

ONE LEFT BEHIND

By
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ONE LEFT BEHIND

*Dedicated to everyone who has ever helped me move forward.
And for Bob, now and always.*

ONE LEFT BEHIND

CAST: 3 W, 1 M, 1-7 M/F/NB

ALICIA SUMMERTON, F, ages in the play from 14-17, computer savant and crackerjack coder. Sometimes electively mute.

FRANCES SUMMERTON, F, ages in the play from 10-12, likes movies in movie houses. More naive than her age would indicate.

GARRETT SUMMERTON, M, 50, CEO of a successful tech company in San Francisco. Alicia and Frances' father. Former software developer. Relishes an unexamined life.

JODY SUMMERTON, F, 45, Garrett's sister and Chief Engineer of their tech company. Socially skilled, confident but deferential when needed.

PATRICIA SUMMERTON, (can be played by the actor playing Jody.) F, 48, Garrett's wife, marketing director of their tech company. Not sure how to use the advice of "lean in."

SWANS - any number between 1 and 8. Can be any gender or age. Alternatively, Swans can be portrayed by the other actors OR shown via video, shadow, puppets, stuffed animals, or other means depending on available resources.

There are only 4 actors required for the play.

SETTING: Several locations in San Francisco, California, 2015-2018.

SCRIPT NOTE: A SLASH - / indicates characters are interrupting each other.

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CASTING NOTE (Taken and adapted from Chuck Mee)

This play does not take race and disability as their subject matter. Other plays do, and I think that is a good and necessary thing. But issues of race and disability do not always consume the lives of people of color or people in wheelchairs. There is not a single role in this play that must be played by an able-bodied white person.

PRODUCTION NOTE: This play moves between a dream world, a literal world, and a virtual world. Effects and changes for these worlds may be embedded in costume, live action, video or projections, or any other means as befits the resources of the theater. Stage effects can be as simple or as complex as resources allow.

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SCENE 1

Late summer, 2017. ALICIA SUMMERTON, 16, is in her bedroom, in her parents' post-earthquake duplex in San Francisco's Marina District. Alicia is fiddling with what appears to be a gigantic headset. She dons the headset after tinkering with its innards, the lights grow dim, and we see, in shadow, child-Alicia playing with her mother PATRICIA in a game of hopscotch.

ALICIA. Mom Mom Mom I got the last square!

PATRICIA. Yes you did honey!

ALICIA. You're the best mommy! *(The shadows disappear, and light comes back to Alicia wearing the headset.)*

ALICIA. Mom! Almost there! *(Blackout)*

SCENE 2

Late summer 2015 - 2 years before the opening scene. Dining Room of Garrett and Patricia Summerton's duplex in San Francisco. Alicia is 14, Frances is 10. Decor is homey but not busy.

GARRETT. What's on your agenda?

PATRICIA. A few things. That blogger from Crunchbase wants to see the new headset. I told him/

GARRETT. /I hope you told him no way/

PATRICIA. /I'll show the old/

GARRETT. /Tell him you're tied up. Tell him trade secret, very hush hush, fuck, tell him whatever but we can't/

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PATRICIA. /Honey, all press is good press right now. Trying to lure Blackstone to the table/

GARRETT. /It didn't get us anywhere.

PATRICIA. I don't know what you want. Use the specs, hide the details. I can't go back and forth like this.

GARRETT. Maybe you/ (*Patricia is silent.*) Maybe WE should hire a marketing guru. (*Patricia is silent.*) Some young singleton in the thick of it, Patty.

PATRICIA. Someone you can ... mentor?

GARRETT. Don't be like that. Someone with laser focus on moving us forward.

PATRICIA. If you think/ (*Alicia and Frances enter.*)

FRANCES. Mom, Mom, Leesy won a prize!

ALICIA. Stop, I want to tell her! the circuits, the stuff Aunt Jody/

FRANCES. /And she gets to go on TV, maybe...

GARRETT. What did Jody fill your head with this time?

ALICIA. She showed me some stuff, it's no big deal.

GARRETT. She better not have/

PATRICIA. /I'm sure she didn't/

GARRETT. /and you are not going on TV. End of story.

ALICIA. Don't want to be on stupid TV. (*Alicia exits.*)

FRANCES. Can I be on TV?

PATRICIA. Not right now honey.

FRANCES. Can I bring Leesy a snack?

PATRICIA. Of course. Give me a hug. (*Patricia and Frances hug. Frances exits.*)

GARRETT. I'm going to fucking kill Jody. Here, you call her, I'm too mad, this is/

PATRICIA. /I seriously doubt she gave Alicia anything valuable. You're exhausted, let's scrap this till later. (*Blackout*)

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SCENE 3

Late Fall 2015. Garrett and Jody in the dining room of Garrett's duplex. Disordered but livable.

GARRETT. The company, she was the face of the company, she was the company, her... people who like what we did liked it because of her.

