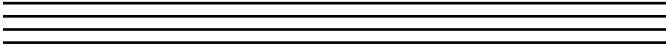
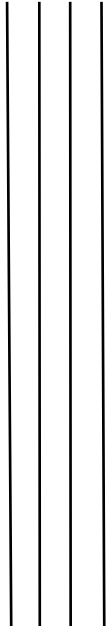




IMAGINARY CIRCUMSTANCES



GABRIELLA WILLENZ



Imaginary Circumstances includes text from the following sources:

Top Gun (Dir. Tony Scott, 1986), Acts of Valor (Dir. Scott Wauch and Mike McCoy, 2012), Zero Dark Thirty (Dir. Kathryn Bigelow, 2012), Pulp Fiction (Dir. Quentin Tarantino 1994), Troy (Dir. Wolfgang Petersen, 2004), Iphigenia in Aulis by Euripides, The New Testimony (Revelation 19:11), Goerge Bush addressing the Congress after 9/11, The story of Thanksgiving by Nancy J. Skarmear, The USA Oath of Allegiance, President Dwight Eisenhower's farewell speech and Bill Clinton addressing the subject of immigration (1996).

Imaginary Circumstances was first produced as part of an MFA thesis project at UC Berkeley in April 2019 with the following cast:

MOTHER	Emily Serdhal
FATHER	Eleanor Hall Watson
CHILD A	Hande Gul Kucukkaya
CHILD B	Xun Zhang
ACTORS	Faisal Michael, Trevor Nagle, Tai White, Marcel Scott, Ryan Takemiy, Napolweon Highbrou, Lhasa Summers, Tiffany Moore, Cheryl Belkin, Gwendolyn Purnama
Director	Gabriella Willenz
Director of Photography	Sepehr Rafiei

SCENE ONE

CHARACTERS

MOTHER

FATHER

CHILD A, 3 years old

CHILD B, 7 years old

ACTORS

Actors preparing to start monologue.

SCENE TWO

A table and four chairs. On the table various breakfast foods such as OJ, bagels, cream cheese, fruit, cornflakes and a small pot of tea.

CHILD A: Daddy, Taste it, it's spicy.

MOTHER: Taste what?

FATHER: The cheese isn't spicy, but I can taste it if you want.

CHILD A: How do you know?

FATHER: Because I've had it before.

MOTHER: Tonight we are a country? Do you want some tea?

FATHER nods, she pours.

CHILD B: *(to FATHER)* Say thank you.

FATHER: *(amused)* Thank you.

MOTHER: *(to CHILD B)* Awakened to danger and called to defend freedom.

CHILD A: Our grief has turned to anger.

MOTHER: And anger to resolution?

MOTHER gives CHILD A a cup of tea, he tastes.

CHILD A: *(making a face)* Whether we bring

MOTHER: Our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done. ok?

CHILD A: I want orange juice.

CHILD B: All of this was brought upon us in a single day

CHILD A: Juice Please.

CHILD B: And night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack

CHILD A: Juice please. Please juice.

FATHER: Americans have many questions tonight.

FATHER pours OJ.

MOTHER: *(to FATHER)* Americans are asking: Who attacked our country. The evidence we have gathered *(pause)* all points to a collection of loosely affiliated

FATHER: terrorist organizations known as al Qaeda.

CHILD A finishes his bowl of cheerios.

CHILD A: Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there.

MOTHER: It will not end until

CHILD A: I'm going to be big.

MOTHER: Every terrorist group of global reach - *(to CHILD B)* has been found, stopped and defeated?

CHILD B: Americans are asking

MOTHER: Why do they hate us?

CHILD B: They hate what we see right here.

MOTHER: A democratically elected government.

CHILD B: Their leaders hate our freedoms -

CHILD A starts to take off his sweatshirt.

MOTHER: No, don't take that off, don't do that.

FATHER: *(to CHILD A)* Americans should not expect one battle,

but a lengthy campaign.

MOTHER: (to CHILD B) Unlike any other we have ever seen?

CHILD B: It may include dramatic strikes.

CHILD A takes his plate and walks off stage.

MOTHER: Visible on TV?

