



# USUAL GIRLS

BY **MING  
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DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.



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*To my younger self*

The world premiere of USUAL GIRLS was produced in New York City by Roundabout Theatre Company (Todd Haimes, Artistic Director; Julia C. Levy, Executive Director) as part of Roundabout Underground, at the Harold and Miriam Steinberg Center for Theatre, on November 5, 2018. It was directed by Tyne Rafaeli, the scenic design was by Arnulfo Maldonado, the costume design was by Ásta Bennie Hostetter, the lighting design was by Jen Schriever, and the sound design was by Tei Blow. The cast was as follows:

KYEOUNG .....	Midori Francis
ANNA .....	Abby Corrigan
LINDSAY .....	Nicole Rodenburg
MARINA/OLDER GIRL .....	Ali Rose Dachis
SASHA/OLDER GIRL/KKG SISTER .....	Sofia Black-D'Elia
RORY .....	Raviv Ullman
FATHER .....	Karl Kenzler
WOMAN .....	Jennifer Lim
OLDER GIRL/KKG SISTER .....	Ryann Redmond

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Infinite love and thanks to my brilliant mother, Diane, and my genius brother, Beau, for their love and unwavering support.

Poh Poh, I know you are watching over me. I love and miss you terribly.

Jill, I do not have the words to express my gratitude for your belief in this play. Thank you for everything.

Enormous appreciation to Lynn Nottage and David Henry Hwang for their invaluable guidance.

To Olivier, for fighting for me.

Lastly, my endless gratitude to Tyne Rafaeli and all the artists whose open hearts and incisive minds have indelibly shaped this play: Midori Francis, Abby Corrigan, Jennifer Lim, Sofia Black-D'Elia, Nicole Rodenburg, Karl Kenzler, Raviv Ullman, Ali Rose Dachis, and Ryann Redmond.

You have changed me.

## **CHARACTERS**

KYEOUNG

ANNA

LINDSAY

MARINA

SASHA

OLDER GIRL 1, 2, 3

KKG SISTER 1, 2, 3

RORY

FATHER

OLDER BOYS

WOMAN

## **DOUBLING**

The play can be performed by 9 actors.

Marina and Sasha can be doubled with Older Girl/KKG Sister.

Rory and Father can be doubled with Older Boys.

*The roles of Kyeong and Woman must be played by Asian actors.*

## **TIME**

Various scenes during Elementary School, Middle School,  
High School, College, & Now

## **PLACE**

Upper Arlington, Ohio,  
& New York City

All characters appearing in this work are fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

# USUAL GIRLS

## 1. “TOUCH”

*Ohio. Greensview Elementary.*

*Lindsay, Anna, and Kyeoung romp around the playground doing everything in their uncoordinated bodies' power to keep away from the mulch.*

*Sounds of children screaming, and see-saws squealing, and dry autumn leaves rustling along the asphalt. A gust of wind blows soft across the blacktop.*

ANNA. You touched! You touched!

KYEOUNG. No I didn't? Where?

LINDSAY. That corner. Your foot! You touched!

ANNA. Shoelaces untied! Shoelaces touched!

KYEOUNG. (*Bending down to tie them.*) Shoelaces don't / count?

LINDSAY and ANNA. Yes they do.

KYEOUNG. Since when?

LINDSAY. Since for/ever.

KYEOUNG. You never say that in the rules.

LINDSAY. You're new. You don't know how to play like we do. Shoelaces / count.

KYEOUNG. All you said was that the mulch was lava. And as long as I didn't touch it, I'd be / safe.

LINDSAY. Well I thought it was obvious cuz like, your shoe is on your foot, and if you jumped right into the lava—

*She jumps into the mulch, screaming.*

YOUR SHOES WOULD BURN OFF AND LIKE THE PLASTIC

WOULD MELT AWAY AND YOUR SKIN WOULD BE ON FFFFIIRRRREEEE AND YOUR BONES WOULD CRUMPLE INTO POWDER AS THE LAVA NINTENDO UNDERGROUND BOSS-LEVEL SUPER MARIO MONSTER DEVOURS EVERY SINGLE INCH OF YOU KYEOUNG UNTIL ALL THAT WAS LEFT WAS A BOILING PUDDLE OF KOREAN GIRL MAGMAAAAAAAAAA!!!!!!

