Here be PIRATES!
by
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Cast of Characters

Alex: Female. Teenager. Surly. Spends most of the play as a silent puppet in Kip’s fantasy world.

Kip: Can be played by any gender. Young (between the ages of 7 and 10), a dreamer. Obsessed with pirates.

Ensemble: Play various roles within Kip’s fantasy. Should consist of about 10-12 people.

Mom & Dad: Alex and Kip’s parents. Good people. They try their best.

Synopsis

A child discovers a secret about their older sibling which inspires imaginary madcap pirate adventures.

Setting

An average American suburban house, present day.

Wild imaginings of a time long since passed into legend.
SCENE 1

(A teenager’s bedroom. ALEX sits at a computer, surreptitiously surfing the Pirate Bay (a popular source for free, illegal software downloads). Every so often, she checks the door.)

(KIP bursts into the room, excited and bubbly. ALEX jumps and tries to exit the browser window, but the computer freezes.)

KIP: (giving ALEX a huge hug) Hey, Alex!!

ALEX: (preoccupied with the frozen computer) Hey, Kip…

KIP: What’cha up to?

ALEX: (still wrestling with the computer) Nothing. Can you – can you go and be somewhere else right now?

KIP: (curiosity piqued) Why?

ALEX: I’m – I’m busy.

KIP: Doing what?

ALEX: (panicking) Nothing! Mind your own business!

KIP: (peering over ALEX’S shoulder) The… Pirate Bay… What’s that?

ALEX: It’s… just a website.

KIP: (oh my god pirates) There are PIRATES in there??

ALEX: (crap) No! It – I’m just trying to find some music, okay? It’s nothing weird.

(KIP has stopped paying attention to what ALEX is saying, lost in daydreams.)

ALEX: Kip…? Kip. (trying to snap them back to reality) You can’t tell Mom and Dad.

KIP: Tell Mom and Dad what?

ALEX: That –

KIP: (excited) That you’re a pirate??

ALEX: What–? No! I –

KIP: I won’t tell!!

ALEX: I’m not a–!

(KIP runs out of the room before ALEX gets a chance to explain.)
SCENE 2

(KIP’S room. KIP is dressed in pajamas, engaged in a mock swordfight on top of their bed. Toys on the floor indicate their obsession with all things pirate. KIP eventually tires of the fight and flops down on the bed, picking up a dress-up pirate’s hat and examining it.)

KIP: I can’t believe Alex is a pirate…

(KIP puts the hat on their head.)

KIP: No wonder she spends so much time in her room! She must be searching for treasure! (sits up excitedly) On the internet! Pirates these days have it so much better than pirates back in the old days. (starting to spin a fantasy) That Pirate Bay place must be where all of the internet pirates gather, just like the taverns in the secret coves they USED to go to, to talk about their treasure hunting…

(As KIP talks, lights change to reveal a bustling pirate pub scene. This is KIP’S fantasy, so the scene moves according to their whims. A pirate’s life as envisioned by a child. ENSEMBLE members, dressed as pirates, mill about, exchanging toasts and jokes, comparing pistols, talking about their travels, etc. The noise level from this scene should be the definition of a Dull Roar. Sea chanties can be heard distantly in the background. A couple of the pirates might even be dancing along.)

KIP: (while the scene unfolds) Alex walks into the tavern with a job and a story…

(ALEX, also dressed as a pirate, walks into the scene, a rolled up treasure map in her hand. The pub grows quiet. Several of the other pirates turn to stare at her. She jumps up onto the table and silently begins to “tell her tale” to the pirates gathered around her. At the same time, KIP jumps up onto her bed. KIP and ALEX move in tandem, ALEX acting as a silent puppet in KIP’S fantasy.)

KIP (as ALEX): (adopting a pirate-y tone of voice) Avast, ye scallywags! I’ve a proposal for ye – there’s a treasure… a MIGHTY haul o’ booty – out there on the open water, and WE’RE gonna be the FIRST ONES to find it!

(The ENSEMBLE joins in – general clamor, lots of “arr”-ing.)

ENSEMBLE MEMBER (as PIRATE): What is it, Cap’n?!)

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KIP (as ALEX): The greatest treasure of all… MUSIC. A very RARE and BEAUTIFUL music… NE’ER BEFORE heard by human ears!

(KIP is making it up as they go along, spinning new ideas as the story unfolds inside their head.)

KIP (as ALEX): ‘Tis the song of a mermaid… from a time very long ago… sung into a seashell and preserved in a cave a million miles away from here. ‘Tis said… ‘tis said that whoever hears this song will be happy forever!

ENSEMBLE MEMBERS (as PIRATES): (slightly overlapping as they talk, a general clamor) A million miles away?! We’ll ne’er find it! That’s impossible! (etc.)
KIP (as ALEX): Not so! With my great ship, the… uh – the… the INTERNET, we can go anywhere!

