

RAW PROVOCATIVE HUMANE PLAYS

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Baby Giraffe

A Short Play
by Katelin Wilcox

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Lights up on the entrance area to the Carter Giraffe Building at The Bronx Zoo in New York City. It is empty. After a moment MAYA, mid 20's, rushes in followed closely by Nina, early 20's. They are disheveled, trailing jackets, purses, zoo maps, etc.

MAYA

...fuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuck...

NINA

Maya it's fine, we're here, we made it. Stop freaking out.

MAYA

We're late.

NINA

Well maybe she's late too.

Maya's phone dings a new text message. They both freeze. Maya fumbles her phone out of her pocket and checks the text. Nina looks at her expectantly.

MAYA

She's here. She's inside.

Beat.

Shit. I- need a minute.

NINA

Breathe. Tell her you're running late and you'll be there soon.

MAYA

Okay.

Maya types the response into her phone, then collapses on a bench. Beat.

I'm fucking nervous.

NINA

I know. But she's the one who should be nervous, okay? I mean, she asks to meet you, then insists on it being where SHE lives, you had to fly halfway across the country. Not to mention this is the weirdest meeting place ever. Giraffes are creepy.

MAYA

(mortally offended) They. Are. Not. *(recovering)* It's not that big of a deal, okay. Besides, I didn't exactly have to twist your arm to come.

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Nina smiles.

NINA

I've always wanted to see New York.

MAYA

I know.

Beat.

NINA

Look, this can go however you want it to go. If you walk in there and it's a disaster, then, that sucks, but it'll be over and we can just leave.

MAYA

Well, that's comforting, considering I'm pretty much a walking disaster.

NINA

That's not what I meant. I'm... sure it'll go fine. I just mean, it's not like you're having Sunday dinner with the family or something.

Beat.

MAYA

Right.

NINA

And hey, worst case scenario, we'll eat our feelings. I know it's super touristy, but I really want to try that Serendipity place.

MAYA

Yeah. I mean, maybe. I'll see how I'm feeling.

NINA

Oh, sure. Of course.

MAYA

Elena was texting me last night, and she kind of mentioned some stuff we could do.

NINA

...oh.

MAYA

I mean, it's such a short trip.

NINA

I had to get back for midterms, Maya.

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MAYA

I know, and "med school isn't like a shift at the mall."

Beat.

Look I told you I didn't want to PLAN the weekend. That we'd figure it out as we went. I'm just saying since we won't be here that long I kind of don't want to schedule anything. So I can see how things go.

NINA

With... Elena.

MAYA

Yeah.

NINA

So... what am I supposed to do?

MAYA

What do you mean?

Beat.

NINA

Never mind. Are you... are you ready to go in?

MAYA

(taking a deep breath) Yeah, I think so. Look, I don't really know how long I'll be, so why don't I text you later about how it's going?

Maya gathers her things and stands.

NINA

Wait, what?

MAYA

Well, I don't want to ask you to just sit here and wait for me.

NINA

I didn't think I was going to sit here and wait for you. I thought I was going with you.

MAYA

Inside?

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NINA

Yeah.

MAYA

No, Nina, I wasn't thinking you'd like, actually come in with me.

NINA

Maya, it's okay, I want to.

MAYA

I don't want you to.

Beat.

NINA

Maya, why am I here?

MAYA

What do you mean? To... help me with this. So I don't have to do this alone.

NINA

But you want to do it alone.

MAYA

Just this one part.

NINA

And maybe later. Elena mentioned some "stuff" you could do.

MAYA

Okay Nina, I'm about to walk in that building and meet my birth mother for the first time. Can you like, NOT make this about you?

NINA

I'm not... making it about me. I thought it was about US. When you said we'd figure it out as we went, I thought you meant WE would figure it out. Not you and (*gesturing to the building*) her.

MAYA

Nina, the fucking POINT of the trip is the meeting with Elena.

Beat.

NINA

I know. I just don't understand why we can't meet her together.

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MAYA

Because I don't want to. Nina, I've got enough to process right now, can we please not fight about it right before I go in there?

NINA

That's exactly what I'm saying. I'm sure there's a lot going on in your head right now. So let me come with you. At the very least I can be a buffer for any awkwardness.

MAYA

No.

Beat.

NINA

God, I'm so stupid. I actually thought you wanted to like, spend time with me. Reconnect. I- can't even remember the last time you asked me to do something, anything with you.

MAYA

You're away at school. Twelve hours away. You're busy. You've made that super clear. I'm not gonna like, bother you.

