

ABIGAIL, FOR NOW

By
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ABIGAIL, FOR NOW

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ABIGAIL, FOR NOW

Abigail, For Now was initially developed through a mini-residency with Play Incubation Collective (formerly The Play Reading Co-Op) in Northampton, MA in 2021.

Abigail, For Now was first produced at St. Teresa's Academy in Kansas City, MO in 2023 under the direction of Shana Prentiss.

ABIGAIL, FOR NOW

CAST: 5W, 3M, 1Any

ABIGAIL	Teens, female. Insists she is from another planet.
RONNIE	40s-50s, female. Abigail's mother.
JAY	40s-50s, male. Abigail's father
DR. BAYLOR	40s or older, any gender. A psychologist.
MARTA	20s or older, female. A mental health counselor.
JEN	Teens, female. A resident at the facility.
NAOMI	Teens, female. A resident at the facility.
SHAWN	Teens, male. A resident at the facility.
AUSTIN	Teens, male. A resident at the facility.
A group of VOLUNTEERS	
Two SECURITY OFFICERS	

TIME: Present.

PLACE: A campsite and small mental health facility in a rural area.

Playwright's Notes:

- The VOLUNTEERS and SECURITY OFFICERS may be played by the actors playing parts other than ABIGAIL, RONNIE, or JAY.
- DR. BAYLOR's pronouns are written as she/her in this play but may be changed to he/him or they/them if needed.
- Teen residents should wear comfortable clothes. AUSTIN always wears long sleeves/sweatshirts. MARTA & DR. BAYLOR dress more professionally.

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ACT I SCENE 1

It is night. ABIGAIL, around 15 years old, is alone on stage. She is in the woods. She sits, legs crossed, face turned toward the sky. Her eyes are closed. Her body is tense, as if she is using all of the energy she has to emit a message into the darkness. In the distance, a voice calls out. It's her mother, RONNIE. She, her husband JAY, and some VOLUNTEERS have been searching for Abigail.

RONNIE. (O.S.) Abigail!

JAY. (O.S.) Abby! Are you out here? (*Abigail starts upon hearing them. She looks toward the direction of the voices. She hadn't planned on this.*)

ABIGAIL. (Quietly.) No. No, no. (*She turns again to the sky.*) Please. It needs to be now. Please! (*The voices grow closer. Ronnie and Jay continue to call for Abigail, and more voices join them. Abigail, agitated, stands. She clenches her fists, keeps her face upturned, eyes closed, and she tenses further, sending all of her energy into the night sky. As the voices get closer, so do lights from several flashlights belonging to the group looking for Abigail. One lands on her.*)

JAY. Is that –?

RONNIE. (Overlapping.) That's her! Abigail!

ABIGAIL. No! No, stop! (*Abigail's desperate shout stops the group in their tracks. The volunteers hang back as Ronnie and Jay continue to approach. One of the volunteers should use a phone to record the rest of the exchange - subtle but okay if it's noticed by the audience.*) Don't come near me.

JAY. Honey –

ABIGAIL. Don't do this! Let me call them back! (*Ronnie and Jay stay close together, approaching slowly. Two SECURITY OFFICERS separate from the crowd of volunteers, moving to the other side of Abigail. She is*

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looking at Ronnie and Jay and does not see them. The following lines of dialogue should start to overlap as Abigail and her parents become more desperate.)

RONNIE. What are you doing out here?

ABIGAIL. I almost had it – I know I did.

RONNIE. Had what?

ABIGAIL. The signal – I need more time –

JAY. Whatever it is, we can help you.

ABIGAIL. I can't do this. I want to go home.

RONNIE. We'll take you home.

ABIGAIL. This is not my home!

RONNIE. We'll get our stuff and go right back home.

ABIGAIL. You don't understand. Get out. Go!

RONNIE. Abigail, please!

ABIGAIL. *(Becoming increasingly panicked.)* Stop! Get away from me! They'll hurt you!

JAY. We're not going anywhere without you.

ABIGAIL. I want to go home – I need to reach them! *(Ronnie approaches Abigail.)* Get away from me! *(Abigail lashes out at Ronnie. The two security officers come around behind Abigail and restrain her. She fights them.)*

JAY. Be careful! She's a kid!

RONNIE. Abigail, please – you're going to hurt yourself –

ABIGAIL. I hate you! Let me go! Let me go! I need to call them back to me – let me go! *(The officers bring Abigail off. Ronnie and Jay look at each other helplessly, then follow. The volunteers disperse.)*

SCENE 2

Ronnie and Jay sit in DR. BAYLOR's office.

