

Due to Unforeseen Circumstances

By Jared Mallard

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STORY OF THE PLAY

This poignant teen drama, inspired by true events, explores loss, unlikely friendships, and the journey to parenthood. Set in an alternative education center facing closure due to budget cuts, the play follows Maddy Joyce, a dedicated teacher who has built her career around helping at-risk teenagers. Maddy is privately navigating an unexpected pregnancy after experiencing multiple miscarriages. Her life becomes intertwined with Jubilee, a brilliant but guarded pregnant teenager who arrives at the center carrying her own grief, fears, and uncertainty about the future. As the students race to earn enough credits to graduate before the center closes, Maddy and Jubilee form an unlikely friendship that challenges both women to rethink what family, responsibility, and hope really mean. Along the way, the students discover their own strengths, support one another through personal struggles, and learn that sometimes the people who change our lives are the ones we least expect. Funny, moving, and deeply human, the play is a celebration of resilience, found family, and the life-changing impact of someone who simply refuses to give up on another person.

Running approximately 50–60 minutes.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

The play premiered at the 2026 Canadian New Brunswick Drama Festival, receiving multiple awards and strong audience response. It was also selected for the Playwrights Atlantic Resource Centre's Jenny Munday Competition.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 m, 5 w, 5 flexible, extras)

MADDY JOYCE: (F) 40s, teacher at an alt ed center, serious, kind, fertility issues.

JUBILEE: (F) 17, new student at the center, bright, strong-willed, independent, and pregnant.

HENRY: (M) 40s, husband of Maddy, overly optimistic and a terrible baker.

KYLE: (M) 15, narrator.

CHARLIE: (W) 15, narrator.

JOHNNY: (M) 17, "wrong side of the tracks" kid, empathic but loves to fight.

FELICITY: (W) 17, the princess of gossip of the center.

DANA: (W) 17, student at the center.

PRINCIPAL SIMPSON: (Flexible) 50s, run-down and tired, always the bearer of bad news.

DOCTOR DOOMSDAY: (Flexible) 40s, OB/GYN, terrible bedside manner, monotone, robotic.

MRS. PEARL: (Flexible) Ancient, retired teacher.

EXTRAS: STUDENTS, PARTYGOER 1 & 2

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SET

The show can be staged very simply with few props, costumes, and technical elements. Most of the action takes place in a classroom, with a handful of additional locations suggested through simple furniture and lighting changes.

Scene 1: Chances

(AT RISE: LIGHTS up on a modern-day classroom. A group of "at-risk" STUDENTS sit on various parts of the desks, tables, etc. The teacher, MRS. MADDY JOYCE, and class are frozen. KYLE and CHARLIE enter and address the audience.)

KYLE: Someone once said, we don't run out of second chances. We simply run out of people who will offer them.

CHARLIE: It's a known fact that everyone stumbles from time to time.

KYLE: And it's in those stumbles that we learn.

CHARLIE: Second chances are not just about someone forgiving us.

KYLE: It's about believing in someone, again and again.

CHARLIE: Giving them a chance to prove to the world that one simple mistake doesn't write them off for the rest of their lives.

KYLE: Some people, that's all they need: just one more second chance.

(KYLE and CHARLIE exit. MADDY and STUDENTS unfreeze.)

MADDY: Okay, settle down... sorry I'm late.

JOHNNY: How lovely for you to grace us with your presence.

FELICITY: We were just about to send out a search party.

(MADDY makes her way over to a STUDENT who has their head buried in their phone. Taps the student on the head.)

MADDY: Ah, it's a rare pleasure to have something I said repeated. I was starting to think my lectures were just a soothing background noise for your Tik-Tok scrolling sessions. Please, put your phones away.

(The STUDENTS all put their phones in their backpacks.)

MADDY: *(Cont'd.)* So, before we start today...

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(SFX: A ding.)

MADDY: *(Cont'd.)* Away, please!

JOHNNY: Sorry, Mrs. J.

(JOHNNY takes out his phone and goes to turn it off. Looks up shocked.)

MADDY: I wanted to talk to you about—

JOHNNY: Is this for real?

FELICITY: What?

JOHNNY: Yo, Mrs. J. Is this true?

(HE shows the phone to HER.)

MADDY: I had this dumb idea to keep things hush-hush, but I should have known. Johnny, who sent you this?

JOHNNY: Umm, Skeeter and Simple Steve texted it to me. Casey M., Casey F., and Jodie from the Northside all sent me a Snap and Bobby, Tyler J., Tyler K., and Felicity posted it on their stories...

