

Special Needs

By

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Character Breakdown

PIERCE, fourteen. He has a slightly loping, off-kilter gait. Awkward, highly intelligent and dreamy, he is a kind-hearted oddball

CONNIE, forties. Pierce's mother. Pragmatic, hard working, smart and empathetic

JEN, sixteen. Pierce's sister. Stylish, confident, strong and kind

MATT, forties/early fifties. Pierce's dad.

CHARLOTTE, forties. Connie's best friend and neighbor. Mother to Evan and Patrick

ALPHA, late teens/early twenties. Male. Pierce's inner self & warrior. Physical ability fashioned after Link in *Zelda The Twilight Princess* computer game.

OMEGA (also TINA), late teens/early twenties. Female. Agile & expressive. The female inner voice.

MRS.RASP (also BUS DRIVER), forties to sixties. Female. Pierce's math teacher

BRENT (also the BEHEMOUTH), teenager. Classmate of Pierce's

Place

The family and dining room of a middle-class home and a few other places

Time

The present

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

ACT ONE
SCENE ONE

A large family room/dining room area in a middleclass home with a big oak table upstage. Connie moves around, cleaning up breakfast. Downstage center two warriors fight, Warrior ALPHA, a young male, and OMEGA, a young female. Grunts, cries, rolls and kicks. They are fighting over the possession of a knit cap. PIERCE, head down and in shadow, paces back and forth far upstage. The hat is finally flung to Pierce. He catches it and stares at it. Both warriors stop.

OMEGA

Pierce! Hello!

Pierce stares at her and then looks down at the hat.

CONNIE

Pierce! Hello! What did I just ask you to do?

Pierce continues to look at the hat.

Pierce, put on your hat. I've asked you five times already. Pay attention.

OMEGA
(to Alpha)

How do I get you out this door without you and me feeling like we've just engaged in battle? Just put on the hat, get your backpack packed because-

CONNIE

-you're going to miss the bus.

ALPHA

It's time.

OMEGA

Get your coat on.

CONNIE

Get your coat on. *(She calls offstage)* Jen! Come on!

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

Pierce slowly pulls on his hat. JEN enters.

JEN

They're not upstairs.

CONNIE

Well, look on the couch. I don't know. I'm not the library book police, you know!

Pierce squats on the floor and begins talking in hushed tones to Alpha. Jen begins rooting around the couch cushions. Matt enters.

MATT

Honey, have you seen my keys?

Matt stares helplessly at the table which is piled with juice glasses, a few cereal bowls, books, papers. Connie continues to clean up. Omega rises and crosses to assist her.

CONNIE

Keys-

ALPHA

(To Pierce)

-to the Book of Shadow and Darkness might be located in the final cave of Labyrinth Mountain.

CONNIE

-Try the key cup?

She hands some bowls to Omega.

ALPHA

Click on the boomerang, use it to open the gate and then access the Cup of Tears. But how to get across the Gorge?

Pierce has begun pacing again.

PIERCE

Maybe if I x-click on Chameleon, she can help me to leap towards the-

CONNIE

Pierce, stop talking to yourself. Get out of your head. Matt, I see them. Under the thingy there. Bus! Come on, you two!

Jen reenters, grabs a backpack from the basket, and pulls open the upstage door. A blast of noise and light. She leaps out the door.

JEN
(Shouting)

Come on, Pierce.

CONNIE

Pierce, you need to stay on task.

Matt tosses his keys next to his wallet on the counter, shoves some plates aside, and begins hurriedly eating some cereal while scanning the morning paper.

MATT

Pierce, you need to pay attention.

ALPHA

Pay attention. Pay. Attention. Paying. The cost. What's the cost of paying attention?

Pierce pulls out his backpack. It is empty. He begins cramming books into it.

CONNIE

Well, look on the couch. I don't know. I'm not the library book police, you know!

PIERCE

Shoot. Wow. I just heard that. I think-

ALPHA

-she said it before-

PIERCE

-but I think I just heard it.

ALPHA

A communiqué that got caught, rattled around, looking for its proper residence for 45 seconds, refusing to be assimilated.

Alpha squats down at Pierce's side as Pierce's attention is caught by a book he has grabbed.

ALPHA (CONT'D)

The Maccabees were important in many respects. The warriors refused to be assimilated. No shame. No apologies. Fierce conviction of purpose. Led by Judah Maccabee, son of Mattathias, they came out of their caves and retreats and, using unexpected, creative and innovative fighting methodology, they defeated the larger Syrian army and achieved victory.

Pierce looks closely at Alpha.

PIERCE

Three years ago-

ALPHA

-on a Saturday. December 1st. It was snowing and raining at the same time and we were on the train going into Evanston for Shawna's birthday party at-

PIERCE

-Aunt Terry's and Uncle Brad's.

ALPHA

It was the 2:46 Metra. You were wearing blue jeans that had a hole in the left knee and a scratchy red shirt that you hated 'cuz the seams felt like pins on your skin. Jen had on these wild boot-top cut, low-rise pants with the names of all her friends drawn on them with indelible marker. Felicia. Jessica. Sandy. Tanya. Ellie. Frank. Liz. Ted. Philip.

Alpha pulls out of the basket a Metra schedule and a pair of jeans fitting Pierce's description. He holds up each one for display as he mentions them.

During the ride, Jen was studying for her bat mitzvah. You don't remember her Torah portion but you do remember that at the bat mitzvah there were-

PIERCE

-54-

ALPHA

-people there, seventeen in the second row, eleven in the third row, four in the fourth row and twenty-two in the fifth row. A man in the back said-

PIERCE

-Emma Davidson Epstein -

ALPHA

-during the part where anyone can mention someone dead that we should all pray for. Rabbi Gold had a kepeh on that looked more African than Jewish.

ALPHA (CONT'D)
(holding up a colorful kepah)

That's when you came up with-

-you. Maccabee Warrior. Alpha.

PIERCE

*Light change. Connie and Omega watch
Pierce and Alpha reading.*

Pierce-

OMEGA
(quietly)

-the bus.

CONNIE

She pauses. A little louder.

Pierce.

Pierce, listen to your mother!

MATT

What?

PIERCE

The bus, Pierce.

CONNIE

What?

PIERCE

The bus!

MATT
(rising, finished with his breakfast)

Shoot!

PIERCE

Pierce grabs his jacket from the basket. It is huge, one arm too short, one arm too long and twisted. He struggles to get it on. When he does, the buttons are the next hurdle. Of

different sizes, shapes and placement, they don't line up to the appropriate buttonhole on the other side, so when he does successfully manage to button up, the jacket is still askew. Matt is also pulling on his jacket and tying his tie.

MATT
(yelling)

Pierce, hurry up.

PIERCE
(equally loudly)

Don't yell at me.

MATT
(slightly lower)

I'm not yelling.

Pierce then flings the stuffed and heavy backpack awkwardly onto his back, stumbles, and runs towards the door. The door (hinged at the corners) unexpectedly tilts into a leaning parallelogram, causing Pierce to slam into the doorjamb. Connie goes to help Pierce but Omega stops her. Pierce, coat buttoned crookedly, finally, stumbling slightly, exits, followed by Alpha.

Matt grabs his keys. They slip through his fingers and he drops them

MATT

I wasn't yelling. He always thinks I'm yelling at him and I'm not. I just don't want him to miss stuff. The bus. And everything. Sometimes he doesn't hear me unless-

CONNIE

-I know-

MATT

-I get loud. Was I yelling at him?

CONNIE
(pause)

No.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

MATT

I was yelling?

CONNIE

Well...that's just what he hears.

MATT

He's so hard to reach sometimes.

CONNIE

I know. But we need to be...extra special calm with him.

MATT

You mean *I* need to be.

CONNIE

I said *we*.

Matt holds up his keys.

MATT

My keys. You were right.

CONNIE

Am I right?

Connie sits at the table. Omega crosses to the family room couch and collapses on to it.

MATT

So. Off to battle. (*Jingling the keys in his hand*) What amazes me is how you always know where the keys are.

CONNIE

No, I don't.

MATT

Yes, you do.

CONNIE

No. I don't.

MATT

Yes, you do.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

CONNIE

You know, that's an amazing amount of pressure.

MATT

What?

CONNIE

To be the one who always knows where the keys are. "Oh, I don't have to know 'cuz Connie always will." It's a completely horrible thing to say. Not to mention expect.

MATT

It's a compliment!

CONNIE

No. It's pressure. What happens if someday I don't know where the keys are, huh? What happens then?

MATT

I know, it's always hard, with Pierce and all, but you're amazing-

CONNIE

-I'll tell you what. You're late and it's my fault because, one day, I failed. One day, I was weak and I didn't know where the keys were. So, because of me, everyone who depends on *you* is let down. Because of me.

MATT

You either need a lot more coffee or you've had way too much.

Matt kisses her and exits. Omega enters with the coffee pot and pours Connie a refill on her coffee.

END SCENE ONE

SCENE TWO

The BUS DRIVER is wearing a mask. Everyone else pulls up dining room chairs. They all are wearing identical matching male or female masks. Everyone except the bus driver is chattering in loud gibberish. Pierce, followed by Alpha, boards the bus. The bus driver nods to Pierce and appears to be speaking, saying something which cannot be heard. Pierce hesitantly nods and takes a seat with Alpha sitting next to him. Every time Alpha speaks, the gibberish instantly stops.

