

The Meadows

A Play

by

Trey Nichols

(EXCERPT:

ACT I, SCENE 3)

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Cast of Characters

Alex Conroy (21): brash, adventurous, playful, aggressive.

Pete Transeth (21): bright, shy, cautious, sensitive.

Player 1 (Female, 20's-30's): Dolores, Poker Dealer, Cocktail Waitress, House of Pancakes Waitress.

Player 2 (Female, late teens-20's): Mary Alice, Video Poker Machine, Stripper.

Player 3 (Male, 40's-60's): Gambler, Floorman, Man, Guy.

SETTING

Place: A motel room and various places in and around Las Vegas.

Time: A mid-July in the mid-1990's.

The room is shabby but inhabitable. There are two single beds, a nightstand with lamp, chest of drawers, TV, and ashtray. The front door is upstage right. Bathroom door at stage left.

The action of the play occurs over the course of one week. The six scenes in Act I (and 1/2 scenes that piggyback) make up the first six days of the trip, each scene taking place on a consecutive day. The three scenes

ACT I

SCENE 3

SETTING: The motel room. Sunset.

AT RISE: The room is filthier than ever, bedsheets twisted, floor strewn with empties, wrappers and the ever-multiplying Kleenex wads. The chest of drawers is now a makeshift bar, replete with liquor bottles and soft drink cans. Pete, Alex and a young woman are heard laughing offstage.

The door opens. Pete and Alex usher in MARY ALICE, a young woman in her late teens. They are all wearing bathing suits and t-shirts and carrying towels. Mary Alice has a small knapsack.

ALEX

Welcome to our little, our little--

PETE

Suite.

(Surveys the mess.)

Yechh. Look at this place.

(He starts picking up scraps.)

MARY ALICE

I guess it's my fault. I was supposed to clean today. But it was so hot, I just put up the "no vacancy" sign and went to the pool. Oh, well. Do you care?

ALEX

Hell, no! This is who we are. If it gets too disgusting we can just move to a new room.

MARY ALICE

It'll cost more. Plus most of our rooms have only one bed. But it's worth it. They're much cuter than this. And some have little heart-shaped soaps in the bathroom and X-rated TV.

ALEX

Sounds like you know these rooms pretty well.

MARY ALICE

Oh, I could find my way around here blindfolded.

ALEX

Yeah? Go for it.

(He whips his towel across her eyes
like a blindfold.)

MARY ALICE

(Laughing)

Hey!

(Alex holds the towel like a set of
reins.)

ALEX

Whoa, girl! Whoa!

(Mary Alice playfully whinnies, throwing up her hands
like hooves.)

Ah ain't gonna hurtcha, precious. Giddyap!

(Mary Alice whinnies again.)

Whoa, girl! Steady now! Let's see if pony girl here knows her way around these parts
like she says.

MARY ALICE

(Pointing)

Bed. Bed. Door. Night table. Chest of drawers. Bathroom.

(Pete picks up a box of crackers from the nightstand.)

PETE

What a smart little pony. I got a treat for such a smart little pony.

(Pete holds a cracker to her mouth. She probes it with
her lips and tongue, then starts to nibble until she's
taken the whole thing into her mouth. When finished,
she opens her mouth for more. Pete and Alex are
transfixed.)

Whoa.

(Beat.)

PETE (CONT.)

(To Alex)
Can I have a ride?

ALEX
I dunno, podner. She's a pretty wild little mare.

PETE
Just a short one.

ALEX
I ain't sure you're ready.

PETE
Oh, I'm ready. I'm ready!

(He gets another cracker and holds it up to her mouth.)

Whaddy say, li'l pony?

(Alex swats Pete's hand away. Pete tries again. Alex grabs Pete's hand and crushes the cracker, which crumbles to the floor. Pete drops the cracker box and slowly backs away, his right hand twitching into the shape of a gun. Alex takes notice and plays along, stepping away from Mary Alice.)

PETE AND ALEX
GUNFIGHT!

PETE
One...

ALEX
...two...

TOGETHER
...three!

(In slow motion, they draw imaginary guns from holsters, aim and shoot each other, relishing with great intensity their cinematic "deaths." They hit the floor and die.)

Silence. Mary Alice just stands there with the towel still over her eyes.)

MARY ALICE

Hellooo!

(Pause.)

Little pony is getting bored!

(Pete and Alex spring to their feet.)

PETE

Sorry. Did we get carried away?