JAY. She wanted to go camping, said she wanted to get out in the country. We haven't been in years. She seemed like our old Abby again. She was happy yesterday, buzzing. And then, I woke up in the middle of the night, and she was gone.

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DR. BAYLOR. Has she ever done anything like that – run away?

RONNIE. No, but... There have been times at home – times we'd find her sitting outside late at night. Just sitting there with her eyes closed. Waiting.

DR. BAYLOR. Waiting for what?

JAY. We didn't know. Not until tonight.

DR. BAYLOR. What was she waiting for?

RONNIE. She was waiting for whoever or whatever it was she thought was coming to take her away.

DR. BAYLOR. Take her where? (*Ronnie and Jay look at each other with uncertainty.*) I've been doing this for a long time. I can assure you, whatever it is, it won't shock me.

RONNIE. She says she wants to go home. To her real home. (*Pause.*) Which is in outer space.

DR. BAYLOR. Oh.

RONNIE. Yeah.

JAY. She's been different the last couple of years but it seemed like... you know, normal kid stuff.

RONNIE. It's gotten more intense over the last few months.

DR. BAYLOR. How so?

RONNIE. She's isolating herself from friends. Getting in trouble. And she'll go off on these rants about "the human species." We thought she was looking for attention.

JAY. We didn't know.

DR. BAYLOR. We'll do everything we can to help her.

RONNIE. That's great. But can you convince her she's human?

SCENE 3

A Group therapy session is taking place in the Rec Room. JEN, NAOMI, SHAWN sit near each other. Abigail sits off to the side. MARTA is facilitating.

MARTA. Before we go, I'm sure you've noticed we have someone new with us today. Abigail, could you introduce yourself to the group?

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Abigail? *(There is no response from Abigail.)* You don't have to say much. We could start with your name.

ABIGAIL. You know what they call me.

MARTA. I'm asking you to introduce yourself. It's an important step: taking ownership of yourself and your journey.

ABIGAIL. This is not my journey. I shouldn't be here.

MARTA. Okay. Everyone, this is Abigail. *(The others mutter greetings.)* I hope you all work to remember what it was like for you your first few days. We're all here to support each other. So, welcome. *(She gives Abigail a warm smile. Abigail does not look at her.)* Should we head to lunch?

SHAWN. Pleeeease! I'm starving.

ABIGAIL. I'll go back to my cell.

MARTA. It's a room, not a cell. And you need to eat.

ABIGAIL. I hate this food.

SHAWN. It's not too bad. You'll get used to it.

ABIGAIL. *(Explosive.)* Don't tell me what I'll get used to!

MARTA. Okay! Lunch time. Let's go, everyone.

NAOMI. What is up with her?

JEN. Psycho.

MARTA. I know that this is difficult. You've been through a lot.

ABIGAIL. You have no idea.

MARTA. You'd be surprised. Look, I know you don't want to be here, but I'm asking you to be kind. Everyone here is going through something.

ABIGAIL. It doesn't matter. The others will come for me soon. You'll all see.

SCENE 4

Dr. Baylor's office. Abigail is pacing. Dr. Baylor watches her for a moment.

DR. BAYLOR. You've been doing that a long time. You can sit if you want to. *(No response.)* Do you want some tea? *(No response.)* It might help.

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ABIGAIL. Help what?

DR. BAYLOR. You seem nervous.

ABIGAIL. I'm not.

DR. BAYLOR. Agitated then.

ABIGAIL. Oh, I seem agitated? Is that your professional opinion?

DR. BAYLOR. I can get you a hot chocolate if you don't like tea.

ABIGAIL. No.

DR. BAYLOR. What's on your mind?

ABIGAIL. Nothing. Everything.

DR. BAYLOR. I'd love to get some background from you. Family history is usually a good place to start. I've spoken to your parents –

ABIGAIL. They are *not* my parents.

DR. BAYLOR. Okay. Well, I've got their side of things. I'd love to hear your story from you.

ABIGAIL. I've already told you, I'm not one of you. That's not something anyone can change, so you're wasting your time.

DR. BAYLOR. Why don't you tell me what it was like growing up?

ABIGAIL. You want to hear Abigail's story, not mine.

DR. BAYLOR. You don't have access to that story?

ABIGAIL. Of course, I do. But that part of the story is over. It ended when I arrived.

DR. BAYLOR. I'd be happy to hear *your* story. From the beginning?

