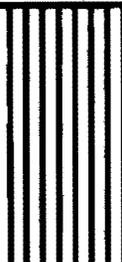


A KID LIKE JAKE

BY DANIEL PEARLE



★
DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



A KID LIKE JAKE

Cast of Characters

Alex	Female 30-40
Greg	Male 30-40
Judy	Female 40-60
Nurse	Male or Female 20-30

2019

CALENDAR YEAR

MARCH

CALENDAR MONTH

SUNDAY

FIRST DAY OF WEEK

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
24	25	26	27	28	01	02
03	04	05	06	07	08	09
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25 Auditions 7:00 pm APT	26 Cast Meeting / Headshots 6:30 APT	27 Rehearsal 6:30pm APT	28 Stupid Kid	29 Stupid Kid	30 Stupid Kid
31 Stupid Kid	01	02	03	04	05	06

2019

CALENDAR YEAR

APRIL

CALENDAR MONTH

May

SUNDAY

FIRST DAY OF WEEK

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31 Rehearsal 6:30pm APT	01 Rehearsal 6:30pm APT	02 Rehearsal 6:30pm APT	03 Rehearsal 6:30pm APT	04 Rehearsal 6:30pm APT	05 Hold for rehearsal	06 Set Build 1 9:00 am
07 Set Build 2 2:00 pm	08 Rehearsal 6:30pm APT	09 Rehearsal 6:30pm APT	10 Rehearsal 6:30pm APT	11 Rehearsal 6:30pm APT	12 Hold for rehearsal	13 Set Build 3 9:00 am
14 Hold for rehearsal	15 Rehearsal 6:30pm APT	16 Rehearsal 6:30pm APT	17 Costume Parade 6:30pm APT	18 Rehearsal 6:30pm APT	19 Hold for rehearsal	20 Set Build 4 / tech 9:00 am
21 Hold for rehearsal	22 Rehearsal 6:30pm APT	23 Rehearsal 6:30pm APT	24 Tech night	25 Rehearsal 6:30pm APT	26 Hold for rehearsal	27 Tech
28 Tech Rehearsal 2:00 pm APT	29 Dress Rehearsal 6:30pm APT	30 Dress Rehearsal 6:30pm APT	<i>May</i> 01 Dress Rehearsal 6:30pm APT	<i>May</i> 02 Preview Night call 6:30pm APT	<i>May</i> 03 Show1 call 7:00 pm APT	<i>May</i> 04 Show2 call 7:00 pm APT
<i>May</i> 05 Show3 call 1:00 pm APT	<i>May</i> 06	<i>May</i> 07	<i>May</i> 08	<i>May</i> 09 Show4 call 7:00 pm APT	<i>May</i> 10 Show5 call 7:00 pm APT	<i>May</i> 11 Show6 call 7:00 pm APT
<i>May</i> 12 Show7 call 1:00 pm APT						

CHARACTERS

ALEX, thirties

GREG, thirties

JUDY, forties to sixties

NURSE, late-twenties

PLACE

Several locations in Manhattan.

TIME

Fall/Winter, 2012.

NOTE

A slash (/) denotes point of interruption
by the following speaker.

A KID LIKE JAKE

Scene 1

Early October. Alex and Greg's apartment. Night. Alex sits at a table, papers and applications spread out in front of her. She's filling one out.

• GREG. *(Off.)* Hello?

ALEX. *(Calls.)* I thought you were done at ten. *(Greg enters.)*

GREG. I know, I'm sorry. My last session ran over. New client. Complete nightmare.

ALEX. What's another word for "explore"?

GREG. Explore?

ALEX. It's for these short answers. About our "educational values."

GREG. *(Looks at the table, laughs.)* Oh. *(Greg kisses her.)*

ALEX. I'm trying to say I want him to have the opportunity to explore not only different subjects but different approaches to learning. But I've used explore already. Here, hand me that ... *(Greg picks up a thesaurus.)*

GREG. He's in bed?

