

THREE

By Jonathan Dorf

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Cast of Characters

LEVI MARKS, late 30s to early 40s.

ANTOINETTE MARKS, mid to late 30s, his wife.

FLORA MARKS, female, 16 in a few hours. Their daughter.

PETER MARKS, male, Flora's barely younger twin.

FIRST AGENT, any gender, a government storm trooper.

SECOND AGENT, any gender and much like the First Agent.

The Agents are also the voices from earlier in the play.

Setting

A house near Philadelphia, about 50 years from now.

Near Philadelphia. About 50 years from now. A kitchen. LEVI MARKS, late 30s to early 40s, dressed as if he's just come from work, is in the middle of a conversation with his wife, ANTOINETTE, mid to late 30s. She's thin. Reusable bags of groceries are on the kitchen table.

LEVI

We buy too much food. That mousy cashier at the co-op was asking questions.

ANTOINETTE

You should shop somewhere larger. Where they won't remember you.

LEVI

I could go to a different precinct.

ANTOINETTE

Then they'd ask why.

LEVI

Closer to my job.

ANTOINETTE

And then they'll ask where your job is or what you do and the questions won't end.

(Beat.)

I should go some of the time.

LEVI

And they'd say, I haven't seen you before.

ANTOINETTE

(As if responding to the cashier:)

Sometimes I come, sometimes my husband comes.

LEVI

(As the cashier:)

Your husband must eat a lot, because you sure don't.

ANTOINETTE

Well, we have a child as well.

LEVI

Still, quite a lot--even for three.

ANTOINETTE

We want our daughter to be strong.

LEVI

All this meat and milk, your daughter will be strong enough for two.

Silence. They are no longer playing out the scene.

LEVI

We need to cut back.

ANTOINETTE

How can we--

LEVI

We need to.

(Beat.)

That cashier has the look of someone who supplements his income with an anonymous call from time to time.

ANTOINETTE

I need to eat less anyway.

LEVI

If you eat any less you'd disappear.

(Beat.)

I've been feeling sluggish after lunch. A few grams less might be just the thing.

ANTOINETTE

I'll adjust the meter starting tomorrow.

(Beat.)

Somebody's been waiting for you to get home.

(Calling out:)

Flora!

Levi finally takes off his coat as FLORA, nearly 16 years old, enters in a hurry. She starts to embrace Levi, but he holds her at arm's length.

FLORA

I got a--

He cuts her off with a hand.

LEVI

What is your name?

FLORA

Flora Marks.

LEVI

Who do you live with?

FLORA
I live with my mother and father.

LEVI
And who else?

FLORA
No one.

LEVI
Where do you live?

FLORA
4645 Martin Luther King Boulevard. Dad, I got an A on my essay.

LEVI
The full address. Always the full address.

FLORA
7147 Martin Luther King Boulevard, Philadelphia Exurban Region, Pennsylvania, 19010-53242.

LEVI
An A.

FLORA
Yes.

LEVI
Again. When are you going to do something different already?

Beat before she realizes it's a joke. He hugs and kisses her.

LEVI
That's wonderful. Keep it up and you're going to be top rank for university.

FLORA
That's what Mrs. Rosedale said.

ANTOINETTE
Mrs. Rosedale is a good teacher. She knows what she's talking about.

LEVI
Let's have a reading. Let's hear this A work.

Beat.

FLORA
"If I Had a Brother." By Flora Marks. If I had a brother, he wouldn't just be my brother.

FLORA (CONT'D)

He would be my twin, but not identical. He couldn't be a he if he was my identical twin.

(Beat.)

His hair would be the same color as mine, his skin would be pale like mine, and his smile would smile just enough like my smile that you knew he belonged to me.

(Beat.)

He would be two inches taller than me, so if we had a race he could get there first and make sure it was safe. He would be smart, but not as smart as me, so I'd have one thing I'd be better at and he'd still need me. But the only part that really matters is he's my brother, my twin brother, and that's for always.

