

## MISSING

By Albi Gorn July '16 (Rev. Nov. '16)

Lena/Dora.....maybe around 40 (age not that important)  
Meagan (2016).....50  
Meagan (1980).....13  
Man.....40

The play takes place at a small ice cream store.

*(MEAGAN 2016 enters and looks around a bit baffled. LENA enters from the back)*

LENA: Thought I heard someone come in. We're not actually open yet, I'm waiting for the kid.

MEAGAN 2016: Oh, I'm sorry, it's just...

LENA: But I'd be happy to get you something.

MEAGAN 2016: How long have you been here?

LENA: Excuse me?

MEAGAN 2016: How long –

LENA: Oh, well, see, they delivered all this milk last night and I've been churning since about eight. That's why I was in the back.

MEAGAN 2016: No, I meant this store. How long has this store been here?

LENA: Oh, I misunderstood you. Um, wow, almost two years. Where does the time go.

MEAGAN 2016: Really? I never noticed it before.

LENA: Oh, do you live in town?

MEAGAN 2016: No, not for years. We moved out in the early 80s.

LENA: Before my time. We came here in '94.

MEAGAN 2016: But I'm in town pretty much every week. I'm sure I've walked past here.

LENA: Yeah, I get that a lot. Maybe if I had an awning.

MEAGAN 2016: But what's really surprising is I think there used to be an ice cream store here, back when I was a kid. I mean there *was* one, I was there practically every day, but it might have been this actual space.

LENA: No kidding? I had no idea.

MEAGAN 2016: You'd think I'd know. My aunt owned it. Not sure this is the building, but it was on this part of the block. Weird, isn't it?

LENA: Yeah. You say you're in town every week? Visiting your aunt?

MEAGAN 2016: No, she's gone. My dad, her brother, is at Andrus.

LENA: Oh.

MEAGAN 2016: Stepdad, actually. So I visit him and usually come into town for a cup of coffee before I head back to Philly.

LENA: That's where you live?

MEAGAN 2016: Yeah. Moved down there a few years ago to take a job.

LENA: What do you do?

MEAGAN 2016. I'm chief of medical services for the VA Hospital.

LENA: Oh my, that's impressive.

MEAGAN 2016: It's mostly administrative.

LENA: But that's important work. Those kids go through hell. (*LENA takes out a picture*) My niece. Died in Afghanistan.

MEAGAN 2016: Oh, I'm sorry.

LENA: Thanks. 23.

MEAGAN 2016: (*Sighs*) Yeah. My dad, my biological dad, died in Vietnam.

LENA: Oh. How old were you?

MEAGAN 2016: Just a year old. Never knew him.

LENA: I thought there were deferments for –

MEAGAN 2016: He never married my mom. She offered, he said he was unworthy and off he went, so she says. Killian Killoran. Grand name, isn't it? Sorry, don't know why I got so maudlin.

LENA: That why you got involved in veteran affairs?

MEAGAN 2016: Don't know. Must've played a part, I guess.

LENA: That's some commute to be making back and forth every week.

MEAGAN 2016: Yeah, but it's my stepdad. He raised me. Only family I got left. I'd move him down by me but he seems so happy here. And besides, I... (*Beat as MEAGAN looks around*) I still can't get over it.

LENA: What? That we put up this store where your aunt's store was?

MEAGAN 2016: No. That I missed it all this time.

LENA: My name is Lena Castaldi (*LENA hands MEAGAN a card*). Here's my card in case you have an ice cream emergency.

MEAGAN 2016: Thanks. Meagan Rawlings.

LENA: You know, I deliver down to Andrus. I'd be happy to check in on your dad when I do, say hello. Bring him a cone.

MEAGAN 2016: Yeah, he's a little out of it, I don't know... His name is Ted. Although I guess it doesn't matter who you say hello to.

LENA: No, you're right about that.

