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**American Association of  
Community Theatre AACT  
NewPlayFest Winning Plays:  
Volume 4 (2020)**

*Casserole* by  
PAM HARBAUGH

*Shattering* by  
PAT MONTLEY

*On Pine Knoll Street* by  
MARK CORNELL

*Goat Song Revel* by  
DAN BORENGASSER

*Proprioception* by  
MARILYN MILLSTONE

*The Cayuga Canal Girls* by  
LAURA KING

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

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## IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

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**American Association of Community Theatre  
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## INTRODUCTION

The American Association of Community Theatre (AACT) is proud to present the six winning scripts and playwrights of the fourth 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 fourth cycle of AACT's NewPlayFest, ending in 2020, proved to be a success despite challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic. More scripts were submitted than in prior years, and six theatres from across the country were selected to produce world premieres of the winning scripts pre-COVID and continued once the CDC made recommendations for reopening. This festival continues to benefit the producing theatres by giving them the excitement of bringing new works to their patrons, and the playwrights by allowing them to experience 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

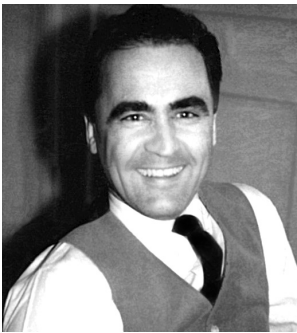
The American Association of Community Theatre is the resource connection for America's theatres. AACT represents the interests of more than 7,000 theatres across the United States and its territories, as well as theatre companies with the U.S. Armed Services overseas. To learn more about AACT NewPlayFest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





# **Casserole**

By  
PAM HARBAUGH

*Casserole* received its premier production at Boise Little Theater in Boise, Idaho, on Oct. 18, 2020.

CAST:

CLAIR WILSON.....Jeanna Vickery  
LEONARD WILSON .....Brad Wm. Ooley  
ERICA WILSON..... Lindsay Eng  
PENNY CAUFIELD..... Katie Kruse  
ZACHARY SIMMONS ..... Omar Orbay  
NICHOLAS ..... David Ybarra

PRODUCTION:

Director ..... Wendy Koeppel  
Asst. Director/Stage Manager..... Jay Parker  
Properties ..... Joanna Marshall & Gary Miller  
Costumes..... Elizabeth Greeley & Cast  
Lighting Design ..... John Myers  
Sound Design.....Gregg Irwin  
Scenic Design..... Wendy Koeppel

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:

“*Casserole* was premiered in the American Association of Community Theatre’s AACT NewPlayFest by Boise Little Theater in Boise, Idaho.”

# Casserole

## CHARACTERS

CLAIR WILSON: 54-year-old housewife with a strong western Wisconsin accent. She loves to putter around the house, cook and clean. She's a bit messy-looking, with strands of hair occasionally popping out of her otherwise tidy "do." She has a huge heart, exudes love and affection and surprises others with her wisdom, much of it derived from watching *Ellen*.

LEONARD WILSON: 57-year-old manager of Delshire's department store, a venerable establishment in downtown Eau Claire. He is orderly, neat, responsible and practical. Although he frequently sounds gruff, there is a deep current of love for Clair.

ERICA WILSON: 29-year-old artist now living in New York City. She's independent and spirited and, at heart, very much like her mother, Clair. She's also very protective of her mother and loves Penny.

PENNY CAUFIELD: 32-year-old successful marketing professional with her own business in New York City. She is tall, fierce, graceful, confident and protective with a Rosalind Russell flair. Penny is also a trans woman. She is NOT to be played by a man. If you can't find a trans woman actress to play the part, then use a cis woman.

ZACHARY SIMMONS: 35-year-old head editor of Williamsburg Publishing. A hipster, his dark, polished-looking hair is very neat but a little bouffant. He likes to think of himself as being droll.

NICHOLAS: 30-year-old freelance photographer/videographer. He, too, is a hipster and sports a close-cropped beard and moustache. His favorite piece of clothing is a black T-shirt that reads "IRONIC T-SHIRT." Preferably cast with a person of color.

## SETTING

The Wilson's home in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The time is from the morning to the evening of July 3, 2015.

The home is bright, clean and cheery. A large desk at the side of the room has neat and organized piles. A framed Norman Rockwell print hangs over the desk.

There is a sitting area next to a dinner table. A bottle of Windex, a rag and a pair of yellow rubber gloves are on the dinner table. The sitting area has a couch, a chair and a coffee table, and, if enough room, a side table. The dinner table sits in front of shelves that hold knick-knacks, including a vase of colorful plastic flowers and a collection of casserole dishes.

There are three exits: a front door leading to the outside, a door to the kitchen, and a door leading to a hallway to the bedrooms and bathrooms.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

There are a few times when a character exits into the kitchen where noisy offstage action takes place. At the same time, another character enters from the front door into the living room. Please use tight timing to overlap these two actions so the stage is not left empty.

In dialogue, a / indicates dovetailed speech. Next line should begin overlapping at the /.

Directors and actors may update the hipster jargon as they see fit.

For John ...

# Casserole

## ACT I

### Scene 1

*(CLAIR, wearing an apron, sits at a desk gluing a handle back on a casserole dish. She's getting Elmer's glue all over the neat piles of paper and the newspaper. LEONARD, dressed in a suit and tie, enters and acts dismayed at what he sees.)*

LEONARD. Clair! What are you doing?

