

THE OLD NEW KID

A one-act comedy by
Adam J. Goldberg

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

ALAN SOCRATES BAMA, an average kid, faced with the decision. Save his own popularity, or do the right thing?

JOSEFINA MADRUGA, intensely in tune with popularity. Charismatic. Devious. Spoiled. More dangerous when she's cornered.

KEARNS HOCKEY-CHRÉTIEN, formerly from Canada.

NEW KID, just another nice guy, or something more devious?

MISS BOKKEN, a teacher who wants to be absolutely enlightening without being at all controversial. Sweet, in her own way.

CHANG LEE, tag along jerk of Josefina's. Female Changs become Chynas.

SANDLER QUEMERE, tag along jerk of Josefina's. Female Slanders become Sandras.

GIULA NORD, an indoor kinda kid. Soft, uncoordinated, but generous and goodhearted.

MR. BELLHORN, the substitute art teacher and regular gym teacher. A social Darwinist.

TIFFERNY, dates Ben Baron. Easily tricked.

BEN BARON, dates Tifferny. Easily tricked.

ANGELINA SEGNAPOSTO, she's just happy to be here!

SCENE 1

(It's the half-day before Thanksgiving break at Greene Primary school. The 5TH GRADERS bustle around in front of the flagpole. ALAN BAMA sits on a short ledge, cramming from a history textbook. Kids pass him by, headed inside. This scene works excellently in front of the curtain, with scene two opening directly up onto the stage. First to pass by is JOSEFINA MADRUGA, coolest of the fifth graders. Her parents are spoiling her as an experiment; she holds herself high, but there's a lack of balance in her bossiness.)

JOSEFINA: Hey New Kid!

(She turns away, and flashes a bit of jewelry. She's swarmed by other FIFTH GRADE GIRLS, who "ooh" and "aah" as they make their way into school. Next up is the sporty ex-Canadian, KEARNS HOCKEY-CHRÉTIEN.)

KEARNS: Sup New Kid? Wow, it's warm out.

ALAN: Yeah, I bet.

KEARNS: Whatever, New Kid.

(The rest of the fifth grade enter without noticing Alan, talking amongst themselves. NEW KID is at the end of the line, overburdened with books, reading from a computer print out.)

NEW KID: Hi. Ummmm...where's Miss Bokken's class?

ALAN: Are you an idiot?

NEW KID: No...

ALAN: Are you...

(Alan's eyes light up.)

New?

NEW KID: Yeah...

ALAN: Then come right with me, buddy! The bell's about to...

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(The bell rings.)

Ring. Well, there it is. Right this way, right this way.

(They enter the building.)

SCENE 2 – MISS BOKKEN'S CLASSROOM

(The classroom is bright, cheerful, and eclectic, a tribute to extreme range of fifth-grade education. Spiders share wall space with State Capitals and Japan. Traditional desk-and-chair combinations are cheated out diagonally. The other classmates are here in the back: GIULA, CHANG LEE, SANDLER QUEMERE, Josefina. There are only two empty chairs: one near the center and one to the left of it. Alan takes the center seat and switches it with the one to the left. He beckons for the New Kid to take the center seat, which the New Kid reluctantly does. Everyone stares.)

JOSEFINA: Heyyyy. New Kid! There's a new kid here!

CHANG LEE: Looks like we're going to have to learn the old New Kid's name!

ALAN: *(Too quick:)* Alan. Alan Socrates Bama.

NEW KID: Alan – Bama?

ALAN: No, Alan Socrates –

ALL BUT NEW KID: Alabama!

ALAN: No, it's –

NEW KID: My name is –

SANDLER QUEMERE: *(To New Kid:)* You can't do that.

ALAN: My name is Alan and I really like the movie *Grown Ups*.

CHANG LEE: Why?

ALAN: Cuz it's funny. There's this one part –

(MISS BOKKEN arrives. She's very tall, redheaded, a habitué of the latest 60's revival.)

MISS BOKKEN: Good morning, class.

ALL BUT NEW KID: Good morning, Miss Bokken.

MISS BOKKEN: According to my notes...

(She scrounges through a folder. She's deluged by state paperwork, more than being personally disorganized.)