ALPHA

Remember to ask Juan about the level. He is more advanced. Since he's further along, he's got the map. So-

Gibberish

PIERCE

(muttering to himself)

-right after gym, he'll be in the hall, by his locker. Number 138. There's a scratch at the top shaped like an upside-down rabbit. Don't forget. Look for him and ask him.

Gibberish stops

ALPHA

Then you and Raj and Juan can duel. Can three duel? Three.

Gibberish resumes

PIERCE

Three. Find the third angle of a triangle. The total of the interior angles of a triangle is one hundred and eighty degrees. When you know the first two angles-

Gibberish stops

ALPHA

-Raj and Juan-

Gibberish resumes

PIERCE

-subtract their total degrees from one hundred and eighty and you get-

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

Gibberish stops

ALPHA

-me.

Gibberish resumes

PIERCE

-my angle.

*Gibberish resumes. A mask, Omega is now
TINA, leans in between Pierce and Alpha.*

TINA

(not unfriendly gibberish)

Shey, wo yee wack wack to, dim boy.

PIERCE

Huh?

TINA

(loudly, still easygoing)

Hey, who ya talking to, dream boy?

PIERCE

What? Who are you?

TINA

(pushes mask back)

Hey, Pierce. You've only know me since second grade. *(Tina assumes a loud "actorly" type voice)* You talkin' to me? I said, ARE YOU TALKING TO ME?

ALPHA

Is she talking to me?

PIERCE

Um...no?

TINA

It's from *Taxi Driver*. Robert DeNiro. "You talking to me?"

PIERCE

Um...okay. I mean, no. I wasn't. I wasn't talking-

ALPHA

-to you.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

Tina replaces her mask and fades back into her seat.

ALPHA (CONT'D)

A fourth angle.

PIERCE

How do I find a fourth angle?

The bus stops. The bus driver opens the door.

BUS DRIVER
(loud gibberish)

Fatter skool, I'll be lear, so don't e fate.

Everyone rises and exits.

END SCENE TWO

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

SCENE THREE

The kitchen. Charlotte sticks her head in the back door, knocking briefly, and then strides in.

CHARLOTTE

Hello? It's the best friend.

Connie enters, pulling a sewing machine table. Charlotte plops down at the table. Omega is perched on the back of the couch.

CONNIE

Why hello, the best friend.

During the following, Connie proceeds to efficiently set up her sewing area.

How was the game Saturday? Did Patrick and Evan get to play?

CHARLOTTE

You bet. We kicked Prince of Peace's ass.

CONNIE

You are some crazy Catholics. And family dinner with favorite sister-in-law?

CHARLOTTE

I hate people with normal kids.

CONNIE

(Simpering)

"And how's Evan?"

CHARLOTTE

And she's indoctrinated my brother. I knew it was going to happen eventually.

CONNIE

No! Stuart's a sweetie.

CHARLOTTE

He's a sweet, brilliant doofus. Hoodwinked by an evil Rapunzel with hair extensions and a standing Botox account. How can you inject botulism into your face? I get woozy when the kids get their flu shots.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

CONNIE

Some people like to paralyze emotion. We are both blessed with a son whose mission in life is to do the opposite. Sort of. I think.

CHARLOTTE

I hope her perfect, socially graceful, courteous and normal son-

CONNIE

-your nephew.

CHARLOTTE

I know! I wasn't finished. I wasn't going to say something bad...mostly.

CONNIE

Well?

CHARLOTTE

I just hope...I don't know.... I hope he does something embarrassing that she can't control one day so she gets it a little bit. What it's like.

CONNIE

World doesn't work like that. Especially for evil step sisters.

CHARLOTTE

Sister-in-law.

CONNIE

Same difference. The pompous, condescending ones never know they're pompous and condescending. They just think they're-

CONNIE AND CHARLOTTE

(in unison)

-helping.

CHARLOTTE

I'm so, so, so busy these days I feel like I do half my stuff in a daze.

Teapot whistles. Omega exits to the kitchen.

CONNIE

(pins in mouth)

Tell.

Midway through Charlotte's next monologue Omega returns with three mugs

of tea and listens, mugs in hand. Connie works at piecing a pattern together as Charlotte talks. This is clearly a standing ritual.

CHARLOTTE

Between getting everybody out the door, on the bus, which was brutal this morning might I add, getting my fat, sorry ass to work, spending the entire day sweating that I'll get another call from the school, brownnosing the principal and the teachers so they just might hesitate before kicking my ADHD, anxiety-ridden dyslexic son out, after school shuttling Evan to therapy and tutoring and trying to pay at least some attention to functional Patrick who's going to be forever scarred by being the normal kid in the family, god knows how much therapy he's going to need, I get to the end of the day and seriously, I can't remember half the shit I did.

Omega puts two mugs on the table. Connie stops working and sees them.

CONNIE

I know exactly what you mean.

Connie hands Charlotte her mug.

And the entire time you're doing all this, you're wondering if your kid is behaving...in his special needs way or if, for today at least, he's managing to fly under the normal radar.

CHARLOTTE

That's what I tell Evan! I swear, this morning I said "Honey, I don't care if you fake it." Is that wrong of me? I'm pretty much telling him to completely deny who he is just to fit in just because I feel the need for a little peace. "Hey Evan, become a social robot just so I don't have any stress, okay?" I am the worst mother in the world.

CONNIE

No, I am.

CHARLOTTE

Okay. You take today. I get tomorrow.

CONNIE

It's like carry a big fat backpack full o' rocks around all day.

CHARLOTTE

Normal kids. Parents don't know how good they've got it. The bitching and moaning. "Little Johnny has so many activities, I don't know how to juggle it all. He wants to go to all these parties, which do I choose, pitch for the baseball team, finish his advanced bullshit class assignment, cure cancer and play with his twelve thousand friends this

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

weekend. I just don't know how to fit it all in." Eat my stained and stretched out Hanes undies, you stinking entitled sons of bitches.

CONNIE

Feeling a little hostile?

CHARLOTTE

I prefer to think of it as passionate. And if one more person asks me "Charlotte, but have you done anything for *you* lately?" I'm gonna pop 'em right in the kisser.

She pauses for a moment.

Are they the ones who don't get it or are we?

CONNIE

Who's "they"? Rapunzel? Evan and Pierce? Or you and me?

CHARLOTTE

I'm not sure.

Connie, Charlotte and Omega all take a quiet sip of tea.

END SCENE THREE

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

SCENE FOUR

Charlotte as MRS. RASP stands in a warm glow. She holds two angular forms.

MRS. RASP

You'll get the test back on Friday. Let's hope all the preparation paid off. Now, review. Two angles are complementary. So, let's say this one is, say, seventy-two degrees.

The image "72 degrees" is flashed up on the back wall of the stage.

What's the other angle?

"18 degrees" is then flashed. Alpha raises Pierce's hand for him.

Anyone besides Pierce?

Silence.

Pierce?

PIERCE

Eighteen degrees.

MRS. RASP

Perfect. How did you come to that figure?

PIERCE

What?

MRS. RASP

Tell me your process. Tell everyone your process.

PIERCE

It just sort of came to me. I just-

ALPHA

-saw it-

PIERCE

-did it in my head.

The bell rings. Gibberish as students exit.

MRS.RASP

(over the noise)

The even numbered problems on page 47 **and** 48.

Pierce and Alpha rise but Mrs. Rasp stops them. Gibberish stops.

Pierce, more, please.

PIERCE

Like, the angles are sort of a team. It might be uneven but together they come together and make up the entire ninety-degree angle. 'Cuz without the eighteen degrees, the seventy-two degrees won't make it. Make it to ninety. It would fall over. Be incomplete. They sort of...need each other.

MRS. RASP

(to both Pierce and Alpha)

You have one of my favorite brains in the whole school.

Mrs. Rasp exits. Alpha swings in a locker for Pierce and then leans over his shoulder.

PIERCE

Social Studies. Test on the Battle of...what was that?

ALPHA

Battle of the Behemoth. Level Nine.

PIERCE

Nine isn't prime.

Brent comes up and slams Pierce's locker shut, almost catching his fingers. Pierce jumps backwards and stumbles.

BRENT

Shey, tath oiy.

PIERCE

What?

BRENT

(Slowly, loudly, condescending)

Hey, math boy! Did you know that math geeks are the ones most likely to commit suicide?

ALPHA

Behemoth.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

I'm not a math geek.

PIERCE

It's a nice word, isn't it? Suicide. Suicide. Suicide.

BRENT
(whispering)

Brent, leave me alone.

PIERCE

Suicide, suicide, suicide.

BRENT
(chanting)

Hate. Hate. HATE!

ALPHA

Stop! Stop it! Stop it!

PIERCE

Suicide would end the voices, Pierce. Now wouldn't that be nice? Aren't you tired of being their slave?

BRENT

I'll end you!

ALPHA

Shut up, you behemoth!!

PIERCE

A what? Behemoth? I'm a behemoth?

BRENT

Jen enters with Omega right next to her.

