

DISAPPEARING ACT
(excerpt)*

By

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

LENA – a beautiful, blond woman, age 40

SARAH – Lena's younger sister, age 37

JANE – Sarah's daughter, age 16

REPORTER 1

REPORTER 2

LORRAINE – News Channel 5 Reporter

JEFF – the Channel 5 Camera Man

YOUNG MAN

Assorted Extras for the CROWD – Children and parents, non-speaking parts

TIME

The present, one summer afternoon in June.

SETTING

A small, mid-western town in America.

The play opens on a small carnival. There is a miniature merry-go-round, a face painting station, an arts and crafts station, and a station prominently advertising: “\$5 Head Shaving – Help Raise Money for Cancer Awareness!” All around, parents are enjoying being with their children, some of whom have shaved heads, but all are no older than five or six years old.

LENA stands on a wooden platform in center stage. She beams proudly, slightly swaying from side to side to show off the pink cotton dress hugging her slender frame. The Press love it, as REPORTERS wildly snap picture after picture of her.

SARAH, Lena's sister, is stage-left, sitting at a wooden picnic table with a beer in hand. Her hair is piled on top of her head in a messy bun, and her clothes are plain and loose-fitting. She wears little to no make-up, and refuses to look up from the table.

On the far side of stage-right, JANE, Sarah's daughter, is seated at another wooden picnic table. Her hair is red and stringy, and her face is pale and gaunt. She hides her thin frame beneath a loose, black hoodie and ripped jeans. For the moment, she appears lost to the world, as she reads her book with her ear-buds shoved into both ears.

LENA

(Smiles.)

I'm so glad you could all come! Your presence today means you're not only supporting Jane and her struggle, but the struggles of all children battling childhood leukemia. Thank you!

REPORTER 1

Miss Lena? How are you planning to help your niece in her fight with cancer?

LENA

Well, I'm glad you asked.

(She gestures toward the carnival around her.)

Half the money that we make today will go to help Jane and her mother pay for chemo and other medical expenses. The other half will go to the Foundation for Childhood Cancers. We've already raised over two thousand dollars so far!

The CROWD claps and cheers wildly.

REPORTER 2

Miss Lena! Can you tell us anything about the release date for your next film?

The CROWD laughs.

LENA

(She smiles and laughs.)

June 15th. Midnight screenings are on the 14th. But today's not about me—it's about Jane.

(She opens her arms wide.)

So, enjoy, everybody! Get your faces painted, have your heads shaved . . . and remember, it's all for a good cause!

(The CROWD begin to disperse, but she stops them.)

Oh, and I almost forgot! Our magician is running a bit late, but he told me he'll be here soon.

So, tell your kids not to worry!

(She leaves the platform and walks over to where SARAH is sitting, and LENA no longer smiles.)

Sarah? Where's Jane? I've got some people I want her to meet.

SARAH

(She looks up at LENA. Grimly.)

Over there.

(She gestures with her head in Jane's direction.)

She's doing her homework, so you'll have to get your photo op later.

LENA

(She narrows her eyes and looks scornfully at her sister and the beer she is drinking.)
Do you have to drink that around the kids?

SARAH

What? This?

(She holds up the beer.)

Don't worry—it's the only one I brought. Besides, indulging in our "family affliction" is the only thing that shuts up the screaming in my head.

(She takes a gulp from the can.)

As you well know.

LENA

(Snorts.)

I kicked that habit a long time ago. If I didn't I wouldn't be where I am today.

SARAH

(Laughs weakly.)

Today? You're right here today . . . right back where you started. Same town, different role.
What is it this time? The conquering hero? It's too late for the return of the prodigal son—

(Pauses, as she considers.)

—or daughter.

LENA

Oh, spare me. Dad gave up on me a long time ago . . . and the feeling was mutual. You should have left when you had the chance.

SARAH

And stick him in some home?

LENA

Why not? He dug his own grave—literally.

SARAH

Sorry. I couldn't be so heartless . . . especially when he never remembered anyone or anything—

LENA

(Skeptically.)

—or so he wanted you to believe.

SARAH

I do believe one thing: running away doesn't solve anything. It's just too easy.

LENA

Running away? As far as I'm concerned, I left home to save my own life.

SARAH

—or, rather, you saved yourself from a life of mediocrity. Either way, Sister, I'll drink to that.

SARAH starts to drink again, but LENA stops her hand. SARAH sighs and puts the beer under her chair.

SARAH (cont.)

(Grumbles.)

It isn't me everyone is here to see, anyway. I don't know why you're doing this.

LENA

You have a problem—

SARAH

That's not what I'm talking about. I mean, I don't know why you're doing all THIS.

(She gestures to the carnival all around her.)

You have the money . . . Lord knows, you have the money . . . to pay for ALL of Jane's treatments. All her pills, all the co-pays, gas money—all of it.

LENA

(Defensively.)

I just thought this would be a good way to raise awareness—

SARAH

About what? A disease that affects thousands of people every year, all over the world?

(She looks at Lena with a mixture of doubt and amusement.)

I think people are pretty aware, don't you?

(She leans in closer.)

Oh, I know you think you mean well. People do. People see suffering and they get scared. And, sometimes, this is all they can think of to push back against something beyond their control. But I know you, Lena. I love ya', Sis, but I know you. And I can't think of anything you have ever done that wasn't in your own best interests. So, why are you really here?

LENA

(Nervously.)

What a silly question. I'm here for Jane.

SARAH

(Tilts her head. Skeptically.)

Are you now?

LENA

(Indignantly.)

LENA (cont.)

Yes, I am! And I know it's hard for you to understand, but I've done a lot of work like this, and I've helped a LOT of kids just like your daughter! And now—if it's okay with you—I'm going to go talk to her.

SARAH

(She shrugs and retrieves her beer from under her chair.)

Do so at your own risk. But—some advice? Leave your own baggage behind.

LENA snorts and walks to the opposite side of the stage, where JANE sits reading.

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*A full, unedited copy of this script is available for purchase! Please click on **Store**.