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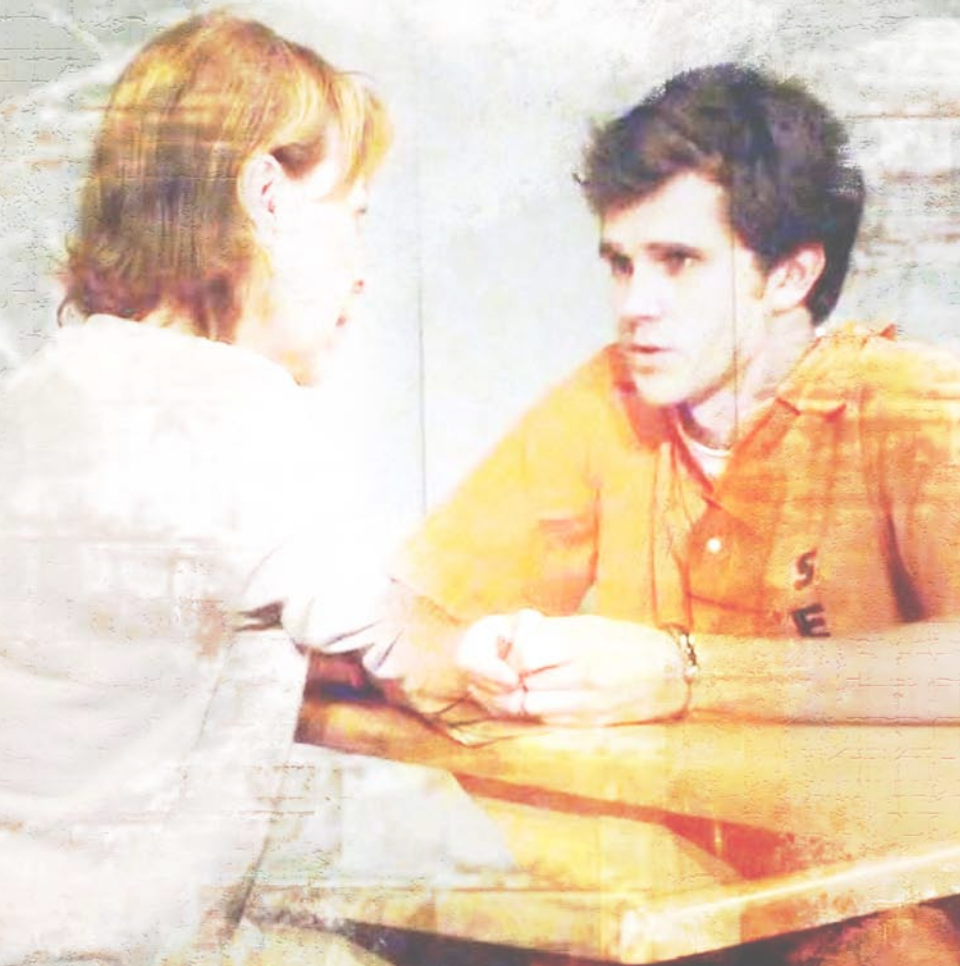
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# Eric LaRue

Drama by Brett Neveu



# Eric LaRue

"Lacerating drama ... [a] mesmerizing work. Neveu sheds remarkable insight on the desperate emotional defense mechanisms used by the affected loved ones." —*Backstage LA*

"Meticulously structured and honed to the bone ... There is no response but a visceral one to this play, and that is the highest compliment." —*Chicago Sun-Times*

**Drama.** By Brett Neveu. Cast: 3m., 3w. Janice LaRue is the mother of Eric, a 17-year-old boy who shot and killed three of his classmates in school. Now, three months after Eric has been jailed, Janice has not yet gone to see him, nor has she found any way to deal with what happened or to show herself in her community. She goes to her Presbyterian pastor—a man who seems to see religion as a kind of therapy—to ask for guidance. He tries to convince her to come to a meeting he has set up with the mothers of two of the murdered boys, but she resists. Janice talks about the meeting with her husband, who, since the murder, has become "born again." He argues for her attending a meeting at his church instead and giving her burden to Jesus. Angered by his blind faith and inflexibility, she decides to go to her pastor's meeting, which quickly spirals out of control, ending with Janice being verbally attacked by one of the mothers and defending herself by recalling how the other boys had taunted and hurt Eric. Janice finally visits Eric in jail and tells him that she believes he "did the right thing" in killing those boys. *Unit set. Approximate running time: 70 minutes. Code: E55.*

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# ERIC LARUE

By  
BRETT NEVEU



**Dramatic Publishing**  
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for Kristen and Lia Pearl

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A Red Orchid Theatre, Chicago, premiered *Eric LaRue* on November 12, 2002, with the following:

