

The Familiar

(A Delirium for a Plagued Planet)

(a full length one act 90 minutes)

TIME: During the height of the coronavirus pandemic.

PLACE: New York City: a stylized set suggests an office, parlor, bookstore, and laboratory of caged rats.

CHARACTERS:

DOCTOR MARGOT PEMBERTON, a research virologist, age 50s

DORIAN (DORY) PEMBERTON, Margot's daughter, an aspiring artist, age 20s

BERNICE PEMBERTON, Margot's mother, a retired nurse, age 70s

DOCTOR RUFUS VOLMER, a psychotherapist, age 50s

GODREY MARSH, the Krishna Book Nook owner, age 30s

PLOT SYNOPSIS:

Dorian Pemberton, the artistic daughter of a renown virologist, is suffering from the neuropsychiatric aftereffects of the coronavirus and believes she is being followed by a *familiar*, a rat named Rufus that only she can see. Although Rufus rarely materializes, his presence in Dorian's life has given her a secret confidant that occasionally interacts with reality, chilling the temperature and toppling teacups. Still living with her mother and grandmother, Dorian longs for independence but has dropped out of college and never been employed or sold a painting. While strolling through a bookstore, she encounters the owner, Godfrey, who claims to sense the presence of Rufus and offers Dorian a job as a part time clerk. Dorian shares pictures of her paintings with Godfrey who is eager to display them on the walls of the store. At first Dorian's mother doubts the existence of the familiar, but is forced to acknowledge his presence when he abandons Dorian and begins following her. Both mother and daughter confide in Doctor Volmer who is sympathetic but skeptical until he is also subjected to the familiar's presence which expands his conception of reality, making him more sympathetic to the delusional claims of his patients. By the end of the play, Dorian's new prospects and blossoming friendship with Godfrey give her the confidence to leave home, causing her mother to face the surprising probability that she will miss her daughter when she leaves.