We have a new student! Now, everyone say hello to—

(She says New Kid's name. Josefina, Sandler Quemere, Chang Lee and Alan all move their desks so the name isn't heard. New Kid stands up awkwardly.)

NEW KID: Hi, my name is—

(More scraping. New Kid pretends not to notice.)

And I'm glad to be at Greene Primary School. I was originally from Maryland, but we moved—

MISS BOKKEN: And what's your favorite food to eat at Thanksgiving?

NEW KID: Cranberry sauce.

(A murmur of approval from the rest of the kids. It's a good answer. The next part is the morning routine, but in a blinding blur. Kids raise and lower their hands, seemingly at random.)

MISS BOKKEN: Now, class, you know how the drill works. Who's getting hot lunch? Cold lunch? Diabetic? Peanut free—?

NEW KID: *(To Alan:)* I brought my lunch from home.

ALAN: *(To New Kid:)* Tell her!

MISS BOKKEN: —Hasidic concerns? Small portion—?

NEW KID: I brought my lunch from home!

MISS BOKKEN: Brought your lunch from home—??

(Miss Bokken is thrown off her game. The class snickers.)

Well, alright. I have you down.

CHANG LEE: *(To Josefina:)* What, New Kid doesn't like pizza?

JOSEFINA: Don't ask me.

CHANG LEE: *(To New Kid:)* What, you don't like pizza?

NEW KID: I didn't know it was pizza day, it's my first—

SANDLER QUEMERE: Don't talk during class, dude.

MISS BOKKEN: We all know Thanksgiving is coming up. Now the Pilgrims— *(An aside:)* Were imperialist, unironic religious hypocrites and witch-burners, but children don't need to know that...unless...well, am I perpetuating the system of misinformation? The—

ALAN: The Pilgrims?

MISS BOKKEN: Oh, yes. The Pilgrims came to America in what year?

NEW KID: 1620?

MISS BOKKEN: That's right. Have a goldfish.

(She tosses him a goldfish cracker. He immediately eats it. The class gasps.)

JOSEFINA: You're not supposed to eat it! When you get ten you get a homework pass.

NEW KID: Oh. Uhm, I didn't know that.

JOSEFINA: Didn't know that. Cuz you're the new kid.

(She high-fives Chang.)

MISS BOKKEN: And the Pilgrims assumed they could go wherever they wanted—

CHANG LEE: Like the New Kid!

(Everyone laughs, except Alan and the New Kid. Miss Bokken whips around.)

MISS BOKKEN: Who said that? That's not...that's not particularly funny.

(She does find it a little funny, though. Alan lowers himself in his seat.)

Now, this is a tough one, but there WAS one permanent colony...I should say, "white person colony," no, sorry, "European..." no, that's inaccurate...can anyone name a colony in America before the Pilgrims?

(New Kid raises his hand, but, reflecting, lowers it. Giulia [Gi-oooh-la] Nord, beautiful and Swiss, raises her hand. She sits one chair in front of New Kid.)

GIULA: Jamestown colony.

MISS BOKKEN: Correct, Giulia.

ALAN: *(To the New Kid:)* You knew that one.

NEW KID: It's called a low profile.

MISS BOKKEN: *(Mid-thought:)* What is?

NEW KID: Oh. The...the Pilgrims tried to...keep a low profile?

GIULA: *(Legitimately curious:)* Is that true?

MISS BOKKEN: Actually...well. The interactions of the Pilgrims and the Indians...Native Americans...

(She begins flipping through one textbook, then another.)

Squanto...you see, the...crop rotation, no, that isn't it... We're going to skip History this morning and do a spelling test.

(The class groans.)

NEW KID: I...

MISS BOKKEN: *(With dooming kindness:)* Don't worry. You

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can take the test, but you won't lose any points because you don't know the words.

(The class is none too pleased about that. Giulia turns around in her seat.)

GIULA: Sorry, New Kid.

NEW KID: I...

(He blushes and puts a textbook in front of his face. Alan takes the book.)

ALAN: No books during a spelling test.

MISS BOKKEN: Alright everyone. Word one: dispute. Word two: contractual. Word three: acrimonious.

NEW KID: *(To Giulia:)* Why are they all...?

