

CHILD'S PLAY

by
Kevin D. Ferguson

CHILD'S PLAY

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CHILD'S PLAY

DEDICATION

Child's Play is dedicated to all the therapists who help children find lost voices, to my parents Doug and Gerry Ferguson who have always encouraged my voice, and to my best friend Trudy Sauvageau for her love and patience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge Todd Ristau, founder of the Playwrights Lab at Hollins University without which I would not be a playwright. Also John Bergman, whose Geese Theatre Company staged readings of *Child's Play* at several conferences. And Ruth Margraff, whose experimental playwriting course planted the first seeds of the play.

CHILD'S PLAY

Child's Play was first performed in Myrtle Beach, SC on April 26, 2013 at Atlantic Stage.

JEN PLANTS as VERA
STEVE EARNEST as ROGER
ASHTON MEYER as CINDY
CANDACE STIMPSON as JULIA
JASON ADAMS as PETER
MICHAEL QUINN as THE KING
STACY DISPASQUALE as THE QUEEN
VERONICA GRAY as THE PRINCESS
MADDIE PENN* as NINJA GIRL
JASON ADAMS as THE DRAGON (ACT ONE)
STEVE EARNEST as THE DRAGON (ACT TWO)

Directed by THOM PENN

*MINDI PENN appeared as NINJA GIRL at performances when MADDIE PENN was unavailable.

SCENIC DESIGNER.....JENNIFER HEBDA
LIGHTING DESIGNER.....THOM PENN
PROJECTIONS DESIGNER.....MINDI PENN
SOUND DESIGNER.....TAYLOR DANKOVICH
COSTUME DESIGNER.....MARJORIE CRAIG MITCHELL
MAKE-UP DESIGNER.....ROBIN EDWARDS RUSSELL
PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER.....MARJORIE CRAIG MITCHELL

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

VERA HEIGL, a child therapist

ROGER, a colleague with a romantic interest in Vera

CINDY STILLMAN, Vera's ten-year old client

JULIA STILLMAN, Cindy's mother

PETER STILLMAN, Cindy's stepfather

THE DRAGON, a miniature toy (Can be doubled by actor playing Peter in Act One and actor playing Roger in Act Two.)

THE KING, a miniature toy

THE QUEEN, a miniature toy

NINJA GIRL, a miniature toy

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SETTINGS

Vera's office space, used for talk therapy and for sand tray and play therapy

Julia and Cindy's mother/daughter space

Sandbox space

The sandbox space must be large enough for the actors portraying the miniature toys to have adequate freedom of movement. The sandbox **MUST** be painted blue on the bottom and the insides. It is a life-size representation of a sand tray, which is 28 1/2" x 19 1/2" x 3" and blue on the inside bottom and sides. The sandbox space must be prominent.

Projections of Cindy's drawings are utilized. The projections can be live projections of the actor as she draws, pre-made projections of drawings in progress corresponding to the stage directions, or projections of the finished drawings described in the stage directions.

COSTUMES

Costumes for Vera, Roger, Cindy, Julia, and Peter should be simple but realistic.

Costumes for the Dragon, the King, the Queen, the Princess, and the Ninja Girl should be colorful and toy-like. The Dragon should be a very scary toy.

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ACT 1 SCENE 1

VERA STANDS in her office space.

VERA. So. Clients come to me demanding to feel better. Feel better. One girl - pretty, petite, gorgeous brown hair, big brown eyes, precocious - we'll call her "Lucy" - comes once a week. You'd know her father, he's quite famous, a politician, gobs of money - you see him in the news all the time, perfect hair, nice blue suit - not too nice, so the public can relate. Lucy came in sobbing. Eleven years old, sobbing uncontrollably. Kicked her Louis Vuitton handbag across the foyer. Sandy, the receptionist, buzzed immediately because of the scene this girl was making. Well, at least I didn't have to mess around with "You seem to be feeling sad today". Turns out she had a show horse. Beautiful chestnut Hanoverian. Her father had sold it that day. Lucy burst out in between sobs "He. Sold. My. 50,000. Dollar. Horse. And. Bought. Me. A. 10,000. Dollar. Horse. Daddy doesn't love me anymore." Dead serious. Sprawled out on my couch. A little princess in her pink Jimmy Choo sandals. Screaming that her daddy didn't love her anymore because he sold this horse. Me, biting the inside of my cheeks til they bled so I didn't start laughing at her. God, I'm so tired of listening to these spoiled kids who think they're the center of the universe. But what's worse are the ones who really do need me. The ones in so much pain it oozes out of them like pus from an angry boil. Physical pain. Dense. Pain with its own gravity. Pulling you in like a great big black hole. Sucking all your energy, sucking all your life. The whiny ones and the needy ones, draining you dry. Each one a black hole at the center of their own selfish little universe. And any minute I could get stuck in their orbits, pulled down by their gravity, crushed in their black holes. (*Vera gathers her poise, mood shifting to humorously sarcastic self-awareness.*) I'm thinking of quitting. Ethically, I really should. Vicarious traumatization. Compassion fatigue. A gradual lessening of

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compassion in individuals working with victims of trauma. A clinical way of saying I no longer give a shit about these kids. Wonder if Anna Freud ever felt this way?

SCENE 2

Vera sits at her desk and begins paperwork. ROGER ENTERS with a file in hand. She doesn't look up. Roger's flirtatious banter is playful, caring, sometimes sad, but never creepy. It is a familiar dance they share.

VERA. Not taking any new cases, Roger.