ABIGAIL. No.

DR. BAYLOR. Let me ask you something else, then. Is Abigail still in there, somewhere?

ABIGAIL. She's gone.

DR. BAYLOR. You can't reach her?

ABIGAIL. She's *gone*.

DR. BAYLOR. That's a shame. It seems like a lot of people care about her.

ABIGAIL. Sacrifices are made in the name of progress all the time.

DR. BAYLOR. That's interesting. That might be something to remember – to make progress you have to get uncomfortable sometimes. (*There is a silence while Abigail considers this.*)

ABIGAIL. What are all of these books?

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DR. BAYLOR. Different things. Reference material, case studies, journals. Some I just like. (*Abigail picks up a book and starts skimming through the pages.*)

ABIGAIL. Just because you've read these, you think you understand everything.

DR. BAYLOR. Those books show me how much more there is to understand. That's why I want to get to know you.

ABIGAIL. You need to let me out of here.

DR. BAYLOR. You'll go home. It takes time, though. And hard work. (*Abigail tears a page out of the book in her hand and lets it fall to the floor. Dr. Baylor doesn't react.*)

ABIGAIL. You're going to be sorry if I'm here when they come for me.

DR. BAYLOR. I'll take that chance. I want to hear your story, Abigail. (*Abigail tears out another page. And another. She continues doing this and letting each page fall around her as Dr. Baylor watches. She may say the next line while she does this.*)

ABIGAIL. You're all so stupid. It doesn't matter how much you read. How much you think you understand. The simple fact that you think you can keep me here? Without consequence? The refusal to see what's right in front of you, simply because you haven't seen it before. All anyone has done is ask me for my history, my story, my truth, but I've already given it to you. You're wasting your time, but more importantly, you're wasting my time. (*She throws the book down. She pulls others off the shelves and throws them on the ground. Dr. Baylor has no reaction. They stare at one another. A timer goes off on Dr. Baylor's desk.*)

DR. BAYLOR. That's time. I'll see you tomorrow. (*Abigail glares at Dr. Baylor and leaves. As soon as she does, Dr. Baylor lets out a breath and slumps in her seat. Her phone buzzes and she looks, texts back, and starts straightening up a bit. A few moments later, Marta enters with lunch for the two of them.*)

MARTA. What happened here?

DR. BAYLOR. Our new friend.

MARTA. Ah, I thought I saw her leaving. I hid around the corner till it was safe.

DR. BAYLOR. (*Chuckling.*) Good thinking.

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MARTA. What do you think?

DR. BAYLOR. The food? It smells great.

MARTA. Well, yeah. I've never steered you wrong with a lunch order. But I was talking about Abigail.

DR. BAYLOR. I know. I was deflecting. It's going to take some time. She doesn't want our help.

MARTA. Do you think we're the best option for her? I mean, we're a pretty small operation. The kids we see tend to be a bit more... I don't know... usually we see depression, OCD, eating disorders, that type of thing. This feels... more complex.

DR. BAYLOR. That doesn't mean we can't treat her.

MARTA. Right, but she's not from here. There are bigger facilities in the city. It'd be a lot closer to home.

DR. BAYLOR. I'm not sure closer to home would be good for her right now. She's so angry with her parents - it might be better that they can't be here every day for the moment. Besides, I happen to think our smaller community is part of our charm.

MARTA. Is that what you put in the brochures? *(Dr. Baylor laughs.)*

DR. BAYLOR. What do you think? Will she make progress here?

MARTA. Hard to say. She doesn't seem to want anything to do with us. Or anyone.

DR. BAYLOR. We've seen plenty of resistant kids.

MARTA. This feels different, though. It's draining. I haven't even run Group yet today and I'm exhausted.

DR. BAYLOR. Wait. *(Dr. Baylor reaches into a desk drawer and pulls out a bag of candy and tosses it to Marta.)* Here. Some fortification.

MARTA. Oh my God, yes. You're the best.

DR. BAYLOR. *That's* what I put on the brochures.

SCENE 5

Abigail is alone in the rec room. She is staring up at the ceiling with her eyes closed, a look of concentration on her face. Jen and Naomi enter, and Naomi gestures toward Abigail.

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NAOMI. Jen, look.

JEN. Ask her.

NAOMI. You ask her.

JEN. You scared?

NAOMI. Shut up. What is she doing?

JEN. E.T. phone home? *(They laugh.)*

NAOMI. I'm gonna ask her.