GIULA: The principal just put down a teacher's strike.

MISS BOKKEN: Word seven: autocracy. Hegemony. Perdition. Living with roommates when you're 28...

SANDLER QUEMERE: Can you repeat the last one?

MISS BOKKEN: Perdition. Now, please pass all tests up to the front of the room...

KEARNS: Miss Bokken?

MISS BOKKEN: Yes, Mr. Hockey-Chrétien?

KEARNS: You didn't hand out any paper.

(Miss Bokken runs her hands through her hair, takes a deep breath.)

MISS BOKKEN: Recess. *Now.*

(The kids rush offstage. Giulia flashes a smile at the New Kid as she exits. Alan catches it. Blackout.)

SCENE 3—RECESS

(Only Miss Bokken's class is around, since she called recess so early in the day. The November wind has picked up. Children huddle in small groups, not unlike survivors in a post-nuclear winter. Of course, their parkas are much more colorful. New Kid and Giulia pair up on one side of the stage, not exactly together, not exactly apart. Alan saddles up to the main group, ending up right next to Josefina. The wind is tremendous. The light brightens as we focus on them:)

ALAN: *(Over the wind:)* So there's a new New Kid!

JOSEFINA: What?

ALAN: *(Louder:)* I'm not the newest kid!

JOSEFINA: Oh, Alabama's not the newest kid! We knew that. We're glad to have you!

SANDLER QUEMERE: *(Louder than "loud enough":)* You should get a southern hat! A cowboy hat!

ALAN: That's not as funny as you think!

CHANG LEE: What'd he say?

ALAN: That I should get a cowboy hat, because I'm Alan Bama.

(Chang laughs.)

CHANG LEE: He's just teasing you! We knew you'd arrive, New K...Alan.

ALAN: I've been here two months, you'd think I...

SANDLER QUEMERE: What?

(The wind dies down. Everyone else is suddenly too loud.)

JOSEFINA: We're glad to have you! We're glad to have you. So, you like *Grown Ups*?

ALAN: Yeah. There's the scene where they're at the—

JOSEFINA: Amusement park! Yeah.

ALAN: Amusement park. Yeah.

(They laugh.)

JOSEFINA: Hey, everyone, let's go on the monkey bars.

(The rest of the kids disperse over toward the monkey bars. Josefina grabs Alan by the back of his jacket.)

ALAN: Hurk!

JOSEFINA: So, what do you think of Giulia?

ALAN: She's...

(He thinks.)

What do you mean?

(Crosslight to Giulia, who's playing with a doll. New Kid approaches her.)

NEW KID: Hi, I'm...why aren't you playing with the other kids?

GIULA: Josefi..."someone" called me a mama's girl. She says I'm weird because I'm not into sports. And bad at them.

NEW KID: Oh.

GIULA: I think dolls are cool but apparently they're "boring" and "dumb" and whatever.

NEW KID: I don't think they're dumb. *(Defensive:)* Not that I like them or anything.

GIULA: You don't have to like them. I only have one.

NEW KID: I could like them. *(A beat.)* So you don't like sports?

GIULA: I like sports a little. But there's no like, national house league.

NEW KID: What?

GIULA: Like the NBL or something, but for playing house.

NEW KID: Oh.

GIULA: There isn't one.

NEW KID: Oh. What's your doll's name?

GIULA: Curmudgeon.

NEW KID: Oh.

GIULA: I like the sound of it.

(A beat.)

My mom says I have "a rich internal life." She's pretty.

(Crosslight back to Alan and Josefina.)

ALAN: She's... I don't know.

JOSEFINA: Do you want to kiss her?

ALAN: No?

JOSEFINA: Good. Now, Alan, Alan Soccerteeth—

ALAN: —Socrates—

JOSEFINA: —Socrates, what if everyone likes the New Kid a lot?

ALAN: I dunno.

JOSEFINA: Because he likes cranberry sauce, he knows about 1810...

ALAN: So what *if* people like him?

(Josefina sits down on a bench with an audible "brrrrr." She shovels off a bit of snow and gestures for Alan to sit next to her.)

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JOSEFINA: Everyone can't like everyone. Otherwise everyone would go over everyone else's house every day, and every day after school would be like, school again.