LEVI

That's a beautiful essay. I can see why you got an A. Go play in your room for a minute.

FLORA

Play? What am I, five?

ANTOINETTE

Honey...

FLORA

Can I use the video even though it's not eight?

LEVI

Homework done?

FLORA

Hours ago.

LEVI

You can use the video.

FLORA

Can I talk to--

LEVI

You know the rules.

FLORA

But I got an A.

LEVI

The world doesn't change because of an A.

FLORA

Maybe it should.

ANTOINETTE

We'll be there in a minute.

Flora exits.

ANTOINETTE

It's an essay.

LEVI

Are you in Mrs. Rosedale's head? Do you know what she thinks?

ANTOINETTE

Don't be ridiculous.

LEVI

You said it yourself. She's a good teacher. She'll know what it means.

ANTOINETTE

If I had a brother. *If*. She knows the meaning of the word.

LEVI

What if she's in trouble? What if she knows that they're onto her and the only way to get them off the trail is to put them onto ours?

ANTOINETTE

It's been almost 16 years.

LEVI

Sixteen years tomorrow.

ANTOINETTE

If it was going to happen, it would have--

LEVI

Do you remember the story of Anne Frank? Do you remember what happened to the little Jewish girl who hid in the attic all those years ago?

Enter Flora.

FLORA

You said a minute.

LEVI

We bought you five new holograms last week.

FLORA

Pete--

LEVI

Flora!

FLORA

He has them. He's finished his work and you took away his connection and all he's got are the things that run on the internal. It's not fair.

(Beat.)

And his name is Peter!

ANTOINETTE

Flora!

LEVI

Lower your voice, young lady!

FLORA

(To Levi:)

I wish they'd take you instead!

The lights shift as Antoinette and Levi exit.

VOICE 1

Wendy Jackson and all those residing at 7095 Martin Luther King Boulevard, you are charged with violations of the Homeland Preservation and Protection Act.

VOICE 2

Surrender all those in violation immediately.

ANTOINETTE

Is that what you really want? For them to take your father?

The lights shift back. Antoinette is with Flora in the kitchen.

FLORA

No.

ANTOINETTE

That hurt him very much.

FLORA

Why does it have to be three?

ANTOINETTE

Didn't they teach you that in school?

FLORA

And how come Philadelphia is the City of Brotherly Love if you can't have a brother?

ANTOINETTE

Irony.

FLORA

What's that?

ANTOINETTE

A kind of funny that makes you laugh and not laugh all at once.

Flora doesn't get it. Beat.

FLORA

Mrs. Rosedale looks at me funny sometimes.

ANTOINETTE

Funny how?

FLORA

I don't know. Just funny.

ANTOINETTE

Well, if she didn't teach you the rule of three, then she's not as good a teacher as I thought.

FLORA

She did. They all do. And it's a stupid rule.

ANTOINETTE

Don't ever let anyone at school hear you say that. Show me you know it.

FLORA

Now you sound like Dad.

ANTOINETTE

Show me.

FLORA

(Reciting:)

The Homeland Preservation and Protection Act, commonly known as the Rule of Three for its most important element, safeguards the food and water supplies and natural resources of the United States of America by limiting households to two parents and one child until such time as the Department of Homeland Security shall determine that an increase in the population is sustainable.

(Beat.)

I can say it's stupid here, right?

ANTOINETTE

It'll be our little secret.

FLORA

Even from Dad?

ANTOINETTE

Shhh!!

(Beat.)

But you might want to tell him you're sorry.

Flora nods, and the lights dim on them as Levi enters Flora's room. Flora isn't there, but instead he pushes a button. The wall moves to reveal a hologram playing. It's a baseball game, maybe 1980s vintage. PETER, a few hours shy of 16 and a few minutes younger than Flora, is "at bat" in the middle of a hologram. The pitcher winds up. It's a hit!