MEAGAN 2016: (*Still looking around a bit baffled*). Even feels like my aunt's store.

LENA: Oh, how nice.

(*MEAGAN 2016 looks at menu on wall*)

MEAGAN 2016: Oh, what unusual flavors.

LENA: Yeah. On the one hand, I want to make ice cream like it used to taste; and on the other, I want it to taste like nothing you've ever tasted before. I thought wacky names might get people in the mood, you know, for something familiar yet different.

MEAGAN 2016: I guess I'll have to taste some. (*Reading*) Transcendental truffle. Possible papaya. Misplaced melon. Whoa, even Ben and Jerry don't have flavors like that.

LENA: Yeah. We're unique.

MEAGAN: 2016: Lost lychee. Absent acai, am I sensing a theme here?

LENA: Maybe; it's supposed to be like recapturing a memory you didn't know you had.

MEAGAN 2016: Missing mango. Is that like an empty cup?

LENA: That would be funny, wouldn't it.

MEAGAN 2016: Could be a diet item.

LENA: We don't have a lot of dieters come in here.

MEAGAN 2016: All right: so like I eat the missing mango and think: What have I been missing, is that how it's supposed to work?

LENA: Yeah, there you go.

MEAGAN 2016: Guess I'll have to give it a try. I'll take a cup. How much?

LENA: (*As LENA prepared a cup*) 3.50.

MEAGAN 2016: (*MEAGAN 2016 reaches into her bag and pulls out dog tags as she looks for her wallet; stops*)

LENA: Oh, those your dad's?

MEAGAN 2016: What? Oh, no. (*Beat*) You've been here for over 20 years?

LENA: Not the store, just living in town.

MEAGAN 2016: No, I know, it's just...did you ever know a Bonham family, or someone named Joe Bonham?

LENA: Nope. Doesn't ring a bell.

MEAGAN 2016: It was a longshot. Being here reminded me of him. These are his.

LENA: Oh. A relative or friend or...

MEAGAN 2016: No no no. I just met him once, when I was a kid, here – well, in my aunt's store. This is back in '80 I think. He was a soldier who wandered in one day and – well, it was memorable. When I landed the VA job I tried tracking him down on the database but it listed him as missing in action in '68 with no follow-up. But he was here twelve years later.

LENA: Wow, weird.

MEAGAN 2016: So I just wondered if he was a local.

LENA: Not a name I'm familiar with. (*LENA serves MEAGAN 2016*) Now, I hope you won't think me rude, but I do have to get back to my churning.

MEAGAN 2016: No, of course.

LENA: (*Exiting to the back*) That kid should be here any second if you need anything. Enjoy.

(*MEAGAN 2016 sits at one of the tables and take a spoonful of the ice cream*)

MEAGAN 2016: Mmmm, wow. That is good. *(As she eats, looking around)* Feels just like Aunt Dora's place. All those afternoons I spent here – there. Maybe here. *(Beat)* Even smells like Dora's. *(Of ice cream)* This is potent stuff.

*(MEAGAN 1980 enters. During the following scene MEAGAN 2016 becomes increasingly invested in the memory but at the start doesn't really look at them)*

MEAGAN 1980: *(Calling off to the back)* Aunt Dora, you back there?

DORA: *(Offstage. Should have an accent to differentiate her from LENA)* Who's that? That you, Meagan dear?

MEAGAN 1980: Yeah.

DORA: *(Offstage)* I'll be out in a few minutes, dear. Just have a seat. Need to go out back for a second. They made me hang that stupid air conditioner outside. Now it's dripping inside.

MEAGAN 1980: Okay.

*(MAN enters. He wears army fatigues. He gives the appearance of being somewhat mentally/emotionally damaged, he's nervous and rocks his body, particularly when he talks. During the scene he stares at MEAGAN 1980 quite a lot. Again, not seeing him particularly, just remembering him and this day, MEAGAN 2016 unconsciously fingers the dog tags in her bag)*

MEAGAN 1980: Hello.

