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**American Association of
Community Theatre AACT
NewPlayFest Winning Plays:
Volume 3 (2018)**

Finishing School by
ELAINE LINER

Making Sweet Tea and Other Secrets by
PAUL ELLIOTT

Eternity by
MICHAEL COCHRAN

Mynx & Savage by
REBECCA GORMAN O'NEILL

Treehouse by
JOE MUSSO

Sweet by
DENISE HINSON

Dramatic Publishing Company
Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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INTRODUCTION

The American Association of Community Theatre (AACT) is proud to present the six winning scripts and playwrights of the third AACT NewPlayFest cycle. AACT NewPlayFest is an initiative by AACT to address the critical need for new, high-quality plays for community theatre audiences around the globe. It has been embraced by playwrights and theatres across the country, bringing exciting theatrical journeys to producing companies and joyful realization and anticipation to playwrights and their work.

AACT is pleased to partner with Dramatic Publishing Company for this program. AACT NewPlayFest is unparalleled in new play competitions, providing full productions of the winning scripts, plus publication and rights representation by a major theatrical publisher.

This third cycle of AACT NewPlayFest, ending in 2018, proved even more successful than the first two. More scripts were submitted, and six theatres across the country produced world premieres of winning scripts. This festival continues to benefit the producing theatres by giving them the excitement of bringing new works to their patrons, and the playwrights by experiencing quality productions of their work, and publication and representation by Dramatic Publishing. The benefits of AACT NewPlayFest will expand as additional theatres produce these top-notch plays.

We hope you will consider one of these plays for your next season.

Break a leg,

Quiana Clark-Roland, Executive Director
American Association of Community Theatre

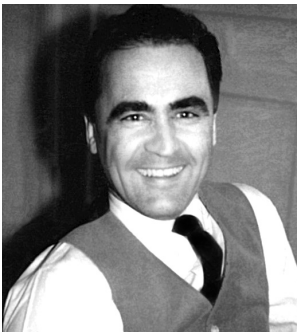
The American Association of Community Theatre is the resource connection for America's theatres. AACT represents the interests of more than 7,000 theatres across the United States and its territories, as well as theatre companies with the U.S. Armed Services overseas. To learn more about AACT NewPlayFest and AACT go to aact.org.

FOREWORD

Jack K. Ayre, born in Pittsburgh on July 9, 1921, celebrated his 90th birthday before passing away in December 2011. At his birthday party in Sunnyvale, Calif., he sang with a barbershop quartet—one of his favorite activities—and celebrated with his cousin and lifelong friend, Frank Ayre Lee. Though as adults they lived on opposite sides of the country, the cousins kept in touch through letters that displayed a love for the written word and an irreverent sense of humor. Jack had participated in theatre productions at Drew University in New Jersey and at a community theatre in Connecticut in his younger years, and continued that interest when he moved to California.

Frank, a chemical engineer by profession, was also an avid aficionado of theatre and had dabbled in playwriting, adapting Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* for a children's theatre production, and penning *McSteg*, a tongue-in-cheek discourse ribbing his cousin Jack and based on a scene in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

The Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation has been created by the children of Frank as a tribute to their father, who passed away in August 2012, and a legacy for the creative endeavors of Jack, who was an advertising executive and public relations director. The family is pleased to honor both men through a lasting legacy promoting new works for theatre.



Jack K. Ayre



Frank Ayre Lee

Photos: Courtesy of the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation.

Finishing School

By
ELAINE LINER

Finishing School received its premier production at the Elkhart Civic Theatre at the Bristol Opera House in Bristol, Ind., on Sept. 8, 2017.

CAST:

Al..... Dave Dufour
Wizzer Gail Janssen
Minnie Melissa Auvil
Shirley..... Sandra Woodiwiss
Announcement Voice Elaine Liner

PRODUCTION:

DirectorKevin Egelsky
Assistants to the DirectorVictoria Kucharski, Bob Franklin
Stage Manager Kristi McCreary
Stage Crew Spencer Murphy
Lights/Sound OperatorGarry Cobburn
Set and Lighting Design..... John Shoup
Set Construction.....John Shoup, Kevin Egelsky
Sound DesignGarry Cobburn
Costume and Properties Design Victoria Kucharski
Front of House Manager Carl Wiesinger
Program Design Kristin Schwerha

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“Finishing School was premiered in the American Association of Community Theatre’s AACT NewPlayFest by Elkhart Civic Theatre in Bristol, Ind.”

Finishing School

CHARACTERS

ALFRED: late 60s, barely 70.

WIZZER: much older than Alfred, in a wheelchair (the actor in the role should appear older than Alfred but without use of obvious “old-age makeup”).

MINNIE: 30s.

SHIRLEY: Minnie’s mother.

ANNOUNCEMENT VOICE: either gender, any age. Can be live or recorded.

SETTING: Small park with a bench next to a nice, senior-living facility; basically, this is a park-bench play.

TIME: Now.

SCENES

ACT I:

Scene 1: Monday morning in summer.

Scene 2: Later that same day.

Scene 3: Tuesday morning.

Scene 4: Wednesday morning.

ACT II:

Scene 1: Same day as before.

Scene 2: Thursday morning.

Scene 3: Thursday afternoon.

Finishing School

ACT I

Scene 1

(Lights up on two men. ALFRED is sitting on a park bench. WIZZER is in a wheelchair beside him. AL is reading a broadsheet newspaper [the size of The Dallas Morning News or Houston Chronicle]. WIZZER is nodding off. The pacing in this opening scene is meant to be deliberately relaxed, like Sheriff Andy Taylor and Deputy Barney Fife on the front porch on a hot summer day in Mayberry. Don't rush things. AL lazily turns newspaper pages. The rustling awakens WIZZER.)

WIZZER *(sleepily)*. Whatcha readin'?

AL. Obituaries.

(Beat.)

WIZZER. Am I in 'em?

AL *(offhandedly, turning a page)*. Not today.

WIZZER. Anybody you know in 'em?

AL. Looks like.

WIZZER. Who?

AL. One of our guys died. Ben McManus.

WIZZER. Who?

AL. McManus. Benjamin. From the second floor. T'other end from you. Died Saturday, looks like.

WIZZER. Who?

AL *(a little louder, as if he's used to this)*. Ben. Ben McManus. The Scottish fella. You know him. Big shoulders. Red sideburns. At the Christmas wingding he wore the kilt.

WIZZER. He was killt? Who killt him?

AL. No, you idiot. Kilt! He wore a kilt. The plaid skirt the men in Scotland wear! Forget it. Go back to sleep.

(Beat.)

WIZZER. McManus. From down the hall a'ways. He die, you say?

AL. Yep. Died Saturday. Write-up says it was prostate, among other things. Service is Tuesday at the Episcopal downtown.

WIZZER. That's quite a surprise.

AL. That he died? He was well past 80, for cryin' out loud. Man can't live forever.

WIZZER. Hey, I'm older'n 'at.

AL. You're a young old.

WIZZER *(after a thoughtful beat)*. No, honest to God, Al, all this time I thought that was a woman.

AL. You thought what was a woman?

WIZZER. The redhead in the skirt.

AL. You thought that big Scotsman was a woman? What's the matter with you? Have you gone blind too?

WIZZER. No, Al, honestly all these years, I'd see that red skirt and those fuzzy red muttonchops walk into the Christmas lunch and think, that's a big homely redhead with a facial-hair problem.

AL *(still looking at the paper)*. You're an idiot, Wizzer. You're my best friend here in the asylum. But you're an idiot.

WIZZER. Beg pardon?

AL. Nothing. I'm done. You wanna read 'em? Good bunch of death notices today. Some humdingers.

WIZZER. Oh, goody. Hit the highlights for me.

AL. Okey-dokey. Two start off with the phrase, "Flew home to the arms of Jesus." That's quite a trip.

WIZZER. That it is.

AL. Four were thirty-second-degree Masons.

WIZZER. Well, that shortens the Shriner's parade.

AL. Three are wearing hats in their pictures. Two women in Sunday hats. One fella in a big white Stetson. Two mentions of pets among survivors and/or honorary pallbearers. Benjamin McManus, it appears, is survived by two ex-wives, both named Shirley, and a cockatoo called Robbie Burns.

WIZZER. A bird? He had a bird? How'd he have a bird in here?

AL. I don't know how he had it. He had it. And it appears it has survived him.

WIZZER. Did you know that I bought a goldfish one day here while back at the mall and they confiscated it as contraband? Took it clean away from me. Probably flushed it down the pipe, poor little thing. Still have the empty fish bowl up there on the dresser. Had a little castle with rocks and everything.

AL. That's too bad.

WIZZER. I didn't have her long, but I loved that little fish. People think you can't get attached to any pet except a cat or a dog. But that little fish and me were friends. We really were.

AL. What'dja name it?

WIZZER. What?

AL. The fish! What'dja name the fish?

WIZZER. I don't recall. Barely had it long enough to give it a name. Just got it home from the mall and they jerked it away from me. Whoosh, right down the crapper. Poor little critter.

AL (*handing WIZZER the paper*). Thirty-one.

WIZZER. What?

AL (*louder*). Thirty-one obits today.

WIZZER. Ooh-wee. That's a bunch.

AL. Yep. Well, we did have record heat last week.

WIZZER. Hotter'n the hinges of Hades.

AL. Not too bad today. Probably get hot later but there's a nice breeze right now.

WIZZER. AI?

AL. Yes.

WIZZER. What's today?

AL. Today's Monday, kiddo.

WIZZER. You sure about that?

AL. Says it right there at the top of the page.

WIZZER. You sure that's today's paper?

AL. It's Monday. Yesterday was Sunday. We watched the ball game, don't you remember?

WIZZER. And what'd we do Saturday?

AL. You mean besides not see them wheel old McManus out the back door under a sheet? I don't know what you did. I played online poker for about eight hours. Then I took a nap, ate a pizza and fell asleep watching *Saturday Night Live*.

WIZZER. Sounds good. Who was the host?

AL. No idea. Some singer. Shave-headed. Tattoos.

WIZZER. Patti Page.

AL. No, it wasn't Patti Page. Why would Patti Page be hosting *Saturday Night Live*? "Saturday Night Dead" maybe.

WIZZER. No! I named that little goldfish Patti Page. My favorite singer. Just came to me. Poor little thing. Flushed away in the prime of life. I miss that little booger. I'd like me a pet something-or-other. Something to keep me company in my little apartment.

It's not fair that Scottish gal got to keep her a bird. Not fair a bit.

AL. He was male, you idiot.

WIZZER. I don't care what sex that bird was. It's not fair that I can't have one too.

AL. Getting lonely in your old age?

WIZZER. I 'spect so.

AL. Does your wife know how you feel?

WIZZER. Dotty? Oh, she's all right. Talks a purple streak. I tune her out half the time.

AL. You're both talking to yourselves.

WIZZER. Yeah. (*Beat.*) Fine singer. Yes, she was.

AL. Who?

WIZZER. Patti Page! Who'd you think I was talking about?

AL. Carumba, now I'm doin' it.

WIZZER. Wasn't your son supposed to come down over the weekend?

AL. I don't know.

WIZZER. Now I remember. He was supposed to come by here for lunch. I recall you saying that.

AL. Yeah, well.

WIZZER. Didn't he show up?

AL. He showed up. I didn't answer the door.

WIZZER. Oh, not again. That's a shame. I worry about you, kid. It's not right. He was bringing you the olive branch and you locked him out. You spend too much time by yourself, carrying a grudge. It's not healthy. You can't stay mad forever.

AL. We'll see about that. Hey, let's take a spin down to the corner. Wanna go down to the corner?

WIZZER. Nah.

AL. Dollar Store?

WIZZER. Nope.

AL. Starbucks?

WIZZER. Do I look like I won the lottery?

AL. What's on your dance card then, bud? Can't sit out here all day. We'll fry in the heat. Whatchu wanna do? Let's do something. I'm restless.

WIZZER. I don't know. I'm doin' good just to stay alive, I 'spect.

AL. Well, the Grim Reaper already grabbed one of us this week. That's about average. I say old McManus took one for the team. We're safe. For now.

WIZZER. Remember last winter that one week—

AL. We lost six? A by-god croakathon that week.

WIZZER. What got 'em? I forget.

AL. Staff said it was Hong Kong flu.

WIZZER. Kung fu?

AL (*louder*). No, idiot, BIRD FLU. Epidemic. Everybody was running a fever. Wandering the halls. Mumbling like crazy—more than usual. It was like one flew over the cuckoo's nest in this place.

WIZZER. Who had a cuckoo's nest?

AL. I give up. It's like talking to a hard-of-hearing Muppet.

WIZZER. Six in one week. Lawdy Pete. Was that a record?

AL. I don't think we know who all dies around here. They sneak bodies out the back door at night.

WIZZER. And what killed 'em, you say?

AL. BIRD FLU. *BIRD. FLU.*

WIZZER. You don't have to yell. (*Beat.*) Maybe it was all her fault.

AL. Who?

WIZZER. The Scotch woman. You said she had a bird. Coulda made everybody sick.

AL. Wizz, wouldn't your wife have your lunch ready about now?

WIZZER (*looking at his watch*). Golly Moses, you're right. It's almost 10:45. Usually calls me by now. Where's my phone? (*Feeling for it in his pocket. He finds it and checks it.*) Not yet. She's probably watching TV. Loves that one show with the games and the prizes. Come on down!

AL. Plinko!

AL & WIZZER. PLINKO!

WIZZER. Best part of it. You bet it is. Al?