LEVI

You're hitting like an MVP.

PETER

I'm batting over .500.

LEVI

Is your schoolwork done, Hall of Famer?

PETER

Hours ago.

LEVI

Show.

Peter's schoolwork projects in place of the hologram. Mathematical equations would be nice.

PETER

I was thinking that you always say homework to Flora and schoolwork to me. But she goes to school and I stay at home, so shouldn't that be the other way 'round?

LEVI

This looks good.

PETER

It's easy.

LEVI

(Pointing at one equation:)

Except for this one over here. Careless.

(Beat.)

I have something for you.

PETER
Don't I have to wait until tomorrow?

LEVI
Do you want to wait?

PETER
No.

LEVI
You're right. Maybe we should wait until tomorrow.

PETER
I said-- Come on...

LEVI
I don't know. If your mother found out.

PETER
She won't.

LEVI
We shouldn't keep secrets.

PETER
I'm a secret.

LEVI
You're the best secret.

(Beat.)
OK. But if she finds out, you snuck out and found it and I'm very upset with you. And recheck your work.

Beat. Levi opens the box. It's a baseball uniform, about Peter's size but not quite.

PETER
Wow.

LEVI
This was mine and my dad's and--

PETER
That's like ancient.

LEVI
I can take it back if you--

PETER
Can I put it on?

LEVI
Now?

PETER
How about when I go to sleep? Nobody will know.

LEVI
(Beat.)
Maybe just tonight.

PETER
Why just tonight?

LEVI
It's a uniform. Not pajamas.

PETER
Then when will I wear it?

LEVI
When you go outside.

PETER
But if I never--

LEVI
You will. One day.

PETER
Promise?

LEVI
Promise.

(Beat.)
The tree in the yard has leaves. Two leaves.

PETER
I don't believe you.

LEVI
See for yourself.

Peter rushes out of his space and toward the window, but Levi stops him, as if to remind him of how things work. Levi takes a long look out of the window, as if scanning the area, then moves:

LEVI
Quickly.

Peter looks out the window.

PETER
Pretty sure there's three now.

LEVI

There were two yesterday.

PETER

Definitely three. They shine in the light.

(Jumping back:)

I think somebody was at Mrs. McDonald's window.

Levi checks.

PETER

Sorry--I just couldn't stop looking.

LEVI

There's no one there. It's all right.

Peter seems shaken.

LEVI

Hey. I told you--we're OK.

The lights shift.

VOICE 1

Reno Family of 7125 Martin Luther King Boulevard, Apt 42, you are charged with violations of the Homeland Preservation and Protection Act.

VOICE 2

You have the wrong people. We're not in violation of anything.

VOICE 1

Surrender all those in violation immediately.

The lights shift back. Levi and Antoinette are in the kitchen.

ANTOINETTE

If you didn't see anyone, maybe he just imagined it.

LEVI

We both know McDonald's been peeping every chance she gets.

(Beat.)

We have to get her first.

ANTOINETTE

She doesn't have an extra child. She doesn't even have one.

LEVI

Everybody's got something. We just have to find out what it is.

(Beat.)

Water abuse.

ANTOINETTE

Is that true?

LEVI

There are people who can make sure it is.

ANTOINETTE

Is that who we are now? The people our neighbors hide from?

(Beat.)

Why didn't you let me take him to Beth's?

LEVI

He's my son.

ANTOINETTE

He's my son too. He would have been safe with her.

LEVI

Until they started asking how she suddenly got a child.

ANTOINETTE

(Beat.)

What do we do?

LEVI

We go on. It's happened before. What did McDonald see? A shadow in a window?

ANTOINETTE

People got found out over less than shadows before.

LEVI

If you're talkin' about Bob Reno, he thought he was being all clever by getting one set of groceries, stowing them in a locker and hopping the skytrain to his job and buying a whole second set. He had to know they'd track his cards.

ANTOINETTE

Maybe he did.