JEN. So do it.

NAOMI. I'm doing it. Hey. Abigail. *(There is no response from Abigail.)* Hello! Earth to Abigail. That's your name, isn't it?

ABIGAIL. For the time being.

NAOMI. Did you actually try to run away last night? That's sort of badass.

JEN. Did you actually bite the orderly?

NAOMI. Wait, seriously?

JEN. That's what I heard the nurses saying.

NAOMI. Shouldn't she be in like, solitary or something?

JEN. This isn't prison, Naomi.

NAOMI. I know, but shouldn't they like, keep her separated? Isn't she a danger to the rest of us?

ABIGAIL. I'm not a danger without the others.

JEN. What others?

NAOMI. The little green men. *(Naomi and Jen laugh.)*

ABIGAIL. Don't be stupid.

NAOMI. I'm not stupid!

ABIGAIL. It's a shame that neither of you was chosen to be a host. At least then, your husks would have served some purpose.

NAOMI. You know, we came over here trying to be nice. It's not like anyone else talks to you.

ABIGAIL. I prefer it that way.

JEN. Yeah. Obviously. Don't worry, we won't bother again.

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SCENE 6

Ronnie and Jay are in Dr. Baylor's office.

JAY. I don't understand. How does someone suddenly wake up with schizophrenia?

DR. BAYLOR. They don't.

JAY. So how does my kid suddenly have it?

RONNIE. That's not what she's saying, Jay.

JAY. That's what I'm hearing.

RONNIE. How did this happen? We have no history of mental illness in our family.

DR. BAYLOR. All families have a history of mental illness.

RONNIE. Excuse me?

DR. BAYLOR. It's a fact, not a judgment. Schizophrenia is one possible diagnosis. It's a solid starting point, anyway. I'll continue seeing her a few times a week, plus she'll have small group sessions each day.

RONNIE. How long will this take?

DR. BAYLOR. There's not a good answer to that question. A lot depends on how the medication affects her, but a lot depends on Abigail herself. She has to do most of the work.

RONNIE. Oh, God. She's going to be here forever, isn't she? *(A pause.)* I thought she was just going through puberty.

JAY. We both did.

RONNIE. She never got mean. I kept waiting, but it never happened. When she started to change, I thought, okay, well there it is. It's happening, and we'll get through it. I expected the slammed doors and rolled eyes and yelling. I never thought... Did we wait too long? Is this who she is now?

SCENE 7

Group, in the rec room. Naomi, Shawn, Jen, and AUSTIN are present. They are sitting, but may get up and move around at times. Abigail sits apart, a blanket wrapped around her.

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MARTA. It sounds like your sister's problems have been taking most of your parents' attention for a long time.

JEN. When you say it like that it makes me sound really selfish.

MARTA. They're only words, Jen. Concentrate on your feelings.

JEN. (*As if to say, duh.*) Fine. It makes me *feel* like I'm selfish.

MARTA. Can you say more about that?

JEN. It's different, talking about this stuff. Like, right now, I'm sort of separate from it all. But when I am feeling it – when I'm deep in it – it's *all* I can feel. I don't think about it in terms of what I might get out of... you know... cutting, or whatever. I don't think about anything. I just feel it, and I do it, and then I feel relief for a few minutes or a few days or whatever it is. But now, talking about it this way... I don't know. It makes me wonder if I'm being overdramatic.

NAOMI. So, what are the rest of us?

JEN. I don't mean you.

NAOMI. But you could be talking about any one of us, right?

MARTA. Naomi, focus on your own reactions. What are you feeling? (*Noami rolls her eyes and sighs.*) Huff and puff all you want, but I'd still like you to answer the question.

NAOMI. I feel judged. Because if you're selfish or overdramatic for *your* actions, and some of my actions have been like yours – that means you're judging me, too.

JEN. But I don't judge you at all. I guess I feel guilty because I'm supposed to be the mature one. My sister is the mess, and I'm the one that does well in school and has it all together, and now... well, look at where I am.

AUSTIN. Yeah but – sorry, can I?

MARTA. Please do.

AUSTIN. Okay. So, just because your sister has problems doesn't mean *you* don't have problems. And I think that you're being really hard on yourself. If you don't think Naomi is a selfish person, why would you think that about yourself, you know? Maybe you could talk to yourself the same way you would talk to one of us.

MARTA. That's really insightful. Thank you, Austin. Anyone else have thoughts? Abigail?

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ABIGAIL. No.

