

MAGPIE

By

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MAGPIE

MAGPIE

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MAGPIE

*To Mr. Buckley, who knew I was a writer before I did.
and
For all those trying to find and claim their own voice—I see you.*

MAGPIE

SETTING

MAGPIE takes place in multiple settings. Maggie's studio apartment and her Therapist's office are both in Chicago, IL. Mama's house, Maggie's childhood home, is a Cape Cod located in Virginia.

The Therapist Office is a constant. It should be located where he can observe the action. Once the small lamp in his office is turned on it does not go off until the final scene. It can dim but must remain lit. The set needs to be such that the actor playing Maggie can walk in and out of each location without interruption while telling the story.

TIME

The play starts in 1998 and ends in 2011. It includes two flashbacks one set in 1975 and one set in 1980.

Scene 1	Maggie's Apt/Mama's House
Scene 2	Maggie's Apt/Therapist's Office/Mama's House
Scene 3	Iowa/Therapist's Office
Scene 4	Mama's House/Therapist's Office
Scene 5	Maggie's Apt/Therapist's Office
Scene 6	Therapist's Office/Maggie's Apt
Scene 7	Mama's House/Therapist's Office

MAGPIE

MAGPIE

ACT 1
SCENE 1

December 1998 Chicago, IL. It's late in the afternoon on a gray, snowy Sunday two weeks before Christmas. Maggie is in her colorful and cozy basement apartment. We see a hint of a kitchenette, a big red chair, and an old radio flyer wagon - being used as a coffee table. An oversized toy jack sits on it. There's a black wall phone with an overstretched cord. On the wall next to it is a framed amateur painting of a girl on the beach flying a kite.

MAGGIE. *(MAGGIE is in her late twenties dressed in jeans and a Muppet t-shirt. She's pacing to the phone and back while talking to herself.)* You got this Maggie...you can do this! You can stand up for yourself...YOU are a strong and confident woman! *(She stops pacing and strikes a pose like a super hero feet apart and hands on her hips.)* Oh, who am I kidding? I can't do this. I've never stood up for myself let alone to her...or her silences...therapy is stupid...I don't need to stand up for myself. *(Beat.)* For Pete's sake Maggie, just get it over with. *(Finally, she grabs the receiver with determination and dials. Lights fade up on Mama's house. Mama is sitting in her chair knitting. There is a small table next to her with a Mickey Mouse phone and a photograph of a girl on the beach flying a kite.)* Please let the machine pick-up, pleeeeeeease let the machine pick...

MAMA. Hello.

MAGGIE. Hi!... Mama...it's me.

MAMA. Magpie! How are you?

MAGGIE. I'm good. How are you?

MAMA. I'm just fine. Sittin here listening to Nat King Cole and knittin on your Christmas sweater. I think you're really gonna like it this year.

MAGGIE. Oh, I'm sure I will...what color is it?

MAGPIE

MAMA. I'm making this one in multiple shades of white. Winter white, Christmas white, snowy white, they call it...oh what is that they call it?

MAGGIE. *(Talking to herself.)* Tell her...come on Maggie, just tell her and get it over with!

MAMA. Mono-chro-matic that's it. That's what it's called. It's very popular this season don't ya know.

MAGGIE. Sounds great. I...

MAMA. But I didn't just use the plain white yarn. I used yarn with all kinds of sparkles. That way, when you wear it, you'll be shiny like a snowflake. Cause I know how much you like sparkly things, my little Magpie.

MAGGIE. I do.

MAMA. Is it still snowing there?

MAGGIE. It sure is...took me forever to get home today. But you should see Michigan Avenue, Mama, with all the Christmas lights and the snow...it looks just like a real fairyland. You'd love it.

MAMA. Get home? Home from where? Why aren't you stayin in drinking hot cocoa?

MAGGIE. Because I have to go to work.

MAMA. Work? Who goes to work when it's snowin?

MAGGIE. Mama, this isn't Southern Virginia, it's Chicago. They have snowplows here, and everyone goes to work.

MAMA. Well, I hope you're at least wearing the hat and scarf I sent you.

MAGGIE. Yes, Ma'am I am. I love them. They're really warm.

MAMA. Oh, I' so glad to hear that. I'll have to tell Jackie. It was her idea to double up the yarn for warmth. She'll be tickled pink that it worked. And speaking of Jackie, we were just starting to talk about the Christmas party...