ALEX

Pete gets carried away. I just play along to see how far he'll go.

MARY ALICE

That's okay. I love games. I love all sorts of stuff.

(Small pause. Pete and Alex exchange a quick glance.
Alex removes the towel from Mary Alice's eyes.)

PETE

Alex loves covering people's eyes. Why do you like that so much, Alex?

ALEX

I love to watch people flail.

MARY ALICE

I didn't flail.

ALEX

Not yet.

(Beat.)

Drink?

MARY ALICE

Sure.

ALEX

We've got everything. I'm having Jack and Coke.

(Gets ice bucket from chest of drawers--it's all water.)

ALEX

Oop. We're all melted.

(Alex hands Pete the bucket.)

ALEX (CONT.)

Your turn.

(Pete bows formally and exits.)

MARY ALICE

He's cute.

ALEX

You think so?

MARY ALICE

You're cute together. Are you best friends?

ALEX

I don't really trust that expression. "Best," "worst," it's all so limiting. We just hang out together. I think I bring a little adventure to his life. And he brings me...he brings me...

(Pete re-enters with ice.)

...ice. And Coke.

PETE

And Jack.

(Alex shoots him a glance.)

Daniels!

(To Mary Alice)

And you?

MARY ALICE

Just Coke.

PETE AND ALEX

You're sure?

(She nods. Pete gets a Coke from the chest of drawers.)

PETE

Can okay?

(Another glance from Alex.)

Not okay.

(Pete slips into the bathroom.)

ALEX

So. How many beds are in your room?

MARY ALICE

Oh, I don't live here. I live down the street with my daddy. I just help Aunt Mamie run the motel sometimes. Today it was cuz of that girl.

(Pete returns from the bathroom with three glasses. He goes to the chest of drawers and prepares the drinks.)

ALEX

So you're in school?

MARY ALICE

I quit school.

ALEX

Good for you. That makes Pete the only college-bound dweeb amongst us.

PETE

(Lightly teasing.)

“Amongst.”

MARY ALICE

Aunt Mamie wanted me to work here full-time. But then I met David.

PETE

Who's David?

MARY ALICE

My fiancé.

PETE

You're engaged?

MARY ALICE

Yeah. But it's okay I'm here. We're open. For now. He travels a lot.

ALEX

Is he in town right now?

MARY ALICE

No, he's in Tokyo.

ALEX

What does he do?

MARY ALICE

He's an illusionist. So am I.

PETE

Did you meet this guy in Vegas?

(Hands Mary Alice and Alex their drinks.)

MARY ALICE

Yeah. He was doing a show at Caesar's and I sort of put a spell on one of the guards with my mouth and he let me backstage. David came back to his dressing room after the show all sweaty and I was there waiting for him. I showed him some tricks and we talked and then he made it snow. Right there in his dressing room. He kissed the snowflakes from my eyelashes.

PETE

(Caught up in her story)

Wow.

ALEX

Wait a minute. Are you talking about David Copperfield?

(She nods demurely and sips her Coke.)

And no one believes her.

MARY ALICE

It sounds weird, huh? Cuz he has so many fans. All those dumb girls screaming and fainting. Sometimes I wish I could just put a bullet in every one of their stupid little heads. Pkeow. Pkeow. Then I'd go to jail and David would come and rescue me and we'd fly away together like he does on his TV special. I was gonna be his assistant for the Asian tour but my Daddy found out and locked me in my room.

ALEX

Don't you have a window?

MARY ALICE

It locks from the outside.

ALEX

So? You're a magician.

MARY ALICE

My daddy would've caught me. He can read my mind.

ALEX

He sounds pretty scary.

MARY ALICE

Not really. We can read each other's minds. It used to drive my mom crazy. Like at the dinner table. He'd look at me and we'd start laughing. I know he loves me. Even when he whups me. He's just afraid I'll run away with David.

ALEX

Doesn't want his little girl doing any more tricks.

MARY ALICE

Just certain ones. Like reading minds.

ALEX

He's not here now. Wanna do it on me?

MARY ALICE

Okay.

PETE

Hey, is it true that psychic powers work best when there's a full moon?

MARY ALICE

Sometimes.

PETE

Then you have--

(Looks at his watch)

--four nights until peak performance.

MARY ALICE

How do you know?

PETE

(Shows her his watch.)

It's right here.

ALEX

You and that watch.

PETE

I love my watch!

(Pete moves closer to Mary Alice.)