ALEX. ... It's almost eleven. So, yes. *(Reaches for it.)*

GREG. No, I got it. *(Finds it.)* "Explore: Examine, hunt, inspect, probe —"

ALEX. I need to see it. *(She takes the book from him.)*

GREG. ... You okay?

ALEX. Yeah. I just wanna get these done.

GREG. *(Puts a hand on her gently.)* It's barely October. We've got time, right?

ALEX. Well, technically we do, but most of these places don't guarantee interviews, so I'm thinking the sooner we get ours in, you know, the better the odds they'll actually meet him ... which

apparently helps. (*Alex looks at the thesaurus.*)

GREG. ... My day was fine, by the way.

ALEX. I'm sorry. How was your day?

GREG. Fine. Like I said.

ALEX. I'm not trying to ignore you.

GREG. Is there anything to eat?

ALEX. Uh. There's some Greek salad in the fridge. You can go and see ... But I have a draft of the essay, if you wanna take a look. I mean, it sucks, but it's a draft.

GREG. Tonight?

ALEX. Well, I'm meeting with Judy on Thursday. I was hoping to email it to her beforehand.

GREG. Right, / okay ...

ALEX. But if you're too tired, / you know ...

GREG. No, no ...

ALEX. It's just, it does have to get done.

GREG. And I will read it. I need a minute. I had four clients back to back, the last of which was this *lunatic*.

ALEX. I'm sorry.

GREG. You'll love this: He comes in, spends the entire session making small talk about nothing. Waits till we've got maybe five minutes left to tell me, "Oh and by the way, I have suicidal thoughts, homicidal thoughts towards my ex-wife, and I'm thinking of kidnapping my daughter and running away to Canada."

ALEX. Impressive.

GREG. I mean it was a very obvious tactic, you know, holding me hostage. But it was just so ridiculous because I'm looking at the clock and I try to call him on it, I say, "Well, okay, how serious *are* these thoughts? I mean do you have *gun*?" And he says, "Oh yes, I have lots of guns. I've got this one and that one and this one I got in '97," and starts going on and on about his *gun* collection. (*Alex smiles but doesn't really laugh.*) Is something wrong?

ALEX. What? No, I'm just

GREG. You / seem ...

ALEX. (*Cont'd.*) overwhelmed. Kelly came over with Tyler. Which was nice for Jake. And Kelly was trying to be helpful, but I think she was just so traumatized by the whole process last year. You should go eat something.

GREG. Lemme see the draft.

ALEX. You're not hungry?

GREG. In a minute. What's the prompt again?

ALEX. Oh, you know ... "Why is Jake more special than all the other hundreds of thousands of / kids —"

GREG. Okay, okay, but what is the *actual* prompt?

ALEX. (*Looking for a form.*) Uh ... they're all slightly different. (*Finds one, reads.*) "Imagine that someone were to see a room full of children playing. Ignoring physical attributes, how would they identify your child?" They're all like that.

GREG. (*A joke.*) How 'bout he's secretly Latino on the inside? Would that help?

ALEX. (*Smiles, jokingly.*) Maybe. But we can't just *say* that. You're supposed to use "anecdotes," remember?

GREG. (*Interlaces his fingers.*) You tell 'em about this?

ALEX. Uh. No. That is exactly the kinda thing that sounds like parent bullshit.

GREG. It's not bullshit! He was hours old. Developmentally, babies don't typically do that for days at least. He was clearly advanced.

ALEX. Well you're not supposed to use the word "advanced," either. That was on Judy's list. If you were even listening.

GREG. We were having dinner. I wasn't taking notes. Come on.

ALEX. Well it's shit, okay? I realize. So don't —

GREG. Al.

ALEX. Fine. (*She hands Greg the essay.*)

GREG. Okay ... (*Reads.*) "The first thing one notices about Jake is his curiosity and his imagination." (*Greg stops.*)

ALEX. What.

GREG. Isn't that two things? (*Short beat.*)

ALEX. You know what, forget it.

