Scene 9 - “Playtime (Reprise)”, “Alicia’s Nightmare”

Lights up on the band room. MS. ANDERSON erases the whiteboard and changes the date to December 20, updating various other info — “All-State application forms due Jan 12”, “Jazz Band cancelled Tuesday”, etc. As she writes she sings:

MS. ANDERSON

PLAYTIME
WE GET BACK INTO GEAR WITH PLAYTIME.
(IT’S BEEN A WEEK, JUST SO WE’RE CLEAR)
NOW IT’S PLAYTIME...

She continues to hum the rest of the melody as she writes. The students are chatting, waiting for class to start. JOHN talks to JOEY as JOEY looks past him, trying to catch JILL’s eye, while JILL is in the middle of a conversation with BAILEY and KAT.

JILL
...so after that, I don’t know that I’ll ever be able to eat latkes again. (to KAT) You look tired.

KAT
I was up late cramming for our chem test next block.

BAILEY
The test that you bought the answers to?

KAT
Um… yup. How was your night, Bailey?

BAILEY
I got this in the mail from Ithaca.

BAILEY pulls out an envelope.

KAT
Why didn’t you open it yet?

BAILEY
Alicia and I were gonna wait to open them together, but…

JILL
But you’re estranged right now.

BAILEY
We’re not “estranged”. She’s been very slightly completely ignoring me for a week. You know, like friends do.

JILL
Case in point…

ALICIA enters. Tired. Frazzled.
Backpack unzipped, arms full of sheet music that’s out of order. BAILEY approaches her, but ALICIA does not acknowledge her presence.

BAILEY
Alicia, look. I’m sorry about the party. I totally get the cold shoulder thing, I deserve it. But I got an envelope from Ithaca yesterday and I’m betting you did too. So if you want to open them together, I’ll be in the second floor bathroom today after school. That’s all.

MS. ANDERSON steps to the front of the room and waves for the group’s attention.

MS. ANDERSON
I know winter break is soon, but it’s not here yet. You should all find parts for Among the Clouds on your stands, let’s sightread it now.

Everyone gets ready. MS. ANDERSON begins to conduct, and the band begins to “play”, with everyone humming the melody to “Playtime”. Except ALICIA:

ALICIA
(singing out of time, yawning)
BEDTIME,
WE WAIT ALL WEEK LONG FOR BEDTIME…
DA DA DA DA… BEDTIME…

ALICIA finally nods off. Some kind of jarring lights/staging transition occurs to show that we are now in the world of ALICIA’S dream, populated by dream-
versions of her peers. MS. ANDERSON exits. Dream-BAILEY gets up and whispers in ALICIA’s ear:

BAILEY
Aw, was Alicia up all night worrying about what’s in this widdle enwewope?

BAILEY reaches into ALICIA’s backpack and pulls out an identical envelope to the one she had before, as ALICIA “awakens” into the dream world.

ALICIA
Bailey?

BAILEY
Silly Alicia, I’m not Bailey! You can’t keep secrets from me, but it’s so cute that you still try. Now, you and I both know you’re not supposed to be here right now.

ALICIA
My parents knew something was wrong when I wasn’t excited to see the envelope from Ithaca, so I had to tell them what happened. They wanted me to cancel all my other auditions, but I made a deal with them. I can keep auditioning… so long as I quit band.

BAILEY
Yet, your presence here would suggest that you haven’t made up your mind yet.

ALICIA
I have. I’m going to keep trying.

BAILEY
Then what’s the hold-up? Why haven’t you broken the news to Ms. A yet?

ALICIA
You wouldn’t understand.

BAILEY
I understand better than you do. I know everything that goes through your head. You think, “Maybe if I never open this envelope, it’s like my colossal failure never happened.” Wrong.

ALICIA
I can’t change the past, but I have to move forward.

BAILEY
You think, “Maybe if I work twice as hard from now on, it’ll all be fixed.” Wrong.
ALICIA
It’s a numbers game! Not all auditions will go well, but one of them will if I keep trying!

BAILEY
You think, “Maybe with enough patience and practice I can fix my broken brain.” Very, very wrong.

*The other dream-students have surrounded ALICIA. Music begins.*

BAILEY
ALICIA DEAR, NOW I KNOW YOU’VE BEEN STRESSED ABOUT THE MYRIAD OF FEARS YOU’VE EXPRESSED. AFRAID THAT YOU WON’T MEASURE UP TO THE REST. Oh, no... how do I put this?

YOUR INSECURITIES, THEY MUST BE ADDRESSED. THEY’RE NOT EXAGGERATED, I CAN ATTEST. YOU DON’T GET BETTER, IN FACT YOU’VE REGRESSED. Sorry, was that too advice-y?

YOU’LL NEVER BE GOOD ENOUGH. YOU’LL NEVER MAKE THE GRADE. IF ALL OF YOUR DREAMS ARE OUT OF REACH, WHY BOTHER PUTTING YOURSELF THROUGH ALL THIS PAIN?

ALL (except ALICIA)
POOR ALICIA’S IN A FIX, SINKING LIKE A SACK OF BRICKS. STILL SHE FLOUNDER LIKE SHE’S GOT A CHANCE, WHEN WILL SHE UNDERSTAND? IT’S TIME TO GIVE UP.