ROGER. It's up your alley.

VERA. Not interested.

ROGER. C'mon, Vera. Just take a look. *(Roger slides the file onto the desk. Vera slides it back off.)*

VERA. No. *(Silence.)*

ROGER. Look stressed.

VERA. Am stressed.

ROGER. Could give you a shoulder rub.

VERA. Don't want a shoulder rub. *(Silence.)*

ROGER. Look good today.

VERA. Don't.

ROGER. Don't what?

VERA. That. Don't. Don't start.

ROGER. Well, you look good.

VERA. Thought I looked stressed.

ROGER. You do.

VERA. Well, which? Do I look good, or do I look stressed?

ROGER. Both.

VERA. Not changing my mind, Roger. *(Silence.)*

ROGER. Let me consult with you, at least. *(Silence.)*

VERA. What've you got?

ROGER. Ten-year old girl. Selective mutism.

VERA. Who's been treating her?

ROGER. No one. She just quit talking.

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VERA. To anyone?

ROGER. As far as I can tell.

VERA. Not selective mutism. Doesn't talk at home?

ROGER. Not according to her parents.

VERA. Was there some trigger?

ROGER. Not that anyone knows.

VERA. She just quit talking?

ROGER. Seems so. No one's sure.

VERA. What'd her teacher say?

ROGER. That she was always quiet. Bright. No behavior problems. One day the teacher called on her, and she wouldn't answer. Teacher couldn't remember the last time the girl spoke.

VERA. And the parents?

ROGER. Vague. Said she'd always been quiet, but never just not talked before. Think they were embarrassed they didn't notice sooner.

VERA. And no trigger?

ROGER. Not that anyone noticed. *(Silence.)*

VERA. What's her name?

ROGER. Cindy. *(Lights down. Roger exits.)*

SCENE 3

CINDY enters Vera's office. She looks around curiously but not shyly. She does not speak. Vera rises to greet her.

VERA. Hello. My name is Vera. *(Cindy solemnly shakes Vera's hand. They sit, Vera next to Cindy.)* Cindy, sometimes when something's bothering a kid, their parents send them to see me. And sometimes when something a kid does is bothering a parent, their parents send them to see me. Is anything bothering you? *(Cindy shakes her head no.)* Is something bothering your parents? *(Cindy nods yes.)* Do you know what's bothering your parents? *(Cindy nods yes.)* Is your not speaking bothering your parents? *(Cindy nods yes.)* Well, I'm going to share something with you. I'm not your parents' therapist. I'm your therapist. So we're going to spend our time together on things that are bothering you, not things that are bothering them.

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OK? *(Cindy nods yes.)* But with you not speaking, we're going to have to try some different ways for me to get to know you, OK? *(Cindy nods yes.)* Before we try any of these ways, I have to tell you three things. First, everything we do in this room is confidential. Confidential is a word that means I'm not going to tell your parents what we do. You can. You can tell anyone you want. But I can't unless you give me permission. OK? *(Cindy nods yes.)* Second, there are two exceptions to this rule. An exception means there are two ways I'd have to break this rule. Got that? *(Cindy nods yes.)* Third, here are the exceptions. If you let me know somebody has been hurting you, I have to tell. It's the rule. And if you let me know you're planning to hurt yourself, or hurt somebody else, I have to tell. Otherwise, it's all confidential. Straight with that? *(Cindy nods yes.)* OK. And your parents are going to want to know how you're doing, and I'll let them know how you're doing, but I'm not going to tell them what you're doing. That's between us. *(Cindy flashes an OK sign.)* Okay. *(Vera pulls out blank paper and drawing implements.)* What I'd like for you to do today is just draw a picture of your family doing something together. Can you do that? *(Cindy affirms this and begins drawing. As she draws, a projection of the drawing appears. Cindy draws a picture of herself with no mouth and no hands. Her mother is a larger figure with big hands, but no mouth. Her father is distant, small, and looking away. An empty picnic basket is in the corner. Cindy puts down the drawing materials and leans back when done.)* Is there anything you'd like me to know about the drawing? *(Cindy shakes her head no.)* *(The projection is the last to fade. JULIA ENTERS the mother/daughter space. Cindy goes to her.)*

SCENE 4

JULIA. Did you say anything? *(Cindy shakes her head no.)*

JULIA. What did you do? *(Cindy shrugs.)*

JULIA. You can't keep on this way. It isn't normal! *(Cindy is a stone.)*

JULIA. Say something! *(Cindy does not. Silence. Julia and Cindy exit.)*

SCENE 5

Vera stands in her office space.

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VERA. So. When I was in graduate school, we learned to interpret children's drawings. This means that, and blue means this, and red means blah, and blah blah blah. Then our professor put a drawing up for us to interpret. Family in a dark room. Mom, Dad, brother, sister. Sitting on a couch. Dark room. One streak of yellow in a corner. Kid had spent a considerable amount of time pressing the black crayon into the paper. You know, when you get that really waxy crayon sheen to a drawing. And streaked in was this one freaky streak of yellow, jagged and terrible. Our professor asked the class to interpret this drawing. We had just spent a semester learning all this crap, after all. We went to town. The kid's depressed. The family is dysfunctional. Possibly abusive. Bad things are happening here. The professor let us go on and on and on. Finally he shut down the projector. Told us the kid was his kid. The family was his family. His son had drawn the drawing. We were shocked. Somebody asked, "What was going on?" The professor said the power had gone out. The family stopped whatever they'd been doing and sat down together. They lit a candle. Took turns telling stories until the lights came back on. One of his kid's best memories. The kid had been asked to draw a picture of his happiest time with his family. The lesson was, you really can't tell. We'd had all this training. But drawings mean different things to different people. There's really only one way to interpret drawings. Ask. Ask. Why did I take on Cindy's case? I don't know. It was interesting. She was interesting. And I can get her to speak. In time. Eventually. She's a smart cookie. But so am I. And she's got something to say. I can get her to speak. But can I give her a voice? Truly give her a voice? No. I can't. She'll have to find that for herself.