Brent, your dick is looking for you. I think I spotted it under the microscope in science lab.

JEN

Brent contemplates Jen. Omega slams her fist into the locker right next to Brent's head.

Your brother is a freak.

BRENT

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

Brent exits.

PIERCE
(still upset)

He pushes me. He pushes me to feel really bad. I need-

JEN

You need to act normal-

OMEGA

-soldier!

ALPHA

I'm not normal!

OMEGA

I don't care!

PIERCE

I hope he dies. Dead and dies.

Bell rings

JEN

Stop. Stop with the stuff. Just...try, okay?!

OMEGA

Undercover, okay?

JEN

You need to...just don't act weird, okay?

PIERCE

I know.

OMEGA

You must move amongst them undetected.

PIERCE

I just want him gone.

JEN

I know. Go. Go to class.

Pierce exits.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

OMEGA

Sometimes I want him gone too.

END SCENE FOUR

SCENE FIVE

Connie fitting a partially made, very feminine prom dress on Omega. As Connie fits Omega, she keeps glancing out the window. The sound of a bus driving up the block. Connie now, hides behind the curtain and watches out the window. After a moment, she scoots quickly back to Omega and resumes the fitting. Pierce enters. He dumps his backpack, heads straight to the kitchen.

CONNIE

Hey, honey.

Pierce returns with a soda and a piece of cold pizza and immediately settles in front of the television, game system controls in hand.

CONNIE
(loudly)

HEY, HONEY.

PIERCE.

Oh. Yeah. Hi, Mom.

Alpha enters. He gives Omega and her partial dress an odd look and then quickly settles next to Pierce on the couch.

OMEGA
(to Alpha)

She wants some information.

ALPHA
(ignoring Omega, to Pierce)

The cave. We can get to it but we have to double back through the minefield.

CONNIE

How was school?

OMEGA
(to Connie)

Get specific.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

CONNIE

Hello? Did Mrs. Rasp give the test?

ALPHA

Get through the minefield and then we can move on to the next test.

OMEGA
(loudly)

The test.

PIERCE

What?

CONNIE

The test?

PIERCE

Test?

CONNIE

The test. The test. Math. School. The location of today's skirmish.

PIERCE

Oh.

ALPHA
(frustrated)

This is testing me. Let me rest. Let me fight.

PIERCE

Oh. Yeah. It was okay.

CONNIE

Okay. Now, to get me off your back, you could ask me how my day was. This is what people call having a conversation.

PIERCE
(moaning)

Mom...

ALPHA

Omega...

CONNIE

What?

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

OMEGA

If you want to fight that battle, you have to finish this one.

PIERCE

Okay. How was your day?

CONNIE

First you tell me.

ALPHA

Oh, she's a wily one. A cunning adversary.

PIERCE

I took the test. It was good. I'm good at remembering stuff, okay? Okay?

He and Alpha turn towards the television.

CONNIE

Okay. Now me.

PIERCE

Mom...

CONNIE

Ask me.

Alpha throws himself at Omega's feet.

ALPHA

When will this interrogation end?

OMEGA

I am not interrogating you. You have to interrogate me.

ALPHA

What?

PIERCE

What?

CONNIE

Ask me about my day.

ALPHA

This is like chewing shards of burning, molten glass.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

PIERCE

How was your day, Mom?

CONNIE

Thanks for asking. It was pretty good. I've almost finished this one. Only three more to go.

PIERCE

That's great.

ALPHA

This is brutal.

OMEGA

He must learn. He must learn to fake sincere interest.

CONNIE

Don't look away. I'm not done. Then I made reservations for the Sanibel Island trip.

ALPHA

Appease her. That's our only hope.

PIERCE

Cool.

OMEGA

He's appeasing me. Good skill.

CONNIE

With the appearance of your feigned interest, my motherly job is now done. You may commence nuking your brain cells with suspect video games.

Pierce and Alpha instantly focus on the game system. Jen enters, chucking her backpack across the room to land in the pile of shoes and boots.

Hi, honey. How was your day?

JEN

Brutal. Agony. Felicia texted her mom during Spanish and not only did Miss Juarez take her phone-

CONNIE

-which is to be expected. It's against school policy-

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

JEN

-not done, Mom.

CONNIE

Just making the point that Miss Juarez-

JEN

Whatever! She grabbed it in the middle of the conversation so her mom now thinks Felicia was being disrespectful, which she wasn't-

CONNIE

-except to Ms. Juarez-

JEN

But Felicia's mom is this raging crazy woman who wants to kick Felicia out of the house! I told Ms. Juarez after class but she still wouldn't-

CONNIE

-I'm getting the gist. This has been going on since we've known them. Has Felicia considered speaking to her mom face to face? I know, I know. Radical concept. Communicating in person. Or the school social worker maybe?

JEN

If her mom kicks her out, can she live here?

CONNIE

What? Felicia live here? Um...no?

Pierce and Alpha grunt simultaneously at the game screen. Connie waves Omega over to resume her fitting position and begins working on the hem. Jen eyes Omega.

JEN

That is quite...elaborate, Mom

CONNIE

The girl wanted something special. I sketched it out for her.

JEN

It sort of looks like that character from Pierce's game. The Princess of Light and Goodness.

Pierce looks up. Connie steps back and observes the dress.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

CONNIE

Oh my god. It does!

Lights dim on Connie and Jen and a special comes up on Omega. Pierce, and now Alpha, watches her. As Connie and Jen continue to talk, their words are without sound. Omega turns and smiles at Pierce and Alpha.

OMEGA

We can join forces if you make it to the top of Mount Sinai. But you have to complete the nine trials first.

Jen turns toward Pierce and is mouthing words to him but he is completely focused on Omega.

Make sure your lantern is filled and you have at least twenty arrows in your quiver.

The lights begin to resume to normal level.

I can't help you up the mountain but there will be others along the way who-

JEN

(looking at Pierce)

-can help?

Lights are now normal and Jen is looking at Pierce.

Hello? Can you? So?

PIERCE

“So” what?

JEN

Mom!

CONNIE

What?

PIERCE

What?

JEN

“What”?! He won't help.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

Pierce, help your sister.

CONNIE

With what?

PIERCE

With my math, for the hundredth time!

JEN

Did he hear her?

OMEGA
(to Connie)

Did he hear you? *(To Pierce)* Did you hear her?

CONNIE

I didn't hear her.

ALPHA
(to Pierce)

I didn't hear her *(To Jen)* I didn't hear you.

PIERCE
(to Connie)

How could you not hear me?

JEN

You know how.

OMEGA
(to Jen)

Perception is nine/tenths of the haul.

CONNIE

I know. I know. *(To Pierce, slowly)* Can...you...help...me...with...my...math...homework?

JEN

Mom.

PIERCE

She's being evil.

ALPHA

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

OMEGA
(to Alpha)

She's merely a tough warrior. One to have in our corner.

CONNIE

Jen, that isn't exactly a way to elicit the response you want.

JEN

I've got this mountain of math homework. So?

PIERCE

Okay. I'll do it.

JEN

Great. *(To Connie)* So, can I-

CONNIE

-No!

JEN

You haven't even heard what I-

CONNIE

He's not going to do your math homework for you, Jen!

JEN

Oh.

CONNIE

Pierce!

*Pierce and Alpha are refocused on the game.
Omega throws a pillow at them.*

PIERCE

What?

CONNIE

You *help* a person with their mountain of homework. You can't climb the mountain for them, okay?

PIERCE

Mom, I wasn't going to do it for her. I'm not an idiot.

CONNIE

I know you're not an idiot. You're the opposite of an idiot. I'm just saying-

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

	JEN
-Hello! What does that make me?	
	CONNIE
What?	
	JEN
Are you saying I am an idiot?	
	CONNIE
It's not an either/or proposition!	
	JEN
I just have trouble at math and he doesn't. Mom, I help him with stuff.	
	CONNIE
I know. I know you do.	
	PIERCE
What stuff do you help me with?	
	JEN
I allow you to continue to breath.	
	OMEGA
I accept you.	
	JEN
I don't kill you.	
	OMEGA
I defend you.	
	JEN
I make sure you don't look too radically stupid, which is every day.	
	OMEGA
I protect you.	
	JEN
And I laugh at your stupid jokes.	
	OMEGA
I love you to the ends of the earth.	

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

PIERCE

MY stupid jokes?! The queen of the knock-knock jokes calls my jokes stupid?

Alpha, intent on the game, pokes Pierce in the ribs.

ALPHA

The two-headed serpent awakens.

Pierce instantly turns back to the game.

JEN

MOM! He's not finishing the fight again!

PIERCE

JEN! Do you mind? I'm fighting the two-headed monster.

CONNIE

No shit! You and me both. God, you guys make me nuts!

Jen, Pierce, Omega and Alpha start to laugh.

ALPHA
(to Pierce)

She is fun when she loses it.

PIERCE

Mom, you're not supposed to say shit.

CONNIE

You all drove me to it. I cannot and will not referee every encounter, exchange and action in this house.

ALPHA

Thank you, god! Freedom.

JEN

But Mom, isn't that, like, your job?

CONNIE

No, it is not. I will not become the evil micro-manager-

OMEGA

-too late-

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

CONNIE

-who tells everybody how to behave.