MAN: I seen you come in here.

MEAGAN 1980: Did you want some ice cream?

MAN: I seen you before. I seen you come in here before.

MEAGAN 1980: (*Growing slightly uneasy*) Yeah, I kinda work here. But my aunt doesn't like me to serve anyone unless she's here. (*Beat*) She's in the back. (*Beat*) She'll be right out.

MAN: You like ice cream?

MEAGAN 1980: Sure. Doesn't everybody?

MAN: Yeah, doesn't everybody. (*Troubled beat*) Everybody.

MEAGAN 1980: Uh-huh. (*Beat. MEAGAN 1980 starts to unpack her books*) Well, if you'll excuse me, I have to work on my report.

MAN: For school?

MEAGAN 1980: Yeah.

MAN: What grade are you in?

MEAGAN 1980: Umm, well, if you'll excuse me.

MAN: Okay, I'll stop talking.

MEAGAN 1980: Don't mean to be rude. I have to do this report.

MAN: Okay. Okay. I seen you come in here. I watched you before. I just... (*He pulls out his dog tags; plays with them nervously*)

MEAGAN 1980: Uh-huh. (*MEAGAN 1980 sees MAN's dog tags*) Oh. Are those dog tags?

MAN: Yeah.

MEAGAN 1980: You in the army?

MAN: Used to be.

MEAGAN 1980: Oh. I read about dog tags for my report.

MAN: I'll shut up. Sorry.

MEAGAN 1980: Oh, okay.

*(MEAGAN 1980 takes out a map)*

MAN: Vietnam.

MEAGAN 1980: Yep. That's what my report's on, the Vietnam War. Uh, did you fight there?

MAN: Vietnam.

MEAGAN 1980: Yeah, it's for history. It's only a few years ago so I don't know if it's really history yet, but my dad, my real dad, died in the war so my teacher said I could do it.

MAN: A lot died.

MEAGAN 1980: Like almost 60,000. Although some of those are still listed as MIAs. Know what that is? Missing in action. And POW is prisoner of war. We learned that.

MAN: 60,000?

MEAGAN 1980: About. Of course, that's just Americans. There was like way more Vietnamese.

MAN: More. Yeah. I'll be quiet.

MEAGAN 1980: *(Showing MAN map)* This is Saigon, this is Hanoi, this is *(struggles a bit with pronunciation)* Dien Bien Phu. I love that name, Phu. Oh, this is the Gulf of Tonkin where it all started. And this is Hue. *(MEAGAN pronounces it you)*.

MAN: *(Long beat)* I was there.

MEAGAN 1980: *(A bit excited)* Where? In Vietnam?

MAN: I was there. Sorry. I'll be quiet.

MEAGAN 1980: No, that's okay. You were there? Wow. Um, like, Annie Strauss, she's a kid in my class, her dad was there so I asked her to ask him if I could talk to him about it, for my report, but she said he said he didn't want to talk about it. But I think she just didn't want me getting a better grade than her.

MAN: A lot died.

MEAGAN 1980: Because if I could talk to someone who was there, you know, it would make my report really great.

*(MAN just looks at her)*

MEAGAN 1980: And I could use the grade.

*(MAN just looks at her)*

MEAGAN 1980: Anyway, I gotta get back to this.

MAN: *(Beat. MAN watches MEAGAN reading)* You like school?

MEAGAN 1980: It's okay. I like science and math, those are my favorites. I hate French.

MAN: Yeah.

MEAGAN 1980: Shoulda taken Spanish.

MAN: Lotta French in Vietnam.

MEAGAN 1980: Oh right. They were there before us. But I already got that. *(MEAGAN 1980 leafs through report)* Somewhere. *(More leafing)* Yeah, here. *(Beat at MEAGAN 1980 looks at MAN's dog tags)* Could I see your dog tags? *(MEAGAN 1980 reaches towards them)* That would be –

*(As her hand nears him, he pulls back sharply)*

MAN: *(Frightened)* I can't touch little girls.

