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Idols .

By

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Cast of Characters

ANNA: Female, 30s. Alex's mother.

SERGEI: Male, 70s. Alex's grandfather.

SOFIA: Female, 70s. Alex's grandmother.

MRS. DELANEY: Female, 30s. Alex's school teacher.

ISOBEL: Female, 10. Alex's love interest.

PRINCIPAL STEVENS: Female, 30s. Principal of the school Alex attends.

ANDREW: Male, 30s. Father of Alex.

DR. HASSLEBECK: Male, 40s. Psychiatrist sent to monitor children in schools.

MR. HOFFMAN: Male, 60s. Alex's piano teacher.

ALEX: Male, 10. Young boy with ADHD.

MR. JOHNS: Male, 40s. Pretentious school counselor

Set in the Nineteen-nineties, one day in the life of a young child growing up with ADHD. Throughout the play the older version of himself is playing piano upstage-stage-left in intervals.

ACT 1

SCENE 1

The stage is black.

MRS. DELNAEY OS

Alex!

Lights rise: In a classroom, Mrs. Delaney sits at a desk center-stage. Alex walks in stage-left.

A Beat

Alex walks center-stage.

MRS. DELANEY

Alex.

ALEX

Yes Mrs. Delaney?

MRS. DELANEY

That was ten minutes.

ALEX

I'm sorry.

MRS. DELANEY

What were you doing in the restroom for ten minutes?

ALEX

Number two.

MRS. DELANEY

That wasn't, I mean, you have virtually no time to take your test now.

ALEX

Well can I take it later?

MRS. DELANEY

No you can't take it later!

ALEX

How about I do half now and half later!

MRS. DELANEY
No Alex!

ALEX
Then I'll just take it later?

MRS. DELANEY
You don't decide that Alex! Go take your seat and take your test!

A Beat

MRS. DELANEY
What's that noise? Alex?

ALEX
Yes Mrs. Delaney?

MRS. DELANEY
What are you doing?

ALEX
I'm taking a test.

MRS. DELANEY
You're tapping your pencil on the desk. Cut that out.

ALEX
Sorry Mrs. Delaney.

A Beat

MRS. DELANEY
Alex?

ALEX
Yes?

MRS. DELANEY
You're still tapping your pencil.

ALEX
I have music in my head.

MRS. DELANEY
Well stop tapping your pencil and take your test, you're disturbing the other students.

Alex walks back to his desk, grabs the pencil and approaches the pencil-sharpener center-stage.

MRS. DELANEY
What are you-

ALEX
-I'm sharpening my pencil Mrs. Delaney!

MRS. DELANEY
Now?!

ALEX
I need a sharp pencil to scribble in the answers!

MRS. DELANEY
Alex take your seat right now and use your pencil as it is, it is sharpened enough!

ALEX
How do you know?

MRS. DELANEY
Excuse me?

ALEX
Does this look sharp to you?

MRS. DELANEY
Yes it looks sharp plenty! Take your seat!

Alex walks back to his desk.

Alex whispers something.

MRS. DELANEY
Alex!

ALEX
Yes Mrs. Delaney!

MRS. DELANEY
Why are you talking!?

ALEX
Jeff asked me a question!

MRS. DELANEY
Jeff asked you a question!?

ALEX
Yeah I thought I'd help him out.

MRS. DELANEY
Alex! There's no talking during a test! What is wrong with you? You're interrupting the entire classroom when your classmates are trying to concentrate.

ALEX
No I'm not!

MRS. DELANEY

You're making noise: the bathroom, talking, sharpening your pencil; why can't you sit still and take your test?

ALEX

Okay I'll just skip this test, can I have a hall pass? I can go sit in the music class with Mr. Levin.

MRS. DELANEY

Do you know what your grades look like?

Mrs. Delaney opens her desk and pulls out Alex's report card.

MRS. DELANEY

Arithmetic: C. ELA: B. Science: D. Technology: C. P.E.: B. Do you know what that sounds like to me?

Mrs. Delaney throws the report card at Alex.

A Beat

MRS. DELANEY

That's where you're at right now. And you don't want to take the test. And you don't want to do anything about your grades. Why not Alex?

ALEX

I don't know what you're talking about.

MRS. DELANEY

Well we'll see about that when I call your parents and the principal.

ALEX

Please don't call my parents Mrs. Delaney. I'll do better Mrs. Delaney.

MRS. DELANEY

You're lying to me!

ALEX

I swear I'm telling the truth!

MRS. DELANEY

No you're not you're lying! You're a liar and your misbehaving!

ALEX

I'm really not I'm being really really honest I'll do better!

A Beat

ALEX
I swear to God Mrs. Delaney.

A Beat

MRS. DELANEY
Alex take a seat immediately! I won't have any of your smart mouth talking!

ALEX
I swear to God I won't do anything anymore. Just please don't call my family or the principal.

Mrs. Delaney exits stage-left.
Lights dim.

Scene 2

Lights rise: in the hallway, surrounded by lockers, Alex is gathering his books. Isobel enters stage-right.

ALEX
Hey Isobel.

ISOBEL
Hey Alex.

ALEX
Your mom is late again?

ISOBEL
Haha not funny.

A Beat
ALEX
Sorry-

ISOBEL
-why are you still here?

ALEX
Do you wanna come with me to the music room? I can play piano while you wait. You can hear me play. If you want.

ISOBEL
You have detention again?

ALEX
Yeah.

A Beat

ISOBEL
Why do you keep getting detention?

 ALEX
These teachers are just crazy!

 ISOBEL
Yeah they are.

 ALEX
You never get detention.

 ISOBEL
I'd rather stay at school longer.

 ALEX
Why?

 ISOBEL
I don't like being home.

 A Beat

 ALEX
Why not?

 ISOBEL
My parents fight a lot.

 ALEX
Like, they hit each other?

 ISOBEL
Sometimes.

 ALEX
Do they hit you?

 ISOBEL
Sometimes. Anyways gotta go wait outside.

 A Beat

 ALEX
I'm sorry. I have a meeting with the counselor now...

 A Beat

 ISOBEL
Wait let me show you this from my locker.

 Isobel turns and retrieves a white
 heather from her locker.

ALEX
What is it!

ISOBEL
It's for good luck!

ALEX
Thank you Isobel, I'm gonna keep this forever. I mean, until it dies, I mean its not gonna' die cuz' of me, it's gonna die cuz of-

ISOBEL
I'm sorry Mrs. Delaney gave you detention.

ALEX
Mrs. Delaney? I think you mean Mrs. Decrazy. She's making my life crazy, I didn't even do anything to her. She's probably an alien and I know she knows I'm on to her!

ISOBEL
What? Alex how do you know?

ALEX
She's always reading but sees everything. How can a human do that?

ISOBEL
Wait a second.

ALEX
Her face is buried in a book, but she sees someone behind her. She has laser eyes!

ISOBEL
Oh my god, I think my neighbor might be an alien too!

The speaker announces Isobel's parents have arrived, and Alex should go to the counselor's office. Isobel exits stage-left.

Lights Dim.

SCENE 3

Lights rise: Alex walks inside Counselor Johns office.

JOHNS
Hi Alex.

ALEX
Hi Mr. Johns.

So.

JOHNS

A Beat

Johns and Alex both recline into sofa-chairs.

JOHNS

Why don't you enlighten me on the status quo?

ALEX

Everything is good.

JOHNS

Oh is it? It is oh?

ALEX

Yeah, I just want to go home. I'm kind of hungry.

JOHNS

Alex, allow me to prognosticate the trivial boondoggle. There's infelicity in your voice, and I have the behavioral reports. So what is causing this amalgamation of sadness?

