



A KID LIKE JAKE

BY DANIEL PEARLE



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For my parents.

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ALEX..... Carla Gugino
GREG..... Peter Grosz
JUDY..... Caroline Aaron
NURSE..... Michelle Beck

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.

“I want to put happiness within his grasp.”

— Henrik Ibsen, *Little Eyolf*
Translated by Michael Meyer

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.)* Helloo?

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.

ALEX. No, not prep him, just —

GREG. (*Reading.*) *Preparing Your Child For the ERB.*

ALEX. Look, I don't want him feeling spooked if someone's asking questions he's never heard before. And I love Judy as much as you do, but there *are* preschools that incorporate more of this stuff into the curriculum.

GREG. Please don't call it a curriculum. (*Alex doesn't laugh. She grabs the book.*)

ALEX. You know, it's not like I'm trying to poison him.

GREG. Whoa, hey, / relax —

ALEX. So you can make fun of me, but the fact is if we're gonna apply, he does have to take the stupid thing, I wish he didn't. And Tyler got a 91 and almost got shut out / completely —

GREG. Why are you getting so upset? (*The phone rings. Stands.*) Here, sit, I'll get it. You want a beer?

ALEX. If it's my mom, just leave it. I can't right now. (*Greg exits. Alex sits.*)

GREG. (*Offstage.*) It's her.

ALEX. Of course it is. (*Greg lets it ring.*) She won't stop asking where we're applying.

GREG. (*Offstage.*) So don't tell her.

ALEX. I try, but she goes off on her rant about the money and if they're gonna help pay for his tuition they have a right to know where we want to send him. Woulda been nice if she'd cared so much about *my* education — (*Offstage, something falls.*)

GREG. Ah, crap.

ALEX. What.

GREG. What was Cinderella doing on the fridge?

ALEX. What?

GREG. She was up on top of the / fridge.

ALEX. (*Gasps.*) Oh shit, did it break? (*Greg reenters with a ceramic Cinderella figurine.*)

GREG. What? No — I caught it. (*Laughs.*) Relax.

ALEX. Sorry. (*Laughs.*) Tyler dropped her. Earlier. They were in the bathroom playing. Jake had made her a gown out of toilet paper or something. I guess he had her on the toilet seat for some reason, and Tyler knocked her off by accident. Anyway, Jake ran in, *crying*, with this — decapitated Cinderella. Like she'd been guillotined. And then *Tyler* started crying, poor thing, and of course Kelly kept asking if he'd apologized, did he *apologize*, which just made him feel worse —

GREG. (*Looking at it.*) So you superglued it?

ALEX. Yeah. I kept insisting — to everyone — that it was fine, but Jake kept saying, “No, there’s a crack! There’s a crack in her neck!” So I told him it was another necklace. (*Alex makes a guilty face at Greg.*)

GREG. (*Smiles.*) Did he buy that?

ALEX. I think so. But I put her up there so she could finish drying ... (*Sighs.*) Oh ... Christ. (*Greg sets the figurine down, puts a hand on her.*)

GREG. Stop, hey. Relax.

ALEX. No, I know —

GREG. You need to take a break. All right? You’re / tired.

ALEX. No, I’m fine, it’s not that, I just —

GREG. What? What’s the matter? Look at me. (*Alex looks at him, struggles.*)

ALEX. I think I’m pregnant. (*Beat.*)

GREG. Wait. (*Smiles.*) Are you serious? (*Alex smiles.*)

ALEX. I — took a test. Today.

GREG. Oh my God. Allie, that’s — What’s wrong? You’re not happy?

ALEX. No, I am. I just — I wasn’t gonna tell you. Right away. I was afraid of — I dunno ...

GREG. Sweetheart, lots of couples go through this. They try again —

ALEX. Right, but there’s still an increased likelihood something will go wrong —

GREG. Not necessarily. With Jake everything was fine. It’s not a pattern.

ALEX. Well, I don’t wanna make any assumptions. Okay? I / can’t —

GREG. And we won’t. We’ll just — you know, one day at a time, send positive energy to your — to you. (*Alex smiles. Greg looks at her.*) I mean, is it too soon? With all this going on? (*Alex shrugs, looks at the applications.*)

ALEX. I didn’t think it would happen so fast.

GREG. (*A joke.*) Well what can I say? (*Alex makes a face, smiles.*)

ALEX. Look, we send these off in a week or two, then — God willing — some interviews in November ... after that, *our* job is done, right? Just don’t say anything. To anyone.

GREG. I won’t.

ALEX. I mean it. Promise? (*Greg smiles.*)

GREG. I can’t believe you weren’t gonna tell me. (*Alex smiles. Suddenly, she thinks of something.*)

A KID LIKE JAKE

by Daniel Pearle

1M, 3W

On the eve of the admissions cycle for Manhattan's most exclusive private schools, Alex and Greg have high hopes for their son Jake, a precocious four-year-old who happens to prefer Cinderella to G.I. Joe. But as the process continues, Jake's behavior becomes erratic and perplexing, and other adults in his life start to wonder whether his fondness for dress-up might be cause for concern. The story of a husband and wife struggling to do right by their son, *A KID LIKE JAKE* is a study of intimacy and parenthood and the fantasies that accompany both.

"[A] smart, fluent drama ... Mr. Pearle has found an intriguing subject of real currency, and one that stirs our natural sympathy."

—**The New York Times**

"A KID LIKE JAKE is a searching, keenly perceptive look at how the nature-versus-nurture question can play out on the front lines of tolerance today."

—**Time Out (New York)**

"Daniel Pearle's polished new dramedy ... is full of perceptive details about the intense world of affluent parenting, where every child is gifted and the struggle for dominance begins at home."

—**New York Magazine**

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