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Cry it Out

By

MOLLY SMITH METZLER

Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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William Morris Entertainment, LLC
11 Madison Ave., 18th floor,
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ISBN: 978-1-61959-183-7

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“World premiere in the 2017 Humana Festival of New American Plays at
Actors Theatre of Louisville.”

Cry it Out was commissioned by Actors Theatre of Louisville, where it made its world premiere at the 2017 Humana Festival of New American Plays.

Cast:

Jessie Jessica Dickey
Lina Andrea Syglowski
Mitchell Jeff Biehl
Adrienne Liv Rooth

Production Staff:

Artistic Director Les Waters
Managing Director Kevin E. Moore
Director Davis McCallum
Scenic Designer William Boles
Costume Designer Kathleen Geldard
Lighting Designer Tyler Micoleau
Sound Designer Stowe Nelson
Stage Manager Lori Doyle
Dramaturg Amy Wegener
Casting Erica Jensen, Calleri Casting

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CHARACTERS

JESSIE (mid-30s): Married to a North Shore native; recently relocated to Port (from Manhattan) to raise her family. Educated, articulate, lovely, warm. From the Midwest and has that Midwestern ready-smile. Beloved by every teacher she's ever had. Always gives the perfect toast; always organizes the group gift. But in private, Jessie bends towards anxiety. She doesn't like empty days on calendars, or being alone. Works 90-hour weeks in the city as a corporate lawyer—or did, until Allie was born. Now she's in yoga pants.

LINA (late 20s/early 30s): From Long Beach (on South Shore of Long Island) and you can tell immediately—she is very South Shore. Acrylic nails, big hoops, velour track suits, Mets trucker hats, and a huge Italian family. Lina failed out of community college, curses too much and blasts Kanye too loudly in the car. But she is also fantastically winning. She's fun, funny and refreshingly genuine. Works at St. Francis Hospital.

MITCHELL (late 30s/early 40s or slightly older): Adrienne's husband, works in investment capital. A math nerd who is amazing with numbers, but not people. Serious, shrewd, sensitive. The kid who ate lunch in the library because he was so shy. Mitchell grew up in a tough house in a tough part of Utica and scholarshipped his way to where he is now, so grades, status and success are his currency. But becoming a father has changed him. He makes goofy faces now. He stares out windows during meetings. His sentences end in question marks.

ADRIENNE (mid/late 30s): Mitchell’s wife. Elegant, powerful, aloof and slightly rock ’n’ roll. Has eyes that are cat-like and assessing. The kind of woman you see climbing out of a dark sedan at JFK headed somewhere more glamorous than you. Adrienne grew up on Central Park West, attended posh boarding schools, studied art abroad and could give you the best-ever guided tour of MoMA. She has never signed an e-mail with an x or an o, but she is loyal and ferocious in both business and life. A successful jewelry designer.

PLACE

We are in suburban Long Island, in the city of Port Washington. Port Washington is an affluent, sleepy city with excellent public schools. Commuters are at Penn Station in just 35 minutes on the LIRR, so it’s a very popular destination for New Yorkers who have families and want to rent/buy bigger homes.

Port Washington is comprised of many small villages. This play takes place in the village of Manorhaven, which is directly on the ocean, heavily populated and, depending on the block, either middle class or quite rundown. This block is somewhere in between.

The streets of Manorhaven are crammed with two-family duplexes, some brand new and flashy, some old and decrepit. The new ones mostly have Manhattan-transplants living in them; the decrepit ones mostly have “Lifers” living in them—people who have been renting for generations (sometimes under Section 8 housing codes). Accordingly, there’s a lot of socioeconomic diversity here.

Manorhaven also abuts one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the whole country, Sands Point, which is up on a cliff, literally looking down over Manorhaven. A bunch of New

York Yankees have houses up there, and it's the model for West Egg in *The Great Gatsby*. Just crazy huge wealth.

Interestingly, the same school bus takes the Manorhaven kids and the Sands Points kids to the same excellent public school in September.

SET

This play takes place in Jessie's backyard in Manorhaven.