MAGGIE. Mama, before you start talking about Christmas plans, I have something I need to tell you... *(She takes a deep breath and speaks quickly.)* I won't be coming home for Christmas this year.

MAMA. Don't be silly Maggie. Course you will. And Jackie and I have been talking about the theme for the party. What do you think about "Winter Wonderland?"

MAGPIE

MAGGIE. I don't really have much time off from work and with the weather and the long drive...and...

MAMA. I thought it was really festive and fun specially since we rarely have snow here on Christmas. Plus, you'll be able to show off your new Christmas sweater.

MAGGIE. Mama, are you listening to me?

MAMA. I hear you. Are you listening to me?

MAGGIE. Yes.

MAMA. Excuse me?

MAGGIE. Yes, Ma'am.

MAMA. Well, what do you think about the theme for the party?

MAGGIE. Sounds fine.

MAMA. Fine? What does fine mean?

MAGGIE. Mama, I'm trying to tell you something important.

MAMA. And I'm tryin to talk to you about this year's theme. I want to make sure it's extra special. Something people will talk about until the 4th of July party.

MAGGIE. Your parties are always special you know that. But I won't be coming home this year.

MAMA. Maggie, I don't have time for this. Of course you'll come home. What could be more important than being with your Mama for Christmas?

MAGGIE. Well, the truth is Mama, I'm going to visit Daddy.

MAMA. *(Mama is silent.)*

MAGGIE. Hello? Mama?

MAMA. *(Silence.)*

MAGGIE. *(Maggie starts to panic.)* Mama, please talk to me.

MAMA. *(Mama speaks in a cold tone.)* How did you find him? Never mind, it doesn't matter. *(Mama takes on an overly sweet but firm tone.)* What matters now is Christmas. Everyone's expecting you and you'll come home, Magpie. I've already started baking for the annual party with the Bayers and the Vaskos. I'm tryin out some of Aunt Betsy's famous cookie recipes. I baked her walnut snowball cookie...member how good those were when she used to make em? Member how much you liked em? I made em special just for you.

MAGGIE. Now that I'm in Chicago it's only a six-hour drive to Daddy's...half as long as it takes me to get to Virginia.

MAGPIE

MAMA. Well, if you don't like those...how bout some of Grammy's chocolate crinkles? You always loved them.

MAGGIE. Yes, Ma'am, I did. And I'd love for you to save me some for the New Year.

MAMA. *(Silence.)*

MAGGIE. Mama, I need to do this. I need to go see him.

MAMA. The cookies won't save Magnolia, and you don't need to see your Daddy. You can go another time. Lord knows he's not leaving Des Moines Iowa anytime soon. You'll come home for Christmas. Ya, hear me?

MAGGIE. Yes, Ma'am, I do.

MAMA. Now, I've asked Big Roy to set up the spare bed and Aunt Susie is makin her chicken nut salad special just for you.

MAGGIE. Mama, please tell Aunt Susie and Uncle Roy I love them and I'd really like to see them. But Mama, listen... I do need to see Daddy. And...I don't think I'll be coming home for Christmas.

MAMA. You never think of others do you? On the other hand I always think about you. I've even invited Charlotte and Debbie over to help make the popcorn and cranberry strings for the tree. They're real excited to see you.

MAGGIE. Well, I would love to see the girls...but...

MAMA. *(Her pace increases and her tone sounds like she's talking to a small girl.)* And then you can help me finish the cookies for the party. I saved the gingerbread for last cause I know how much you like lick'n the batter.

MAGGIE. *(Maggie starts to sound a bit more Southern.)* I love our Christmas traditions, Mama. I do. The tree, the family, the cookies... *(Mama is loudly silent.)* I know you don't understand, Mama, and I know you're mad at me. And I'm truly sorry about that. This is so hard for me to do. *(Beat.)* Mama, I always do what you want. I respect you, and I want to make you happy, you know that. But just this once, I need to do what I want...what I need to do.

MAMA. *(Sarcastically.)* Just this once?

MAGGIE. I love you, and I promise I will come home to visit after the first of the year.

MAMA. *(Silence.)*

MAGGIE. *(Desperate.)* Mama? Mama, please talk to me.

MAMA. I'm very disappointed in you, Magnolia.

