RED HAIR, ext.

by Despoina Giapoudzi
SYNOPSIS:
A young person on the Autistic Spectrum meets love for the first time. In the conservative town they call their home however, a same-sex relationship cannot be allowed.

CAST OF CHARACTERS:
ALEX: Any sex, aged 17-26
JAY: Same sex as ALEX, aged 17-26
SAM: ALEX’s sibling, any sex, aged 21-30
FATHER: JAY’s father, aged 45+
EXTRA: portraying NURSE, CURATOR and FATHER JOHN (This character can be broken up in 3)
DOCTOR: Any sex, 40+, can also be played by SAM’s actor, w/disguise-shadow-other effect

NOTES FOR THE DIRECTOR:
RECORDING: refers to ALEX’s Voiceover or Video Projection
Inspiration music:
- Starsailor – Alcoholic, Love Is Here
- The Smiths - Asleep
- David Bowie - Gasoline
- Band of Skulls - Patterns
- Monophonics - Bang Bang
- Raign - Don’t Let Me Go
- James Bay - Need The Sun To Break
- Jet - Are You Gonna Be My Girl
- Madrugada – Honey Bee
- Lana Del Rey - Old Money
- Coldplay - The Scientist
- Archive - You Make Me Feel
- James - Senorita
- Charlotte OC - Colour My Heart
- James Young - I’ll Be Good
- Billie Eilish - lovely (with Khalid)

ALEX’s Behavior Breakdown:
Alex is between ASD Level 1 & ASD Level 2*, comorbid with OCD*. Remember, Alex is also an individual, not just autistic:
- Often calls JAY Jaybird (Director can allow extend of use)
- Has sudden violent bursts/meltdowns
- Has certain obsessions, e.g. trees (weeping willows)
- Arranges his/hers belongings in order
- Wears minimalistic clothes → T-shirts w/quotes, symbols
- Paints w/watercolors, draws using rulers for everything
- Wears noise cancelling headphones in loud environments
- walks/talks/acts in patterns
- Seems often distracted
- Avoids direct eye-contact
- Ignores things of no interest
- Avoids make-up (if female)
- Cannot fully grasp sarcasm
- Accepts changes w/difficulty
- Is synesthetic

*Further research assistance:
(During the following RECORDING, ALEX and JAY can be seen in different sides of the stage, improvising a synchronised sequence of moments from their daily routines, each in their own way)

RECORDING: ...) 5 6 32 68 1 8 4 3 7.. over 3 ... 458 83 ... Ughh.. Need to remember, need to remember, need to... (we hear or see EXTRA/NURSE entering, letting light come in, trying to inject some medicine with a syringe, while ALEX resists) hello Mr. mosquito, nice to see you (EXTRA/NURSE leaves) I am autistic. But then this thing happened (enraged to the point that he/she laughts) 84 57 2 09 (snaps), Then I am crazy- a psycho you know? Jay? Jay?? J loves ALEX, J..where is Jay? (Crying) I love J. He/She is mine and I am his/hers. 3 6 7 402 +13 68 95..!! (disbelief) Crazy! Hahaha Crazy? Me? (frightened) I promised, Jay said, He/She promised me.. forever.. forever, forev.. (JAY approaches ALEX, ALEX looks at the audience breaking the Fourth Wall, VOICEOVER deep breath) Jay, said

JAY & RECORDING: Hi

RECORDING: (ALEX still looking at the audience, smiling) on the bench; Date. March. 28. Hour. 15. Minute: 41. Second: 08, 09, 10.. Jay. Sun, Nike green/orange sneakers, brown check shirt and light baggy jeans, red hair, freckles. Jay.. Jay said hi. Jay said hi, Jay said hi, Jay said hi- JAY: (ALEX assumes sitting position on a bench, drawing, with many rulers and other measuring tools neatly arranged by him/her, headphones resting on neck) Excuse me (no response, ALEX is too focused) Mind if I sit here? (ALEX a bit upset, drawing with intensity, never looking up. JAY hasn’t noticed) Wow, that is pretty, how long did it take you?