A Beat

ALEX

If you read the reports, don't you already know?

JOHNS

Oh the old obtuse reverse psychology eh?

ALEX

I don't get it Mr. Johns.

JOHNS

These problems with your classmates, tell me about them. What seems to be the problem?

A Beat

ALEX

They always beat me up.

JOHNS

And why is that?

ALEX

Because..they're mean?

JOHNS

That's not just the cat's meow Alex; there must be a genesis to this shenanigan.

ALEX
I mean, they make fun of me all the time. They steal my lunch money. They rip up my drawings and writing. They punch me during recess.

JOHNS
And you?

ALEX
What?

JOHNS
What are you doing to propose this encouragement?

ALEX
What am I doing?

JOHNS
You see Alex, everyone has a part in all things. The master and the slave relationship, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit", published eighteen-oh-seven. Desire is directed at things other than itself, correct?

ALEX
Uh, I guess.

JOHNS
Of course, so absolute knowledge cannot realize without a self-consciousness recognizing another self-consciousness.

ALEX
Okay...

JOHNS
Is your consciousness recognizing your classmate's consciousness?

ALEX
I'm trying to avoid them because they do the same thing every time.

JOHNS
Exactly!

A Beat

JOHNS
Have you heard of the concept "turning the other cheek"?

ALEX
I mean yeah, in church.

JOHNS

Yes so Jesus of Nazareth explained that you can respond to injury without revenge. Fighting back would simply cause more injury, do you understand?

Johns takes a pen and scribbles in Alex's file.

JOHNS

The way of the barbarian has adjourned, Alex.

ALEX

What does that mean?

JOHNS

We live in a civilized society, we are the higher being, capable of turning the stardust composition of our bodies into mantles of the future.

ALEX

You're right Mr. Johns. My first instinct is wrong, I thought to fight back but I don't know what I was thinking. I'm going to try being a better classmate to them. It's my fault and I didn't see that until talking to you, so I guess I heard what I needed to hear. Thank you Mr. Johns.

A Beat

JOHNS

Oh Alex.

ALEX

What?

JOHNS

The quagmires multivariate the more we battle them.

ALEX

Quag what?

JOHNS

Troubles, Alex, our troubles, what we meddle in. The most sagacious wisdom I could bestow upon you is to do the opposite of what you think you should be doing, and then do the opposite of that.

A Beat

ALEX

Mr. Johns I'm really confused.

JOHNS

Truth is the danger of time, not authority.

A Beat

JOHNS

There must be a modicum of faith placed in authority figures Alex, or else we wouldn't have a system, or leaders, or any semblance of structure. Your conflicts are a product of unmindfulness.

ALEX

Unmindful?

JOHNS

See, you're doing it.

ALEX

Doing what?

JOHNS

That.

ALEX

What?

JOHNS

You just did it again.

ALEX

What did I do Mr. Johns?

JOHNS

Unmindful cajoling.

A Beat

MR. JOHNS

This angsty acrimony subjects yourself to inferno. The report says you have capricious issues with your teachers?

ALEX

Yeah they're really boring.

MR. JOHNS

What was that? Can you repeat thysself?

ALEX

I just said they're boring. Like really boring.

MR. JOHNS

Ah cloying deja vu strikes again!

ALEX

What Mr. Johns?

MR. JOHNS

Boring is the antidote to pain, don't you comprehend?

ALEX

How does that..yes..yes..now I see it!

MR. JOHNS

It's the epitome of elan! Boring is positive, constantly finagling you but you must break through the smoke-screen to see the nirvana behind that tugging your eyelids!

ALEX

Right!

MR. JOHNS

Your teachers are purveyors of your development, the boring subject's cannonballs for your neurological weapon.

ALEX

You're just so smart Mr. Johns.

JOHNS

In behavioral science Alex, everyone is subject to peer pressure.

ALEX

Yeah.

JOHNS

Your peers look up to you, they desire harmony, not chaos.

ALEX

How can that be true?

JOHNS

This talent you have, you've expressed it in front of them. The modality of your classmates obfuscates their optimum potential, so you are a bearer of light. You must use this talent of yours to educate your peers instead of harnessing resentful anger towards them and yourself.

ALEX

You're right, I'm angry at myself. It's unbelievable. If only I cared about being cool and popular, but I just have this thing inside of me that doesn't care. Something's really wrong with me Mr. Johns. It's good that I'm figuring it all out with someone as smart as you, you're a lifesaver for sure.

JOHNS

This has been a very productive session.

A Beat

JOHNS

While you may cling to a maudlin fastidious complex, we are breaking the heavens in reaching emendations to eventual catharsis.

ALEX

What are you going to tell principal Stevens?

JOHNS

Need worry not dear Alex, well is all that is well.

A Beat

ALEX

Can I go now?

JOHNS

My parting words are: Bart Simpson is not a role model, do you understand?

Lights dim.

ACT ONESCENE 4

Lights rise: Anna and Andrew enter and sit on two small chairs, Principal Stevens, Dr. Hasslebeck, and Mrs. Delaney sit behind an ominous desk.

PRINCIPAL STEVENS

Thank you for joining us, Mister and Missus Durant-

ANDREW

-Andrew-

ANNA

-Anna, please-

PRINCIPAL STEVENS

-yes well, you know Mrs. Delaney, and this is Dr. Hasslebeck-

DR. HASSLEBECK

-pleasure-

ANDREW

-so what calls this meeting-

ANNA

-to attention-

PRINCIPAL STEVENS, DR. HASSLEBECK,
MRS. DELANEY

Alex.

A Beat

ANDREW

Obviously but-

ANNA

-what exactly is-

MRS. DELANEY

-the problem?

DR. HASSLEBECK

I was sent by Columbia-Presbyterian to monitor classroom settings-

PRINCIPAL STEVENS

-in particular-

DR. HASSLEBECK
 -students who may be symptomatic-

ANDREW
 -of what-

DR. HASSLEBECK
 -well-

ANNA
 -behavioral disorders?

A Beat
 DR. HASSLEBECK
 Neurological disorders.

PRINCIPAL STEVENS
 Not to say there's something malignantly wrong with Alex-

MRS. DELANEY
 -he does however exhibit symptoms-

ANDREW
 -what neurological disorder-

ANNA
 -are you talking-

DR. HASSLEBECK
 -ADHD.

A Beat
 ANDREW
 Is he tested-

PRINCIPAL STEVENS
 -a difference in brain development-

MRS. DELANEY
 -and brain activity-

ANNA
 -is he displaying symptoms-

DR. HASSLEBECK
 -such as the ability to sit still, self-control-

ANDREW
 -sounding very vague-

PRINCIPAL STEVENS
 -it can affect the child at home-

-in school- MRS. DELANEY

-relationships- DR. HASSLEBECK

-how does Alex relate? ANNA

He's careless, overlooks details- DR. HASSLEBECK

-trouble focusing in class- MRS. DELANEY

-easily distracted during conversations- PRINCIPAL STEVENS

-easily sidetracked- DR. HASSLEBECK

-difficulty organizing his work- MRS. DELANEY

-again this sounds vague- ANDREW

-it truly does- ANNA

-losing everyday items- DR. HASSLEBECK

-forgetful- PRINCIPAL STEVENS

-fidgets constantly- MRS. DELANEY

-difficulty with quiet activities- DR. HASSLEBECK

-restlessness- MRS. DELANEY

-talking excessively- PRINCIPAL STEVENS

-what do you- ANDREW

-interrupting others- DR. HASSLEBECK

-intrusive-
MRS. DELANEY

-mood swings-
PRINCIPAL STEVENS

ANNA
-what is the main symptom above all the rest?