MEAGAN 1980: What?

MAN: I can't touch little girls.

MEAGAN 1980: Why not?

MAN: Too dangerous. I can't touch little girls.

MEAGAN 1980: *(A little freaked)* Okay. Sorry. I just wanted to see 'em.

MAN: I'll shut up.

MEAGAN 1980: Okay. Sorry. *(Beat as MEAGAN 1980 reads and writes)* I mean, if you wanted to tell me about Vietnam, I think that would be okay. Stuff I could use in my report.

MAN: I'll shut up.

*(MEAGAN 1980 looks at him and then goes back to her work)*

MEAGAN 1980: What kind of ice cream do you like? Maybe I could get you some while you're waiting. *(Somewhat sotto voce)* If my aunt doesn't see me.

MAN: Don't eat ice cream.

MEAGAN 1980: Really? Wow, you're like the only person in the world, right, who doesn't?

MAN: Don't know.

MEAGAN 1980: *(MEAGAN 1980 looks at map)* Do you know where Khe San *(MEAGAN 1980 pronounces it KEE SAN)* is? There was like a big battle there and I'm –

MAN: *(Correct pronunciation, KAY SAN)* Khe San. Northwest. Near Laos.

MEAGAN 1980: *(As she traces it on map)* Northwest, Laos...ah, there it is. Did you fight there?

MAN: *(Shakes his head)* Marines.

MEAGAN 1980: *(As she writes)* Good, that's good, thanks.

MAN: We were in Hue.

MEAGAN 1980: Where?

MAN: *(Points it out on the map)* Hue.

MEAGAN 1980: Oh, I thought it was Hue *(YOU)*. Okay, gotta remember that, Hue.

What happened there? Was there a battle?

*(Note: During the following story, MAN relives much of it with hands gestures and shifting focus of his eyes and change of position)*

MAN: 1968. January.

MEAGAN 1980: 1968? Oh, was that the Tet Offensive? I just read about that. Man, you were there?

MAN: Lunar New Year. Everyone celebrating. Fireworks. Food carts. Word came down that Charlie was on the move.

MEAGAN 1980: Who's Charlie?

MAN: Viet Cong.

MEAGAN 1980: Why did you call the Viet Cong Charlie?

MAN: Military code for letters. Viet Cong, VC, V Victor, C Charlie.

MEAGAN 1980: Wait, wait, I got to write all this down. Wow, this is great.

MAN: Sergeant told us to clear the streets. *(begins to visualize)* A little girl. Didn't – didn't understand, what I was saying. *(Gestures)* Inside...inside. Thought it was a game, kept running...and giggling.

MEAGAN 1980: How old was she?

MAN: Old man selling ice cream. Took a cone (*as if showing it to the little girl*) ... get her close.

MEAGAN 1980: (*Writing*) Slow down. This is good.

MAN: She'd go for the cone...try to lick it... pulled it back. Giggling. Had to grab her, get her inside. Gave her the cone.

MEAGAN 1980: Oh, good.

MAN: (*He gestures as if trying to grab the little girl*) Got her arm and ... (*He indicates pulling her to him*). Shot rang out. Mauser. She reached for me, grabbed my tags, collapsed. Pulled off my tags.

MEAGAN 1980: Was she dead?

MAN: Couldn't move. (*Note: MAN means he couldn't move*) Shots everywhere. Black kid from Lexington came over screaming: "Get inside." Then he caught one, fell on top of her.

MEAGAN 1980: Was he dead?

MAN: On top of her.

MEAGAN 1980: Why would they shoot at her?

MAN: (*MAN softly shakes his head*) Shooting at me. They never shot if there was a kid around, but ...reached down, grabbed these (*this time he does grab the dog tags he's wearing*). Need 'em to get out. Hadda get out. Ran.