ALEX: 10 days, 4 hours, (looks at calculator clock by him/her) 24 minutes and 12 seconds before you asked.

JAY: (a bit taken aback) Uhh ok.. Such dedication, I tend to stop at hour 3--

ALEX: Do you draw too??

JAY: Not like this, I try.. Wanna see? (ALEX motions yes) Here, see? Not much compared to yours (silence) That bad?

ALEX: There is no order.

JAY: Not everyone uses rulers. (silence) That’s the beauty in it for me. Uhh not that yours isn’t beautiful it-it is yours is beautiful for a different reason it’s intricate and detailed and in order. (Alex smiles privately to this, it’s a compliment) But for me, for my doodles, this makes sense, I just-I like it. Everyone has a style, really, uhmm like Dali with his melting clocks, or Rothko with the big blocks of colour, or Picasso-

ALEX: Ugh Picasso..

JAY: Not a fan?
ALEX: *thinking* Don’t get me started, he is all over the place. But everyone loves him.

JAY: I don’t! My favorite is Waterhouse. Have you been to the university next town? There’s a nice little gallery and they host very believable replicas! I’ve been meaning to visit for a while now.-

ALEX: *flips another page on the journal, sees that it’s not just pencilwork* You paint too?? Me too, when I am home. I cannot bring the colours here, the bag is too heavy and there is not enough water nearby, I use watercolors you see.

JAY: Oh I’ve never tried them, I’ve just stuck to pastels since third grade. *silence* Can I see your paintings sometime?

ALEX: I will have to get my mom’s permission for you to visit. But first we should become better acquainted. *flips another page* This is me..

JAY: Uhh sorry, I, you caught my eye from over there and I thought I’d-

ALEX: *looks up for the first time* This is me..

[BLACKOUT]

ALEX: *To the audience* What is your favorite tree? Mine is the weeping willow. It’s so beautiful. When I think of our first date with JAY, I picture a willow in there. Even though there wasn’t one. There was a maple tree by the gazebo, which is also pretty, but the willow has taken over in the image. Because it’s more fitting.

ALEX: Remember, it’s a secret, my mom would not advise this.

JAY: Yes, I remember. You know you don’t need her permission to talk to me.

ALEX: I was excited.

JAY: Can I hug you?

ALEX: Probably not.

JAY: Oh.. Can I hold your hand?

ALEX: You can try.

JAY: *(gently puts his/her hand on Alex’s, Alex tightens up)* Shall I remove it?

ALEX: Yes please.
JAY: Do you want me to leave?

ALEX: No. I like you..

JAY: You do?

ALEX: Yes

JAY: So it’s a date! Here, let’s try this. Lay down, we’ll look at the trees. Trust me (they lay)

RECORDING: (narrating action on stage) We date? Shhh, it’s a secret (Ultimate Happiness) We lay. Fireworks in my head- where did the numbers go? I’m lost, I’m lost, I’m lost. (starts breathing fast, Jay becomes alarmed)

JAY: Can we try again now? Our hands I mean? (does it absentmindedly)

RECORDING: (still to the audience) ..Touch..Breathe (breathing starts to become regular).. Smile, he/she laughs. Jay laughs. (Jay kisses him/her softly on the lips-Alex freezes) He/She says

JAY & RECORDING: ..it’s a kiss

RECORDING: I call it supernova-

[BLACKOUT]

(Indication of time passing to the taste of this script’s Director. Some suggestions include a sequence of voiceover or image projections, visual depiction of a clock moving fast or slow, a choreographed sequence of moments from JAY and ALEX’s life during their relationship, etc.)

[BLACKOUT]

(JAY and ALEX at the museum. ALEX is a bit too prepared for this trip, with all possible things hanging from his/her backpack.)

JAY: Ugh I could stare at that Waterhouse for hours.

ALEX: Will we continue drawing after we eat?