CAST:

Janice LaRue . . . . . Kate Buddeke  
Steve Calhan . . . . . Will Clinger  
Ron LaRue . . . . . Doug Vickers  
Jill Yardly . . . . . Jennifer Engstrom  
Stephanie Grazer . . . . . Claudia Garrison  
Eric LaRue . . . . . Jarrett Sleeper

PRODUCTION STAFF:

Directed by . . . . . Ann Filmer  
Stage Manager . . . . . Tiffany Wilson  
Set Design . . . . . Heather Graff and Richard Peterson  
Light Design . . . . . Andrew Meyers

Sound Design/Original Music . . . . . Joseph Fosco  
Costume Design . . . . . Jana Stauffer  
Fight Direction . . . . . Kevin Heckman  
Artistic Director . . . . . Guy Van Swearingen



The Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-Upon- Avon, England, produced *Eric LaRue* in October 2005, with the following:

CAST:

Janice LaRue . . . . . Lia Williams  
Steve Calhan . . . . . Barnaby Kay  
Ron LaRue . . . . . Tom Hodgkins  
Jill Yardly . . . . . Meg Fraser  
Stephanie Grazer . . . . . Suzanne Burden  
Eric LaRue . . . . . Kevin Trainor

PRODUCTION STAFF:

Directed by . . . . . Dominic Cooke  
Stage Manager . . . . . Gabrielle Sanders  
Set Design . . . . . Tom Piper  
Light Design . . . . . Vince Herbert  
Sound Design . . . . . Andrea J. Cox  
Fight Direction . . . . . Terry King  
Assistant Director . . . . . Moritz Von Stuelpnagel  
Company Voice Work . . . . . Jan Haydn Rowles

# ERIC LARUE

## CHARACTERS:

STEVE CALHAN (m). . . . . Presbyterian minister, late 30s  
JANICE LARUE (f) . . . . . late 40s  
RON LARUE (m) . . . . . late 40s  
STEPHANIE GRAZER (f) . . . . . early 40s  
JILL YARDLY (f) . . . . . mid-40s  
ERIC LARUE (m) . . . . . 17

TIME: The present.

PLACE: Steve Calhan's office at First Presbyterian Church.  
The living room of the LaRue home.  
A holding room at a prison.

# ERIC LARUE

## SCENE 1

*(Lights up. A pastor's office in a Presbyterian church. JANICE LARUE sits in a large, older chair on the opposite side of a heavy brown desk. The desk has a few books, a picture or two, a reading lamp and a box of tissues. PASTOR STEVE CALHAN sits behind the desk in a somewhat modern, high-backed chair.)*

STEVE. Don't you think it's a little tight in here? I can't find places for everything. I had a hard time finding a place for the trash can. I try not to throw things away in here. If I have any garbage, then I walk it downstairs to the bigger trash cans in the kitchen. Then I just end up dumping them later. Not all the time, though. We have a service that does that, a garbage service. I don't know. It's cramped, but's it's comfortable. How are you?

JANICE. Not well.

STEVE. I'm sorry.

JANICE. Eric's been there for over a month.

STEVE. Have you been to see him yet?

JANICE. No.

STEVE. You should go see him.

JANICE. I try, but I can't.

STEVE. It'll be a good thing. You should go see him.

JANICE. I will.

STEVE. Good. And he's doing okay?

JANICE. I'm not sure.

STEVE. You might want to be concerned.

JANICE. I am.

STEVE. I realize that. But maybe you should be more concerned. He's up there without any family. He's among strangers and criminals and I'm sure he's pretty upset. It's upsetting for him, you, and everyone concerned. You should go see him. He needs that. What would you say to him?

JANICE. In prison.

STEVE. That's what I mean.

JANICE. I'm not sure.

STEVE. Maybe that's why you haven't gone yet. You should think about what you would say to him. Just thinking about that discussion would help you understand what you are thinking.

JANICE. Eric killed those boys.

STEVE. I know the circumstances.

JANICE. He shot them.

STEVE. You should think beyond the situation. (*Pause.*)  
How have you been?

JANICE. It's hard.

STEVE. It is.

JANICE. It's hard to be outside.

STEVE. What do you mean?

JANICE. It's hard to go outside.

STEVE. You should go outside. You shouldn't punish yourself.

JANICE. I don't feel like I can be outside.

STEVE. You shouldn't become a shut-in. You need to be active.

JANICE. I don't feel like exercise.

STEVE. That's not what I'm talking about. I don't mean aerobics or anything. I'm just saying that you shouldn't sit and dwell on things that happened. All of this is still fresh in your mind and you can't think of anything else.

