



David-Matthew Barnes

## **Johnny Ramirez Really Wants to Kiss Me**

A One Act Play About Love

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### *Cast of Characters*

ALEX WILDE, 16. Impulsive. Confident. Comforting.

JOHNNY RAMIREZ, 17. Sensual. Intelligent. Protective.

### *Time*

A Thursday night in late March. The year is non-specific.

### *Place*

Alex Wilde's small bedroom in a small house in a small town.

## **Johnny Ramirez Really Wants to Kiss Me**

### Act One

*(When the play begins, we are in a bedroom belonging to sixteen-year-old ALEX WILDE. The room is plain and fairly non-descript. There is a bed, a desk, a portable stereo and a small bookshelf. A red and white lettermen's jacket is sitting on the back of the chair at the desk. Except for a pile of dirty clothes shoved into a far corner, the room is fairly clean, organized.)*

*Alex is sitting on the edge of his bed. He exudes an almost disarming confidence. His appearance is commanding and his style is unique: conventional with a twist. Next to him is a very nervous JOHNNY RAMIREZ. Johnny dislikes being the center of attention. This desire for a low-key existence is evident in the simple, casual way he dresses. He carries himself as if part of his spirit is wounded or he has not been loved enough. Johnny is unaware of his stunning, sensual beauty. His genuine naiveté makes him even more endearing to those he meets.*

*It is almost eleven o'clock at night. There is a math book sitting on the bed between Alex and JOHNNY:*

*There is an electric, palpable attraction between the two young men.)*

**JOHNNY:** What if she wakes up?

**ALEX:** We'll lie.

**JOHNNY:** What will we say? It's almost eleven o'clock.

**ALEX:** We'll tell her we fell asleep.

**JOHNNY:** But I couldn't fall asleep right now even if I tried.

**ALEX:** I don't sleep much myself.

**JOHNNY:** You stay up late practicing phony accents still?

**ALEX:** No. I quit that. *(Beat.)* I stay awake and think about you. *(Another beat; slightly longer than the first.)* I can't sleep because I wonder what it would be like to be with you.

**JOHNNY:** What are you talking about? You're with me all the time.

**ALEX:** *(Changing the subject:)* Your sister hates me.

**JOHNNY:** She thinks you're the devil. She calls you *el diablo*.

**ALEX:** She told Bethany and the entire freshman student council that I had problems.

**JOHNNY:** What do you care? You're a junior.

**ALEX:** You're so lucky you're a senior.

**JOHNNY:** I'm even luckier that I got into a good school.

**ALEX:** I hate it.

**JOHNNY:** It's only college.

**ALEX:** No, I hate imagining what next year will be like. When you're gone.

**JOHNNY:** Why think about it now? It's only March. We'll have the entire summer together.

**ALEX:** Who's going to help me with math class?

**JOHNNY:** If you pass the class this year, you won't have to repeat it again.

**ALEX:** *(He suddenly stands and moves across the room.)* I can't help it. I'm not as smart as you.

**JOHNNY:** What are you talking about? You're smart at a lot of things.

**ALEX:** You always say such nice things to me. Even at school. When you pass me notes in the hallway. In between fourth and fifth period. *(Beat; a confession)* I save

them all, JOHNNY: I have them right here. *(He picks up a shoe box on the floor and takes the lid off of it.)* Look at all of these. This is just three months worth. I have five more boxes in the closet.

**JOHNNY:** Do you read them more than once?

**ALEX:** Sometimes.

**JOHNNY:** But why? They're just words.

**ALEX:** It's like history. Our history.

**JOHNNY:** Are you better at history than math?

**ALEX:** I hope so. I'd really like to be good at something.

**JOHNNY:** You're good at a lot of things. *(Beat.)* I think it's cool that you save all of my notes. Most guys wouldn't do that.

**ALEX:** Do other guys give notes to each other?

**JOHNNY:** I don't know. You're the only guy I write notes to.

**ALEX:** My favorite one was the first one. You said I had a nice smile.

**JOHNNY:** You do.

**ALEX:** You said I looked friendly.

**JOHNNY:** I kind of figured we'd become best friends.

**ALEX:** Only because you're smart.

**JOHNNY:** And because you're so bad at math.

**ALEX:** It's kind of funny when you think about it. That my Mom had no idea that we were friends.

**JOHNNY:** She's paying me to be here.

**ALEX:** You should ask her for more money. Tell her I have problems. She'll feel sorry for you for having to deal with me.

**JOHNNY:** I don't think you have problems.

**ALEX:** I don't. I just get lonely sometimes. I get kind of sad and it starts to feel like I'm always going to feel that way. Like I can't breathe.