PRINCIPAL STEVENS, DR. HASSLEBECK,
MRS. DELANEY
He is not able to follow directions.

A Beat

MRS. DELANEY
Alex continuously refuses to follow the rules!

ANNA
You think Alex has one of these disorders because he keeps getting in trouble? What about the other kids, surely there have been instances where the other kids trigger-

DR. HASSLEBECK
-he has this disorder inherently.

ANDREW
Doctor Hasslebeck, can you explain how he follows his music teacher's instructions so well then?

A Beat

ANDREW
If he exhibits all these debilitating symptoms, how does he display prodigious talent?

DR. HASSLEBECK
Very simple, actually.

MRS. DELANEY
Its' called hyperfocus.

ANNA
How is that a bad thing?

DR. HASSLEBECK
He can zero in intensely-

MRS. DELANEY
-on that which he finds interesting-

PRINCIPAL STEVENS
-and maintain an abnormal level of focus-

DR. HASSLEBECK
-it's a fixation really-

MRS. DELANEY
-he blocks out the world around him-

PRINCIPAL STEVENS
-to retreat into this 'paradise'-

DR. HASSLEBECK
-unless something or someone interrupts-

MRS. DELANEY
-hours drift by-

PRINCIPAL STEVENS
-other tasks become secondary-

ANNA
-is this what makes him so good?

A Beat

DR. HASSLEBECK
If you are speaking of divine gifts, we do not cover such an area.

ANDREW
But he can 'hyperfocus'.

MRS. DELANEY
Music clearly speaks to him, not much else.

PRINCIPAL STEVENS
But he cannot remain in this school unless-

ANNA, ANDREW
-unless what?

DR. HASSLEBECK
Measures must be taken.

A Beat

ANDREW
What measures-

ANNA
-exactly-

MRS. DELANEY
-it's not uncommon-

PRINCIPAL STEVENS
-especially during these progressive times-

DR. HASSLEBECK
 -children with these disorders require something more-

ANNA
 -you mean medicine-

MRS. DELANEY
 -yes but-

PRINCIPAL STEVENS
 -what we mean is-

ANDREW
 -what they're saying is-

PRINCIPAL STEVENS, DR. HASSLEBECK,
 MRS. DELANEY
 -medication.

A Beat

ANNA
 Street drugs in pharmaceutical form?

DR. HASSLEBECK
 A primitive way of looking at it.

ANDREW
 What's the correct way?

MRS. DELANEY
 While it is a substance-

PRINCIPAL STEVENS
 -it is used differently in these cases-

DR. HASSLEBECK
 -for treatment.

ANDREW
 What substance?

ANNA
 What treatment?

DR. HASSLEBECK
 The first in line treatment are stimulant drugs.

PRINCIPAL STEVENS
 Do not be alarmed.

ANDREW
 Like what?

DR. HASSLEBECK
Amphetamines and methylphenidate fall under this category.

Anna stands.

ANNA
Meth!?

PRINCIPAL STEVENS
Please Missus Durant-

ANDREW
-honey let them-

DR. HASSLEBECK
-these drugs control two levels of chemicals in the brain.
Dopamine and Norepinephrine.

ANNA
And what does that do exactly?

DR. HASSLEBECK
Those chemicals can affect how well you concentrate.

MRS. DELANEY
Psychostimulants are pharmacotherapies.

DR. HASSLEBECK
Amphetamine actions include dopamine and norepinephrine transporter inhibition, vesicular monoamine transporter 2 inhibition, and monoamine oxidase activity inhibition. Methylphenidate actions include dopamine and norepinephrine transporter inhibition, agonist activity at the serotonin type 1A receptor, and redistribution of the VMAT-2. There is also evidence for interactions with glutamate and opioid systems. The overarching point is Alex must take medication-

PRINCIPAL STEVENS
-or be expelled.

A Beat

ANDREW
And there's no alternative to this?

DR. HASSLEBECK
Nothing the literature supports.

ANNA
Is there any safer or holistic approach?

MRS. DELANEY
You're looking at it all wrong-

PRINCIPAL STEVENS

-this is the 20th century Mrs. Durant-

DR. HASSLEBECK

-I'm prepared for this-

ANDREW

-for what-

DR. HASSLEBECK

-the alternative homeopathies marketed as a medical solution.

A Beat

DR. HASSLEBECK

Avoiding food coloring and preservatives, diets that restrict allergens, electroencephalographic biofeedback, yoga and tai chi, greenery and nature, or behavioral and parental therapy.

A Beat

DR. HASSLEBECK

Did I miss anything?

ANDREW

We're going to have to think about this.

PRINCIPAL STEVENS

There isn't much time.

ANNA

We can't just jump to a decision like this without thinking it through!

MRS. DELANEY

The deeper issue that Alex's condition presents is that he simply does not obey.

DR. HASSLEBECK

Authority is a meaningless buzzword to him.

PRINCIPAL STEVENS

He does not obey us.

ANDREW

What child is exemplary in obeying authority?

MRS. DELANEY

Even the children with disciplinary issues follow the rules once they are punished.

DR. HASSLEBECK

Alex is not some extraordinary case of hyper juvenile individualism, but a boy who cannot submit because of a neurological imbalance.

PRINCIPAL STEVENS

And he must submit, we are the adults, and the professionals.

ANNA

This is not right.

DR. HASSLEBECK

This isn't about philosophy, this is cold science.

PRINCIPAL STEVENS

You two need to have a serious discussion.

MRS. DELANEY

And check in with us soon.

DR. HASSLEBECK

Before Alex gets in trouble again.

ANDREW AND ANNA

We will.

MRS. DELANEY

Mr. and Mrs. Durant, many children in the United States take medication.

ANDREW

In what dosage would he hypothetically take this? Would this need to continue for the rest of his life?

DR. HASSLEBECK

It's entirely subjective.

ANDREW AND ANNA

Alex isn't.

Lights dim.

Scene 5

Lights rise: Alex is seated at a piano, center stage with Mr. Hoffman.

MR. HOFFMAN

Well somebody's been practicing!

ALEX

Yes and let me show you-

MR. HOFFMAN
-I see, we need to up the ante.

ALEX
What do you mean?

MR. HOFFMAN
I mean.

Mr. Hoffman places sheet music in front of Alex on the piano.

MR. HOFFMAN
Lizst.

ALEX
Mr. Hoffman! This is crazy!

Alex starts playing.

MR. HOFFMAN
So this is called "La Campanella", and the way you-

ALEX
-what's "La Campanella"?

MR. HOFFMAN
The little bell.

ALEX
This looks really cool!

MR. HOFFMAN
Which is why you will be performing this on Sunday.

ALEX
I'll be ready by Sunday? How many pieces will I play? Do I have to learn it by heart?

MR. HOFFMAN
By heart.

A Beat

MR. HOFFMAN
You will play this at a brisk allegretto tempo, with right hand jumps larger than an octave away.

ALEX
Oh boy!

MR. HOFFMAN
I think you can play anything, Alex.

Really?
ALEX

MR. HOFFMAN
You have a natural gift, it is time to challenge it.

Alex attempts the piece, in multiple instances.

Trust your fingers.
MR. HOFFMAN

Alex plays The Little Bell.

Marvelous!
MR. HOFFMAN

Wow, that was just..
ALEX

MR. HOFFMAN
I want you to know, young man, that the future ahead of you will be one filled with beauty.

ALEX
I don't know what to say Mr. Hoffman.

