been creating personas, cosplays, since I was fifteen. Practically half my life. In that amount of time, I have had it all. Gross comments about not being "right," questions about why I dress the way I do, many, many instances of strangers walking up and touching me.

NALIA

How do you handle it?

BLUE

The comments, I brush off. Like brushing my wigs. It's not worth engaging every word that people say. Create a tough skin, and yes, that skin will crack, but patch it up and move on.

HOLLY

And the touching?

BLUE

...I'll let you know. One thing's for sure. Brushing that off doesn't work.

(Pause.)

I apologize if my grand entrance interrupted anything important.

NALIA

Ehh, just gotta get this banner hung.

(BLUE walks over with the now empty box.)

BLUE

Can I do it?

NALIA

Thanks, but I think we got it covered. The tables still need signs...Holly, were you able to—

HOLLY

Uhh, I dropped them when I was trying to get away earlier.

BLUE

I got it...Which way?

HOLLY

Down that hall.

(BLUE exits.)

NALIA

Okay, Holly. Let's get this banner unfolded.

HOLLY

And when we hang it up, how are we doing it?

NALIA

You'll take one side, and I'll take the other and...we'll be using this to hang it.

(NALIA pulls black strips from her pocket.)

HOLLY

Velcro?

NALIA

Heavy duty. One side goes on the wall, and one goes on the banner. No hassle, and it leaves no damage when the banner comes back down.

HOLLY

Con hacks by Nalia.

NALIA

Stick with me, and you'll learn plenty.

HOLLY
Can't wait.

NALIA
Take that end and go over to that side.

(HOLLY jogs to the other ladder and both she and NALIA begin to climb.)

HOLLY
Whenever you're ready, boss!

NALIA
All right, place the Velcro strip where you think it should go, and raise the banner up. I'll try to match you over here!

(Pause.)

HOLLY
Got it!

NALIA
And...

(Pause.)

Done. Let's see how it looks!

(THAYER Enters.)

THAYER
Wow, Every man's wet dream. Right at the perfect level to do...this.

(THAYER reaches out and grabs NALIA.)

NALIA
Hey!

(NALIA pulls as far away from THAYER as she can.)

THAYER
What's the matter, sweetheart?

NALIA
Let go of me!

(HOLLY rushes down the ladder.)

HOLLY

Get your hands off her!

(THAYER backs away.)

THAYER

Well, look at you. Brave one, huh?

HOLLY

Leave her alone.

(BLUE and OLLIE enter.)

OLLIE

What the hell?

HOLLY

He grabbed Nalia!

THAYER

Okay, okay.

(Pause.)

Didn't realize I was committing a crime.

BLUE

Did she ask you to touch her?

THAYER

Not exactly...lady-man....Didn't I already teach you a lesson earlier? But if a woman's ass is right there in your face, even *you* can't tell me you wouldn't—

OLLIE

That's it...why don't I show you just exactly what *I'm* willing—

BLUE

Whoa, Ollie. Trust me, I'm right there with you, but I think we all just need to—

HOLLY

This is the one who verbally assaulted you?

BLUE

The very same.

THAYER

Verbally assaulted? Look, if you want to dress like that, you should expect people to—

OLLIE

Shut Up!

(STAN enters.)

STAN

What is going on?

OLLIE

Stan! Get this piece of trash out of here!

NALIA

Uh, can everyone move? I'd like to get off this ladder.

(No one moves.)

HOLLY

You heard her! *Move* it.

(NALIA stumbles down the ladder.)

I've got you.

STAN

Someone explain.

NALIA

Holly and I were finally hanging the banner, and—

OLLIE

And this asshole—

(OLLIE grabs THAYER's shirt.)

THAYER

Let go of me!

OLLIE

Oh, you don't love it when it's you getting grabbed, huh?

BLUE

What he is trying to say is Nalia was up on the ladder, and this...he walked in and—

He grabbed her ass!

HOLLY

Now wait a—

THAYER

Let's go.

STAN

Yeah, right. Boss man.

THAYER

You bet your ass. Now move.

STAN

(THAYER and STAN exit.)

I'm surprised you're still here, Ollie.

BLUE

It's probably best if I leave it to Stan. He's got this.

OLLIE

(Pause.)

Nalia—

HOLLY

How did he get in?... You would think security would be more alert of people coming in and out.

NALIA

I mean, he was in a costume, but I'm not sure... I'll go find out.

OLLIE

No, we still have things to do, so let's get 'em done.

NALIA

No way, boss. You can sit for a minute.

OLLIE

I'm fine.

NALIA

Nalia—

HOLLY

NALIA

I'm okay.