MAGPIE

MAGGIE. Yes, Ma'am, I know you are...and it is very hard for me to disappoint you.

MAMA. Then don't. Just come home for Christmas...you were raised better than this Magnolia Lynn.

MAGGIE. *(In one last attempt to not give in...she says to herself.)*

Breathe... *(Lights fade up to half in the Therapist's office.)*

WISE MIND-THERAPIST. You're a grown woman Maggie. You get to choose who you spend the holidays with.

MAGGIE. *(Doing her best to stand her ground and convince herself.)* I'm a grown woman, Mama.

MAMA. *(Silent...she begins to knit.)*

MAGGIE. *(Trying not to cry from frustration and anger.)* And I get to decide who I spend the holidays with...

MAMA. *(Silence.)*

MAGGIE. And... *(Struggling.)* I'm going to...

MAMA. *(Silence.)*

MAGGIE. *(Defeated.)* I'm going to of course spend them with you.

MAMA. *(Cheery.)* I knew you wouldn't let me down, Magpie. *(Beat.)* And since you're being such a good girl I'm gonna give you a present. How bout I send you a plane ticket so you don't have to drive home?! Won't that be nice? It'll take you even less time to get home than it would to get to your Daddy's.

MAGGIE. Thank you....That's very nice of you.

MAMA. You're welcome, sweet pea. I'll get it in the mail by the end of tomorrow so, make sure to keep your eyes open for the ticket, all right? I don't want it sittin in your mailbox.

MAGGIE. Yes, Ma'am.

MAMA. And Maggie, you won't be going to visit your father, right?

MAGGIE. No, Ma'am.

MAMA. That's my good girl.

MAGGIE. Bye, Mama.

MAMA. Tell Mama you love her.

MAGGIE. I love you, Mama.

MAGPIE

MAMA. I love you too my Magpie, Bye-bye.

(They both hang-up, lights fade in Mama's house. Maggie hangs up the phone, slides down the wall and cries.)

SCENE 2

Maggie's apartment. Later the same week. She is opening a box with a small knife.

MAGGIE. Airplane ticket. Chocolate crinkles, mmm. Thank you Mama.

And...what's this? *(She pulls out an envelope with a note taped to it.)*

MAMA. Dear Magpie, Since you're being such a good girl and coming home for Christmas, I thought you might like this.

(Maggie opens the envelope and reads the letter to herself.) Wait who is this from? It can't be... *(Lights fade up in the Therapist office. It is a warm welcoming space with bookcases, a couch, and a chair. Next to the chair is a small table with a lamp on it.)*

THERAPIST. It can't be what? Who is the letter from?

MAGGIE. Well, it looks like my Granddaddy's handwriting — my Daddy's Daddy.

THERAPIST. It's a letter from your Grandfather?

MAGGIE. No, it can't be from him. He's dead.

THERAPIST. Then who is it from?

MAGGIE. *(Turning towards the Therapist.)* I guess my Daddy?...but...it's postmarked 1966.

THERAPIST. That's a long time for a letter to be lost.

(Maggie walks into the office carrying the letter and a small Christmas Tupperware, she plops down on the couch.)

MAGGIE. *(Angry.)* Oh, it wasn't lost. I can't believe she kept this from me.

THERAPIST. Where did you get it?

MAGGIE. Mama. She sent it with my plane ticket.

THERAPIST. What plane ticket?

MAGPIE

MAGGIE. The one she's giving me to come home for Christmas so I won't go see Daddy.

THERAPIST. What happened? You were feeling so good about things when you left last week.

MAGGIE. Yeah, then I got on the phone with her and she ignored me and guilted me and I caved. Just like I do with everybody in my life.

THERAPIST. Not everyone. You've worked really hard to start to change this pattern. Changing it with your mom is going to be the hardest part. Did you tell her what you needed?

MAGGIE. (*Agitated.*) Yes! I told her I wasn't coming home and that I needed to see Daddy and, she told me to stop being dramatic.

THERAPIST. So why do you think she sent you this letter?

MAGGIE. Because, it's "Classic Mama." If you do exactly what she wants you get a reward.

THERAPIST. Interesting. Did she send a note with it?

MAGGIE. Yes. And according to it, she sent the letter because, I'm being a good girl.

THERAPIST. This can't be the first time you've been what she thinks is a good girl... Why now? Did the note say anything else?