MARTA. You're the only one who hasn't shared. Go ahead and tell us what you're thinking. (*Abigail stares at Marta for a moment, and then looks at Jen with resolve.*)

ABIGAIL. Fine. Jen, you're an adolescent female human, which is difficult on its own. Everything that surrounds you tells you that you aren't good enough unless you're perfect, and if you *are* perfect, everyone hates you for it. And there's your sister, with her addiction taking everyone's attention. It hurts. It makes you angry. You don't feel like you can lash out at your family so you do it to yourself. You turn it inward - you let it eat you alive. You hurt yourself just enough to feel *something* other than the crushing weight of voices in your head telling you that you are not enough. You hid it from your parents for a long time, so you *think* that you didn't want them to know. But deep down, you probably hoped they would figure out that something was wrong and would turn their attention to you for once. And it worked. They know, don't they? Never mind that they're probably lying awake at night, wondering what they did wrong. That's what they signed up for when they decided to have a family. So yes, you may be selfish, but all humans are. You're not so special. (*There is a long silence.*)

NAOMI. This bitch.

MARTA. Naomi!

NAOMI. What is wrong with you?

ABIGAIL. What are you upset about? This information should be comforting.

JEN. (*To Marta.*) So, she's allowed to go off on me like that?

NAOMI. Forget it, Jen. None of us take her seriously, anyway. She's a freak.

MARTA. Now, wait –

ABIGAIL. You're right, Naomi.

MARTA. You're not a freak, Abigail.

ABIGAIL. I most certainly am.

MARTA. Naomi, that was out of line.

NAOMI. *She's* out of line!

ABIGAIL. Freak, noun. A very unusual and unexpected situation.

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NAOMI. Freak, noun. You.

ABIGAIL. It's the first definition of the word in the dictionary.

SHAWN. (*Sarcastically.*) Cool, a vocab lesson for the dumb earthlings.

ABIGAIL. Maybe you shouldn't have insisted on hearing my point of view, if you were all going to be so touchy about it.

JEN. Can we go? I am so done with this.

MARTA. Yes. We'll start fresh tomorrow. Not you, Abigail. Please stay. (*All but Abigail exit.*) That was disappointing.

ABIGAIL. All I did was state facts.

MARTA. Facts aren't always helpful. Sometimes we need to show compassion.

ABIGAIL. You made me participate, and now you tell me that I participated *wrong*. It isn't fair. People here are always going on and on about fairness, but then when it benefits them, they throw it away.

MARTA. People here, at the hospital?

ABIGAIL. Here, on Earth.

MARTA. You don't – (*Marta stops herself before getting too frustrated.*) I'm sorry you feel that way. And I hope you can start to trust us soon. That's all. (*Marta exits in one direction. Austin enters from the other.*)

AUSTIN. Uh, sorry. I think I left my – (*He locates his book under the seat where he had been sitting, and holds it up to Abigail as if to say, "Found it."*)

ABIGAIL. *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy?*

AUSTIN. You've read it?

ABIGAIL. I have not.

AUSTIN. Oh, it's so good. It's about this guy, right? This regular guy and he like, gets rescued from the annihilation of Earth by his friend, who turns out to be an alien, and there's more to it than that, but he's like, searching for the meaning of life and he's zipping around the galaxy – God, I'm sorry. You didn't ask. (*A pause.*) I get excited about books.

ABIGAIL. Clearly.

AUSTIN. Anyway... I mean it sounds like this nerdy story but it's also really funny and... Sorry. I'm doing it again. I'll see you later.

ABIGAIL. It's not possible, you know.

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AUSTIN. What's not possible?

ABIGAIL. A human being, traveling around the galaxy like that.

AUSTIN. Well, yeah. It's fiction. I mean, we can go to space.

ABIGAIL. Space. Yes. But what *you* think of as space is such a tiny speck of the universe.

AUSTIN. Wait... you're Alien Chick.

ABIGAIL. That's vulgar.

AUSTIN. Sorry, you're right, "chick" is rude.

ABIGAIL. No, *alien*. Alien is a vulgar term. It's not the preferred vernacular.

AUSTIN. I knew you looked familiar.

ABIGAIL. What do you mean?

AUSTIN. ...What?

ABIGAIL. Look familiar from where?

AUSTIN. Nothing. It's nothing. Hey, what you said about being a freak? You don't really think that, do you?

ABIGAIL. I do. I'm a freak. Unexpected. That's why no one believes me.

