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Dramatic Publishing

What Remains



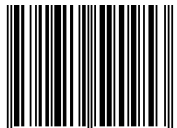
Drama by Max Bush

What Remains

Drama. By Max Bush. Cast: 2m., 9w. Maggie is a talented young artist who is just a couple of months away from graduating high school. As the summer swiftly approaches, she finds herself agonizing over serious life decisions. What is the right path for her future? Should she follow her dreams and become an artist? Or should she do the sensible thing and go to college with her boyfriend, Mike? As Maggie struggles with looking into her future, she meets Cliona, a 69-year-old woman who hires Maggie to sort through the objects of Cliona's life. As Maggie and her eccentric friend, Sarah, search through Cliona's things, the people involved with them come alive, and we see the truth about Cliona's own artistic past. An unlikely friendship blossoms between Maggie and Cliona as they each help the other discover something about themselves they never would have found on their own. *Area staging. Approximate running time: 95 minutes. Code: WJ5.*

Cover photo: Carbondale High School, Carbondale, Ill., featuring (l-r) Megan Odaniell, Jacqueline Betz and Elizabeth Tolley. Photo: Max Bush. Cover design: Molly Germanotta.

ISBN: 978-1-61959-095-3



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What Remains

By

MAX BUSH



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(WHAT REMAINS)

ISBN: 978-1-61959-095-3

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What Remains was co-commissioned by Carbondale High School (Carbondale, Ill.), and The First Baptist Church of Greater Cleveland. It opened in Carbondale on Friday, Jan. 31, 2014, with the following cast and crew:

CAST:

MaggieMegan Odaneill
SarahLily Sronkoski
Karen..... Kayla Estes
TrishaRadia Lahlou
Mike Jack Rose
Cliona..... Jacqueline Betz
OnaHelen Lant
Evan Harrison Barr
Angela..... Elizabeth Tolley
Leanne..... Rachael Paull
Kimi Alex Taylor

CREW:

DirectorJustin Dennis
Stage ManagerClaire Culton
Set DesignErik Berrey
Light Board Operator.....Lelan Lewis
Painting Gloria Jones

Funding for the commission of the play was supported by The Garwin Family Foundation.

What Remains opened at The First Baptist Church of Greater Cleveland as part of their FBC Arts Outreach Program on Friday, Nov. 13, 2015, with the following cast and crew:

CAST:

Maggie Jennifer Salkin
Sarah Callie Levan
Karen Melanie Tyler
Trisha Adaja Thompson
Mike Ryan Jenkins
Cliona Candace Russell
Ona Emma Bartz
Evan Carlos Piepenburg
Angela Kayla Carabotta
Leanne Jessica Felden
Kimi Kelley Pernicone

CREW:

Producer/Director G. Michael Skerritt
Associate Producer Sharon Anderson
Assistant Director Karen Gill
Set Design G. Michael Skerritt
Set Decoration Courtney Gill, Karen Gill
Costumes Karen Gill, Courtney Gill, Cast
Props Barbara Abrams, Karen Gill, Cast
Choreographer Kelly Perkins
Lighting Design Greg Gillooly
Light Operation Mark Tyler, Craig Bady
Hair and Makeup Maya Anderson, Courtney Gill
Tickets Jeff Gordon, Star Knuckles, Jane Pernicone
Refreshments Jane Pernicone
Ushers Jim Ankenbrandt, Betty Meyers
Publicity Tawnya Csapo, Star Knuckles

Church Support..... Kregg Burris, Jeff Gordon,
Tawnya Csapo, Steve Rosen,
Ed Szalay, Mercedes Westbrook,
Jae Williams, Debbie Cornelius.

What Remains was selected for further development by the American Alliance for Theater & Education as part of their Playwrights in Our Schools Program and received a week-long developmental workshop at the DaVinci Academy, in Ogden, Utah, in 2014.

What Remains was also selected as one of three plays to be developed and given a public reading by The Purple Crayon Players of Northwestern University in 2014, as part of their PLAYground Festival of Fresh Works.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the following for their invaluable help in the development of this script:

Brian M Everitt, Kelly Herremans, Madeline Jones, Emma Swanson, Shelby Swanson, Hannah Cremin, Mychal Hilken, Cathy Gartland, Diana Curtis, Ryan Jackson, Avery Mills, Alisha Kelley, Delanie DeCan, Abigail Fergus, Maddie Walker, Cathy Cremin, Gerrit Overway, Myra Bush for help with the songs, Lynette Bush, Keri Miller-Fenwood, Lynda DeCan, The Holland Civic Theater, The American Alliance for Theater & Education for their support for Playwrights In Our Schools, The Purple Crayon Players for including the play in their PLAYground Festival of Fresh Works, Tecumseh High School Theatre Department, Jon Anderson, Penelope Maguire, Pat Forrest, Lou Furman and the casts and crews of the initial productions.

