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Since I was little, I thought I had my life planned out. I knew I wanted to go to college and earn a Master's degree, and maybe even pursue a PhD. My love of animals, science, and helping others only led to one possible occupation: Zoology. It was not only a career that suited my interests but also one that could support my side hobby of ballet. Then, within four years, that life I had envisioned was swept away. At fourteen, I suffered an injury that ended my ballet career, and during my recovery, COVID-19 shut down the world. During sophomore year, I struggled through my chemistry class, realizing that science was harder than I originally thought. With nothing to do for twenty-four months except sit in my house and watch my high school career pass outside my window, I turned to the arts. I had enjoyed making stories as a kid, spending hours creating plotlines with dolls and action figures and the strangers I passed on the street. However, I'd never seen films with stories like mine, and while I spent my time in quarantine consuming more media than I had in any other years of my life, I wondered if I would ever find such tales. I worked through a long list of greatly awarded men, I started to wonder if someone like me had a place in it. Then, I found another side of filmmaking, with content like "Booksmart", *Pose*, and other films highlighting experiences of minorities, not as highly acclaimed but twice as powerful.

The thought that not only could I be part of the consumption of this, but the creation of it too, was baffling. I could make stories for people who looked like me, acted like me, and lived like me. I had the opportunity to call attention to the atrocities that affected humanity and call for action against them, including to the LGBTQ community I called home.

This was the only path for me.

I started researching all the ways to get myself out there, willing to do any sort of filmmaking (from documentaries to fictional feature films) to get myself a place in the industry. I used my free time to write novels, film manuscripts, and TV pilots. I read screenwriting books, annotating them and keeping notes tucked between their pages. I directed, wrote, and acted in short films. I took summer and school provided classes. I participated in competitions, such as the 48 Hour Competition where I won third place regionally for best film, titled "Criminal Pursuits," building my confidence since my team was the only ones under eighteen. If I could wish for anything, I'd wish for my career. I'd wish for my place in the writer's room, director's chair, and credits at the end of a full-length feature film. The idea of building my career, and getting the opportunity to do such with a college education, is all I could hope and dream of.