CHILD B: And covert operations

CHILD A comes back with out the sweatshirt.

FATHER: Secret even in success.

CHILD A ignores and sits back at the table.

FATHER: We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another. (CHILD A doesn't move) drive them from place to place.

CHILD A walks out dramatically and comes back with sweatshirt. Puts it on chair and sits down.

MOTHER: (to CHILD B) And we will pursue nations that provide aid. Or safe haven to terrorism?

CHILD B nods in agreement.

MOTHER: (to CHILD A) Every nation, in every region now has a decision to make?

CHILD A takes a spoon full of humus and tastes it.

CHILD A: Either you are with us.

FATHER: Or you are with the terrorists.

MOTHER: You don't have to eat it if it's spicy to you. Do you also want cream-cheese?

CHILD A: I want Cheerios.

MOTHER: This is not, however, just America's fight.

CHILD B: And what is at stake is not just America's freedom?

FATHER: This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight. This is the fight of all.

CHILD B: Who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom.

FATHER: But this country will define our times?

CHILD B: Not be defined by them. As long as the United States of America is determined and strong.

CHILD B walks off stage looking for book.

CHILD A: This will not be an age of terror.

FATHER: This will be an age of liberty? here and across the world?

CHILD A: Great harm has been done to us. We have suffered great loss.

FATHER: And in our grief and anger we have found our mission and our moment.

MOTHER: Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom -

CHILD B comes back with book.

CHILD B: I found it in the living room.

CHILD B puts the book in the backpack. MOTHER

finishes making the sandwiches. She wraps them in a napkin.

CHILD A: *(takes another piece of bread)* The great achievement of our time.

FATHER: And the great hope of every time? *(to MOTHER)* Now depends on us.

CHILD A takes off the hard part of the bread and gives it to CHILD B.

CHILD B: I don't want yours.

CHILD A pushes it in MOTHER's face.

CHILD A: I don't want the hard part.

MOTHER takes it and eats it.

MOTHER: Our nation - this generation.

CHILD B: Will lift a dark threat of violence.

CHILD B takes an apple and eats it.

FATHER: Like your FATHER.

CHILD A: From our people and our future.

CHILD B inspects the sandwich.

CHILD B: We will not tire, we will not falter?

MOTHER: And we will not fail. You know there are like dozens of

flavors of cream-cheese, Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty

CHILD B: Have always been at war, it's smelly.

FATHER: Fellow citizens.

CHILD A: We'll meet violence with patient justice.

CHILD B: Assured of the rightness of our cause.

MOTHER: And confident of the victories to come, but I agree you can taste the goat.

CHILD A rocks on the chair.

FATHER: In all that lies before us, may God grant us wisdom?

CHILD A: And may he watch over the United States of America.

FATHER: *(amused)* During Korea, the Navy kill ration was 12 to 1. We shot down 12 of their jets for every one of ours.

FATHER straightens CHILD A's chair and brings it closer to the table.

FATHER: During Vietnam that ration fell to 3 to 1.

MOTHER: Our pilots became dependent upon missiles. They had lost some of their dogfighting skills..

Both smile.

FATHER: Top Gun was created to teach Air Combat Maneuvering?

MOTHER: Dogfighting. This gives me a hard-on.

CHILD A stands on the chair.

CHILD A: At the end of Vietnam?

MOTHER: *(smiles, strokes him)* That ratio was back to 12 to 1.

CHILD A gets off the chair, holding a piece of bread.

CHILD A: And Now?

FATHER: I am.

CHILD B stands on chair.

CHILD B: You will not find a finer.

MOTHER gets up.

MOTHER: fighter pilot anywhere in the world. (*gestures to CHILD B to get down*) Gentlemen, you are the top one percent of all naval aviators.

MOTHER exits.

CHILD A: But who is the oldest?

FATHER: That's, sadly, a competition your not ever going to win.

CHILD A: I want to eat standing.

FATHER: Now, we don't make policy here.

CHILD A continues to eating standing.

FATHER: gentlemen, elected officials, civilians do that.

Child: We are the instruments of that policy.

FATHER: (*very strict*) and although we are not at war.