NINA

Come on, Maya, even when I'm home I barely see you, and - I had to hear from *Dad* that Elena sent that letter to the adoption agency asking to contact you? I mean, that didn't warrant a phone call?

MAYA

Nina, don't blame me that we don't talk anymore. You're the one who ran halfway across the country and left me to fend for myself. From the very beginning, from the moment Dad told you that I was in contact with Elena, you have made it incredibly clear that you want no part of it.

NINA

I'm just trying to protect you Maya. It's been like, four months since you got that first letter. It's all happening way too fast. I just don't want you to get hurt.

MAYA

Nina, I know you think you always know the right way to handle shit, but in this case, you have no idea what you're talking about.

NINA

Well, your track record for handling things isn't so great.

MAYA

I'm aware. Everyone's aware.

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NINA

So maybe you should listen to me.

MAYA

Nina, you're the smart one, and the one who never got in trouble, and you have no idea what it was like to grow up in a family feeling like an outsider. You can't possibly understand what I'm going through right now.

NINA

I do understand it! I *get* being curious. I *get* wanting to know about her. I *get* the importance of finding out your family history. But I don't think you've thought this through. I mean, where is this headed Maya?

MAYA

I am NOT having this conversation with you right now.

NINA

Because you don't have an answer.

MAYA

Yes I do.

NINA

And?

MAYA

And, a lot of it depends on today, but I hope I meet her, and we like each other, and we can be friends.

NINA

But what exactly does that look like?

MAYA

Why do you care?

NINA

Maya, I care because Elena sent you that letter right after Mom died.

Beat.

I think you were going through a lot, and she maybe... put some ideas in your head.

MAYA

That's ridiculous. And paranoid.

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NINA

Don't you think it's a little manipulative that your birth mother wants a relationship with you right after your adoptive mother dies?

MAYA

She didn't KNOW mom had just died.

NINA

But she found out soon enough, and she should have backed off.

Beat.

Look, you don't actually know her that well. You don't know what her intentions are. Just let me come with you. So someone objective can assess the situation.

MAYA

You're hardly objective.

NINA

More than you.

MAYA

You're not coming in there with me.

NINA

WHY?

MAYA

Because I don't want you to fuck it up for me.

Beat.

NINA

What do you mean?

MAYA

Look Nina, your feelings about Elena aren't exactly a secret.

NINA

So?

MAYA

SO, I actually want this to go well. Maybe you can't understand that-

NINA

I understand it-

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MAYA

She wants to get to know me, take me to her favorite restaurant, maybe even meet some of her family IF I'm up for it. And none of that will happen if you barge in there and scare her off, Nina. I'm sorry.

NINA

Sunday dinner with the family.

MAYA

No, I told her maybe. I said we'll see how it goes. But I know that's probably a lot for you, and it's not what you were expecting, so I don't think you should go in there with me.

Beat.

NINA

We should leave.

MAYA

What?

NINA

Maya. *She gave you up.* She let someone else do the hard work of raising you, then when you're all nice and grown up she magically reappears and wants to insert herself into your life. She doesn't get to do that.

MAYA

I'm not leaving. Why did you even come if you felt that way?

NINA

Because you asked me to! But this isn't how it was supposed to go. I thought- if I was with you, since you asked me to be there, that maybe that meant you were going into this with the right perspective. But clearly that is not the case.

MAYA

What do you mean?

NINA

She doesn't deserve you, Maya. She's not worth it. All this. All you're putting yourself through.

MAYA

I *offered* to come to her, okay? She couldn't afford a plane ticket to Colorado.

NINA

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Oh, really? Well, that's great, that really lifts my opinion of her.

MAYA

What the fuck, Nina? Are you actually insulting someone because they don't have money?

NINA

No! That's not what I- ! Maya you're being naive. She doesn't have money. WE do. That's like, the classic ulterior motive for wanting to get close to someone.

Beat.

MAYA

I wrote the letter, Nina. Not her.

Beat.

NINA

What?

MAYA

I wrote the letter to the adoption agency asking to contact her, not the other way around.

NINA

But Dad said-

MAYA

I asked Dad to tell you that. I wanted you to know I was in contact with her, I just didn't want you to know how.

Beat.

NINA

I think I have to go.

MAYA

Nina-

NINA

Maya, I can't make you come with me. But I'm leaving.

MAYA

Nina, don't do this. Don't leave me here.

NINA

I'm not leaving you here. You won't come with me. You don't even want me here.

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MAYA

I *need* you here.