MADDY: Felicity!

FELICITY: Sorry, Mrs. J.

MADDY: All those people just sent you that?

JOHNNY: Yeah, and they're all still losing their minds.

(HE unmutes it and shows her his phone. SFX: So many notification sounds.)

MADDY: Oh my God. How do you all handle this? Mute, mute!

(HE mutes it.)

MADDY: *(Cont'd.)* Okay, everyone, sit down. *(Pauses, looking at the STUDENTS.)* Yes... what you've heard is true.

(The room goes silent, with a collective sense of dread.)

JOHNNY: Wait... They're shutting down the center?

FELICITY: Looks like it's back to hiding out in bathroom stalls and hallways.

DANA: I can't go back to being invisible. Not again.

FELICITY: Honestly though... this place saved me. You think Sunnyside even remembers me? No way.

JOHNNY: Yeah, like here, I matter... you know?

MADDY: You think I'm thrilled about this? They're robbing you of the one thing that's working for you. It's unfair. They don't understand what this place means. *(SHE quickly composes herself, hiding her emotions.)* After this year...

FELICITY: Mrs. J., this is like our home!

JOHNNY: Mrs. J., you're like our mom.

MADDY: *(Caught off guard, then firm.)* No, no, I'm not anyone's mother! Got it?

(SHE pauses, takes a breath. The room is still.)

JOHNNY: Why are they doing this?

MADDY: Budget cuts. Reallocation of funds. It's... just higher-up nonsense. *(SHE starts to speak again but pauses, as if the words are difficult.)* I'm sorry, I...

(SHE gags suddenly, catching the STUDENTS off guard. There's an uneasy murmur as she tries to wave it off.)

MADDY: *(Cont'd.)* I'm fine, just... *(Gags again, more violently this time.)* Oh God...

(The tension shifts to concern as SHE rushes behind the desk, retching. JOHNNY moves to stand, but stops himself, unsure.)

DANA: You okay, Mrs. J.?

MADDY: *(From behind the desk SHE weakly holds up a finger, struggling to regain composure.)* I think I'm okay. *(SHE pops up from behind, wipes her mouth.)* I'm fine... I'm o...

(MADDY begins puking again. One of the KIDS begins filming her. JOHNNY snatches the phone and stares the kid down. Maddy comes up again. This time sits in her chair.)

FELICITY: I think you should go home, Mrs. J.

MADDY: It's okay. I'm fine.

(JOHNNY gets up, opens his bag and brings her a can of soda.)

JOHNNY: Here. Drink this. My ma's been sick since I was a kid. This helps sometimes. *(HE sits.)*

MADDY: It's just... it's just hard to keep it together knowing this place is closing. *(HER voice breaks as she tries to push down another wave of nausea.)*

FELICITY: Well, at least it's not like morning sickness, am I right? *(SHE leans and whispers the next part to DANA.)* My sister had those exact same gags. She's eight months now.

MADDY: *(Stands up from behind her desk, woozy. SHE wipes her mouth and takes a deep breath.)* I'm fine.

(HER voice cracks, she's holding back more than just sickness. JOHNNY stands up, walking over to her. He offers her a quiet nod of support.)

JOHNNY: You don't have to keep it together for us.

MADDY: This place was everything to me, too.

(The LIGHTS slowly dim as SHE slumps into her chair, JOHNNY takes a step back, and as the last light fades, we see Maddy gripping the can of soda Johnny gave her. Silence.)

Scene 2: Happy Pukes

(LIGHTS up on an apartment. HENRY is baking cupcakes in the kitchen. MADDY enters, frazzled, a mess from her long day.)

HENRY: Hey hon, you gotta try this new recipe... *(HE brings over a piece of cupcake.)* Whoa! You do not look well. Here, sit.

(HE leads HER to the sofa. She slumps over her head resting on his lap.)

MADDY: I'll never not be jealous that you get to work from home.

HENRY: Are you okay?

(A long beat. SHE reaches into her back pocket and then holds out a pregnancy test.)

HENRY: *(Cont'd.)* What is that?

MADDY: I puked 15 times in front of my students today. I took ten tests...

HENRY: Oh my God, happy pukes? Are you having happy pukes again?

MADDY: Happy pukes? Are you serious? Please don't call them that. There is nothing happy about puking.

HENRY: Hang on!

(HENRY drops the cupcake and runs out of the room quickly, fleeing. He returns with a bag.)