To Martin Rolfs-Massaglia,
director, artist and a light to so many.
To work with him, to know him, is a joy,
a privilege and a blessing.

What Remains

CHARACTERS

Maggie: 18

Sarah: 18

Karen: 18

Trisha: 18

Mike: 19

Cliona: 69-70

Ona: 19, young Cliona

Evan: 27

Angela: 17

Leanne: 17

Kimi: 17, Cliona's granddaughter

SETTING: The promontory/dune overlooking a lake and Cliona's living room, with various suggested locations.

TIME: Late April of 2005 and different days and times in 1955.

RUNNING TIME: Approximately 95 minutes, not counting intermission. Intermission occurs between Scene 4 and Scene 5.

NOTE: This script is designed so all of the transitions from scene to scene are done with crossfades, none by going to blackout. Also, the characters from Cliona's past start onstage at the beginning of the play and remain onstage throughout, whether the focus is on Cliona's living room or the promontory. When not directly in focus, they will witness the action in the living room, not, for instance, freeze or stare off into space.

What Remains

Scene 1

SCENE: *As the audience enters, they see a divided stage. R is a suggested promontory looking over a large lake, with the forest in the background.*

L is the large living room of CLIONA. For most of the room, everything is carefully placed and organized: photographs, sterling pieces, antique tools, books, letters, house plants, antique furniture, antique kitchen utensils and a variety of memorabilia. There are a small number of boxes that seem out of place, like they were randomly set down.

While the audience enters, prior to the opening of the play, when house lights are still up full, various characters enter the promontory/dune. First SARAH enters, with dyed, long, black hair; dressed mostly in an elegant, antique, black dress. Her face is made up with a spider web around one eye that covers half of the side of her face. She moves to her make-up box, which sits on a rock, and organizes it. Next is KAREN, who enters dressed in a red dress and sits on a stump near SARAH. SARAH then continues something she has already begun: to put elaborate make-up on KAREN's face, in the image of a butterfly.

Next TRISHA enters, dressed in a semi-bridal white dress; her face has a yellow sunflower painted on it. She moves to MAGGIE's sketch book, which lies on the ground, and looks through it. Next is MIKE. He enters eating a sandwich, looking out over the lake, and waits.

MAGGIE enters dressed in contemporary clothes, moves to MIKE, kisses him and takes a bite of his sandwich. She then sees TRISHA looking at the sketchpad, quickly moves to TRISHA, snatches the sketchbook away and closes it. TRISHA smiles. MAGGIE then sharpens her pencils while TRISHA moves to her CD player and plays a soulful medium-slow rock song. TRISHA then moves back to MAGGIE, sneaks the sketchbook, moves away from MAGGIE and looks at the sketches.

MAGGIE again takes the sketchbook away from TRISHA.

TRISHA isolates herself and begins to absently dance to the music. Her dance comes from classical training as well as from musicals.

This all continues as lights slowly go out and the stage lights come up.

AT RISE: *TRISHA dances, MAGGIE readies her sketch pad, MIKE eats and SARAH finishes painting on KAREN.*

ONA, EVAN, ANGELA and LEANNE appear in CLIONA's living room. They will remain there during the first scene, unfrozen, giving focus. They will remain onstage for the entire play. When they are lit, they watch the scenes occurring around them. They do not look off into space, nor stand frozen, but focus on the action. For now they wait, unlit.

MAGGIE. Please take your last positions.

(TRISHA turns off the music. The three girls wrap a thick cord around themselves and pose in their positions as The Three Fates. They then hold their positions. MAGGIE looks them over.)

MAGGIE (*cont'd*). And ... shift.

(The models move in unison for two to three seconds, freeze in unison in position for two to three seconds, then move again in unison, and freeze in unison. They continue to do this, all the while relating to one another; remaining silent and moving in character. It is a kind of silent, rhythmic, character dance. MAGGIE speaks while they are frozen.)

MAGGIE (*cont'd*). All together ... Stay together ... Clotho, the spinner, you give birth ... Lachesis ... measure the thread of life ... Atropos, cut the thread of life ... end in a position that you can hold ...

(When MAGGIE finally sees a pose she is interested in [after five or six shifts] she speaks.)

MAGGIE (*cont'd*). Hold there.

(The models freeze in that position. MAGGIE begins sketching and continues during the following.)

MIKE. Do you want to go?

MAGGIE. Of course.

MIKE. It took me two weeks to figure out how to ask my dad, I had to wait till he had a good day at work, he won his golf game, the Tigers won a double header—

MAGGIE. I want to go.

MIKE. Thank you! What did your mother say?

MAGGIE. I didn't dare ask her yet. She's been under a lot of stress with work lately. And you know how protective she is.