(The ENSEMBLE cheers as the lights go down.)
SCENE 3

(Lights up on KIP in their bedroom, as the rest of the ensemble changes the scene to that of a pirate ship in black.)

KIP: And of course, they set sail right away, ready for another adventure. Off to find the music that will make anyone who listens to it happy forever!

(KIP bends down, picks up a toy saber, and thrusts it out in front of them in a grand “forward-ho” gesture. Lights up on the “pirate ship.” KIP remains on their bed, standing as if looking out over the stern. They shield their eyes. On the other side of the stage, ALEX does the same. A crew member walks up behind ALEX and stands watching her.)

KIP (as ALEX): We’re on the right course, mate.

ENSEMBLE MEMBER (as CREW MEMBER): But Cap’n, won’t there be terrible danger in the way of the shell?

KIP (as ALEX): No doubt, skipper. That’s why I picked the best crew for the job.

ENSEMBLE MEMBER (as CREW MEMBER): What kind of things will be see, Cap’n?

(KIP jumps down from the bed at this point, acting out each trial with childish enthusiasm, while ALEX unfurls her treasure map but otherwise stays put, still silently matching KIP’S speech.)

KIP (as ALEX): We’ll face a TERRIBLE storm. Then, if we’re lucky to make it out alive, we’ll find the island where the shell is hidden, only to find it inhabited by DREADFUL ENEMY PIRATES! If we can fight our way through and beat them, they will tell us where the shell is hidden. But THEN! Once we get to that place, we will have to FIND the shell, and take it for ourselves. And that’s not gonna be easy, owing to the LEGENDARY GUARDIAN OF THE SONG!

(KIP hasn’t quite figured out what the Guardian of the Song is yet, but they do know that it’s massive and scary.)

KIP (as ALEX): (cont’d) The cleverest monster KNOWN to MAN. We’ll have to use all of our wits to outsmart it!

(KIP leaps back onto the bed and ALEX resumes her puppetry.)

KIP (as ALEX): But I believe that we can do it, matey. We have one very important thing on our side.

ENSEMBLE MEMBER (as CREW MEMBER): What’s that, Cap’n?

KIP (as ALEX): A pirate’s luck. (cheesy grin and a wink)

(Lights down.)
SCENE 4

(KIP remains on their bed, but now rocking back and forth as if the ship is in a high wind. Lights up on the pirate ship. The ENSEMBLE and ALEX mimic KIP’S movements. ALEX stands at the wheel, steering with an eye to the horizon.)

KIP (as ALEX): Look alive, mateys! We’re comin’ up on a mighty storm! Man the ropes, and steady on!

ENSEMBLE MEMBER (as CREW MEMBER): It’s too big, Cap’n! We’ll never make it through!

KIP (as ALEX): The Internet can weather more’n a squall like this! We push on!

(Thunder cracks and waves roar, and everyone rocks and falls at once as the lights go down once more.)
SCENE 5

(KIP lies on the floor, spread-eagled on their back. ALEX and half of the ENSEMBLE do the same. The other half has exited backstage in black. KIP and ALEX sit up and look around.)

KIP: The storm carried the ship way off course, right onto the sandy shores of a deserted island.

(The half of the ENSEMBLE that exited at the end of Scene 4 sneaks up, their normal pirate accessories swapped for black ones.)

KIP: Or... seemingly deserted.

(KIP and ALEX turn and leap up, grabbing their swords as one. The two groups meet head-on, ALEX and her crew fighting the enemy pirates while KIP acts out the duel on their own, taking on the role of ALEX as always. Crew and enemy pirates alike fall one by one, until ALEX is left dueling the last remaining enemy pirate. With a swift sword stroke, she brings them to their knees. The enemy drops their sword and raises their hands in surrender.)

KIP (as ALEX): (still with the sword pointed at the enemy pirate’s throat) Give me one good reason why I shouldn’t kill ye where ye kneel.

ENSEMBLE MEMBER (as ENEMY PIRATE): Ye... yer here for the song.

KIP (as ALEX): Aye, that’s right.

ENSEMBLE MEMBER (as ENEMY PIRATE): (sinisterly) I can take ye to it.

KIP (as ALEX): I won’t be repeatin’ meself again, bilge rat. Tell me where it is, or ye die in the sand.

ENSEMBLE MEMBER (as ENEMY PIRATE): It’s in a cave... up north. Ye’ll ne’er survive.

KIP (as ALEX): (turning away and sheathing their sword) YOU might not.

(ALEX walks off stage while KIP mimes trudging up a sandy hill in place. The ENSEMBLE remains frozen until the lights go down.)
SCENE 6

(Lights up. KIP is alone, pacing back and forth and swinging their sword as they tell the next part of the story.)

KIP: Alex searched all day, mourning the loss of her men. The cave remained hidden, until the setting sun shone down on a small hole in the side of the highest hill on the island.

(KIP drops to their belly, crawling as if creeping along a very small underground passage. Lights up on the other side of the stage, where ALEX does the same. After a moment, they both straighten up, looking around and squinting as if in very dim light.)