PETE (CONT.)

See? The number in that square tells how many days until the next full moon. And the moon in the watch is in the same phase as the real moon.

MARY ALICE

That's neat. I saw one of those at the mall. Isn't there a wizard in there or something?

PETE

Yeah, but he's hidden right now. This ugly guy is the Warrior. He turns into the Wizard at midnight. Then at noon he changes back.

MARY ALICE

Wow.

PETE

He's from a comic book. Actually, he's two characters--a wizard, and a Warrior--that got stuck together in a sort of cosmic soul blender and were fused into one person. Each side takes over at a different time... usually the wrong time.

MARY ALICE

What do you mean?

PETE

When he's the Wizard, he's always getting into situations where he could use physical strength; then when he needs magic, he changes into the Warrior. Each side lacks the other's special power, so every situation forces him to confront his limitation. He has to find the strength in his weakness.

MARY ALICE

That sounds too confusing for a comic book.

ALEX

It is.

PETE

Not really.

MARY ALICE

Did you get that in town?

PETE

No. It was a birthday present.

When's your birthday?
MARY ALICE

July 20th.
PETE

(To Alex)
When's yours?
MARY ALICE

Hard to say.
ALEX

You don't know when your birthday is?
MARY ALICE

Well, when my parents found me on their doorstep...
ALEX

It was last week. We're five days apart.
PETE

That's just what the note said. It was scribbled on my diaper. Which was a big maple leaf.
ALEX

Are you pulling my leg?
MARY ALICE

You tell me.
ALEX

(Mary Alice smiles and shifts closer to Alex. She makes a psychic preparation--elaborate little hand gestures around her eyes and face.

Then she closes her eyes and leans into Alex, her hair lightly touching his chest. Alex is aroused. Pete is getting agitated.)

You're pulling my leg.
MARY ALICE

Are you sure about that? Maybe I'm just thinking about pulling your leg. Or both of them.
ALEX

MARY ALICE

Mmm. Oooo. You're thinking about...things you'd like to be doing...
with someone...

(Pause. She concentrates.)

ALEX

Go on.

(Pete downs his drink.)

MARY ALICE

I see something dark. Or maybe a place that's dark.

ALEX

A dark place?

MARY ALICE

You want to go there. It's warm there. Wait. Someone else is there.

ALEX

It better not be Pete.

MARY ALICE

You're reaching out. You're small and lonely. You want to be held.

ALEX

What?

MARY ALICE

You want to be held.

ALEX

No, before that. I'm what?

MARY ALICE

Small and lonely.

ALEX

Heh. Where'd that come from?

MARY ALICE

I see it. In your aura. It's all over you.

ALEX

That I'm lonely? Or a loner? Like lone wolf.

MARY ALICE

Just lonely. And small. You don't like to be alone. You get lost.

(Small pause. Alex pulls away.)

ALEX

What is this? I mean, what, what, what is this?! What are you talking about?!

MARY ALICE

It's just what I see.

ALEX

Well, it's bullshit!

PETE

Hey.

ALEX

Listen to me, Sa-fuckin'-brina! The only reason you're here in the first place is 'cause we felt sorry for you. Splashing around the shallow end of the pool like a retard. Let's talk to her. Make her feel special.

MARY ALICE

Do you want me to leave?

ALEX

Hey, read my fucking mind!

PETE

Don't leave.

(Beat. Alex turns to Pete.)

ALEX

What?!

MARY ALICE

Excuse me.

(She exits to the bathroom and shuts the door.)

ALEX

What's your problem?!

PETE

I--I just--you don't--you don't have to--

ALEX

Do you want to fuck this girl?!

(Pause. Pete seems unable to respond.)

Whatever.

(Alex grabs his keys and wallet and exits, slamming the door. After a moment, Mary Alice timidly comes out of the bathroom.)

MARY ALICE

Everything okay out here?

PETE

I, uh...I don't...

MARY ALICE

He turned mean so fast.

PETE

I don't know what happened.

MARY ALICE

I should have known. Sometimes when I read minds I start saying things people don't want to hear about themselves and I just can't stop. I go on and on 'til something crazy happens. Are you okay?

PETE

I-I-I, sure. Why?

MARY ALICE

You're shaking. I'll fix you a drink.

(She goes to the chest of drawers and puts together a strong, carelessly mixed drink.)

PETE

I don't even know what that was about.