JODY. I can only imagine how hard this is for you. Actually, I can't imagine.

GARRETT. Oh fuck whenever I look at them I just see her. Her face, the way she washed their mouths when they were little. She used to braid Alicia's hair; I don't know how she ever got a ponytail that didn't even look like a ponytail it oh I don't know I'm just babbling...Jesu/

JODY. /No one is judging you. Let's just get through these plans tonight, I'll bring it to engineering in the morning, and/

GARRETT. /Don't let Alicia see them she'll want to tinker with them. That kid... reminds me of you when you were her age. Couldn't keep your hands off, what, did Mom get you that electronic abacus? Or that electricity thing minicomputer?

JODY. I don't think Alicia could make sense of these plans. These are way out of the box. I'll call you tomorrow. You don't have to come in, I can take care of Alex and the others. *(Jody exits. Garrett sobs. Blackout)*

SCENE 4

Late summer, 2017. A few days after the opening scene. Alicia (16) is in her bedroom, still tinkering. Headset, laptop parts, other electronic detritus scattered around.

ALICIA. Here, what, go, go GO! *(Alicia dons headset again, we see indistinct shadow of Patricia who begins to come into focus.)* Mom! Help me!

PATRICIA. Alicia, honey I'm right here.

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ALICIA. Mom really, help me, you have to stay, I can't/ (*Patricia fades slowly into shadow. Alicia fumbles with headset, clicks into her laptop. Patricia's voice fades in and out.*)

PATRICIA. I'm sorry honey, sorry.

ALICIA. Please, you don't know, it's fucked up/

PATRICIA. I'm trying. Keep trying.

ALICIA. (*Continues her work. Nothing happens. Blackout*)

SCENE 5

A few days later. Garrett and Jody in the living room of Garrett 's duplex - now Scandinavian Design all the way. Jody is tinkering with some small headsets. Garrett is on his laptop.

GARRETT. Lindsey called, said he thought there'd be a way around the FDA red tape - he "knew a guy."

JODY. Our best shot is you in that boardroom. You always get your way.

GARRETT. I can't talk specs anymore. Not like you. I've been glad-handing so many people I've forgotten how the science works. We should both go. You can talk details and I'll be the "pretty boy. "

JODY. Oh no. Last time you dragged me into one of those meetings they asked you all the questions anyway.

GARRETT. Come on Jody, it's different now. Once they hear you talk they will know you're the brains of the outfit. Like you always have been.

JODY. They're not expecting to see me. Please. You're our problem solver.

GARRETT. Here I am. With the team, our people. Blackstone, they want data, details.

JODY. Garrett, I can't. I don't think I even fit in my suit anymore.

GARRETT. Come on, you're the substance, I sell the dream. It's going to take the BOTH of us to convince them we're onto something that'll go soon. I'll even buy lunch.

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JODY. We can hang out, talk like we used to? Before this was all a test of whose dollars we'd take?

GARRETT. Sure.

JODY. Can we skip the sushi place and you bring those pictures of Patty you promised?

GARRETT. I ...don't think I'm ready.

JODY. I promised the girls, a real album, not just digital.

GARRETT. Digital IS real, Jody - you better not forget that for the meeting.

GARRETT. "More real than reality!"

JODY. "More real than reality!" I know, I know...

GARRETT. I'll set something up for Thursday.

JODY. Bring the pictures.

GARRETT. We'll see. And charge a new suit. A good one. On the company card.

SCENE 6

A few weeks later, a weekend afternoon. Dining room of Garrett's duplex. Frances, (13) Alicia (16), and Garrett eating from takeout containers. Alicia is busy on her laptop; Frances may be throwing food.

FRANCES. Aunt Jody is late. We're supposed to go to the park.

GARRETT. Finish your lunch first.

ALICIA. Not those stupid swans again.

FRANCES. I like swans. They're friendly.

ALICIA. No they aren't! They will bite you. *(Alicia grabs Frances with her fingers like a mouth.)*

FRANCES. OWWW!

GARRETT. Frances, stop annoying your sister.

FRANCES. Daddy I wasn't even/

ALICIA. /Plus who eats lunch at 2 o'clock? It's almost like dinner.

GARRETT. If you are going to work in tech you better get used to eating when you're done and not before/ *(SOUND of doorbell.)*

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FRANCES. Aunt Jody!

JODY. Fran-fan!

ALICIA. Dad, can Aunt Jody take us to the office?

GARRETT. No, she will not. Last time you made such a mess.

ALICIA. Carl was showing me the code, I wanted to try it at school/

JODY. Hello Alicia. Carl tells me you are quite the ninja coder!

GARRETT. You should not be talking to Carl. He's/

ALICIA. /Carl is nice. He let me try to/

GARRETT. /I know what he tried, and your little experiment set us back two days. If you want to learn something Aunt Jody can teach you.

