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More Great Plays Available
From OWP

American Way
by Jeremy Gable

3 Males, 1 Female

No Intermission

Synopsis: It's not easy being a superhero. When not busy looking danger straight in the eye, there's comic book sales, public complaints and failed marketing strategies to deal with. Sometimes it seems the only solace for a hard day of crime-fighting is a trip to the secret café. Our heroes - the explosive Firebang, the voluptuous Mandible Maiden and the recently retired Crescent Wonder - gather to have a drink and welcome the newest apprentice, an eager kid with an unusual name. But the day is young, and there is danger lurking. "American Way" shows what happens when those with superpowers suddenly realize that they are powerless. With a mixture of humor and tragedy, it shows us what truly makes a superhero.

True Genius
by David Holstein

3 Males, 2 Females

Synopsis: True Genius tells the unfolding story of a boy genius named Scooter who also happens to be a pathological liar. As Scooter falls in love with another pathological liar named Lila, and an eccentric psychologist pries at his past, Scooter's bizarre family history begins to unravel and he comes to question everything his mother has led him to believe is real. In the end, we're forced to ask, "Is Scooter crazy?" Or is his love for Lila breaking through to his sanity? Is she curing him? Or worse, is she not even there?

NEVERLAND

a full length play 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?

SCENE 3

(Nearly four years later. A suburban neighborhood. PETER, surrounded by boxes, carries as many boxes as he can; he can barely see over them. His MOTHER carries a tiny box.)

MOTHER: I think you should get a paper route.

PETER: We just moved here.

MOTHER: Never too early. The job market is competitive.

PETER: Can I unpack first?

MOTHER: Most people would say that seventh grade is late. *(Beat.)* Race you to the door!

(PETER tries to move toward the "door," which is upstage. His MOTHER is gone before he takes more than a few steps, and he drops the boxes he carries. He picks them up. Enter WENDY, dressed in trendy clothing—she should look very different.)

WENDY: I wondered when you were gonna' move in. I saw the sold sign. *(Thinks for a moment.)* I'm Barrie. I just moved here too.

PETER: That's a boy's name.

WENDY: Not. B-A-R-R-I-E.

PETER: Oh.

WENDY: Is your name Peter?

PETER: How'd you know?

WENDY: I forget. Is that right? *(PETER nods.)* My Mom and Dad got divorced because they're so rich.

PETER: I gotta' help unpack.

WENDY: I made my Dad buy our house so he could make up for my Mom buying me these clothes. It's bigger than my Mom's house by fifteen square feet. That's the number of years they were married before they got divorced. That was his idea.

PETER: My Mom wants me to get a paper route.

WENDY: That's so weird.

PETER: I know. I feel like a dork.

WENDY: No—I'm getting a paper route. That way I'll have my own money, and I don't need to depend on my parents. I'm in seventh grade—not kindergarten.

PETER: How did you get one?

WENDY: I haven't yet. But I'm going to.

PETER: What if there aren't any?

WENDY: Then I'll make my Dad get me one. Do you want him to get you one too?

PETER: I guess.

WENDY: Do you have a girlfriend?

PETER: No.

WENDY: Would you like me to be your girlfriend? (*Pause.*) Well?

PETER: I guess.

WENDY: Don't you think I'm pretty?

PETER: Yeah, but—

WENDY: But? (*Beat.*) I think you look hot.

PETER: Thanks.

WENDY: You can kiss me if you want. I don't care if you put your tongue in my mouth. I want you to.

PETER: (*Beat.*) I should unpack first.

WENDY: Don't you want to?

PETER: (*doesn't*) I don't know.

WENDY: (*Beat.*) What do you want to do tonight? (*Beat.*) I could come over and make you dinner.

PETER: My Mom, uh—

WENDY: I could make your whole family dinner. I'm a really good cook. Or we could order takeout. My Dad'll pay. I told him if he wasn't nicer to me I'd go live with Mom. What kind of food do you like?

(*The lights flicker. Enter PETER'S MOTHER with a chair and a whip.*)

MOTHER: Do this, Peter!

(*She snaps the whip on the ground. WENDY snaps her fingers at PETER.*)

WENDY: No! Do *this!*

(MOTHER snaps the whip again. WENDY snaps her fingers. MOTHER snaps her fingers. PETER looks back and forth between them as a snapping duel breaks out.)

PETER: Stop it! Stop!

(WENDY pulls out a piece of chalk and draws a hopscotch grid on the ground.)

WENDY: Jump, Peter!

(MOTHER holds the whip knee-high.)

MOTHER: Jump, Peter!

(WENDY and MOTHER each grab one of PETER's arms and engage in a tug of war.)

PETER: Stop it! You're pulling me apart!

WENDY: I love you, Peter. I need you. I'll rubber band newspapers while you throw them.

MOTHER: I'm your mother. I'm entitled to at least the left side of your body.

WENDY: *I* want his left side.

MOTHER: You take the right. You're already on the right.

WENDY: He has a pimple on his right cheek. I don't want it.
(MOTHER checks PETER's cheek.) Not that cheek.

MOTHER: Do you have a chainsaw?