OMEGA

I mean, that boat has so sailed.

CONNIE

You both are both old enough...I mean, Pierce, you're almost fourteen. Jen, do I even need to tell you?

JEN

I do know my age, Mom!

CONNIE

No, I meant-

OMEGA

She's just messing with you to rile you up.

CONNIE
(to Jen)

Stop playing stupid.

Pierce and Alpha turn back to the game.

And don't you dare look away from me, young man.

Pierce and Alpha put the controls down but their eyes remain on the screen.

LOOK AT ME!

Everyone looks at Connie.

Silence.

JEN

Um, Mom? What?

CONNIE

You both need to...um...if you both don't...um...

OMEGA
(prompting her)

Micro managing.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

CONNIE

Yeah! That's it. You both need to start negotiating life better or else I'll pack you both off to Sunday school again with Rabbi Gold.

PIERCE

Mom, I already go to Sunday school with Rabbi Gold.

CONNIE

Stop splitting hairs. I'm making a point.

ALPHA

Which is?

CONNIE

All of you... behave, do your homework yourself, be moral and quite bothering me. Turn that thing off.

PIERCE

Mom-

CONNIE

Are you messing with me?

OMEGA

(to Alpha and Pierce)

I wouldn't mess with her.

Alpha pushes a control button.

ALPHA

It's paused.

PIERCE

It's off.

CONNIE

It's on pause. I said off. You want me to do it? I'll be happy to unplug the entire-

ALPHA

No!

PIERCE

NO! I got it. It's off!

*The lights dim except for a spot on Pierce.
Omega shines a floor lamp on Connie. She*

begins speaking but no audible words come out.

PIERCE (CONT'D)

She's going on about...something. It is hard to hear. Hard to see.

Pierce stares at her intently. Alpha begins plugging and unplugging the light so every time the light from the lamp hits her, Connie can be heard. The rest of the time, she is mouthing her words.

CONNIE

Responsible...

PIERCE

What does that mean? Response? Responsible? Am I supposed to respond? Respond to what? What does respond mean? Does she want me to respond to this? How? Am I supposed to smile?

CONNIE

...because without rules, ruling your own world, both of you....

PIERCE

Rules. Rulers. Something about me and Jen.

CONNIE

Okay? Okay? So? Yes or no?

He looks at Jen. She leans into Connie's spot and nods furiously, indicating for Pierce to nod as well. He does.

JEN

Absolutely, Mom.

PIERCE

Okay. Yeah.

Alpha rises.

ALPHA

Can we return?

PIERCE

Can I-

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

No. Homework. CONNIE

I'm just going to finish this battle and then- PIERCE

What did I just say? CONNIE

What? PIERCE

About personal responsibility? CONNIE

I have no idea. ALPHA

Um- PIERCE

CONNIE
I JUST SAID IT WHILE YOU STOOD THERE NODDING!

She struggles, resumes control and somewhat calmly, prompting him

Following through. Committing to your tasks, without me having to remind you every afternoon.

Knock, knock. JEN

What? CONNIE

Come on, Mom. Knock, knock. JEN

Who's there? PIERCE

No. Mom? JEN

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

Jen, I'm not in the mood-

CONNIE

Come on, Mom. Knock, knock.

JEN

No. This is not the-

CONNIE

-I'll do it.

PIERCE

No. *(To Connie)* Knock, knock.

JEN

Who's there?

CONNIE

Warrior.

JEN

Warrior who?

CONNIE

Why are you fighting with us when we're all on the same side?

JEN

You win! I give up!

CONNIE
(laughing, throwing her hands up)

Connie puts a challah on the kitchen counter, two worn candlesticks, a Kiddush cup, all the trappings of Shabbat. Jen leans in and fiddles with the challah cover.

JEN

Mom, how old is this thing?

CONNIE

Bubbe gave it to us. It's sort of-

OMEGA

-don't say heirloom.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

CONNIE
(fingering it)

-well, yeah, it's pretty beat up.

JEN

It's like a polyester crime, Mom. Almost as bad as these kepahs.

CONNIE

Whatever. I pick my battles with your Bubbie.

Alpha suddenly stops and inhales deeply.

ALPHA

Challah.

Pierce stops.

PIERCE

Shabbat.

ALPHA
(to the pacing Pierce)

Everything should stop on Shabbat.

*Pierce crosses to Connie and envelopes her
in a big hug.*

PIERCE

Shabbat shalom, Mom. Thanks for remembering this each week. You know how I'm good at remembering stuff? I think it's because I'm Jewish.

Alpha, Omega and Jen all begin listening.

We remember stuff. We are supposed to remember we were slaves in Egypt. And when we remember Shabbat, we remember to observe Shabbat. That's sort of what you do. You've got the observing thing going. Like you always watch Jen and me to make sure we aren't screwing up. You're like Shabbat all the time. It must have been awful to be a slave. To be bound to do something, to follow what someone else tells you to do. But it's weird 'cuz Rabbi Gold says that people get Shabbat all wrong, that since you aren't supposed to do stuff, it's like a restriction, like you're enslaved, but it's just that you aren't supposed to be enslaved to work. So Shabbat is really complex. It's like a labyrinth of how to be free. I think it's really cool. So can I have a challah and brisket sandwich for breakfast?

CONNIE

(slightly stunned from all the insight)

Yes.

Pierce, Alpha and Jen exit.

Omega switches the just-lit candles with ones that have burnt low. She then grabs a pin cushion, pulls Connie's sewing things out and perches on the chair. She holds the pin cushion as Connie pins together fabric. Connie has a carton of ice cream on the table as well. Every so often, she stops and eats a scoop of ice cream, as does Omega. Connie hears the garage door activating, quickly runs the carton of ice cream to the kitchen, returns and resumes her work.

Matt enters, weary, suit on, briefcase in hand.

MATT

Hey honey. Shabbat shalom.

Matt and Omega cross paths as he dumps his stuff on a chair and she makes her way to the kitchen. She returns with the ice cream and eats while listening.

CONNIE

Shabbat shalom.

Connie and Matt kiss.

MATT

Such a good Jewish girl I married. Does your mother know what you're doing?

CONNIE

(eyeing some swatches)

This isn't work.

MATT

(sifting through the pile of mail on the counter)

Really? What is it then?

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

CONNIE

It's... meditation. It's funny. It's almost a need. A need to make something with all this.

MATT

(Muttering, to a couple of bills)

Damn it. *(To Connie)* Any ice cream left?

Mouth full, Omega reluctantly hands the carton to Matt.

CONNIE

Lots.

OMEGA

A little.

MATT

(eating)

How are the kids?

CONNIE

I wish they wouldn't make you work so late on Fridays.

MATT

Pierce okay? Was his day okay?

CONNIE

I think. Always hard to tell.

MATT

Jen?

CONNIE

Fine. No problem telling with her.

MATT

You?

CONNIE

Fine.

MATT

Con, there's not much ice cream left...

CONNIE

Stop. You're lucky I don't hit the scotch. I have stress, you know.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

MATT

I know you have stress-

CONNIE

You want to be married to a skinny drunk or a sober blob?

MATT

There you go, sweet talking me again.

He hands the ice cream back to Omega, who shoves the empty carton in the garbage. She then yawns and starts upstairs.

You want to fool around?

Omega stops.

It's a mitzvah. On Shabbat. It's written.

CONNIE

Oh please. I'm sure it was just snuck in at the bottom of the Talmud by a horny rabbi.

MATT

(gesturing to her work table)

What are you working on?

CONNIE

Something with all the scraps. I don't know what I'm trying to make but there's all this material to work with. I just want to make something that works, that doesn't look too crazy to the rest of the world but uses all the good stuff.

MATT

What are we talking here? A quilt? A dress?

CONNIE

Don't know. I don't have all the answers, you know.

MATT

But you're so good at faking it, sweetie.

CONNIE

I think something happened at school.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

MATT

Pierce? What? Why?

CONNIE

He was *really into* his video game.

MATT

That's saying something. Get it out of him?

CONNIE

No.

MATT

Jen?

CONNIE

No. I think it's hard for her, being his sister.

She unpins a scrap from the others and contemplates it.

I think it would be easier for her sometimes if he didn't look so normal. Like if he used crutches. Or was a Downs kid. Then she might not feel the need to....

Connie trails off, staring at the scrap of fabric.

MATT

If his special need was more special?

CONNIE

Yeah. It's hard fighting for someone that doesn't appear to need fighting for.

MATT

Yeah. I know.

*Rumpled, Matt slumps down in his chair.
Connie looks at him for a moment.*

CONNIE

So, my rumpled weathered warrior, want to enjoy some spoils?

MATT

(not getting the invitation)

The ice cream's gone.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

Omega smacks him on the side of the head.

MATT (CONT'D)

Oh. Wait. Do you mean...

CONNIE

Yes.

Connie grabs his hand, pulls him up, and leads him upstairs.

MATT

Shabbat shalom, baby!

They exit, leaving Omega. She crosses to Connie's work table and peers at the fabric. Lights fade to black.

END SCENE FIVE

SCENE SIX

Math class. Pierce is sitting with Alpha squatting behind him. Brent is behind them both and Mrs. Rasp in the front of the class.