GREG. No, hey! I'm sorry. I was kidding. (*Alex takes the essay, starts stacking some papers to clear the table.*)

ALEX. No, you weren't kidding. And you're right. That is two things. You're absolutely right. I told you —

GREG. (*Sees a book.*) What is this?

ALEX. What? (*Sees it.*) Nothing.

GREG. (*Grabs it.*) Oh, you're *kidding* me!

ALEX. Kelly brought it, okay? It's just to get acquainted with the test.

GREG. He's *four*.

ALEX. For *me* to get acquainted. If I get a sense of the kinds of things they ask, maybe I can sort of, you know, casually —

● GREG. Prep him.

GREG. And your solution is what, then? Keep on pretending like nothing's wrong?

ALEX. My solution is to make it clear that if he ever *does* want to play with trucks or guns, no one will be *disappointed*. Maybe he just needs to be reminded that there's nothing wrong with being a *boy*.

GREG. Oh, please.

ALEX. I'm serious. *(The cell phone rings. Greg looks at Alex to see if she wants to answer it. She doesn't move. Greg picks it up, answers it.)*

GREG. *(Into the phone.)* Uh. Hi, it's me. Alex is — in the bathroom. Uh huh ... Okay. Well I'm — glad he apologized. Okay. Yeah, I will. Tell him we're not angry. *(Greg listens.)* Yes, we're having a very nice time. You too. *(He hangs up. Neither speaks.)* She said to tell you that Jake is sorry. He's still crying, but now he's crying because he feels "ashamed." His word, she says. *(A moment.)* Look, what do you wanna do? *(Pause.)*

ALEX. Let's just — order.

Scene 7

An examining room. Alex is standing on a scale. The nurse is reading it, holding a chart.

NURSE. Okay. Great. You can have a seat back up here. *(Alex steps off the scale and sits on the examining table. The nurse writes on Alex's chart.)*

ALEX. How much have I gained?

NURSE. Uh. Looks like ... three pounds since last time.

ALEX. That's all?

NURSE. That's pretty normal for 13 weeks. 'Cause that's a total of almost six.

ALEX. Oh. I feel like with my son it was more.

NURSE. Well. It varies. But this is definitely in the range.

ALEX. Okay. *(The nurse writes in Alex's chart.)*

NURSE. You're by yourself today.

ALEX. *(Nods.)* My husband had some errands to run. I told him I was fine.

NURSE. Is it still snowing out there?
ALEX. ... It was when I came in.
NURSE. (*Sighs.*) Yeah ...
ALEX. Something nice about it though. (*Nurse smiles, looks at her chart.*)
NURSE. Uh ... Any spotting?
ALEX. Occasionally.
NURSE. (*Writes.*) Okay ...
ALEX. But no heavy bleeding.
NURSE. (*Smiles.*) You make it easy for me. (*Writing.*) How old is your son?
ALEX. Oh. Four. Five, actually. He just turned five.
NURSE. (*Smiles.*) That's wonderful.
ALEX. It's amazing how fast it happens.
NURSE. 'Swhat I hear. (*Nurse fills something else in.*)
ALEX. We had a little party, just ... you know, a few kids from his class, some friends of ours at the apartment. And he wouldn't come out of his room. He was just ... sitting. Looking ... perplexed, I guess. He was doing a puzzle. And I asked him what was the matter, why he didn't wanna come see his friends ... And he shook his head, and he said ... "I don't know, Mom. About five. I don't know about five." (*A moment.*)
NURSE. He sounds smart.
ALEX. Yeah. No, he is actually. He's very ... intense. (*Nurse nods, looks back at her chart.*)
NURSE. You hoping for a girl this time? (*Short beat.*)
ALEX. (*Startled.*) ... Oh. No. I mean — I don't / know.
NURSE. I'm sorry, I didn't mean —
ALEX. No, no, it's fine.
NURSE. It's just most women / I talk to ...
ALEX. Sure. Right. No, I — I guess I hadn't really asked myself. (*Smiles.*) I mean, as long as it's healthy, right?
NURSE. (*Nods.*) Of course. (*Nurse looks back at the chart.*) And ... It looks like your iron was a little low last time. He might wanna check that again.
ALEX. I've been taking a supplement. Along with the multivitamins he'd recommended.
NURSE. Good. And ... any pain? Discomfort?
ALEX. No. Headaches, but that's normal for me.
NURSE. (*Nods.*) Okay. Good. (*Writes.*) Well. I'm gonna go ahead

and take your blood pressure. If that's all right.