AUSTIN. But if that's what a freak is, don't we all fit the definition? I mean, you can't tell by looking at any of us that we need to be here. But here we all are, for one reason or another.

ABIGAIL. What's your reason?

AUSTIN. What's yours?

ABIGAIL. You know mine.

AUSTIN. Oh. Right. Alien.

ABIGAIL. Vulgar.

AUSTIN. Sorry. Your name is Abigail, isn't it?

ABIGAIL. It's the host's name. I assume it while I'm here.

AUSTIN. So... what's your real name?

ABIGAIL. I don't have one. Our communication has evolved beyond names.

AUSTIN. Hm. Impressive.

ABIGAIL. Why are you being so nice to me?

AUSTIN. Why wouldn't I be?

ABIGAIL. No one else is.

AUSTIN. Are you nice to them?

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ABIGAIL. You've been here a week. Sitting alone. Reading but not reading.

AUSTIN. You could tell I wasn't actually reading?

ABIGAIL. My entire reason for being on this planet is to observe. (*A pause.*) Also, you never turned the page.

AUSTIN. I was too tired. It's always exhausting the first few days.

ABIGAIL. Always?

AUSTIN. This isn't my first time.

ABIGAIL. That's why you knew what to say in Group.

AUSTIN. No! I mean...I guess, in a way. Look, it's not like I've planned out things to say. But, I know that for this to work, you need to like, go with it. You need to be honest, and open.

ABIGAIL. You're talking about vulnerability. Dr. Baylor and Marta keep harping on that, too. I don't like it.

AUSTIN. Most people don't.

ABIGAIL. Vulnerability could get me killed.

AUSTIN. Oh. I was gonna say, like... it's uncomfortable. Killed?

ABIGAIL. Cut apart, studied. The first of us who approached humankind without taking appropriate precautions are still splayed open and preserved in chemicals somewhere in the desert.

AUSTIN. Sure. Yeah. I've heard about that. Terrible injustice.

ABIGAIL. I let myself be vulnerable once. One time, and it landed me here. I let my emotions take control. I wanted to go home so badly, and now I'm stuck here.

AUSTIN. If you want to get out of here sooner, you could try going with the program.

ABIGAIL. Maybe. Or maybe I'll stop talking altogether. Do you think if I stopped talking, they'd leave me alone?

AUSTIN. Is it physically possible for you to stop talking?

ABIGAIL. Knowing when to stay quiet has never been one of my strengths. It's why I ended up in this mess.

AUSTIN. Maybe that's true for all of us. All those cries for help, sent off into the night. Into the abyss, or wherever the cries for help go.

ABIGAIL. Into the night. Do they ever let us go outside at night?

AUSTIN. Dunno. You've been here longer than me, remember?

ABIGAIL, FOR NOW

MARTA. (*Entering.*) What are you two still doing here?

ABIGAIL. (*To Marta.*) Do we ever get to go out at night?

AUSTIN. I was... (*He holds up his book.*)

ABIGAIL. I would like to be allowed outdoor privileges at night.

MARTA. It's been chilly at night. Austin, you have a meeting with Dr. B in 10 minutes.

AUSTIN. Right, okay. Uh. Bye Abigail. (*He exits. Abigail does not acknowledge him.*)

ABIGAIL. How do I get outside privileges at night?

MARTA. You don't. Austin seems nice. It's good to see you making a friend.

ABIGAIL. That's not what I was doing.

MARTA. Having a friendly chat then. Ready to head back?

ABIGAIL. Can't I be alone for a while? There's no privacy here.

MARTA. No resident is left alone unless it's in their room.

ABIGAIL. Where doors can't be closed for longer than 15 minutes and people are peeking in all night.

MARTA. The rules are the same for everyone.

ABIGAIL. This is a hostile environment.

MARTA. (*Getting frustrated.*) The hospital is not –

ABIGAIL. I don't mean the hospital. I mean –

ABIGAIL and MARTA. (*Simultaneously.*) Earth.

MARTA. Right. (*A deep breath.*) Right.

SCENE 8

Dr. Baylor's office. Ronnie and Jay sit together. Abigail is in the room but has set herself apart from them.

RONNIE. How much longer is this going to take?

DR. BAYLOR. It's a process. Let's celebrate the small victories.

JAY. Which are?

DR. BAYLOR. She's been less combative. Staying in her room at night, taking her meds, going to Group.

ABIGAIL, FOR NOW

RONNIE. What about the call we got? She's verbally abusing the other patients.

ABIGAIL. I didn't abuse anyone.