MIKE. Emphasize that it's a geology walk down the Grand Canyon, and the Dust Bowl, the Rocky Mountains. Tell her how much you'll be learning because my mother—the professor—is obsessed-with-teaching. And tell her you would be sleeping above the cab, while I sleep in the back, with my parents running interference in between.

SARAH (*staying frozen*). In the old pictures of The Fates, I have scissors. Will you draw me with scissors?

MAGGIE. I might want to have you each holding something from the present, like a measuring tape, or ...

SARAH. I want a skull, skulls ... no ... I want to be standing on a mountain of skulls. I am, after all, the daughter of Night, with the abhorred shears, the triumph of death over life.

MIKE. Lighten up, Jack the Ripper, you're scaring me.

MAGGIE. How much money will I need?

MIKE. My parents will pay for almost everything.

MAGGIE. My mother will like that.

MIKE. Talk to her! She'll let you go. Your mother loves me!

MAGGIE. I'll talk to her tonight.

MIKE (*moves to her; puts his hand on her*). Why don't we take a loooong riiiiide tonight and talk about what you're going to say.

MAGGIE. Oh, wish I could. I'm going to help Cliona tonight.

MIKE. Cancel; my parents want an answer soon. And the future of my world depends on it.

MAGGIE. Cliona's expecting me. And I need the money.

MIKE. She can get by without you for a night.

MAGGIE. I told her I would help her.

MIKE. She's not your grandmother.

MAGGIE. You should come with me sometime to see her house. I don't dare touch anything, I don't dare move, I'll break something. Everything is ... old and ... DISPLAYED; like in a museum. That's what it feels like, a museum—of the dead.

SARAH. Really?

MAGGIE. It's like the house is haunted; by Cliona.

SARAH. I'll go with you, sometime.

MAGGIE. You'd love it, Sarah. She's an artist; and part of her artwork is the way she arranges her house.

MIKE. What does Cliona want you to do?

MAGGIE. I don't know. It's not grocery day. Last week she paid me to sit with her and listen to a symphony.

MIKE. Rock on.

MAGGIE. She might want me to draw something for her. She seems interested in my sketchbooks. *(She looks at her sketching; it obviously isn't working.)*

TRISHA. Am I what's throwing you off? I feel odd? And maybe if I—

MAGGIE. It's not you. *(Models relax.)* I knew when I saw you in the play that you would be perfect for this. And you are!—You're all acting the parts just like I want, but ... The angle of the light changed. And I need to put in more of the lake. *(She moves her position.)* Ready ... Shift.

(As before, the models move in unison for two to three seconds, freeze in unison in position for two to three seconds, then move again in unison, and freeze in unison. They remaining silent, moving in character.)

MAGGIE *(cont'd)*. Clotho, the spinner, my birth ... Lachesis ... measuring out my life ... Atropos, how long will I live? ...

(When MAGGIE finally sees a pose she is interested in [after five or six shifts] she speaks.)

MAGGIE *(cont'd)*. Hold. Ah! Perfect! Don't move. Don't move! That's the best! The light, the lake ...

(The models freeze, MAGGIE turns the page in her sketchbook and begins sketching energetically.)

MIKE. So, if all Cliona-the-Ghost needs you for is to hold her hand while you listen to Mozart, you can cancel. We need to set this up. My annoying little sister wants her annoying little friend to come if you don't and—

KAREN. I feel like I should be naked. Shouldn't we be naked?—

MIKE. Three weeks with those obnoxious little what did you say, Karen?

TRISHA. I already feel like I am.

KAREN. They painted The Fates naked in the middle ages.

MIKE. You should consider this, Maggie.

KAREN. I feel like we should be the truth, the naked truth.

MIKE. You have taught me, Maggie, how important it is to show the naked truth in art.

KAREN. You've taken life drawing at the university, Maggie. What do you think?

MAGGIE. Yeah, if I was in college, Karen, and this wasn't for my high school art project.

MIKE. Is somebody getting naked or not?

MAGGIE. No.

MIKE. Then let's take a ride, babe. Summer's coming fast, we got to make plans.

MAGGIE. You know the reason I'm using models? And having them shift their positions and not just setting them up? And why we come out here? Because I can't plan it. I have to discover it. I don't know what connections I'll make, or what I'll see. But when I do see something interesting, it's new and different and it ... it gives me energy. And I need to draw it now, because it's going to disappear soon. That's what I like about art. Something is here, and then it's gone. Drawing makes it stay longer, so we can appreciate it more.

MIKE. What's that have to do with this summer?

MAGGIE. I'm telling you why I'm excited to go! All the different landscapes, the different faces, everything will be new to me and—

MIKE. Oh, yeah, I see. This trip will inspire you.

MAGGIE. Yeah.

MIKE. Yeah!

SARAH. You want me to go with you tonight?