MAGGIE. Nope. But she did send me a box of chocolate crinkles.

THERAPIST. Chocolate what?

MAGGIE. Crinkles. They're my favorite Christmas cookie. Want one?

THERAPIST. No, thank you.

MAGGIE. She's had this letter for (*Doing the math in her head.*) ...twenty...four years.

THERAPIST. So, you would have been...

MAGGIE. Eleven months old. It's not even her letter...isn't that mail fraud? I wonder if she has any more?

THERAPIST. Do you want to share the letter with me?

MAGGIE. Sure. (*Opens the envelope, pulls out the letter and reads it.*) Dear Maggie, And how are you? (*She gets overwhelmed by emotion.*) Would you read it?

THERAPIST. Are you sure?

MAGGIE. (*Nods her head.*)

MAGPIE

THERAPIST. I'd be honored to...Dear Maggie, And how are you? I bet you're crawling around the floor looking for something to get into. Or maybe, you're looking out the big window at the bird perched on the railing? Have Mama give you a big kiss for me. Love, Daddy

MAGGIE. (*Nibbling on a cookie.*) Such a sweet letter.

THERAPIST. It says something about your father that he wrote you a letter when you were so young.

MAGGIE. (*Comes to a decision.*) I'm gonna go visit, Daddy.

THERAPIST. I thought you said you were going home for Christmas.

MAGGIE. And I will. But I have a week and a half before I leave. She doesn't control me.

THERAPIST. Are you going ask your mother why she sent you the letter?

MAGGIE. (*Sarcastically.*) Yeah, I'm gonna ask her that and then I'm gonna ask if she wants to join Daddy and me for a lovely picnic lunch.

THERAPIST. I know this is hard to talk about Maggie. And you can be as snarky as you want with me. But, I'm still going to ask you the hard questions. Why won't you talk to your mother?

MAGGIE. Because it's easier not to. I'm going to do what she's taught me to do — ignore it.

THERAPIST. I hear you and that's a choice. But I want to remind you that you're here for you...to learn to change behaviors that aren't working for you.

MAGGIE. I'm tired of her controlling my relationship with Daddy. I need to connect with him. And I also want to see where he grew up and went to school. He's a part of me, and I feel like getting to know him will help me know myself. Mama doesn't understand that. If she did, she wouldn't have kept this letter from me. She doesn't need to know I'm going.

THERAPIST. I support you in seeing your dad. It's totally natural for you to want to know him and it's important to build a relationship with him separate from your Mother. AND, I know you're angry and I think it would be beneficial for you to have an honest conversation with your mother.

MAGPIE

MAGGIE. Noted. *(Pause. Maggie is having an internal struggle to not completely shut down.)* I really wanted to go visit Daddy for Christmas. Is it so terrible that I wanted to make that choice for myself?

THERAPIST. No, it's not. You're not a little girl anymore, Maggie. You're a grown woman and YOU get to decide who you want to spend the holidays with.

MAGGIE. You know sometimes I hear your voice in my head...Is that weird?

THERAPIST. No, that's good!

MAGGIE. Really?

THERAPIST. Yes, it means you're internalizing our work. You're beginning to develop your wise mind. Right now, the voice in your head sounds like me because you trust me.

MAGGIE. Does that mean the voice will start to sound more like me?

THERAPIST. Eventually, if you practice. Every time you feel overwhelmed or like you want to shutdown you need to take a breath and connect with your wise mind.

MAGGIE. That's what I did.

THERAPIST. When?

MAGGIE. When I was on the phone with Mama. I told myself to breathe and then I heard your voice...

THERAPIST. Well, see, there you go.

MAGGIE. Maybe if I hear your voice more often, I'll be brave enough to stand up to Mama when she starts in on me. *(Mimicking Mama.)* "You'll come home Magpie. You were raised better than that." What the hell does that even mean? I was raised to ignore my own wants and needs. No wonder my life sucks.

THERAPIST. What do you mean by that? And be specific.

MAGGIE. *(Deflective laughing.)* About what? About how much my life sucks?

THERAPIST. Yes.

MAGGIE. *(Patronizing and sarcastic.)* Okay. My life sucks because I'm scared to do what's best for me. Oh, and I have no clue what that is. AND there's this neat thing where I seem to disconnect from myself when people don't really listen to me. It's great and I can't control it at all.

