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SCRIPT SAMPLE

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NEVERAND
By Jonathan Dorf

Cast of Characters

PETER, from eight years old to his early forties

WENDY, same ages as Peter

J.M., ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER, PETER'S MOTHER, MINISTER,
PRISON GUARD, COLLEGE PROFESSOR, RELIGIOUS FIGURE, COP, AA
COUNSELOR, all played by one Actress

A DIGNIFIED VOICE:

An intermission probably shouldn't exist, but if there must be one, it should fall after
Scene 6.

Neverland received its world premiere at City Theater Company, Wilmington, Delaware.
It was directed by Michael Gray, with George Tietze as Peter, Kerry Kristine McElrone
as Wendy and Melissa Dammeyer as the Actress.

PROLOGUE

(WENDY, early forties, is on a ledge outside her apartment. PETER, a few months older, pokes his head through a window frame.)

PETER: I'm coming out.

WENDY: It's dangerous out here. You could fall.

PETER: I'll go in if you will.

WENDY: Do you love me?

PETER: Now?

WENDY: Yes.

PETER: I think I'm supposed to.

WENDY: But you don't?

PETER: I should have liked you better when we were eight. Sorry I was mean to you at my ninth birthday party. I had a bad day.

WENDY: Did you love me then?

PETER: I was nine.

WENDY: What about when you were eight, when you told me to give back the hundred dollars and buy a lottery ticket?

PETER: I was eight.

WENDY: And you don't love me now.

PETER: It's complicated. Could you come inside? I'm worried that if I explain it you might get bored and fall off.

(The lights dim, and PETER pushes the window frame offstage.)

SCENE 1

(A split stage approximately thirty-five years earlier. On one side, a dark classroom with a blackboard upstage. On the other side, WENDY, eight years old, goes through a garbage can. She finds a small brown bag. Enter J.M.—played by the Actress, as are all characters except for Peter and Wendy—wearing an overcoat.)

J.M.: Don't eat from there. Garbage in that can's been sitting there for two weeks. Try this one here. *(J.M. points at a second can, which WENDY opens. WENDY pulls out a fast food bag.)* See? Sealed for freshness.

WENDY: I'm Wendy.

(WENDY offers her hand, but J.M. doesn't take it.)

J.M.: You don't want to do that. Destroys the illusion. *(J.M. walks toward the darkness of the classroom.)* I'll be back later.

(J.M. enters the classroom area, removes her overcoat and becomes a TEACHER who dresses like La Femme Nikita. WENDY continues to dig in the garbage can. She finds a wallet. She holds it up and looks through it. Inside are a number of bills—a hundred dollars. Beat. She pockets it. Lights up on the classroom, where the Teacher stands at the blackboard. PETER, almost nine years old, sits in a chair surrounded by empty chairs and nibbles on an apple.)

TEACHER: Some children starve. They starve to death. Little boys and girls just like you starve and die. It happens all the time. Starve and die. Not die and starve. Make a note: that's impossible. You must starve first and die later. Sometimes you'll hear the phrase "dying of starvation," as if they're doing both at the same time. This is inaccurate. It is not possible to die slowly. Really, they are starving slowly, and when they are done, they'll die all at once. In one motion, so to speak. Please make a note.

(WENDY enters the classroom and takes a seat.)

WENDY: Sorry I was late. I had to make my own breakfast.

TEACHER: For today's lesson, *(pulling out a large cue card that reads "People change")* I would like to talk about God. But I can't, because this is public school. Instead, I will talk about Greek gods and expose you to subliminal messages. *(She changes to a cue card reading "Some things never change.")* We're allowed to mention Greek gods because there are so many of them. So they don't violate your constitutional rights. Can anyone name any Greek gods? Peter?

PETER: Petey.

TEACHER: Big boys go by Peter. Petey sounds like someone who limps. Maybe your wrist limps. Do you want everyone to think you're limp, *Petey*?

(The TEACHER changes her card to "Remember where you came from.")

PETER: Peter.

TEACHER: Good boy. But—are you eating in class?