NINA

I guess you need her more. And I guess I should have seen that coming.

MAYA

What the fuck are you talking about?

NINA

Christmas, Maya.

MAYA

What about it?

NINA

We were in the middle of dinner. There was this- pretentious classical music playing, a store-bought smoked ham, Dad and Lori holding hands under the table like freaking teenagers, and I looked over to see which of us was going to call bullshit on all of it, and you were nowhere to be found. You got this call from Elena and disappeared. And I sat there by myself.

MAYA

She just wanted to wish me a Merry Christmas. What was I supposed to do, hang up?

NINA

Yes!

MAYA

Why?

NINA

Because our mother is dead, Maya!

Beat, collecting herself.

Because it was Christmas. Our first Christmas without her. We should have made a turkey like she always did, and sung the cheesy carols she loved, and we sure as hell should have been mutually despising the hollow shell of a woman sitting in *her* chair. And instead you were off chatting it up with *Elena*.

MAYA

Nina, that phone call sucked for me. Before I even knew what was happening Elena started handing the phone around to relatives I didn't even know about, and when she got back on she started crying... It really messed me up, and all I kept thinking was "Nina

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can help me figure this out." And when I came back in, you gave me the fucking silent treatment the rest of the night.

NINA

Well I'm sorry I wasn't as supportive as you'd have liked. I was too busy dealing with the fact that Dad got a new wife, you got a new mom, and I got nothing. I have no one.

MAYA

That's not true. I'm still here. Dad's still here.

NINA

Dad married Lori six months after Mom died. I can't even begin to forgive him for that. For forgetting her like that. And now, you just want to forget her too.

MAYA

This is why I didn't tell you. I knew you would take it the wrong way.

NINA

Three months after our mother died, you wrote a letter to your back-up mom! How am I supposed to take that? Was it that easy for you? She was our *mom*.

Beat.

Well, she was mine, anyway.

MAYA

Nina-

NINA

I was sitting there alone on Christmas, and I saw every Christmas for the rest of my life stretching ahead of me exactly the same, and I can't handle it. I can't handle losing the rest of my family. Please don't walk in there and do that to me.

Beat.

MAYA

Nina, do you know why we're here?

NINA

Yeah, you've made that super clear.

MAYA

NO. Do you know why we're HERE. At the Carter Giraffe Building at the Bronx Zoo.

NINA

I don't care why she wanted to meet you here.

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Nina, I picked the meeting spot.

MAYA

What?

NINA

I picked the meeting spot.

MAYA

Why?

NINA

Because of the baby giraffe.

MAYA

Beat.

What are you talking about?

NINA

Six months ago there was this baby giraffe born here. And its mother got liver disease and died, but this other giraffe in the herd like, stepped in to take care of it. I thought it was... I don't know, I thought it was poetic or something.

MAYA

Oh.

NINA

Beat.

Maya, what are you saying? Because it sounds like you're proving my point for me. Mom-giraffe is gone, and now Elena-giraffe is here to take her place.

What? No. Nina. God. The giraffe that stepped in is not Elena. It was our mom. When she adopted me.

MAYA

But, Elena didn't die.

NINA

I know- I'm not saying it was exactly- God, Nina, I picked this place in memory of mom, not to forget her. Mom wanted me to reach out to Elena. For years. She said no mother should ever go through life not knowing if her baby is okay.

MAYA

Beat.

NINA

I wish I'd known that.

MAYA

I know it's a lot for you to come all the way here, and then for me to basically ask you sit on your hands until I need you. I know that was selfish. But I was afraid if I told you everything, then you wouldn't come. And I needed you to come. Because I'm scared, and freaking out, and I need my little sister who always knows the best way to handle shit to *help me with this*. If I meet Elena, it doesn't mean you're going to lose me. You couldn't get rid of me if you wanted to. It's one thing I'm grateful to Elena for. Because we ended up together. And you're the only motherfucker on this planet who can handle me.

Beat. The sisters stare at each other tensely for a moment. Nina breaks away and sits on the bench. Finally-

NINA

You'd better get in there.

MAYA

Are you- ?

NINA

She's waiting.

MAYA

Will you... come with me?

NINA

No. You need to do this part alone.

Beat.

Text me how it's going?

Beat. Maya nods, gathers her things, and stands to go. Nina reaches out and squeezes Maya's hand. Maya exits into the Carter Giraffe Building. Nina watches her. When she is gone, she walks over to the railing of the animal enclosure, looking at the animals.

NINA

Hi, baby giraffe. Is that your mom?

Lights fade.

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