JAY: If we want to. We could go check out the modern art section later. I love making fun of those. Do you need water? Here. Uhhm, ok before we get food, I’m gonna go to the bathroom real quick, can you wait for me by that painting? I’ll be right back, I promise. (silence as ALEX stares at the painting and starts towards it, then JAY leaves. ALEX is too focused on the painting. It is a replica of a Piet Mondrian geometric composition, and ALEX eventually touches it)

EXTRA/CURATOR: (discreetly coughs from afar-ALEX doesn’t notice. CURATOR approaches strictly yet maintaining a sense of privacy) Excuse me young man/lady! Sir/Madam? Excuse me, you are
not allowed to touch the exhibits. Sir/Madam I am talking to you, can you remove your hand from the painting? Sir/Madam! (Removes ALEX’s headphones, ALEX snaps to reality and starts having a panic attack, hyperventilating and crying loud, the curator doesn’t know what to do, JAY returns while:) Please Sir/Madam, you are making a scene-

JAY: Hey! What did you do to him/her? Alex? Alex listen to me. It’s Jay, I’m right here. Alex, it’s me, you can calm down now. I’m here. (Alex has not calmed down, but has instead curled up into a ball on the floor, still panicking) What did Sam say? (thinks) Breathe Alex, breathe-

EXTRA/CURATOR: What is up with him/her? Sir/Madam stop this nonsense!

JAY: (to CURATOR) Are you fucking stupid? (to ALEX) Alex babe breathe, it’s alright now, I am here. (to CURATOR) What did you do? (to ALEX) Nobody will harm you, I am here Alex, do you hear me? (to CURATOR) What did you do?

EXTRA/CURATOR: He/She was touching the painting and I asked him/her to stop.

JAY: WHAT DID YOU DO?

EXTRA/CURATOR: NOTHING! He/She wouldn’t listen.

JAY: Didn’t you see the fucking headphones?

EXTRA/CURATOR: I-I didn’t do anything, I just took them off!

JAY: WHY? Alex, Alex, breathe, focus on me, it’s alright dear.

EXTRA/CURATOR: Sir/Madam I would like you to leave, you are upsetting the visitors.

JAY: Fuck you, and fuck the visitors. Don’t you see what is happening here? Look at me Alex, can you, can you look at me? Can I hold your hand Alex? No, ok no. Let’s take a breath. Uh, what did Sam say? Oh yes, Alex, do you want to count with me?

EXTRA/CURATOR: Sir/Madam, please escort him/her out. Or I will have to call the police.

JAY: Are you fucking serious? Fine, fine, let me make a call first. Alex, dear, I’m going to call Sam, alright? He/She will come pick us up, he/she will know how to handle this. (gently puts ALEX’s headphones on) Hey, Sam? We have a problem, Alex is having an episode. No it was all fine until I went to the bathroom. I’m sorry, I didn’t know.. It’s a pretty serious one. I don’t know what to do, and this dude/chick here is saying he/she’ll call the police. How the fuck (or hell) do they not train these people? Ok, please hurry, I’m freaking out. Alex, breathe, count with me babe. 1*1, 1, 2*2, 4, 3*3, 9, 4*4, 16, 5*5, 25, (Alex starts slowly calming down, never completely) 6*6, 36, 7*7, 49, ..

[FADEOUT]
JAY: (seeing SAM rushing in, jumps up) Is Alex alright?

SAM: Alex? Yea, he/she's painting. Sorry I'm late, there was a line at the bank-

JAY: Gods, you scared me. I thought he/she had another episode or something!

SAM: Not since. Listen, I need to talk to you.

JAY: Here? Don't you wanna go somewhere more quiet?

SAM: It's crowded, he/she won't find us here.

JAY: ...riiignt. You're freaking me out. Why the secrecy? [...] Sam? [...] Are you gonna talk?

SAM: You've made a mistake.

JAY: About the museum? You still think it was too much? I'm telling you, he/she was fine after a while- he/she-he/she loved it there befor-

SAM: About this whole relationship thing.

JAY: What? [...] You too?

SAM: Jay, I support your right in love, but my brother/sister is not the best subject.