MAGGIE. I'd love you to go, Sarah. But she wants to see me. And I'd better go now, I'm probably late. You can relax. Thanks. *(The models relax.)* I think I have something to work with, now. Especially from the last position. *(Checks her phone.)* Oh, I *am* late. I'll meet you back at the car.

KAREN. May we see?

MAGGIE *(reluctantly hands KAREN the sketchbook. SARAH approaches MIKE)*. You should really wait to see the final painting, Karen.

MIKE. Who are you, Sarah? I mean, what is it about you?

SARAH. This morning when I woke up, I thought I was a fat balding man.

MIKE. Oh, yeah, well, let me be the first to tell you; unless you're really good at makeup, that ain't the naked truth.

SARAH *(as a Fate, to MIKE)*. Ah, you want the naked truth. All right. How long will you live, Mikey??

MIKE. Forever.

SARAH. You're in my book. Do you want to know?

MIKE. Sure, how long will I live, Daughter of Night, with your abhorred shears?

SARAH. You can't know. But I know. One day I'll just ... *(She makes a cutting gesture and smiles.)*

MIKE. That's no answer.

SARAH (*as a fat balding man*). Come on, man. You don't know, you don't want to know. One second, you on the street, then you not. Yeah, you ready, poor little rich college boy, thinking: "I got special love. I'm gonna live forever."

MIKE. I bet you're a lot of fun on dates.

SARAH (*as a man*). I got you on the run, man. You mine. Now you know. Now you know you know. 'Cause now you know, you don't know." (*Exits.*)

MIKE. What the hell?

TRISHA. You are so good, Maggie, and you can work so fast.

(MIKE moves to the girls and looks at the drawings.)

TRISHA (*cont'd*). Your long lines are unbroken and graceful. I'm all envy. Wow.

MAGGIE. Thanks, Trisha, but, something is missing.

MIKE (*taking the sketchbook*). Ain't nothin' missin' for me, babe. You're getting better and better. Look at that: Clean and simple, just the way you like it. It's them—it even looks like them—already—with just a few lines. The Three Fates—no one else could come up with this. What do you think, Karen?

KAREN. You're right, Maggie: the last was the best. And Mike is right, no one else would do something like this. You could paint that last one.

MIKE. Someday. Someday, what, Maggie? Someday, big money for your art.

MAGGIE. Thanks.

(She takes the sketchbook and looks out across the water, thinking. MIKE motions for KAREN and SARAH to leave them alone.)

KAREN. See you back at the car.

(KAREN and TRISHA exit.)

MIKE *(after a moment)*. This girl Sarah? Is weird.

MAGGIE. She's talking about her sister Molly, you know.
The one that was killed by a drunk driver.

MIKE. Ah, yeah. Did she want to be the Fate that decides how
long people live?

MAGGIE. Yeah.

MIKE. See? Weird.

MAGGIE. That's why we love her.

MIKE. Maaaagggiiiiieeee. *(Embracing her from behind.)* It's a
warm night; a ride with the top down—

MAGGIE. Oooooo ...

MIKE. A bucket of cherry berry ice cream—I'm buying.

MAGGIE. My favorite.

MIKE. A walk on the moooooonlit beach—with me.

MAGGIE. That's the best part. *(She kisses his hand repeatedly.)*

MIKE. How can you turn all this down?

MAGGIE *(she turns to him, smiles)*. You know I can't resist
you, my love.

MIKE. Bravo.

MAGGIE *(she kisses him warmly)*. I'll call you on my way
home.

(She runs off. He stands a moment, mouth open.)

MIKE. How does she do that to me? *(Yelling after her.)* Stop
doing that to me!

(He follows after her. Crossfade to CLIONA's house.)

Scene 2

(CLIONA enters her unusually decorated house. She's listening to a song from the 1950s. Around the set, wait ONA, EVAN, ANGELA and LEANNE.

Note: The characters from the past never freeze, they remain passive when not actively engaging each other or CLIONA, giving focus, watching what occurs around them. With the exception of CLIONA, none of the other contemporary characters engage or acknowledge the past characters. Also, after speaking, these characters do not fade upstage into the background. They continue to loosely surround CLIONA.

Cliona, humming with the music, carries an old shoe box. She stops, looks slowly around the room. Her spirit sinks as she becomes overwhelmed.

She sets the box down, picks out an old letter from the box, unfolds it and reads.)

—ANGELA. —The way he sees things, the way he sees women—why doesn't he paint you? He's afraid—

CLIONA *(drops the letter back in the box)*. Angela, you understood even less than me. *(She picks up a photograph.)*

—EVAN. You got to have the stomach for it. For everything the world throws at you—especially indifference.

CLIONA *(drops the photo back in the box)*. Evan ... What would I have done ... ?

(MAGGIE hurries on, carrying her sketchbook.)

MAGGIE. Hello, Cliona.

CLIONA. Ah, there you are, just a little late.