THERAPIST. *(Curious and unfazed by her sarcasm.)* Does the disconnection happen no matter what you're talking about?

MAGPIE

MAGGIE. I don't know. (*Beat.*) I guess it's when I'm sharing something important to me. Though it doesn't feel as bad as when people are silent...that's really bad...of course, Mama's silences are the worst.

THERAPIST. How do they make you feel?

MAGGIE. (*Lashing out.*) How do you think they make me feel? They make me feel like crap. How would they make you feel?

THERAPIST. We're not talking about me, we're talking about you and how you feel.

MAGGIE. This is pointless.

THERAPIST. Actually, it's not. Now, tell me how you're feeling.

MAGGIE. (*Angry.*) Stupid and embarrassed. Okay?! I feel stupid, are you satisfied?

THERAPIST. No. That's not what I want. Will you please tell me what's going on?

MAGGIE. Whenever you ask me how things "make me feel" I just feel stupid...because I don't know!

THERAPIST. I'm not trying to make you feel stupid. I'm trying to get you out of your head and into your body and emotions.

MAGGIE. (*Silence.*)

THERAPIST. I know it isn't easy Maggie, and I know it doesn't feel good to share how you experience your Mother's silence. But the choice you make in this moment can change your life.

MAGGIE. I'm afraid.

THERAPIST. I'm right here. What do you want to do?

MAGGIE. I'll try it.

THERAPIST. Good answer. Now, put yourself in the moment when your Mother is silent.

MAGGIE. Okay...

THERAPIST. Tell me what it feels like.

MAGGIE. I don't know...I really don't.

THERAPIST. I think you do...deep down in your body...you're protecting yourself and for good reason. But you're in a safe space now. I'd like you to close your eyes and take a deep breath.

MAGPIE

MAGGIE. Do I have to?

THERAPIST. No, but it might help.

MAGGIE. *(Maggie closes her eyes, she's very uncomfortable. She takes a deep breath.)*

THERAPIST. Now try to feel the silence.

MAGGIE. *(Beat.)* I can feel it.

THERAPIST. Good. Can you describe how it feels?

MAGGIE. It's wrapping around me.

THERAPIST. Like a blanket?

MAGGIE. No. It feels like...vines...and they're twisting around me...holding me in place...it feels scary.

THERAPIST. You're doing great. Do you feel or see anything else?

MAGGIE. Yeah, I'm watching Mama build a brick wall. But the bricks are clear...or maybe they're one way glass because I can see her, but she doesn't seem to be able to see me.

THERAPIST. Go on.

MAGGIE. I'm feeling really alone, the silence is getting louder and louder, and the vines are getting tighter. *(Growing more agitated.)* I feel like I'm starting to panic...

THERAPIST. Try to stay with it...what happens next?

MAGGIE. I feel like I'm being erased and I can't stop it... *(Lights dim in the Therapist's office and come up in Mama's house as she is setting the table, it is 1980. Maggie crosses taking off her scarf and uses it to tie a big bow around her ponytail. She becomes her 15-year-old self.)*

MAGGIE. Mama! Mama!

MAMA. No need to yell, I am right here.

MAGGIE. Oh, Mama! My first day was A-mazing! It's so different from Junior High School, everyone is so much cooler and there are so many classes and clubs and things. And I can't get over how many people there are...

MAMA. Well, of course there are more people...its High School. Now, get washed up and I'll get dinner on the table. Then you can tell my all about your day.

MAGGIE. Yes, Mama. *(Maggie exits. Mama finishes setting the table and exits. Maggie enters reading a flyer and sits at the table. Mama enters carrying two plates of food.)*

MAGPIE

MAMA. You know there's no readin at the table.

MAGGIE. Yes, Ma'am. It smells delicious *(She puts the flyer down and picks up her fork.)*

MAMA. Not without grace you don't. *(They hold hands.)*

MAGGIE. God is good, god is great, let us thank him for our food, amen.

MAMA. Amen. Now, tell me all about your classes.

MAGGIE. I haven't been to all of them yet. Today I had Science but not just regular science it's called biology. And we're gonna learn about the body and cells and there were all sorts of insects and things floatin in jars...

MAMA. That's not for the dinner table. What other classes did you have?

MAGGIE. I had History and Art and English. I'm really gonna like English class, we get to write all different kinds of essays.