SCENE 6

Vera sits at her desk and does paperwork. Roger enters.

ROGER. Got a minute?

VERA. No.

ROGER. How's it going with Cindy?

VERA. Fine.

ROGER. The Stillmans are pressuring me.

VERA. We've established a relationship. She's making progress.

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ROGER. Has she said anything?

VERA. Think I'd have mentioned it if she had.

ROGER. Need to tell them something.

VERA. You know how I work.

ROGER. They're the parents, Vera.

VERA. Not their therapist. Cindy's therapist.

ROGER. But they're the ones paying the bills.

VERA. You brought me the case. Didn't ask for it.

ROGER. Why don't you fill me in? Over drinks.

VERA. Go away, Roger.

ROGER. C'mon. One drink.

VERA. Not going down that road. Again.

ROGER. Old times sake.

VERA. No. *(Silence.)*

ROGER. Terry's leaving me.

VERA. I'm sorry.

ROGER. Yeah.

VERA. I really am sorry, Roger.

ROGER. She's taking the kids.

VERA. That's rough.

ROGER. Yeah. *(Silence.)* Funny.

VERA. What?

ROGER. Hundred and fifty dollars an hour.

VERA. Don't do that.

ROGER. Family therapist extraordinaire.

VERA. You'll make yourself crazy.

ROGER. Can't hold on to my own family.

VERA. We can't treat ourselves.

ROGER. I know.

VERA. Go see someone.

ROGER. Got an appointment open?

VERA. Only see kids.

ROGER. How about a big kid?

VERA. Seriously, Roger. See someone.

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ROGER. How about I see you?

VERA. Okay, we're done. Go away.

ROGER. Sorry. Sorry. *(Silence.)* You know how I-

VERA. Not going to happen. *(Silence.)*

ROGER. Yeah. Okay. *(Silence.)* At least meet with the Stillmans.

VERA. Planning on it.

ROGER. Oh?

VERA. Appointment tomorrow.

ROGER. Family session?

VERA. Background interview.

ROGER. Didn't think you worked that way.

VERA. Client doesn't talk.

ROGER. How does Cindy feel about that?

VERA. She said it was okay.

ROGER. Said?

VERA. Figure of speech.

ROGER. They can be tough.

VERA. So can I.

ROGER. Tell me about it. *(Silence.) (Lights down. Roger exits.)*

SCENE 7

The Stillmans, PETER and Julia, enter Vera's office space.

VERA. Mr. and Mrs. Stillman. Pleasure to meet you.

PETER. Likewise, Dr. Heigl. Please call me Peter. And this is my wife, Julia.

VERA. Call me Vera. And I'm not a doctor. I have a Master's degree.

PETER. I just assumed.

VERA. Happens all the time.

JULIA. Has Cindy spoken to you yet? Has she said anything?

VERA. Cindy communicates quite well. But no, she's not spoken out loud.

JULIA. How long do you think this silence is going to go on? Can you get her to speak?

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VERA. I can't give you those answers. Therapy is a process that takes time. Unfortunately, we don't have a way to speed that process up.

JULIA. You must think we're terrible parents.

VERA. I'm not here to judge you. I'm here to help Cindy.

PETER. My wife is naturally concerned. We both are. What's wrong with Cindy?

VERA. That's something I think we'd all like to find out. What can you tell me about Cindy? What was she like as a baby?

JULIA. Why is that important?

VERA. It isn't, necessarily. I'd just like to get the best possible idea of Cindy's life up until now. It could be helpful.

JULIA. Cindy was a perfectly normal baby. Started walking at about a year and a half. Talking at two years. She was just normal. I don't understand why she's doing this to us!

VERA. Peter, what is your impression of Cindy's early years?

PETER. Well, I'm actually Cindy's stepfather. Julia and I didn't meet until Cindy was four. Then we started dating. I remember Cindy was a very precocious little girl.

VERA. Precocious in what ways?

PETER. Well, she was just a bright little kid. Very bright. Always asking questions. We got along right away. Didn't we, Julia?

JULIA. Cindy took to Peter from the start. She hadn't had a father figure - I was unmarried when I had Cindy, her biological father has not maintained contact.

VERA. That must have been very hard on you.

JULIA. Oh, not really. My boss was a single mother. Very understanding. You hear horror stories, but my experience wasn't any harder than you'd expect. Juggling work and Cindy was tough, but- Then Peter came along-

PETER. We moved in together when Cindy was five.

VERA. That must have been an adjustment for everybody.

JULIA. Actually, no. Everything was perfect.

PETER. Well, it was a bit of an adjustment for me.

JULIA. What are you talking about?

PETER. Julia, I went from being a single guy to instant Dad. It took some adjusting.

VERA. That would be normal.

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JULIA. Oh, he took to Cindy right away. And she took to him.

VERA. When did you get married?

PETER. We made it official six months ago.

VERA. So you lived together for the first five years?

JULIA. We knew we were going to stay together; the marriage was just a formality.