ALEX. Sure. *(The nurse goes, gets a B.P. monitor. She puts it on Alex's arm. She's about to start pumping it up when she notices Alex's hand is shaking. Alex notices too.)* Oh. I'm sorry.

NURSE. No — are you —

ALEX. I don't know. I just suddenly ... *(Laughs.)* I'm sorry. *(Alex steadies herself.)*

NURSE. It's all right.

ALEX. I feel a little — dizzy. All of a sudden.

NURSE. *(Removes the monitor.)* Take a deep breath.

ALEX. *(Out of breath.)* I'm fine. *(Pause.)*

NURSE. Has this happened before?

ALEX. *(Swallows.)* No. I don't think so. No.

NURSE. It's okay. Just breathe. *(A moment. Alex tries to steady her breath. The nurse holds Alex's shaking hand in hers.)*

ALEX. I think I just — this is silly — *(Pause.)* I remembered a dream I had. Suddenly. You know when that happens? Just all at once. Almost — déjà vu or something. 'Cause I was here. Sort of. With you maybe. *(Nurse smiles, unsure what to say.)* I don't mean to make you uncomfortable.

NURSE. You're not.

ALEX. ... Something about the blood pressure, I can't remember exactly. The floor dropped out and I was falling. It just — hit me. I guess. This is embarrassing. *(A moment. Alex's hands have stopped shaking. She withdraws them from the nurse's.)*

NURSE. It was a year ago, yes? The last time? *(Alex nods.)* It's very different. Doing it all over again. After that happens. People don't always understand how hard it can be. Anxiety is completely normal.

ALEX. I know. *(Pause.)* I'm fine now. Really. You can go ahead.

NURSE. You sure?

ALEX. Yes. *(The nurse delicately wraps the monitor around Alex's arm. Starts pumping it up. Alex takes a deep breath. Trying to lighten the mood.)* Do you want kids? I mean, eventually?

NURSE. Don't we all? If we're being honest? *(Alex nods, thinks.)*

ALEX. I was so scared of it. For so long. But maybe you're right. *(The nurse nods. Looks at her watch. A moment. She starts to remove the monitor.)*

NURSE. Blood pressure is just a tiny bit high, but I'm pretty sure that's — you know ...

● ALEX. Okay.

NURSE. It does fluctuate.

ALEX. Right. *(The nurse writes in Alex's chart.)*

NURSE. Anyway, you can go ahead and get undressed. The doctor will be in in just a minute. Would you like some water? While you wait?

ALEX. No, I'm fine. Thank you ...

NURSE. You sure? *(Alex nods.)*

ALEX. Did you write down about ... my hands...? *(Pause.)*

NURSE. I'm sure it's nothing to worry about. *(Alex nods.)*

Scene 8

January. Judy's office. Greg and Alex are sitting across from Judy.

3

• JUDY. *(Opens a folder.)* So. Where do you wanna start?

ALEX. Uh ... Dalton.

JUDY. *(Shakes her head.)* I'll be honest. Not looking good.

ALEX. Okay.

JUDY. They actually had a record number of applications — we're talking well over six hundred.

GREG. Right.

ALEX. What about Trinity?

JUDY. *(Looks.)* Uh. Trinity, also, is unlikely. *(Beat.)*

ALEX. Oh.

JUDY. I mean, we knew that was a long shot.

ALEX. Right, but — did they say anything? I thought Jake was really at his best that day. He was in such a good mood afterwards.