JOHN, JOEY, NED
GIVE UP, GIVE UP, GIVE UP, GIVE UP…(etc., continues in background a la walking bass)

BAILEY
I know realizing your limits is a tough pill to swallow. Tougher than the pills you take every morning.

*All of the dream-students laugh evilly.*

BAILEY (CON’T)
It’s so much *easier* to yell at me, isn’t it? Trust me – you’ll feel better if you stop fighting the truth. Stay in band and enjoy it while you can. Let this silly dream go.

ALICIA

Never.

BAILEY

If you refuse to listen to me, maybe you’ll listen to the rest of them.

JOHN & JOEY

*(holding hands, in unison, kinda creepy)*

We’ll go next.

JOHN

YOU SPEND ALL DAY PRACTICING AND PLAYING PRETEND. CONSTANTLY PRIORITIZING SCALES OVER FRIENDS. I THINK WE ALL KNOW HOW THIS TRAGEDY ENDS.

You’re even less fun to be around than Ned.

NED

It’s true!

JOEY

SEEMS LIKE THE CLARINET IS TOO MUCH FOR YOU. PERHAPS THERE’S SOMETHING SIMPLER THAT YOU COULD DO. WE COULD FIND SOME SPACE FOR YOU ON WOOD BLOCK 2…

KAT

I have seniority, after all.

*KAT doinks ALICIA on the head with the wood block mallet.*

BAILEY / JILL / KAT

YOU’LL NEVER BE GOOD ENOUGH. YOU’LL NEVER HAVE IT MADE. IF “PRETTY GOOD” IS ALL YOU’RE DESTINED TO BE, WHY BOTHER PRACTICING EVERY SINGLE SOLITARY DAY?

ALL (except ALICIA)

POOR ALICIA’S OFF THE RAILS. AGAIN SHE RISKS, AGAIN SHE FAILS. STILL SHE STRUGGLES AGAINST THE RISING TIDE, WHEN WILL SHE REALIZE? IT’S TIME TO GIVE UP.

JILL
They say insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. What’s her prognosis?

BAILEY
Don’t ask me, I’m not a doctor. But I could be if I wanted to! Anything is possible when you just relax!

MS. ANDERSON enters wearing a lab coat.

MS. ANDERSON
Did somebody say “doctor”?

KAT
Ms. Anderson! I never knew you were a psychiatrist!

MS. ANDERSON
Actually, my doctorate is in music, but it’s pretty much the same thing.

JILL
Please, doc. Tell us, what is this girl’s problem?

MS. ANDERSON
It’d be faster if I told you what isn’t her problem! (laughs) But seriously. Depression, anxiety… They say all great artists are neurotic, but it seems like she missed out on the talent and just got the neuroses.

JOEY
Can you put that in layman’s terms for us, please?

MS. ANDERSON
She’s fucked.

ALICIA
IT ISN’T TRUE, WHAT YOU SAY,
I KNOW IT DEEP INSIDE.
WITH PATIENCE AND PRACTICE, I’LL BE OKAY
THAT’S WHAT EVERY MOVIE TAUGHT ME…

ALL (EXCEPT ALICIA)
THEY LIED.

BAILEY
I only hang out with you because I feel bad for you.

JILL
You’re a disappointment, and not in a cool way.

KAT

You’d be so pretty if you smiled more!

JOHN

…and took that stick out of your ass.

JOEY

Seriously, what is wrong with you?

MS. ANDERSON

You want a letter of recommendation? Here’s your letter of recommendation: “To whom it may concern: I recommend that you stay as far away from this loser as possible.”

ALICIA

Stop! Everyone, stop! You’ve made some compelling arguments, but you’re all wrong. I can do it. I know I can do it.

BAILEY

Why?

ALICIA

Because it has to work out in the end.

BAILEY

Does it? Do you want to know what’s really going to happen?

ALICIA

What, you can see the future?

BAILEY

This is a dream. I can do fucking anything.

AFTER DECADES PASS MONOTONOUSLY, SOMEDAY, WHEN YOU LOOK BACK ON THIS, YOU’LL AGREE. YOU’LL PLOP YOUR LITTLE DAUGHTER DOWN ON YOUR KNEE, And you’ll tell her…

“ALICIA JUNIOR, DEAR, WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE. I DREAMED OF PLAYING MUSIC UP ON THE STAGE. BUT NOW I’M BETTER OFF WITH MINIMUM WAGE.” That’s the truth! The ugly truth!

“I JUST WASN’T GOOD ENOUGH,” (THAT’S WHAT YOU’LL SAY) “I COULDN’T TAKE THE HEAT, BUT WHEN ALL’S SAID AND DONE, I’M SO GLAD I GAVE IN,
AND STOPPED GETTING MY HOPES UP…

PLAYING FOR HOURS…

PULLING ALL-NIGHTERS…

RUINING FRIENDSHIPS…

I’M SO GLAD THAT I GAVE UP!”

I CAN’T GIVE UP!

NED

JILL & KAT

JOEY & JOHN

ALL

ALICIA

Music ends and the other students exit. ALICIA awakens with a jolt.