

# ***Safer Place***

*by*

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Cast of Characters

<u>ELAINE</u> :	30s
<u>BRUCE</u> :	50s
<u>JESSE</u> :	Teen

Place  
Apartment complex

Time  
Evening

2.

Setting: The play takes place inside a hallway/apartment.

At Rise: The play opens up with both Jesse sitting atop a staircase when Elaine enters the building.

JESSE is writing in his notebook on top of a staircase.

ELAINE enters the first floor and JESSE comes sprinting down the stairs, in a jubilant mood.

JESSE: Hi Elaine!

ELAINE: Jesse, hi, how are you?

JESSE: I finished reading Chekhov.

ELAINE: Already?

JESSE: All five plays in the collection.

ELAINE: Really?

JESSE: I really loved The Seagull.

ELAINE: Yes, The Seagull is wonderful.

JESSE: There are some really great monologues in it.

ELAINE: Oh yeah?

JESSE: I like how the tragedy of the characters have humor in them.

ELAINE: Yes, so do I.

JESSE: I read it twice, actually.

ELAINE: You're a fast reader. Did you understand everything?

JESSE: I read it twice to be sure.

ELAINE: Be sure of what?

JESSE: That I comprehended everything. I think I did.

ELAINE: Well, I am impressed with you. Your speed and your understanding, which we will have to discuss.

JESSE: Can we discuss it now?

ELAINE: I'd like to Jesse, but I am exhausted from work. Coming off a double shift and my shoulders are sore from lifting patients. This weekend I will be home and we could go to the park, grab pizza and chat about Chekhov if you want.

JESSE: That's sounds awesome.

An apartment door where JESSE reside swings open and there stands BRUCE. White tank top, beer in his hand, unshaven, balding and almost drunk.

BRUCE: What's going on?

ELAINE: Hi Bruce.

BRUCE: Giving history lessons now?

ELAINE: Jesse and I were discussing Chekhov.

BRUCE: Who?

JESSE: He's a writer.

BRUCE: Shut up and get your ass inside. There's mac and cheese for dinner.

JESSE waves and runs into the apartment.

BRUCE goes to close the apartment door.

ELAINE: Bruce. Um...I was hoping we could talk.

BRUCE: What.

ELAINE: In private.

Unpleased, BRUCE shakes his head and steps into the hallway, closing door behind him.

BRUCE: This better be good.

ELAINE punches BRUCE square in his face.  
Blood trickles out from his nostrils.

ELAINE: I see one more bruise on that kid, I'm calling Children's Protective Services.

BRUCE (coughing): Fucking broke my nose.

ELAINE: That's not all I'll break.

BRUCE: Fuck is wrong with you?!

BRUCE coughs out blood.

ELAINE: Taste of your own medicine.

BRUCE: Why the fuck did you hit me for?!

ELAINE: I hear it, through the walls. I hear you snoring at night. Believe me, I hear what you do to that boy. The shouting, the slaps, those sounds of furniture being thrown...I can go on. He's a good kid, super intelligent...you're gonna let him rot away like some rat in a sewer.

BRUCE: He's out of control.

ELAINE: There is no way you will ever convince me to side with you. I know the truth.

BRUCE: Take him.

ELAINE: Excuse me?

BRUCE: Take the kid.

ELAINE: You're a disgrace.

BRUCE: He's not my real son. His mother left him on my doorstep years ago. Claims I'm the father but I had nothing to do with that whore. If it weren't for me Jesse would have starved to death long time ago.

ELAINE: If you're not the father than who is?

BRUCE: I don't give a shit. Was looking to give him up to some adoption place anyway---

ELAINE punches BRUCE in the face again.

BRUCE moans in pain and falls back against the wall and slides down to the floor.

ELAINE: I'll take him.

BRUCE: What? When?

ELAINE: Right now.

BRUCE: How much?

ELAINE: What?

BRUCE: I'm not just gonna give him up for free.

ELAINE: I'm not paying for a child.

BRUCE: Then he stays with me.

JESSE opens up the door.

JESSE: Dad, the mac and cheese overflowed.

BRUCE: Damn it! Fucking retard can't even do that!

BRUCE gets up and barges into the apartment.

JESSE: Is he okay?

ELAINE: He'll be fine, Jesse.

JESSE: I have to give you back your book.

BRUCE shouts from inside the apartment.

BRUCE: Get your ass back in here!

ELAINE: Jesse, would you like to live with me?

JESSE: ...How?

ELAINE: I'm going to be moving into a nicer place soon and there is a room for you.

JESSE: I can't leave Bruce.

BRUCE shouts from within the apartment.

BRUCE: Get your ass in here now!!

JESSE: I have to go.

JESSE shuts the door.

ELAINE leans against the wall.

ELAINE (to herself): Shit...

ELAINE walks to her apartment and puts the key in the door.

BRUCE'S apartment door opens up.

JESSE comes running out with a book.

JESSE: Here. Thank you.

ELAINE: Your...you're welcome.

JESSE: Do you have something else I could read?

ELAINE: Of course.

BRUCE stands heaving at his apartment doorframe.

BRUCE: Fucking kid don't listen.

ELAINE: Jesse, go back inside and I'll find you another great book for you to read.

JESSE: Alright. Thank you, Elaine.

JESSE runs back down the hallway. BRUCE smacks JESSE on the backside of his head and slams the door.

From inside BRUCE'S apartment we hear the following:

JESSE: Ow! Stop! That hurt!

BRUCE: Eat your damn food. Cost me a fortune!

JESSE: Let go of my arm! I can't eat if you pull my arm!

BRUCE: EAT it! DAMN IT!

ELAINE enters her apartment and examines her bookshelf. She picks out a book and exits her place, back down the hallway and knocks on BRUCE'S apartment door.

The door swings violently open.

BRUCE: What do you want now you stupid bitch?!

ELAINE: JESSE! JESS!

BRUCE: Don't make me call the police. You assaulted me, didn't you?

ELAINE: Bruce, I already told you once, if you touch that child one more time that I would call Children's Protective Services, which is what I'm going to do. I warned you! The second you shut your door I heard him scream in pain. I will not allow you to do that anymore! You hear me?! I want him to come with me where he'll be safe and looked after. (she calls for boy) Jess! JESSE! Let him out, Bruce. You're an abusive, toxic man,; you put another finger on him and I'll plant a punch on you, much worse than before. The boy will stay with me and he'll know the truth about you, who you are...I will do everything in my power to work out a better way for him to stay with me permanently, I'll be his guardian. The guardian Jesse needs. I won't have this go on a day longer. Let him out now or I will call the police and have you arrested.



BRUCE: Police don't scare me...you take him, but know this isn't over.

ELAINE: I'll take my chances.

BRUCE: You do what you need to do and so will I. (to JESSE) Jess! You're gonna stay with Elaine tonight. You wanna go with her?

JESSE: If it's okay.

BRUCE: Get your ass in gear then.

ELAINE: Get your things together, Jesse. Put your clothes and important things in a suitcase.

JESSE: For one night?

ELAINE: I'll explain everything to you honey, come on.

JESSE: Okay.

BRUCE: Send him out when he's done packing.

BRUCE slams door.

ELAINE waits.

**END OF PLAY**