JUDY. They say ... "Curious ... attentive ..." But they're concerned about collaborative learning.

GREG. What does that mean?

JUDY. Sharing, listening, teamwork ...

ALEX. Right, but they can't expect him to be perfect *now*.

JUDY. No, but — Alex, you have to understand the numbers. They have nine siblings coming in and over three hundred applicants for the remaining twenty-two spots. I mean, when you put things in a

numbers perspective you realize it's not so personal.

GREG. Well, why don't we just start with the ones that *are* interested. I mean there are some, right?

JUDY. ... Yes. (*Looking.*) Packer is interested. They say, "Creative, independent, bright." City and Country, also. They were very impressed with his artwork —

ALEX. Well, we sent his ERBs as well.

JUDY. (*Reading.*) "Original thinker ... self-directed ... "

GREG. Is that code?

JUDY. (*Laughs.*) No, coming from them that's a good thing ... Ethical Culture also has some good things to say. And they loved you guys.

GREG. Well, okay. (*Short pause.*)

ALEX. Wait. Is that it? For places that are interested?

JUDY. Well, those are the top three, at this point. (*Beat.*)

ALEX. Trevor Day?

JUDY. (*Flips some pages.*) Trevor says ... uh ... "Smart, creative, a little young."

GREG. Young?

JUDY. It means they think he might not be ready. (*Pause.*)

ALEX. What about Calhoun?

JUDY. Uh ... (*Reads.*) "Young."

ALEX. That's it? That's all they / say?

JUDY. Well. Obviously they're not telling me *everything* ...

ALEX. Right, but, so they say, "young," you know, but is there any chance they'd still come back and accept / him?

JUDY. Unlikely. I have to be honest with you, it's the kinda thing where if they're saying that at this point ... (*Shrugs. Pause.*)

GREG. And the rest are all...?

JUDY. Well, I can go through them if you'd like —

GREG. No, no, I mean not if it's pretty much — bad news.

ALEX. (*Still in disbelief.*) Even Browning? (*Short beat.*)

JUDY. Alex, Browning is incredibly competitive.

ALEX. No, I know, but —

JUDY. And frankly, I really don't see him there. Do you? Coat and tie? All *boys*?

GREG. I completely agree. (*Beat. Alex reacts but doesn't look at Greg.*)

ALEX. I just — his ERBs are so strong, he is artistic, you said that would help —

JUDY. Well, it / does but —

ALEX. And I assume you recommended us highly ...

JUDY. Well of course I did! Sweetheart, I *wish* I had the power to get him in anywhere I wanted, but I don't.

GREG. We know that. *(Pause. Judy looks at Alex.)*

JUDY. Alex?

ALEX. Yes, I'm fine. Sorry.

GREG. So ... What do we do now?

JUDY. Well. Basically you have a couple options. Of course, he could go to public school.

ALEX. Wait — what?

JUDY. I'm not saying that's what you / want —

GREG. No, we get it.

JUDY. *Or* he could do another year with us. Some places, especially the more rigorous ones academically, they actually like a kid that's had an extra year of seasoning.

GREG. *(Half-laugh.)* Seasoning, right ...

ALEX. But I still don't under —

JUDY. *(Stopping her.) Or* — and this is what I'd suggest — we make a very strong push for one of the schools that's interested, even if they're a little farther down on your list. You let me get on the phone and try to feel out which is the most likely, and then I'll recommend sending one of them a first-choice letter.

GREG. And that means ...

JUDY. You'll go if accepted. Or he'll go, I should say. And then, fingers crossed, that's enough to seal the deal. And if not, then most likely we're dealing with a waitlist situation. Which does not mean it's over. I call it season two.

ALEX. Right, but I thought you said those places were interested, I'm just confused why we're talking about repeating a year, or public school, if there are / places that are interested.

GREG. She was just listing options —

JUDY. Alex, look, I wouldn't be doing my job if I wasn't preparing you for the possibility — *(Stops herself.)* The truth is, even the ones that are interested, they do have some concerns about — behavior. *(Short beat.)*

ALEX. ... How so?

