

A WAVE IN THE OCEAN

By Dennis Bush

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ISBN: 978-1-60003-708-5

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SYNOPSIS: Anticipating heartbreak, Chloe tries to face the fears she can't lock away in her memory box. A challenging solo piece for a young actress, *A Wave in the Ocean* is funny, quirky, and, ultimately, uplifting and empowering.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

CHLOE (f) 18, sensitive, intense, quirky; anticipating heartbreak; trying to face the fears she can't lock away in her memory box

PROPS

- A box.
- Several doll body parts.
- A tote bag.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Reading: New York City, April 2012

Premiere: Phoenix, AZ, May 2012

Both the reading and the premiere performance featured Chelsea Karnes as Chloe.

SETTING:

The present

AT RISE:

Lights up as CHLOE, 18, enters tentatively, carrying a tote bag. She approaches a chair, looking as if she's not certain that she should proceed. Narrowing her eyes, she stares intently, distrustfully at the audience.

A beat.

She reaches into her tote bag and pulls out a small box, approximately the size of a cigar box. Putting the box on her lap, she stares straight ahead, narrowing her eyes, again.

CHLOE: This is my memory box. Usually, it stays in my room. But today's Saturday, so I have to bring it with me. I can't leave it in my room because it's Saturday. *(Quick pause.)* Saturday is when the cleaning couple come. A cleaning lady and a cleaning man. *(Quick pause.)* A cleaning couple. I told my mom that I didn't want them to go in my room at all – that I'd be responsible for cleaning it myself – but that request was denied. A big, "No." So, my memory box comes with me. The cleaning lady does my room and my sister's room. The cleaning *man* does my brother's room. My mother believes in gender specificity, in terms of cleaning assignments. The man does the bathroom and the lady does the kitchen. The kitchen has traditionally been the bastion of female control, so even though my father does most of the cooking for our family, my mother thinks that the cleaning *lady* should be the one who cleans it. I'm not sure why the man gets stuck with the bathroom. My mother has never articulated her reasons for that particular cleaning assignment and I don't want to ask. I like a little mystery. Whichever one of them finishes first – the lady or the man – cleans my parents' bedroom. That may change, though. Last week, my mother saw the cleaning lady picking up a pair of my dad's underwear off the floor. She didn't think that was appropriate. She would have preferred if the cleaning lady went and got the cleaning man to pick up my dad's underwear. I think

my dad should pick up his *own* underwear. But maybe my expectations are unrealistic. I clean my room before the cleaning lady gets there on Saturday morning. I don't want her thinking I have a messy room. I don't want her to judge me. And I don't want her to touch my memory box. Because she'd open it up and look inside. The temptation would be too strong. She'd have to open it. I wouldn't blame her. I'd *judge* her but I wouldn't *blame* her. (*Rubbing the top of the box, intensely.*) A person's memory box is a very private and personal thing. And having somebody else touch it taints the sanctity of the memories inside. It puts the fingerprints and, more importantly, the *energy* of somebody else on your private, personal memories. (*A pause; tracing her finger around the edge of the box top and.*) I put *people* in my memory box. (*Quick pause, with a laugh.*) Not actual people. Just *parts* of people. (*Quick pause.*) And not parts of *actual people*. Just parts of *dolls* that *represent* actual people. (*Quick pause.*) People in my life. (*Quick pause.*) People who've had an impact on me. (*Quick pause.*) People who have earned the privilege of having a symbolic part of their body in my memory box. (*She opens the box, looks inside, and smiles.*)

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