JANICE. I do think of other things.

STEVE. I had a man in the congregation a few years ago that wouldn't leave his house.

JANICE. Why wouldn't he leave his house?

STEVE. He was scared of plants or clouds and he wouldn't leave his house.

JANICE. What happened to him?

STEVE. He finally went outside.

JANICE. Why?

STEVE. I'm not sure, but he did.

JANICE. Wasn't he scared of plants or clouds?

STEVE. I'm not sure what he was scared of, if he was scared of plants or clouds or what it was. I am sure, though, that he finally overcame his fears and left his house.

JANICE. Oh.

STEVE. That's right.

JANICE. I'm not scared to go outside.

STEVE. Oh.

JANICE. I'm just sad.

STEVE. You're sad? Are you numb? Some people feel numb when tragic things occur in their lives. They go from month to month, year to year, not feeling anything. They're numb.

JANICE. I don't think I'm numb.

STEVE. Time can heal anything.

JANICE. I know.

STEVE. It can.

JANICE. I know.

STEVE. It's why you're here.

JANICE. What is?

STEVE. To heal yourself. Isn't that why you're here?

JANICE. Yes.

STEVE. Why are you here?

JANICE. To heal myself.

STEVE. Is there another reason we've been meeting?

JANICE. I don't know.

STEVE. You seem like you have another reason.

JANICE. I said why.

STEVE. You said what I said. I might be wrong. You can give me a reason. We're trying to get beyond the shooting and what Eric did.

JANICE. And heal. (*A pause.*)

STEVE. Why are you here?

JANICE. I guess I want to understand how I'm feeling now. I want to understand what I'm supposed to be feeling.

STEVE. I'm not going to tell you what you should be feeling.

JANICE. I don't mean that.

STEVE. You're trying to look inside yourself and see what steps you need to take in order to feel less upset.

JANICE. Maybe that's what's happening.

STEVE. "Maybe" doesn't get you past anything. You should be making some concrete decisions about things. You know what I want to do, and maybe we should talk about that.

JANICE. I'm not sure.

STEVE. I still want to set up a meeting.

JANICE. I know.

STEVE. I'm very serious about this step. I've talked to the principal and to a few counselors and I think we should do this soon. Especially if you feel sad.

JANICE. I know.

STEVE. What do you think?

JANICE. I don't think I can.

STEVE. You've had some time to think about it.

JANICE. I know.

STEVE. We shouldn't let these wounds get infected. We need to treat them quickly so they can heal.

JANICE. I'm not ready.

STEVE. I understand, but it would be good for everyone.

JANICE. I know.

STEVE. I don't know if you do. I'm saying you should go see Eric, you should be there in the meeting, you should do all of it.

JANICE. I know.

STEVE. What did Ron have to say about it?

JANICE. We haven't talked about it much.

STEVE. I know that he hasn't been attending services here for a few months now, but I don't want to lose touch with him or his feelings about what has happened.

JANICE. Okay.

STEVE. I know John Berman over there and he's nice. Please tell Ron he can come to both services if he wants; he can go to Redeemer Lutheran and he can come here, too. I don't have a problem with him splitting time between the two churches. He can come back anytime. I don't want him to feel that I don't think what he thinks isn't important just because he's over at Redeemer.

JANICE. I'll talk to Ron again about what he thinks about the meeting.

STEVE. You should get his opinion.

JANICE. I know.

STEVE. I'm harping. I'm sorry. It should be up to you when and if you talk to him. It should be up to you what course these things take. The only problem is that there's more than just you involved here. We've got three other families to think about. Three other mothers, who of which are members of this church, just like you. It's been hard. It's been hard for everyone, the community, of all involved. I'm just trying to reach out to you. I'm trying help you, I'm just trying to help.

JANICE. I know.

STEVE. Then we can all understand. We can understand what we're all thinking.

JANICE. Okay.

STEVE. If you want to ask me questions about anything I'm saying, it's fine.

JANICE. I'm sorry.

STEVE. I want you to figure this out by yourself.

JANICE. I don't mean to sound so confused.

STEVE. You don't sound that confused.

JANICE. I'm just not sure if I'm making any sense.

STEVE. You just said the same thing twice. You said that you don't mean to sound so confused and that you're not sure if you're making any sense.

JANICE. I'm sorry.

STEVE. No! It's okay to feel that way. Us talking is a great way to figure these things out. And this meeting I'm talking about is also a great place to do the same thing. (*Long pause.*) How are you?



JANICE. I thought I said how I was.

STEVE. I'm sorry. You're right. You're sad.

JANICE. I've been back to work.

STEVE. See? You can go outside.