AL. Yeah, bud?

WIZZER. Was he in the cave? The Scotchman. Did it say? Was he in there, ya reckon?

AL. The cave? I wouldn't think he was. I saw him around a bunch. He seemed to be all there whenever I saw him. But the write-up probably wouldn't say, would it?

WIZZER. Don't want to be in the cave.

AL. Nosirreebob. Do not.

WIZZER. What's it called again?

AL. Officially? The Memory Care Cove.

WIZZER. No memory left, more like.

AL. Yep. Purty much.

WIZZER. Stay outta there.

AL. I'm with ya on that score, kid.

(WIZZER's phone goes off with the ringtone tune of the Bee Gees' "Stayin' Alive," or something similar.)

WIZZER *(reaching for phone in his pocket)*. Thar she blows. *(Answering.)* Is this my girlfriend? ... Sounds good, honeybun ... Be right up. *(Shuts off phone.)* Mind if I keep that one part of the paper, Al? I like to study those obits after lunch. See if I know anybody besides that Scottish dame.

AL. Go to town, kid. It's the senior citizen's sports page.

WIZZER. See ya later, mashed pah-tater.

*(AL pushes WIZZER to the garden gate and WIZZER exits. As WIZZER leaves, an ANNOUNCEMENT VOICE is heard from a public address system concealed within the garden's fake rocks. This VOICE will recur throughout, like the PA system in M*A*S*H.)*

VOICE *(overly cheerfully, but with a hint of malice)*. Good morning, residents! Today is Monday, June twenty-second. Here are today's announcements. Lunch today in the big dining room is Salisbury steak with gravy, spinach casserole, carrot salad and pineapple tart.

AL (*settling back on the bench to do the crossword puzzle from the newspaper*). That's for the chewers.

VOICE. The alternates are steamed carrots, cream of mushroom soup and rice pudding. This afternoon's exercise in the small gym is chair-robics. And in the big gym, intermediate tai chi. Your sensei, Miss Beverly, says dress to move and wear your nonskid footwear.

AL. So you won't break a hip and have to do chair-robics.

VOICE. Our special entertainment tonight is DoNAL-doh the MagNEE-fico, a local magician who will delight and astound you with his feet—

AL. Idiot.

VOICE. His *feats* of magic. Showtime is five-thirty. The library lady will be here tomorrow with new large-print selections, including new copies of the popular self-help book *The Purpose-Driven Life*—

AL. Grinding to a miserable end—

VOICE. And don't forget our Seniors Prom is coming up! If you never went to your high-school prom or you want to relive that special night, this year's theme is "Never Too Late." So find a date and dust off those dancing shoes.

AL. Shoot me now.

VOICE. Our thought for today is: "The tragedy of old age is not that one is old, but that one is young." Oscar Wilde.

AL. Who died in his 40s.

VOICE. And a request from housekeeping. Do NOT try to flush absorbent undergarments down your toilets. We are presently experiencing a blockage on the second floor that we hope to have repaired over the next few hours. *If* the plumbing crew can locate the source of the problem. That is all!

(*Beat.*)

AL. Patti Page!

(*Blackout/transition.*)

SCENE 2

(Lights up on same park setting later in the day. It is nearly dusk. A young woman, MINNIE, sits on the bench, scrolling through her cellphone. AL appears at the gate, pushing WIZZER into their regular spot, now occupied by the stranger.)

MINNIE *(distractedly)*. Hiya.

WIZZER. Howdy do.

AL. Ahem.

MINNIE. Am I in y'all's way?

AL. Well ...

MINNIE. Scooch in. There's room. Don't mind me. *(She makes room on the bench for AL, who sits close to the edge away from her.)* I'm checking messages. I'm supposed to meet somebody here, but she's late.

AL. Don't say "late" around here. They'll think she's dead.

(WIZZER quickly dozes off in his chair.)

MINNIE *(texting on her phone)*. You fellas live here?

AL. I wouldn't call it livin'. But I eat and sleep here. I come up for parole about two weeks from never.

MINNIE. Aw, it's not that bad, is it? I've seen worse. This is one of the better places, as assisted living goes.

AL *(not too seriously)*. Assisted. Living. That's a good one. More accurately, assisted *dying*. Move in on the fourth floor and work your way down to the loading dock where they stuff you in a box and deliver you to your e-ternal resting place.

MINNIE. Whoa. A realist. Interesting. My name's Minnie, by the way.

(MINNIE sticks out her hand to shake AL's.)

AL. I'm Al. He's Wizzer. Asleep. As usual.

MINNIE. Aw. Is he your roommate? Have y'all lived here long?

AL. Roommate—lord, no. Just a friend. He's a long-timer in this joint. I've been here about eight months, give or take an eon. My son stuck me in here last year when he and his new wife decided I needed "assistance." They stole my house out from under me. But that's another story.

MINNIE. You seem a little too young for ... this place.

AL. I have a portrait aging in an attic. If I'd known I'd live this long—

MINNIE. You'd have taken better care of yourself? Isn't that how the saying goes?

AL. Well, I was gonna say, I wouldn't have stopped smoking. I really enjoyed smoking.

MINNIE. How old is your friend?

AL. Wizzer? No idea. Up there. Just this side of Methuselah. He fought in Korea, so he's way older than me. He has narcolepsy. That's the *best* thing he's got. Falls asleep every few minutes. Makes for some short conversations. But he's just about the only person in this cellblock I can tolerate.

VOICE (*slowly and deliberately*). Good evening, residents. Reminder for our night owls, our late-late movies at 7:30 in the media room are *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *On Golden Pond*.

AL. Followed by heavy sobbing and an extra dose of antidepressants.

MINNIE (*still looking at her phone*). Hey, you're funny.

AL. I am my generation's Henny Youngman.

MINNIE. Who?

AL. Never mind.

MINNIE (*texting again*). You going to those movies?

AL. Nuuuuuu, not me. I can't watch movies with all these old people. All their hearing aids squealing and everybody going, "What'd they say? What's going on?" The Baptists get mad if there's nudity. The Lutherans get upset if there's cussing. And the old bigots throw a fit if there's black people kissing white people. I've seen better behavior at dog fights.

(*MINNIE checks her phone again.*)

AL. Who ya meetin' out here? Your grandma?

MINNIE. My mother, actually. My father died here over the weekend and she's meeting me to help clear out some of his things. Maybe you knew him ... Benjamin—

AL. McManus? Aw, good man. I'm very sorry for your loss, Miss ... Miss ... you told me ...

MINNIE. Minnie. Minnie McManus. I know. It sounds like Minnie Mouse. When I get married I'm taking *his* name.

AL. You engaged?

MINNIE. *No*. But I'm on the market, if you know anyone under 40.

AL. Well ... I'll, uh ... yeah. You know, your daddy was a right nice fellow. I didn't even know he was ailing.

MINNIE. He had heart problems for a long time. And then the prostate stuff. But he was strong as an ox. And a real sweetie.

AL. So you're Shirley's daughter?

MINNIE. You know my mom?

AL. No. I read the obit. The two Shirleys and everything.

MINNIE. My mom is Shirley two, his second wife. She and Dad divorced when I was younger—she was a bit of a handful for him, I think. She was his late-in-life fling that turned into a crazy marriage. I think I was a surprise. They divorced but they were still friends right to the end. Talked all the time. She's supposed to be meeting me here after work. Like, twenty minutes ago.

AL. Who gets the bird?

MINNIE. What bird?

AL. Ben's bird. Robbie Burns. You taking him home?

MINNIE. I guess I'll have to unless Mom wants it. I hadn't really thought about it. Dad had some books and pictures and things he wanted me to have, she said. I didn't even know about a bird. I never really visited him here. My mom or somebody would pick him up and drive him out to the house for holidays and birthdays.

WIZZER (*sleepily*). Yeah, Patti Page. I loved that old song.

MINNIE. I'm sorry. What?

AL. Don't mind him. He's in la la land.

WIZZER (*singing softly*). How much is that ... de dah dah dee dah dah.

AL. That doggie in the window? Go back to sleep, Wizz.

WIZZER (*waking up a little*). Who's this? Hey, there. You're a pretty little thing, ain'tcha?

AL. This is old McManus' daughter. Minnie Mouse... oh, damn it.

MINNIE. Minnie. My name's Minnie. Nice to meet you, sir.

WIZZER. Minnie? Like the Moocher?

Making Sweet Tea and Other Secrets

By
PAUL ELLIOTT

Making Sweet Tea and Other Secrets received its world premier production at Lincoln Community Playhouse in Lincoln, Neb., on Jan. 19, 2018. It was produced by Lincoln Community Playhouse (Morrie Enders, Executive Director; Christine Cottam, Director of Operations).

CAST:

RUTH.....Margaret Minary
DOTTIELaurel Crusinberry
AMBER Evan Pitt
JANIE Jessica R. Dinger
SHEILA RAY.....Amy Koepke
DOC Mark Feit
ROBBIE..... Walter J. McDowell III

PRODUCTION:

Director Morrie Enders
Set Design Douglas Clarke
Costume Design Cheri Sailors
Lighting Design Kathleen Turner
Sound DesignBJ Montague
Properties DesignEmily Kuklinski
Fight Choreography Ian Borden
Technical Director.....Nick Turner
Stage Manager Lauren Parker
Assistant Scenic Designer..... Jessica Thompson
Assistant to the Technical DirectorJosiah Morgan

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“Making Sweet Tea and Other Secrets was premiered in the American Association of Community Theatre’s AACT NewPlayFest by Lincoln Community Playhouse in Lincoln, Neb.”

Making Sweet Tea and Other Secrets

CHARACTERS

RUTHIE ROSE HAMILTON: a no-nonsense, rigid, 65-year-old, country woman raised to be gentler than this life has allowed her to be. She rules her world and her sister with love, but in black and white terms.

DOTTIE LORRAINE HAMILTON: Ruthie's slightly older sister. A small, seemingly genteel, 68-year-old woman, stronger in many ways than her fragile frame implies.

ROBERT (ROBBIE) PARKER: 35 years old and a good guy, as well as the local sheriff.

AMBER: a battered and abused 18-year-old girl with lots of anger issues and a big secret.

SHEILA RAY: the town gossip and hairdresser. A woman who has been 30 years old for at least the last 15 years.

DOC MARSHALL: mid-50s, the most influential and most beloved man in town.

JANIE MARSHALL: Doc's wife, a woman who hides her secrets with prescription drugs.

TIME AND PLACE

The entire play takes place in the living room and on the porch of the Hamilton's old, weathered farmhouse in rural America. The time is the present, but in some of these isolated communities people tend to live as though time stopped in the '60s. And for many of them, it did.

Making Sweet Tea and Other Secrets

ACT I

Scene 1

(House lights dim, and, in the darkness, we begin to hear the sounds of a warm country evening—crickets, tree frogs, a porch swing creaking and then a dog barking happily in the near distance.)

RUTH *(voice, calling, irritated)*. Dottie, will you hush that dog up.

DOTTIE *(voice, matter-of-factly)*. She's just out scoutin'.

RUTH *(voice)*. Well, tell it to do its scoutin' where I can't hear it.

DOTTIE *(voice, chuckling to herself)*. I don't speak dog, Ruthie Rose.

(The lights come up to reveal the weathered, once elegant, wooden porch of the Hamilton farmhouse. It is warmly beautiful in the moonlight, but the shadows can't completely hide the need of paint and repair.)

DOTTIE LORRAINE HAMILTON, a diminutive 65-year-old, sits at the end of the porch in the shadows of the moon, quietly rocking in the swing, enjoying the night. Beside her is a large, half-empty pitcher of iced tea.

Her older sister, RUTHIE ROSE HAMILTON, stands silhouetted, just inside the screen door, looking out. From her stance, we can tell that this is a no-nonsense woman, as weathered and worn as the house she owns. Removing the apron from around her waist, RUTH absentmindedly wipes the perspiration from her face before throwing it aside.

Both sisters speak in the soft rhythm of the farmlands with that familiarity that comes from a lifetime of living and working together, knowing the other's thoughts and finishing each other's sentences.)

RUTH. No, but it listens to you. Me, it just ignores.

DOTTIE. When you stop calling it an “it,” she might just give you a listen, too.

RUTH. I don’t speak dog. (*Shouting out to the dog.*) ’Specially not nuisance dog!

(The dog can still be heard barking.)

DOTTIE. Oh, hush, She’s not a nuisance. She’s workin’ out there, lettin’ us know she’s on the job, and appreciates that we took her in.

RUTH. I didn’t take her in. You took “it” in. Not me. As far as I’m concerned, it’s a waste of space and good chicken scraps.

DOTTIE. Let it be, sister, it’s too hot to get all bunched up. Where’s Sheila Ray?

RUTH. Where do you think she is? Still in there on the pot. Don’t know why that woman can’t wait till she gets home.

DOTTIE. Don’t be like that. It’s a long way back to town and ... and it was nice of her to visit.

RUTH. I’d rather have a tooth pulled. You want me to turn the light on?

DOTTIE. Naw, just draw bugs. The dark’s just fine for me. Gonna be a full moon tomorrow. Near full tonight. Bright as all getout. Almost reach out and touch it.

RUTH. Well, it’s hot enough.

(The dog stops barking.)

DOTTIE. What’s a full moon got to do with being hot?

RUTH. Nothin’ I guess. Just talkin’. (*Shouting back into the house.*) Sheila Ray, We’re out on the porch. (*Under her breath.*) When you get through doing whatever you’re doing in there.