ALAN: What? What do you...

JOSEFINA: Okay. So my parents took me on a birthday limo scavenger hunt, right?

ALAN: They did?

JOSEFINA: That was back like in October, don't worry about it. Now, you can only fit so many people in a limo, 'cuz the limo company has rules.

ALAN: Sure.

JOSEFINA: Being cool is a lot like that. There's only so much room in the limo.

ALAN: I think I get it.

JOSEFINA: Ooooh, are she and New Kid gonna kiss?

(Alan turns. In a moment of play, it looks like they just might. He turns around, and they go back to goofing around...false alarm.)

ALAN: *(Faux-nonplussed:)* Kissing is gross. Especially kissing girls.

JOSEFINA: I'm a girl, Alan.

ALAN: Yeah, but I'm not... *(Shell-shocked)* Do you want to kiss me?

JOSEFINA: No! No way. But I'm not gross.

(Something dawns on her.)

Maybe I'd kiss the new kid.

ALAN: Why?

JOSEFINA: He's sweet, and smart, and...*mysterious*.

ALAN: Was I mysterious, when I was new?

JOSEFINA: Maaaybeeee.

ALAN: So you want me to...

JOSEFINA: Hey. I don't want you to do anything. But if you do it, it'd better be by the end of today, is all I'm saying. Going until Christmas break as the "Old New Kid" instead of "Alan"...

(She rolls it over on her tongue.)

Alaaan...Alaaan...would be very, very...un-fort-un-it.

(The bell rings sharply. Josefina pats Alan on the back.)

Maybe I can free up a table at lunch.

(She exits. Alan stares behind, a bit stunned. The rest of the class files past him in a straight line, back into the building. He runs to catch up. Blackout.)

SCENE 4—ART CLASS

(Giula, still in her outdoor sweater, sits at a small table with New Kid. Alan is at the closest seat at the cool kids table. The art teacher, MR. BELLHORN, wears track pants, a warm up jacket, a whistle, and a token smock. There's low level chatter. Josefina and many of the cool kids are noticeably absent, replaced by OTHER 5TH GRADERS. Bellhorn's about to blow on the whistle, but everyone notices and stops their conversations.)

MR. BELLHORN: Now, class, who knows what holiday is coming up?

ANGELINA SEGNAPOSTO: *(Not raising her hand:)* Thanksgiving.

MR. BELLHORN: Good. And who knows what this is?

(He holds up a cornucopia.)

GIULA: It's a cornucopia.

MR. BELLHORN: *(Too harshly:)* But can you spell it?

GIULA: No.

MR. BELLHORN: I bet none of you can spell it! It's c-o-r-n corn, u, cop-i-a.

GIULA: Not p-e-i-a.

MR. BELLHORN: Absolutely not.

NEW KID: And it's not corn "ih" copia?

MR. BELLHORN: It's not. Today's task is to reflect this item...creatively.

ANGELINA SEGNAPOSTO: Like, draw it?

MR. BELLHORN: Perhaps.

KEARNS: Through music?

MR. BELLHORN: *(Harshly again:)* Not through music! Where

do you think you are?

KEARNS: School?

MR. BELLHORN: The art class part of school! Now get creative!

(He blows his whistle. The class begins working. Alan weasels his chair between New Kid and Giulia.)

ALAN: Hey Giulia.

GIULA: Ummmm, hi or whatever. Were you talking to Josefina?

ALAN: A little. She's...she's really...rich.

GIULA: Yeah, that's the word for it. I hope she didn't offer you a ride on her helicopter. Remember when you got here in September?

ALAN: Yeah...she has a helicopter?

(Giula shakes her head no. Alan missed the joke, and New Kid laughs.)

NEW KID: You were the new kid?

ALAN: What? No, don't worry about it.

GIULA: Well, you hang out with her, you'll be a jerktapus.

ALAN: What's that?

GIULA: A jerk times eight.

(She gives him a look.)

Pass me the glue.

ALAN: Am I a jerktapus?

GIULA: If you don't give it to me, you are.

(Alan laughs. New Kid passes Giulia the glitter.)

What're you gonna do?

NEW KID: Well, at my old school we did a lot of origami.