CHILD A sits down

CHILD A: we must always act as though we are at war

FATHER: Before my FATHER died, he said the worst thing about growing old was that other men stopped seeing you as dangerous..

CHILD A: Why?

CHILD A acts sad and slowly slides down the chair to the floor.

CHILD B: Your fatehr's grandFATHER gave up his life flying a B-24 in World War 2. He kept the Liberator aloft just long enough
CHILD A: for everyone to jump, and then he went down with the plane.

FATHER: That's the blood that courses in your veins.

CHILD A & CHILD B: Yeah!!!

FATHER: (*Raising his voice so to speak with MOTHER off stage*)
Your FATHER was my Boss and I was his Chief.

MOTHER returns with a coat.

MOTHER: What we knew about each other strengthened ...our bond as operators...

FATHER: There was a brotherhood

MOTHER: between us and we depended on each other more than a family.

CHILD B: I also want an apple for school.

CHILD A: Monster truck also wants an apple to school.

MOTHER: Whomever wants an apple will get one.

FATHER: Did you two brush you teeth this morning?

The children start to walk off.

MOTHER: We did, before breakfast.

FATHER: hey, hey, wipe your hands.

FATHER gives CHILD B a napkin and wipes hands and face of CHILD A . FATHER kisses both children goodbye.



SCENE THERE

Actors are listening to an off-camera director.

DIRECTOR: Do you know that play? I'd like to give you some context and then we will do it again. So, it's a Greek Tragedy. You're Iphigenia, a Greek princess, the daughter of Agamemnon. He is a king and the chief of staff of the Greek army. Agamemnon's brother, your uncle, Menelaus, is married to Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world. And then, a few weeks ago, Paris, the Trojan prince came to visit Greece and he seduced Helen and convinced her to run away with him to Troy. So it's a huge scandal, big problem, right? So they have to go to war to show the world you don't fuck with the Greeks. The Greek army has gathered, getting ready to sail to Troy, the problem is there is no wind so they can't sail. And then Agamemnon gets a prophecy that if he sacrifices his daughter, you, then they can sail and win the war.

SCENE FOUR

Small sofa and beside it a rug. MOTHER and CHILD A sit on the rug playing with the Duplo. CHILD B is near them building a very delicate and elaborate castle out of Lego.

MOTHER: Don't we have more Duplo pieces?

CHILD A: I don't need more.

MOTHER takes a piece of duplo and puts it on the structure CHILD A is building. CHILD A removes it.

CHILD A: It's not good here.

MOTHER: You are so bossy.

MOTHER gets up and brings a basket with more duplo.

MOTHER: Do you know why we have Thanksgiving day.

FATHER walks in with a cup of coffee and his iPad and lays on the couch. He pats the head of CHILD B on his way.

FATHER: I wonder where he got that from.

MOTHER: From you?

CHILD A: Because of the Pilgrims and Native Americans.

MOTHER returns to sit next to CHILD A.

MOTHER: The Pilgrims could not have their own church, so they left their homes for a new land far away.

CHILD A: A tower. The highest tower.

CHILD A gets up and demonstrates how high it is going to be.

CHILD B: The Pilgrims crossed the ocean on a ship called the Mayflower?

FATHER: The wind blew. The ship rocked. The pilgrims prayed that it would not sink.

CHILD B: After many months the boat stopped at Plymouth Massachusetts?

MOTHER: The Pilgrims thanked God for keeping them safe.

CHILD B: The Pilgrims built their homes! Winter came.

FATHER: There was not much food to eat.

CHILD B: (*getting annoyed*) One day, three native Americans came to visit!

FATHER: One named Squanto stayed to help the Pilgrims.

CHILD A: Mommy, this is for you.

MOTHER: Really? For me?

CHILD A: It's a present.

Mommy: Thank you sweetie, it's lovely. What is it?

CHILD A: It's a house for you. Squanto taught the Pilgrims.

MOTHER: (*gestures towards FATHER and CHILD B*) how to hunt and fish?

CHILD A: He gave them seeds.

CHILD B: And showed them how to plant corn. pumpkins and squash.

CHILD A: The vegetables grew. The p...pilgrims... The pilgrims...

Mommy: Filled their barns with food? For the next winter?