MR. HOFFMAN
Keep at this craft, and the music will reward you. Think of it like a person, put your faith in this person, and let them return the favor.

ALEX
This is a really important recital, huh?

MR. HOFFMAN
People are flying in from different countries to play here.

ALEX
Are they all goanna' watch me Mr. Hoffman?

MR. HOFFMAN
You can win this competition, and with it all the fruits that are rightfully yours.

ALEX
I don't know how I feel about all these people watching me.

MR. HOFFMAN
You just need to believe in yourself. The music believes in you.

Wow.
ALEX

MR. HOFFMAN

See you in the winners circle, young man. Now show me what you practiced this week.

Alex begins playing.

Mr. Hoffman and Alex exit stage-right, lights dim. The piano set center-stage is replaced by a home set.

Scene 6

Lights rise: Alex sits on the sofa, Sergei sits next to him.

SERGEI

What's on the television?

ALEX

Just Powerpuff Girls and Johnny Bravo.

SERGEI

Oh look they're eating, American cartoons!

ALEX

What do you mean, grandpa?

SERGEI

Nothing.

A Beat

SERGEI, ALEX

So what's going on with you?

SERGEI, ALEX

Nothing. You?

SERGEI, ALEX

I asked you.

SERGEI

Come on, why aren't you listening to your mother?

ALEX

What? I listen to mom.

SERGEI

Don't fool me, I can tell, Alex. Your cheeks look different.

ALEX

I don't know what you're talking about.

SERGEI

You know, when I was your age, I worked on a farm.

ALEX

With cows and sheep?

SERGEI

Yes, goats, chickens, pigs, turkeys. But then the war came.

A Beat

SERGEI

I saw things..no boy should see. I fought for my life some days. I watched people I love..simply..

ALEX

Grandpa?

SERGEI

And now, I sit on this couch with you in luxury. I chased two rabbits and I caught neither.

ALEX

What does that mean?

SERGEI

Your generation is different. Too much sugar! Life was different back then. Character was rewarded. Morals were upheld. The decline all started with those Beatles.

ALEX

Oh, the Yellow Submarine movie?

SERGEI

But what's going on with you? Is school and everything okay?

ALEX

I'm..just..good.

SERGEI

You can tell me, Alex.

ALEX

Everything is pretty good.

SERGEI

You think you can pull wool over me?

ALEX

What?

SERGEI

Tell me what's going on.

A Beat

ALEX

Well..you know..I just..things are..I'm like..over here. And these other..peope..they're over there. And I just feel like..sometimes..I should be somewhere else. Because where I am it just feels like..I'm not supposed to be there. And I don't..know..what..to do. Where I am supposed to be.

A Beat

SERGEI

Alex. We will be alive, we won't die. You wake up, you get ready. You show up. You do your absolute best. And then you come back and relax. Necessity is the mother of all invention. An appetite comes with eating, no? If you do nothing, you are nothing. The first pancake is always lumpy, however. You need to keep trying, and one day all the expenses will be paid off. I admire you, how nothing holds you back from your passion, from life. You should listen to me, there's no fool like an old fool. Do you understand?

A Beat

ALEX

Not really.

SERGEI

That's okay, you will one day. Lets eat.

Lights dim.

ACT 2

SCENE 1

Lights rise: Sergei, Sofia, Anna, and Andrew take seats to the sound of dishes and plates hitting each other, fast chatter, and general chaos at the dinner table which rests center-stage.

ANNA
Mom do we have Oreos for Alex-

SOFIA
-what, I don't hear so well-

SERGEI
-oh what-

ANDREW
-maybe we shouldn't, honey-

ANNA
-Oreos-

SOFIA
-what-

ANDREW
-it's a lot of sugar-

SERGEI
-what the hell is an Oreo-

ANNA
-OREOS-

SOFIA
-what, oranges?

ANDREW
That would be better-

SERGEI
-potassium-

ANNA
-yes, mom, do we have any oranges-

SOFIA
-we don't have any oranges-

ANNA
-ugh, pass the kielbasa-

-more wine- SERGEI
 -cognac, please- ANDREW
 -not before the meat- SOFIA
 -thank you- ANNA
 -so, Anna- SERGEI
 -yes- ANDREW
 -chai, I need chai- SOFIA
 -Andrew was telling me- SERGEI
 -about what- ANNA
 -ah, so steamy- SOFIA
 -I told him about- ANDREW
 -what the principle said- SERGEI
 -what did...the principle say- ANNA
 -about what? SOFIA
 Alex. ANDREW
 He's going to be so handsome- SOFIA
 -you told them- ANNA
 -I thought they should know- ANDREW

-I don't understand- SERGEI

-has my father's eyes- SOFIA

-why did you tell them- ANNA

-slipped out actually- ANDREW

-what the hell is an ADHD- SERGEI

-it's an acronym- ANDREW

-A what- SOFIA

-it's a medical term, mom- ANNA

-medical term, for what- SERGEI

-no, it's a condition- ANDREW

-for what- SOFIA

-attention deficit- ANNA

-pass the potatoes- SERGEI

-hyperactivity- ANNA

-whaaaat- SERGEI

-a developmental- ANDREW

-disorder. ANNA

The potatoes are overcooked- SOFIA

SERGEI
 -this is just more-
 ANNA
 -"American propaganda", I know..-
 ANDREW
 -a special psychiatrist came into school-
 SOFIA
 -we didn't have this in Russia...-
 SERGEI
 -so, what's wrong with him-
 ANNA
 -he can't pay attention-
 ANDREW
 -he has excessive energy-
 SOFIA
 -he's a growing boy-
 SERGEI
 -who can pay attention-
 ANNA
 -difficulty with impulse control-
 SOFIA
 -he just needs a girlfriend-
 SERGEI
 -American teachers can't even do calculus-
 ANDREW
 -he's nine-
 SOFIA
 -he's FINE-
 ANNA
 -they said-
 SERGEI
 -so he has a lot of energy-
 SOFIA
 -nobody in this country has any energy-
 ANDREW
 -it's more complicated than that-

ANNA
 -they said-

SERGEI
 -so he pays attention to what interests him-

SOFIA
 -I know nonsense right away-

ANDREW
 -the psychiatrist said-

ANNA
 -he needs medication.

SERGEI
 He NEEDS an outlet-

SOFIA
 -give him a soccer ball-

ANDREW
 -they were adamant-

ANNA
 -a list was recommended-

SERGEI
 -what list-

SOFIA
 -this never would've happened with Stalin..

Andrew spits his drink out.

ANNA
 -MOM-

SERGEI
 -he needs medicine for what, I'm confused-

ANDREW
 -Ritalin was recommended-

Sergei slams his hand on the table.

SERGEI
 -NARCOTICS-

ANNA
 -it's controlled-

Sofia makes a passionate "Thumbs up" sign.

SOFIA
 -Stalin..

SERGEI
 -he'll become degenerate-

ANNA
 -the school said they'll-

SOFIA
 -why did I come to this country-

ANDREW
 -he needs it, you should see-

ANNA
 -expel him if he doesn't-

SERGEI
 -a vegetable-

ANDREW
 -those with untreated ADHD-

SOFIA
 -never would've happened-

ANNA
 -start taking Ritalin. You know, you're why Americans think
 Europeans look down on them-

SERGEI
 -why do we look down on them-

SOFIA
 -the earth's slightly tilted-

ANDREW
 -they aren't, honey-

SERGEI
 -do you know what we discovered, living under communism-

ANNA
 -it behooves you, enlighten me-

SOFIA
 -ninety percent of everything is shit-

ANNA
 -MOM-

SERGEI
 -the remaining ten percent must be examined very closely-

ANDREW
-interesting, why's that-

SOFIA
-for it may have shit smeared upon it-

ANNA
-they aren't usually like this-

ANDREW
-very interest..please..continue-

SERGEI
-Andrew Lewis, let me tell you-

ANDREW
-yes-

ANNA
-oh god-

SOFIA
-listen-

SERGEI
-you can resolve to live your life with integrity but let your credo be this: let the LIE come into the world, let it even triumph.