JANICE. I guess.

STEVE. How is work going?

JANICE. It's okay.

STEVE. It keeps you distracted, I suppose.

JANICE. I don't want to be distracted.

STEVE. I meant occupied.

JANICE. I can't stop thinking about things.

STEVE. Work keeps you occupied so that you can think  
about other things.

JANICE. I don't think about other things.

STEVE. Do you need some help?

JANICE. Help with what?

STEVE. Things at home. Preparing food, cleaning.

JANICE. No.

STEVE. Those sorts of home things can make you dis-  
tracted, too.

JANICE. I don't need help at home.

STEVE. I'm here to help however I can.

JANICE. I know.

STEVE. That's why we're talking, right?

JANICE. Yes.

STEVE. I'm here to help.

JANICE. I know.

STEVE. Have you ever played Ungame?

JANICE. Played what?

STEVE. The Ungame game?

JANICE. No.

STEVE. It's a game where you can learn a lot about yourself. It's a card game.

JANICE. I don't want to play cards.

STEVE. It's a learning game. (*He opens a drawer in his desk and pulls out a deck of playing cards.*) I don't have the actual Ungame, but I remember how it goes. I have it all written down. I just use regular cards and it's the same thing. (*Pause.*) I just want you to see how opening up to others can help you get past tragedy in life. I just want you to understand that all human experience is the same, all sadness can be quieted. I'm here to listen and to help, and sometimes I might seem silly. I know a card game is silly but it really does help. When I have counseling sessions for married couples, I always play Ungame with them during their second session. You would not believe how much two people can learn about each other by simple questions and varying answers. It's like a trick, but a trick that teaches. Through learning your responses, you can learn about problems or things you may need to correct. This simple card game can give you tools for finding out how to make your life less complicated. It can bring answers to frustrating questions. I've seen it happen during my marriage counseling sessions. I'm no liar.

JANICE. I don't think you're lying.

STEVE. I didn't mean that you thought I was lying. I'm just trying to show you how strongly I believe in interaction and communication as ways to overcome the greatest of misfortunes. So when I say, "I'm no liar," I mean to tell you that you should believe that my motives are about using tools in order to understand our progress through life. I don't know if it's about trust or honesty.

Maybe “I’m no liar” isn’t the right statement. Maybe I should say, “I’m not going to lie to you.” I want to tell you things as I see them and I want you to do the same. (*STEVE shows the deck of cards to JANICE.*) It’s not silly. It’s just a game. Let me see here. (*He removes a sheet of paper with notes on it from a desk drawer. He then takes the cards from their box and shuffles them. He deals out five cards, face down, to JANICE. She reaches for the cards.*) Don’t look at them.

JANICE. Okay.

STEVE. Okay. Now let me see here. (*He looks at his notes.*) There are usually two people here to play the game, not counting me.

JANICE. Okay.

STEVE. I guess we’ll have to modify the rules. Go ahead and reveal your first card and we’ll see what to do from there.

JANICE (*turns over one of the cards*). It’s the five of diamonds.

STEVE. The five of diamonds. (*Looks at his notes.*) Okay. The five of diamonds. Okay. “Describe how you put on your shoes and socks in the morning.”

JANICE. I should answer that?

STEVE. Yes. “Describe how you put on your shoes and socks in the morning.”

JANICE. I put on socks and then I put on shoes.

STEVE. Anything else?

JANICE. No.

STEVE. Do you sit down?

JANICE. Yes.

STEVE. Where?

JANICE. On a chair.

STEVE. Is it always the same chair?

JANICE. I sometimes sit on the bed.

STEVE. And is it right then left or the other way around?

JANICE. I'm not sure.

STEVE. Think about it.

JANICE. I guess right first.

STEVE. Not always right?

JANICE. Maybe not.

STEVE. Okay. Then what do you do?

JANICE. I stand up.

STEVE. Is it always the same shoes?

JANICE. No.

*(A long pause. STEVE pokes at one of JANICE's remaining cards. JANICE turns over the next card.)*

STEVE. The ten of clubs. *(He looks at his papers.)* "Describe your mate's hair color in detail."

JANICE. What?

STEVE. I guess this is more of a couple card. *(He turns over JANICE's next card.)* The ten of hearts. "Tell the group about your favorite vacation." There's no group, so you can just tell me instead, okay?

JANICE. A vacation?

STEVE. Your favorite vacation. *(A pause.)*

JANICE. When Eric was seven we went up to Leech Lake in Minnesota.

STEVE. That was your favorite vacation?

JANICE. Yes.

STEVE. Leech Lake was the name of the lake?

JANICE. Yes.

STEVE. That's funny! *(Laughs.)*