MEAGAN 1980: Were they dead?

MAN: I ran.

MEAGAN 1980: Man. Bummer.

*(MAN is gently rocking but far away. MEAGAN 1980 struggles with what to do and finally reaches out to pat him on the arm. He recoils)*

MAN: Can't touch little girls.

MEAGAN 2016: *(Speaking MEAGAN 1980's thoughts)* It's all right. I can help. I can help.

*(MEAGAN 1980 impulsively hugs him. He looks horrified but doesn't pull away)*

MEAGAN 1980 and 2016: See, nothing bad happened. I'm okay. You're okay.

*(MAN maintains eye contact with MEAGAN for the first time in the scene. He goes through a series of conflicting feelings, and then loses it and starts to cry silently)*

DORA: *(From offstage)* What's going on out there, sweetie?

MEAGAN 1980: I'm just talking to this guy.

DORA: *(From offstage)* What guy? Who is it?

MEAGAN 1980: I don't know.

DORA: *(From offstage)* Gimme a second with this stupid machine and I'm coming out.

MAN: She's angry.

MEAGAN 1980: No, she's just –

MAN: I better go. I seen you come in here and...I better go.

MEAGAN 1980: Oh. Okay. Nice meeting you. I hope you feel better. Thanks for your help.

MAN: Yeah. *(He turns to go, stops and turns back. Takes off his dog tags)* Don't need 'em anymore. Not me. Maybe you could use 'em in your report.

MEAGAN 1980: Wow, really? That would be great.

*(He stares at MEAGAN 1980. Nervously hands her the tags)*

MEAGAN 1980: Thanks! (*MEAGAN 1980 takes tags*) I'm okay, see?

MAN: Yeah, Meagan. You're okay. (*He exits*)

MEAGAN 2016: (*More to herself, realizing something*) Not me.

MEAGAN 1980: (*MEAGAN 1980 reads the tags*) Joe Bonham. Hmm. Wait, how did you know my name?

DORA: (*From offstage*) Meagan, honey, is that man still in there?

MEAGAN 1980: No, he left.

DORA: (*From offstage*) Okay. Good. Do you think you could come in here and help me with this thing? Need another pair of hands.

MEAGAN 1980: Coming. (*To herself*) Hope he's okay. (*MEAGAN 1980 pockets the dog tags and then walks off to help DORA*)

MEAGAN 2016: (*Looking very puzzled*) How *did* he know my name? I didn't... (*Intense realization*) oh my god. Oh my god, it can't be. (*MEAGAN 2016 pulls dog tags from her bag*) Joe Bonham. "Not me." (*MEAGAN 2016 slams her palm into her forehead and then takes out her cell*) Pam? Yeah. Run a search for me on a Killian Killoran K-I-L-L-O-R-A-N. (*Phone beat*) He's a relative, a long lost relative. (*Phone beat; sharply*) I know the regulations, Pam. Just look it up. (*Beat as Pam looks it up; to herself*) "I watched you before." (*Back to phone*) Montrose? That's near here. When's the last contact? 5/23/14? Oh god, I'll bet he's still alive. What? No, I'll explain when I get back. Thanks.

LENA: (*Coming out*) Oh, still here. How was it?

MEAGAN 2016: What? Oh, the ice cream? It was incredible.

LENA: Oh good. Glad you liked it.

MEAGAN 2016: How far is Montrose from here?

LENA: Umm, maybe a half hour, little more. Are you – oh, there's a VA Hospital there, isn't there?

MEAGAN 2016: Yeah.

LENA: Well, be sure to drop by the next time you're in town, even just to chat. And oh, I can check out that name you mentioned, Joe Bonham was it?

MEAGAN 2016: No need. You won't find anything. But maybe now I will.

*(MEAGAN 2016 exits)*

LENA: *(LENA starts cleaning up)* Can't imagine what happened to that kid.

- **End of play** -