(Pause.)

Everything is fine. Ollie, go show Holly how to do final mic checks in all the panel rooms. Then, you can go check on Stan and see how the second guy got in.

HOLLY

Nalia—

NALIA

Go. Please.

HOLLY

O-okay. If you need anything, just...yeah.

(HOLLY and OLLIE exit.)

NALIA

We need to get the signs on the front of the tables. Do you...?

BLUE

Got them right here.

NALIA

Let's get started.

BLUE

Lead the way.

(NALIA and BLUE move toward the tables and begin putting the signs up.)

NALIA

How many characters have you created?

BLUE

Blue is my twenty-third. I like to brainstorm, brainstorm, brainstorm. And once I have the general concept down, I go out and get a cup of coffee before deciding where to start bringing my ideas to life.

NALIA

How are you so positive?

BLUE

I am not going to let my interests and expressiveness be hindered by naysayers who don't understand.

NALIA

Brush it off. Ignore, ignore, ignore. Sounds so easy.

BLUE

It's not. But nothing *truly* worth fighting for is.

NALIA

And that answer to nonconsensual touching?

BLUE

Jury's still out.

(Pause.)

But even if I did have an answer, it might not be the right one for *you*.

NALIA

When that guy wouldn't take no for an answer with Holly earlier...I was more comfortable on that side of things. Not that I want Holly or anyone to go through this or anything like it.

BLUE

It's easier when it's not you. That's not selfish. Just human truth.

NALIA

No one thinks it will happen to them. Everyone hopes it won't.

BLUE

What did you say to Holly when you were trying to help her?

NALIA

I asked her why she created Holly. What she loves about her.

BLUE

Why did you create Nalia?

NALIA

Even after all the work women have done throughout history to become independent, there is all too often a mindset of women needing a man to make decisions or they need a man to be happy. Nalia, the dark fairy, has her issues, what with walking a dystopian world alone, but Nalia proves that even after the world falls apart, it is possible to pick up

the pieces and be yourself. Yourself is good enough. I like independence in my characters. Reminds me that I am significant.

BLUE

I agree, and it is possible to pick up the pieces. It's also perfectly acceptable to feel lost for a little while.

NALIA

I also asked Holly if she would have changed her cosplay choice had she known someone was going to treat her like a toy he couldn't have.

BLUE

Would you?

NALIA

Of course not. I love cosplay. Dressing up as a character...Creating characters. I love helping Stan run his con. I may even want to run my own con someday. I feel at home in the world of cosplay, but there are obviously those who seem bent on turning fun into something dull and unrecognizable. I want to help keep that light alive and bright.

BLUE

And maybe you could use this experience to help you do that.

NALIA

Not let him win.

BLUE

Exactly.

(Pause.)

With your whole Miss Independent persona, do you ever see yourself settling down? Not out of necessity, but because you want to?

NALIA

My dream is to one day have a little cosplay family. A husband who cosplays. And we will definitely get the kids involved...make them little costumes. Maybe even make costumes for our dogs. I don't mention that to most people...How about you?

BLUE

If I ever find someone who can handle all of this, then they will be extremely lucky.

STAN
(Offstage)

Nalia, how are things coming together?

NALIA

We're getting there!

STAN

Is there anything you desperately need from me?

NALIA

Not *desperately*, no.

STAN

Excellent...I need to go pick something up! Don't need me while I'm gone; I'll be back.

(The sound of footsteps can be heard.)

BLUE

Now that the signs are all put up, what else needs doing?

NALIA

There should be two boxes of t-shirts, hats, and other items in the hall closet—down the left walkway—by the bathroom. If you could retrieve those, I would appreciate it.

BLUE

On it.

(BLUE exits as OLLIE enters with bags of badges.)

NALIA

Ollie. And you have the badges.

OLLIE

Stan made sure Thayer—that's his name—actually left.

NALIA

I don't know what it is about today...just gonna keep fingers crossed that we don't have any more issues.

OLLIE

All fingers crossed. Do you need anything other than setting up the Registration tables?

NALIA

No, you'll be in charge there, so just stay put.

OLLIE

Aye, aye, boss.

(BLUE enters with a box.)

BLUE

How do you want this stuff set up?

NALIA

Just make rows of hats...keep the shirts folded and put them in piles based on size.

BLUE

Understood.

(HOLLY enters.)

HOLLY

All mics are a go.

NALIA

Does the big screen work in Panel 1?

HOLLY

Sure does...Ollie told me to check. Is there anything else you need?

(Pause.)

NALIA

Holly, I—I shouldn't've—I just...earlier, I was talking about how lucky I was for never having had bad experiences while cosplaying and now...