VERA. How did Cindy react to the marriage?

JULIA. She was thrilled!

PETER. Cindy was very excited. She really was. She wanted to be involved in every aspect of the wedding planning.

JULIA. Cindy was a maid-of-honor. She wore a little white dress, almost like a little bride herself. We had her come up during our vows.

PETER. We lit a family candle together.

JULIA. A unity candle. You know, we each had a family candle. And in the middle was the unity candle. Cindy helped us light it.

VERA. Sounds like you thought everything out.

JULIA. She ran around talking to everyone that day. I don't understand what any of this has to do with Cindy's problem.

VERA. As I said, it may not have anything to do with it. I just want to get the widest picture possible.

JULIA. Oh, our wedding day was perfect. Cindy was talking up a storm. Everything was normal.

PETER. Almost perfect.

VERA. Almost perfect?

PETER. Julia's parents almost didn't come. We delayed the start of the wedding.

JULIA. I don't see what that has to do with anything.

PETER. Julia's parents disapproved of our living together. Her father doesn't like me.

JULIA. That's not true. He just takes time to get used to people, that's all.

PETER. Five years.

VERA. How is that relationship now?

PETER. Still a bit tense.

JULIA. My father has gotten used to Peter. He has been very supportive of our marriage.

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PETER. Well, let's just say he's been accepting of the marriage.

JULIA. Things are fine.

PETER. We don't have a lot of contact. Holidays, things like that.

JULIA. What has any of this got to do with Cindy?

VERA. Possibly nothing. Children can sense tension, though.

JULIA. *(Julia bursts into tears.)* Cindy has had everything she could ever want. I raised Cindy on my own for five years, and if I did anything wrong, it was to spoil her. After Peter came along, she had a daddy who spoiled her even more. I don't understand why she's doing this to us!

VERA. I think it's important to keep in mind that Cindy is not doing this to you. There is something going on with Cindy. She needs our help.

JULIA. Forgive me, but that's easy for you to say. You don't have to live with the silence. You don't have to live with a child who doesn't speak! You don't have to live with a daughter who used to be bright and funny and now acts like a ghost!

PETER. Julia, it's okay.

JULIA. It's not okay. She doesn't know what's wrong with Cindy. Nobody knows what's wrong with Cindy. It's not okay. It's just not! *(Peter comforts his wife.)*
(Lights out. Peter and Julia exit.)

SCENE 8

The mother/daughter space. Cindy is in bed. She cries in her sleep. She makes whimpering sounds- no words- sounds a baby would make when calling for her mother. Julia enters. She watches. She does not go to Cindy. She does not comfort Cindy. She looks at Cindy, her face a mask of deep but unreadable emotion. Julia exits.)

SCENE 9

Vera in her office space. Cindy enters.

VERA. Cindy! How are you today? *(Cindy shrugs, but smiles.)* I've been thinking a lot about the last session. *(Cindy looks inquisitive.)* I wonder if you could do another drawing for me today. *(Cindy affirms that she could.)* Good. I was wondering if today you could draw a picture of your hopes. *(Cindy looks at her as if she is crazy.)* I know, I know. It sounds weird. "Draw a picture of your hopes." Just

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try to think of what you hope for. Maybe some future thing. Maybe what you hope to get out of seeing me. I don't want to tell you too much. I want it to come from you. OK? *(Cindy accepts blank paper and drawing implements. She sits thinking for a moment. Then she begins to draw. As before, her drawing is projected as she draws. Cindy draws a sun in the right hand corner of the page.)* You're drawing the sun. *(Cindy affirms that it is the sun. She draws green grass.)* And some grass. *(Cindy gives her a 'you're half-way there' gesture and look.)* The ground. The earth. *(Cindy affirms that this is close enough. She starts to draw a little girl.)* You're drawing a girl. *(Cindy fills in everything but the face, which is blank. She pauses.)* You're deciding something. *(Cindy stares at the blank-faced little girl. She crumples up the paper and puts her head down.)* Something about your drawing makes you sad. *(Silence. They sit together for a moment. Cindy raises her head and sits up.)* Is there anything you want to let me know about your sadness? *(Cindy shrugs.)* Do you think you could draw your sadness? *(Cindy shakes her head no.)* Okay. Maybe another time? *(Cindy gives her a non-committal maybe response.)* Let's try something else. It might be hard, but let's try. How about drawing a picture of your fears. Draw what you're afraid of. *(Cindy stares at her, then reaches for the paper and drawing implements. Again her drawing is projected as she creates it. Cindy places a tiny figure of a little girl at the bottom of the page.)* There's a girl. *(With great intensity of feeling Cindy begins to shape a terrifying monster engulfing the figure of the little girl. The monster consumes the page. Evil is personified in this monster.)* A monster is there. The girl is afraid of the monster. *(Cindy affirms that this is so. She then looks away. This is all she can handle right now.)* Cindy, in this part of our time together you can choose to do almost anything. *(Cindy looks around Vera's space, weighing her choices. She picks up various things and puts them down again.)* You're deciding what to do. *(Cindy affirms this. She goes to the sand tray.) (Lights up dim on the sandbox space.) (Cindy looks at miniature figures for the sand tray.)* You picked that. *(Cindy affirms this.) (Cindy picks up a miniature and examines it. She smiles.)* You chose the dog. *(Cindy puts it back.)* You like the dog, but you didn't pick it. *(Cindy affirms this. She picks up the dragon. She frowns.)* You don't like that one. *(Cindy places it on the edge of the sand tray.)* You don't like it, but you chose it. But you didn't put it in the sand tray. *(Cindy affirms. She picks up a miniature Ninja Girl. She looks at it thoughtfully.)* You're thinking about that one. *(Cindy reluctantly replaces it.)* You didn't pick it.