MRS. RASP

So, finally, the geometry of the square. Four right angles. There are many ways of looking at the characteristics of the square. The interior angles at ninety degrees but observing it from the outside, there are also angles of two hundred and seventy degrees. Are you observing the square from inside or outside? To employ a current metaphor, are you thinking inside or outside the box?

BRENT

Who wants to be an outsider anyway?

MRS. RASP

Don't worry, Mr. Black. Observing your math homework, or shall I say, lack thereof, I don't think you can ever be accused of thinking outside the mathematical box. Pierce?

PIERCE

What?

MRS. RASP

The square?

ALPHA

Just talk some.

PIERCE

The square has a variety of mathematical characteristics, all true. All accurate. Even something that seems simple can be really involved, once you look at it in different ways. The word square comes from olden times; it was, like, the area of a square. It meant raising the second power.

MRS. RASP

And other characteristics of the square?

PIERCE

Well, it's a quadrilateral. And so's a rhombus too. And they're also parallelograms. But all of 'em are quadrilaterals. Four sided figures. Now, a trapezoid is not a parallelogram but-

BRENT

(muttering)

I'll trapezoid you.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

Bell rings.

MRS. RASP

(Over the noise of the exiting students)

Unacceptable, Mr. Black. My office, fifth period.

Mrs. Rasp and Brent exit. Pierce is lost in thought at his locker, Alpha is holding and examining the angular forms Mrs. Rasp had. Brent appears.

BRENT

Need some help there, special needs boy?

He shoves Pierce into his locker, slams the door shut and spins the combination.

I'm special needs too, you know. 'Cuz I got a special need. The need to see you bleed.

The locker is swung around the reveal Pierce inside, panicking. Alpha struggles on the outside, trying to open the door.

Try thinking inside this box, math boy!

Brent exits.

PIERCE

No! No! No! Trapped! Prisoner.

ALPHA

Enslaved! Contained!

PIERCE

Help! Help! This isn't happening to me.

ALPHA

Trapped in the box-

PIERCE

-trapped and enslaved. Stuck. Dying.

ALPHA

No power in the area of the square. Not enough area. Not enough room for me.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

PIERCE

Shadow and darkness. I'm lost. Lost in the cave. The cave of the Maccabees.

Lights come up on Connie in the kitchen, phone to her ear, Omega behind her. As Connie listens, Brent enters, beast mask on, crosses to Omega, and slugs her in the stomach and exits.

END ACT ONE

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

ACT TWO
SCENE ONE

Keys in hand, Connie enters.

CONNIE

Pierce. Pierce. It's okay. I know. Please just come in the house.

Pierce enters. He is wild-eyed and screaming.

PIERCE

I want him DEAD! DEAD!

He hurls his backpack across the room. It flies onto the dining room table, sending scraps that had been careful laid out scattering.

I want to hurt him, rip his eyes out and his heart out and bury him in a mountain!

Omega enters, half carrying, half dragging Alpha with a black hood over his head, handcuffed with his hands in front of him, covered in blood and dirt.

CONNIE

It's going to be okay.

Pierce is pacing furiously.

OMEGA

(panting, dragging Alpha)

I got you.

PIERCE

AUGHH!

He throws himself on the couch, writhing and screaming.

CONNIE

Pierce! You need to listen to me!

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

Connie squats in front of Pierce. Omega dumps Alpha in a chair and begins untying the hood from around his neck.

Hang on.

OMEGA

Look at me!

CONNIE

Omega frees the hood and pulls it off. Alpha is bruised and catatonic.

Are you there?

OMEGA
(looking into Alpha's eyes)

Pierce?

CONNIE

Die, die, die!!!! I want it to-

PIERCE
(twisting away from Connie)

-stop.

ALPHA
(muttering to Omega)

Pierce, look at me.

CONNIE
(firmly)

Solider!

OMEGA
(barking)

Dazed, Alpha looks at Omega. Pierce, still weeping and shaking, looks at Connie.

You're home.

CONNIE

We got you out.

OMEGA

Omega grabs some of the scattered fabric swatches and begins wiping the blood off Alpha's face.

They got you out. It's over.

CONNIE

I need, I need...

PIERCE

What?

CONNIE

Pierce is sitting up and rocking.

What do you need?

PIERCE
(screaming)

I don't know what I need!!!

Frantically, Connie looks around, spies the game controls and thrusts them into Pierce's hands as Alpha holds up his wrists to Omega. Omega grabs Connie's keys and unlocks the handcuffs, releasing Alpha. Pierce has begun playing.

Alpha breaks away from Omega, staggers over to Pierce. Throwing himself next to him, he grabs the other set of controls and begins playing. Omega and Connie stare at them for a moment, and then Omega begins slowly picking up the scattered fabric. Connie sits at the dining room table.

Charlotte enters with a bakery bag of donuts. Throughout the following scene, Pierce and Alpha will occasionally grunt and mutter at the evolving game and Omega will continue straightening up.

How is he?

CHARLOTTE

Completely checked out.

CONNIE

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

CHARLOTTE

Good for him. Don't blame him a bit. How are you?

CONNIE

Spent. Fried. Furious. Who raises these shithead bullies? "Survival of the fittest" pack animals. Well, I say, it's time to thin the herd.

CHARLOTTE

How long was he in there?

CONNIE

Ten minutes. Maybe more. The little Nazi did it right when the halls were emptying out.

CHARLOTTE

What's the school doing?

CONNIE

Pierce was too upset for me exactly to sit down and talk to the principal. Matt's calling them.

CHARLOTTE

Good. Could you anything more out of him?

CONNIE

This little Brent weasel has been bothering him for years. Always just under the radar, you know? What I wouldn't give for five minutes alone with him...and then ten more with his pathetic parents. Who raises bullies, huh? What kind of parent thinks, "Oh, yeah, picking on other kids, not a problem. You go for it, Johnny boy." It's the sports. You know it is-

CHARLOTTE

Sports can be okay. A good release for-

CONNIE

-for your kids, yeah. But all these athletes, they teach them nothing about compassion. It's all "win, win, win." "Be stronger than the other guy." Teamwork, my ass. It's a training ground for high school terrorists. Al Queda quarterbacks and Hamas halfbacks.

CHARLOTTE

Well, Connie-

CONNIE

Whose side are you on?

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

CHARLOTTE

Yours! But maybe you're just a little-

CONNIE

No, I'm not a "little" anything. I'm a lot of everything. Sometimes, I really hate humanity. What if he doesn't make it? Pierce? What if the shitty little terrorists win?

CHARLOTTE

Oh, he's got a formidable array of skills and advantages. They just aren't apparent to the naked eye.

CONNIE

Name me a couple 'cuz I'm not seeing a one.

CHARLOTTE

(gazing at Connie)

I am.

CONNIE

But I can't be there all the time.

Charlotte gets up, exits to the kitchen.

CHARLOTTE

(off stage)

None of us can. And, you know, this doesn't only happen to special needs kids.

Plates in hand, she returns and begins plopping donuts on plates. Jen enters.

JEN

Mom?

Connie waves her over.

CONNIE

Jen, honey. Oh god. There was this...an incident at school. Pierce was-

JEN

-I know. Felicia told me. She heard him crying when they got him out. Who-

CONNIE

Brent.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

PIERCE
(to the game)

Stop. Incoming...

JEN

Okay. He okay?

Charlotte hands her a donut.

Thanks, Mrs. O'Brian. Is he okay?

CONNIE

He melted down. He's really stressed.

JEN

Okay.

Taking her donut with her, Jen wiggles in next to Pierce on the chair. Pierce and Alpha don't even acknowledge her. Omega begins piecing the fabric together, attempting to recreate the previous pattern.

CONNIE

And it's hard on Jen.

JEN

So hearing you, Mom. And I'm fine.

CHARLOTTE

Yes, you are fine, Jen. Con, she's fine. He's going to be fine.

PIERCE

Watch out! No-

ALPHA

Lost in the Labyrinth again-

CONNIE

Well, I'm not going to be fine.

CHARLOTTE

Yes. You all will survive this skirmish. And that's what it is. A skirmish. You haven't lost the war.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

Gesturing to Pierce who is grunting as he manipulates the gaming controls.

CONNIE

He's certainly missing in action right now. I worry that someday...he won't make it.

CHARLOTTE

He'll make it.

CONNIE

Promise?

CHARLOTTE

I'll promise you if you promise me. Hey, we're both in the trenches here.

Charlotte shoves a donut to Connie.

CONNIE

Thanks but I can't right now. I'll wait.

OMEGA

Wait! Charlotte. Bag of donuts.

CONNIE

Wait. Wait a second. Um...how was Sunday dinner?

CHARLOTTE

What? Oh. It was...never mind. It was nothing. You have had an awful day. What is the school-

CONNIE

No. I'm done. Well, I'm not done but it's your turn.

CHARLOTTE

I don't need a turn.

OMEGA

Donuts. Video games. Same diff.

CONNIE

Did you or did you not have that bag of donuts before I called you?

Pause

CHARLOTTE

Oh god, you're such a...a...MOM!

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

CONNIE

Now there's no need to get nasty.

CHARLOTTE

Sorry.