(He begins to fold some paper.)

You have something behind your ear.

GIULA: I do?

(He hands her a swan. She laughs with delight.)

ALAN: Well, we're making corna – whatever, not animals –

(New Kid folds a newspaper, twists the end, and opens up the other, creating a cornucopia. Giulia "wows.")

NEW KID: Pretty easy.

ALAN: Yeah, well...I was gonna do that, too, so you took my idea.

NEW KID: I'm sorry.

ALAN: ("Worry about it":) Don't worry about it.

GIULA: *(To New Kid:)* That is really cool. Are you gonna like, fill it with fruit?

ALAN: I gotta go to the bathroom.

GIULA: Can you make a pear?

NEW KID: Pears are pretty easy. Pass me the green?

GIULA: Sure.

ALAN: I am gonna go to the bathroom. I'm gonna go right over, and –

GIULA: Don't let me stop you.

ALAN: Be...because I need to.

NEW KID: And are you like, bragging about it? Do you guys do that here?

ALAN: No, I'm not bragging about it! It's a...it's a...

(Alan exits, his bluff called. New Kid folds up a pear to Giulia's delight. Blackout.)

SCENE 5—LUNCH

(The cafeteria's tables are small and cliquy. It's immediately clear who's cool and who isn't. New Kid and Giulia are at the outcast table. As Alan enters, Josefina, who's at the only two-person table, pats an empty seat. A few kids gasp at this opportunity. Alan comes over.)

NEW KID: What's the big deal? I feel like I'm saying that a lot.

GIULA: You are. It's always a production when Josefina opens her lunch box. One time she got like, a whole package of Twizzlers.

NEW KID: Wow.

GIULA: Yeah. Just for herself.

(Spotlight on Josefina. Everyone's staring. She gestures their attention away, but it doesn't work. With pomp and ritual, she opens her pink princess lunch box. She empties it onto the table... Inside is a bottle of water, a plain sandwich, and a silver packet of slurry. The last thing she removes is a daisy wheeled computer printout. She quickly crams everything but the printout back into her lunch box. She begins to read it, and her world collapses.)

ALAN: What does —

JOSEFINA: *(To him, only:)* Dear Daughter. In this time of year noted for Thankfulness, we are here to...to reveal...that we have been spoiling you. We have done this dell-liber-at-ely, so that you can learn a...lesson, a lesson on...

(She bursts into tears, but keeps going.)

Allowance...better understand the role of...

(Alan is powerless to do anything but watch. In an instant, a shadow falls across Josefina's face. When it passes, she's grinning the devil's grin.)

ALAN: Josefina, are you —

JOSEFINA: Tifferny. Get over here.

(TIFFERNY obeys. Josefina stage whispers in her ear, Iago-esque; the fact she does it so blatantly is a sign of her power.)

Tifferny, Ben Baron wants to go steady with Anella, not you.

TIFFERNY: He...he does?

JOSEFINA: I am *so* sorry. I wish he'd have told you in person.

TIFFERNY: I'll...

JOSEFINA: You should probably go for a walk. I know you're angry right now.

(Tifferny exits.)

Ben Baron. We need to talk.

(BEN comes over. His color pattern matches Tifferny's.)

BEN: Why were you talking to Tifferny?

JOSEFINA: Golly, Ben! I was trying to figure out if she mentioned you, you know, cheated on your math test.

BEN: I...she wouldn't do that. I mean, I didn't cheat. She's...! I thought she liked me!

JOSEFINA: I think Anella told her. You should probably talk to her.

BEN: Oh, I will. Right now.

(Ben storms off.)

JOSEFINA: *(Turning back to Alan:)* So it's kind of easy, you know?

ALAN: You're...this is all because of your lunch?

JOSEFINA: Oh, some things are just because of things.

ALAN: I'm...I was gonna...the New Kid is cool. I don't know why I have to be mean to him.

JOSEFINA: You don't! You absolutely don't. But there are only so many seats on the limo, you know?

ALAN: I thought you were —

(She gives a death glare, then softens.)

JOSEFINA: And if you push him off, there may be a seat for Giulia, too.

ALAN: Really?

(She just grins.)

JOSEFINA: So what'd you get today?

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