HOLLY

I know. I'm sorry.

BLUE

You know what this con needs?

NALIA

What?

BLUE

A big "Cosplay Is Not Consent" sign.

HOLLY

Yes! People need a reminder 'cause they sure don't seem to have enough common sense to behave on their own.

NALIA

Because we're not people when we cosplay.

HOLLY
We're characters.

BLUE
Here for others' amusement.

OLLIE
"Cosplay Is Not Consent"?

BLUE
It's a campaign that got started as a way to protect cosplayers.

NALIA
Because much like the world in general, cosplay tends to attract all sorts of sexual harassment.

OLLIE
Why would a cosplayer harass another cosplayer?

BLUE
Unfortunately, even some cosplayers don't understand the concept of consent, or they choose to ignore it.

OLLIE
That's just...wrong.

HOLLY
Hence the reminder...but it's not just a reminder for would-be harassers. The sign also stands as a reminder to be there for fellow cosplayers. See something, do something.

OLLIE
And...why don't we have a Cosplay Is Not Consent sign?

NALIA
I think Stan has been optimistic that we haven't had any problems at our con, so he didn't want to jinx it.

BLUE
Clearly that luck well has run dry.

HOLLY
Nalia, you should talk to Stan.

(Pause.)

You told me not to be ashamed, and you shouldn't be either.

HOLLY

Cosplay Is Not Consent!

BALHORN

When I heard what happened to you...I knew I had to do something...Once the evil that is sexual harassment passed through our doors, it wouldn't cease without a strong, worthy opponent.

HOLLY

That is a pretty elaborate elf costume...you would've needed some time to pull something like that together.

BALHORN

All right, all right.

(Pause.)

The truth is...I've had Balhorn for a long time. I just wanted to give him a strong entrance.

BLUE

Oh, I get that.

BALHORN

He is—err I am a king after all. I could've walked in and presented myself. Instead, walking in with this all-important sign? A much better unveil.

BLUE

Creating a character is incredible, isn't it?

BALHORN

It is...you get to conceive an entire world, and your character lives in that world. You also get to decide how they act...what they wear.

NALIA

You *would* choose to be a king. Seeing as you enjoy being in charge.

BALHORN

You have your reasons for cosplaying, and I have mine.

HOLLY

I love it. You're kinda sneaky...you really sold it when you were all, "I do what I want."

BALHORN

I still do...You'll notice I never actually said I *wouldn't* cosplay.

NALIA

You...wow. I—the sign is...it's...thank you.

BALHORN

We gotta draw the line somewhere. Honestly, I think I've been burying my head in the sand for the last few years...we were just so fortunate that nothing...

NALIA

Yeah.

BALHORN

Because this con is based around created characters and not well-known ones from anime or comics, we've had a good couple of years with no real trouble. I just hoped that would continue.

BLUE

How did those two get in here in the first place?

BALHORN

Apparently, the camera on the east side of the building is broken, and security just let me know when I got back. That's strike one. Regardless, they should have been doing a steady patrol. Strike two. And when I came in, one of them was sleeping on the job.

HOLLY

Strike three...you're out.

BALHORN

Indeed.

(Pause.)

Ollie, would you consider working security?... You don't have to answer right now, but I do need you to make sure no one comes in until we're ready. I think you should do it full-time. It would be a paying job, and even though you are a little hot-headed, you do have some training...and maybe you'll learn to harness that kind of enthusiasm. Plus, you've been a volunteer for the con from the very beginning.

OLLIE

I'm on it! Thank you for this opportunity, and I will try my best not to let you down, sir.

BALHORN

We need people we can trust.

(OLLIE exits.)

HOLLY

Who will you have working along with Ollie?

BALHORN

For the time being, I've hired a temp agency...they should be here—

(BALHORN's phone rings.)

That's them now...Finish getting things together...(Into his phone) Yes, I'm on my way...

(BALHORN exits.)

NALIA

We need the raffle tickets, the drawing box, and the prizes.

BLUE

I'll go. Where are they?

NALIA

Right hall closet. Near the building's entrance.

(BLUE exits.)

HOLLY

So...since Ollie is going to start working security, you've lost your one volunteer.

NALIA

We have more who come in when the events start...but even without them, I have you and Blue.

HOLLY

So, you've decided to keep us?

NALIA

I think I made that decision the minute each of you walked in and said you wanted to volunteer.

(Pause.)

Unless...you've changed your mind?

HOLLY

Well, I can't speak for Blue, but I would love to become your permanent assistant...I mean, I may not know everything, but I can learn...and I—

NALIA

I'd like that. I'll have St—Balhorn draw up a contract.