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(Cindy picks up three figures: The King, The Queen, and The Princess. She places them in the sand tray. THE KING, THE QUEEN, and THE PRINCESS ENTER and take corresponding positions in the sandbox space. Every move they make corresponds to Cindy's play.) You made your choices.

SCENE 10

Lights come up full on the sandbox space as they dim to half in Vera's space. "Royal family" music underscores the scene.

KING. Shall we have tea?

QUEEN. Let us do. I dearly love tea. *(The Princess skips in circles within the center of the sandbox.)*

QUEEN. Dearest, would you like tea?

PRINCESS. Yes, mummy, I would love tea.

QUEEN. And cakes. We shall have cakes.

KING. Tea and cakes. Spot on.

PRINCESS. What kind of cakes, Mummy?

QUEEN. Whatever kind you like, Princess.

PRINCESS. With jam, Mummy?

QUEEN. Of course with jam.

KING. Jam. Jolly good. And cream. Cream and Jam.

PRINCESS. What kind of jam, Mummy?

QUEEN. Whatever kind you like, Princess.

PRINCESS. With blackberry jam?

KING. Blackberry jam. Jolly good.

QUEEN. Then we must pick blackberries, princess.

PRINCESS. Oh, can we? Can we pick blackberries?

KING. Blackberry picking. Jolly good.

QUEEN. We shall go blackberry picking. *(The Princess stops skipping and picks imaginary blackberries, as does the King and the Queen. Each places them in an imaginary basket.)* Lovely day for blackberry picking.

KING. Lovely day.

QUEEN. Such nice ripe blackberries.

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KING. Nice and ripe.

QUEEN. We'll have such sweet jam.

KING. Very sweet jam.

PRINCESS. And cakes, mummy.

QUEEN. Yes, dearest. And cakes.

KING. Cakes and jam.

QUEEN. With our tea.

KING. Cakes and jam. With our tea.

PRINCESS. Mummy, there are thorns.

QUEEN. Thorns?

PRINCESS. Yes, mummy.

QUEEN. Can't have thorns. There are no thorns.

PRINCESS. But there are thorns, Mummy. *(The Queen and the King hear no more about thorns. The Queen prepares imaginary tea.)*

QUEEN. Shall we have tea?

KING. Yes, lets. Jolly good.

QUEEN. Shall I pour?

KING. Yes, pour. Spot on.

PRINCESS. There are thorns, Mummy. *(The Queen pours tea and hands a cup to the King.)*

KING. Delicious, Darling.

QUEEN. Oh, good. Princess, tea?

PRINCESS. Mummy, there are thorns.

QUEEN. Sugar, Princess? One lump or two?

PRINCESS. Thorns, Mummy. I'm bleeding.

QUEEN. Cream... or lemon?

PRINCESS. Bleeding, Mummy.

QUEEN. Cake, darling?

KING. Don't mind if I do. Delicious!

QUEEN. Jam, darling? Blackberry jam?

KING. Blackberry jam. Spot on.

PRINCESS. I AM BLEEDING, MUMMY.

QUEEN. Drink your tea, Princess.

PRINCESS. I don't want tea.

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QUEEN. Eat your cakes.

PRINCESS. I don't want cake.

QUEEN. Drink your tea and eat your cakes.

PRINCESS. I don't want tea! I don't want cake!

QUEEN. Eat your jam.

PRINCESS. I DON'T WANT JAM! I'M BLEEDING! *(The Dragon's roar reverberates menacingly.) (The King throws himself forward into the sandbox and buries his head in the sand.) (Lights out on the sandbox space and Vera's space. Cindy exits. King, Queen, and Princess sit as if figures on a shelf.)*

SCENE 11

Vera's space. Mrs. Stillman [Julia] enters.

JULIA. Thank you for seeing me on such short notice. I really couldn't say this over the phone.

VERA. You said you had something important to tell me?

JULIA. Yes. I didn't want to say this where Peter might hear. He doesn't know.

VERA. Doesn't know what?

JULIA. He's so close to Cindy, you see.

VERA. Yes?

JULIA. When Cindy was younger, she used to do things - say things - to get attention.

VERA. What kinds of things?

JULIA. Oh, I don't even know if it's important.

VERA. You thought it was important enough to schedule the appointment.

JULIA. When Cindy was younger, before Peter came along, she would make up stories.

VERA. What kind of stories?

JULIA. Oh, preposterous stories. She would tell her pre-school teacher that I wouldn't feed her. She would tell them that she was alone at night. She would say all kinds of terrible things.

VERA. None of it was true?

CHILD'S PLAY

JULIA. Of course it wasn't true! You have no idea what it was like - having the pre-school teacher call and accuse me of starving my child! Of leaving her alone!

VERA. Must have been hard, single parenting. No support.

JULIA. It was. Never even dated until Peter. Never been with anyone else- except- Cindy's- biological father. And Peter and I used a sitter. Cindy was never alone.

VERA. Were any formal inquiries made?

JULIA. Oh, no. Nothing like that. I don't even think they really believed Cindy. But just to be questioned like that...

VERA. Must have been very hard on you.

JULIA. You can't imagine. So you see, you can't believe everything Cindy tells you.

VERA. You're afraid Cindy will say something against you?