**JOHNNY:** But you always seem happy to me.

**ALEX:** I only smile when you're around.

**JOHNNY:** You're happy when you're crank calling that girl in your English class that you don't like.

**ALEX:** I quit that. It was taking up too much time. (*Quick beat.*) I'm going to get a job.

**JOHNNY:** Tired of being broke all the time?

**ALEX:** No. I want to save up all my money so that I come and visit you next year when you're at college.

**JOHNNY:** That would be cool. Make sure you come for a long time, like a week or something.

**ALEX:** Is there a bus?

**JOHNNY:** There is. That's how I'm going to get there in August.

**ALEX:** Your parents won't drive you there?

**JOHNNY:** They don't even know I've been accepted.

**ALEX:** Maybe you should tell them. If I got accepted to a good college, I would definitely tell my mother. Of course, she probably wouldn't believe me, but it would be worth it just to see the look on her face.

**JOHNNY:** Well, my dad works a lot and my Mom's always busy with my brothers.

**ALEX:** You have too many of them.

**JOHNNY:** They get into a lot of trouble.

**ALEX:** I wish your sister was in trouble. She's the kind of girl who should be grounded.

**JOHNNY:** She thinks you and I are strange.

**ALEX:** Did she say that?

**JOHNNY:** She found one of your notes.

**ALEX:** Which one?

**JOHNNY:** I don't know. I never got a chance to read it. It was in my chemistry book. I had forgotten that it was there. She found it when she borrowed my book.

**ALEX:** I really am dumb.

**JOHNNY:** Don't be embarrassed. I don't care if she knows we're best friends. (*Quick beat.*) I don't care if everybody knows.

**ALEX:** I was talking about the fact that your sister is taking chemistry and she's only a freshman.

**JOHNNY:** I think she's trying to impress someone.

**ALEX:** You mean Gilbert? Everyone thinks your sister is in love with him.

**JOHNNY:** Maybe they are.

**ALEX:** I hope she gets pregnant and has to drop out of school.

**JOHNNY:** You really don't like her, do you?

**ALEX:** She said some stuff to me.

**JOHNNY:** When?

**ALEX:** The other day when I was waiting for you outside of your house. When you were going to loan me that book.

**JOHNNY:** *Giovanni's Room.*

**ALEX:** Yeah, that one.

**JOHNNY:** What did she say to you?

**ALEX:** She came outside and stood up on the porch. She crossed her arms like this and looked at me like she was all high and mighty. I was like, "What do you want?" She came down the steps and out onto the sidewalk. She marched up to me like I had kicked her dog or something. She leaned in real close to me and she said real quiet, "I *know*."

**JOHNNY:** What did she mean?

**ALEX:** That's what I asked her. I said, "*What* do you know?" She looked at me with her rat-like eyes and said, "You *know* what I know." So I turned to her and said, "All I know is that Gilbert thinks you're bowlegged and he said you have small tits." She didn't seem to take that real well because she starting looking around the yard for something. It took me a few seconds to realize that she was looking for something to hit me with.

**JOHNNY:** Did she hit you?

**ALEX:** No, but she chased me for two blocks with a tree branch. She was swinging at me like this. She was like the Grim Reaper. I think something needs to be done about your sister and her violent temper. She almost decapitated an old woman with that tree branch. (*Quick beat.*) Was that the same day that she borrowed your chemistry book?

**JOHNNY:** Yeah, it was actually.

**ALEX:** I think I know what she knows now.

**JOHNNY:** Is it a big deal?

**ALEX:** Sort of.

**JOHNNY:** Tell me.

**ALEX:** *(He sits down next to JOHNNY:)* Johnny, you know how we always sign our notes to each other?

**JOHNNY:** B.F.F. Best friends forever. Yeah, so? She thought it was girly?

**ALEX:** Well, it *is* kind of girly when you think about it, but no, that's not it. I think the note that your sister read was different.

**JOHNNY:** How?

**ALEX:** Because I signed it with love. I signed it 'Love, ALEX:'

**JOHNNY:** *(Surprised:)* You did?

**ALEX:** I can't tell if you're really freaked out or really happy.

**JOHNNY:** That depends.

**ALEX:** We don't have to talk about this. We can finally do my math homework. I just don't want to wake up my mother because I don't want you to go and she's going to completely ground me for being related to her.

**JOHNNY:** Did you mean it?

**ALEX:** *(After a moment:)* I did.

**JOHNNY:** You meant love like how two friends love each other like brothers?

**ALEX:** Sure. *(Quick beat, then:)* No, not exactly.

**JOHNNY:** No?

**ALEX:** No.

**JOHNNY:** Well how did you mean it, then?

**ALEX:** I'm not sure if you want to know. I think you really want me to say it, so I'm going to do. But I hope that after I do say it, you won't say good bye.

