

IMPENETRABLE by Mia McCullough ©2010 dialogue sample

LIGHTS UP on RENEE. She sits in a salon chair, a bib around her upper body. She is lost.

RENEE

I don't know... quite how I got here. To this place. Geographically, mentally, metaphysically.
I was a math major.
No one in my current circle of acquaintances knows that about me, certainly not the other moms.
I got a degree from a respected university.
And I got a job.
That paid well.
And then Ted and I got married, and I got pregnant.
On purpose.
And honestly, I didn't *like* my job that much. There was nothing interesting about it, nothing fulfilling. And Ted's a lawyer, was almost partner at that point, so why pay a nanny, so I could wish I was home?

RENEE takes off the bib. She looks at her hair in the mirror. MOURAD approaches.

MOURAD

Are you happy? I think it looks good.

A moment of awkwardness.

RENEE

Yes. No, Shannon always does a great job.

MOURAD

We're glad to have you back.

Beat.

RENEE

Thank you.

She EXITS. MOURAD speaks to us as he brushes off the chair.

MOURAD

The part that hurts me most is the accusation that I do not like women. This is the most hurtful. And completely untrue.

PETE ENTERS. He has a high-end digital SLR around his neck. He takes photos of the other characters, of the audience, maybe, but not JENNA. Not yet.

PETE

I studied anthropology in college.

Not diligently or anything. I had to pick a major so why not something with classes called Human Sex.

(beat)

That class was not as exciting as I anticipated.

There was a lot of talk about menstrual cycles.

(beat)

Apparently the moment girls hit puberty, some biological imperative kicks in, some hormonal hardwiring that turns all their focus toward seeking out a suitable mate. Preferably an alpha male.

I am not an alpha male.

The image of Jenna is ILLUMINATED.

JENNA

(to us)

I didn't plan on being a model. I think it's kind of shallow, actually. But once I hit puberty — **at eleven** — people constantly told me I should model. So I got into it for the money. It paid my tuition. And I figured, this is a young person's career, I could milk it for a few years, pay for medical school. It doesn't have to define me.

The arrows pointing at Jenna in the image are illuminated. The "Problems" and "Solutions."

PETE

I remember one day, during a lecture, looking around the room. At the make-up, the hair twirling, the painted toes, the shorty-shorts and realizing that *none of that*, none of that effort was for me.

I'm cool, girls like me well enough — to hang out — but I'm no alpha.

LIGHTS SHIFT. RENEE ENTERS the café with CARI in tow. CARI has her nose in a book. She speaks to us as she approaches ANDIE at the counter.

RENEE

I had two boys first.

I didn't necessarily want three kids, but I wanted a girl.

(To ANDIE)

Could I have a half caff venti soy vanilla latte?

(MORE)

RENEE CONT'D

(to us)

And you know, if I had been given the option of genetically engineering the child — just for the gender — I would have done it.

ANDIE

(to us)

Shocker.

RENEE

People said, “It’s going to be another boy.” “You’re playing with fire.” “You’re going to be disappointed.” But I wasn’t. I had a girl.
And she is so smart.

As RENEE looks at CARI, the LIGHTS RISE on her. She sits on the floor reading, she looks up from her book. She is pure earnestness and excitement.

CARI

I want to be a veterinarian at a zoo so that I can touch all the animals, even the large predators, well, ok, especially the large predators. I mean, I’m pretty sure that when zoo veterinarians perform surgery on tigers and polar bears, they take a few minutes to rub their bellies, tickle their paws, maybe even kiss them on the nose while they’re sedated. I also want to be a musician, probably the clarinet because you can play all kinds of music with the clarinet: classical, jazz, blues, folk. It doesn’t have genre limitations like the saxophone or the harpsichord.

I’d like to go on record as saying that the harpsichord is my favorite instrument. It’s what it would sound like if spiders played music on their webs, I think. I also want to be an astronaut unless they start letting regular people go into space — for a lot less money, and a trapezist. Is that what they’re called? The circus performers on trapezes? But really I should become an inventor because then I wouldn’t be limited to one field. I could invent a tiger cloning machine so that they would never be extinct, and new musical instruments that you can hear in outer space and a bed that makes itself. I could invent anything I want if I was an inventor.

RENEE

And she is not going to be like me.

I mean, she can be a mom, if she wants, that’s fine. But she is going to have a career that means something to her. She’s going to know what excites her, know what she wants from the world.

I didn’t know what I wanted.

So I got this.

ANDIE

Here's your half-caff venti soy vanilla latte.

RENEE

Which isn't terrible.
I'm not complaining.
I'm just saying...
it's not what it could have been.

ANDIE

What could it have been?

RENEE

And I try not to think about it. Because playing the "what if" game at my age...

ANDIE

"What if I wasn't pretty and rich and didn't have to work?"

RENEE

It can be extremely disruptive.

JENNA glances at the door, then at her watch.
CARI has been watching her.

CARI

Are you Muslim?

RENEE

Cari!

CARI

What?

RENEE

That's rude. You can't just ask people—

JENNA

(kindly)

No. I'm not Muslim.

CARI

Then why is your head covered?

RENEE

Honey, it's not polite— I'm sorry.

CARI
You don't have cancer, do you?

JENNA
No.

CARI
My grandma wore a scarf on her head when she had cancer. She's dead now.

RENEE
(to JENNA)
I'm sorry.

JENNA
I'm sorry.

RENEE ushers CARI over to a table,
whispering:

RENEE
Honey, you can't just go up to total strangers and ask them personal questions.