JULIA. Honestly, I don't know what to think. This is all so bizarre and unsettling.

VERA. What do you think is happening with Cindy?

JULIA. I think she wants attention! And she's getting it. She's all Peter and I talk about anymore. Is Cindy speaking yet, when will Cindy speak, please Cindy say something. I think she's doing it on purpose!

VERA. Why would she do that?

JULIA. I don't know! Maybe it's because of the wedding. Maybe she thinks she's not getting enough of Peter's attention anymore.

VERA. Has anything changed since the wedding?

JULIA. No, nothing. We were planning to move, but we put that on hold when she stopped speaking.

VERA. You must feel stuck.

JULIA. Sometimes I think she does it to spite me.

VERA. What makes you think that?

JULIA. I don't know. I'm sorry; I said what I came to say. I have to go. (*Julia exits.*) (*Lights down.*)

SCENE 12

Vera and Roger in her office space.

VERA. No record whatsoever?

CHILD'S PLAY

ROGER. None.

VERA. What'd the school say?

ROGER. Pre-school teacher left three years ago.

VERA. And the accusations?

ROGER. No one knows anything about it.

VERA. Hum.

ROGER. Current teacher reports no problems.

VERA. Lying? Exaggerations? Story-telling?

ROGER. Imaginative, but separates fantasy from reality.

VERA. No attention-seeking behaviors?

ROGER. Opposite. Avoids attention.

VERA. Completely?

ROGER. Quiet kid. Took awhile to notice she'd quit speaking.

VERA. What is Julia's deal?

ROGER. Don't know. What do you think happened to Cindy?

VERA. We'll know when she tells us. Not jumping to conclusions. *(Silence.)* Next time Peter brings Cindy, I want to see him after.

ROGER. Fine by me. *(Roger lingers.)*

VERA. What?

ROGER. You know what.

VERA. No.

ROGER. Vera-

VERA. Friends. Colleagues. Don't mess that up. *(Roger exits.)*

SCENE 13

Cindy is in Vera's space. She picks up the dragon miniature and places it on the edge of the sand tray. Lights up dim on the sandbox space. Queen, King, and Princess look on from their places, toys on the shelf.

VERA. The dragon. *(Cindy affirms. She looks at the figures thoughtfully again. She picks up the Ninja Girl figure. Ninja Girl enters the sandbox space. Cindy places the ninja girl miniature in the center of the sand tray. Ninja Girl takes the corresponding position in the sandbox.)* You chose that one. *(Cindy affirms. She*

CHILD'S PLAY

begins playing with the ninja girl miniature. Lights dim in Vera's space. Lights up full in sandbox space. The Ninja Girl's theme music underscores the scene. The Ninja Girl executes a series of martial arts exercises within the sandbox space. She is lithe and graceful, free and confident. As she moves, Ninja Girl makes a series of staccato vocalizations.)

NINJA GIRL. Hai, hai, hai, hai, hai, hai. (*Pronounced "Hi."*) (*After a rapid set of serious martial arts moves, Ninja girl strikes a cute pose and waves playfully to the audience.*) Hi! (*Ninja Girl skips in a circle around the sandbox much as the Princess did. In Vera's space, lights still dim, Cindy reaches for the princess miniature and puts it in the sand tray. The Princess rises from her position and enters the sandbox space. Ninja Girl and Princess look at one another a moment. Ninja Girl does a short bow from the waist. Princess curtsies. They take each other's hands. The Dragon's eyes glow menacingly behind the Princess and Ninja Girl. The Dragon's roar reverberates. Ninja Girl and Princess freeze and do not move. Lights down both spaces. Ninja Girl and Princess sit at the edge of the sandbox space, toys on a shelf. Cindy exits.*)

SCENE 14

Vera and Peter in her office space.

PETER. I thought Cindy was happy we were getting married.

VERA. What makes you think she's unhappy?

PETER. You mean other than the fact that she doesn't speak anymore?

VERA. Yes. Other than that.

PETER. She was happy until the wedding.

VERA. You noticed changes after the wedding?

PETER. After the honeymoon. We came back, she was like a different child.

VERA. Had she quit speaking?

PETER. No, she was still speaking. But she was moody.

VERA. Can you give me an example?

PETER. Well, Julia would ask her to do something - the simplest thing - like make her bed - and Cindy would snap at her.

VERA. She'd never done that before?

CHILD'S PLAY

PETER. No.

VERA. Not unusual for her age.

PETER. No, but it was unusual for Cindy. She'd always been so - happy.

VERA. Had you ever noticed anything before? Did she make up stories? Lie to get attention? That kind of thing?

PETER. Good Lord. No. Never.

VERA. And the two of you got along well?

PETER. Very well. Like I said before. I'm really the only Dad she's ever known. We're pretty close. Were pretty close.

VERA. Were?

PETER. She doesn't like to be around anybody now.

VERA. Stays in her room?

PETER. No. She doesn't really stay in her room much either. She plays outside. By herself. We have to call her in the house. When it gets dark.

VERA. How are you handling all of this, Peter?

PETER. Not very well. Cindy is... well, you know how Cindy is. Julia is angry all the time. Taut as a wire.

VERA. And you're in the middle.

PETER. Yes.

VERA. Is this a new dynamic?

PETER. Not really.

VERA. Not new in what way?

PETER. Frankly, Julia was always a bit jealous of how well Cindy and I got along.

VERA. She didn't want you to get along?

PETER. I mean, she was happy we clicked. But sometimes I got the feeling she didn't want us to click as well as we did.

VERA. Have you ever discussed this?