PETER: *(nods, waves an apple)* I brought one for you too. It's organic.

TEACHER: Thank you, Peter. That's very thoughtful of you. *(She takes the apple and changes her card to "Don't live in the past.")* Toss it.

PETER: But—

TEACHER: But what?

PETER: That's not fair.

TEACHER: Suck it up. *(PETER tosses his half-eaten apple in the trash can as the TEACHER switches to "Nurture your inner child.")* Class, that's your first lesson on Greek gods. They are arbitrary. Whimsical. Capricious. Does anyone understand any of the words I've used? Please make a note to look them up tonight. *(A BELL RINGS.)* For tomorrow, please dress as your favorite Greek god.

(The Teacher switches to "You have to grow up sometime.")

PETER: But we don't know any!

TEACHER: Research! This is third grade, not kindergarten!

(PETER sulks out and sits elsewhere on stage, staring into space. Exit the TEACHER with the good apple. Beat. WENDY rummages in the garbage and pulls out the half-eaten apple. She wipes it on her shirt and bites into it. She exits as the lights dim. WENDY, the apple gone, reenters and approaches PETER.)

WENDY: What would you do if you found a hundred dollars?

PETER: Where?

WENDY: What's it matter?

PETER: If I found a hundred dollars at a bank?

WENDY: A hundred dollars all alone.

PETER: It has to be somewhere.

WENDY: In a wallet.

PETER: You found somebody's wallet?

WENDY: I said what if.

PETER: Did you?

WENDY: Yeah. What would you do with it?

PETER: Can I see? (*WENDY pulls out the wallet. They look at it.*) Whose is it? (*Beat.*) I guess I'd tell my Dad. My Mom might spend it. She shops.

WENDY: You'd give it back?

PETER: Except for a dollar. My Dad says you always keep a dollar for luck.

WENDY: How's a dollar lucky?

PETER: You could buy a lottery ticket. That's what my Dad does.

WENDY: What if you only find a dollar?

(*Beat. Exit WENDY. Lights dim on PETER, who pulls out another apple and eats.*)

SCENE 2

(*The next week. PETER has a birthday hat on his head. Enter his MOTHER, played by the Actress. Enter WENDY, who stands at the edge of the stage in a spotlight.*)

MOTHER: Your friend is here.

PETER: She's not invited.

MOTHER: That's not nice.

PETER: You said I could only have ten people. She isn't one of the ten people. (*To offstage friends*) It's time to open the presents everybody!

MOTHER: You can have eleven, Peter. It's all right.

PETER: But I don't want eleven. I want ten. It's MY birthday.

MOTHER: Last week she was your best friend.

PETER: She was not. She's a girl.

MOTHER: So am I.

PETER: The guys'll make fun of me. And she's poor.

MOTHER: God punishes mean people, Peter. He dogs them their entire lives, and no matter where they go, he is always dogging them.

PETER: What's "dogs"?

MOTHER: He's in here, Wendy!

(PETER'S MOTHER exits.)

PETER: Mom!

(WENDY walks out of the spot and into the room.)

WENDY: Hi.

PETER: Hi.

WENDY: Happy birthday.

PETER: Thanks.

(WENDY takes out an apple.)

WENDY: I brought you a present.

PETER: Really? What? *(Beat.)* Thanks. *(He takes it. He smells it and looks about to eat.)* Is it organic?

WENDY: I don't know.

(PETER no longer looks ready to eat it.)

PETER: Oh.

WENDY: I'll get you another present.

PETER: That's OK. *(Beat.)* I gotta' go open the presents.

WENDY: We won five million dollars in the lottery.

PETER: If you won five million dollars, how come you're wearing the same clothes as all last week?

WENDY: We just won today. We didn't get the money yet.

PETER: I gotta' go open the presents now.

WENDY: Can I watch?

PETER: I already opened yours.

(Lights flicker. Enter the Actress dressed as a MINISTER.)

WENDY: Do you wanna' be my boyfriend?

PETER: No.