JAY: What the fuck does that mean? Isn't he/she human? So what, he/she has breakdowns, that doesn't mean he/she can't love.

SAM: It's not that simple.

JAY: It's exactly that simple. What is right then? Do you wanna keep him/her inside for the rest of his/her life because you don't feel like babysitting anymore? Don't worry, I'll do it.

SAM: Jay a breakdown like that has not happened in ages.

JAY: So what? Life has new experiences, that's how it goes. He's/She's gonna have new kinds of breakdowns as he/she grows up, you can't keep him/her in a bubble.

SAM: No Jay, stop. What's the matter with you? Listen, I think you like this cause he/she makes you feel more normal, and that's not fair to him/her.
JAY: What?

SAM: Yes. Compared to him/her, you’ve got zero issues. It’s all "dandy"!

JAY: Dandy? Dandy! This (gesturing to his/her nonconforming existence) aside, you think I like being someone’s parent? Having to spell out every thought in my head five times before I speak to prevent misunderstandings? To not be able to get lost in his/her eyes?

SAM: I think you actually do. Cause for once, you’re considered the responsible adult instead of the reckless teen you feel you are all the time. You’ve got to understand that it’s impossible for him/her to be with you. He’s/She’s not normal.

JAY: She’s fine! (while heading/storming out) If she’s not normal, then I’m not normal either.

SAM: This is different. Jay, he/she needs constant attention, not you.

[JIGHTS FADE OUT ON SAM]

FATHER: (finding a card and potted plant on the front door) Jaay, I think you have an admirer!

JAY: (runs from his/her room) What? No, no, that’s nothing, where did you find it?

FATHER: Aww it all makes sense now, the singing mood, the restless painting.. I know you, you have a special someone.

JAY: No.

FATHER: Come on

JAY: Fine, maybe..

FATHER: How long now?

JAY: A while..

FATHER: Heey, why didn’t you say anything? You used to when you were little.. So, a girlfriend/boyfriend huh? About time. Who is she/he?

JAY: (pause, unsure if to continue) Uhmm, Alex.

FATHER: Bobby’s kid? Tall one?
JAY: No. Listen dad, it’s nothin.

FATHER: Come on, tell me about this Alex. I’m proud, I wanna tell your grandma!

JAY: Dad! No, stop asking.

FATHER: Jay? Why won’t you say? Hey, maybe now you’ll start looking more like a man/a lady. (if JAY is male) Maybe cut your hair a little! (if JAY is female) Maybe wear a dress sometime!

JAY: (now irritated) Dad, Alex is a guy/girl.

FATHER: What?

JAY: (realising he/she’s said it) Alex is a guy/girl.

FATHER: (long, awkward pause) Is that a weird joke of yours? (long, awkward pause) JAY? (long, tense pause) I AM FUCKING TALKING TO YOU JACOB/JACKIE! Say that again. Say it!

JAY: Dad I’m gay.

FATHER: SHUT UP! My son/daughter cannot be gay! This is disgusting, you are not gay, do you hear me? Forgive him/her Father. You should be ashamed for even thinking to make that joke. GAY! (starts towards JAY ready to slap him/her, hesitates right before) Go to your room, you can come back when you are yourself again.

[TRANSITION]

(Throughout the following series ALEX can be seen on a different side of the stage worrying and failing to focus on his drawing/painting)

(FATHER breaks into JAY’s room, searches for and throws his/her PC monitor/laptop/radio or other object and throws it on the ground, while saying the following. JAY is shocked, scared and protesting throughout)

FATHER: It’s this fucking machine (or other, eg music) that gave you the idea, isn’t it? Where is it? WHERE IS IT? Fucking computers, all day in front of a screen, your brains have become a mush. Now you’ll see. Stupid garbage, fucking piece of shit. No more Internet (alternate choice of word: nonsense/crap), you hear me??

[BLACKOUT]

(FATHER consulting a DOCTOR on one side of the stage, only them in light)

FATHER: What can I do Doctor?
EXTRA/DOCTOR: There is nothing you can do Sir, I am really sorry. Perhaps a psychiatrist would help.