DOTTIE. I said, let it be. Come on, sit a spell. It’s cooler out here. Startin’ to breeze.

RUTH. I guess. You want more iced tea or anything ’fore I call it quits?

DOTTIE. No, almost flooded now. Any more I’d have to go.

RUTH. Then you better stand up and do it like a man ’cause I don’t think either of us is going to be using that john tonight after she’s done with whatever she’s doing in there.

SHEILA RAY (*voice*). Lordy, I feel ten pounds lighter.

RUTH. Oh god, I knew it.

DOTTIE. Out here.

(SHEILA RAY is a bubbly, slightly overweight, town beautician and local grapevine, who likes to think of herself as the epitome of everything beautiful, but manages to look more like a slightly off, decoupage of every bad fashion statement since the '70s.)

SHEILA RAY *(joining them on the porch)*. I swear, I don't know what it is about coming out here ... All this fresh air just works like someone stuck a firecracker up my behind and went "boom."
(To RUTH.) You want me to turn on the porch light.

RUTH. No. You're leavin' and we're goin' to bed.

DOTTIE. Ruthie!

RUTH. Well, we are. I'm tired. We've already missed *Wheel of Fortune*. It's bedtime.

DOTTIE. Sheila Ray, don't listen to her. You can stay as long as you want.

SHEILA RAY. That's OK. I know when I've overstayed my welcome.

RUTH. No, you don't.

DOTTIE. Don't pay any attention to sister. She's just got a burr up her tail tonight. Been antsy as all getout. Usually a sign of bad weather comin'.

RUTH. Or bad company.

SHEILA RAY *(to RUTH)*. OK, OK, I can take a hint. *(Kissing DOTTIE on the cheek.)* I don't know how you put up with her. You are such a saint. That's what you are, and that's what I tell everybody. *(To RUTH, as she steps off the porch.)* And Ruthie Rose, I hope you like that pie I brought, fresh out of the oven, homemade and baked especially for you. *(To DOTTIE.)* And you can keep the pan.

(She exits.)

DOTTIE. Thanks. Drive safe. *(To RUTH.)* Say thanks, Ruthie.

(RUTH doesn't say anything but the dog can be heard barking happily.)

DOTTIE. Ruthie Rose?

(RUTH just gives SHEILA RAY a quick dismissive wave. The dog's barking calms down as the car is heard pulling away.)

DOTTIE. You don't have to be rude.

RUTH. Homemade, my Aunt Aster. It still had freezer burns all over it. I've tasted cardboard with more flavor.

DOTTIE. It's the thought that counts and you know it. And what is with you tonight? All fidgety and all.

RUTH *(after a beat)*. I don't know. Something. Maybe it's just hot.

DOTTIE. Well, sit out here a bit. You're making me nervous. It's not going to be coolin' off in there for a while yet.

RUTH. I'll bet our bathroom stinks to beat the band. It's like she saves up the entire month, just to let loose on us.

DOTTIE. Ruthie, just drop it. She's gone now. Enjoy the peace and quiet.

(The dog barks again.)

RUTH. What peace and quiet? *(Referring to the dog in annoyance.)* What's it doin' now?

DOTTIE. Oh, just treed something, I guess. At least, sounds like it.

RUTH. I'm givin' you fair warning, Dottie, if that dog of yours brings a skunk in here, or another dead thing like yesterday, I'm shootin' it.

DOTTIE *(calling to the dog)*. You'll do no such thing. Hootch!!! Hootchie, you leave it be, whatever it is.

(The dog stops barking.)

DOTTIE. Good girl.

RUTH. Damned stupid name for a dog.

DOTTIE. What? Hootchie?

RUTH. Namin' a dog after corn liquor.

DOTTIE. Wasn't naming it after liquor. Just liked the name. 'Sides, I couldn't just be callin' it "it."

RUTH. Why not? It is an "it." Born an "it," die an "it." That's the way things are.

(Suddenly the dog starts barking ferociously in the yard.)

RUTH (*annoyed*). Will you shut that dog up?

DOTTIE (*sitting up*). No, I think somebody's comin'.

RUTH. She better not be coming back. Dog, if that's Sheila Ray comin' back ... you better bite her ass off, or you're dead meat.

(*Both listen for a car.*) I don't hear anything.

DOTTIE. I think Hootch does.

(*RUTH moves to the edge of the porch and leans out to look.*)

RUTH. It's not hearing anything. It's just a stupid dog and if it doesn't shut up, I'm gonna ...

(*A car is heard approaching from a distance, its tires crunching on the gravel.*)

RUTH (*cont'd*). Well, I'll be damned.

DOTTIE. See. I told you so. (*Calling to the dog.*) It's OK, girl. We hear it. That's right, you're a good girl.

RUTH. It's not a girl, it's a boy. Or have you forgotten what those things look like?

DOTTIE. Didn't matter to me. I don't go turning things upside down to find out. Hootchie's a name that could go either way.

(*The dog quiets down as the car lights sweep across the porch. The car comes to a stop.*)

DOTTIE (*cont'd*). That sounds like Robbie's car?

(*The car stops, and a car door is heard opening. RUTH moves to the porch steps while DOTTIE gets out of the swing.*)

RUTH (*calling*). Robert? What you doin' out here?

ROBERT (*voice*). I'm sorry to do this to you, but I didn't know where else to bring her.

RUTH (*shouting to him*). We don't need another dog. The one you brought last week is useless. Well, practically useless.

(*A second car door is heard being opened.*)

RUTH (*cont'd*). I said, we don't need ...

DOTTIE. Ruthie, I don't think it's a dog he's bringing.

ROBERT (*voice*). OK, easy now. Let me help you.

AMBER (*voice, angry, defensive and wounded*). Get your hands off me. I don't need your ... ohhhh.

ROBERT (*voice*). I'm trying to help, damn it.

RUTH. What the hell is he bringing in here?

(DOTTIE grabs the door and opens it as ROBERT [ROBBIE] PARKER enters, supporting a battered, bleeding young girl [AMBER]. He's also dragging a ripped backpack which he drops on the floor.

ROBERT is a slightly overweight, middle-aged man who wears a sheriff's badge. Though it's obvious tonight, he's the one who needs help.

It's hard to tell what AMBER looks like with her bloody face and smeared makeup, but first impressions are that she's tough, like a hooker who's tricked the wrong john. Her heavy makeup is streaked with blood, her teased hair is disheveled and her blouse and skirt are blood stained, torn and shredded on her body.

As ROBERT helps her into the house, DOTTIE clicks on the lights and we see the interior of the house for the first time.

Once elegant, the sitting room furniture has seen better times.

A wooden staircase angles up into the second story darkness, There is an archway by the dining room table that leads to the back of the house.)

RUTH. Who is she?

ROBERT. She's hurt.

RUTH. I can see that.

DOTTIE. Good gracious, the poor thing.

(DOTTIE rushes out to the kitchen.)

ROBERT. She needs a place to sit.

(When RUTH doesn't move, he grabs one of the dining room chairs and lowers AMBER down. AMBER continues to try to push ROBERT away.)

ROBERT. Will you stop fighting me? I've got to see ...

RUTH. Who is she?

ROBERT. In a minute. Right now, I need some hot water and towels.

DOTTIE (*voice, from the kitchen*). It's coming.

RUTH. What happened? An accident?

ROBERT. No. (*To AMBER.*) Miss Dottie's bringing something to clean you up with.

(*AMBER pushes his hands away as she tries to catch her breath.*)

AMBER. Can't breathe with you smothering me.

RUTH. Stop ignoring me. No, what?

ROBERT. What, what?

RUTH. You said it wasn't an accident. So what was it?

ROBERT (*hesitant about saying too much*). A fight ... that sorta got out of hand.

RUTH (*to AMBER*). What's she want to go pickin' a fight for?

AMBER. I didn't pick a fight, damn it. He attacked me. Stupid.

RUTH. Watch who you're callin' stupid in my own house. I'll take you out and give you a beating myself.

DOTTIE (*entering with a basin of water and washcloth*). You'll do no such thing. Just hush.

RUTH. She called me stupid.

DOTTIE. If you don't calm your feathers back down, I'm gonna call you worse. Now help me.

(*RUTH moves completely away.*)

ROBERT. I'll help you.

AMBER. I didn't call her stupid, and I don't need ...

ROBERT. I know. I know. But we're gonna do it anyway.

RUTH. Well, somebody certainly got called stupid.

DOTTIE. Now, let's see what we have here.

AMBER. Me, I was talkin' about me.

ROBERT. Will you hush and let Miss Dottie clean you up. We need to know how bad those cuts are.

AMBER. I'm OK. I said I was OK.

DOTTIE (*getting ready to begin the clean up*). Well, you certainly don't look OK. Goodness, you've got blood all over.

AMBER (*suddenly concerned*). Shit! Where's my suede coat?

ROBERT. Suede coat? What suede coat?

DOTTIE. Honey, a coat's the least of your worries right now.

AMBER. But it was on sale.

(*RUTH pulls ROBERT to one side.*)

RUTH. Robert, that girl needs the doc. Why'd you bring her here?

DOTTIE (*to AMBER*). Now, I'm warning you. I splashed some alcohol in this water so there may be a little sting.

RUTH (*to ROBERT*). Why didn't you just take her to the doc like you ...

AMBER (*suddenly jerking up from the sting*). Ahhhh ... Shit!! Fuck!! Jesus!! What are you doin' to me?

RUTH (*almost impressed*). Whoa, she's got quite a mouth on her.

DOTTIE (*easing AMBER back into her chair*). Sorry, I told you I put some alcohol in the water. It'll stop in a second. Least now I know where the cuts are and so far, they don't look that deep.

AMBER. Well, they hurt like hell and you pouring alcohol all over them doesn't ... (*Again the sting.*) Aw, shit!!!

DOTTIE. It's not all over. It just a splash in the water.

AMBER. Well, it stings like a mother ... (*Pushing everybody away.*) Stop it, I gotta get ...

ROBERT. No, you don't "gotta" anything, least not till I figure out where to take you.

AMBER. You don't have to take me anywhere. I can take care of myself.

ROBERT. Yeah, I can see that. Jesus.

DOTTIE. Both of you, stop that swearin' and let me fix this child.

(*AMBER tries to get up, and ROBERT pushes her back down.*)

ROBERT. Sit down. We're trying to help.

RUTH. Where you get this "we" shit!

DOTTIE. Ruthie Rose, don't you start swearin' too.

AMBER (*trying to push DOTTIE away*). I don't need you or anyone else.

DOTTIE. Honey, listen to Robbie. He's the sheriff, and he knows best. You can barely move and, trust me, tomorrow your body's going to feel like it was run over by a truck.

AMBER. Great. Oh, just great. And will you look at this ... He even tore my blouse. And it was a good one. (*Pushing DOTTIE's hands away.*) I said I don't want to be here.

DOTTIE. I know. I know. But right now, here's where you are. What kind of accident where you in?

RUTH. She wasn't in a accident, Dottie.

DOTTIE. No?

RUTH. She got beat up.

DOTTIE. Oh my, no.

RUTH. And she probably started it.

AMBER. Damn it, lady, I didn't start anything.

ROBERT. Watch your mouth. Don't go calling Miss Ruth a lady. I mean, don't be disrespecting her. She's trying to help you.

AMBER. She's not trying to help. She's over there judging ... like every other person in this town.

RUTH. Don't you go thinking I'm like everybody else in this town, 'cause I'm not. Am I judging? I don't know. Let me think about it. You get dragged in our house, by our soon-to-be castrated sheriff, at night, way past bedtime, and you're beaten to crap because of a fight you either did or did not start. That's not judging, little missy. That's me deciding whether I sit and listen to you whine over there, or throw you out on your ear. That's just me wondering what the hell is going on. (*Wheeling on ROBERT.*) Now, Robbie Parker, I'm asking one more time. What is she doing here when she should be ... ?

ROBERT. I needed a place to hide her out for a while.

DOTTIE & RUTH. What?

ROBERT. I didn't exactly mean hide.

AMBER (*to RUTH*). Fuck that, hide.

ROBERT. Jesus, kid, will you stop that fuckin' swearing.

DOTTIE. One more word and I'm going to wash all of your mouths out with soap. And I mean it.

AMBER. I didn't ask to come here. (*To ROBERT.*) I was holding my own, then there you are, breaking in the door and dragging me out. I didn't ask you to.

ROBERT. Well, your mother did.

AMBER. Well, I didn't. I wasn't finished yet.

ROBERT. Finished? Five more minutes and you'd have been dead.

AMBER (*yelling back*). Then I'd have been dead. Big Whoop. (*A beat.*) Least, I wouldn't be here.

RUTH (*to ROBERT*). Out of here. Right now. The both of you.

DOTTIE. Now Ruthie.

RUTH. No, Dottie, you're over there trying to help and this girl doesn't want it. Fine. Out!

AMBER (*trying to get up*). Fine. Can't be fast enough for me.

ROBERT. Miss Ruth, please. I just need a couple of ...

RUTH. I said, "Now!" Or I'm calling the police.

ROBERT. Oh, come on, Miss Ruth. I am the police.

AMBER. Big whoop, nobody's impressed.

ROBERT. I didn't ask for you to be impressed. Just maybe a little thankful I saved your ass.

AMBER. I didn't ask you to.

ROBERT. Well, I did it, anyway. For your mama.

RUTH. And I don't care either way.

DOTTIE. Stop it right now, all of you. Just back up a few feet so this child can breathe.

AMBER. I am not a child.