MARY ALICE

Once I tried to buy some Jolly Ranchers out of a machine. Jolly Ranchers was Number 14 and I kept pushing the 1 and the 4 and a Kit Kat bar fell out every time. I had about five Kit Kats 'til some guy behind me said "Look, Jolly Ranchers is Number 14. Press 14. Kit Kat is Number 1." I didn't even know the buttons went up to 14.

(Beat. Pete doesn't get it.)

Sometimes it's hard to see the big picture. Even when it's right in front of you.

PETE

Oh. Wow. That's, that's, that's....hunh!

MARY ALICE

Wanna know something else? A friend of mine told me that sometimes when she leaves for work, she slips a Jolly Rancher inside her, you know, in her panties. Then when she comes home at night, her boyfriend eats it out of her. I think that's so romantic.

(Small pause.)

PETE

You couldn't do that with a Kit-Kat.

(Small pause.)

So, um, do want to stay for awhile? Wait for the big picture to hit like a, a--

MARY ALICE

Storm?

PETE

Yeah.

MARY ALICE

It's up to you.

PETE

Stay.

(Small pause.)

I bet, um, it's not too hard to read my mind right now.

(She smiles, shuts her eyes and leans into him.)

MARY ALICE

Hmmm...you're thinking... oooh...you want this to be a date.

PETE

Wow. You make me feel so, so...

MARY ALICE

Naked?

PETE

You're amazing.

MARY ALICE

It's a gift. Wanna know what else? I'm getting thirsty for another Coke.

PETE

Sure.

(He starts for the dresser.)

MARY ALICE

I brought one with me. It's colder.

(Opens her backpack. Takes out a can of Coke.)

You can reimburse me.

PETE

Sure.

(He pulls some change from his pocket.)

How much?

MARY ALICE

Six hundred dollars.

PETE

What?

MARY ALICE

Six hundred dollars.

PETE

For a Coke?

MARY ALICE

It's the real thing.

(She nudges his feet with hers.)

I really like you, Pete. Pete? Or is it Peter?

PETE

Just Pete.

MARY ALICE

Just Pete. That's cute. Like a sound a baby bird makes. Look how cute our feet look together, Pete. Don't you want tonight to be special?

(Whispering in his ear.)

I am soooo thirsty...

PETE

How about one hundred dollars?

MARY ALICE

That'll work.

(He goes to the dresser, gets out his wallet and hands her the money. She slips the money into her knapsack, takes out a can of Coke and pops it open.)

Thanks. My mouth was getting so dry.

(She takes a long drink of Coke.)

PETE

So what, um, what, what, what now? Should I take anything off?

MARY ALICE

First, I have to tell you something. I like you. I want us to have a nice time tonight. But I'm not a prostitute. Do you understand?

PETE

Oh, sure! Of course! I never thought you were--

MARY ALICE

I'm just a girl you met by the pool. You asked me to your room and bought me a Coke. In Clark County, if you tried to pay me for certain recreational "services," you'd go to jail. That's why, for the record, we have no oral contract. All you did was reimburse me for a Coke. Then later on if we decide, as two mature, responsible adults, that enough mutual attraction and trust have developed to the point that we'd like to, you know, consensually fool around or whatever--and this is no guarantee that we will--then that's something entirely independent and has no relation to any monetary exchange that has

taken place between us. I'm telling you all this 'cuz I care about you. Plus it's the law. Are we clear?

PETE

Yeah, I...I guess I...so what is it we're, what can we do?

MARY ALICE

We can do whatever. Whatever we decide. Let's just see what happens. Okay?

PETE

Okay.

(She sips her Coke, then smiles at him. He slowly leans in to kiss her. She gently pulls away.)

MARY ALICE

Unh-unh. That spreads germs. I just want to get to know you first. Do you have any fantasies you want to tell me about?

PETE

You mean like sex fantasies?

MARY ALICE

I can be anything you want. I can be a relative. I can be a teenage runaway. Whatever you want.

PETE

I want...I just want...I want to touch you. Can I touch you?

(She smiles and takes another sip of Coke. She takes his hand, moves it to her face, her tummy, teasingly avoids her breasts.)

MARY ALICE

Are you nervous?

PETE

A little.

MARY ALICE

That's cute.

(Beat.)

You know what I'd like now?

PETE

What?

MARY ALICE

I'd like you to rub lotion on my body.

PETE

Oh, I'd, uh, I'd, I'd, yeah. Cool.

(Beat.)