MAMA. You always have liked makin up stories.

MAGGIE. Then at lunch Debbie and Charlotte told me about cheerleading try-outs. Oh, Mama I'm so excited.

MAMA. Cheerleadin? What are you excited about cheerleadin for?

MAGGIE. I think it would fun! And, I think I might be good at it. I've been taking ballet for forever so learning the routines won't be any trouble. And the cheerleaders learn really cool jumps and pyramids and things.

MAMA. Why in world do you want to jump around cheerin for the boys teams?

MAGGIE. It's more than that, it helps with school spirit! Besides, there are competitions just for the cheerleaders. Oh, and the cheerleaders have a float in the Azalea parade and then there's the uniforms...they're really cute, they're blue and white and the skirts...

MAMA. You're not going to be a cheerleader, Maggie. I raised you better than that. Let the silly girls go out for that — you can write for the school paper.

MAGGIE. But I can do both, Mama.

MAMA. *(Mama is silent and eats her dinner as if she is alone at the table.)*

MAGGIE. Debbie and Charlotte are gonna try out and Lisa might too. You don't think any of them are silly girls...

MAMA. *(Silence.)*

MAGPIE

MAGGIE. Here, why don't you take a look at the flyer. *(She slides it over towards Mama-who ignores it.)* I could get to go to Washington DC, and the squad does all sorts of fundraising for good causes...it's so much more than just cheering at games. *(Maggie takes the flyer back and looks at it, then puts it in her pocket.)* I would make a great cheerleader.

MAMA. *(Silence.)*

MAGGIE. Mama, would you please pass the salt?

MAMA. *(Silence.)*

MAGGIE /MAMA. *(They eat in silence...Maggie mostly picking at her food. Mama finishes her dinner picks up her plate and takes Maggie's, even though she's not done eating, and goes to the kitchen.)*

MAGGIE. *(She tries to contain her tears. She takes out the flyer looks at it again and tears it up and shoves the pieces back into her pocket. Mama enters and starts to clear the table.)* Mama, I was thinking I really don't want to try out for cheerleading. I don't think it's for me.

MAMA. *(Warmly.)* I agree sweet pea. I think there are so many more things you are much better suited for...plenty of things to choose from. Now, give Mama a hug and I'll get us some desert.

MAGGIE. I don't want a hug.

MAMA. But you'll give your Mama one. *(Maggie hugs Mama and goes to pull away and Mama holds her a bit longer. Lights begin to fade in Mama's house. Maggie crosses back to the Therapist's office taking the scarf out of her hair and tying it back around her neck. She sits on the couch with her eyes closed.)*

THERAPIST. Open your eyes Maggie. Great job.

MAGGIE. *(Maggie opens her eyes and wipes her tears.)*

THERAPIST. Let's take moment and ground you back in the present. Tell me everything you see in the room that is blue.

MAGGIE. *(She looks around.)* The painting has blue in it, the pillow, there's blue in the rug, your coffee cup.

THERAPIST. Good. Do you feel a little more connected to yourself? A little more present?

MAGGIE. Yeah.

THERAPIST. That was really good work.

MAGPIE

MAGGIE. Really? It just makes me feel embarrassed and weird.

THERAPIST. I know. And I'm sorry it's so uncomfortable. What you described is important and tells me that you never learned to mirror yourself.

MAGGIE. I didn't learn what?

THERAPIST. How to mirror yourself.

MAGGIE. Why am I always the problem?

THERAPIST. YOU are not the problem.

MAGGIE. Feels that way.

THERAPIST. What I'm saying is, because your mother didn't react to you, it was hard for you to learn that you were separate from her...you didn't develop a sense of self.

MAGGIE. Sometimes when she's silent I can't feel myself...I start to feel like I'm fading away and I can't control it.

THERAPIST. Those feelings tell me it started when you were really young. It's an adaptive response we call being disembodied. There was a whole study done about it in the 70's called the Still Face Experiment.

MAGGIE. So it's a real thing? I'm not the only one who feels this way?

THERAPIST. It's totally a real thing. And you most definitely are not the only person who has experienced it or feels this way.

MAGGIE. Mama would never do anything to hurt me on purpose.

THERAPIST. I don't think your Mother ever intentionally withheld herself from you.