WENDY: I have a knife.

(WENDY pulls out a plastic knife.)

MOTHER: It's plastic.

WENDY: So?

MOTHER: It'll take two hands. You're trying to trick me into letting go.

WENDY: I'll do it then.

MOTHER: You'll stab me and make a run for it. I don't think so.

WENDY: What do you suggest?

(MOTHER pulls out two pairs of handcuffs.)

MOTHER: Handcuffs!

WENDY: I'll preheat the oven. Or order a pizza.

(PETER screams. Blackout. Lights up. PETER sits, a box on his foot. Enter MOTHER.)

MOTHER: Are you all right?

PETER: I . . . dropped a box on my foot. And I fell. I was talking to—

MOTHER: Does anything feel broken?

PETER: What does broken feel like?

MOTHER: You can't move it. Howling, screaming pain. *(PETER shakes his head.)* Good. Try to stand on it. *(PETER stands and walks around carefully. MOTHER starts to exit.)* Don't try to use this to get out of your paper route.

PETER: What's for dinner?

(MOTHER stops.)

MOTHER: Your new friend is bringing it. Isn't that sweet? Try to be nice to her. I didn't see many children your age in the neighborhood. She reminds me of . . . who was that girl, the girl from the birthday party?

PETER: Wendy.

MOTHER: She reminds me of Wendy. *(The lights flicker.)* And after dinner she's going to put her tongue in your mouth. Would you mind, sweetheart? People who bring dinner are few and far between. *(PETER pinches himself and lets out a yelp.)* What did you do that for?

PETER: I don't want her tongue in my mouth, I don't want her to bring us dinner, and I don't want a paper route.

MOTHER: Don't be difficult, Peter. Don't be difficult again. It's all your fault we had to move, Peter. Don't go and screw things up again. *(Beat.)* Now get the boxes inside before I tell your father.

PETER: Did you tell Dad about the tongue?

MOTHER: Your father would be all for it. He likes *my* tongue.

PETER: How do you know? He can't talk.

MOTHER: He blinked twice.

PETER: That means no.

MOTHER: He likes it, Peter.

PETER: It's not fair.

MOTHER: Is it fair we had to pack up and move because of your school record? Do you have any idea how embarrassing that was? (*Beat.*) I'm waiting for an answer.

PETER: Yes, ma'am.

MOTHER: Yes ma'am what?

PETER: I know how embarrassing it was.

MOTHER: How could you know? Were you in our shoes? Were you us?

PETER: N-no, but—

MOTHER: We had our tails between our legs. Do you know how uncomfortable that is?

PETER: No, but—

MOTHER: Do it!

PETER: What?

MOTHER: Put your tail between your legs!

PETER: (*Beat.*) It already is.

MOTHER: What!

PETER: This (*points to his butt*) is my tail; it is between my legs.

MOTHER: You . . . you . . . (*Beat.*) Sweetie. We both know that you were an accident, but we can't get bitter. And I don't blame you for your father having a stroke and becoming a vegetable, even if it was your fault. We just have to make the best of it. So for my part, I'm sorry.

PETER: Sorry about what?

MOTHER: Does it matter?

PETER: No. (*Beat.*) Yes.

MOTHER: What?!

PETER: And I'm not sorry.

MOTHER: No allowance for you.

PETER: I don't get one anyway.

MOTHER: Ever.

PETER: Bite me.

MOTHER: Did you say—

PETER: Bite me. You're not my mother.

MOTHER: Who's your mother then?

PETER: Not you.

MOTHER: Then leave.

PETER: My real mother would never let a girl put her tongue in my mouth.

MOTHER: Still crying about the tongue.

PETER: I'm not crying.

MOTHER: Cry, cry, cry—

PETER: I'm not crying!

MOTHER: Cry, cry, cry—

PETER: Where's my stuff?

MOTHER: What stuff?

PETER: My things.

MOTHER: Your things? What things? You don't have any things. They're all ours. They stay with the house. We own your things. Your stuff. Your clothes, including the ones you're wearing. You can keep those because the thought of you naked is so disgusting that my vomit would be all over the neighborhood. (*Beat.*) So be a good twelve year old and carry the rest of the boxes into the house. Bring them inside, wash your repulsive little mug, and rinse with mouth-wash so your little neighbor girlfriend person doesn't cough up a mess when she sticks her tongue in your mouth, because your father's a

MOTHER (cont'd): vegetable and I don't do vomit. *(Beat.)* All twelve year olds tongue. *(Beat.)* Maybe you wouldn't have lost Wendy if you'd let her stick it to you. *(Beat.)* I want neighbor girl to do it before dinner. But after she's brought dinner. Have to make sure she really delivers. OK?

PETER: No.

(PETER walks away.)

MOTHER: Peter! *(PETER exits.)* I don't care if you run away, but if she doesn't bring dinner, I'll dog you.

(Beat as the lights flicker. Enter WENDY with dinner.)

WENDY: I brought—

MOTHER: *(takes dinner from WENDY)* That smells wonderful. Thank you. If Peter comes back, I'll tell him what a good dinner he missed.

WENDY: Where is he?

