

DOROTHY AND ALICE

by Itamar Moses

Characters

DOROTHY, a young girl, with brown hair.

ALICE, another young girl, with blonde hair.

Scene

An elementary school playground, lunchtime. Two seemingly ordinary young girls meet and eat lunch together.

(ALICE sits on a bench with a brown-bag lunch. She takes items out of her bag and sets them on the bench next to her: a slice of cake, a small flask filled with colorful liquid. Sounds of children laughing and playing are distantly audible. A second girl, DOROTHY, approaches. She, too, has a brown-bag lunch.)

(DOROTHY stares at ALICE for a few moments. A wind rustles them both, and ALICE looks up, suddenly.)

ALICE. Oh! Hello.

DOROTHY. Hi. *(Pause.)* Do you...?

ALICE. What?

DOROTHY. Do you mind if I eat with you?

ALICE. Oh! Not at all! Sit, sit. Sit.

DOROTHY. *(She does so, relieved.)* Thank you. I hate not having anyone to eat with. It makes me feel very—

ALICE. I know.

DOROTHY. Sometimes, I like to eat by myself, anyway. But I'd just someone to ask. So I have the choice.

ALICE. I know.

DOROTHY. But nobody does.

ALICE. *(Beat.)* Do you want to eat alone?

DOROTHY. What? Oh, no. Today I asked because I really want someone to eat with.

ALICE. I'm Alice.

DOROTHY. I know.

ALICE. You're Dorothy, right?

DOROTHY. *(Pleased.)* Yes!

ALICE. I pay attention during roll call. I pay attention to everything. My big sister thinks I'm absent-minded but I'm very observant is the truth.

DOROTHY. Most people don't know my name, because—

ALICE. You just moved here.

DOROTHY. That's right! You're very—

ALICE. I'm very observant. Also, the first day you were in class you gave a speech: "My name is Dorothy. And I just moved here."

DOROTHY. From Kansas.

ALICE. I know. *(Pause.)* I'd love to visit Kansas.

DOROTHY. What for? It's a very boring place.

ALICE. No, I don't think so. I think it's exciting.

DOROTHY. But you've never been there.

ALICE. Exactly!

DOROTHY. What?

ALICE. Even the *word* is exciting. Kansas! Kaaaan-sas! It sounds so strange and wonderful, doesn't it?

DOROTHY. *(Pause.)* No.

ALICE. It does!

DOROTHY. No. I lived there. There's nothing.

ALICE. Why did you move away?

DOROTHY. There were...problems with the weather.

ALICE. Well, it was silly to move here.

DOROTHY. What do you mean? This place is much more exciting than Kansas.

ALICE. Maybe. But now that you're here, it will just be the place that you are, which is never as exciting as places you haven't been, but might go to.

DOROTHY. I know what you mean.

ALICE. No, I don't think you do.

DOROTHY. No, I think I know what you mean better even than you do.

ALICE. I really don't think that's possible.

DOROTHY. Well, I guess we'll just see.

ALICE. Yes, I guess we will.

(Pause.)

DOROTHY. That's a pretty weird lunch you've got.

ALICE. What do you mean?

DOROTHY. Well, it's just cake, and a drink. That's not very healthy. Don't your parents want to make sure you eat right?

ALICE. Oh, I didn't get these from my parents.

DOROTHY. Really? Then who made you these thoughtful notes?

(DOROTHY turns the food so that we can see there are notes on ALICE's lunch. The cake says "EAT ME" and the potion says "DRINK ME.")

ALICE. I don't know. *(Pause. She considers the cake.)* Do you ever feel like you're growing up too fast?

DOROTHY. Of course. All the time.

ALICE. Me too. I'm afraid of getting so big that I can't even fit in *(side of)*—

DOROTHY. Tell me about it. Fitting in is so hard, what with moving, and everything. I feel so awkward all the time, like I'm saying or doing something wrong.

ALICE. What? Oh, no, I meant... Literally. Changing...physically...

DOROTHY. *(Crosses her arms.)* Oh. Yeah. That makes me feel awkward too.

ALICE. *(Impressed:)* You know what I'm talking about?

DOROTHY. Of course. It happens to all of us, doesn't it?

ALICE. Are you sure?

DOROTHY. Oh, yes!

ALICE. I don't *think* so. Falling, all alone, down a dark hole...?