DOTTIE. Then stop acting like one. That goes for you too, Robbie. And sister, you behave.

RUTH. I want her out of our house.

DOTTIE. I think you've made that perfectly clear, but nobody's going anywhere until I clean her up. (*To AMBER.*) And I'm sayin' this just one more time, none of you has to use that kind of language. It doesn't impress anybody.

AMBER (*after a long conceding beat*). OK, I'm sorry. Some people just tick me off.

DOTTIE (*finishing up*). If that's what you're feeling, then that's what you're feeling, but you don't have to shout it out in front of Ruth or other people. (*Confidentially to AMBER.*) Though, I've got to admit some of those words do have a certain zing to them. (*Suddenly realizing.*) Goodness, do you even have a name, child?

AMBER. Amber.

DOTTIE (*continuing to clean AMBER's face*). Amber. Now, that's a pretty name. Don't know any Ambers from around these parts.

Eternity

By
MICHAEL COCHRAN

Eternity received its world premier production at Stage III Theatre in Casper, Wyo., on Jan. 26, 2018.

CAST:

Jeff Lane.....Adrian J Guillen
Zoe Phillips Dawn Anderson-Coats
Abe..... Ron Richard
Edith..... Pat Greiner
Tony Willam T Wallace
Freddy Jason Magnuson
Dinky..... Heather Rankin
Priscilla Elizabeth Address
Elvis Rob Tate

PRODUCTION:

DirectorClint Saunders
Scenic Design..... Kris Kontour
Costume DesignFathom Swanson
Lighting and Sound Design Scott Johnson
Stage ManagerRita Butler
Assistant Director.....John Ordiway
Crew Amber Ordiway, Sami Saunders,
Tanis Saunders, Ben Sorby, Tyler Ballard,
Fay Ballard, Fay Hall, Christine Kiefer,
Tanya Baures, Kiaya Johnson

In addition to the information on the Important Billing and Credit Requirements page (p. 3), all producers of the play must include the following acknowledgment on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and on all advertising and promotional materials:

“*Eternity* was premiered in the American Association of Community Theatre’s AACT NewPlayFest by Stage III Community Theatre in Casper, Wyo.”

Eternity

CHARACTERS

JEFF LANE: A young man in his 20s. Zoe's boyfriend.

ZOE PHILLIPS: A young woman in her 20s. Jeff's girlfriend.

ABE: An older man. Edith's counterpart.

EDITH: An older woman. Abe's counterpart.

TONY: A young streetwise male in his late teens.

FREDDY: A Las Vegas hotel detective in his late 30s or early 40s.
Dinky's boyfriend.

DINKY: A cocktail waitress at a Las Vegas hotel in her 30s. Freddy's girlfriend.

PRISCILLA: The co-owner of the Viva Las Vegas Wedding Chapel.
She is in her 20s or 30s with a Priscilla Presley look. Doubles as
GIRL IN THE PARK.

ELVIS: The white-jumpsuit Elvis impersonator in his 30s or 40s
and reverend of the Viva Las Vegas Wedding Chapel. Doubles as
HOMELESS GUY.

SETTING

The action of the play takes place during the course of a single day in the spring. The settings for each scene can be extremely simple or as elaborate as needed. The most fully realized location is the final scene in the Viva Las Vegas Wedding Chapel.

SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1: City bus, early morning.

Scene 2: City park, midday.

Scene 3: Private chartered airplane, mid-afternoon.

ACT II

Scene 1: Construction site outside a casino in the early evening.

Scene 2: Inside the wedding chapel a few minutes later.

Eternity

ACT I

Scene 1

(A section of a city bus during the early morning commute. A young couple, JEFF LANE and ZOE PHILLIPS, are seated together and on their way to work. JEFF is scrolling through Twitter on his cellphone. A young skateboarder, TONY, is asleep on the seat in behind them with his headphones on. In the seat behind TONY is an older man, ABE, with a bearded, long-haired HOMELESS GUY wearing a hat who has a cardboard sign around his neck that reads, "The End Is Near!")

ZOE. I want to do something fun. Let's go someplace special.

JEFF *(focused on his phone; agrees without meaning it)*. Uh-huh.

ZOE. We should get away ... a nice romantic vacation ... somewhere warm. I saw this great deal on resorts.

JEFF *(still doesn't look up)*. Great! Now even Brian has a job. Brian, who asked me to write his resume for him, has a job!

ZOE. Let's do it, Jeff. Let's get away. I've got vacation time coming. I can slip into that new swimsuit you liked and we can lay on the beach drinking margaritas.

JEFF *(still on phone)*. Look at this self-satisfied tweet! "I'm the featured chef and get my own signature dish. Hashtag sweet." What a twit! And here I am working any food job I can get just so I won't default on my student loans. How about I tweet that life is just one giant disappointment! Hashtag failure.

ZOE. It's not Brian's fault he got a good job.

JEFF. Oh sure, take his side.

ZOE. Jeff, I don't care what kind of job you have right now. You're smart; you'll be successful someday. I'll bet you'll even own your own restaurant.

JEFF. I doubt it. I should have been hired a year ago. We should have a nice apartment by now instead of living in a third-floor walkup. We shouldn't have to ride on this smelly bus to go to and from work every day. Life sucks.

(The HOMELESS GUY slowly pokes himself on the top of his hat with his finger and then slowly starts to poke ABE on the top of his head. ABE calmly reaches out to stop him.)

ZOE. Wait, are you saying our relationship sucks?

JEFF *(finally looks up)*. No. I'm sorry. I've just got a lot on my mind.

ZOE. What is it that you want?

(The HOMELESS GUY slowly starts to reach out to poke JEFF on the head, and ABE calmly takes the guy's arm and puts it back into his lap.)

JEFF. I feel like shit, OK? I put applications in every day and they tell me I'm—

ZOE. Overqualified or don't have enough experience. I know.

JEFF. I feel like I'm dying here.

ZOE. Besides, I'm not talking about your employment. I'm talking about us. Do we—

JEFF. Do we have to have this argument now? Can't it wait until tonight at home?

ZOE. You've been walking around with this big chip on your shoulder and I don't know if I can take it anymore. You don't want to get married, you don't want kids.

JEFF. Not while I'm in this shitty job, a shitty apartment and shitty life.

ZOE. Are you saying your life with me is, what, worthless?

JEFF. No. It's not—

ZOE. And don't say, "It's not you, it's me." *(Pauses to gather her thoughts.)* Look Jeff, I need you to make an effort. You've been in this, this mood for months now, and I can't be the positive one all the time. I can't keep doing this.

(JEFF's phone chirps. He looks at it, makes a face and then answers it.)

JEFF. Hi, Brian ... yeah, I saw your tweet. Congratulations on the job.
 Sure, sure you're welcome. What? This weekend? Let me check.
(To ZOE.) Do we want to go out and celebrate this weekend?

(ZOE nods yes. He then speaks into the phone.)

JEFF *(cont'd)*. We're busy this weekend.

(ZOE mouths the words, "No we aren't.")

JEFF *(cont'd)*. I think we're going to have to pass. Sorry. Maybe some other time. Take care and say hi to Laura.

(JEFF hangs up. ZOE stares at him.)

JEFF *(cont'd)*. I'm sorry I just couldn't do it. I'm not up to hearing about how great he's doing.

(We hear the sound of the bus slowing down, and they both jerk forward in reaction to it.)

ZOE. Here's my stop.

JEFF. See you at lunch at one o'clock?

ZOE. I'll be about fifteen minutes late today.

JEFF. Want me to bring you anything?

ZOE. No. I ... I don't think I'll have very long for lunch today.

JEFF. Are you mad at me?

ZOE. No. *(Pauses, as if making a decision.)* I have a lot on my mind. We'll talk at lunch.

(ZOE exits. JEFF's phone chirps as the bus noise indicates the bus is moving again.)

JEFF. This is Jeff ... I'm almost there now ... What? A new flavor ... What is it? Chocolate chip.

(ABE lowers the paper and looks at JEFF.)

JEFF *(cont'd)*. Why can't I get my supplies from the old distribution point? That means a trip downtown right after I clock in ... OK, OK I got it.

(JEFF hangs up the phone. Looks up.)

JEFF *(cont'd)*. Just kill me now, OK?

(ABE frowns and raises the paper. All passengers jerk forward as the bus comes to a stop. JEFF and ABE both get up to go. JEFF exits. ABE turns to the HOMELESS GUY next to him.)

ABE. Let's go.

(The HOMELESS GUY gets up, and his hat falls off revealing a brick sticking out of the top of his head that was hidden by the hat. He pokes himself on the top of his head again and then exits with ABE. The stage is empty except for the sleeping TONY. We hear the bus start moving again. Suddenly there is a horn sound and tires screeching.)

OFFSTAGE VOICE. *Ten cuidado imbecil! (Watch out, stupid idiot!)*

(TONY wakes and looks out the window. As the bus starts up again, he shrugs and then goes back to sleep listening to his music.

Blackout.)

Scene 2

(A path through a park. ABE and EDITH are seated on a bench. They eat from brown paper bags. It's a beautiful spring day.)

EDITH. So what happened with your appointment this morning?

ABE. Nothing much. Helping out a homeless guy. What happened with you and the girl?

EDITH. So, there I was trying to give her directions and she turns her back on me trying to take a selfie.

ABE. You want my banana?

EDITH. Sure.

ABE. Damn things give me gas, don't know why I brought it.

EDITH *(not willing to give up the subject)*. Can you imagine the nerve? She's lost, I offer help, and she acts like I'm invisible.

ABE. It's a crazy world. Not like the old days.

EDITH. How can people talk so much and say so little?

ABE. Twitter tweets, Snapchat and Insta-thingy.

EDITH. Apps and Androids. Five hundred channels and still nothing on. And reality TV—

ABE. Honey Boo Boo, the Kardashians ...

EDITH & ABE (*looking at one another*). Donald Trump!

(*Both shiver.*)

ABE. The internet is like a worldwide lynch mob. Nobody stops to find out the truth before they yell, “String ’em up!” What happened to the truth? What happened to the family?

EDITH. That’s easy. When was the last time anyone sat down around the table for dinner? They’re all staring at their phones like they might miss the second coming. No one has conversations anymore.

ABE. We should have seen it coming the day the billionth burger was sold.

EDITH. How could we? Don’t you remember all those little wars during the ’50s?

ABE. What does that have to do with fast food?

EDITH. We were distracted and convenience snuck in the back door.

ABE (*disgusted*). Progress.

EDITH. It’s too late to stop it now.

ABE. We could try to start over again.

EDITH (*huffs*). Remember the flood? Didn’t seem to make much difference. You clear out the riffraff and all you do is pave the way for Sodom and Gomorrah.

ABE (*finishes his sandwich*). I’m still hungry.

EDITH. I’ve got half your banana here.

ABE. No, I want something sweet.

EDITH. Remember your diet.

ABE. I think maybe ice cream.

EDITH. Ice cream. What about your diet?

ABE. What about it?

EDITH. Ice cream’s fattening. Why don’t you get some yogurt?

ABE. I don't want yogurt! I want real ice cream. There's a guy who sells ice cream out of a box. I'll get one from him.

EDITH. We haven't eaten lunch here for weeks. How do you know that?

ABE. He's meeting his girlfriend in the park for lunch.

EDITH. So that's why you wanted lunch in the park today!

ABE. I've got a 1:05 appointment across the street.

EDITH. And what time is the ice cream guy coming?

ABE. About one o'clock.

EDITH (*looks at him closely*). You're up to something.

ABE. No, I'm not.

EDITH. You've got that look like you're not telling me the whole truth. (*Pauses to think.*) How did you know the ice cream guy was coming by today?

ABE. I just checked the calendar.

EDITH. So you had this planned since yesterday?

ABE. Not really.

EDITH. Wait, the only way you would have his schedule for today is if he was on your appointment calendar. You're up to something. I know it. What did you do?

ABE. I just ... ah ... moved one appointment.

EDITH. Moved an appointment?!

ABE. It's no big deal. It's not like I delayed the end of the world.

EDITH. Whose appointment did you move?

ABE. A guy named Jeff something.

EDITH (*taps cell to bring up calendar*). A guy named Jeff what?

ABE. You don't have to look it up.

EDITH (*finds the name*). Jeff Lane. Wait a minute. Occupation: ice cream vendor! You changed an appointment so that you could have ice cream!

ABE. I had a craving, all right? I've been on this stupid diet for so long that when I heard him talk about a new flavor I couldn't think straight.

EDITH (*reading*). Jeff Lane was supposed to die in a traffic accident at 9:07 this morning on his way to work.

ABE. So he dies at 1:05 this afternoon. What's the big deal?

EDITH. The big deal is that we don't know what he may have done in the meantime. What if he mortally wounds someone who wasn't on the list?!

ABE. Oh yeah, he's going to hit some little kid over the head with a Fudgsicle.

EDITH. Stop joking! Abe, do you know how serious this is?

ABE. Will you stop, Edith! I told you it'll be all right. Besides, look at the grief I saved that taco truck driver.

EDITH. But what if the guilt caused him to devote his life to something good?

ABE. Already checked. The driver only glanced up to see him step out before I pulled the kid back. He was texting on his phone *before* and went right back to texting *after* hitting the brakes. He's still listed in my calendar for an accident August second, next year. No changes.

EDITH. Wait. How does this Jeff die now? You aren't allowed to just kill him. He has to die on his own.

ABE. See that spot? At 1:03 Jeff Lane will be standing there after I buy my ice cream and be hit by a stray bullet from a gang shooting. I have an appointment at 1:05 with a skateboard kid who gets killed in the same drive-by.