MOTHER: This way. That way. We're estranged. What's the difference?

WENDY: What's estranged?

MOTHER: Peter doesn't live here anymore.

WENDY: *(Beat.)* Now I have to make my Dad buy me a house somewhere else!

(Blackout.)

SCENE 4

(A juvenile detention center five years later. A stool with detention center regulation clothing on it is the only furniture. PETER removes his shirt and pants and changes into the prison gear, or he could be changed already. Beat. Enter WENDY, this time with a prim school-girl look and carrying a stack of books, escorted by the Actress, dressed as a PRISON GUARD.)

WENDY: Hi. *(Beat as the Guard exits.)* I'm your reading tutor.

PETER: I don't need a reading tutor.

WENDY: But I thought—

PETER: We can read if you want. It's OK. But I just wanted somebody to talk to.

WENDY: Oh.

PETER: Is that OK?

WENDY: Do you like to read?

PETER: I don't know.

WENDY: Would you like to read one of these books?

PETER: What've you got?

(WENDY juggles the books to look at them.)

WENDY: There's one about dogs, and The Yearling—that's about a boy and a deer—and this looks like a cookbook and—I had to take them from the library here. Sorry.

PETER: The deer one sounds OK.

WENDY: Do you like depressing books?

PETER: Why?

WENDY: He shoots the deer.

PETER: Whatever. Does it bother *you*?

WENDY: Does it bother *you*?

PETER: I robbed a mini-mart. You're staring.

WENDY: Sorry. I—

PETER: When people stare it's 'cause they want to know why I'm here. *(He puts his finger in his shirt and makes it look like a gun.)* Like this. Guy believed me, only when I'm leaving with the money, I forget it's just my hand and not a gun, and I take my hand out of my shirt. Guy figures out it's my hand and not a gun, and he hits me in the back with a bat. I was in the hospital for a week.

WENDY: Are you all right?

PETER: He didn't break my back or anything, just a couple ribs. I'm here for another five months. I've been here for a month. If I had a normal life, I'd be in twelfth grade. Were you gonna' ask that?

WENDY: You're really nice.

PETER: I'm just being nice 'cause I want to bone you. *(Beat.)* Don't worry. I can control it. *(Beat.)* My Mom threw me out 'cause I wouldn't let the girl who lived across the street put her tongue in my mouth. Really I left, but she woulda' thrown me out.

(The lights flicker. Enter the Actress dressed as a cross between PETER'S MOTHER and the GUARD.)

GUARD/MOTHER: I'm not your real mother.

PETER: But you said I was an accident.

GUARD/MOTHER: You were. I was waiting for the bus—the only time I ever took the bus—and this heavysset woman handed me a baby, said "take this baby" with one of those voices that made me think she had a phlegm problem, then climbed into a dumpster and suffocated herself. The bus was late.

PETER: She didn't say I was an accident.

GUARD/MOTHER: Oh—I forgot. Right after she said "take this baby," she said, "it was an accident." I said "is it a boy or a girl?" She said, "who cares?—I'm suffocating myself in that dumpster across the street." I forgot that part of the conversation.

(The lights flicker as the GUARD/MOTHER exits.)

PETER: Something like that. Every time I think about it, I remember it different. *(Beat.)* A couple years after I ran away, I tried to come back.

WENDY: I lost you.

PETER: What?

WENDY: *(covering)* I lost you when you said you tried to come back.

PETER: I tried to go back to my old parents or whatever they were. I even told them it was OK if the girl put her tongue in my mouth, but it was too late. She moved a couple weeks after I ran away. So I left again.

WENDY: *(Beat.)* You could put your tongue in *my* mouth.

PETER: Thanks, but you don't really mean it.

WENDY: I do.

PETER: That's not what I meant. You mean it, 'cause you're all nice and you're trying to be nice to me, but—well, there's a lot of reasons why I could never do that. For starters, the whole room's covered by video cameras.

WENDY: How's my hair?

PETER: What?

WENDY: Does it look OK?

PETER: Yeah.

WENDY: If I'm going to be on video, I want to make sure I look good. Do you have any mouthwash or toothpaste or gum?

PETER: I'm not tonguing you.

WENDY: Don't you like me?

PETER: You're a nice girl and you're pretty and smart, and I'm sure you're a great reading tutor. And maybe I used to be this nice little kid—I don't think I ever was nice. Maybe when I was really, really little, like a little baby. When I was nine, when I turned nine, I had this birthday party, and there was this girl, Wendy. I told her she couldn't come to my party 'cause she was poor and her clothes smelled. Only I told her it was 'cause—it doesn't matter what I said. My Mom hated me after that. *(Beat.)* I'm no good for you. You shouldn't come back here.

WENDY: But what about The Yearling?

PETER: What?

WENDY: The deer.

PETER: I already know it died—right? You're too good for me.

WENDY: But I'm—

PETER: Don't say your name. In case I get even meaner and start stalking you when I get out.

(Enter the GUARD.)

GUARD: Time's up.

WENDY: I'll leave the books.

PETER: Suit yourself. *(Beat. WENDY leaves the books on the floor and starts to exit.)* I just don't know how I'll turn out.