RONNIE. That's not what we're hearing.

ABIGAIL. No one wants to hear the truth, so it's abuse. No one believes me, so I'm crazy.

DR. BAYLOR. It's possible that these outbursts are a symptom.

Impulsive behavior isn't uncommon in people who are –

ABIGAIL. Stop talking about me as if I'm not here!

JAY. Baby, please don't –

ABIGAIL. I am not your baby.

JAY. You used to tell me you'd always be my little girl.

ABIGAIL. Well, I'm sure she meant it. At the time.

DR. BAYLOR. You know what, Abigail, you're right. You should be part of this conversation. Is there anything you'd like to say to your parents? (*Abigail thinks for a moment, and then turns to Ronnie and Jay.*)

ABIGAIL. Jay, you're one of the good ones. Ronnie is too. She's louder and more irritable than you are... but I think that's because she misses her daughter. Her sadness is the angry kind of sadness. It must be confusing, seeing her body in front of you but not recognizing what's inside. You're good people. It's one of the reasons I panicked when you found me in the woods that night. If they had come while you were still there, you'd have been destroyed.

DR. BAYLOR. Destroyed?

ABIGAIL. If my assembly had come, they wouldn't have left witnesses.

DR. BAYLOR. (*Making a note.*) I see.

ABIGAIL. We usually arrange a departure carefully. We leave the host body somewhere it can be found. It must seem cruel to you, and many of us would agree. But the elders are set in their ways. No one bothers to try to make them change.

JAY. What are you saying?

ABIGAIL. We can't acquire a body without losing the original occupant. Abigail is gone. Forever. (*A silence.*)

RONNIE. Improvement, Dr. Baylor? Really?

ABIGAIL, FOR NOW

SCENE 9

The Rec room. Abigail and Austin are playing cards. Shawn is occupied nearby. Jen and Naomi approach.

NAOMI. Hey Abigail, did you hear there's going to be an eclipse next week?

ABIGAIL. Lunar or solar?

NAOMI. Huh?

JEN. Lunar. *(To Naomi.)* The moon. *(To Abigail.)* I'm surprised none of your space buddies told you.

ABIGAIL. I'm *obviously* not in contact with my assembly.

NAOMI. Assembly?

ABIGAIL. It's what we call ourselves. An assembly. It's the closest translation, anyway.

JEN. An assembly of aliens. It's got a nice ring to it.

AUSTIN. Alien's an offensive term, actually. *(Jen scoffs, and she and Naomi join Shawn.)*

ABIGAIL. Do you know if that's true? About a lunar eclipse?

AUSTIN. No idea.

ABIGAIL. Do you think they would let me go outside to see it?

AUSTIN. I guess you could ask. Maybe if you suggest we *all* go out and see it? If it were framed as a bonding experience or something?

ABIGAIL. A bonding experience. That's exactly what it would be, yes. Genius. You'll help me convince Marta?

AUSTIN. Yeah, sure. An eclipse sounds cool. *(Abigail puts a card down and smiles.)*

ABIGAIL. I win.

SCENE 10

Dr. Baylor's office. Ronnie and Jay are waiting.

JAY. I think enough's enough.

RONNIE. You made your point.

ABIGAIL, FOR NOW

JAY. Well, you don't seem to hear it.

RONNIE. I heard it for two hours on the way here.

JAY. She needs to be home. With us.

RONNIE. She'll only run away again.

JAY. If that's true, then what are we even doing? It's been weeks.

RONNIE. I know how long it's been. (*Dr. Baylor enters.*)

DR. BAYLOR. Sorry to keep you waiting.

JAY. We were just, uh. We were talking about next steps.

DR. BAYLOR. What are you thinking about as a next step?

JAY. Well...

RONNIE. We're not sure. We're hoping you can give us some guidance on that.

DR. BAYLOR. I don't want us to get ahead of ourselves, but we've all seen improvements. She seems to have made a friend.

RONNIE. What about the therapy?

DR. BAYLOR. She doesn't say much, but she's not being disruptive.

JAY. Is it working? Should we expect to see someone closer to our daughter this time?

DR. BAYLOR. Abigail hasn't let go of her delusion, yet, if that's what you are referring to.

RONNIE. Of course, that's what we're referring to.

JAY. So, she still thinks...

DR. BAYLOR. She is still detached from the idea of being human, yes.

Mr. and Mrs. Goodwin, I'm wondering... Could something have happened to Abigail?

JAY. Happened?