LEVI

He had five. Guess he had to try. They'd'a starved otherwise.

ANTOINETTE

Maybe he wanted to get caught.

LEVI

Those were his children.

ANTOINETTE

Maybe the waiting for it to happen was worse.

LEVI

(Beat.)

We keep our heads down, no time at all he's 18 and then there's people who can take care of this.

ANTOINETTE

That's two years.

LEVI

Sixteen down already. We're 88.8888 [feel free to let him extend this as much or as little as he wants] percent of the way there.

ANTOINETTE

Thanks, Mr. Math.

LEVI

Call me Mr. Baseball.

ANTOINETTE

He's going to love that.

LEVI

He, uh...did.

ANTOINETTE

You couldn't wait a few more hours?!

(Beat.)

I knew you couldn't, so two can play at the early presents game...

The lights shift.

VOICE 1

Arthur McDonald of 7148 Martin Luther King Boulevard, you are charged with violations of the Homeland Preservation and Protection Act.

VOICE 2

That's not true.

VOICE 1

Surrender those in violation immediately to avoid termination of all residents.

VOICE 2

You've got it wrong!

The sound of high-tech GUNFIRE, then silence, and the lights come up on Peter and Flora.

PETER

The blinds are closed, right?

FLORA
Why does everybody treat me like I'm a baby?

PETER
I don't.

FLORA
I'm older.

PETER
I just gotta be sure.

FLORA
I know.

FLORA AND PETER
I got a present.

(Beat.)
Mine's better.

PETER
Mine is definitely better.

FLORA
Says the baby.

PETER
Twenty-three minutes.

(Beat.)
You ever think what woulda happened if I came first?

FLORA
I think he'd'a just let them take me.

PETER
Dad would never do that.

FLORA
He loves you more.

PETER
Then why am I in here? Who woulda' known if they said I came first?

FLORA
Maybe they thought you could make it.

Lights rise simultaneously on
Levi and Antoinette.

LEVI
How much you want to bet he's out?

ANTOINETTE

It's their birthday.

FLORA

(Pulling out a small
package:)

You want some chocolate?

PETER

Where'd you get chocolate?

FLORA

Where do ya think? Eighty-five percent cacao. From the
locked, super-special specialty case.

PETER

Mom definitely loves you more.

FLORA

(Breaking off a little piece
for Peter:)

I think she got a little extra 'cause she knew I'd give you
some.

ANTOINETTE

They know to stay away from the windows.

LEVI

And keep the lights out?

PETER

(Savoring the chocolate:)

This is so good.

(Beat.)

One day I want a crazy big cake. And a party.

LEVI

Do you remember when "the talk" was don't get pregnant?

FLORA

I just want to have my friends over.

PETER

Yeah. You should.

ANTOINETTE

My mother told me Grandma did that with her.

FLORA

You just want Maura to come over.

ANTOINETTE

She said they both wanted to die of embarrassment.

PETER
Maura and her mountains.

FLORA
You're so gross.

PETER
She's got them.

LEVI
I'd give anything for that.

PETER
I like bein' gross. Helps me forget I live in the wall.
(Beat.)
Do you think Maura would like me?

FLORA
Not if you talk about mountains.

ANTOINETTE
What if we moved out west?

PETER
Like, for real.

FLORA
She's not that nice.

LEVI
Too big a chance he'd get seen. Or they'd find the
compartment.

PETER
Who's nicer?

FLORA
Delta is nice.

ANTOINETTE
You're probably right. Just hear things are looser out there.

PETER
I'll ask Delta then.

LEVI
People still get caught.

PETER
I should go back in.

ANTOINETTE
But maybe they don't look for it as much.

It's our birthday. FLORA

We'll think on it. LEVI

Our almost birthday. PETER

They can't be mad on our almost birthday. FLORA

 There's a loud knocking.

Want to read the entire script? Hit the back button
and follow the instructions for requesting a perusal!