KIP: This had to be it—! The cave she’d been searching for… but there wasn’t anything there. Just the sandy ground…

(ALEX sits down in despair, taking off her hat and tossing it in the dirt. KIP stays where they are, mesmerized by their own imagination. Through the next part of the scene, the puppetry is gone. ALEX still acts out what KIP says, but the two do not move in tandem.)

KIP: Alex couldn’t believe she’d gotten so far for all of this nothing. Her crew was dead, she was hungry and tired, and the treasure was nowhere to be found. She was just about to give up and turn back to her ship, when suddenly… (dramatic pause) she heard a strange, beautiful noise.

(A song starts up underneath KIP’S last sentence. Ideally, it should be a member of the ENSEMBLE, quietly singing a haunting song to chill the bones. KIP stops narrating, mesmerized by the song. ALEX follows the music through the cave. It gradually rises in volume until the performer is singing at full. ALEX drops to her knees excitedly and unearthed a CD case, battered and aged by years in the sand. She opens it as the singing reaches a crescendo and pulls out a CD, painted to look like a seashell. She grins triumphantly and holds it aloft, like the scene at the end of a children’s cartoon. KIP whoops and cheers.)

KIP: But suddenly…

(A loud (and legitimately terrifying) roar shakes the scene. KIP and ALEX step back in surprise, their movements joined again.)

KIP: The Guardian of the Song emerged!

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1 There is some room for artistic liberty on the part of the director here. The song can be one of two things: It can either be a sea shanty, for thematic appropriateness, OR it can be a song from the modern day, in order to imply the song that Alex was downloading at the beginning of the play. In the case of the sea shanty, the song should be “Dead Man’s Chest.” In the case of the modern song, use your imagination, but it should be in a minor key to add to the ambiance of the scene.

2 The Guardian of the Song can be played in different ways, but it should be comprised of multiple ensemble members. A couple of suggestions: a Chinese lion dance costume, or the outline of a being created using only the bodies of the ensemble. The possibilities are endless. The only requirement is that the Guardian looks impressive.
(ALEX and KIP draw their swords. The GUARDIAN does not move to attack ALEX immediately.)

KIP: (aside) The Guardian was only a thing of legend – up until now. It was deathly clever and had an incredibly short temper… Alex would have to use all of her wits to best it and claim the song.

(A booming voice echoes through the cave.)

GUARDIAN: PIRATE. THE SONG DOES NOT BELONG TO YOU.

KIP (as ALEX): Does it belong to you?

GUARDIAN: IT BELONGS TO THE ONE WHO CAME BEFORE.

KIP (as ALEX): Do you mean the mermaid? The one the tales speak of?

GUARDIAN: THIS CAVE ONCE BELONGED TO THE SEA. SHE WAS HAPPY HERE. SHE SANG SO HER HAPPINESS WOULD NEVER BE FORGOTTEN.

KIP (as ALEX): So why won’t you let me take the shell?

GUARDIAN: (taken aback) … WHAT?

KIP (as ALEX): If her song was never meant to be forgotten, why won’t you let me take it and share it with the world?

GUARDIAN: (no one’s used this tactic before…) I… HADN’T THOUGHT OF IT THAT WAY BEFORE.

KIP (as ALEX): So… you’ll let me take it.

GUARDIAN: (wavering) NO! YOU DO NOT KNOW HOW TO CARE FOR IT. YOU WOULD USE IT, AND WHEN YOU NO LONGER HAVE NEED FOR IT YOU WILL THROW IT AWAY.

KIP (as ALEX): I want to share the song because I want to be happy, and I want my friends to be happy. I won’t throw it away. It’s too important.

(Long beat.)

GUARDIAN: WELL… I SUPPOSE.

(KIP and ALEX grin triumphantly again and look down at their prize. The GUARDIAN slowly disappears. Lights down.)
SCENE 7

(KIP crawls into bed, feeling sleepy from all the excitement, still with their pirate hat on their head.)

KIP: (gradually falling asleep) Alex took the treasure back home and played it for all of her pirate mates. They all agreed that it was the best song they’d ever heard, and they all were very happy to the end of their days...
SCENE 8
(The next day, at breakfast. ALEX and MOM and DAD are sitting around the breakfast table. KIP comes running into the kitchen, still wearing their pirate hat.)

MOM: Kip, honey, did you wear your hat to bed last night?

KIP: (just realizing it’s still on their head) Oh… oops.

(ALEX has started to piece together what must have happened after their exchange the day before and looks at KIP with an “oh god please no” look on her face.)

DAD: Why’d you do that?

KIP: Because I wanted to be like Alex!

(ALEX wonders what would happen if she just ran for it.)

DAD: Be like… Alex?

KIP: Yeah!

MOM: What do you mean, sweetheart?

KIP: ‘Cause she’s a pirate!!

(ALEX quails as both parents turn to look at her.)

(Lights down.)