It's been a long, horrible winter. There's no grass, no landscaping, nothing to sit on.

We could see a fence, or the back of Jessie's house, or the side of a neighbor's house . . . but really, there's no set for this play. Just a patch of dead, sludgy earth where two yards meet.

TIME

Almost spring, but not yet. This year.

PRODUCTION NOTE

Adrienne's tablet is identified as an iPad on page 40, which can be changed to reflect the most modern technology. Also, the year 2017 on page 66 may be changed to the current year.

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1.

(JESSIE's yard. It's been raining. Puddles. Sludge. A wet, newly assembled plastic play set sits off to the side, waiting patiently for spring.

First, we just hear two voices. Then LINA and JESSIE enter from their respective homes, baby monitors in hand. JESSIE has two mugs of steaming coffee.)

LINA. OH MY GOD THIS WAS SUCH A GREAT IDEA!!!!

JESSIE. SHHHH!—sorry—/the window—

LINA. Oh shit I'm sorry— *(Pointing to the window.)* Where is she—right up there?

JESSIE. On the second floor yeah, so—

LINA. So I need to shut my big mouth is what you're saying! Sorry. *(Whispers.)* Oh my god, hiiiiiii.

JESSIE *(whispers)*. Hi! I didn't interrupt you, did I?

LINA. *Are you kidding?!* I leapt for joy when I got your text. I was talking to my breast-pump in there. Like he's Wilson in *Castaway*.

JESSIE. I know, me too. *(Handing LINA her coffee.)* Here. Two sugars, one milk, right?—

LINA. Fuck yes.

JESSIE *(indicating LINA's video monitor)*. So what do you think? Can your monitor stretch up here to my patio?

LINA. I don't know, let's see ...

(LINA starts advancing towards JESSIE's house, eyeing her baby video monitor. She moves slowly across the yard.)

LINA *(cont'd)*. OK I can see the baby ... *(Beat.)* Still see him ...
... *(Beat.)* Still see him Nope—can't go past here.

JESSIE. OK—let's go to your yard—

LINA. No, there's tons of dog shit back there.

JESSIE. Don't be silly—let's see how far mine can stretch ...
It's supposed to go sixty-five feet ... *(Then.)* ... No, I lose
my signal here.

LINA. All right then, X marks the spot. We can just stand here
awkwardly??

JESSIE. I'm sorry we don't have patio furniture—we haven't
gotten around to it yet. *(Noticing.)* What if I dragged that
play set over? We could sit on that—

LINA. *Great idea—here, gimme your coffee.*

*(JESSIE dumps the rain out of the play set and starts
dragging it into monitor range.)*

LINA *(cont'd)*. Oh my God, this is *great* coffee. You are an
amazing coffee maker and I could make love to you with
my mouth right now.

JESSIE. ... Thank you. *(Play set in place.)* Yay! Cheers!

LINA. To napping babies.

JESSIE. May they NAP LONG AND PROSPER! *(Beat.)*
Sorry, that was a weird thing to say; I got like twenty
minutes of sleep last night.

LINA. Puh-lease, gurl. I was right there with you.

*(They both take a seat on the play set; one on the slide, one
on top. Two adult women on a tiny play set.)*

LINA (*cont'd*). This play set *rocks*. How do you already have an assembled play set?! You have a 12-week-old.

JESSIE. Oh my husband. Nate. Assembling things gives him a sense of purpose. You should see our nursery. He installed every single baby-safety gadget on the market, to the point that: I kid you not, Lina—I *cannot access* the room. It's like, boobie-trapped with baby lasers.

LINA. Well, better that than a guy who doesn't do jack, right? I mean, John is pretty good: he does the middle of the night diaper change. But a lot of my friends back home are with *such d-bags*.

JESSIE. Where's home?

LINA. South Shore. Long Beach. You been?

JESSIE. I think so ... there's a boardwalk, right?

LINA. Right. And all those loud people eating cotton candy on the boardwalk? I'm related to *every single one of them*. Try it: call out the name Bustamante—every head turns, I swear to God. (*Beat.*) What about you? Where are you from?

JESSIE. ... Outside Chicago.