CONNIE

So? Please. Come on! Be a friend. It really would make me feel so much better to hear about someone else's misery.

CHARLOTTE

Well, when you put it like that. Okay. Well...um, I wasn't...it didn't...let's just say, it probably wasn't my most shining moment.

PIERCE

Take that, you slimy behemoth!

CONNIE

What happened?

CHARLOTTE

I sort of yelled at Botox Rapunzel.

CONNIE

You yelled at her? What did you yell?

CHARLOTTE

That I was fat but she was Satan.

Jen and Omega are now listening.

CONNIE

A little context might improve that statement but it also stands alone quite well.

CHARLOTTE

Doesn't it though?

CONNIE

Did you just say this as you walked in or was there a trigger involved?

CHARLOTTE

She's my Brent, you know. She is. She flies just under the radar. She's the one who came up with these goddamn family Sundays. Evan never does well at them.

CONNIE

Too much sensory overload.

CHARLOTTE

Exactly. And first there was church and then he had gotten into it a little at the game. We lost and, well, afterwards... anyway, he was just stressed. I was stressed. Danny was stressed. Patrick was, well, Patrick. What we really all needed was...well, not Sunday dinner at Rapunzel's house.

CONNIE

So?

Charlotte begins putting a couple of donuts on a plate.

CHARLOTTE

"Can't he sit still for five minutes?" That's all she said. And then she's looking at my plate of potatoes and chicken. And roll.

Crossing to Pierce, Jen and Alpha with the donuts piled high. Alpha grabs one as she passes her.

And it wasn't that much. But she just said, "Can't he sit still for five minutes?" in that sort of pseudo-nice but judgmental way. She didn't even say his name.

Handing them over Pierce's shoulder. Alpha takes them and, shoving one in his mouth, sets them in front of the tv.

Not Evan! Just he.

Pierce shushes Charlotte, which she takes in stride.

And then that thin-person glance at the portion size. I launched.

CONNIE

With "I'm fat but you're Satan"?

CHARLOTTE

Because I am and she is and I'm tired of dancing around it. I'm so tired of being judged. And coming up short. I get so twisted up, trying to navigate this anxious, wired and befuddling kid that the only comfort I seem to get is warm food. My soul is hungry for peace and it never gets fed. So, yes, I am fat. And to have family, *family*, glare at me because of my size, or my parenting, or Evan because of who he is and, no, I can't get

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

him to sit down for five minutes, I've gone for twelve years without ever having an easy, worry-free day and I am a shitty, tired mom, so yes, I am fat. But she's a judgmental Satan who lacks imagination and compassion and any kind of insight beyond how many calories might be in a ho-ho.

CONNIE

What did she do?

CHARLOTTE

I think she was surprised. Hard to tell, with that face.

CONNIE

What did Danny do?

CHARLOTTE

He laughed.

CONNIE

He laughed?! God, I love that guy.

CHARLOTTE

He tried not to. So anyway, there was that awful flurry of "How could you think that about us, when we invite you over to our home, yadda, yadda, yadda," and Stu just standing there because he knows she doesn't like Evan. Or me, for that matter.

CONNIE

And you don't like her. So? Then?

CHARLOTTE

I look over at Evan and he's shaking his leg like he does, biting his fingers, and I just say, "We're going." And we do. We decamp and move out.

CONNIE

No shame in a prudent retreat.

CHARLOTTE

No shit.

*Light change. Charlotte and Connie
continue to talk at the kitchen table but can't
be heard.*

PIERCE

(To Jen)

You're mushing me.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

JEN

Good. (*Gesturing to the screen*) Look.

OMEGA

There's-

ALPHA

-the behemoth.

Brent walks on, monster mask in hand.

PIERCE

Got him.

Brent pulls the mask on and Alpha fights him alone. The behemoth blocks and counters well.

You will not-

The beast gets Alpha in a headlock.

BEHEMOTH

Stupid geek.

Alpha slips out and pins him.

ALPHA

You don't lock me!

PIERCE

I'll lock you.

The beast spins out and shoves Alpha into the wall.

JEN

Give me a turn.

PIERCE

No!

Alpha struggles and the beast laughs.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

I'm good at this level. I can kill him.

JEN

I wanna kill him.

PIERCE

I know. But you always forget to-

JEN

-No. See, I-

PIERCE

Let's do two players.

JEN

Omega hands Jen a control unit as Alpha struggles against the beast.

Jen, I got it.

PIERCE

Why aren't you letting me?

JEN

Alpha and the beast keep replaying their movements like an idling computer game.

I want to play alone.

PIERCE

I won't ruin it. I promise.

JEN

I'm a good fighter.

OMEGA

I'll help.

JEN

Help.

ALPHA
(gasping)

Okay.

PIERCE

Pierce and Jen start playing intently. Omega does a choreographed shoulder roll and pops up, fists up, arms in fighting position. The beast is surprised. She sweeps his feet, knocking him down and Alpha free. The beast keeps fighting but eventually they both bring him to his knees in a dance of kicks and punches.

PIERCE (CONT'D)

Augh! Now run. Run away and die. Die. Die. DIE, BEAST!

Connie and Charlotte turn and look at Pierce and Jen.

JEN

We're okay. He's okay.

END SCENE ONE

SCENE TWO

Later. Pierce sits at the kitchen table, working on homework. With a dry erase board in hand, Alpha holds up numerical answers at regular intervals. Alpha is still battered and bruised. Matt enters, briefcase in hand. For a long moment he watches Pierce working.

MATT

Hey, Pierce.

Pierce and Alpha continue working. Matt puts down his briefcase.

Pierce.

Pause.

PIERCE!

Pierce and Alpha jump.

PIERCE
(not looking at Matt)

What!? Oh. Hey, Dad.

Pierce and Alpha turn back to their work.

MATT

How's it going?

He waits. Slightly louder

Pierce. How you doing?

*Alpha scribbles on the dry erase board
"HE'S TALKING." Pierce reads it.*

PIERCE
(Glancing at Matt)

I'm doing math.

MATT
(abruptly)

When someone asks you a question, you-

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

He stops himself. More gently.

MATT (CONT'D)

I asked *how* you were doing.

PIERCE

(Finally looking directly at Matt)

Oh. I'm okay.

MATT

Where are Mom and Jen?

PIERCE

(Back to his homework)

Mom's delivering a dress and Jen's upstairs. I think.

Matt sits where Alpha is sitting, causing Alpha to jump up and fall back. Pierce looks up.

MATT

I stopped by the school and talked to the principal and Mrs. Butler and...um...the social worker gal...um...Miss Patel-

Alpha grabs a small medical kit, sits on the floor and begins tending his wounds.

PIERCE

Mrs. Patel. She's married. And she's a psychologist. She's not the social worker. Miss Henry is the social worker.

MATT

She was there to. Mrs. Henry.

PIERCE

Miss.

MATT

What? Look, Pierce-

PIERCE

It's Miss Henry. She got divorced and went back to her name before she was married. She was Mrs. Roberts before.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

MATT

Okay! Miss Henry and, well...lots of people were there.

MATT

Mrs. Rasp?

MATT

Oh, yes. Mrs. Rasp was very much there. She was...yes, she was really there...she is quite the advocate for you and she...but, anyway, what I'm saying is when you go back tomorrow-

ALPHA

Don't want to be back here.

PIERCE

I don't want to go back there.

MATT

Pierce, you have to go back.

PIERCE

I know. Mom says too. That I have to...but maybe we could do a home school thing or something?

MATT

No. Home school is out of the question. You have to figure out how to handle this yourself.

PIERCE

I know, Dad! Stop. I know. I just thought...never mind.

Pierce turns away from Matt.

MATT

Listen, we're just talking.

ALPHA

Judging! Deciding! Telling!

PIERCE

I don't want to talk.

MATT

(deep breath)

Okay. But well, when I did go to the school and talk to everybody, and well, one thing, Brent is in trouble.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

Pierce looks at Matt.

Good!

PIERCE

Good!

ALPHA

Really good.

MATT

Is he kicked out?

PIERCE

No, because it's his first offence-

MATT

But he's been bothering me since-

PIERCE

-I know. Don't get upset.

MATT

Don't tell me how I am!

ALPHA

I'm not getting upset!

PIERCE

(beginning to rock)

Alpha begins to pace.

Good. Good. Okay, so Brent. I know he's been, you know, but this is the first time it's gotten physical in school. Calm down.

MATT

I am calm.

PIERCE

(rocking harder)

But, so, he's in trouble. They can't tell me what exactly because of privacy laws but-

MATT

What?

PIERCE

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

MATT

-but I know his parents, or parent, has been called.

PIERCE

So?! That's all?

ALPHA

He has to die! Why can't he die?

MATT

Pierce, we are on this. Everybody is on this. The school has a no-bullying policy so people are aware but, Pierce, you have to do stuff too.

ALPHA
(stopping)

What?!

PIERCE

But I didn't do anything!

MATT

I know. But sometimes...okay, look, you know you are different. Smarter. But also...more in your head than other kids.

PIERCE

I don't want to talk about this.

MATT

I know.

Alpha goes to the television and grabs the gaming controls.

But sort of less in control of what your body does.

PIERCE

I control stuff.