EDITH. But how do you know he'll be here at 1:03? He was supposed to die at 9:07.

ABE. His girlfriend made a date with him to meet for lunch at 1:15 today. She's going to tell him she wants to split up. She's tired of waiting for him to get his life together.

EDITH. Well, at least both of them will be spared the pain of that.

ABE (*looks at watch, then in JEFF's direction*). And speaking of our boy, here he comes right on time.

(JEFF enters, crosses in front of ABE and EDITH and sits on a bench on the other side of the stage. He carries a freezer box filled with ice cream treats. He sits back and looks at the sky with a big smile on his face.)

ABE (*cont'd*). Well, I believe it's time for my ice cream. Would you like some? My treat.

EDITH. No, thank you.

ABE. What about an ice pop? I know how much you love them.

EDITH (*weakening*). I really shouldn't.

ABE. Grape ice pop. Your favorite.

EDITH (*struggles, then gives in*). All right. But make it quick. I don't like the idea of messing around with this.

ABE. I'll be right back.

(ABE starts to walk over to the bench JEFF is sitting on as TONY, with earphones in, whizzes by on a skateboard and almost runs into ABE.)

ABE (*cont'd*). Look out! (*Continues to yell as TONY moves offstage.*) Watch where you're going! (*Crosses to JEFF.*) I'd like to purchase a chocolate chip ice cream sandwich and a grape ice pop.

JEFF (*standing*). You're in luck. I just got that ice cream flavor this morning. That'll be three dollars, please.

(JEFF looks through his freezer box and produces an ice cream sandwich and a grape ice pop. He looks at ABE and then suddenly recognizes him.)

JEFF (*cont'd*). Hey, you're the guy who saved my life this morning!

ABE. Yes.

JEFF. No, I mean it! You saved my life!

ABE. Yes, I know. Quite a coincidence, eh?

JEFF. I thought I was a goner for sure. I wasn't even looking when I stepped off that curb. It's true, you do see your whole life flash before your eyes. I wanted to thank you, but you seemed to just disappear into the crowd.

ABE. I had another appointment to keep.

JEFF. Now, it's like each moment is a gift.

ABE (*glances at his watch*). Yes, and it seems we only have just a few left.

JEFF. So anyway, thank you.

ABE. You're welcome, but no thanks necessary.

JEFF. Sorry. What was it you wanted?

ABE (*points to items already in JEFF's hands*). An ice cream sandwich and a grape ice pop.

JEFF. Oh, sure. Here you go!

(ABE reaches in his pocket and pulls out his wallet.)

JEFF *(cont'd)*. No, I couldn't take your money. It's my treat.

ABE. Well, that's very considerate of you. Thanks. *(Another look at his watch.)* Would you do me a favor?

JEFF. Anything, you name it!

ABE *(indicate a spot a few feet away)*. Would you stand right over here for a minute? I'd like to take a picture of you. What's more traditional than an ice cream vendor in the park? I'm kind of a photography nut.

JEFF. Right over here?

(JEFF crosses to the spot indicated.)

ABE. Yes. That's perfect. I'm going to get my camera, and I'll be right back. *(Crosses to EDITH.)* See, everything worked out just fine.

(JEFF walks over behind ABE. Neither ABE nor EDITH see this.)

JEFF. I just realized I don't even know your name.

(The sounds of a racing car and gunshots are heard.)

ABE *(to EDITH)*. Please tell me he's not standing right behind me.

EDITH *(looks at JEFF and then back to ABE)*. Guess again.

JEFF *(looking towards direction of the gunshot sound)*. Wow, did you hear that? It sounded like gunshots!

ABE. No. That was just a car backfiring.

EDITH *(under her breath to ABE)*. No. More like the sound of someone *being* fired.

JEFF. Oh. OK. Anyway, I'm Jeff Lane, and you are?

EDITH *(looking at ABE)*. A dummy.

JEFF. Excuse me?

EDITH. Jeff, meet Abe.

(ABE's phone begins to beep.)

ABE. Oh no, my 1:05 is ready. *(To EDITH.)* What am I gonna do?

EDITH. Don't ask me, you're the genius.

ABE. When is your next appointment?

EDITH. Not for another twenty minutes or so. Why?

ABE. Can you watch ... (*Mindful that JEFF is listening.*) I mean *visit* with Jeff for a minute until I get back. (*To JEFF.*) I forgot, my camera is in my car and I just want to run get it. Why don't you two get acquainted while I'm gone? (*Pushes the ice cream to EDITH.*) I'll be right back.

EDITH. Abe, don't you dare—

ABE. Please!

EDITH. All right, but hurry back. You wouldn't want Jeff to leave without taking his picture.

ABE. I'll be just a moment. You two stay right here. Don't go anywhere.

(ABE exits in a hurry. EDITH looks at ice cream sandwich and ice pop and has lost her appetite and puts them both into her empty lunch bag.

EDITH. So ... Jeff. I'm Edith. Nice to meet you.

JEFF. Nice to meet you, too.

EDITH. Lovely weather, isn't it?

JEFF. Your friend saved my life today. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be here right now.

EDITH. Yes, I know.

JEFF. I guess I was so wrapped up in all my problems that I didn't even see that truck coming. My girlfriend and I have been having some troubles.

EDITH. Breaking up is always painful.

JEFF. We're not at that point.

EDITH. Oh, you never can tell.

JEFF. I guess we were headed in that direction.

EDITH. So you're meeting her for lunch today?

JEFF. Yes, how did you know?

EDITH (*scrambling for a plausible answer*). You're young and in love, it's a nice warm day and, well, it's lunchtime!

JEFF. We are and it is! (*Looking around.*) Isn't the park beautiful? Life is so beautiful. I'm going to ask my girlfriend to marry me.

Mynx & Savage

By
REBECCA GORMAN O'NEILL

Mynx & Savage received its world premier production at The Vortex Theatre in Albuquerque, N.M., in April 2017.

CAST:

Adam Mark Evans Chris Hughes
Ket Timura Heather Donovan
Female Actor Aleah Montano
Male Actor Gennaro Leo

PRODUCTION:

Directors.....Ray Rey Griego, Caitlyn Jones
Production Stage Manager..... Maria Alma Rivera
Costume Designer..... Louisa O’Neill
Scenic Designer Mary Rossman
Sound Designer..... Josh Brown
Lighting Designer Joseph Wasson
Props Designer.....Nina Dorrance
Comic Design..... Orion Pike
Mynx & Savage Logo Design..... Anna Woltman
Master Carpenter.....Thane Kenny
Master Electrician Pepe Gellardo
Seamstress..... Rhonda Backinoff
Scenic Painters Brigid Smith, Bud Schaffer
Board Technicians..... James Zamora, Josh Brown
Deck Chief Santana Florez
Special Consultant David Burton
Dressers..... Louisa O’Neill, Brigid Smith, Lizzie Torrez,
Sheldon Blackhorse, Madison Vanderlingen,
Alfie Darling-Roberts, Tori Whisler

In addition to the information on the Important Billing and Credit Requirements page (p. 3), all producers of the play must include the following acknowledgment on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and on all advertising and promotional materials:

“*Mynx & Savage* was premiered in the American Association of Community Theatre’s AACT NewPlayFest by The Vortex Theatre in Albuquerque, N.M.”

Mynx & Savage

CHARACTERS

ADAM MARK EVANS (m): 30s; a comic book writer, he carries the strain that comes of having written his best work years ago.

KET TIMURA (w): late 20s; sharp and bright, she is used to being one of the few women in a boy's world.

FEMALE ACTOR (w):

MYNX: 20s; a superheroine, has the attitude and the spandex costume to prove it.

HOPE DANIELS: Mynx's alter ego, an archaeologist.

JILL BLAKE: 9; a little girl in a graphic novel.

FAY: nonhuman, a doll-woman

MALE ACTOR (m):

SAVAGE: 20s; a supervillian, has a Jekyll/Hyde thing going on.

CARTER WIGHT: Savage's alter ego, a zoologist.

KYLE HANOVER: 9; a little boy in a graphic novel.

DOLL: Fay's doll-child

CHARACTER NOTES: Actors of any ethnicity may play any of the parts, but ADAM and the MALE ACTOR should be of the same ethnicity. Also, changes in character/costume of the Male and Female Actors should happen very quickly.

TIME: Present. Spring.

PLACE: Seattle. All scenes take place in an artist/writer's studio, a place where comic books are born. Other locations, like scenes from the pages of the books, are simple and suggested.

Mynx & Savage

ACT I

Tell Me a Story

(The studio. There is a partners desk in the middle of it—two drafting tables facing each other. One is lived in, the other is empty.

There is a little kitchen, a coffeemaker and places to sit. A tattered couch. There is a massive pile of unopened mail.

KET TIMURA is there. She reads a glossy comic book.

She is oblivious to MYNX and SAVAGE, who are having a full-on superhero showdown.)

MYNX. Did you kill him?

SAVAGE. Does it matter? If I did, what? You'll kill me? You don't have it in you to kill, Mynx!

MYNX. Where is he, then? Where is Ernest Daniels?

SAVAGE. That stodgy old professor—what is he to you? Surely someone of your ... qualities ... could find a more exciting catch?

MYNX. You're disgusting!

SAVAGE. Touchy, touchy! The good professor is safe, little one, for the moment ...

MYNX. Tell me where he is!

SAVAGE. You think it's that easy? Just ask me nicely, and I'll do your bidding?

MYNX. What do you want, Savage? Why are you playing these games? It's not about money with you any longer, or power, now you torture the weak, the innocent, for what? Your sick, sadistic games?

SAVAGE. Yes, yes, I'm a disgusting wretch, aren't I? You should put me out of my misery like the dog that I am! But we both know that won't happen, Mynx, for all your strength ... you're so ... good.

MYNX. If you were any sort of man—

SAVAGE. Ha! I am no sort of man anymore. No sort of man at all.

MYNX. Enough of this, Savage!

SAVAGE. Yes! Enough! I do have Ernest Daniels ... *and* a certain item he was keeping safe for you.

MYNX (*thought bubble*). Gasp! No, that can't be! It's impossible!

SAVAGE. I have a deal for you.

MYNX. A deal?

SAVAGE. You'll get your professor back, and your treasure ... But only if—

(ADAM MARK EVANS enters, carrying a duffle bag and a flat portfolio case. KET glances up. A slight break in MYNX and SAVAGE's action.)

SAVAGE (*cont'd*). You do a little something for me.

(ADAM snatches the book from KET. SAVAGE and MYNX leave, disoriented.)

ADAM. Can I help you?

KET. Is Ernest dead?

ADAM. You have to wait for the next issue like everyone else. Who are you?

KET. You're Adam Mark Evans.

ADAM. I know who I am.

KET. I'm Ket Timura.

ADAM. OK.

KET. Comstock sent me.

ADAM. Why?

KET. They sent a letter.

ADAM. A letter?

KET. It should have come—

ADAM. I don't read paper mail.

KET. Ah. OK. I have a copy of it with me, here. *(She hands him a letter, which he tosses onto his mail pile.)* It just introduces me and says that we'll be working together from here on out.

ADAM. I'm sorry?

KET. I'm your new partner. Inks, colors and letters. You do your own pencils.

ADAM. Yes, I ... How did you get in here?

KET. Key. Front office had a copy, for the courier.

ADAM. Who are you?

KET. Would you please just read the letter? It's all there.

ADAM. Not that I mind random pretty girls in my studio—

KET. Comstock, your publisher—

ADAM. Yes—

KET. Your contract's up for renewal and—

ADAM. And what?

KET. And you've been missing deadlines and Comstock feels that *Mynx and Savage* has reached a critical line ...

ADAM. A line.

KET. The line where production and readership is in this teeter-totter place. The people at Comstock explained it to me and probably you ... (*Gesture to the letter.*) OK, at the point the story is at, things can keep going well, like, years-and-years-of-success well, or things can fade and sputter. And what I was told is they're up in the air about renewing your contract.

ADAM. No they're not.

KET. Yes they are. And because they're only committed to a hundred issues—

ADAM. I own *Mynx and Savage*. It's my property.

KET. No question. But that doesn't mean they have to print it. Look, they want to renew. But they need to see the hundredth issue be awesome. And that's why I'm here.

ADAM. You are here.

KET. To help.

ADAM. I don't need an editor.

KET. I do inks, color and letters.

ADAM. You're here to make sure the cash cow keeps mooing.

KET. I'm fast, too. I'll help you hit your deadlines.

ADAM. Check it out. (*He shows his phone.*) I have four days for issue ninety-nine and twenty-two days for issue one-hundred. I'm all set. Bye.

KET. I do the colors and letters digitally, but I ink by hand.

ADAM. Go away! I already have a guy. I—this is stupid, I have a partner—where’s Brian?

KET. He’s gone.

ADAM. I’m sorry?

KET. Brian Trent has gone—

ADAM. No—

KET. Over to—

ADAM. He did *not*—

KET. Maybe he saw the writing—

ADAM. That little bitch—

KET. Can you blame him?

ADAM. I leave town for two days! Where’d he go? Monarch? Undercover?

KET. Third World Comics. They’re new.

ADAM. I don’t believe this.

KET. Brian’s chasing the young, sexy and penniless existence of not selling out. You were at a ComicCon when that happened which is kind of poetic.

ADAM. He’s a trust fund-baby. He can afford to not make money.

