

WHEN WE GET HER HOME

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Lynd returns to her hotel room in Changsha, China to discover that the toddler she is adopting has disappeared.

CHARACTERS:

LYND and JAKE are husband and wife

Note to actors:

Slash marks (/) indicate the point at which the next speaker begins.

SET:

A hotel room in Changsha, China. The play can be performed with one chair. Some toddler clothes and toys are scattered about. A suitcase may be in evidence.

JAKE sits bolt upright. Toddler toys and clothes are scattered. After a moment, LYND lets herself in with a key, full of enthusiasm and energy, carrying a couple of small parcels.

LYND

How did you do? I brought some more of those spring roll things. (HE doesn't speak or move. SHE whispers.) Is she asleep? ...

JAKE

/ Um

LYND

What's wrong? Where is she?.....Jake? Where is she?

JAKE

Um. Don't...don't be upset.

LYND

What do you....? Where is Mei-lin? You're / scaring me.

JAKE

She'll be fine.

LYND

Where is she?

JAKE

Um. They're looking for her.

LYND

Who's looking for her?

JAKE

I told the, the concierge, and he made some calls.

LYND

What are you talking about? Where is / she?

JAKE

After you left, I took her in her stroller to the lobby and a woman came up to us. You know how they stare and everything. And this woman was gesturing that she wanted to pick the baby / up

LYND

But you didn't let her, / right?

JAKE

I didn't let her. But she was scolding me. You know "Why you Americans taking our little girls away?" But in sign language, like /they do

LYND

Who's watching her? Where's her stroller? / Where is she?

JAKE

She had dropped her rabbit toy out of her - the rabbit,
- the little pink rabbit thing / that we brought from home

LYND

Stop talking about the rabbit thing. Where / is she?

JAKE

She had dropped it out of her stroller. It was a little ways away. And I just walked over to pick it up. And in that second, that couple of seconds, it took me to walk over and bend down to pick up the the rabbit toy, this woman had seized the /stroller

LYND

/ Oh no.

JAKE

and raced out the door.

LYND

/ No.

JAKE

The doorman even held the door open for her. He didn't see anything strange about a Chinese woman going / out with a

LYND

But you went after her. You ran after / her, right?

JAKE

I...I ran after her. I was holding the little rabbit thing /and

LYND

You got someone to help you. You got the / doorman to

JAKE

I tried, Lyndi. I tried. Some people tried to help me, but no one - you know the language barrier and everything...No one could follow her fast enough. And there are so many people out there and she...And she just...she vanished, with the baby / into the crowd.

LYND

Did you call the police? The orphanage? The embassy? Who / did you

JAKE

The concierge did. He called the the / authorities.

LYND

What did the police say?

JAKE

I don't know. I couldn't understand them anyway / and they

LYND

Well, what / did they

JAKE

They didn't know English, but the concierge said...The concierge / was

LYND

/ No.

JAKE

I think we're just going to have to wait and / see and

LYND

No.

JAKE

Our plane is / Friday.

LYND

Oh No. No no no no no no no

JAKE

We can try...again. We can try for a different...

LYND

What are you...?

JAKE

She just disappeared. She could be...anywhere by now. The woman wasn't, I don't think, staying at this hotel, but she seemed...She was well dressed. She could have gotten on a train, or a plane or anything by now...She looked like every other / Chinese woman.

LYND

You told the police what Mei Lin was wearing? The lavender -

JAKE

/ Um.

LYND

How was the woman dressed? Did you / tell the police?

JAKE

She was in brown...tan...one of those neutral...One of those / shiny dresses they wear

LYND

What was it made of? What color was it / exactly?

JAKE

Um, it had those little tie things some / of them have.

LYND

Did you describe the stroller to the police? The pink tray on her stroller is / different from

JAKE

I...um. I talked to the concierge. And he / talked to the

LYND

How long ago / was all this?

JAKE

The concierge said we should wait here for them to / ring us.

LYND

Not both of us. We don't both of us / have to

JAKE

No. Not...I'll go. I'll go out / and look.

LYND

But I mean, we should get them to put out an All Points Bulletin. Isn't / that what they...?

JAKE

Yes. That's a good idea. We should.../ I'll...

LYND

What's wrong with you? You're not...Are you in shock? You don't seem to be thinking about what / we should do.

JAKE

I guess I am. I'm... / Am I in - ?

LYND

When she left the hotel did she go left or / right?

JAKE

Um....I didn't really..../ Left. She went.

LYND

You ran after her. Which way did you run? Down past the juice place? Or / toward the the the

JAKE

Down past the juice / place.

LYND

She wasn't going toward the train station and she was on foot, right?

JAKE

Right.

LYND

She didn't get into a car, right? So she must have / been a local

JAKE

Right. Not toward the train station, but she could have gotten on a bus or one of those what-do-ya-call-ems....What?

LYND

Where's the rabbit?

JAKE

What?

LYND

Where's the rabbit? The little rabbit toy thing.

JAKE

The / rabbit?

LYND

The rabbit. The rabbit. The little pink rabbit / toy.

JAKE

I...she...The woman must have taken it. She had it in her / stroller.

LYND

Mei Lin had it in her...But you said she dropped it and you bent to / pick it up.

JAKE

Right. Right. Right. I picked it up. I must have...I probably left it at the concierge's... What?

LYND

What's going on here? What is...You're not telling me something.

JAKE

No, we're both upset because, because Mei Lin has vanished and we're trying to think / what to do next.