MAGGIE. So, the work I'm doing here is really important?

THERAPIST. Absolutely.

MAGGIE. I need to learn to mirror myself?

THERAPIST. Yes.

MAGGIE. And if I do...will I be able to stay connected to myself when people are silent?

THERAPIST. That's the goal.

MAGGIE. Even with Mama?

THERAPIST. Especially with your mother.

MAGGIE. I like this goal.

MAGPIE

THERAPIST. It's interesting your Mother calls you Magpie.

MAGGIE. She does it because she thinks I'm distracted by shiny objects.

THERAPIST. It's true Magpies do like shiny objects. But, did you know they are also the only bird that can recognize their own reflection in a mirror?

MAGGIE. Really?

THERAPIST. They sure can. You might say they are capable of self-mirroring.

MAGGIE. That's so cool. How do you even know that?

THERAPIST. I'm a birder.

MAGGIE. A birder? Is that really a thing?

THERAPIST. It is indeed. Now, anything else you want to talk about before we're finished?

MAGGIE. Yeah, do you want to go to Iowa with me?

THERAPIST. Nice try...But that's all yours.

MAGGIE. I'm afraid I'm not going to know what to do or say...I kinda feel like I'm walking into a dark cave all alone.

THERAPIST. I get that. And I think you're brave for doing it. Here... *(The Therapist leans over and turns on ** a small lamp.)* Think of this light as your flashlight. When you get nervous or anxious, remember this light. Let it remind you of all the work you've done. Of the safe space, you have here, where you are heard and understood. Let it remind you...that you're not in this alone.

MAGGIE. Thank you.

THERAPIST. Maggie, there is no "right thing" to say to your Dad. Just be honest and connect from your heart.

MAGGIE. Okay.

THERAPIST. And remember, every time you do what's best for you, your internal light will get stronger and brighter.

MAGGIE. You keep saying that, but it doesn't feel that way.

THERAPIST. I know. But it's true. So, I'm going to keep saying it and I'm going to ask you to trust me on this one.

MAGGIE. Trust you. *(Standing to go.)* Yeah, cause that comes so easily to me. I'll see you next time.

MAGPIE

THERAPIST. Easy isn't always best. (*He does a power pose feet apart hands on hips.*) You got this, Maggie.

MAGGIE. (*She strikes her own power pose.*) I got this. (*Maggie exits and the Therapist goes to work on session notes, which he continues through the next scene. Lights fade to black. **Lighting Note: The small table lamp will stay on. When stage lights fade or go to black the light on the Therapist's table should always remain on. It can dim but does not go out until the final scene.*)

SCENE 3

Des Moines, Iowa. One week later. It is another cold, gray, snowy day. In the background, there is a stone building surrounded by what looks like a field. Maggie enters wearing an oversized knitted sweater that zips in the front, jeans tucked into her snow boots, and a red bandana worn like a headband in her hair. She is carrying a paper bag that holds a miniature Christmas Tree and a bag of ornaments. She is talking to herself.

MAGGIE. So, what do you say to a father you don't remember?

Hi...Hello...Howdy, I'm your daughter, Maggie...nice to officially meet you...where have you been my whole life? No. How about...Hey, I'm Maggie...I thought things might be awkward between us so I brought this Christmas tree...you know...to give us something else to focus on. (*She stops walking.*) What am I doing? What-in-the-world am I doing? You're okay, Breathe...

WISE MIND-THERAPIST. It's important for you to build a relationship with your father.

MAGGIE. (*She looks around, then up.*) This looks like an Oak tree to me. Said he'd be by the oak tree. He must be here somewhere. (*Maggie walks to her left and brushes the ground with her foot, then back to center, and then to the right brushing the ground with her foot again. She kneels and continues to brush the snow away with her hands. It is a flat military grave marker. James Colton Morrison — IOWA — Lieutenant Commander US Navy. — Sept 1933 to Nov 1966.*) (*Beat.*)

Hi, Daddy...I'm Maggie...your daughter. I know we've met before...but I don't remember. I guess I was too young. (*She kneels very still with both her hands on the*

MAGPIE

lettering of the flat grave wishing, wanting, and trying to feel a connection...suddenly self-conscious, she pulls her hands away. Feeling awkward she looks for something to do. Remembering the tree, she begins to set it up.)