Sergei wags his finger at Andrew.

SERGEI
But not through me.

ANDREW
Mister Pazarov, what a profound-

ANNA
-he's quoting Solzhenitsyn.

SOFIA
Our literature was always better...-

SERGEI
-it's not who spoke the words-

ANDREW
-no honey I completely-

SOFIA
-"American education" ladies and gentlemen-

ANNA
-message received. So-

ANDREW
-I'll bring out the coffee?

SOFIA
And the worst in me-

ANNA
-Mom-

SERGEI
-make it fresh.

Andrew exits.

SERGEI
You can't do this.

ANNA
It's a different time, papa.

SOFIA
You can say that again...

SERGEI
It's..spoiled..dishonest..

ANNA
You're not a doctor-

SOFIA
-neither is a psychiatrist..-

ANNA
-it's not Russia, mama, the laws are different here-

SERGEI
It makes no sense.

SOFIA
Oh, he's upset.

ANNA
How do you think this makes us feel?

SERGEI
Andrew, I don't like him.

SOFIA
Listen to your father.

ANNA
You never liked him...

SERGEI

A boy loses a father, he's lost a father. A boy loses a mother, then...he's an orphan.

Anna stands.

ANNA

Don't say that to me.

SOFIA

Look how you've upset your father.

ANNA

And what about me? My child? This decision we have to make as a family!

SERGEI

Don't involve me.

ANNA

What?

SERGEI

You do this, I won't.

Sergei gets up and walks stage-right. He walks into the darkness.

SOFIA

Why did you do that?

ANNA

I can't believe-

SOFIA

-it brings back bad memories for him-

ANNA

-what memories?

SOFIA

You know why he always waits a day to celebrate his birthday-

ANNA

-yes, yes, because of the war-

SOFIA

-they took it you know.

ANNA

Who?

SOFIA

The Germans.

ANNA

Mom it's late, maybe you should go to bed-

SOFIA

-Hitler put his soldiers on narcotics, that's why the blitzkrieg was so fast and successful.

ANNA

It's not the same thing-

SOFIA

-I doubt it's changed-

ANNA

-it's a false equivalence-

SOFIA

-so they AREN'T making obedient little soldiers-

ANNA

-where is he going anyway-

SOFIA

-he brought a gift for Alex-

ANNA

-I hope it's appropriate-

SOFIA

-his brother was fifteen when they killed him before we were evacuated to Siberia. You think about this when you do what you do with Alex.

ANNA

This emotional blackmail, it's not mutually exclusive.

SOFIA

I don't know what that means, but you think.

Virtuoso piano playing is heard.
The dinner table is struck. The
stage-lights dim center-stage.

Scene 2

Lights rise: Alex plays piano while Mr. Hoffman strolls around the room.

ALEX

Ugh, I'm not playing on my tips.

MR. HOFFMAN

Very good, correct yourself but keep playing.

ALEX
 You can hear that?

MR. HOFFMAN
 I can HEAR it!

A Beat
 Alex plays.

MR. HOFFMAN
 Good. Better.

A Beat

MR. HOFFMAN
 Do we need a small focus break?

ALEX
 Yeah a small one, I don't know why but I just got so tired.

MR. HOFFMAN
 That's because you're a hard worker. A Mensch.

ALEX
 What's that?

MR. HOFFMAN
 A Mensch is someone of integrity and honor. It's very rare these days.

ALEX
 Are you that, Mr. Hoffman?

MR. HOFFMAN
 What's that?

ALEX
 A Mensch?

MR. HOFFMAN
 I once was.

A Beat. Alex continues to play.

ALEX
 Sometimes I get anxious because I mess up.

MR. HOFFMAN
 Always follow your gut.

ALEX
 Really?

MR. HOFFMAN

I had to learn to follow my gut.

ALEX

Did it make your playing better?

MR. HOFFMAN

It's one thing to read music, it's another thing to feel it, let it allow you to play the complex pieces.

ALEX

What do you mean feel the music?

MR. HOFFMAN

Your soul as an artist.

Mr. Hoffman walks to the piano.

MR. HOFFMAN

This instrument is but a tool.

ALEX

For my soul?

MR. HOFFMAN

To express what's inside you.

A Beat

MR. HOFFMAN

You have a wonderful opportunity here, Alex.

ALEX

With what?

MR. HOFFMAN

Your talent. Your family loves and supports you. This country you live in has endless opportunities. All you have to do is work for it.

ALEX

For this? I play every day.

MR. HOFFMAN

And it shows.

ALEX

But you're always pointing out my mistakes.

MR. HOFFMAN

Do you really consider them mistakes?

ALEX

Did you make these mistakes?

MR. HOFFMAN

I was just like you. Full of life and energy. But afraid of my instincts, afraid of allowing my soul to play the music. I was letting the world and everyone in it tell me who I was. But the piano, the piano didn't judge me. It never criticized my mistakes, it let me hear myself. And it was the first time my voice was clearly speaking.

ALEX

Wow Mr. Hoffman.

Isobel starts walking around the piano only Alex can see her.

MR. HOFFMAN

Doubt will never achieve victory in this world, only love for what you do. What do you love, Alex?

ALEX

Well..

MR. HOFFMAN

What is going on Alex.

ALEX

I love Isobel.

A Beat

MR. HOFFMAN

Who?

ALEX

My friend.

MR. HOFFMAN

That's lovely.

ALEX

She's just a friend of mine...

MR. HOFFMAN

A special friend?

ALEX

Yes.

MR. HOFFMAN

That's good, Alex. What is it about this girl?

ALEX

Well..

A Beat

ALEX

The more I talk to her, the more I realize that she's like me. I'm sad sometimes Mr. Hoffman, because I feel like being myself always gets me in trouble. But Isobel, she likes for who I am, and I like who she is. She never judges me.

MR. HOFFMAN

It's good to be in love, Alex.

ALEX

Love.

MR. HOFFMAN

Yes, love. Love is the basis of all life. It's why we're here. It's why we do what we do.

ALEX

I never felt anything before like this, when I'm with her everything just feels special. I'm so happy.

MR. HOFFMAN

Hang on to this, young man. Love will make your life richer than anything else. It will make you a happier, more useful person. Creatively, it can power your playing and take you to new heights.

ALEX

I hope so Mr. Hoffman, because it's scary.

A Beat

MR. HOFFMAN

Frightening?

ALEX

Yeah.

MR. HOFFMAN

Everything in your life will be a challenge, Alex. It's facing it and going all the way through that will make you what you are.

ALEX

She makes me think about things.

MR. HOFFMAN

The only way out is through.

A Beat

ALEX

What do you mean, Mr. Hoffman?

MR. HOFFMAN

This fear you have is normal, it would be unusual if you had no fear at all. Love is the fuel for the engine. You are the instrument and love is the player. You must go on this journey and find out what the love is between you both.

ALEX

I really want to kiss her, but I also want to do everything with her. I really care about her, Mr. Hoffman. The day is so much better with her in it.

MR. HOFFMAN

The things you love make you who you are.

A Beat

ALEX

I feel like I really know her. Not just in some way, but in every way.

