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PREVIEW: THE BUREAU OF RE-NAMING

By

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Cast of Characters

The Receptionist:	no-nonsense, a little harassed by her job, but good at heart
The Mother:	desperate, sort of high-strung, pushy
The Jock:	loud, full of himself, but not without some charm
The Cheerleader:	pretty, bubbly, enthusiastic, an undercurrent of uncertainty
The Goth:	her dress, posture, and demeanor try hard to convey edginess, but...
The Geek:	awkward, timid, a little eccentric, but very sweet and kind
The Voice:	magisterial, but benevolent – a little otherworldly

Synopsis

In keeping with Earthsea and its genre, all of the above characters are archetypes with which we’re pretty familiar – but also have the potential to be more than that. Care should be taken to make them recognizable, but not caricatures.

Set

A waiting room, much like every other waiting room you’ve been in. A little out of fashion. Old magazines. Worn furniture. Monochromatic. Boring. Not a place you’d want to be stuck forever. What gives the room any sort of energy are the conversations and

Act 1

Scene 1

At rise, JOCK and CHEERLEADER are sitting in the waiting room, reading magazines or playing on their cell phones. MOTHER is at RECEPTIONIST's desk or window, trying to schedule an appointment.

The Receptionist

How about Thursday the 24th? How does that sound?

The Mother

That's a little far out. You don't have anything sooner?

The Receptionist

Well, it's a very busy time of year for us, what with graduation coming up. Lots of folks coming of age, hitting that moment when it's time to –

The Mother

I understand, yes, but I just don't know what to do with him, and I've got to get him in here soon. He just lies on the couch all day, playing video games, not a single word to me or his father. It takes every ounce of energy to get him out the door for school, and when it's time for homework – oh!

The Receptionist

Well, I don’t know if that’s something we can help with. It doesn’t really sound like he’s ready to be re-named.

The Mother

How dare you! He’s the same age as those two over there. In the same calculus class as – You! Boy! What’s your name?

The Jock

Hello, Mrs. –

The Receptionist

Maam, I’m going to ask you to calm down and lower your voice. Our services here at The Bureau of Re-Naming are not “one size fits all.” Specific age has nothing to do with it. Some get renamed at eighteen; others aren’t ready until they’re fifty. And if he shows up at the appointed time, not ready to be renamed, we’ll send him home.

The Mother

Of course he’ll be ready! I’m a very good mother, but I’m at my wit’s end!

The Receptionist

I’m not questioning your parenting skills. Quite the opposite. Your skills and abilities have nothing to do with it. Your son will be ready for re-naming precisely *when* he’s not dependent on you any more.

The Mother

Oh, that’s ridiculous! If I don’t help show him who he’s going to be, how will he ever find out? Every day, I tell him: “You could be so much more! A doctor! A teacher! Don’t you want a family, a nice home, to be recognized in the community for helping others and – “

The Receptionist

Well, the process of re-naming is a little more complicated than that –

The Mother

Don’t I know that?! Why do you think I’m here, begging for your help?

The Receptionist

(trying to end the conversation) Ok, look, I can shift some things around and get him in here next Wednesday at three, right after school lets out. Will that work for you?

The Mother

Yes, yes, of course that will work. Put us down! *(As she’s hurrying out)* Why couldn’t you just say that in the first place? I’ll have him here! *(Exits)*

The Receptionist

(Under her breath) And we’ll send him home. He ain’t ready, lady.

The Jock

(Having overheard the preceding) Wow. That was pretty intense. People get kind of crazy about this re-naming stuff, right?

The Cheerleader

Well, it makes sense. It’s kind of a big deal. It’s basically the most important day of your life.

The Jock

I don’t know about all that. I mean, I’ve had some pretty big days already. Like when I led the team to victory for the state championship. And I got chosen to be Prom King. You hear about that?

The Cheerleader

(Fawning) Oh yes.

The Jock

And just last week, I picked up a full-ride football scholarship to State. What’s gonna top all of that?

The Cheerleader

I don’t know. It just seems like this is different. All of that stuff is terrific, but these new names – they’re like our futures. What we’re supposed to be, what we’re going to do with our lives.

The Jock

Whatever you do, as long as you keep looking as good as you do right now, you’ll be fine.

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The Geek

(jumping up) Hey. Um ..... before you head in there. Good job yesterday on your speech for Comm class. I thought it was really – er – funny – and.....well, I didn't know that you knew all that stuff about animals. I mean, dogs kind of freak me out, but you made them seem not so scary. If you wanna be a veterinarian, like you said in your speech – you did say that, right? – if you did, I mean, I think you'd be great. Maybe that'll be your new name. Good luck.

The Cheerleader

(somewhat calmed by this small kindness) Oh. Thanks. Thanks a lot.

As she enters the re-naming room, GEEK and RECEPTIONIST re-take their respective seats. Lights shift to isolate.

The Cheerleader

Hello?

The Voice

Hello there.

The Cheerleader

(a little jumpy and laughing nervously) Oh wow. Trippy.

The Voice

I'm glad to see you.

The Cheerleader

(a little taken aback) Well. I'm – glad to be here? I think?

The Voice

Well, you made the appointment, my dear. Do you want to be here?

The Cheerleader

I think so. But I'm not sure I'm supposed to be. Am I –

The Voice

You are. And that's your question, yes? *(CHEERLEADER nods silently, amazed at being "read."* You are...Enough.

The Cheerleader

I am?!

The Voice

Yes, you've always been and you always will be. So I give you that name as a reminder. You are Enough. Not because of what you DO and how you'll succeed – and you WILL – but just because of who you ARE. You are Enough.

There are a couple of beats of silence as CHEERLEADER just sits in this news, relieved, grateful, with a fresh perspective slowly dawning on her. And then –

The Cheerleader

Well. Thank you. I hope that I'll be able to live up to that, that I'll work hard enough to earn the –

The Voice

(gently, but firmly) Shhhhhhhh..... Enough.

The Cheerleader

(laughs a little at the – maybe – unconscious joke) Yes. I'll try to – *(catches herself)* I'll remember. *(basks for a moment in the growing confidence)* Well, good bye then.

The Voice

Good bye.

CHEERLEADER leaves the re-naming room, enters the waiting room and crosses to exit, but then stops at RECEPTIONIST'S desk.

The Cheerleader

I appreciate you insisting that I keep the appointment.

The Receptionist

(laughing to herself) Most of the time, they do.

The Cheerleader

(turning to GEEK) Hey. Good luck in there.

The Geek

Thanks

CHEERLEADER exits to the parking lot.

The Receptionist

(to GEEK) Well, honey, you're the last one of the day. I told you I'd fit you in, didn't I?

The Geek

You did.

The Receptionist

You ready for this?

The Geek

As much as I'm ever gonna be. Here goes nothing. *(He walks to the door, and then turns back)* If I die or something, could you please call my mother and let her know that my brother is – under no circumstances – allowed to touch my comic book collection?

The Receptionist

(laughing and shaking her head) I'm on it.

The Geek

Thanks

He heads into the re-naming room and lights shift to isolate.

The Geek

Howdy doo! Anybody home!

The Voice

Hello there. I’ve been waiting for you for quite some time. Forever, in fact. Good to see you, Beloved.

GEEK smiles as the lights dim to BLACKOUT



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