JUDY. Well, they all report basically the same thing. There's no question, he's bright, he's creative. That comes across in all the feedback. But they also note that he gets stubborn and defensive when working with other kids. There've been some incidents of

aggression.

ALEX. But couldn't that be nerves? I mean, he's fine when he's here, isn't he? Didn't they observe him in his own classroom?

JUDY. Most of them did, yes, but — even here. We've discussed this, Alex. He's had mood swings. Outbursts.

ALEX. Don't *all* kids have mood swings?

GREG. You know, we have considered bringing him to see a therapist.

JUDY. I think that might be a / great idea.

ALEX. Okay, I think that's a separate conversation. And what about a first-choice letter somewhere else? That's higher on our list? Would that maybe make them change their mind? Reconsider?

JUDY. (*Shakes her head.*) I wouldn't do that. You're better off using it strategically. Somewhere he has a real chance. (*A moment. Alex is visibly upset.*)

GREG. Al, it's a numbers game. We knew this. (*Pause.*)

ALEX. (*With difficulty.*) Judy ... Is it possible that talking about the ... "gender-variant behavior" was not a good move? For places like Trinity?

JUDY. ...

ALEX. I know it's technically progressive, but it's more conservative than some of the others.

JUDY. Alex, first of all, no school in this city is going to shy away from a child for that reason. Okay? Frankly, you're very lucky to be raising a kid like Jake *now*, instead of fifty years ago, even twenty years ago.

ALEX. And what exactly does that mean, "a kid like Jake"?

GREG. I think we're getting off topic. We can't look back at this point. Let's just figure out our next / step and then —

JUDY. (*To Alex.*) Look, I'm sorry this isn't what you wanted to hear, but I'm only relaying to you the information I have —

ALEX. Yes, but I don't think it's a coincidence that the top three are the same ones you were pushing from the beginning.

GREG. Al, she knows these places, of course / her instincts are —

JUDY. I'm sorry, do you think I've *slighted* Jake in some way?

GREG. No, of course / not.

JUDY. I mean, do you realize the number of spots we're talking about? How many kids they have applying?

• ALEX. Yes. And I also know how many kids you have to place —

JUDY. Whoa, whoa, Alex, listen to me, that may be true, but

4. ALEX. You know what I think? I think you resent him. You do. And not because you feel *excluded* or *left out*. It's because he's passionate and has his own opinions and he's not so desperate to please everyone all the time —

GREG. Oh, of course —

ALEX. And because you're jealous. That he has everything you didn't. You resent him for going to private school, for having a mother who's devoted to him and protective of him —

GREG. My mother did her very best, you know that —

ALEX. Oh, of course, God forbid we criticize our poor parents, they were just doing their best, right? I thought that was the whole *point* of therapy —

GREG. (*Sharp.*) You are so incredibly spoiled, you know that? I get it, all right? Your mother's not perfect, she's fucked up, she's cruel, she didn't *value* you, but she did pay for everything you ever wanted.

ALEX. Always, / the fucking money ... You'll never forgive me.

GREG. Everyone, your whole life, has bent over backwards to make you happy, and all you do is feel victimized and attacked —

ALEX. You'd rather I refuse their help? *Deprive* Jake so you can feel less *insecure* —

GREG. No, but —

ALEX. I'm not *spoiled* for wanting to stay at home and raise my son!

GREG. No, but I'm sick of being treated like you're raising him *alone*! Your parents' money doesn't mean I don't get a *say*. I'm his *father*. I live here too. And maybe you could be a little grateful that I don't care what you read him, or what games he likes to play, or whether or not he *does* want to be a girl someday, maybe I should get a little fucking credit for loving my son *unconditionally* —

ALEX. (*In tears.*) And what about *me*? Huh? Why can't you love *me* unconditionally?

GREG. That's ridiculous.