LINA. Oh shit, tell me you're not a Cubs fan.

JESSIE. What?

LINA. Cubs. You a Cubs fan?

JESSIE. Is that baseball?

LINA. OK, we can be friends.

JESSIE. Oh, good. Because I *really* want to be friends, Lina. (*Beat.*) Sorry. I ... shouldn't have said that out loud. Now you must think I'm desperate or crazy or something.

LINA. *No*.

JESSIE. But I have just had the hardest time meeting other moms out here. And you're so cooped up in your house all day with the baby—all these hours when babies are sleeping and husbands are working. Where are all the moms??

LINA. This is *North Shore*, honey. Nanny Central. The moms are at SoulCycle or getting raindrop facials at Bliss. Speaking of ... my ass is extremely wet right now. Is your ass wet?

JESSIE (*laughs*). Yes. I'll go get us a towel—

LINA. No no no—I was just checking you were wet, too. After being pregnant, I honestly can't tell when I've peed myself. That's just my life now.

JESSIE. *That is so true.* Disgusting and very very true.

(*Beat. They smile at each other. This is going *well.**)

JESSIE (*cont'd*). So you didn't think I was a freak, coming up to you in Stop 'n' Shop yesterday?

LINA. Are you kidding?! *I was a pig in shit.* I'd seen you around the nabe too—but it's not like you can run out into the snow to say hi when you have a baby on your boob.

JESSIE. Which is why I hurdle-jumped over the cantaloupe to introduce myself.

LINA. Well, I'm real glad you did.

JESSIE. *Me, too.* (*Beat.*) Truly, it's impossible. Meeting people in Port. And Nate doesn't get home until almost eight most nights, and I don't like driving with the baby in the car unless the conditions are perfect ... so it's a lot of me and her alone in Room. (*Beat.*) Do you know that novel, *Room*? It won the Booker Prize? (*Off her blank expression.*) Anyway, it's a *beautiful* story about a woman who's held captive for years in a gardening shed with her child.

LINA. Oh, *Room*. The movie!

JESSIE. Exactly. And I keep telling my mom: that's what this is. It's Room. It's winter in Long Island, and I'm home with a newborn, and it's Room. I'm *in* Room.

LINA. That's why I thank God every day for Stop 'n' Shop. Sometimes it's the only time I get out in a forty-eight-hour period, I / swear to God.

JESSIE. I know! Me too!

LINA. And you'd think I'm going to the prom—I do like full face makeup, shave my legs. And usually I don't even need anything. I'll just go stand in the vitamin aisle being like: *oooooo vitamins.*

JESSIE. I know—me too, with shampoo and conditioner. (*Beat.*) Oh! You'll appreciate this ... guess what *my husband* did the other day? *He* went to Stop 'n' Shop on his way home from the train.

LINA. *No.*

JESSIE. Without checking with me. Just “thought he'd be nice” and stop for diapers and milk. And he took his time, too, Lina. Like *checked the ingredients of stuff.*

LINA. That son of a bitch. Did you go ape shit?

JESSIE. I did. Honestly, I think I was pretty scary. He came in with the bags and I went down to my knees sobbing—just *a puddle on the floor.* And poor Nate is standing there *staring* at me, saying “You Usually Like It When I Get Groceries Jess, What's Wrong??” and I'm like YOU ARE IN THE CITY ALL DAY, YOU DON'T GET STOP 'N' SHOP!!!! *I GET STOP 'N' SHOP!!! I GET TO GO TO STOP 'N' SHOP YOU MOTHERFUCKER!!*

LINA. Shhhhhh, your baby.

JESSIE. Sorry. (*Beat.*) I didn't call him a motherfucker, by the way. I don't curse in real life. But I *wanted* to is my point.

LINA. Of course you did.

JESSIE. They don't get it.

LINA. Of course they don't. *They* get to go interact with humans all day and like, go to *Hale and Hearty* for lunch and eat chopped salads made by someone *whose job it is* to chop salad. I mean. What would you do for a fucking chopped salad right now??

JESSIE. I would murder someone.

LINA. *I know you would.* But we don't get chopped salad anymore.