KET. Luckily, you don’t need him, as you have me, your new partner, who is going to help you get your next issue out on time and hey, check it out, (*She offers her iPad.*) I’m also really really talented and you should be all kinds of happy.

ADAM. What was your name again?

KET. Ket Timura.

ADAM. Timura ...

KET. Call me Ket. With a short “e.” Not “Cat.” Ket.

ADAM. You used to work with Griffin Blake.

KET. And Dawn Stephens, and Jo Royce.

ADAM. That’s it. Stephens and Royce ... they did that thing that just tanked.

KET. It didn’t ... “tank.”

ADAM. What was that thing?

KET. *Zombie Emergency*—

ADAM. *Zombie Emergency Room!* Oh my god, that was awful. I mean, it started off well, good action, nice pace, but then it was all talk, talk, talk, blah, blah, blah. And the zombies actually got dumber. How do you even do that?

KET. I didn't write it, I just inked it.

ADAM. I'm gonna call my agent.

KET. Here. My portfolio. Multitask.

(She throws her iPad under his nose and grabs some pages off of his desk.)

KET *(cont'd)*. Do you mind if I ... ?

ADAM. Those aren't finished.

KET. I don't mind.

ADAM. Fine. I ... fine.

(He speed-dials his phone.)

KET. Cold open?

ADAM. For issue ninety-nine, which is under control! *(The phone connects.)* Michael?

(KET reads.

CARTER WIGHT and HOPE DANIELS enter. They have a 1950s mild-mannered dynamic going on.

CARTER. With the conversion process successful in the mammalian subjects ...

HOPE. Carter—

CARTER. Including the arboreal and aquatic species—

HOPE. Darling—

CARTER. We're finally ready to make the jump to the avian subjects. Working with birds—

HOPE. Carter!

CARTER. Sorry—what?

HOPE. I waited for you last night. I needed your help with the seating chart.

CARTER. I called.

HOPE. No, you didn't.

CARTER. From the lab, of course I did.

HOPE. You did, but—

CARTER. I told you I'd be working late. To start on it without me and—

HOPE. You called, and you were cut off. All I heard was, “Hope darling, you'll never guess what we've ... kkkkkkzzzzz ...”

CARTER. I'm so sorry—why didn't you call back?

HOPE. I did. I must have called ten times.

CARTER. Larry must have turned off the phone—spooks the animals ...

HOPE. I came by.

CARTER. You did?

HOPE. Larry said you'd left ...

CARTER. I'm sure it's just—

HOPE. Listen, it's my brother, Ernest. He's missing.

CARTER. Missing?

HOPE. From his office in the museum ... something ...

CARTER. What? What happened?

HOPE. They're not sure. Someone broke in—

KET. This is boring ...

(She flips a few pages ahead. ADAM notices.)

ADAM. You can't just skip—

KET. Talk to your agent.

(CARTER and HOPE reposition.)

CARTER. Don't walk away from me!

HOPE. I can't talk to you when you're like this.

CARTER. Like what? Isn't this what you wanted?

HOPE. What *I* wanted?

CARTER. My research is everything I have. How else am I to provide for you? The wedding alone is costing—

HOPE. This isn't about me or the wedding—I don't even want a big wedding—

CARTER. It's not about what you want, little one, it's about what you deserve.

HOPE. Deserve? This isn't about “deserve.” My brother doesn't deserve to be missing ... and I ... goodness knows I don't deserve ...

CARTER. Listen—

HOPE. Maybe we should postpone the wedding—

(ADAM hangs up the phone. CARTER and HOPE stop, unsure what to do.)

ADAM. Hey, guess what?

KET. You're stuck with me.

ADAM. I'm stuck with you.

KET. This'll be fun.

ADAM. I can't believe this.

KET *(re: the pages)*. Me neither. This is terrible.

(HOPE and CARTER leave, annoyed.)

ADAM. It's not—

KET. You're lucky they brought me in.

ADAM. It's just a draft.

KET. If you look at this next to what you were pushing out a couple years ago ...

ADAM. I thought you weren't an editor.

KET. But if I'm going to work on it—

ADAM. OK, sure, it's bad, but I have time—

KET. Four days!

ADAM. You're the one coming into my studio—

KET. We have four days to get this thing ready for press. I mean, I'm good, so maybe—see this? *(Forcing her iPad under his nose again.)* I did that in three hours—

(ADAM pages through the digital portfolio.)

ADAM. Damn it!

KET. What?

ADAM. You're really good!

KET. I know I am.

ADAM. How did you get stuck with me?

KET. The writing's on the wall ... we're just trying to rewrite it.

ADAM. "We."

KET. Comstock. The powers that be.

ADAM. What do they actually want?

KET. I told you—

ADAM. They're not known for their benevolence, so why did they send me you?

KET. I don't—

ADAM. What are they after?

KET. A great one-hundredth issue? A contract renewal they can feel good about?

ADAM. I realize that this is me being all territorial here, but *Mynx* is mine, and it's always gonna be. This sandbox, my sandbox.

KET. You worked with Brian.

ADAM. Brian was the professional equivalent of Siri. "Ink the pages, Brian." (*Siri voice.*) "Ding! Sure Adam, I will ink those pages for yooou." (*His own voice.*) That was nice.

KET. If it makes you feel better, I'm technically your employee.

ADAM. That does help.

KET. Except that you don't pay me and you can't fire me.

ADAM. But I can still treat you like—

KET. Your bitch. You bet. But I have two conditions.

ADAM. Sorry?

KET. I mean yes, of course, but ... two conditions.

ADAM. I'm listening.

KET. You let me give you feedback. You have to let me tell you what I think about the work. Not as an editor, but as a person whose name is actually going to be on this thing.

ADAM. I have a codicil.

KET. A codicil?

ADAM. It's a condition to your condi—

KET. I know what a codicil is.

ADAM. I don't have to listen to or acknowledge your feedback in any way.

KET. Deal.

ADAM. Condition two?

KET. You let me read the other thing that you're working on. (*Beat*)

ADAM. The other thing?

KET. The other piece you're writing. The story that's actually good that you have squirreled away somewhere. Every popular writer has one. The story you're writing that makes you feel like not such a sellout.

ADAM. Sorry. Don't have another story.

KET. C'mon—

ADAM. Nope. I'm a sellout.

KET. Oh, ridiculous.

ADAM. I really don't have—

KET. Why else would you be missing deadlines?

ADAM. I'm really lazy.

KET. You're ... you're Adam Mark Evans.

ADAM. I know who I am.

KET. Of course you don't have to show it to me right away. You can wait till you trust me better. But you must have something. Just tell me it exists.

ADAM. No.

KET. "No" it doesn't exist, or "no" you won't tell me?

ADAM. I'm sorry to disappoint you.

KET. You didn't answer.

ADAM. Yep.

KET. You ... listen. You're so so so talented. I read—

ADAM (*under*). Please don't bring up—

KET (*over*). *Stupid Masks* ages ago and—

ADAM. Uuuuggghhh—

KET. You wrote *Stupid Masks*. You won a Harvey Award. I know you can't possibly be putting everything you have into *Mynx and Savage*. You're writing something ... good ...

ADAM. If you're going to be disappointed all over the place, maybe you should just leave.

KET. Maybe I will.

ADAM. Maybe you should.

KET. Where would that leave you?

ADAM. I'm pretty sure there's another inker out there somewhere.

KET. Maybe I will go.

ADAM. It's a shame you went through this whole song and dance for nothing.

KET. I'll tell Comstock we weren't a good match.

ADAM. You do that.

(Pause.)

KET. All right then. It was nice to meet you, Mr. Evans.

ADAM. And you, Miss Timura.

KET. May I have my—?

(He hands her iPad back. With a snicker.)

KET *(cont'd)*. Why are you laughing?

ADAM. We're being all dramatic. It's funny.

KET. We're not—

ADAM. You're bluffing. *Zombie Emergency Room*, which aside from being the worst title ever, was damaging all around. Comstock Comics is turning into a house of cards. *Mynx and Savage* is keeping it stable. That's the real reason you're here. You walk out that door, what are you going to? I think Third World already has an inker ... so, I'm guessing a promising career in the greeting card illustration industry.

(They stare each other down for a moment.)

KET. Touché.

ADAM. So that's where we stand.

KET. That's where we stand.

ADAM. You really are talented. When do you want to start?

KET. I'm in?

ADAM. When do you want to start?

KET. What changed your mind?

(JILL BLAKE enters. In her time and place, it's summer. She has colored pencils and a cheap sketchpad.)

ADAM. Please don't make me ask a question three times—

KET. Tomorrow.

ADAM. Yes, but whatever.

KET *(re: the pages)*. Are you going to work on these today?

Treehouse

By
JOE MUSSO

Treehouse received its world premier production at Cottage Theatre in Cottage Grove, Ore., on Aug. 10, 2018.

CAST:

Johnny Malakhai Schnell
Alana Clare McDonald
Oliver Blake Nelson
Ben John Eckstine
Mrs. Ross Chelsey Megli
Susan Tracy Nygard

PRODUCTION:

Director Tara Wibrew
Assistant Director and Set Designer Kory Weimer
Stage Manager Randall Brous
Technical Advisor Tony Rust
Set Construction and Painting..... Alan Beck, Sophie Blades,
Randall Brous, Wayne Gonterman,
Ashley Lawn, Blake Nelson,
Mackenzie NesSmith, Tracy Nygard,
Tony Rust, Marisela Taylor, Kory Weimer
Costumes.....Chris Carter
Props Randall Brous
Lighting Design Amanda Ferguson
Light Board Operator..... Marisela Taylor
Sound Design..... Tyler Travers
Sound Operator Cosette Adamson
Promotional Videos..... Matthew Goes
Photography Matt Emrich, Emily Bly

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“Treehouse was premiered in the American Association of Community Theatre’s AACT NewPlayFest by Cottage Theatre in Cottage Grove, Ore.”

Treehouse

CHARACTERS

JOHNNY (m): 17, thin, mentally 53 years old, only one who can see/hear Susan.

ALANA (w): 17, ethereal beauty, understated popularity in school.

OLIVER (m): 17, Johnny and Ben's friend, wears thick glasses.

BEN (m): 17, Johnny and Oliver's friend, wise guy, crude.

MRS. ROSS (w): late 30s, Johnny's mother, plain looks.

SUSAN (w): late 40s, Johnny's wife, beautiful actress, an apparition, died in 2016.

SETTING: The play primarily takes place over six months in 1980 in a suburb in the United States. Much of the play is set in Johnny's treehouse. The treehouse has walls and a roof and is furnished with an old bookcase, an old table, and unmatched chairs. One of the chairs, referred to in the play as the "reading chair," is overly large and comfortable. An old manual typewriter is on the table. The treehouse has at least two windows and an entrance reached by an offstage rope ladder either stage left or stage right. One of the windows is a portal into Johnny's mind where Susan's apparition often appears.

NOTE: Words in brackets [] indicate lines implied but not spoken.

Treehouse

Scene 1

(The hallway of JOHNNY's house. February 13, 1980. Two a.m. JOHNNY, wearing only pajama bottoms, walks from the dark into a small pool of light. He puts a handgun to his head. His hand shakes. His throat makes a primitive, guttural sound. SUSAN appears beside him. In the play, only JOHNNY sees and/or hears SUSAN.)

MRS. ROSS *(offstage)*. Johnny.

SUSAN *(gently takes the gun)*. No, my love.

MRS. ROSS *(offstage)*. Johnny.

JOHNNY. Susan?

SUSAN. Go.

MRS. ROSS *(offstage)*. Where?

SUSAN *(gently pushes him)*. Go.

(SUSAN disappears. MRS. ROSS, wearing a nightgown, steps into the light.)

MRS. ROSS. There you are.

JOHNNY. Huh?

MRS. ROSS. You're—

JOHNNY. Momma?

MRS. ROSS. Sleepwalking.

JOHNNY. You—

MRS. ROSS. You're sweating—

JOHNNY. How can—

MRS. ROSS. Shaking.

JOHNNY. But—

MRS. ROSS. It's two in the morning.

JOHNNY. You—

MRS. ROSS. Two—

JOHNNY. Can't—

MRS. ROSS. Two, Johnny.
JOHNNY. Where *am* I?
MRS. ROSS. The hallway.
JOHNNY. What day is it?
MRS. ROSS. What—
JOHNNY. Day.
MRS. ROSS. Wednesday.
JOHNNY. No, I mean—
MRS. ROSS. The thirteenth.
JOHNNY. Year.
MRS. ROSS. Year?
JOHNNY. What *year* is it?
MRS. ROSS. 1980.
JOHNNY. Can't be.
MRS. ROSS (*takes his arm*). C'mon.
JOHNNY (*resists*). But—
MRS. ROSS. What?
JOHNNY. Why? ... How?
MRS. ROSS. Why how what?
JOHNNY. 1980. My body.
MRS. ROSS. This way.
JOHNNY. I—
MRS. ROSS. Back to bed.

(Fade to black.)

Scene 2

(High school. February 13, 1980. Midday. ALANA, wearing a football letterman's jacket too large for her, sits on a small bench and reads Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra. She discovers a line she likes and writes it in a notebook; then she returns to reading the play. JOHNNY and OLIVER enter. JOHNNY sees ALANA and stops so suddenly that OLIVER runs into him.)

OLIVER. Damn, dude.
JOHNNY. Man.
OLIVER. [You've] been a space cadet all day.

JOHNNY. There she is.

OLIVER. Who? ... Alana Goddard?

JOHNNY. With her notebook.

OLIVER. You're looking at her notebook? Most guys would not be looking at her notebook.