MAGGIE. I brought you this tree. Do you like Christmas trees? I love them. The little white lights...and the popcorn and cranberry strings. Mama and me always string them on Christmas Eve...Oh, Mama. *(She does her best to push Mama out of her mind.)* Maybe you're more of a tinsel kind of guy, huh? *(She stops talking and is deep in thought. Then begins to sing Silent Night softly to herself as she continues to decorate.)* Silent night, holy night. All is calm, all is bright.

Round yon Virgin Mother and Child. Holy Infant so tender and mild. Sleep in heavenly peace. Sleep in heavenly peace.

There. *(Maggie sits back and looks at the tree.)* That's not too bad...it actually looks pretty good...now it just needs the star.

(Beat.) Is this stupid? Why did I think this would make me feel better? Can you even hear me, Daddy?

WISE MIND-THERAPIST. There's no "right thing" to say just connect from your heart.

MAGGIE. *(Beat.)* I've always wanted to know you Daddy...I did get to see a ship like yours. When I was in kindergarten, we went on a field trip to the Naval Base and I got to go on an aircraft carrier...just like the one you were on... I don't remember much. Except how small I felt on the flight deck...it was huge. I also remember that they call stairs ladders in the Navy...course you know that. *(Maggie gets very reflective.)* I do remember walking up the ladder between decks...I can still see my feet in their lacy white socks and red Buster Brown shoes...I'll NEVER forget the echo of my feet on those metal steps...and how sad that sound made me feel... *(Maggie pulls her father's letter from her pocket and stares at the envelope.)* Thank you for the letter you wrote me. I just got it this week. *(She overwhelmed by her emotions.)*

WISE MIND-THERAPIST. Can you identify what you're feeling?

MAGGIE. I feel so lost. Did you ever feel that way, Daddy?

(She sits in silence.) Silence...I'm not usually very good with silence... *(Beat.)* But, sitting here with you, I sorta feel calm and like we're in the silence together. I wish I

MAGPIE

had a memory with you. (*Maggie sits in silence for a bit then begins to sing.*) We Three Kings from Orient are...bearing gifts we travel so far...

That's Mama's favorite Christmas Carol...she loves to sing it loud and off-key...but I guess you'd know that. You probably know a whole lot more about her than I do...I wish you could explain her to me, Daddy. I love her so much, but she's so confusing. I miss you, Daddy. I'm sorry it's taken me so long to visit...I didn't know where you were. Mama didn't want me to come see you so she wouldn't tell me where you were.

THERAPIST. (*Lights come to full in therapist office.*) Your mother wouldn't tell you where your father was buried?

MAGGIE. No. (*She kisses her hand and touches the grave.*) I love you, Daddy. (*Maggie crosses to the Therapist's office and sits on the arm of the couch.*)

THERAPIST. Why wouldn't she tell you?

MAGGIE. I have no idea. I've asked her so many times over the years and she always says she doesn't remember the name of the cemetery.

THERAPIST. Why didn't you tell me you didn't know where he was buried?

MAGGIE. I guess because when I started sessions with you, I had already found the cemetery. I was just too scared to go.

THERAPIST. How did you find it?

MAGGIE. The short version is I tried writing the Navy, but that was a no go because I didn't have his social security number. So, I tried randomly calling some cemeteries but couldn't find anything. Then a friend of mine who works at a library suggested I request microfiche from Virginia and Iowa papers. So, I did. And then I spent hours scrolling through the film...finally I found a clipping from a small Des Moines newspaper that mentioned his death and the cemetery where he was buried.

THERAPIST. I'm impressed with your determination. You had a want and a need, and you didn't stop until you fulfilled them.

MAGGIE. Mama calls that being headstrong.

THERAPIST. Nothing wrong with that. How did it feel to be at the cemetery?

MAGGIE. Weird at first. But after a while, it felt okay. I liked sitting with Daddy. This might sound strange, but whenever I connect with him, I kinda feel like I'm being colored in.

MAGPIE

THERAPIST. What a lovely image. Do you remember the first time you felt like that?

MAGGIE. Yeah, I do. I had bugged Mama for weeks to go up to the attic with me... *(The lights in the Therapist's office fade to half as Maggie removes her sweater, leaving it on the couch and crossing down stage left. She pulls her bandana out like a kerchief and becomes herself as a 10-year-old girl. The therapist watches the scene.)*

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