HENRY: *(Cont'd.)* Okay, so we need to start you on prenatal vitamins right away. Here, *(Hands HER a couple pills.)* and we need to get you into a doctor ASAP. I've read this book front to back *(Hands HER a pregnancy book.)* ... twice... I've highlighted sections for you to read according to trimester, and we will need to convert my game room into a nursery. I can have everything boxed up by this weekend, then...

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MADDY: Look, I know you're excited, but...

HENRY: Excited? Who's excited? I'm just prepared.

MADDY: I know you're excited, but don't get your hopes up...
remember the last two times we...

HENRY: Ancient history, Maddy. This is gonna happen.

MADDY: I'm just not as optimistic as you.

(HE reaches into the bag and takes out a hat that says, "Father to Be.")

HENRY: No one is.

(MADDY looks at the hat, her face unreadable. She reaches out, but instead of taking it, she lets her hand drop to her side.)

MADDY: I want to be as excited as you... I really do, but you know what they said last time. They kept telling me everything looked fine... *(SHE trails off, trying to hold back tears.)* I can't go through that again. The hope... it was worse than the loss. Last time, we had the whole nursery decorated, decals, and board books on the shelf...

(A long beat while her words sink in. MADDY turns away. HENRY watches her, concerned.)

HENRY: I'm scared too, and I know it's hard to believe it'll be different this time. I... I want to tell you it'll be okay, but I can't promise that. Whatever happens, the outcome will be the same... me and you and a tough time. We've got a pretty good track record with those things.

(A long beat.)

MADDY: *(Softly, finally speaking.)* You keep saying "we," but you don't know what it's like. It wasn't your body that experienced it... it was mine.

HENRY: You're right. I can't understand what you've been through. I just... I know, if we don't keep pushing ahead...

MADDY: But it's not just about pushing forward.

HENRY: What else can we do?

MADDY: I don't know.

HENRY: Let's just take it one day at a time.

MADDY: I want this as much as you do.

HENRY: I know you do...

(A beat.)

MADDY: *(Noticing his smile.)* I just don't understand how you're not afraid.

HENRY: *(HE reaches for HER hand.)* Oh, I'm terrified on many levels. Not gonna lie. I peed a little when you told me.

(SHE chuckles. The mood has lightened.)

HENRY: *(Cont'd.)* But I'm also ridiculously excited.

MADDY: I want to feel excited... I just don't know how to get there.

HENRY: You might never get there, and that's okay.

MADDY: Sure, but I'll let you be that person... for now. *(THEY both smile.)* You're holding back, aren't you? *(SHE gives a small, reluctant smile, but it's still tinged with her hesitation.)*

HENRY: I got you a hat, too. *(He reveals a hat that says, "World's Best Mom.")*

MADDY: I'm not wearing a hat. *(A longer beat.)* But you, you go ahead. *(SHE sighs, shaking her head, but there's affection in her voice now.)*

HENRY: *(Grinning wider, takes her hand again, but testing her reaction.)* You'll come around.

(THEY hug. During the hug she feels nauseous again. She covers her mouth and backs away. They both know what is going to happen.)

MADDY: Oh God.

HENRY: Happy pukes?

MADDY: Don't...

HENRY: Right, the "less than fun, but totally necessary pukes."

MADDY: That's worse. So much worse.

HENRY: Hang on!

(HE grabs the trash can and puts it in front of HER. She retches. He holds back her hair.)

HENRY: *(Cont'd.)* See, we're going to handle this just like everything else. Teamwork!

(SHE tilts her head out of the bucket and gives HIM a death stare as the LIGHTS fade out.)

Scene 3: Cravings & Calculus

(LIGHTS up. Enter KYLE and CHARLIE.)

KYLE: Some of us are too afraid to take risks.

CHARLIE: Especially when it comes to friendships. You never know who you're going to meet when you step out of your comfort zone.

KYLE: Like how sometimes friendships are found in the strangest of places.

CHARLIE: Exactly! But we would never know unless we take those risks and put ourselves out there, right?

KYLE: Think about your best friend. How did you two meet? Someone had to spark up the conversation. Someone had to be bold, maybe even sneak out past curfew, to really make that connection.

CHARLIE: Of course, taking a chance comes with risks. But the price of staying put and doing nothing? That's much worse. Who knows what kind of people you might meet.

(LIGHTS up on the classroom. It is a few weeks later. MADDY sits at her desk, while the STUDENTS sit, working quietly. SFX: There is a knock at her door. Enter PRINCIPAL SIMPSON, looking run-down.)

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PRINCIPAL SIMPSON: Mrs. Joyce?