**JOHNNY:** Say it.

**ALEX:** I think I'm in love with you, Johnny Ramirez.

**JOHNNY:** *(Leaning in towards ALEX:)* That's good.

**ALEX:** That's what I think, too.

**JOHNNY:** Because I really want to kiss you right now.

**ALEX:** Oh my God, what's stopping you?

**JOHNNY:** I'm your math tutor. Your mother is sound asleep in the other room. I was supposed to go home hours ago.

**ALEX:** Those are really lame excuses.

**JOHNNY:** Do you want me to do it?

**ALEX:** More than anything.

*(Johnny suddenly stands up. He grabs Alex by the hand and pulls him to his feet. They move to the center of the room.)*

**JOHNNY:** Come here.

*(They are standing face to face. They stare at each other for a moment before giving in to nervous laughter.)*

**ALEX:** I don't mean to laugh, but when you think of it all, it's kind of funny.

**JOHNNY:** How we've both been waiting for each other to say or do something for the last three months?

**ALEX:** No, I was talking about how in a strange way my mother is completely responsible for anything that's about to happen between us.

**JOHNNY:** She told the school that she wanted the best math student. (*Quick beat.*)  
And you got me.

**ALEX:** And I got you. (*Quick beat.*) I've never been so happy to be bad at something before.

**JOHNNY:** I'm kind of nervous.

**ALEX:** Why? It's just me.

**JOHNNY:** Yeah, but this is really intense for both of us.

**ALEX:** Really big and life changing and stuff like that?

**JOHNNY:** When you put it that way –

**ALEX:** We don't have to do this, JOHNNY:

**JOHNNY:** Yes, we do. (*Beat.*) We owe it to each other.

**ALEX:** All right. Fine, then. Kiss me.

(*They lean in and kiss.*)

**JOHNNY:** (*Softly:*) Wow.

**ALEX:** Maybe we should get in bed now. (*Alex moves to the bed and lies down.*)

**JOHNNY:** (*His voice cracks.*) So soon?

**ALEX:** No, I don't mean that. So we can go to sleep.

**JOHNNY:** You want to sleep?

**ALEX:** Not really. I was looking for an excuse to be next to you.

**JOHNNY:** (*He joins Alex on the bed, lies down next to him.*) You don't need one.

**ALEX:** So, does this mean we like each other?

**JOHNNY:** This means next year is going to be really tough on both of us.

**ALEX:** We can do it.

**JOHNNY:** I think so, too.

**ALEX:** Johnny, now that we both know don't you feel so much better?

**JOHNNY:** I can't stop smiling.

**ALEX:** Me either. (*Quick beat.*) Oh my God. Your sister. She's going to overdose or put her head in an oven or something brilliant like that.

**JOHNNY:** Don't make me laugh. That's mean.

**ALEX:** You're beautiful.

**JOHNNY:** No, I'm not.

**ALEX:** And you're smart.

**JOHNNY:** Some people think so.

**ALEX:** God, I feel sorry for you. How did you end up with me?

**JOHNNY:** I've fallen in love with *el diablo*.

(*They are quiet for a moment, then:*)

**ALEX:** I love you, too.

(*Another moment passes. Suddenly, there is a knock at the bedroom door.*)

**ALEX:** Damn. It's my mother. She's always destroying someone's happiness.

**JOHNNY:** What should we do?

**ALEX:** Move closer to me. If we lay real still and we don't breathe, maybe she'll go away.

*(Alex and Johnny move closer to each other. There is another knock at the door. Lights fade to black as the bedroom door starts to open.)*

## CURTAIN

### Author Bio

David-Matthew Barnes is the author of the young adult novels *Mesmerized* and *Swimming to Chicago*, and the literary suspense novel *Accidents Never Happen*, all published by Bold Strokes Books. He wrote and directed the coming-of-age film *Frozen Stars*, which received worldwide distribution. His stage plays have been performed in three languages in eight countries. This play, *Johnny Ramirez Really Wants to Kiss Me*, is featured in the anthology *Stage This, Too!* and received a world premiere at Stage Q in Madison, Wisconsin where it was nationally selected to be performed at their annual festival *Queer Shorts*. The play received a New York premiere at the 78<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre Lab, where it was nationally selected to be performed as part of the festival “Stage This, Too!”. *Johnny Ramirez Really Wants to Kiss Me* also received a Boston premiere at the Boston Center for the Arts. This production received the 2008 Slam Boston Award for Best Play. The play also secured a second New York production at the Roy Arias Studio Theatres, where it was performed as part of the festival “Short Play Lab”.

Barnes’ literary work has appeared in over one hundred publications. David-Matthew earned a Master of Fine Arts in creative writing at Queens University of Charlotte in North Carolina. He teaches courses in English, humanities, and speech at Southern Crescent Technical College in Griffin, Georgia. For more information, visit:

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