CHILD A: They would have enough to eat?

Mommy: The Pilgrims invited their Native. N-a-t-i-v-e American friends.

CHILD A: Native. to a great feast.

MOTHER connects pieces of Dubplo to the top of the tower as if they were branches. The structure becomes unstable and falls. CHILD A gets very upset, shouts and stomps.

Mommy: *(taken aback)* Hey, hey, what's this reaction? *(assertive)*

Excuse me - For three days they ate turkey.

CHILD A: *(crying)* Fish, corn, beans, pumpkins and squash.

Mommy: On Thanksgiving we eat turkey, corn, and pumpkins just like the Native Americans and Pilgrims.

CHILD A: And, like them, we also say.

CHILD A gets up stomping and accidentally kicks and ruins what CHILD B has been building.

CHILD B: Thank you! God! for our families?

CHILD B pushes CHILD A.

MOTHER: our food, and our homes. We do not push. After years of neglect.

CHILD B: this administration has taken a strong stance! to stiffen the protection of our borders! He's such a cry baby.

FATHER: We are increasing border controls by 50 percent.

CHILD A, insulted, walks to the side of the stage crying.

MOTHER walks over and caresses CHILD A.

MOTHER: We are increasing inspections to prevent the hiring of illegal immigrants.

CHILD A: But he said I'm stupid.

MOTHER: Who else is part of the Saudi group? give me one name and I'll stop this.

CHILD B: Where was the last time you saw Ben Laden! When you lie to me I hurt you.

MOTHER looks at FATHER.

MOTHER: This is what defeat looks like bro.

FATHER: Come here...

CHILD B shrugs.

FATHER: Your time is over. let's see what exactly is the damage. Do we need a carpenter or a building constructor or is it only a painting job.

A smile creeps onto CHILD B's face.

MOTHER: *(to CHILD A)* he is the biggest man I've ever seen, I wouldn't want to fight him.

CHILD A: That's why no one will remember your name?

CHILD B: And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse.

FATHER and MOTHER look at each other, FATHER shrugs.

FATHER: and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True.

The Children jump up and down excited.

CHILD A & CHILD B: Yeah!!!

MOTHER: First we are picking things up.

CHILD B: Maybe after we watch TV. (*hugs MOTHER's arm*). please?

MOTHER: Ok but in righteousness He judges and wages war.

CHILD A: Pokoyo!

CHILD B: TZ masks!

CHILD A: Pokoyo!

CHILD B: TZ masks!

FATHER walks off stage after the two children. MOTHER sits down on couch and opens the ipod.



SCENE FIVE

Actors audition with the monologue of Iphigenia from the play Iphigenia in Aulis by Euripides.

Mother, my words must be heard! For I see that you are angry with your husband, and in vain. Hear what has come into my mind, mother, as I was thinking about this. To die - this is my decision. I want to do just this, gloriously, putting all meanness of spirit wholly aside. Here! Consider with me the good of my words. It is to me that Greece in all its wide extent now looks, and on me depend the ship's crossing and the destruction of the Phrygians; and, as to our women in the future, if the barbarians do something, not to allow them any longer to snatch them from prosperous Greece, by ensuring that they pay for the ruin of Helen whom Paris snatched away. Through my death, I shall secure all that, and my fame as the liberator of Greece will be blessed. For in fact, it is also not right for me to love life too much. You gave me birth for the common good of the Greeks, not for yourself alone. Then, shall numberless oarsmen dare to strike against the enemy when their fatherland is wronged, and die for Greece, and shall my life, a single life, prevent all this? How could we argue that this is right? I give my body to Greece. Make your sacrifice, sack Troy! These shall be my lasting memorial, and my children and marriage, and my fame. It is right that Greeks should rule barbarians, and not barbarians Greeks. For slavery is theirs, but Greeks are free.

Mother, why these tear-soaked eyes, in silence?

SCENE SIX

Child's bedroom. A large arm chair and a few feet away a single bed. FATHER sits on the arm waiting. Child A approaches holding a toy dinosaur and a book.

CHILD A: *(regarding the dinosaur)* He also wants to read the book.

FATHER: Ok. Come sit next to me. What book did you choose?