HOLLY

It's something to get used to, huh?

NALIA

I guess it shouldn't be so difficult, but yes.

HOLLY

Does the job pay?

NALIA

A little, and you can discuss that with Stan. You'll get paid at the end of the con. Usually, Stan raises the wages each year we work.

(BLUE enters loaded down with bags and boxes.)

HOLLY

Here! Let me help.

(HOLLY takes a couple of bags from BLUE.)

NALIA

The prizes can go behind the table. Neatly pile them up.

BLUE

I think I saw some volunteers moving about the panel rooms. They already know the drill?

NALIA

Balhorn tries to run things efficiently.

BLUE

So, Nalia, I was thinking...it seems like you need more volunteers for pre-con set up, so if you wouldn't mind me sticking around, I'd like to—

HOLLY

Yes, yes! You're hired.

NALIA

What she said.

BLUE

Well then is there anything else to do before people flood this place?

I think we're done with set up. NALIA

Nothing else on that list of yours? HOLLY

Nope, but there is something I'd like to do. NALIA

What is it? HOLLY

When we were talking before, about just being characters, and not people... Well, I'd like to change that. NALIA

Because we are people. HOLLY

We are. We call each other by our character names because it adds to the illusion and it really puts us in the world of cosplay, but right now I would just like a reminder of the fact that we are real people. NALIA

(Pause.)

So...my name is Lynne.

Rose. HOLLY

Eli. BLUE

Now I think we're finally ready to open. LYNNE

Let's make this year a good one. ROSE

And look forward to many more to come. ELI

(As the lights fade, the words "Cosplay Is Not Consent" can still be seen.)

END of Play

Drawing the Line—A Reflection

Cosplay is a huge passion of mine. It started off as a side hobby and then, suddenly, I could not go to a clothing store without getting ideas for a costume. Almost any piece of clothing can be used for a costume, especially if it is colorful or unusual. The amount of creativity and imagination that goes into any one costume is phenomenal. Furthermore, there is a never-ending flow of inspiration that I am drawn to. This pastime can satisfy my creative mind for a lifetime. Through cosplay, I have bonded and grown so much closer with my family because they help me when I have doubts about the execution of a certain costume piece, and my sister cosplays just as often as I do. I have also met many great people who share an appreciation for the art. When contemplating a topic for my thesis, I knew I had to look no further than where my heart already lay. I knew from the start that I wanted to write a play because there is something magical about the stage and how it can translate written words into actions. Seeing these characters move and bond with each other would be incredible indeed. Through the duration of this project, I have learned a lot about myself as well as cosplay. One significant reminder I am left with is just how positive cosplay is because it allows people to be themselves, it is a fantastic outlet for creativity, and it is an opportunity to share incredible talents with likeminded individuals who may in fact become lifelong friends.

Cosplay may be the process of making and wearing costumes in order to assume the role of a character, but there is something about stepping into a costume that is completely freeing. More than that, wearing a costume to a convention is a confidence booster. As a cosplayer, I can speak to this firsthand. There is no feeling in the world quite like walking onto the con floor all decked out in my most recent costume.

Normally, crowds are a little overwhelming; however, when it comes to conventions, I enjoy them. When cosplaying, I am indeed embracing the character, but I am also able to put real world issues such as shyness and censorship aside and walk around with a sense of pride. The convention crowd may see a character they recognize or an original character of my own making, yet when congoers introduce themselves or ask for a picture, I am presenting myself. I very much believe cosplaying is empowering because I have experienced that empowerment. I also assert that cosplay lets people be themselves. In life, there is a certain censorship that lurks, especially when it comes to work or school. However, amidst a convention, there are no such parameters. That right there is extremely freeing. Moreover, when it comes to cosplaying, I am wearing my art. With my creations on display, it is difficult not to be confident.

Because cosplay is about making costumes, there is a wealth of creativity to explore within the activity. Once a character is chosen, a creative explosion happens because there are a lot of considerations when it comes to making a costume. There is a certain joy I find in choosing the materials I will use to make my costumes. For example, I have a leotard covered in leaves that I made out of duct tape. For Holly, I used duct tape leaves as well as fabric leaves. Not only is there a plethora of materials that can be used to make costumes, but there are also other aspects of costume making that need a creative mind. For instance, makeup. Makeup is one of my favorite parts of cosplay because even if the character I am trying to emulate has a set makeup that they wear, there is usually a bit of flare that I can add to make the look my own. I firmly believe that cosplay is for anyone with a passion for creativity and imagination. With cosplay, the creative opportunities are never-ending.