*She jumps back onto a beam of wood.*

It's the logic of lava. The skin would be what's next for him to start eating. So *obviously*, your shoes count.

ANNA. *Obviously.*

LINDSAY. Otherwise we'd have to play naked for anyone to get out. And no one wants to see us doing that.

KYEOUNG. That's not true. Everyone wants to see girls naked.

LINDSAY. YUCK! No they don't.

KYEOUNG. Yes they do.

LINDSAY. *Nuh-Uhhh.*

KYEOUNG. *Yeah-Huhhh.*

I saw Rory and Michael looking at this biology book during Library. There was a picture of a naked lady with her legs wide open and a big wet baby head coming out? Shane Johnson? Was trying to look up our shorts morning recess when we were on the monkey bars and the other boys were playing first bounce fly? An—and that kid with the really scary light-blue eyes asked to see my boobs cuz it was his birthday last Friday, and when I said no he called me “prude” and said he never wanted to see my “mosquito bites” anyways... And my dad has these special magazines? Where everyone's naked?

LINDSAY. What are you talking about?

ANNA. I know! Victoria's Secrets?! We get those in the mail!

KYEOUNG. No um actually...

ANNA. My mom's always yelling at my dad about bringing the angels into the bathroom when he takes a shower. I wonder how they don't get wet? There are all these old ones in the basket my Gran Gran weaved before she died sitting right next to the toilet. With all the pages stuck together.



KYEOUNG. Those are different.

ANNA. How?

KYEOUNG. The girls are still wearing their panties in that.

LINDSAY. I hate that word.

ANNA. Lindsay says you're supposed to—

LINDSAY. Say underwear.

KYEOUNG. But my mom says panties cuz panties are specially for girls.

ANNA. Mine too! She's always "ANNA! Get your hands out of your panties! You're a lady and that's not what lady fingers do!"

LINDSAY. What did I say about using that word?

ANNA. Sorry.

LINDSAY. Kyeoung?

KYEOUNG. What?

LINDSAY. Apologize.

KYEOUNG. Um, *why*?

LINDSAY. Cuz I said so?

*Anna gives Kyeoung a look.*

KYEOUNG. Okay sorry whatever.

*Lindsay picks up a leaf. Spins it.*

LINDSAY. How'd you even find these *special magazines*?

KYEOUNG. My dad showed me. He's got a big brown Kroger bag full of 'em beneath the sink in his bathroom. My parents have separate bathrooms.

ANNA. Sooooo they're not like the Victoria Secrets?

KYEOUNG. I guess they're close. But those girls in the pictures are covered mostly—Well you can see that line where like their boobs start? My best friend Sam has this older sister Meredith who always had this friend Stacey over, who was in high school and was so cool and she told us all about that line on the chest because she was dressed up as a witch last Halloween and witches wear these things called "bustiers" which is another kind of grown-up underwear? Cleavage, she called it. She was 15. She had a lot of it. The cleavage.

Oh and sometimes they're wearing those weird-lookin' undies where the butt part is missing? Do you know what I'm talkin' about? And it looks kinda like you have a really really big wedgie? Kinda like sumo wrestler costume but not so diaper-y. Usually red. Or black. Instead of white or pink or blue like mine and they have these long see-through socks on that are connected to this belt thingy with straps that hang down and somehow hold on to the socks? Doesn't actually cover any—Oh I think those underwears, the wedgie ones, I remember now, are called "thongs." But I always get confused cuz my old nanny Violetta who was Filipino use to call my jelly flip-flop things *thongs* and then one time when the bus was coming she tried to shove a spoon up my brother's butt, so I don't know which is the right one. But anyways, since they're wearing underwear you can't see their like, vaginas and stuff.

ANNA. You mean *bathing suit area*?

LINDSAY. Anna. No one calls it that.