Alpha begins playing the game.

MATT

I know. You do great. But you've got to work a little harder at school.

PIERCE

I do work hard at school!

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

MATT

Not grades. The other stuff.

Pierce gets up and starts to pace.

PIERCE

Okay. I know, I know. Okay? I get it. Can we stop talking about this now?

Alpha hands Pierce the second set of controls. Matt intercepts them.

MATT

(holding the controls)

No. We're still talking.

Pierce is pacing again, Alpha shadowing right behind him.

Um, listen...

Matt watches Pierce for a moment.

You remember the Maccabees from Hebrew school?

Pierce and Alpha stop.

How they fought for and gained control over their religious freedom in Israel in...well, a long time ago? They fought for their freedom. And there weren't a lot of them. Right?

Pierce and Alpha nod.

They were smart. And they needed to be smart because they were like you. Different. Smaller. So they had to be creative. To survive and thrive they needed to think outside the box. And they did.

Seeing he's got Pierce's attention, Matt grows more passionate.

They won by using guerrilla tactics. Diversion. Ambush. Guerilla actually means "little war" in Spanish. And that's what you've got with this Brent character. A little war. Okay, okay, I'm not saying ambush the guy, tempting as that might be.

ALPHA

So?

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

PIERCE

What?

MATT

Okay. Let's think.

The three think.

What's that big beast monster guy in your game?

PIERCE

The behemoth?

MATT

Yeah. That's a biblical beast you know.

PIERCE

No.

MATT

So, how do you kill him in the game?

PIERCE

Well, you don't. I mean, I haven't yet. He keeps coming back.

MATT

So maybe that's it. You aren't ever going to completely rid your world of these monsters. That's just not how the game is programmed. You just gotta keep slaying them as they come up. But also know that each battle is a new chance to win. Each encounter will make you stronger if you don't give up. Keep thinking as you battle. And you need to remember, you've got the controls.

PIERCE

What happened to the behemoth in the bible?

MATT

I don't remember.

PIERCE

Maybe we should find out. It could give us some ideas.

MATT

That's a good idea.

PIERCE

Yeah. Dad?

MATT

What?

PIERCE

In the locker, I realized what the Maccabees felt. That's what got me out. God got me out. It's like I'm a Maccabee. I'm like Israel. Small. Surrounded. Different. So I have to be a warrior. Brent will never relent but neither will I. Kids like me, we are the different. The Jews. But I'm glad I'm Jewish and I'm glad I'm me. Brent is bent. Crooked. Not straight. Not right. He'll never be a right angle.

He thinks for a moment.

Can I play my game now?

MATT

No-

PIERCE

Dad! Please-

MATT

-because I want a turn.

ALPHA

What?

Matt hands the controls to Pierce and grabs the other set.

MATT

Come on, my son. Let's fight the bastard together.

PIERCE

Dad, that's pretty corny.

MATT

Sorry.

PIERCE

It's okay.

They begin playing. Pierce intently. Matt begins to smile.

END SCENE TWO

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

SCENE THREE

Late. Connie is sewing and Omega is perched on a chair, biting her nails. Jen in pajamas appears.

Hey Mom.

JEN

Hey sweetie.

CONNIE

Jen plops down at the table.

Where is it?

JEN

Where's what?

CONNIE

Omega roots around the table and pulls out a small opened bag of candy from the sewing kit. She hands it to Jen, who waves it in front of Connie, and begins munching.

I couldn't sleep.

JEN

Well, those should help. A nice big infusion of sugar in the bloodstream should knock you right out.

CONNIE

Connie stops pinning.

God, I'm tired. I should clean up but I need to finish these alterations and-

Connie trails off and looks around. Omega begins picking up.

You should be in bed.

I know.

JEN

Bed. Wait. She's not in bed.

OMEGA

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

Why aren't you asleep?
CONNIE

I told you. Hungry.
JEN

Hungry for what?
OMEGA

He's going to be okay, you know.
CONNIE

Yeah, I know.
JEN
(shrugging)

I know it's hard, being his sister. I mean, I know you get embarrassed. It's hard enough being a teenager without having a special needs brother to-
CONNIE

-Mom! No. It's okay. I'm completely adjusted and...okay. Okay?
JEN

I get embarrassed sometimes and I'm his mom. You just need to-
CONNIE

Mom, it's not that I'm embarrassed. I'm just hungry. Just sew.
JEN

Okay.
CONNIE

Connie resumes pinning. Omega sits right next to Jen and watches her, waiting. Silence.

He's been my brother, like, forever.
JEN

Yup.
CONNIE

I completely get him. More than you and Dad.
JEN

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

Okay. CONNIE

More than anybody. JEN

Yeah, you probably do. CONNIE

He's smarter than most everybody. JEN

That he is. CONNIE

He's really smart. JEN

So are you. I've got two smart kids. CONNIE

Yeah, I know. I'm smart at some stuff. JEN

You excel at- CONNIE

I know. I know. The social and stuff... JEN

You're a wonderful, funny, brilliant- CONNIE

But that's all, you know- JEN

She trails off, fingering some fabric.

What? CONNIE

-easy. JEN

Not for everybody. CONNIE

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

JEN

But what if it's not enough?

CONNIE

What's not enough?

JEN

What I am. What I've got. I mean, I might have to take care of him when we're both, you know...

CONNIE

Older?

Jen nods. Connie takes a deep breath.

Yes, maybe.

JEN

What if what I am isn't special enough? What if he needs me to be...special. And I'm not.

CONNIE

Jen, your dad and I will be here for a long time. We won't leave you stranded. We are all a unit. Like a special opps, special needs, long term S.W.A.T. team.

JEN

So he-

OMEGA

-I-

JEN

-won't ever be alone?

CONNIE

We're in this together.

JEN

I feel like two separate people sometimes. The sister and the...big sister. I want him to be okay. I just wish the world could see how unique and smart and incredibly "Piercely" he is. But sometimes...I am just embarrassed. And I just want him to be over it.

CONNIE

I know. You don't have to feel wrong about-

JEN

Mom! Stop. You don't have to fix my feelings, okay?

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

CONNIE

Yeah. Okay, I know. Sorry. Go on.

JEN

I can completely deal, you know!

CONNIE

Oh, I know.

JEN

When I'm not incredibly annoyed, well...sometimes I get really scared for him. Like today. Today was scary.

Omega pulls Jen up by her armpits and guides her into Connie's arms. Connie envelops Jen. After a moment, Omega encircles them both with her arms.

END SCENE THREE

SCENE FOUR

Sunrise. Connie is sitting at the kitchen table, sipping tea. She is surrounded by fabric and sewing paraphernalia. Omega is sitting on the couch, completely relaxed, with Alpha's head in her lap. He is sound asleep. Omega is stroking his hair and sipping some tea as well. Matt stumbles in, wearing pajamas.

Con? MATT

Hi, honey. CONNIE

Are you okay? MATT

Did I wake you up? I'm sorry. CONNIE

What time is it? Why are you... MATT

Pause

What time is it?

Early. Go back to bed. CONNIE

Were you up all night again? It's been days. Almost a week of this. Maybe you should talk to- MATT

-Matt, no- CONNIE

-Sweetie, it's all gonna be- MATT

-No. I know. It's okay. It was a good up all night, not a bad one. CONNIE

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

MATT

Okay.

CONNIE

Sit down. There's tea.

MATT
(sitting)

I hate tea.

CONNIE

I know. I'll put coffee on in a second.

MATT
(referring to the sewing things)

Looks like a bomb went off.

CONNIE

Yeah.

Silence

I think I figured something out.

He waits

I think I figured out they aren't me.

Connie sighs. A big sigh of relief.

I'm not them.

MATT

Pierce and Jen?

CONNIE

I'm me. Sometimes I get me lost in it all but I'm Connie. Constance Sarah Abrahams Goldman. And someday, Constance Sarah Abrahams Goldman is going to be dead.

MATT

Okay. Is this why you're smiling? Is this the good part?

CONNIE

Don't be a jerk. I had an epiphany. And it didn't involve chocolate.

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

MATT

Then I don't trust it. Go on.

CONNIE

But that's it. That's all of it. I'm it. Only me. You are only you. Jen. Pierce. Charlotte. The Brent bastard prick bully shithead. We are all just stumbling around, trying to avoid the big landmines, slugging it out the best we can. And eventually...I will be dead. I'll be dead, dead, dead, stuck in a box in the ground. Constance Sarah Abrahams Goldman will be gone. But I'm here right now and so this silly, slightly flabby, hardworking body and silly, slightly flabby hardworking mind does the best it can. And so do you and Jen. And so does Pierce. He is enough. My body, our bodies made him...G-d made him. And he was made just fine.

MATT

He is fine.

CONNIE

And so are you. And so am I. I am fine. I'm enough. We're all fine and we are all enough. All we can do is love the crap out of those little stinkers, love each other, and throw pieces of love and fabric at each other and see what sticks.

MATT

And I'm enough to?

CONNIE

(straight into his eyes)

Yes. You are enough.

Matt sighs. A big sigh of relief.

MATT

They are stinkers.

CONNIE

That they are.

Matt takes a sip of Connie's tea.

MATT

You know, this is pretty good.

