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The Imperfect Plan

by Cynthia Grant

SETTING:

Empty stage. No props. All actions are pantomime.

CHARACTERS:

MARY Small and feeble. Pale in the face. Remains seated throughout the play. Acts like she is studying.

ALICE Very vibrant and energetic. Is constantly doing an activity.

SCENE:

Mary is seated back-stage left at a desk. Alice is standing up-stage right.

(ALICE is thrashing her arms around as if playing the drums.)

MARY: Could you keep it down? I'm trying to study.

ALICE: Is that all you ever do?

MARY: Yes.

ALICE: Why?
MARY: I want to be prepared.

ALICE: For what?

MARY: Life.

ALICE: This is life. What do you want to be prepared for?

(ALICE bends her knees and bounces her body as if she's water skiing.)

MARY: I want to be someone. Thank you.

ALICE: Don’t you want to have fun?

MARY: I will.

ALICE: No you won’t.

MARY: I know you, Alice. You’ve been studying your whole life. Don’t you ever want to just go out and do something? Look at me, I’m bungee jumping right now.

(ALICE jumps up stage.)

MARY: No.

ALICE: Why not?

MARY: I’m getting prepared. Unlike people like you who have no goals in life.

ALICE: I do too. I’m going to get married, have a family, earn a living.

MARY: But you’re not prepared.

ALICE: What is there to be prepared for?
(Now ALICE is walking holding someone’s hand and laughing as if she’s on a date.)

MARY: Everything.

ALICE: Like what?

MARY: Everything.

ALICE: Are you prepared?

(ALICE swings her arms like she is swimming.)

MARY: Almost.

ALICE: How are you prepared?

MARY: I can’t explain it. It’s my own personal plan.

ALICE: But that’s all you’ve been doing your whole life, preparing for the future. You’ve done nothing your whole life.

MARY: I have.

ALICE: Name one thing you’ve done.

MARY: I told you, I’m preparing.


(ALICE is bewildered at the sight. MARY is not enthused.)

MARY: But you’re not prepared.

ALICE: How more prepared can I be? I’ve lived! You just sit there!
MARY: At least I’m prepared.

ALICE: You’re crazy. Why don’t you get off your butt and do something? Live, for crying out loud!

(ALICE stiffly jerks her arms and legs like she is rock climbing.)

MARY: I’m not done with my plan yet.

ALICE: Well, when will your plan be done?

MARY: I don’t know. I haven’t gotten to that part of the plan yet.

ALICE: This is ridiculous. How can someone spend their whole life planning for the future?

MARY: It’s easy.

ALICE: But you can’t live in the future. You’ll never do anything.

MARY: Yes, I will.

ALICE: When?

MARY: When I’m done preparing!

ALICE: I’m getting nowhere with you.

MARY: Sort of like your life.

(ALICE is cheering as if at a sports event.)

ALICE: What do you mean by that?

MARY: I mean your life is going nowhere.

ALICE: My life is going nowhere? Look at yours.
MARY: But I’m prepared. You’re not.

ALICE: How can you say that!

MARY: Alice. Are you going to go to college?

ALICE: Yes.

MARY: What for?

ALICE: I don’t know yet.

MARY: Because you’re not prepared.

ALICE: So. I’ll decide.

MARY: What if you can’t?

ALICE: I will.

MARY: Not if you’re not prepared. You’ll never get anywhere if you’re not prepared.

ALICE: This is pointless.

MARY: What’s pointless?

ALICE: Trying to talk you into living.

MARY: I have a point.

ALICE: No, you don’t. You just sit there and do nothing.

MARY: That’s because I planned this conversation. Do you think I’d waste my time talking to you if I wasn’t prepared for this?

ALICE: You planned this conversation.
(ALICE looks at MARY with disgust.)

MARY: Yes.

ALICE: How could you plan this?

MARY: It’s easy.

ALICE: I think you’re insane, that’s what I think. I think you have no life so you just sit here and manipulate people into believing you’re normal. I’m not talking to you anymore.

(ALICE is aiming a rifle.)

MARY: I know that.

ALICE: You know what?

MARY: That you’d react like this. I planned it that way.

(ALICE slowly turns towards MARY with her rifle still pointed.)

ALICE: Well, did you plan this!

(A loud bang is heard and ALICE’s body lurches back from the power of the rifle. MARY grabs her arm in pain.)

MARY: Of course I planned this! Why do you think I’d have this!

(MARY pulls a white bandage out of her pocket as if it’s a weapon that she’s threatening ALICE with. ALICE exaggerates a gasp.)

MARY: You can’t trick me, you fool! I’m prepared!

(Another bang is heard, but this time MARY ducks. The sound of a bullet ricocheting off of metal is heard. MARY grabs her leg in pain.)

ALICE: Ha!
(ALICE looks determined to kill MARY. MARY pulls out more gauze and begins wrapping up her leg.)

MARY: Go right ahead and shoot me! I'm still prepared!

(ALICE fires again and MARY grabs her chest and falls back.)

ALICE: How about that, Mary! Are you prepared to die?

(MARY falls limp and sirens are heard off stage. Two uniformed officers dart across the stage to arrest ALICE. The curtain closes as MARY is being escorted off stage.)