ANNA. But Mrs. Nesbitt says—

LINDSAY. (*Mocking.*) *But Mrs. Nesbitt says.*

ANNA. "*Bathing suit area*" is important. Cuz it means top privates AND bottom. She brought a picture to class of her daughter Megan in a one-piece and she touched the picture *here* and touched her *here* and said no one should touch us there unless it's washing.

KYEOUNG. The pictures I saw show everything the "bathing suit area" covers. Boobs. Vaginas. Some even have penises in them. With big hairy balls

ANNA. I've only seen my little brother's (penis) One Time we put Doritos and pepper down his pants he started screaming and my grandma had to take him to the bathtub to wash all the spicy stuff out—

LINDSAY. Gross.

KYEOUNG. My old babysitter had a son and she brought him to my house sometimes and he used to show me his penis whenever she turned around and wasn't looking One Time she went downstairs to go get laundry and he held me down and put his thingy on my arm until finally I bit his shoulder and he started bleeding and jumped away crying but I didn't tell anyone about the penis part so

I got in trouble because everyone, even my mom, thought I just bitted him for no reason.

LINDSAY. Did you guys not hear me say GROSS?

KYEOUNG. We heard you.

LINDSAY. Well, what are you going to do ab—

KYEOUNG. Am I out? Cuz if I am... I'm gonna go play tetherball.

*Kyeoung waits a second before she starts to walk away.*

LINDSAY. You said he showed them to you? You look at them together?

*Kyeoung turns back.*

KYEOUNG. Sometimes I go in and look by myself.

LINDSAY. And your mom doesn't say anything?

KYEOUNG. She's not home much. She works a lot.

ANNA. My mom would be so mad if she saw me looking at stuff like that. She already doesn't like my dad looking at those big-boobie ladies in their underwear.

KYEOUNG. She got mad this one time I showed her. This One Time when I was real little when I was learning to read. My m—mom was standing in the kitchen making her tea with the teddy bear honey and lemon an' I asked her how to say this one word that I didn't know cuz I wanted to know what it meant. Some have cartoons in them. The magazines. *Playboys* are my favorite. *Cuz I really like drawing.* Anyways I was looking at this one drawing of a naked lady wearing bunny ears and holding this big black wig between her legs. And surrounding her were these bubbles coming out of her mouth with words written inside them. And I remember I brought the magazine to my mom, opened it to where my finger was kept place, asked her a question just like "What word is this?," and when she saw the bunny-ear woman she got really really angry. Yelled at me. And then shouted out "*DALE*," that's my dad's name, and then I got in big trouble with the both of them... So now I never show her anything I'm interested in.

ANNA. What are the people doing in these pictures?

KYEOUNG. Lots of things.

LINDSAY. Like?

# USUAL GIRLS

by Ming Peiffer

2 men, 7 women

Kyeoung has spent her entire life negotiating the double standards imposed on her as an Asian-American woman. Bullied by boys in childhood, ostracized by girls as a teen, and gas-lit by men as an adult, her experiences with sexuality grow more and more challenging. As we trace Kyeoung from the insecurity of puberty to the disenchantment of her adult life, *USUAL GIRLS* chronicles the wonder, pain, and complexity of growing up female.

*"USUAL GIRLS is exciting to watch. With hilarity and grimness, it connects the dots between pleasure, pain and shame."* —**The New York Times**

*"...delivers multiple punches to the gut... Although it includes many darkly humorous moments...USUAL GIRLS is a primal scream of a play that wants to make you squirm, and it succeeds."* —**Time Out New York**

*"Peiffer's play explores female sexuality without attaching it to a love story. It's a gutsy, vulnerable piece of writing and part of what feels like an immensely heartening wave of intelligent, compassionate, unafraid-to-get-ugly plays... [USUAL GIRLS] remains clear-eyed and forceful, and it shines a neon light on how much of growing up, for usual girls, is a process of unlearning."*  
—**New York Magazine**

*"USUAL GIRLS is certainly not a comfortable evening in the theater, but it's never less than thought-provoking."* —**The Hollywood Reporter**

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