DR. BAYLOR. Before this all started. Was she showing any signs of dissociation? Or any other symptoms- moodiness, angst, unexplained fatigue, irritability?

RONNIE. She's a teenager.

JAY. You think someone hurt her?

DR. BAYLOR. She hasn't said anything like that. It may be simply that this illness was latent and the onset of puberty brought it out. I'm trying to cover all bases. (*Marta peeks her head in.*)

MARTA. Dr. Baylor? I have Abigail out here.

ABIGAIL, FOR NOW

DR. BAYLOR. Great. *(Abigail enters. She is quiet, tense, but on her best behavior. Ronnie and Jay tentatively get up to hug her. She lets them.)*

JAY. Hey Abby. We hear you guys get to go out and watch the eclipse tonight?

ABIGAIL. Yes. Marta's bringing a group of us out.

MARTA. It was Abigail's idea. She thought it would be a nice experience for the group to have together.

RONNIE. That's fantastic, honey. *(Marta exits.)*

DR. BAYLOR. I was telling your parents how great you've been doing this last week.

RONNIE. We were talking about something else, too. We were wondering if... if anything had happened that you wanted to tell us about?

ABIGAIL. When?

RONNIE. Well... Before.

JAY. Mom's asking if anything happened before you started feeling... different. Did anything happen that made you want to... you know... stop being you?

ABIGAIL. Oh. I see.

JAY. Because if something did happen, you can tell us. Or you can tell Dr. Baylor, or Marta, if you don't want to tell us.

ABIGAIL. I'm sorry. I really am.

JAY. Sorry?

ABIGAIL. I'm sorry because that would be easier for you to understand. But no, nothing happened. This is who I am.

SCENE 11

All of the residents and Marta are outside waiting for the eclipse to start. The mood is excited, a little awed, a little wired. Abigail is particularly tense.

JEN. When does it start?

AUSTIN. 10ish.

SHAWN. Is it one of those things where you can't look directly at it?

ABIGAIL, FOR NOW

ABIGAIL. No, that's the sun. You can't look directly at the sun.

NAOMI. I have to admit, this was a cool idea.

SHAWN. Look at that sky. You guys ever see a meteor shower? When I was a kid we used to watch the meteor showers in the summer. There was always a good one in August. I remember it was August because we were on vacation at my grandma's lake house. My dad and I would head out to the dock when it got real dark, and we'd lie there and wait, and eventually... *(He makes a sound like a "whoosh" and gestures his hands out in front of him, signifying an explosion in the sky)*

JEN. My family goes camping every summer. I couldn't believe it the first time I saw a night sky without any lights around. It almost made me want to cry.

SHAWN. It makes me feel totally insignificant. In a good way. Like, do any of the things I'm worrying about really matter when there's all of this above us?

JEN. I didn't go camping with my family last year. I thought it would make me feel like an adult to stay home alone, but instead I felt sort of lonely.

NAOMI. I feel lonely all the time. Doesn't even matter if I'm with other people.

AUSTIN. I read once that loneliness is part of the human condition. *(Everyone looks at him.)* What? I read a lot.

ABIGAIL. You don't have to be human to feel lonely.

MARTA. It's interesting, isn't it? We have more ways than ever to connect with each other, but everyone experiences loneliness anyway.

SHAWN. Well, that's depressing.

MARTA. But isn't it a little bit comforting to know you're not alone in feeling alone? Sometimes it hurts, and you cope, and you keep going. But it can help to find ways to enjoy it.

NAOMI. Enjoy loneliness?

MARTA. It can be nice to take time for yourself, by yourself. Those are the moments it stops feeling like loneliness, and starts feeling like solitude. There's a difference. Solitude can be calm, and quiet, and peaceful. *(A pause.)* I think it's starting. *(Marta and the others look up at the sky. Abigail watches them for a moment before stepping away. She gets about*

ABIGAIL, FOR NOW

as far away as she can before sitting down with her back to them. She turns her face upwards and closes her eyes. Austin watches this. After a moment, he approaches Abigail. He sits down next to Abigail, startling her.)

AUSTIN. Can I...?

ABIGAIL. I need to concentrate.

AUSTIN. I'm not looking for conversation. Just something to lean on.
(Abigail nods. They sit back to back and lean against one another. Abigail turns her face to the sky. Austin does the same. Their heads are next to one another, resting on each other's shoulders. They stay like this, silent and still, Abigail's eyes closed while the others watch the sky.)

END OF ACT ONE

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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