MADDY: Principal Simpson? How can I help you?

PRINCIPAL SIMPSON: I have a new student joining. Please welcome Jubilee Jacobi.

(JUBILEE enters. She is wearing a large hoodie with the hood up, chewing gum, bit of a chip on her shoulder.)

PRINCIPAL SIMPSON: *(Cont'd.)* Jubilee comes to us from *(Looks at paper.)* Toronto, and because of her circumstances the center would be the best place for her to start.

MADDY: Hi, Jubilee.

JUBILEE: Hey.

FELICITY: Hey, girl. I like your hoodie.

JUBILEE: Thanks.

PRINCIPAL SIMPSON: Okay, thank you. Gotta go. *(Moves to exit.)*

JOHNNY: Simpson, why you shutting down the center?

FELICITY: Yeah!

(PRINCIPAL SIMPSON snaps back. He is clearly stressed.)

PRINCIPAL SIMPSON: *(Sighing, rubbing his temples.)*...Due to unforeseen circumstances, the alternate education center... you know what? You have no idea the pressure I'm under... You think I have anything to do with this? You think I want to lose classrooms? You think I make these decisions? No! I don't! You know what decisions I get to make? Do you? Do you? I get to pick the colors for the walls but then I'm told there's no money for paint! You think my job is easy?

(MADDY puts her hand on HIS shoulder.)

MADDY: Let me handle this, okay?

PRINCIPAL SIMPSON: But...

MADDY: The kids need calm now, not panic. We'll manage. I've got it under control.

(MADDY starts to escort HIM out.)

PRINCIPAL SIMPSON: I wanted teal! Teal for the staff room!

(SHE walks HIM out the door and returns to the STUDENTS.)

MADDY: Now, where were we? Jubilee, why don't you take a seat right over there next to Felicity.

(JUBILEE sits down. The STUDENTS awkwardly stare, sizing her up, trying to figure her out.)

JUBILEE: Okay, let's just get this out of the way.

(JUBILEE takes off her hoodie and reveals a baby bump under it. The STUDENTS all gawk. A silence falls over the classroom. They all start silent gossiping, giggling.)

MADDY: Welcome, Jubilee. We are—

JUBILEE: *(Interrupting.)* Yes, I'm pregnant. Yes, I know the father. Yes, I'm keeping it and no, you cannot touch my belly. Now, can we all move past the awkward small talk where you say things like "bundles of joy," "lack of sleep," and "you look beautiful." I'm uncomfortable. I'm gassy and I just want to finish high school. Okay?

(Silence.)

JUBILEE: *(Cont'd.)* Good chat.

MADDY: That's completely fair, Jubilee. Everyone, let's respect her space. We're here to support each other, not judge.

(JUBILEE takes out her books. Calculus, physics, chemistry, etc. Sets up her learning space meticulously and waits to learn. MADDY approaches her.)

MADDY: *(Cont'd.)* So, this is an alternative learning center, and we don't have formal lessons. Kids all learn at different paces and have different goals and...

JUBILEE: Perfect. I'll just do my own work in silence and if I go into labor, I'll let you all know.

(SHE puts her headphones on and begins to work. SFX: the bell rings. The other STUDENTS get up and leave. Jubilee stays. Her music is too loud to hear the bell. MADDY sits next to her. Taps her headphones. Jubilee, looking annoyed, takes the headphones off.)

JUBILEE: What?

MADDY: The bell. You can go for lunch now.

JUBILEE: Can I just stay in here?

MADDY: Sure, but don't judge me, okay?

JUBILEE: What's that supposed to mean?

MADDY: Just don't judge me, okay?

JUBILEE: Okay?

(MADDY sits back at her desk, takes out a large jar of peanut butter, two slices of bread, a bag of Cheetos and mustard. She begins making a sandwich and putting it all together.)

JUBILEE: Okay, I'm gonna judge. What are you doing?

MADDY: Making a sandwich.

JUBILEE: With Cheetos, peanut butter...and what is that, mustard?

MADDY: Yup. Sometimes I just pour mustard in my mouth. You have any weird cravings?

JUBILEE: Yeah, but, I'm pregnant.

(MADDY's face softens into a mixture of a cheeky smirk.)

JUBILEE: Oh... *(Smirks.)* Really? How far along?

MADDY: Twelve weeks.

JUBILEE: Yeah, that's when they start. During my first trimester, I ate only pickles and drank pickle juice. Sometimes I would dip stale crackers in the pickle juice.

End of Freeview

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