ALEX. It's not ridiculous. You're never on my side. I don't care whether it's Judy, or Jake, or my mother, you're never —

GREG. I'm so tired, Alex. I love you. No one is against you. No one is trying to fight you.

ALEX. So it's all in my head? You're gonna tell me you don't feel it too?

GREG. Feel what?

ALEX. God you won't even look at me.

GREG. I'm *looking*!

ALEX. It never used to be like this. We used to take care of each other. We used to make each other happy.

GREG. So what, you wanna divorce me? Great. Good luck finding someone else who'll put up with you. *(Beat. A wound. A long moment. Finally.)* I'm sorry.

ALEX. No. Don't be. At least now we're being honest.

GREG. Allie —

ALEX. So I'm sorry, okay? I'm sorry for making you so unhappy.

GREG. You make me *angry*. There's a / difference.

ALEX. I'm sorry for not paying enough attention to you, for taking you for granted. I'm sorry for all the ways I've fucked things up with Jake.

GREG. Alex —

ALEX. *(Sincerely.)* No, I mean it. You're probably right. I've been too hard on him. I've confused him. And now, on top of everything else, I've ruined his chances.

GREG. Please stop.

ALEX. And I am sorry about the baby. For whatever I did wrong —

GREG. I'm not asking you to apologize. *(Beat.)* Please. Let's just stop. *(A long moment.)*

ALEX. *(Quietly.)* They died inside me, Greg. Both of them. Don't pretend there's not some part of you that doesn't wonder — what that means. *(A moment. Alex waits for him to object. He says nothing. This hurts. Beat. Crying.)* I'm gonna have to tell my mother. Again. God I'll have to listen to the whole ... Like I've wounded her. Like it's just further proof / that I'm —

GREG. Not right now.

ALEX. A failure ...

GREG. Shhh ...

ALEX. And what if it happens again? What if it's always like this?

GREG. It won't be. I promise. Maybe we just need to wait a little while. Or maybe we see a specialist. We don't have to decide right now. *(Pause.)*

ALEX. God, you know, when Jake was born I thought: It's starting. I'm *starting* my life. We came home with him that first night, I was holding him in the bed and I thought ... Finally. I'm okay. This ... *means* something. This is ... real. *(Pause. Greg nods.)*

GREG. That was how I felt — when we got married. *(Alex stares at the table. A moment. Greg's cell phone rings. Greg takes it out. Looks at it.)* Judy. *(He silences it.)* She called before. At the hospital.

Left a message. She wanted to make sure everything was okay. *(A moment. Alex stands up from the table.)*

- ALEX. Well. It's not. *(Alex walks out of the room. Greg is alone. He pauses. Then suddenly kicks her chair over. He sits. A moment like this. Lights fade.)*

Scene 10

Soft light. Alex and the nurse. Alex thinks. A moment.

- 6
- ALEX. Well. Once upon a time ... *(Nurse nods. Pause.)* This feels silly.

NURSE. Keep going. Please?

ALEX. Once upon a time ... There was a girl named Cinderella. Who wanted to go to the ball. But she had nothing to wear. And her evil stepmother wouldn't let her go. They went to the ball and left her at home alone with the mice. In some versions, the mice sing songs. *(Pause.)*

NURSE. And then what?

ALEX. And then ... A fairy godmother appeared. She had a magic wand, and she turned the rags into a ball gown and the pumpkin into a carriage and the mice into horses, and now Cinderella could go. Because she had everything she needed. Oh, and slippers. She had glass slippers. That somehow didn't break when she put them on. That was the part of the story I never understood. How they didn't break. And that no one recognized her, at the ball. Her stepmother and stepsisters, they were there looking right at her and didn't know who she was. If it was me, I'd certainly recognize my daughter's face. *(Pause.)*

NURSE. Are you sure? *(A moment. Alex stares at the nurse. Something changes.)*

ALEX. Jake...? *(The nurse smiles.)*

NURSE. Keep going.

ALEX. Jake ... Oh ... sweetheart ...

NURSE. What happened next?