DOROTHY. It can feel like that. But it happens to everybody. Even animals. That's how I learned about it. Watching animals on my farm.

ALICE. You had a farm?

DOROTHY. Yes.

ALICE. I'd love to visit a farm!

DOROTHY. Why? Farms aren't very exciting.

ALICE. Of course they are! Listen: Faaarm. Faaaarm. What a wonderful word! It even has the word "Far" *in it*. That's what makes it sound so far away and exciting.

DOROTHY. It doesn't matter what other words are in it. You can be right on top of a farm, and it would still have the word "far" in it.

ALICE. No, I think then it would be a Narm.

DOROTHY. You're very silly about words.

ALICE. I'm sorry.

DOROTHY. No, I like it.

ALICE. Really? You should hear me rhyme!

DOROTHY. I'd love to! *(Pause.)* Those are things they don't let you do so much when you grow up.

ALICE. I know.

DOROTHY. The years just start to slip away, swallowed up by—

ALICE. Giant monsters.

DOROTHY. *(Beat.)* I was going to say: "Responsibility."

ALICE. Oh.

DOROTHY. My Aunt and Uncle are always talking about "responsibility." *(Beat.)* What were you thinking of?

ALICE. The Jabberwock.

DOROTHY. What's that?

ALICE. Responsibility also. More or less.

DOROTHY. Sometimes, I just wish there was a magic potion I could use that would make me small forever.

(ALICE offers DOROTHY her drink. DOROTHY doesn't pick up that this is a direct response to her wish, and declines:)

DOROTHY. Oh, no, thank you. I have my own drink.

(DOROTHY takes a large bucket of water out of her bag.)

ALICE. What is that?

DOROTHY. Just water.

ALICE. Why so much of it?

DOROTHY. I always like to have a lot of it with me. You never know when you might need it, for self-defense.

ALICE. I know what you mean.

DOROTHY. You do?

ALICE. One time, Billy Thomason wouldn't leave me alone. He was chasing me all day. And then the teacher sprayed him with water and said, "Cool off." And he did.

DOROTHY. Why was he chasing you?

ALICE. I don't know.

DOROTHY. It was probably because you're changing physically.

ALICE. I hate boys. They're completely mad.

DOROTHY. No!

ALICE. They're heartless, brainless, cowardly, dogs.

DOROTHY. No! (Beat.) Well, yes. But not usually all four at once. And, even so, they're very dependable companions.

(Pause.)

ALICE. What kinds of problems with the weather?

DOROTHY. What?

ALICE. You said you left Kansas because of problems with the weather.

DOROTHY. Oh. Do you ever feel like you've been swept up in a great wind, and spun around, and flown through the air, and then dropped down somewhere completely unfamiliar and strange and frightening and even dangerous?

ALICE. That must be what it feels like to move.

DOROTHY. That's also what it feels like to move.

ALICE. Oh. I see.

DOROTHY. You do understand.

ALICE. Yes. Oh yes.

DOROTHY. Tell me.

(Something shifts. A string is plucked, somewhere. They each look out, as though in a trance, and speak slowly.)

ALICE. You were told to stay put, but you saw him, and chased him—

DOROTHY. Your small furry friend, kidnapped, pleading, his bark—

ALICE. Furry, yes, but huge, white, and his lateness disgraced him—

DOROTHY. You caught him—

ALICE. —no, lost him—

DOROTHY. —and then came the dark.

ALICE. And you found yourself falling and falling—

DOROTHY. No, rising, first.

ALICE. Clocks on the walls—

DOROTHY. —ripped away, as you passed.

ALICE. And then, wondering whether you'd weathered the worst—

DOROTHY. You descended—

ALICE. —so slowly—

DOROTHY. No, terribly fast.

ALICE. And you're there.

DOROTHY. But where?

ALICE. Wonderland?

DOROTHY. Oz?

ALICE. Brigadoon?

DOROTHY. Shangri-La?

ALICE. Lilliput?

DOROTHY. Narnia?

ALICE. Atlantis?

DOROTHY. And you'd wished for so long—

ALICE. —every bright afternoon—

DOROTHY. —every night, for adventures like this.

(Pause. They look at each other.)

ALICE. But now that you're there, free to play—

DOROTHY. —free to roam.

ALICE. You have a new wish.

DOROTHY. Yes, that's true.

ALICE. Your wish is for home.

DOROTHY. To find home.

ALICE. To go home.