MR. HOFFMAN

It's a harmony. Your instrument is being tuned to create beautiful music, the songs of love. It is like the gasoline for the car, but your soul is driving. Follow the path, and go after that which you love. It is your life force, your constant growth.

ALEX

Yeah Mr. Hoffman. There isn't a lot in my life that makes me happy. I barely sleep because I always want to do something. I always want to do something. I always want to play. I hear music all the time. Even when people are talking to me I hear the pitch and tempo of their voices and their words. Everyone sounds like music to me. When I play the piano I feel like I'm speaking my real language, I don't even consider the languages we speak to make any sense. So many words, so many meanings, definitions. But music is just, I feel it. I feel what it is saying, and it makes total sense to me. When I'm with Isobel, I feel like we're in an opera or something. It almost makes these sad days go away, the bullying, the meanness, everything.

A Beat

ALEX

She's my best friend.

MR. HOFFMAN

I hope you never lose this great intelligence you have Alex. You have to show up for her too. You have to bear with her and make her feel appreciated. Emotions can be intense, so prepare yourself for the largest challenge possible.

ALEX

I don't know what to do.

MR. HOFFMAN

Trust yourself the way you do when you play. Let yourself be guided. How do you feel?

ALEX

Honestly?

MR. HOFFMAN

Yes.

ALEX

I feel better, I feel like I got a load off my chest. I feel like I wanted to tell someone but I just can't. I'm afraid people will laugh at me and call me names.

MR. HOFFMAN

You're very brave Alex.

Lights dim.

Scene 3

Lights rise: Alex enters led by Andrew. Anna and Andrew clean the dishes.

ANNA

How was school today honey?

ALEX

I don't know.

ANDREW

You don't know?

ALEX

Mom I hate talking about school, I don't like it.

ANNA

Oh c'mon was there one thing that you liked about today?

A Beat

ALEX

Well I like music class.

ANDREW

Ok, how was music class?

ALEX

Mrs. Garcia let me play a really nice piece during the whole class.

A Beat

ANNA
Wow, did you now?

ALEX
Yeah, we are learning Beethoven and I told her I can play him.

ANDREW
What did you play?

ALEX
Für Elise.

ANNA
Oh that's a good one!

ALEX
It was really funny. She liked it too!

ANDREW
Did the class enjoy it?

Andrew and Anna bring dishes and bottles to the table.

ALEX
No, everyone was so mean to me before I played.

ANNA
What do you mean mean to you?

ANDREW
Were they just playing around maybe?

ALEX
They were telling me to shut up but I wasn't even talking.

ANNA
Did Mrs. Garcia say anything?

ALEX
No.

ANDREW
She probably didn't hear them.

ANNA
She never hears anything...

ALEX
Whenever she walked by they started being nice to me.

A Beat

ANDREW
Okay, lets get everything wiped down, Alex.

Alex is banging some spoons
together making a rhythm.

ANDREW
And as soon as you played they all were quiet?

ALEX
They looked like they saw a ghost. They were absolutely
speechless!

A Beat

ANNA
What are you doing honey?

ALEX
These spoons are in three/four; triple time, this is either
a teaspoon waltz or tablespoon minuet.

ANDREW
Utensils are not instruments, Alex.

ALEX
Says who?

ANDREW
Your parents.

Alex continues. Andrew swipes the
spoons from Alex.

ANDREW
You have to practice impulse control, Alex.

ALEX
I don't even know what that means.

ANNA
Just don't do everything that comes to mind, honey.

ALEX
Yeah okay.

A Beat

ALEX
Ah!

Alex spills soup on the table.

ANNA
Oh!

ANDREW
Goddamn it!

ALEX
I'm sorry!

ANNA
It was an accident, Andrew.

ANDREW
What made you flip over a bowl of soup?

ALEX
It was really hot!

ANDREW
So? You wait until it cools down.

ALEX
Well I couldn't wait. It was an accident.

A Beat

Anna and Andrew grab paper towels
and clean the table.

ANDREW
So you decided to put scorching soup in your mouth?

Alex gets some napkins to clean up
the soup, and he starts fidgeting
with them and tearing them up
throughout the conversation.

ALEX
I was HUNGRY!

A Beat

ANNA
Tell us more about playing piano today, honey.

ALEX
I don't care about it.

ANNA
What?

ALEX
I was playing for buttlicks and meanies.

ANDREW
I'm sorry I raised my voice, Alex.

I'm used to it.

ALEX

A Beat

Are you okay, Alex?

ANNA

I'm just tired of people screaming at me for everything.

ALEX

It's not everything, Alex.

ANDREW

And you guys do it too.

ALEX

I don't shout at you.

ANNA

No you two are always fighting.

ALEX

Not always.

ANDREW

People have disagreements, Alex.

ANNA

Yeah whatever.

ALEX

A Beat

So your piano playing, everyone was clapping for you?

ANDREW

Yeah but they didn't mean it.

ALEX

When people see something magical, they appreciate it honey.

ANNA

They just did that so Mrs. Garcia wouldn't say anything to them.

ALEX

You have to be balanced, Alex. It's not so black and white.

ANDREW

I go to school with them everyday, you think I don't know?

ALEX

Eat something honey, have some potatoes.

ANNA

I'm not hungry.

ALEX

Are you sure? They're really good. Do you smell that?

ANDREW

Okay I am hungry, but I don't want to eat.

ALEX

Why?

ANNA

Because.

ALEX

Do you wanna starve? You have to eat something.

ANNA

I want to starve.

ALEX

Alex? What are you saying?

ANDREW

I want to starve and go away.

ALEX

Honey, that's, don't say that!

ANNA

A Beat

I wish I could eat my face!

ALEX

Oh you think your face will taste good?

ANDREW

Yeah will probably taste like Johnson & Johnson.

ALEX

Your classmates probably appreciated your playing more than you know.

ANNA

Only one did.

ALEX

A Beat

Really?

ANNA

Who?

ANDREW

ALEX
Nevermind.

ANNA
Come on.

ALEX
Nobody, nobody did.

ANDREW
You can tell us Alex, we're your parents.

ALEX
That's why it's nothing I don't want tell you anything.

ANNA
Why?

ALEX
Because every time I tell you something it's bad.

ANDREW
Bad?

ALEX
You're always saying "Alex you need to do this, Alex you need to do that".

ANNA
That's not true.

ANDREW
As your parents it's our job to guide you, make sure you stay out of trouble, do you understand that?

ALEX
Mr. Hoffman said the music should guide me-

ANDREW
-who is this classmate of yours that you were talking about?

ALEX
I said nobody!

ANNA
Don't raise your voice, Alex.

ALEX
Can I eat in my room?

ANDREW
We eat at tables for dinner.

ALEX
I don't want meat and bread and sourcream, I want to sit in
my bed and eat Oreos.

ANNA
You have to finish your dinner.

ALEX
This is stupid.

ANDREW
It's not stupid.

ALEX
I think it's stupid.

ANNA
Is it a girl?

A Beat
ALEX
What do you mean?

ANNA
Was a girl watching you play in class today?

ALEX
No.

ANDREW
If you keep things bottled up, you will be unhappy.

ALEX
I'm not doing anything.

ANNA
Well what made you notice this person?

ALEX
I don't know what you're talking about.

ANDREW
You said it Alex, not us.

ALEX
Peanut butter and jelly.

ANNA
You want peanut butter and jelly?

ALEX
Duh.

Then tell us. ANDREW

A Beat

ALEX
Someone was smiling at me. They were really smiling at me a lot.

ANDREW
When you were playing?

ALEX
Where's my PB&J?

ANNA
Who was smiling at you?

ALEX
Well..