ALEX. You know what happened next.

NURSE. Tell me anyway. *(Pause.)*

ALEX. Well. She went to the ball, and she met the prince. And they fell in love. And they danced until midnight. She forgot all about the time. And before she knew it ... it was over.

NURSE. Over.

ALEX. Yes. The carriage, the gown, everything. It all turned back to what it was. She had to run home so he wouldn't see her rags.

NURSE. The clock struck twelve.

ALEX. Yes.

NURSE. And everything was as it had been. *(Alex stares.)*

ALEX. You're very tall, aren't you? *(Pause.)*

NURSE. The wife of a rich man fell sick, and as she felt that her end was drawing near, she called her only daughter to her bedside and said, "Dear child, be good and pious, and then the good God will always protect you, and I will look down on you from heaven and be near you." Thereupon she closed her eyes and departed.

ALEX. *(Smiles.)* The Grimms. It's a lovely beginning, isn't it? I always forget about Cinderella's mother. Her real mother. Your memory's better than mine. *(The nurse smiles. A moment.)*

NURSE. Do you remember McDonalds?

ALEX. McDonalds?

NURSE. Yes.

ALEX. I never took you to McDonalds.

NURSE. You did once. *(Pause.)*

ALEX. Oh. You mean — After Trinity. You'd done so well.

NURSE. And you'd promised.

ALEX. Yes.

NURSE. You'd promised if I behaved ...

ALEX. We'd go anywhere you wanted.

NURSE. Even McDonalds. *(Pause.)*

ALEX. And we stood in line. You wanted a Happy Meal. And the Happy Meal came with a little toy. You got to choose. Either a little car or truck, or a little plastic princess, in a yellow dress. So I held your hand and ordered, and the cashier said, "Okay, one Happy Meal, for a boy or a girl?" Because I guess she couldn't see you below the counter. Or she didn't care. *(Nurse waits.)*

NURSE. And you almost said something. *(Alex nods.)* You were tempted to give that cashier a lesson or two. About the reductiveness of gender norms in American society. The limitations of binary thinking. The dangerous assumptions communicated in what she

thought was an innocent question. But she was probably sixteen years old, and she had acne all over her face, and she was getting paid minimum wage to spend all day covered in sweat and grease, and so instead of saying any of that you just lowered your voice and said, very softly: / a girl.

ALEX. A girl. *(Beat.)* And I looked down at you, to see if you'd noticed. You were staring up at me, so intently, with a look I'd never seen before. And I said, Jake, what's the matter? What's wrong? And you waited a moment, and finally you said:

NURSE. Can we get McNuggets too. *(Alex smiles. The nurse smiles. A moment.)*

ALEX. And I said yes.

NURSE. You even ate one. *(A moment.)*

ALEX. Did I hurt you, Jake? *(The nurse smiles.)* Did I do something? *(Pause.)* I prayed so hard you'd be a boy.

NURSE. I know.

ALEX. You were growing inside me. Sometimes it felt like a miracle. Sometimes it felt like a cancer. And for some reason I kept praying: Please be a boy. Please. I thought I'd do better ... with a boy. But maybe I interfered. Maybe I did something. *(Pause.)* I wish you'd tell me. Please? ... Jake? *(Alex reaches out to touch the nurse's face. A clock strikes just before she does. Something changes.)*

NURSE. Midnight. *(It strikes again.)*

ALEX. Jake ... No ... *(Again.)* You're not Jake, are you? *(Again. The nurse smiles.)*

NURSE. I can't stay. *(Again.)*

ALEX. Oh. No. Don't go. *(Again.)* Please. *(Again.)* I don't even know your name. *(Again.)*

● NURSE. Dear child, be good and pious, *(Again.)* and then the good God will always protect you, *(Again.)* and I will look down on you from heaven and be near you. *(Again.)* Thereupon she closed her eyes *(Again.)* And departed. *(Lights fade. Music swells: Ilene Woods singing "A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes," from the Disney film.)*