Apart from being a dream for the creative soul, cosplay is also an opportunity to meet amazing people. Conventions are certainly a type of social gathering. Therefore, speaking to others, even, and sometimes especially, if they are strangers, is a must. The fact that cons are full of cosplayers and admirers of cosplay makes it that much easier to have conversations with new people. One bonus to cosplay is that it can act as an ice breaker. Compliment someone on their costume, and you are in. I have met some great people throughout my cosplay journey. The people I have met along the way are one of the reasons why I continue to cosplay and will continue cosplaying for the foreseeable future. The bonds that are formed through cosplay very much inspired the relationships that are made between Lynne, Rose, and Eli. Making lasting relationships or even just having fun and interesting conversations is a huge part of what makes cosplay so extraordinary.

All in all, cosplay is well worth the effort that goes into making the costumes. Writing the play and making the costumes for this project has reasserted my appreciation and love for this art. I find cosplay to be a beautiful hobby that should be celebrated. I only hope my play can showcase that while also delving a little into the darker side. I am saddened that harassment is so engrained in many parts of life. I am a firm believer that a line needs to be drawn somewhere, and I choose to draw the line at consent. Cosplay is Not consent. I want cosplay to continue to be a world of creativity and imagination. Many people, including myself, have benefited from what cosplay has to offer, and I aim for that to be the case for a long time to come. I am grateful that I found this magnificent pastime; therefore, I recommend it to anyone who wants to give it a shot.

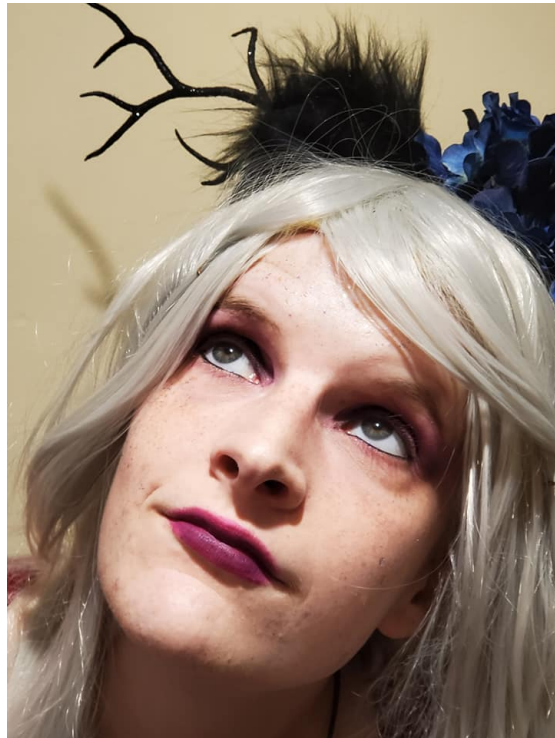
Costume Pieces

Nalia









Holly







Final Looks

Nalia



Holly





“We are not people when we cosplay.”—Nalia





“We’re characters.”—Holly







“Cosplay is a form of self-expression.”—Holly





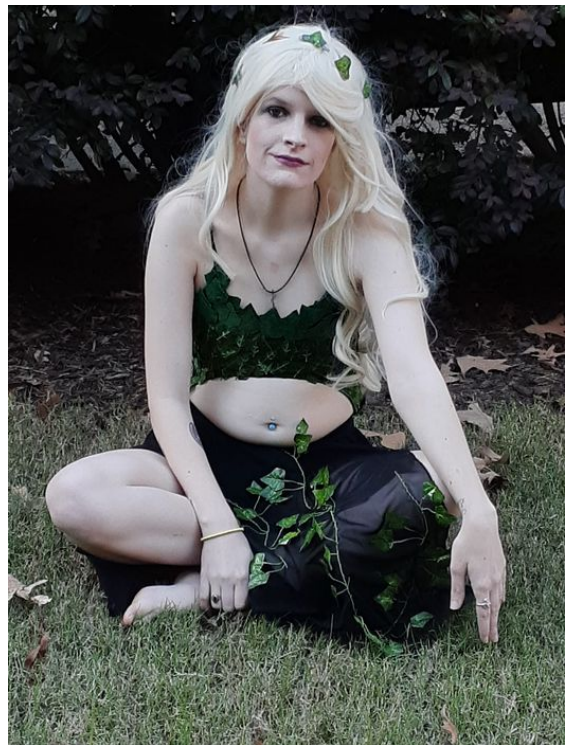


“We gotta draw the line somewhere.”—Balhorn





“Cosplay Is Not Consent.”





“We are people.”—Lynne, Rose, Eli, and...Victoria.



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