CHILD A hands FATHER the book.

FATHER: Oh, nice, the path of the rites man is beset on all sides.

CHILD A sits next to FATHER. It takes him a few minutes to settle down and throughout the story he changes positions often.

FATHER: Are we good? *(Reading the book's title)* by the iniquities of the selfish and the tyranny of the evil man.

FATHER reads the book slowly and in an animated way.

CHILD A is very engaged. It's a loving time.

FATHER: Blest is he, who in the name of charity and good will *(FATHER flips page)* shepherds the weak *(flip)* through the "valley of darkness," for he is truly "his brother's keeper" and the finder of lost children. *(flip)* And I will strike down upon thee with great vengeance *(flip)* and furious anger *(flip)* those who would attempt to poison and

destroy my brothers. *(flip)* And you will know my name is the Lord when I lay my vengeance upon thee.

CHILD A: Where is he sailing to?

FATHER: We'll see in a minute. *(flip)* I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance *(flip)* and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen *(flip)*

CHILD A: that I will support and defend the Constitution? Why are they scary?

FATHER: And laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic

CHILD A: Oh.

FATHER: That I will "bear true faith" and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law *(flip)* that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States -

CHILD A: *(continues the sentence)* When required by the law.

FATHER: Correct.

FATHER smiles at CHILD A, then notices CHILD A is sucking a fingre.

FATHER: Take your fingers out of your mouth.

CHILD A: But I like it.

FATHER: No. stop. *(continues to read)* "that I will perform" work of "national importance under civilian direction" *(flipping 2 pages)*

Child: When required by the law.

FATHER: Tomorrow, when you get home from preschool we can climb the tree out in the back. *(flips another 2 pages)* "and that I take" this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion.

Child: He's sad. He misses his mommy.

FATHER: I also think so. (*continuing*) This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. (*flip*) But the wild things cried "The total influence—economic, political, even -"

CHILD A: (*filling in*) even spiritual!

FATHER: (*approving smile*) is felt in every "city", every statehouse, every office of the federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. (*flip*) Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. (*flip*) Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved (*flip*) so is the very structure of our society.

CHILD A: Yummy.

FATHER hugs Child A, gets up and walks to a wall waiting near the light switch (indicated with finger).

FATHER: In the, councils, of government.

CHILD A gets up reluctantly, hugs the dinosaur.

FATHER: We must guard against the acquisition.

CHILD A: of unwarranted influence?

FATHER: Whether sought or unsought.

CHILD A looks around, chooses the best place to place the dinosaur.

CHILD A: (*while placing the dinosaur*) by the military-industrial complex. The monkey isn't scared of him.

FATHER: The rise.

FATHER turns off the light and gestures to CHILD A to come to bed. CHILD A walks over dramatically and clearly un-happy. CHILD A gets into bed. Only light from the nightlight is left.

CHILD A: Of misplaced power exists, and will persist.

FATHER spreads out the blanket.

FATHER: Do you want me to put you into a cocoon?

Child: yes.

FATHER wraps the child in the blanket and kisses him on the head.

FATHER: We must never let the weight.

CHILD A: Of this combination?

FATHER: Endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted.

CHILD A: OK.

FATHER sits on the bed and strokes CHILD A. After a few seconds he gets up, gives CHILD A another kiss on the forehead.

FATHER: I love you very much.

He walks away.

CHILD A: I love you too and also Mommy.

FATHER: Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry.

Child: Can compel the proper meshing.

FATHER: Of the huge industrial.

CHILD A: And military machinery of defense?

FATHER: With our peaceful methods and goals so that security and liberty may prosper together.

CHILD A: OK.

FATHER walks out, CHILD A sits up in bed. FATHER returns with a glass of water and gives it to CHILD A to drink then puts the glass near the dinosaur and walks out.

FATHER: No getting out of bed.

CHILD A: OK.

FATHER: Good night.

CHILD A: Are you leaving?

FATHER: No, love, both me and mommy are staying home all night. We will be in our room. I'll see you in the morning.

CHILD A: OK. But...

FATHER: Good night.

FATHER exists and CHILD A mumbles: "can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial. and military machinery of defense..."

THE END