JESSIE. Nope.

LINA. Because we're held hostage all day in dirty yoga pants by little larval creatures who would literally *die* if we checked our e-mail or took a leisurely dump.

JESSIE. Though my girlfriends who don't have kids don't get it, either. A couple of them came out to meet the baby a few weeks ago, and it was like aliens got off the train.

LINA. Really?

JESSIE. They showed up at 8:45 p.m. *To meet a baby.* And they brought stuff to make cosmos and asked questions like, "So are you sooooo eager to get back to work?"

LINA. Bitches.

JESSIE. Yeah. I don't think I like my city friends anymore. I don't really like anyone anymore.

*(LINA's son, Max, makes a peep and they both *jump* to check their monitors. He squawks for a second, moans, then quiets.)*

JESSIE *(cont'd)*. Wow—you've got a good sleeper there, huh. That he self-soothes.

LINA. Yeah. We've got napping down. But once the sun goes down? *(Indicating boobs.)* He just wants to hit the buffet.

JESSIE. Oh I know, us too. We're up every three hours still. *(Carefully, as this is a touchy question.)* Does Max sleep in a crib, or?

LINA. No, Max sleeps between my tits.

JESSIE. Oh, that must be *so nice*. I really wanted to co-sleep, but Nate's six-foot-two, so. He couldn't relax with her in the bed. (*Another touchy question.*) Are you planning to sleep-train Max?

LINA. Is that the thing when you let them Cry it Out?

JESSIE. Yes.

LINA. *No*. I am *not* doing that shit. (*Beat.*) Why, are you?

JESSIE (*yes*). ... We might. I mean. I don't know yet. We're still discussing.

LINA. Well, you do you, girl. No judgment here. I'm just not into Cry it Out, myself.

(*Beat.*)

JESSIE. Why not? I mean. May I ask?

LINA. Sure. Because *I don't hate babies*.

(*JESSIE laughs.*)

LINA (*cont'd*). Well, I'm sorry but that's what sleep-training is: it's barbaric. You put your baby down in a dark crib and *let them scream and scream* until *they learn no one's coming for them*? I mean, are we Vikings? Are we gonna put fucking Viking hats on and club them, too?

JESSIE. Wow, you have strong / feelings about—

LINA. I think you're *supposed to cry* when you're all alone in a dark room. That's what I think. And I think your mom or dad—or someone who loves you—is *supposed to come help you*.

JESSIE. I know. You're right, you *are* right. I just wish our doctor said that.

LINA. Is your doctor a woman or man?

JESSIE. Man.

LINA. Then he needs to shut his fucking mouth. This is our rodeo. The vaginas are in charge now, and *we vaginas* know what to do.

JESSIE. ... yeah we do.

(But JESSIE's not convinced. She listens to doctors. And Nate. And finds vagina talk a little scandalous.)

JESSIE. So is Max a “Max” or a “Maximus”?

LINA. Max. Max Giuseppe Vanera. Though Boom Boom Pow is what I call him. For some reason.

JESSIE. Oh. *Max Vanera. (True.)* I really like that.

LINA. You do? Oh good. My mother said it sounded like a rare STD. As in, “We’re sorry, sir, very sorry, but you have an advanced stage of Maxvanera in your janky penis.”

(JESSIE laughs.)

LINA *(cont’d)*. She’s a beast. My mother. You’ll meet her. And you’ll agree: she is a beast. She was my “live-in nurse” after the birth and I think I’m fine, never seeing her again.

(JESSIE laughs.)

LINA *(cont’d)*. What about you—Allison?

JESSIE. Jensen-Gelb. Allison Catherine Jensen-Gelb. Hyphenated. Nate’s Jensen; I’m Gelb.

LINA *(hates it)*. Oh. Very nice. Lots of sounds.

JESSIE. Yeah, I like it, too. Not that I can take any credit. Nate named her all by himself.

LINA. Where were you? Barbados?

JESSIE. No, I uh ... wasn't cogent. At the time.

LINA. You weren't cogent?