JOHNNY. She calls it her quotebook.

OLIVER. Her what?

JOHNNY. Quotebook.

(JOHNNY steps into ALANA's field of vision. ALANA sees JOHNNY but continues reading. JOHNNY returns to OLIVER.)

JOHNNY (*cont'd*). A hello from her would melt me.

OLIVER. Alana? Speak to *you*?

JOHNNY. She will, first Saturday in April.

OLIVER. You're full of shit ... She's always reading.

JOHNNY. Uh-huh.

OLIVER. Wonder what?

JOHNNY. Shakespeare.

OLIVER. Yeah?

JOHNNY. But at the beach this summer, she'll read horror fiction, even a trashy romance.

OLIVER. *This* summer?

JOHNNY. Uh-huh.

OLIVER. You can read her mind?

JOHNNY. No.

OLIVER. Are you stalking her?

JOHNNY. No.

OLIVER. Yes you are.

JOHNNY. No, I'm not.

OLIVER. Mr. Creepy.

JOHNNY. I'm not stalking.

(JOHNNY steps back into ALANA's field of vision. Her eyes never leave her book. JOHNNY returns to OLIVER.)

JOHNNY (*cont'd*). She's reading *Antony and Cleopatra*.

OLIVER. Let's go.

JOHNNY. One more minute.

OLIVER (*starts to leave*). We don't leave, I'm gonna have one of those all-day boners.

JOHNNY (*in ALANA's direction*). "Where souls do couch on flowers, we'll hand in hand."

(The school bell rings.)

OLIVER (*mortified, seizing JOHNNY's arm*). Dumbass.

(JOHNNY and OLIVER exit. ALANA looks in their direction.)

(Fade to black.)

Scene 3

(Treehouse. First Saturday, April 1980. Morning. JOHNNY sits in the "reading chair." He reads Shakespeare's The Tempest and sips whiskey from a glass. OLIVER enters, followed by BEN, who carries a football.)

JOHNNY. "Hell is empty and all the devils are here."

BEN. What?

JOHNNY. Shakespeare. *The Tempest*.

BEN. Are you gay?

JOHNNY. No.

OLIVER. Yes you are.

JOHNNY. Stop mocking homosexuals.

BEN. It's Saturday morning.

OLIVER. No school.

BEN. And you're reading a book.

JOHNNY. A play.

OLIVER. A play, while we—

BEN. Two strapping heterosexuals.

OLIVER. Are organizing a football game.

BEN. Tackle.

OLIVER. At Cecil's house.

BEN. So stop bitching.

OLIVER. And get your ass up.

(BEN seizes JOHNNY's book and tosses it out of a window.)

JOHNNY. Thy play doth soar.

OLIVER. *Get up!*

JOHNNY. No.

BEN. Yes.

JOHNNY. I'm not playing football today.

OLIVER. Why not?

JOHNNY. I have to finish my column for the school newspaper.

BEN *(pulls the page from the typewriter)*. *Advice From an Old Man.*

By Johnny I'm-a-Dick-for-Not-Playing-Football Ross.

(JOHNNY leaps out of the chair and unsuccessfully tries to take the page from BEN, who reads part of it.)

BEN *(cont'd)*. What's compounded interest?

JOHNNY. Interest added to principal that also earns interest.

BEN. Interest?

OLIVER. Principal?

JOHNNY. It's how a teenager, who saves his money *(Snatches the page.)* can one day be a millionaire.

OLIVER. When are you going to stop pretending you're fifty-three?

JOHNNY. I *am* fifty-three.

BEN. Bullshit.

OLIVER. You're seventeen.

BEN. We were in kindergarten together.

OLIVER. You used to be cool before you started this old man shit.

JOHNNY. I was never cool.

(BEN takes a quick swig of the last of JOHNNY's whiskey and then violently spits it out.)

BEN. What the?

JOHNNY. Will you please not waste my whiskey?

BEN. That's what this is?

JOHNNY. I pay Randy's brother a fortune to buy it for me.

OLIVER. If you're fifty-three, why can't you buy your own alcohol?

JOHNNY. I have fifty-three years of life in this brain.

BEN. Brain?

JOHNNY. Fifty-three years of memory.

BEN. What brain?

JOHNNY. It's only my body that's seventeen.

BEN. I'd'a guessed twelve.

OLIVER (*feels JOHNNY's bicep*). Exercise. Does the body good.

BEN. Had your first wet dream yet?

JOHNNY (*to BEN*). Moron.

OLIVER. When did you start drinking?

BEN. And why didn't you tell us?

OLIVER. Your best friends.

JOHNNY. The truth? (*To BEN.*) In college, you develop a drinking problem.

BEN. Huh?

JOHNNY. Booze wrecks your life. Failed marriage. Estranged children.

BEN. I could never drink that stuff.

JOHNNY. You start with beer.

OLIVER. You're the one drinking alcohol, not Ben.

JOHNNY. Yes, but I never become an alcoholic, and you want to know why?

BEN. No.

OLIVER. I do.

JOHNNY. A beautiful woman once told me—

(SUSAN, holding a martini, appears in a window.)

SUSAN. Never let alcoholism ruin your love for drinking, Johnny. Promise?

(SUSAN disappears.)

OLIVER (*waves a hand in JOHNNY's face*). Hello?

JOHNNY. Huh?

OLIVER. It's mean to call Ben a drunk.

BEN. Yeah, if you're making up shit, pretend I marry a hot piece and become a millionaire.

JOHNNY (*looks out a window*). Damn. Miss Castleberry's dog has my copy of *The Tempest*.

(*BEN and OLIVER also look out a window.*)

BEN. I like ol' Rufus.

OLIVER. Dog's a beast.

BEN. Hey, Oliver has a new word for our vocabulary.

JOHNNY. God save me.

BEN. Tell him.

OLIVER. Ready ... Loins.

(*JOHNNY puts his head in his hands.*)

OLIVER (*cont'd*). As in my loins burn for Alana Goddard.

BEN. *Goddard?* You mean *goddess*. Alana is a goddess.

OLIVER. True.

BEN. I'd chop off my left nut just to hold her hand.

JOHNNY. Do you two ever want to date in high school?

OLIVER. Alana Goddard would never date us.

JOHNNY. Not Alana.

BEN. Who then?

JOHNNY. Lotta fish in the sea.

OLIVER. Why date?

BEN. Yeah, we just want to get laid.

OLIVER. And we could, if we were handsome.

BEN. And popular.

OLIVER. And jocks.

BEN (*to JOHNNY*). But we're like you.

OLIVER. Ugly.

BEN. *Not* popular.

OLIVER. *Not* jocks.

BEN. Marching band.

OLIVER. At least I play a trumpet.

BEN. What's wrong with the tuba? I'm first chair.

OLIVER. It's a tuba, man. A tuba.

BEN. Girls prefer men with big instruments.

JOHNNY. Gentlemen.

BEN. Gentlemen?

OLIVER. Where?

JOHNNY. I wish I could say our pathetic social standing in high school won't matter after we grow into adulthood, and in large part, it won't. However, the psychological scars of adolescence never quite heal. If they did, psychiatry would be a dead science.

BEN. What the hell is he talking about?

OLIVER. More old man shit.

BEN. We could get laid?

OLIVER. We could?

BEN. If we settled for ugly girls. But you know what?

OLIVER. What, my amigo?

BEN. I'd rather jack off than fuck an ugly girl.

OLIVER. You sound just like William Shakespeare.

(BEN and OLIVER high-five.)

JOHNNY. And you both sound like, nay, are misogynists.

BEN. Hurrah! *(To OLIVER.)* What's a misogynist?

(OLIVER shrugs.)

JOHNNY. Note to self. Write a column, no, a series of columns, discussing famous feminist thinkers.

BEN. Feminine?

OLIVER. Something about girls.

BEN. Cool.

JOHNNY. *Feminism* is the advocacy of women's rights. Political, social, and economic equality to men.

OLIVER. What does that have to do with us?

JOHNNY. Everything. In this country—

(BEN lifts his leg and loudly farts.)

JOHNNY *(cont'd)*. In this country—

(BEN again lifts his leg and loudly farts.)

JOHNNY (*cont'd*). You win.

(*BEN lowers his leg.*)

OLIVER. You do know people only read your column for the freak value.

BEN. I wipe my ass with it.

JOHNNY. I thought you were playing football today.

OLIVER. I think he wants us to leave.

BEN (*simulates masturbation*). Yeah, he has more important things to do.

(*BEN and OLIVER start to exit.*)

OLIVER. We're outta here, gay boy.

(*MRS. ROSS appears, carrying the dog-chewed copy of The Tempest.*)

BEN (*to JOHNNY, not seeing MRS. ROSS*). We'll tell everybody at Cecil's how much of a pussy you are.

MRS. ROSS. Did you just use the "p" word?

(*JOHNNY quickly hides his whiskey glass.*)

BEN. Yes ma'am. Are you tellin' my mom?

MRS. ROSS. I am ... if I ever hear you say it again.

BEN. Yes, ma'am.

OLIVER. C'mon, Ben.

BEN (*to MRS. ROSS*). Sorry.

(*BEN and OLIVER exit.*)

JOHNNY. That was fun.

MRS. ROSS (*hands book to JOHNNY*). This yours?

JOHNNY. Yeah.

MRS. ROSS. Rufus—

JOHNNY. I know.

MRS. ROSS. Shakespeare?

JOHNNY. Rufus has sophisticated tastes ... I thought you were scared of the rope ladder.

MRS. ROSS. I am.

JOHNNY. So I can assume you're not here for small talk.

MRS. ROSS (*holds up report card*). Your report card.

JOHNNY. You have to sign it.

MRS. ROSS. I know that.

JOHNNY. Why are you mad?

MRS. ROSS. Straight A's? You never make straight A's.

JOHNNY. You're mad at straight A's?

MRS. ROSS. This isn't you.

JOHNNY. I have a Ph.D. in literature. If I can't make straight A's in the eleventh grade, god help me.

MRS. ROSS. You've never stepped foot on a college campus.

JOHNNY. I go to college.

MRS. ROSS. Junior college.

JOHNNY. The University of Virginia. (*Or any large public state university.*)

MRS. ROSS. We can't afford—

JOHNNY. Oh, but we can, because I win a scholarship.

MRS. ROSS. How?

JOHNNY. A national essay contest.

MRS. ROSS. Congratulations.

JOHNNY. At Virginia, I major in English lit. Then, Yale for my Ph.D.

MRS. ROSS. What next? The Nobel Prize?

JOHNNY. No, teaching job, UCLA.

MRS. ROSS. I'm glad you dream big, but—

JOHNNY. Are you saying those aren't real A's?

MRS. ROSS. I'm saying this isn't you.

JOHNNY. Call the school.

MRS. ROSS. I did. I spoke to Principal Marley.

JOHNNY. And?

MRS. ROSS. He's not sure if you've been struck by lightning or your body is inhabited by an alien.

JOHNNY. That's funny.

MRS. ROSS. No, that's *not* funny.

Sweet

By
DENISE HINSON

Sweet was premiered by County Seat Theatre Company in Cloquet, Minn., on Sept. 28, 2018.

CAST:

SWEET CLEMMET CARTER Michael “Beastie” Rosen
ADDIE CARTER..... Ruthie Breuer
RUBY JOHNSON Jennifer Soukkala
CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON Joseph Larson
TREVOR WALLACE Greg J. Anderson

PRODUCTION:

Director Joel Soukkala
Light Design..... John Justad
Scenic and Sound Design..... Joel Soukkala
Set Construction..... Joel Soukkala, Sam Stuart
Lighting Operation..... Karen Murphy
Stage Manager Aleyse Chapin
Art Curator Kris Nelson

In addition to the information on the Important Billing and Credit Requirements page (p. 3), all producers of the play must include the following acknowledgment on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and on all advertising and promotional materials:

“*Sweet* was premiered in the American Association of Community Theatre’s AACT NewPlayFest by County Seat Theatre Company in Cloquet, Minn.”

Sweet

CHARACTERS

CLEMMET CARTER: 60s. Former fighter, his physique is reminiscent of the boxer he once was—still thick in the neck and shoulders. He now struggles with coordination and is on oxygen.

ADDIE CARTER: 60s. Clemmet's wife.

RUBY JOHNSON: 30s. Clemmet and Addie's daughter.

CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON: 14, Ruby's son.

TREVOR WALLACE: late 30s to mid-40s.

SETTING: The Carter home. Nestled in a wooded area, only the living room is visible. Near the front door is a large picture window that allows a view from the house to the porch and front yard, with a couple of metal lawn chairs and a table. A flower bed is next to the steps to the porch.

TIME: Present.

Sweet

ACT I

SCENE 1

(There is only the sound of an oxygen machine. Hiss. Hiss. Hiss. Lights up on CLEMMET CARTER. The remainder of the set remains dark.)

CLEMMET stands, a still-impressive man, tethered by an oxygen cannula in his nose. He stares ahead.)

CLEMMET. I dream some nights ... dream I'm back there. That old heat ... the sound of the crowd, like thunder rolling in over the horizon ... I stand in the center of that white box, that rectangle ringed in gold, lights flooding my eyes ... The center of the universe. And I am a god.

The floor shakes under my feet ... I'm bouncing, moving ... the crowd pushes me on ... I can't see them, outside that ring in the darkness, but I feel them and I hear them and they call to me— Get 'em, Sweet!—Go!—Bring it on! ... And I'm facing the other guy. Sometimes, I know who it is ... Louis Hinks ... Teo Pesaro ... Sam Winton ... other times, I don't recognize him ... He's just a man trying to be a god, like me ... but this is my universe. My world. There's only room for one god in this ring.