ALICIA. Aunt Jody... doesn't know ...squattitudinous about HTML, CSS, C ++ (*pronounced C plus-plus*).

GARRETT. She has forgotten more about C++ than you will ever know, young lady.

JODY. You make me sound like a dinosaur.

ALICIA. Can you show me the new project? Carl gave me some of the code but I think it's still buggy/

GARRETT. Carl needs to get that code working, Jody, we are way behind on this. I'm dealing with...lots of paperwork with Patricia ...gone... all the sympathy cards, this house.

JODY. I can help with that, I told you, we have a lot of the same friends/

GARRETT. /It's a husband's job. To be honest I could use your help more with the girls...

ALICIA. Yeah like take me to the FREAKING office/

FRANCES. /The park! By time we get there the swans will be asleep!

JODY. Alicia, I think your dad/

GARRETT. /Jody, don't encourage her, please. She knows just enough to mess everything up.

JODY. Do you remember how many circuits I blew trying to learn BASIC? And FORTRAN?

GARRETT. Crashing circuits when you were 16 didn't cost us anything.

JODY. (*To Alicia*) How's this? When we get the prototype you'll be the first one to see it.

GARRETT. And soon I hope. (*To Alicia*) But you're not going to touch it.

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JODY. Garrett, give her something to look forward to. We know how much they've been through.

GARRETT. And me?

JODY. It's not easy for any of us Garrett. I miss Patricia too.

GARRETT. No one's doubting your suffering Jody, but if we don't get this moving forward...

JODY. The prototype is nearly there. I promise.

FRANCES. Are we going to the park or not? Jeez.

JODY. All right, let's go, girls.

ALICIA. Do I have to? Seriously? I mean SERIOUSLY? You're not my mom you know.

GARRETT. Ali/

JODY. /It's all right, Garrett. Alicia, come to the park, get outside, and you can bring your laptop. I'll show you some tricks for/

ALICIA. /Coolio.

(Jody, Alicia, and Frances exit and walk to the banks of the lagoon outside the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco. Jody and Frances have bread for the swans. Alicia is entranced with her laptop.)

FRANCES. Swans love bread.

ALICIA. They're just like you, you always eat bread. We never have any in the house, you eat it all.

JODY. We have plenty of breadcrumbs for the birds.

FRANCES. They're not birds they're swans.

ALICIA. Swans are birds, dumdum.

FRANCES. Are they birds, Aunt Jody? I thought they were swans.

JODY. Swans are birds, Frances.

ALICIA. See see I told ya so!

FRANCES. So swans are birds. But they're so big! Birds are little, and they fly around. I don't think these swans, birds can fly.

JODY. Swans fly, honey.

ALICIA. Ha ha you're still a big dum-dum!

FRANCES. I have more breadcrumbs than you! I can feed more swans...birds.

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JODY. Sweeties, let's not fight. I know it's tough, but you have each other. You should lean on each other, and your dad. (*Alicia begins leaning on Frances.*)

ALICIA. Can I LEAN on you? I KNEAD you (*Begins rubbing Frances' shoulder.*) Can I COUNT on you? (*Taps her fingers one by one on Frances' back.*)

FRANCES. Cut it out Leesy! I mean it! (*Alicia continues to poke Frances.*)

JODY. Stop now you two! I promised your dad we'd have a nice day.

FRANCES. We used to come here with Mom.

ALICIA. YOU used to.

FRANCES. You didn't ever wanna come with us. You 're not even sad.

JODY. Frances., I know Alicia misses her. We all do.

FRANCES. Maybe she's flying in heaven. Looking after us.

ALICIA. That's baby talk. Daddy is going to take care of us now.

FRANCES. And Aunt Jody, right?

JODY. Yes, Frances, of course.

ALICIA. Can I have the keys to the car?

JODY. Leesy, honey, why don't you and Frances/

ALICIA. /I want to wait in the car.

FRANCES. We still have a lot of breadcrumbs; you can have some of mine too/

ALICIA. /I hate those fucking/

JODY. /Language!

FRANCES. Quarter!

ALICIA. That's for Daddy, not me. I can fucking say what I fucking want. And you said I could bring my laptop. And I do not care about the graceful movements of these INCREDIBLY RARE fucking birds...

FRANCES. They're swans.

JODY. Alicia please... OK, Alicia, if that's what you want. We'll be right here. (*Hands Alicia the keys.*)

ALICIA. Sweet! (*Alicia exits.*)

JODY. Let's feed the rest of these swans. I bet they're still hungry.

FRANCES. Wheeee! (*Throws the rest of the breadcrumbs.*)

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JODY. Wheee!!!! (*Several swans surround Frances and Jody as they hold hands and spin. Swan feathers fly around them as they spin. LIGHTS on Alicia in the car, working her laptop, writing code. On a screen behind her we see a flickering image of Garrett, then of Patricia. The image disappears.*)

ALICIA. Mom! Almost there. (*Blackout*)

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