ANNA
Who?

ANDREW
Who?

ALEX
Isobel.

A Beat

ANNA
Nowak?

ALEX
Yes.

ANDREW
Hmn.

A Beat

ALEX
What?

ANNA
Don't, Andrew.

ANDREW
Nothing.

ANDREW
Tell us more about her.

ALEX
You don't like her, dad?

ANNA
Andrew.

ALEX
What's wrong?

ANDREW
Nothing it's just..you're an artist, Alex.

ALEX
Yeah, and?

ANNA
Yeah, and?

A Beat

ALEX
Isobel was staring at me smiling.

ANNA
Oh really?

ALEX
The whole time I was playing.

Alex take a few tangerines off the counter and starts to try and juggle they fall throughout the scene and he throws them.

ALEX
I never saw her look at me like that before.

ANDREW
Uh-oh.

ALEX
What?!

ANDREW
You should ask her out.

A Beat

ALEX
Like..on a date?

Like that, yeah. ANDREW

Okay... ALEX

It'll be fine honey. ANNA

Well it sounds like you had a good day at school today. ANDREW

What are you talking about? It sucked! ALEX

Having a connection with someone is more important than what everyone else thinks honey. ANNA

Lights dim.

Scene 4

Lights rise. Alex plays with Mr. Hoffman.

How do you feel when you are not playing? MR. HOFFMAN

I feel sick. ALEX

Sick? MR. HOFFMAN

I just feel wrong, everything is sad. ALEX

Keep that feeling. MR. HOFFMAN

Jeez Mr. Hoffman. ALEX

You feel this way when you don't practice regularly, your connection is temporarily cut. MR. HOFFMAN

I want to be a great musician, Mr. Hoffman. ALEX

Alex stands and walks to the window.

ALEX

I hear it, I really hear it. I hear it in my head all the time. The music, it doesn't stop. I can't even write it all down, I forget, but then more music comes in. I've written so many sheets, and I know I can do something with it. I want to play music all the time. I forget I'm alive when I'm playing music, I just feel like I'm not even here. I wish I could spend all day playing piano and not have to eat or sleep. I know I could in a way but that would be bad. When I wake up I hear music, when I do anything I hear music.

MR. HOFFMAN

You can do all of that.

Mr. Hoffman walks to the window.

MR. HOFFMAN

Most people just look out the window. I see what you see.

A Beat

ALEX

I see a lot, Mr. Hoffman.

MR. HOFFMAN

God made you perfectly.

ALEX

Really? Because everyone says other things to me.

MR. HOFFMAN

There were billions of ways you could have exited your mother's womb, Alex. The fact that you came out how you did means you're perfect.

ALEX

I'm really tired, Mr. Hoffman.

Alex walks and sits on the couch.

ALEX

I'm bullied all the time. My teachers are mean to me. I have no friends. I'm fat and ugly.

MR. HOFFMAN

You are not fat, you are big-boned. And you're a good-looking kid. Friends? You'll make them. Teachers and bullies can't recognize what you are so they stick to what they know, conformity.

ALEX

What is the point of everything?

MR. HOFFMAN

This world is a tough place for an artist.

A Beat

MR. HOFFMAN

You have to give up your life for what you love.

ALEX

Give up my life? That sounds bad.

MR. HOFFMAN

Not breathing, but the little things. You must bear it for the big picture. Then, you will be happy. Then, your meaning will be real.

ALEX

I hope so, Mr. Hoffman.

MR. HOFFMAN

These recitals you are doing now, eventually will lead you to the life you dream of.

ALEX

I feel like this is the one thing in my life that makes me feel complete.

MR. HOFFMAN

And I am proud of you, Alex.

ALEX

Thanks, Mr. Hoffman.

MR. HOFFMAN

All these other parts of life are only there to feed your creativity.

ALEX

I get so tired of it all.

MR. HOFFMAN

Translate your emotions into your playing, your craft.

ALEX

I feel better now can we play some more before you have to go.

MR. HOFFMAN

We have a long road ahead of us, young man.

ALEX

Yeah.

MR. HOFFMAN

As long as you breath, you play.

Alex continues to play music.

Lights dim.

SCENE 5

Lights rise: Stage-left Anna and Andrew are in bed, stage-right Sergei and Sofia are in bed.

ANDREW

It's going to be the most important decision of his life.

SOFIA

I feel they are up to something.

ANNA

It doesn't seem like there's an option.

SERGEI

Who is?

ANDREW

Lets really weigh it.

SOFIA

Alex is sad.

ANNA

He can't stay in school if he doesn't take the pills.

SERGEI

What's wrong with being sad? I've been sad with you!

ANDREW

If they write a bad report, no private school may accept him.

SOFIA

You are sad because of fatigue because you are old, he is too young to be sad.

ANNA

And then we'll have to send him to public schools.

SERGEI

Why do you always suspect there is a jig? This is not the Soviet Union you don't have to feign happiness.

ANDREW

And in that there's drugs, gangs, he'll probably fight other kids, he already has issues with kids in this school. Maybe we have to change schools-

SOFIA

I want you to talk to him, not like that coward Andrew.

ANNA

-He may fall in with the wrong crowd in an environment like that, even if he's a good kid.

SERGEI

I shouldn't do the job of a father, Anna didn't ask us, she called him her family, not us!

ANDREW

A Russian kid who plays piano recitals, he'll get his ass kicked.

SOFIA

Something is seriously going on with the boy, I can see it in his eyes.

ANNA

But then if he takes the medication, Dr. Hasslebeck disclosed the side effects. I'm worried about that.

SERGEI

Of course! That's what our daughter gets for marrying an American!

ANDREW

Think about it, his heavy mood swings, tantrums, maybe they will go away with the medication.

SOFIA

But you still liked that he worked in computers because it gave you something to talk about.

ANNA

Honey...

ANDREW

What?

ANNA

I've been thinking.

Andrew embraces Anna

ANDREW

Tell me.

ANNA

Well since he's having trouble in school, what if we home-school him?

SERGEI

Lets stick to the topic: Alex is in trouble.

ANDREW

Are you out of your mind? Do you know what that entails?

SOFIA
Have you made up your mind to do something?

ANNA
What's the stigma exactly?

SERGEI
Yes, I figured it all out!

A Beat

SERGEI
I'll talk to him!

ANDREW
What future will he have? How will he make friends, socialize? How will we know if he's hitting the proper milestones for his age?

SOFIA
Fortune favors the bold.

ANNA
And putting him on speed is somehow better?

SERGEI
It sounds perverted when you say it in English.

ANDREW
It's medication, handled by professionals!

SOFIA
God will thank you for this later.

ANNA
So that's it then? Do we even have any other options?

A Beat

SERGEI
That's it, if Andrew does this, I'm never talking to him again.

ANDREW
We can't sacrifice his future because we disagree with the school. We have to make a choice, Anna, I don't want us to be conflicted about this too.

SOFIA
We didn't go through dictatorship to have this done to our grandson.

ANNA

We're going to have to talk to him about it, lets figure out how he feels.

ANDREW

How are we gonna' do that? He doesn't tell us anything.

SERGEI

To Americans, drugs are the only solution!

ANNA

As his parents, we should get his consent.

ANDREW

Why do we have to? It's for his own good.

SOFIA

These Americans don't know about work, but Alex is the hardest working pianist!

ANNA

Don't do that, we can't force him to take it!

SERGEI

His talent will take him very far, if only my brother Alex were alive to meet him..

SOFIA

Sergei, don't get sad, your heart!

SERGEI

I'm not sad, that Andrew has been a problem from day one!