I weave ... cross ... counter ... check hook—yeah, that one gets 'em ... And then I see it—my moment, rising before me bright as the sunrise, and I step in. Blood's pumping, eyes are sharp, muscles tight as steel, legs—legs bracing me, I swing ... and ...

And then ... I wake up. Lifting my hands, just reaching up into that darkness, trying to grab something ... Can't remember what I'm reaching for ...

(The sound of the oxygen machine.)

ADDIE CARTER's voice enters the darkness.)

ADDIE. I dreamed last night I had a baby ... A little girl. Oh, she was so beautiful ... All curly black hair, big brown eyes. What do you think that means?

(Silence.)

CLEMMET takes a deep breath before he sinks into his chair.

Lights fade up to reveal ADDIE on the couch, rubbing ointment into her hands.)

ADDIE *(cont'd)*. My momma used to say that baby dreams were good.

CLEMMET. That so?

ADDIE. Means something's coming.

CLEMMET. Like what. A storm? Swarm of grasshoppers? Bills. Probably bills.

ADDIE. Something special.

CLEMMET. That would be special, the two of us having a baby—

ADDIE. It was just a dream—

CLEMMET. Imagine the look on that doc's face, these two old people come shuffling in ... "What can I do for you, Mrs. Carter? Well, you can deliver this baby, that's what you can do"—

ADDIE. You know what your problem is?

CLEMMET. "Baby! Why, Mrs. Carter, surely you're pulling my leg. No, doc, not at all. I'm here to have a baby"—

ADDIE. You don't believe in anything.

CLEMMET. I believe in lots of things.

ADDIE. Name one.

CLEMMET. Your hands.

ADDIE. Oh now—

CLEMMET. Those dainty hands. The day you grabbed my arm to stop me from punching out that punk Ted Wilkers ... Think that was the moment I fell in love with you.

ADDIE. I don't remember that—

CLEMMET. You wrapped those pretty hands around my wrist, felt like—iron. I thought to myself, Clemmet, you could use someone like her in your sorry life. You need this woman and those fine hands.

(CLEMMET clenches his own hands into fists.

Outside, RUBY JOHNSON enters, steps onto the porch and stops. She looks down at the flower bed, steps down and gathers up broken crocuses that litter the ground.

ADDIE holds her hands up, inspects them.)

ADDIE. They're getting old. Like the rest of me. Started cramping up right before lunch, and nothing I did would stop it.

CLEMMET. It's time you hung up those rubber gloves ... I've been thinking I should get back out there.

ADDIE. And do what?

CLEMMET. I'm still strong. I can dig a ditch, maybe hammer a nail—do me good to get out of this house—

(CLEMMET seems to realize his fists are still clenched. He relaxes them, places them on his lap.

RUBY enters the house.)

RUBY. Hey—

ADDIE. Hey.

(ADDIE pushes herself up and looks at the flowers in RUBY's hands.)

ADDIE. What's—are those my crocuses?

RUBY. They were laying in the yard.

ADDIE. What happened to them!?

(RUBY gives her mother a knowing look.)

CLEMMET. Oh, now, he didn't do it—

RUBY. No, of course not. I've been reading about this—they pull their roots up out of that dirt and throw themselves onto the yard. Mass flower suicide. It's becoming an epidemic.

(RUBY drops her purse and keys, takes a chair opposite her father.)

RUBY (*cont'd*). What else is going on?

ADDIE. Your father here thinks he's going to go out and dig some ditches—

CLEMMET. Your momma thinks she's pregnant.

RUBY. Well. You two have been busy—

CLEMMET. Don't look at me. Better talk to the milkman.

(CLEMMET reaches for a cup on a table but knocks it over, spilling coffee everywhere.)

CLEMMET *(cont'd)*. Damn it all to hell!

RUBY. That's OK, Daddy—I'll get it.

CLEMMET. I can do it—

ADDIE. I'll get a rag.

(ADDIE exits to the kitchen.)

RUBY's cellphone rings. Taking it from her purse, she reads the screen and exits to the yard. She takes a seat, begins texting.

Inside, ADDIE has cleaned up the coffee and then goes to the window. She exits and stands on the porch, watching. She leans on the rail and looks down at her daughter.)

ADDIE *(cont'd)*. Must be important.

(RUBY jumps a little, then laughs to cover her reaction.)

RUBY. No—I mean, it's news. I get ... I have this app that alerts me to breaking news—

ADDIE. A map?

RUBY. No—app. Application ... it's a program that—

ADDIE. I don't even know what you just said.

RUBY. It's a program—

ADDIE. Like a robot?

RUBY. Wha—Sure.

ADDIE. You have robots calling you?

RUBY. It didn't call me—it sent a—kind of like a message.

ADDIE. Robots are sending you messages?

RUBY. Momma. Come on. Look—see this? That's—

(ADDIE backs away.)

ADDIE. What's wrong with a phone that rings when a human being calls? All we've ever needed.

(ADDIE exits. Lights go down in the house.)

RUBY lights a cigarette and takes a couple of long drags. CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON enters from the woods behind the house, sketchbook tucked under his arm, and heads for the front door.

RUBY hears CHRISTOPHER coming, so she puts out the cigarette and waits for him to get to the porch. Before he can open the front door, she speaks.)

RUBY. Finish your homework?

CHRISTOPHER. I'll do it after dinner—

RUBY. You're not supposed to wander off until homework's done.

CHRISTOPHER. And you're not supposed to smoke.

(RUBY motions for him to join her.)

RUBY. It relaxes me—

CHRISTOPHER. Bullshit—

RUBY. Christopher Dean!

CHRISTOPHER. I want my mom at my high-school graduation. Is that too much to ask?

RUBY. Watch that mouth.

CHRISTOPHER. I'm not a little kid, you know—

RUBY. Then why'd you pull up the flowers?

CHRISTOPHER. Grandma know you're out here smoking?

RUBY. Answer me—

CHRISTOPHER. I didn't—

RUBY. Your grandma loves those flowers. Leave them alone.

CHRISTOPHER. Why do you ask if you're not going to believe me?

RUBY. This weekend you're going to fix the fence you pulled down—

CHRISTOPHER. This is—

RUBY. AND plant bulbs to replace the ones that got pulled up. Understand?

CHRISTOPHER. I'm going inside.

RUBY. Wash your hands and peel the potatoes.

CHRISTOPHER. Pops wants me to help him with the puzzle—

RUBY. Peel the potatoes.

CHRISTOPHER. There's child labor laws, you know.

RUBY. Well then it's a good thing you're not a child.

(CHRISTOPHER enters the house. RUBY stares out into the growing darkness.)

SCENE 2

(Early morning. RUBY is already outside, sitting in her robe in a chair. She is texting.)

RUBY hears ADDIE and slides her phone into a pocket.)

ADDIE. You're up early.

RUBY. Couldn't sleep.

(Silence. ADDIE sips coffee. Waits.)

RUBY *(cont'd)*. Just texting with a friend.

ADDIE. That so. Who would that be so early in the day?

RUBY. No one.

ADDIE. Spit it out.

RUBY. It's no one, Momma.

(ADDIE waits.)

RUBY *(cont'd)*. It's just a guy I met in town. No big deal—

ADDIE. What's his name?

RUBY. Momma—

ADDIE. What's his name.

RUBY. Trevor.

ADDIE. And do I know this Trevor?

RUBY. No.

ADDIE. I see. And how long have you been talking with this Trevor?

RUBY. It's called texting—

ADDIE. Is he one of the robots?

RUBY. What?

ADDIE. One of those—apps—

RUBY. No, Momma. This is texting—

ADDIE. Stop it.

RUBY. It's nothing, really. It's not.

ADDIE. Do you imagine this is a good time for you to be messing around with some man? You've got Christopher to think about—

RUBY. This is why I didn't tell you—

ADDIE. And your daddy's not well—

RUBY. It's not like that.

ADDIE. You have responsibilities here.

RUBY. I know—

ADDIE. When you were young, I made sure you were always taken care of. Sure, I would've loved to go gallivanting all over with your father, but my place was with you. Making sure you were safe, doing your schoolwork, keeping you in line—

RUBY. I don't see the harm in talking to someone.

ADDIE. Maybe someday, when Christopher is grown, you can ... text or—whatever—to your heart's content. But your job now is to take care of him. He needs his mother. You know I'm right.

RUBY. Yes, Momma.

(Silence.)

ADDIE. I sure love the morning before your daddy wakes up. A little quiet to start the day.

RUBY. I miss hearing him banging around the house.

ADDIE. Making a racket in the kitchen before he went to work out—

RUBY. I loved waking up hearing him yelling, "You people sleep too much! If you got up and went to the gym with me you'd feel better—"

ADDIE. "Time's wasting under those covers!"

RUBY. "I'll sleep when I'm dead."

(The women drink their coffee.)

SCENE 3

(ADDIE is on her knees, working in her flower bed, attempting to salvage the remaining crocuses. Occasionally she stops and rubs her aching hands.)

TREVOR WALLACE enters. He doesn't see ADDIE as he climbs the stairs to the porch, mumbling to himself.)

TREVOR. You've come this far, man, don't back down— (*Goes to knock on the door, then stops.*) What am I thinking, just showing up here— (*Begins to leave, stops himself.*) Take charge. (*Three deep breaths, goes to the door again. Stops again. Stares at the door.*) Damn it.

ADDIE. Are you going to knock or stand outside all day talking to yourself?

TREVOR. Oh holy shit—I—I am so—

ADDIE. Can I help you with something?

TREVOR. Is—I'm Trevor Wallace ... I'm a friend of Ruby's?

ADDIE. Is that right?

(TREVOR bounds off the porch.)

TREVOR. Are you Mrs. Carter?

(ADDIE takes her time getting up. She doesn't extend a hand to TREVOR.)

(RUBY enters the living room. She sees TREVOR and ADDIE through the window and quickly moves to the front door.)

ADDIE. I am.

TREVOR. Oh that's wonderful! I don't know if Ruby's told you about me—

ADDIE. As a matter of fact, she hasn't—

(RUBY bursts through the front door.)

RUBY. What are you doing here?!

TREVOR. Hi—good morning!

RUBY. How did you find us!

ADDIE. Trevor's come to pay us a visit.

TREVOR. I should have called, or—

(RUBY comes off the porch and pulls TREVOR away from ADDIE.)

RUBY. It's fine ... I'm just—surprised. Maybe we can—

(ADDIE walks into the house while delivering her next line.)

ADDIE. I'm going in to make coffee. Would you like some coffee, Trevor?

TREVOR. Oh—no ma'am, I've had plenty. Thank—

(The door closes before he finishes. He stares at the door.)

TREVOR *(cont'd)*. You. OK.

RUBY. You see? That's why I told you I'd let you know when you could—

TREVOR. I know, I know.

RUBY. You can't just show up and walk in on them!

TREVOR. You said you were going to talk to them.

RUBY. And I will.

TREVOR. When?

RUBY. You have to let me handle this my way. You don't know my parents—

TREVOR. If you'd introduce me to them, I would.

RUBY. A little more time, OK?

TREVOR. You could perhaps ... speed things up? Like before I have to leave?

(RUBY moves away from TREVOR.)

RUBY. Maybe this wasn't a good idea.

TREVOR. What—

RUBY. It's going to be a disaster—

TREVOR. We've got it all worked out. You agreed—

RUBY. I know! But ... I didn't think it through.

TREVOR. Are you going to give me back my money?

RUBY. I can't, Trevor—I need that money—for me and Christopher—

TREVOR. Then I need you to stop putting me off and introduce me to your father. The deal was an exclusive interview with him.

RUBY. Just a little more time, OK? You showing up here, it caught me off guard. I need to prepare my mom, not just spring it on them.

(TREVOR regards her for a moment.)

TREVOR. OK. But you have to do it soon. Listen—I know it’s scary, and you barely know me, but I promise you, this is going to be fine. It’s going to be better than fine. It’s going to be mind-blowing.
 RUBY. That’s what I’m afraid of.

(TREVOR attempts a reassuring smile. Exits.)

RUBY sits in the chair and puts her head in her hands.

CHRISTOPHER exits the house, sees his mother and closes the door quietly. He sneaks away from the porch. He almost makes it, but—)

RUBY. Where do you think you’re going?
 CHRISTOPHER. Just out—there—
 RUBY. You’re fixing a fence, remember?
 CHRISTOPHER. Can’t I do it later?
 RUBY. Nope. Now.

(CHRISTOPHER turns to go behind the house.)

RUBY. Hold on—the book stays here.
 CHRISTOPHER. Why?
 RUBY. Give it.
 CHRISTOPHER. I won’t draw—
 RUBY. I know. Because you won’t have it.
 CHRISTOPHER. But you’ll look in it.
 RUBY. What?
 CHRISTOPHER. I don’t want anyone to look—
 RUBY. What have you got in there?!
 CHRISTOPHER. Nothing! Just ...
 RUBY. Is there something in there you shouldn’t be drawing?
 CHRISTOPHER. Like what?
 RUBY. I don’t know—naked ... people.
 CHRISTOPHER. Naked people?
 RUBY. Or—pictures of killing people ... like knives and guns and ... severed parts. You can get in serious trouble at school for that, you know.
 CHRISTOPHER. Wow.
 RUBY. It is, isn’t it?!
 CHRISTOPHER. It’s nothing like that.