Connie leans over to him and they kiss.

END SCENE FOUR

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

SCENE FIVE

Pierce at his locker, Alpha at his side. Brent appears.

BRENT

I'm back. Miss me, special needs boy?

ALPHA

He needs something from this. From me.

BRENT

Still hearing the voices? Go to the light, smart boy. Go to the light.

PIERCE

Go away.

ALPHA

What is it?

BRENT

What are the voices saying, math geek?

ALPHA

What's my advantage? How can I fight him?!

BRENT

Wouldn't death be easier?

ALPHA

I need to find a way. My way.

PIERCE

You asked me what a behemoth was-

BRENT

-oh, boy, here we go with the weird stuff. Does it make you feel good to-

PIERCE

-well it was a big, sort of stupid animal-

BRENT

-Stupid? *You* explaining stupid to *me*?

PIERCE

(beginning to speak more rapidly)

-who only had muscle but no brain and God created him to represent basically, the bad guy. The stupid monster who's always there-

BRENT

Oh, I'm always going to be here.

PIERCE

-but nobody really wants a behemoth around because people eventually get sick of fighting and the behemoth is eventually killed and everybody? Really happy about that.

BRENT

You know what would make me happy-

PIERCE

(now extremely focused in on Brent)

Yeah, I know. Me, dead. Anyway, and so everyone eats his flesh and celebrates the end of him because nobody really deep down wants to be around a stupid, big, loser bully. It's just not fun.

BRENT

Oh, shut up with the lecture, asshole.

ALPHA

The party. Remember, there's a party.

PIERCE

There's actually a party to celebrate the end of him, just like it's pretty great when you're not around, Brent. I think you are always talking about suicide 'cuz you know people just don't want *you* around and you know you're stupid, just like a behemoth. And you know the only person that can kill a behemoth-

BRENT

Oh, do tell, lecture boy.

PIERCE

Whoever created it. So maybe you're the one who should be thinking about suicide. Because you know it's not just me.... people want *you* gone. End of the behemoth, end of conflict.

BRENT

You looking for a conflict? I'll give you a-

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

PIERCE

-conflict. Yeah, I get it. See what I mean? Stupid. Easy and stupid and people really want you gone.

Pierce slams his locker shut, just missing Brent's fingers.

So be gone, Brent. You try dying-

ALPHA

-behemoth.

Brent and Pierce stare at each other for a moment and then Brent slowly exits.

END SCENE FIVE

SCENE SIX

Connie is setting up Shabbat. Omega is gazing at the pile of scraps. Pierce and Alpha are in front of the television, Matt is sifting through the mail, his briefcase on the floor beside him, and Jen is doing homework at the table.

MATT

Notice how I'm home early for Shabbat?

CONNIE

I'm very impressed.

MATT

I had to battle my way out of the office. They were coming at me from all sides. But I fended off the stinking hordes just to get home to you. I should be an action hero.

CONNIE

Oh, you are. You're my action hero, baby.

JEN

Please, get a room.

CONNIE

Oh, are we bothering you, my little soldier?

MATT

Pierce, how's the game coming? Almost time for Shabbat.

Pierce and Alpha grunt in unison.

Wrap it up. Come on.

JEN

Pierce, what's pi again?

PIERCE

Three point one-

CONNIE

No! Jen, look it up.

JEN

MOM! He's knows so why don't-

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

MATT

Jen, listen to your mother. Pierce, listen to me. Pierce. PIERCE.

PIERCE

What?

ALPHA

What?

MATT

The game.

PIERCE

The game.

Matt leans on and firmly rubs Pierce's shoulders.

MATT

Turn it off, private.

Pierce does.

How was school?

ALPHA

Say "fine."

PIERCE

Fine.

MATT

Any problems?

OMEGA

Battles?

PIERCE
(calmly)

Oh, Yeah. Brent was back.

Silence

CONNIE

Brent?

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

Damn! OMEGA

Did he do anything to you? CONNIE

-hurt you? OMEGA

He tried. PIERCE

Pierce, listen. You have to just ignore him. CONNIE

What lame, pathetic advice. OMEGA

Mom- PIERCE

What did he- MATT

I got him. ALPHA

It's okay. I did it. PIERCE

Did what? MATT

I won. PIERCE

What? How? CONNIE

How? OMEGA

I slayed him. ALPHA

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

PIERCE

I think I...well, I think I talked him to death.

MATT

What?

PIERCE

I can't beat him with coolness or being strong. So I just kinda came out of my head, like the Maccabees, the cave in my head, and started talking. You know, how sometimes I can go on and on and it sort of makes people a little crazy? Well, I tried it for real. I tried to make him crazy with just all the stuff in my head.

CONNIE

Did it work?

JEN

That is so cool.

PIERCE

I think it kind of did (*Alpha nudges Pierce*) Can I play now?

CONNIE

No. What did you say?

ALPHA

Come on! We're getting to the end of the Labyrinth.

PIERCE

(*impatient*)

Just stuff. It just worked for today. But that's okay. Can I play now?

CONNIE

No-

MATT

-Yes.

CONNIE

Matt-

MATT

Did you hear what he just said? (*To Pierce*) Play.

CONNIE

(*hands up in surrender*)

Okay, falling back.

Connie kisses the top of Pierce's head and Omega gives Alpha a huge bear hug which he tolerates.

Mom. Stop.

PIERCE

Finish this skirmish and then Shabbat.

CONNIE

Speaking of skirmishes-

MATT

He grabs Connie and kisses her.

Knock, knock.

JEN

Who's there?

MATT
(still holding Connie)

Kepah.

JEN

Kepah who?

MATT AND CONNIE
(in unison)

Keep a going with that stuff and I'm gonna hurl. Come on. Let's do this.

Jen shoves her homework aside and stands. Alpha and Pierce end the game and rising, they come to the Shabbat candles. Omega hands out colorful kepahs made from fabric scraps and covers the challah with a gorgeous, ornate matching challah cover.

Honey, these are beautiful. Where did you...oh my god. You made these.

MATT

Cool, Mom.

JEN

CONNIE

I finally figured out where to put all the pieces.

They all put on the kepahs and Connie strikes a match and, lighting the candles, begins the Shabbat prayer.

Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat

MATT

Thank you, God, for this wonderful, resourceful, creative family.

CONNIE

Thank you, God, for my wise children and fabulous husband.

PIERCE

Thank you, God, for being Jewish and cool computer games.

JEN

Thank you, God, for the best joke ever. There was this-

CONNIE

Jen, not on Shabbat. Come on. Do you really need to-

JEN

It's my turn. I'm talking to God.

MATT

Jen, this is serious.

CONNIE

Honey, Shabbat is a special time.

JEN

Well, it's a special joke. There was this German, Arab, whatever, an army was marching through the desert and at the top of a distant sand dune, they spotted one, single Israeli soldier. He was waving and yelling, "Hey there, army dudes, betchya can't get me! Whoo, whoo! Come and get me, you big, bad tough losers! I'm right here!!" So the general sent two of his men to take this guy out. The Israeli disappeared behind the hill and the two soldiers followed. After a minute or two, the Israeli soldier popped back up, calling, "Whoo hoo! I'm still here. Is that the best you can do?!" So then the general sent an entire team. Six fighters took off after this single Israeli. Disappearing behind the hill, a few minutes later, the Israeli pops up again. "HEY, army! Oh my god, I'm still here!

JEN (CON'TD)

What do you think about that?" So now the general's getting pissed. He sends an entire battalion after this guy. They all disappear behind the hill, and after a few minutes, one lone German-Arab-whatever soldier comes crawling back over the hill. Bloody and mangled, he makes it back to the general and gasps, "It's a trick. There are two of them."

They all begin to laugh. Lights change to bring the focus around the circle of light cast from the candles. Matt takes Connie's hand, Connie takes Pierce's hand and Jen grabs Pierce's other hand. Behind them, Omega throws her arm around Alpha's neck and they grin at each other...and then begin to wrestle. Blackout.

END OF PLAY

Special Needs Prop List

Knit hat
Car keys
Dishes
Newspaper
2 backpacks
Notebook
Pen
Books
Wallet
Kepah per script description
Book basket
Book on Jewish history
Tie
Coffee pot
Coffee cups palette of play, brown, green, sand, earth tones
Masks, to be painted skin tone
Steering wheel
Sewing machine
Sewing machine table
Fabric patterns and sewing paraphernalia in colors of final challah cover
Tea bags
3 mugs of tea in palette of play, brown, green, sand, earth tones
2 angular forms per script description
Can of soda
Slice of pizza
2 gaming remotes
Couch pillows
Phone
Cell phone
Flashlight
Tray
Loaf of challah
2 candlesticks w/ candles
Kiddush cup
Polyester challah cover
2 polyester kepahs
Carton of ice cream
Spoons
Briefcase
Math book
Brent mask
Rope or handcuffs
Black hood, have fabric, needs to be built
Bag of donuts
Dry erase board, notebook size, 8 X 10" approx

SPECIAL NEEDS/Sergel

Medical kit with bandages
Dry erase board marker
Notebook
Candy, M&Ms
Pins
Challah cover, new/colorful
3 kepahs, colorful
Candlesticks with candles
Matches
Homework