LYND

We're both upset, but you're...Why aren't you leaping into crisis mode? "Let's figure this out logically." "Let's divide up," and - I don't know - "Make a house-to-house search," or or call the Embassy and tell them that an American child - I mean, she's ours, the paperwork is....But you're you're like a /zombie.

JAKE

No. I'm just. I'm I'm I'm. ...I.....Let's go home. Let's just do some sightseeing and go / home.

LYND

When we find her, we can...When we've got her back, we / can

JAKE

No. I mean, let's be...tourists. Let's not be...parents.../ right

LYND

/ What are you...?

JAKE

We'll let the police look...or whatever. But you and I will just go see the the museums and the shops and walk down by the water and drink that tea they have. What's / it called?

LYND

Are you crazy? We have to find her. She's been through so much already. She must be / frantic.

JAKE

They don't want us to take their babies. You've seen / that.

LYND

But we were told - you can't really believe that. They're just....They're curious. We show them that we love her and /then

JAKE

They don't want us to take their girls out/ of the country

LYND

We can talk about this after we've found her. We have to get our daughter / back first.

JAKE

But she's not -

LYND

She will be. As soon as the paperwork is finished she / will be.

JAKE

She doesn't want to have anything to do with us.

LYND

She's just frightened. When she was at the orphanage she was fine

JAKE

She wasn't fine with / us.

LYND

Well, what do you expect? Two people who don't look like anyone she's ever seen before / show up

JAKE

They've seen Americans / before

LYND

and take her away from the only home she's ever / known.

JAKE

But she doesn't seem to like us...At all. She just cries /all the

LYND

She doesn't cry all / the

JAKE

And sleeps. Cries and and howls and sleeps. For five days she has cried and wailed and slept and wet the bed and woken up and cried and shrieked and screamed / some more.

LYND

She's grieving. She misses the only home she's ever known. She'll get used to us. She's already... She lets us hold her and take her / in the

JAKE

- take her around in the stroller. She's only happy when she thinks we might be taking her back to the orphanage.

LYND

If she stayed in the orphanage she'd have to become a street cleaner when she's sixteen. Patty / said Lily Jun

JAKE

Patty's daughter is a wonderful, outgoing, / bright little

LYND

So is Mei Lin. She will be...When we get / her home

JAKE

This baby is not Lily Jun. She's not...cheerful

LYND

Not....Not / yet.

JAKE

She's not affectionate. / She's not even pretty

LYND

Not yet. She's got to get used to us. She is pretty! She's beautiful. She's just got to start thinking of us as her parents. Then / she'll

JAKE

It's not happening, Lyndi. She's miserable. / It's not -

LYND

They don't necessarily bond right away. She's almost two, so of course she - And anyway, even birth parents don't always / bond

JAKE

But they don't...They don't hate them either.

LYND

...You don't hate her.

JAKE

I...she...I don't feel any...warm feelings / towards her.

LYND

You will. Wait til she calls you "Daddy." / You're going to

JAKE

No.

LYND

(as if "I get it!") This was just so we could have a chance to talk about this, right? She's just down the hall with the, what's-their-names, those people from Augusta, right?

JAKE

She's not with the / Robertsons.

LYND

So, who's looking for her? Why aren't you looking for her? *(rising hysteria and panic)* Where is she?

JAKE

I...I was with her in the lobby. Everyone's staring because Mei Lin is making that *(he makes a hideous wailing sound)* noise. And a woman came up to us. You know how everyone stares. And this woman was gesturing that she wanted to pick her / up.

LYND

You said that. You bent down to pick up the / rabbit

JAKE

I...I didn't tell you the truth about...the rabbit.

LYND

Okay.

JAKE

The baby's crying. Surprise surprise. Mei Lin was miserable. And this lady, this very pretty lady, came over and picked her up and sort of rocked her in her arms until she was quieter, just sort of hiccupping and clinging to this woman, this stranger. And then she sang a little Chinese song to Mei Lin. And she - Mei Lin, smiled. And then the woman sort of bounced her around and said something and Mei Lin spoke. She said a couple of Chinese words. Then the lady said something in a funny voice and Mei Lin - laughed...This woman made /her

LYND

She / laughed.

JAKE

The woman knew a little pidgin English. She turned to me and said it was bad to take girls out of the country and she had always wanted a little girl of her own. Then she reached into her bag and took out her wallet and grabbed a fistful of yuan and tried to give / me

LYND

You...you sold her?

JAKE

No. I didn't take it. I just... I just backed away and she looked at me for a minute - The woman looked, Mei Lin didn't care. And then she took the stroller and started out of the hotel. And I started to go after her. She turned back and then I just thought, "This is the right thing to do." To leave her with someone who can make her laugh. So I handed the lady the rabbit. And she took it and pushed the stroller across the street and, you know how hard it is to cross the streets with all the... (*HE gestures frantic traffic.*) But this woman knew how to do it. She made it to the other side and then, then, I couldn't see them anymore.

LYND

No. No. / No.

JAKE

It's better. She'll be better off. She'll be happier with people she can talk to. And we like our life at home. It's just here that we're outsiders. And we're exhausted. The crying. Five days and nights of sobbing. It was too much. We can try for some / other kind of

LYND

No. No no no. No...How do we?...What do we...?... (*HE reaches for her. She fends him off*) No. No. No. No. / No.

On the second to last "No" Quick Fade to

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY

Acknowledgments

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