I don't have any lotion.

MARY ALICE

I do.

(She takes a small sample-sized bottle from her knapsack.)

It's twenty dollars.

(Pete's on auto-erect. He hands her a twenty from his wallet and she hands him the bottle. She turns upstage and takes off her t-shirt as he squirts out a handful of lotion and rubs his palms together. She moves her hair to one side, revealing bruises and welts on her shoulders and back.)

PETE

(Startled)

Oh my god. What happened?

MARY ALICE

Huh? Oh. Me and my daddy were horsing around. I can barely feel it. Go ahead.

(Pete gently starts to rub the lotion on her shoulders.)

Mmm, that's nice.

(Pete's sexual arousal is dissipating. He continues to rub the lotion on her, staring at the marks on her body.)

PETE

Be who you are.

MARY ALICE

Huh?

PETE

My fantasy. Just be yourself. You've been waiting for me. And now I'm here. And I'm going to take you away.

MARY ALICE

You mean like a princess in a castle and you're my prince?

PETE

No. Well, kind of. But not from a fairy tale.

MARY ALICE

That's the only kind of princess I know. The pony was fun. Do you want me to be your little pony again?

PETE

No.

MARY ALICE

Well, while you're making up your mind, why don't you buy me another Coke?

PETE

I just paid a hundred dollars for that one.

MARY ALICE

That money goes to my Daddy. I won't see a dime unless you buy another.

(Pause. He stops rubbing her back.)

PETE

This is all wrong.

MARY ALICE

But this is our time together, Pete.

PETE

I know. But this is, this is, it's wrong. I like you. I like you. It's not about the money. Well, it is and it isn't. I know we invited you here, I think we thought, I know I thought...

MARY ALICE

We'd do three-way?

PETE

No, no, no...I thought...I thought, when we saw you by the pool, I thought you were just staying. Like a guest. And when we started talking, I thought maybe you'd end up with one of us. Choose one of us. And I thought it might be me.

MARY ALICE

It is you. I'm here. And I'm starting to feel really close to you.

PETE

Then why do I have to pay you? Why can't we just...be together?

(Small pause. She sees this isn't going anywhere.)

MARY ALICE

Cuz I gotta go. My Daddy's gonna kill me.

(She gets up, gathers her things. Small pause.)

PETE

Could I, um, could I get my money back? Or part of it?

MARY ALICE

I already drunk the Coke. That's what you paid for.

(Beat.)

I'll tell you what. I'll give you twenty back for your watch.

PETE

Oh, no. I couldn't do that. This was my birthday gift. It's a limited edition, it was a big deal, I...

MARY ALICE

It's not so great. I've seen it in stores.

PETE

Yeah but this one, this is, no. I'm sorry. No. How about--?

MARY ALICE

Forget it.

(She starts to leave, then stops, turns.)

Oh. Your room might not get cleaned for awhile. Aunt Mamie fired the maid.

PETE

Why?

MARY ALICE

For stealing food. Aunt Mamie found some cans in her hamper. She must've stole 'em from the kitchen up front. How dumb can you be?

(She exits. Pete sits on his bed. After a moment, Alex enters with an open bottle of Jack Daniels in his hand. He's drunk.)

ALEX

Well? Should I bang pots and pans and hang the fuck-stained sheets over the door?

(Pete shrugs. Alex goes to Pete's bed, bends over, sniffs around like a dog.)

Pete! Shame on you!

PETE

We didn't do it there.

ALEX

Then where?

PETE

Keep sniffing.

ALEX

Fuck you.

(Takes a drink from his bottle.)

PETE

Are you still mad?

ALEX

I wasn't mad. I was just bored.

PETE

Where did you go?

ALEX

Got more Jack.

(Drinks. Small pause.)

She was wrong, you know. All that venomous shit she said about me. I am a loner. I like to be alone. I mean, I like you, but in general, I'm best with just me. You know? I think I'm usually at my peak when I'm alone. In fact, it's a shame no one else is around to witness it. It's really something sometimes.

(Beat.)

Why do you look so bummed? You should be celebrating. She was your first, right?

PETE

Maybe.

(Alex hands Pete the bottle. Pete takes a swallow.
Pause.)

PETE

They fired that maid.

ALEX

No shit?

PETE

I gave her some cans of food. Just to be nice. They thought she stole it.

ALEX

Well, see? That's why I quit Spanish. It's the language of the powerless.

(He drinks.)

BLACKOUT