FATHER: A psychiatrist? What will the town say? I cannot take my son/daughter to a psychiatrist. I drove here today because you are a doctor. People go to the doctors all the time. And our family doctor is busy this week, you understand?

EXTRA/DOCTOR: I see. Listen, there is perhaps one more person who can help. A patient tried it once and said it worked. (Slow fadeout while lights come up on FATHER JOHN and JAY across the stage. Looks like a confessional, JAY starts crying over the following.) Father John is an expert on such cases, I can give you his number.

(Fadeout and lights come up as FATHER meets Stage Centre with FATHER JOHN)

EXTRA/FATHER JOHN: Trust me, this is the only way to cure the child.

FATHER: How long will it be for Father?

EXTRA/FATHER JOHN: I’m afraid I cannot answer that. As long as it takes. It will all depend on Jay.

[BLACKOUT]

SAM: Alex, I need you to hear me carefully, and promise that you will not do anything. Alex, Jay has not been angry or disappointed with you. Jay told his/her father about your relationship and was not allowed to talk to you. (silence) Alex, Jay is going to be transferred to a conversion center in the morning. I have tried talking to his/her father, but he won’t listen. Alex, I couldn’t keep it a secret from you, you deserve to know.

ALEX: (too shocked to move, eyes fixed to the floor) They are taking him/her away? Why?

SAM: A lot of people don’t like gay people, Alex.

ALEX: Why?

SAM: Because they’re different.

ALEX: I am different. Jay is perfect. What is a conversion center?

SAM: It’s a place with doctors; they...treat gay people.

ALEX: What are they going to do to him/her?

SAM: I don’t know honey.. (ALEX is starting panicking, white noise builds up) ALEX, promise me that you will stay here and not do anything. Alex, calm down. (White noise stops abruptly)
RECORDING: (narrating action on stage while ALEX remains still) 5. 5. 5. 5. 5. Date. August. 5. Hour. 7. Minute: 26. Second: 03, 04, 05, 05, 05, 05.. I sneaked out. Ran to the house on the hill and saw a car and men pushing. Pushing. White socks, grey sweatpants, white T-shirt with a rainbow, red hair - ponytail. Jay..

JAY: (resisting, calling to the air) ALEX! ALEX! NO, LET ME GO. ALEX!

RECORDING: They hurt him/her. They sent him/her away. (hate in his/her eyes) HE..

[BLACKOUT]

(Lights slowly up while ALEX is restlessly banging on FATHER’s door)

FATHER: Go away you freak! Jay is gone

ALEX: NO HE/SHE LOVES ME

FATHER: GO AWAY. Jay will love only God now.

ALEX: NO! No no no no no Jay loves Alex. Alex.. Alex.. Alex me Alex. Jay gone. He/She gone away. Ugh OPEN UP OPEN UP OPEN UP OPEN UP OPEN U-

FATHER: (suddenly opens) I SAID GO AWAY!

ALEX: (FATHER starts to go, but ALEX has questions to ask. Improvised scene to the discretion of the director. It leads to a fatal accident that ALEX does not realise until it is too late) YOU HURT HIM/HER YOU HURT JAY! YOU HURT HIM/HER YOU HURT HIM/HER. JAY.. JAY.. (FATHER is now unconscious, possibly bleeding.) Jay’s dad? Uhm, say something. Hello? Wow.. Uhm... 872 82 3 4 5 87203 Uhhmmm

(Light change during the following, while ALEX is being tied in a straight jacket by EXTRAs.)

EXTRA & RECORDING: (EXTRA seriously, RECORDING with sarcasm: ) Hello? Police?? Lock him/her up. Crazy!

RECORDING: (still voiceover, next 3 sentences fast, while ALEX is being pushed) Alex being pushed. (police sirens/lights) Alex in a police car.. Wait! What about Jay..? (Voiceover stops, as ALEX is alone in an isolation ward)


[END]