MINISTER: With this apple, I thee wed. Do you, Wendy, promise to be eternally grateful, recognizing Peter as your Lord and Savior, your chosen one, the horse you rode in on, *(examines an index card, then tosses it)* your one and only, so long as you both shall live?

WENDY: I do. I really, really do.

MINISTER: *(Turns to PETER)* Do you, Peter—

PETER: No! Get away from me. You're all icky.

WENDY: I love you, Peter.

MINISTER: She loves you, Peter.

WENDY: I want to marry you, Peter.

MINISTER: She wants to—

WENDY: Choke you!

(WENDY puts her hands around PETER's throat and chokes PETER.)

PETER: Help!

WENDY: I just wanna' get close to you.

PETER: You're . . . chok . . . ing—

WENDY: I love you, Peter.

PETER: Get off!

WENDY: I'll always be with you.

(WENDY chokes him to the ground. Lights dim as PETER goes limp. Exit MINISTER. Lights up. PETER and WENDY stand. WENDY peers at PETER, who has his mouth open and stares blankly. PETER snaps out of it.)

PETER: My mom said I can only have ten kids over.

WENDY: Oh.

PETER: Sorry.

WENDY: We're getting a new house. Maybe you could come over sometime.

PETER: Maybe. So . . . bye . . .

(PETER exits, leaving WENDY alone. Beat. Enter the Actress as J.M.)

WENDY: You came back!

J.M.: I'm not your guardian angel, so don't cling. *(Beat.)* That boy is "the one." Why are you letting him go without a fight?

WENDY: What's "the one?"

J.M.: *The one!*

WENDY: One what?

J.M.: Will you grow up—or get some foresight? Think like a grown-up for a minute. Here—*(producing a hat)* put this on. It's a grown-up hat.

(WENDY puts on the hat.)

WENDY: I don't feel any different.

(J.M. grabs WENDY by the collar.)

J.M.: Do you like that boy?

WENDY: I don't know.

J.M.: What! *(She shakes WENDY.)* Don't worry—anybody who sees us'll just think it's a catfight. Do you like him? If they can't see me, they'll think you're having a seizure. You can't lose. So listen up before I shake your head off.

WENDY: Mommy!

(J.M. covers WENDY's mouth.)

J.M.: Do you believe that for every person on this planet there is one other person who is chosen—by God or luck or random urine sample, whatever. Do you? Just nod or shake, girlie. Nod or shake. *(WENDY wags her head diagonally.)* What the hell is this diagonal shit? *(J.M. lets out a howl.)* You licked me! *(She removes her hand from WENDY's mouth.)* You tongued me, you—

WENDY: He doesn't like me.

J.M.: I'm sure that's not true. Why did you lick me?

WENDY: He doesn't like me. He didn't want me at his party.

J.M.: He's shy. *(Beat.)* Why do you think he was standing there with his mouth open—for an entire minute—right before he left? *(WENDY shrugs.)* He was thinking about you!

WENDY: He doesn't want to be friends with me.

J.M.: Of course he doesn't want to be friends. He wants to be more than friends.

WENDY: He does?

J.M.: Were you there?

WENDY: *(Beat.)* What do I do?

J.M.: Go after him.

WENDY: What if he doesn't like me?

J.M.: Then be somebody else. You're it for him, and he's it for you.

(She picks WENDY off the ground and moves her out of the way—or simply moves her out of the way with authority if the former is physically impossible.)

WENDY: You're strong.

J.M.: So are you. Hold onto him, ride him 'til he breaks—or you'll be alone your whole life. *(She wipes her hand on WENDY's clothing.)* Do whatever you have to do, but don't ever lick me again.

(J.M. starts to leave.)

WENDY: How do I make him like me?

J.M.: I have confidence in you.

WENDY: I don't care what *you* have. What do *I* have?

J.M.: You *know*.

WENDY: I'm eight. *(J.M. exits.)* Will you come back?

(J.M. returns.)

J.M.: Maybe. By the way, the name's J.M. Don't ever call me that.

WENDY: What should I call— *(Exit J.M. again, leaving WENDY alone as the lights fade to black.)* you?

END SAMPLE.