ANDREW

Were you listening about the life he would lead if he's unmedicated?

Andrew imitates one of Sergei's lines from the dinner scene.

SOFIA

I never liked that Andrew, that is where I failed my daughter the most.

ANNA

Does a textbook define somebody's life?

SERGEI

He is spoiled rotten, coca-cola and cheeseburgers.

ANDREW

The literature said he will be prone to drug addiction? Oppositional defiant disorder? God knows what else!

SOFIA
Did we immigrate for our baby to be on drugs?

A Beat

ANNA
We need to at least explain to him what's going to happen.

SERGEI
We came here because there was nowhere else to go, and they are making Alex have nowhere else to go.

ANDREW
I don't think this is a good idea, he's too young to understand. This will get him into less trouble.

SOFIA
We wanted a better life for the next generation. What will happen to them?

ANNA
This is not up for discussion anymore, if he's taking medication, he's going to be aware of it.

SERGEI
Alex is the future, so I will give my all to him.

A Beat

ANDREW
Fine, but he has to take it one way or another, that's what I've come to. Can we agree on this, Anna?

SOFIA
Talk to him before his upcoming recital, he needs you.

ANNA
I think he will, as long as we talk to him honestly.

SERGEI
The truth will set him free.

Scene 6

Alex is playing piano at his recital.

Scene 7

Alex is playing the keyboard in his pajamas. Anna enters.

ANNA

Time for bed!

ALEX
 No!

ANNA
 Come on honey.

ALEX
 I don't want to go to bed!

ANNA
 Honey, it's eight PM.

ALEX
 So?

ANNA
 It's bedtime!

ALEX
 It's only bedtime because you're saying that!

ANNA
 You have to go to sleep!

ALEX
 Why now?

A Beat

ALEX
 Fine, I'll go to sleep.

ANNA
 You will?

ALEX
 Yes.

ANNA
 Okay. Goodnight honey.

Alex enters his bed as Anna tucks him in.

ANNA
 The lights are going off.

Lights out.

A Beat

A flashlight beams. The flashlight moves across the room, as the lights turn on.

ALEX
Haha!

Alex sits at the keyboard.

ALEX
And now..to turn the volume down..

Anna steps out of the closet as
Alex plays.

A Beat

ANNA
Nice job.

ALEX
Ah!

ANNA
What are you doing there?

ALEX
Oh, hi mom.

ANNA
Aren't you supposed to be sleeping?

ALEX
Yes.

ANNA
What are you doing?

ALEX
I was just doing..nothing.

Anna grabs the flashlight.

ANNA
Well I guess you won't be needing this.

ALEX
Wait, wait!

ANNA
Well, you're not camping in here right?

ALEX
No.

ANNA
So I'll just take this downstairs then.

ALEX
I want my flashlight back!

ANNA
Alex, you have to go to sleep!

ALEX
I know!

ANNA
Then what are you doing?

ALEX
I can't sleep!

A Beat

ANNA
Andrew! Get in here!

Andrew enters.

ANDREW
What's going on here?

ANNA
Your son refuses to go to sleep.

ALEX
That's a lie!

ANDREW
Don't call your mother a liar!

ALEX
I wasn't!

ANNA
It's okay, why can't you sleep honey?

ALEX
I just lie in bed and nothing happens.

ANDREW
What do you mean? You can't close your eyes?

ALEX
They won't stay shut!

ANNA
See if we have some melatonin.

ALEX
What's that?

ANDREW
It helps you sleep.

ANNA
How about some warm milk?

ALEX
No matter what I do I can't sleep.

ANDREW
Have you tried counting sheep?

ALEX
I get past one thousand in two minutes!

ANNA
Have you really tried honey?

ALEX
I try all the time! I'm always trying!

ANDREW
What about reading?

A Beat
ALEX
Reading?

ANDREW
Yes. A book.

ALEX
Are you insane?

ANNA
Alex!

ALEX
You expect me to read at night?

ANDREW
It's okay honey.

ANNA
It might make you fall asleep.

ALEX
I don't want to read!

ANDREW
How about you read some earth science for an hour and see if you stay awake.

ALEX
That's the worst!

ANNA
You have to try Alex!

ALEX
I am!

ANDREW
Okay, we're going to step out of the room, close your eyes
and try your best to go to sleep.

ALEX
Okay fine.

ANNA
Okay.

Alex enters his bed.
Lights out.
A Beat

ALEX
Ow!

The lights turn on.

ALEX
Mmm, time to get some milk and cookies.

Alex exits his room.

ANDREW AND ANNA (OS)
Alex!

Alex runs back into his room
holding a glass of milk and
cookies.

Andrew and Anna enter.

ANDREW
Just what on earth are you doing young man?

ALEX
I was trying to sleep!

ANNA
This is how you try?

ALEX
Every little bit helps!

ANNA

Good lord.

Anna swipes Alex's milk and cookies.

ANNA

You shouldn't be having sweets this late!

ANDREW

Or at all! Why do we even have this?

ALEX

I CAN'T!

A Beat

Alex tears.

ALEX

I can't sleep. I just lie there, tossing and turning over and over. I'm going crazy. If I don't move somewhere I'll lose my mind! I'm not trying to be bad I just can't take it! I don't know why I can't sleep but I just can't!

Andrew and Anna sit on Alex's bed and console him.

ANNA

It'll be okay.

ALEX

I can't..

ANNA

Okay honey, how about you can play for a little bit longer as long as when I come back, you have to go to bed.

ALEX

Okay.

Lights dim while illuminating upstage, stage-left. Alex is seen playing the piano, while Anna enters from the darkness. Alex turns around, and runs to Anna.

ALEX

Mom, mom!

ANNA

Yes honey?

ALEX

Look!

Alex takes a tooth out of his pocket.

ALEX
Should I put it under my pillow?

ALEX
I wonder if I'll get candy this time! Last time I got three dollars and seventy-five cents! This is a REALLY BIG tooth!

Downstage, the stage-lights rise on Sergei and Sofia, listening intently.

SOFIA
What's she saying?

SERGEI
Quiet. I need a large white sheet.

SOFIA
Why? Now? For what?

Sergei walks away, into the darkness, Sofia follows.

SOFIA
Wait for me!

ANNA
Go to bed..you have a big day tomorrow.

ALEX
Okay!

Anna exits, stage-left. Sergei appears, donning a large white costume (a bed sheet draped over his body.)

SERGEI
Hello Alexander!

ALEX
Woah! Who are you!?

SERGEI
The tooth fairy!

ALEX
No way! Where's your wand, where's your wings?

SERGEI
We tooth fairies are large and white like teeth!

ALEX

Ohhhh really?

SERGEI

I want you to promise me..don't ever let anyone tell you you can't create..whatever you want. There are people who want to tell your story for you..with words..their..ideas..no matter..what anyone says..or does..or "tells" you..promise me..you won't EVER let anyone tell you there is something "wrong" with you..that you are "different"..in a bad way..you tell your story..your grandfather once told me.."You measure seven times..cut once".

ALEX

You know my grandfather?

SERGEI

Yes he doesn't have teeth anymore, but we still see each other from time to time.

Sergei walks over to Alex's piano.

The stage-lights all around the stage begin slowly turning off one by one, a slow domino effect.

SERGEI

If you keep playing piano-

The stage-light no longer illuminates Sergei. Alex begins peering his head in different directions.

SERGEI

-you will never die..you will simply..

Alex looks at his piano, as a lone stage-light shines upon him and his instrument.

SERGEI

..become music.

The final stage-light slowly fades to black.

Performance rights must be obtained before production. For contact information, please see [the Idols information page](#).