JESSIE. No. I uh ... (*Still hard to talk about.*) ... I actually had a crash c-section? A "splash and slash" they call it. It's when it's such an emergency you're not even prepped for surgery; they just splash you with iodine, and slash you until they get the baby out. I was under general anesthesia.

LINA. *Jesus.* What happened?

JESSIE. Uh I'm still not sure, honestly? I think the umbilical cord was cutting off her oxygen and her heart stopped completely? I don't know. All I know is one minute Nate and I were doing our ice chips, the next minute people were screaming "Code Blue."

LINA. *Fuck.*

JESSIE. Nate's face. That's what I remember. The crash team was pulling my gurney down the hall and Nate was getting farther and farther away, at the other end of the hall ... and then I saw him just go *boneless* with fear, you know? Down on the floor. (*Beat.*) But! Allison was totally and completely fine the moment they resuscitated her.

LINA. Well thank God. Those stories go the other way sometimes. I work in a hospital, I hear things. Birthdays are the worst days for a lot of people.

JESSIE. I know. We are *very* lucky.

(LINA's monitor chirps again, and she dives for it.)

LINA. Oh shit, he lost his binky ...

(LINA stands and watches in suspense; she might have to bolt. Beat. Finally, Max finds his binky and falls silent.)

LINA (*cont'd*). Phew. False alarm. (*Beat.*) So you guys were in the city. Before here?

JESSIE. Yeah. A charming one bed on 63rd and Lex. I loved it, but it wasn't practical for a baby. There wasn't a washer-dryer, and it was a fourth floor walk-up / which—

LINA. Aw hell no.

JESSIE. Exactly. So we thought ... well? Thirty-five minutes to Penn Station? And we can live right on the ocean?— Let's give Long Island a try.

LINA. I heard there was a *crazy* bidding war over your place.

JESSIE. I know, who would've thought. A little two-family duplex. But we basically had to make a cash offer in the driveway and go 10% over the ask. (*Beat.*) Nate said it was a good investment property—we can rent both sides out, down the line.

LINA. He's absolutely right. The rental market out here is *insane*, especially for the newer models like yours. It's because we're so close to Sands Point. Have you driven around up there? (*Pointing up.*) Those houses *start* at 10 mill. And our kids get to go to the same excellent public school those entitled shits do.

JESSIE. Yeah, I know. (*Carefully.*) ... Nate's parents live out here. Not in Sands Point. They aren't that rich. But: Plandome?

LINA. *Your in-laws live in Plandome?* Where?

JESSIE. Plandome Road?

LINA. *You go to dinner at a house on Plandome Road.*

JESSIE. I do. Long and stressful and horrible dinners, but yes.

LINA. What number?

JESSIE. 1251?

LINA. With the lion statue??

JESSIE. No that's next door. 1251 is a bit more modest—up on the hill with the white brick?

LINA. Oh yeah, OK. That's super “modest.”

JESSIE. I think it's a little over the top, too. But Ken's worked his ass off in investment banking for the last forty years, so who am I to call it tacky. (Even though I do think it's tacky. I think it's very very tacky.)

LINA. So wait—did your husband grow up here? In Port?

JESSIE. Yeah. In that house.

LINA. So he went to Schrieber?

JESSIE. Yeah, class of '94.

LINA. Oh my God you have to ask him if he knows John Vanera! John went there too. He's a little younger, class of '97, I think.

JESSIE. Oh, how wild! They must know each other!

LINA. Did Nate play sports?

JESSIE. Tennis.

LINA. Maybe they know each other from lunch?

JESSIE. They must! Oh how funny! Our husbands totally broke bread!

LINA. *So funny.* But John's not my husband. Just. FYI.

JESSIE. ... I'm sorry. / Oh, God—

LINA. *Don't be.* I mean we'll probably get married. Or not. *Let's get out of his mother's house first—then we can talk.*

JESSIE (*pointing to her place*). Oh. That's? You're living with?—

LINA. Yolanda Vanera. Yes. Not that she owns it; she rents. For thirty-seven years now, just been paying someone else's mortgage—and now we get the privilege of doing the same. But she's only charging us six hundred a month so we're