PETER. God, no.

VERA. What would happen if you did? *(Peter stares at her without answering. Lights down. Peter exits.)*

SCENE 15

Cindy and Vera in Vera's office space.

CHILD'S PLAY

VERA. I've been thinking a lot about the work we've done in here, and I was wondering if you could do something for me today. *(Cindy looks inquisitive.)* I was wondering if you could draw what it is to feel sad. *(Vera offers the blank paper and drawing implements. Cindy does not take them.)* You don't want to do that. It's hard to think about things that make you feel sad. *(Cindy affirms this.)* How about this, then. How about you draw a picture of your house for me. Show me your house. *(Cindy takes the paper and drawing implements. As before, her drawing is projected. Cindy draws an outdoor scene with flowers. In a bottom corner, contained, is an ugly bleak house.)* You've drawn flowers, and- *(Vera describes the colors and figures in the drawing as it has been drawn. She gets to the house last.)* -and this is a house. *(Cindy affirms this.)* The house looks- *(Vera watches Cindy's body language and expression closely. Vera's response must come from Cindy's cues.)* Angry. Sad. Scary. *(Cindy indicates that angry and sad are partially true. She affirms scary in a big way.)* What makes this a scary house, Cindy? *(Cindy is a stone.)* Okay. Could you draw inside the house? *(Cindy is a stone.)* Could you show me your room? *(Cindy sweeps the paper and things to the floor.)* You don't want to draw your room. *(Cindy shakes her head no. She is near tears.)* You don't like your room. *(Cindy is a stone.)* You have a lot of feelings. Sadness. Anger. Scary feelings. It's hard to look at these feelings. These feelings don't feel good. Don't feel safe. *(Cindy reacts strongly to not feeling safe.)* It's not safe to have these feelings. *(Cindy's response tells Vera she's gone off track.)* You don't feel safe. *(Cindy affirms this in a way that is nearly, but not quite, relief.)* You don't feel safe in your house. *(Cindy's affirmation is fearful. It is not safe to reveal that she does not feel safe.)* Cindy, what gives you the feeling you're not safe in your house? *(Cindy is a stone.)* Okay. Cindy, in this part of our time together you can do almost anything.

SCENE 16

Cindy gets the sand tray and miniatures. Lights up dim on the sandbox area. The Queen, King, and Princess rouse and move into position. All reflect Cindy's arrangement with the sand tray. Lights dim on Vera's space and up full on sandbox.

CHILD'S PLAY

“Royal Family” music underscores the scene. The Princess wanders through her “garden”. The Queen and King “stroll” arm-in-arm.

QUEEN. The garden is so lovely.

KING. Lovely, dear.

QUEEN. The moon is so bright.

KING. Stars out tonight.

PRINCESS. Moon bright. Star light.

QUEEN. Shall we pick flowers?

PRINCESS. The flowers are my friends.

QUEEN. Moon flowers.

KING. Witch’s weeds.

PRINCESS. The flowers are my friends!

QUEEN. Primroses.

KING. Angel’s trumpet.

PRINCESS. Don’t pick my friends!

QUEEN. Angel’s trumpet calling.

KING. Mr. Moon is yawning.

QUEEN. Bed time, darling.

PRINCESS. Don’t want to go to bed, Mummy.

QUEEN. Time for bed.

PRINCESS. Monsters under the bed.

KING. Dust bunnies, Princess.

PRINCESS. Dragons.

QUEEN. No such things as dragons.

PRINCESS. DRAGONS UNDER THE BED.

QUEEN. Rock-a-bye baby.

PRINCESS. Not a baby.

QUEEN. In the treetop.

KING. Wind blowing.

QUEEN. Cradle will rock.

KING. Bough breaking.

QUEEN. Cradle will fall.

PRINCESS. I’M NOT A BABY!

QUEEN. Sleep tight.

CHILD'S PLAY

KING. Don't let the bedbugs bite.

PRINCESS. NOT BEDBUGS. DRAGONS!

QUEEN. No such things as dragons. *(The Dragon enters roars, loudly and violently, threatening them all. The King throws himself forward and sticks his head in the sand. The Princess covers. The Queen seems not to notice. Ninja Girl gracefully leaps into the sandbox and interposes herself between the Dragon and Princess. "Martial arts fight music" underscores the scene. Each circles and sizes up the other, the Dragon writhing evilly and powerfully, Ninja Girl calmly graceful and strong. A series of feints and strikes take place, each testing the other's strength. The Dragon chuckles cruelly (perhaps voice-over); Ninja Girl is silent. Vera's voice floats over the sandbox space from her dimly lighted area as if from a land far away.)*

VERA. We have five more minutes left in our time together. *(Cindy angrily throws the miniature Ninja Girl and Dragon. In the sandbox, Ninja Girl and Dragon separate violently as if invisible hands had tossed them to the side. Vera's voice continues to come dreamily as if from far away.)* You are angry that our time is almost up. *(All freeze in the sandbox. Lights come up full in Vera's space. Her voice is solid, no longer dream-like.)* You're angry our time is up, but its time to go now. *(Cindy is a stone.)* You don't want to go, but its time to go. *(Cindy is a stone.)* The rule is, when our time is up, we have to go. *(Cindy angrily rises and storms out. Vera straightens the sand tray. The sandbox characters return to being toys on the shelf except for the Dragon, who exits. Ninja Girl keeps on eye on him as he leaves. Lights down in the sandbox space. Lights down in Vera's space.)*

SCENE 17

Vera is in her office space. Roger enters.

ROGER. What's up?

VERA. I could use a drink.

ROGER. Want to go get one?

VERA. No.

ROGER. Hard day?

VERA. Yep.

CHILD'S PLAY

ROGER. Talk about it?

VERA. Door knob session. Cindy.

ROGER. Oh.

VERA. Yeah.

ROGER. That's tough.

VERA. Had to end the session.

ROGER. Happens.

VERA. Client waiting.

ROGER. How'd she handle it? *(Vera makes a noise like a volcano erupting.)*

Think you can get her back there?

VERA. Yeah.

ROGER. Okay, then.

VERA. Yeah.

ROGER. Sure about that drink?

VERA. Yes.

ROGER. You're alone too much.

VERA. Bye, Roger.

ROGER. I worry about you.

VERA. Uh huh.

ROGER. I do.

VERA. Don't worry.

ROGER. All work. No play.

VERA. I play, Roger.

ROGER. Really.

VERA. Just not with you.

ROGER. Don't believe you.

VERA. Suit yourself. *(Silence.)*

ROGER. Who do you talk to, Vera? *(Silence.)* Gonna burn-out. *(Silence. Roger exits.)*

VERA. *(Vera snorts. She speaks perhaps mockingly, perhaps not.)* Gonna burn-out? *(Blackout.)*

CHILD'S PLAY

SCENE 18

Cindy in Vera's space, humming with barely contained energy. As Cindy's energy builds, Ninja Girl's watchfulness grows.)

VERA. Cindy, the last time you were here you expressed some anger about the session ending. Would you like to work on that now? *(Cindy communicates an emphatic "no".)* You have a lot of feelings - sad feelings, scary feelings, angry feelings. All these feelings seem to be mashed up inside you, trying to get out. *(Cindy is like - yeah?)* I can see you have a lot of energy inside you today. *(Again, Cindy is like - so?)* Do you think you could draw what is inside you today? *(Cindy indicates 'no'.)* Do you think you could express your feelings physically? *(Cindy is like - 'What the hell are you talking about?')* Could you show me with your body, or show me with your voice? *(Cindy indicates 'no'.)* Okay. Well, in this part of our time together, you can do almost anything. *(Cindy rushes to the sand tray and gathers the miniatures, placing them in the sand tray. Princess, Queen, and King take corresponding positions in the sandbox. Lights dim in Vera's space and come up in the sandbox.)*

SCENE 19

"Royal family" theme music underscores the scene.

KING. Shall we have tea?

QUEEN. Let us do. I dearly love tea. *(The Princess skips in circles within the center of the sandbox.)* Dearest, would you like tea?

PRINCESS. Yes, mummy, I would love tea.

QUEEN. We must dress for tea.

KING. Dress for tea. Jolly good.

PRINCESS. What shall I wear?

QUEEN. You must wear a white dress.

KING. White dress. Spot on.

PRINCESS. My white dress for tea?

QUEEN. Your white dress for company coming to tea.

PRINCESS. What company, mummy?

CHILD'S PLAY

KING. More the merrier, I say.

PRINCESS. Mummy, who is coming?

QUEEN. Why, the Dragon, dearest.

KING. The Dragon is coming.

QUEEN. Coming for tea.

KING. Wear your white dress.

QUEEN. Your white dress for the Dragon.

KING. Your white dress for the dragon coming to tea.

PRINCESS. No such things as dragons.

QUEEN. The Dragon is coming.

PRINCESS. Dragons under the bed.

KING. Coming to tea.

PRINCESS. YOU SAID THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS DRAGONS UNDER THE BED.

QUEEN. Be good for the dragon.

KING. Play nice with the dragon.

QUEEN. Be sweet for the Dragon coming to tea. *(The Dragon comes to tea. He is menacing and frightening. The Queen and King do not notice. The Princess cowers.)* Shall we have tea?

KING. Yes, lets. Jolly good.

QUEEN. Shall I pour?

KING. Yes, pour. Spot on.

PRINCESS. There is a dragon, Mummy. *(The Queen pours tea and hands a cup to the King.)*

KING. Delicious, Darling.

QUEEN. Oh, good. Princess, tea?

PRINCESS. Mummy, there is a dragon.

QUEEN. Sugar, Princess? One lump or two?

PRINCESS. Dragon, Mummy.

QUEEN. Cream... or lemon?

PRINCESS. Mummy, Dragon. *(The Dragon rumbles (voice-over).)*

QUEEN. Drink your tea, Princess.

PRINCESS. I DON'T WANT TEA! *(The Dragon roars (voice-over). The King throws himself forward into the sandbox and buries his head in the sand. The*

CHILD'S PLAY

Dragon circles the Princess. The Queen watches with detached interest. The Princess cowers in a ball. The Dragon comes in closer. Suddenly the Ninja Girl launches herself into the sandbox. "Martial arts fight music" underscores the battle. She forces the Dragon back with a series of feints.)

NINJA GIRL. Hai. Hai. Hai. Hai. Hai. *(The Ninja Girl engages in an epic battle with the Dragon. The Princess watches with hope; the Queen watches with detachment. After it seems that the Ninja Girl might have a chance, the Dragon delivers a devastating blow and the Ninja Girl falls. The Dragon turns to the Princess once again. The King remains with his head in the sand. The Queen watches as the Dragon devours the Princess. Lights dim. Spot on Dragon.)*

DRAGON. *(The most cruel and evil voice ever imagined (voice-over).)* You taste good. *(Blackout.)*

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