CLAIR. Fixing the handle on this casserole dish ... *(Finishes repairing the dish.)* There! Good as new. Anything worth keepin' is worth fixin'.

*(CLAIR crosses to the collection of casserole dishes where she puts back the dish. LEONARD sits at the desk.)*

LEONARD. Awww ... for cripes sake. Ya got glue all over the newspaper.

CLAIR. Leonard, while you're over there, can ya find that recipe for me? You know, the one for root beer and raisin meatloaf? I clipped it out and put it on the desk ... *(Crosses to the desk.)* Whereabouts could it be? *(Fussing around his neat desk.)*

LEONARD. Sooooooo, I took all your clippings and project ideas and recipes and organized them in this little box ... so ...

*(He hands her a little recipe box.)*

CLAIR *(pleased)*. Oh, Leonard. That's a humdinger of a gift. Thank you!

LEONARD. I know how busy you get with the church 'n all. So ... it's just a couple, two, three things ... see, the coupons here, church notices ... gardening tips, recipes are in here ... mostly casseroles ...

CLAIR. There it is! Pastor Steven wants me to bring my new hot dish to the potluck. I was looking everywhere for it. You are a wonder of organization, dontcha know.

*(LEONARD starts straightening up the mess she made.)*

LEONARD. Thank you. I do take pride ... *(Patronizingly, he shows off his excellent order.)* See? These are paid bills, these are bills / that have to be—

CLAIR. Ope. I'm so glad you said that. I almost forgot.

*(She reaches into her pocket and retrieves a letter.)*

CLAIR *(cont'd)*. This came in from Delshire's. I don't get your discount any longer?

LEONARD. Let me see. Hmmm ... hmhhh ... no dear, this is for families of *non-managers*.

CLAIR. Thank heavens!

LEONARD. Tsk, tsk, tsk. This was sent last month, Clair. *(Back to bragging about his desk.)* Here's information about the new line of Florsheims comin' in. These are newspaper clips about Norman Rockwell I think Erica will find interesting.

CLAIR. She won't like that.

LEONARD *(pointing to framed poster above his desk)*. That is real art.

CLAIR. She'll know you're trying to influence her.

LEONARD. That's what fathers do. Here are the newsletters and such from Rotary Club. Our to-do list. And here's junk mail / I've got to—

CLAIR. Oh Leonard, throw / it away.

LEONARD. No. I have to make sure it's not important.

CLAIR. How can junk be important.

*(CLAIR grabs the junk letters and is about to toss them into the wastebasket when she sees a letter addressed to her.)*

CLAIR *(cont'd)*. This one's for me.

LEONARD. Junk, Clair. If it were important, I would give it to you.

CLAIR. It's from Williamsburg Publishing, Leonard!

LEONARD. You don't need any more cookbooks. You've got all these recipes ... and besides that, you're the best cook in Eau Claire.

*(She opens the letter and reads.)*

CLAIR. Oh my gosh ... it's ... they're interested in ME. They want MY recipes for a book ... "saw your recipe in the *Valley Gazette* ... would like to talk to you ... we want to call it *The Midwest Chef*." Oh my gosh ... Leonard. Leonard. Oh my gosh.

*(She keeps reading.)*

CLAIR *(cont'd)*. "I'm meeting a former professor of mine at the University of Wisconsin in Eau Claire Saturday, on the Fourth of July, and, if convenient, would like to invite myself to dinner ... " *(To LEONARD, very satisfied she knows the distinction.)* He means "supper," dontcha know ... These New Yorkers. Wait! That's tomorrow. When was this sent? Leonard! ... Last month? It's been on your desk all that time?

LEONARD. It had your name on it. I thought it was junk mail.

CLAIR. Give me the phone. I've got to call this Mr. Simmons. Oh my gosh ...

*(CLAIR dumps the junk mail onto LEONARD's lap and on top of work he's doing. LEONARD hands her the phone, she dials.)*

CLAIR *(cont'd)*. Hello ... Mr. Simmons, please ... This is Clair Wilson from Eau Claire, Wisconsin? Yes, I'll hold ... Thank heavens he's still there ... Oh, my, Mr. Simmons. Hello. Ya know, I just now got your letter. I must say, I'm so flattered ... Umm hmm ... Um hmm ... I'm sorry ... Well are you still coming to town? Umm hmmm. Oh my yes, we're free tomorrow night. We're free every Saturday night, even on our nation's Independence Day. *(Shoots an unkind look toward LEONARD.)* Umm hmmm. Photographs? Gosh, I don't know. And a what? A video? ... Oh sure. Yes, I would be delighted to make that for you. Yes, and some of my other "especialites" *(Pronounced "especialit-ays" followed by a funny giggle, indicating a mix of embarrassment and flirtation.)* If you get yourself a pen and paper, I'll give you our address ... Oh, of course you have it already. *(The same giggle.)* See you at six p.m. sharp tomorrow night. Toodle-oo!

LEONARD. Geez Louise. What have you gotten us into? Saturday night is my relaxing night! And it's the Fourth of July for heaven's sake. I'm going to be extra tired after the sale. All those people! For cripes sake, Clair.



*(CLAIR runs to her husband and hugs him.)*

CLAIR. Leonard. You won't believe this. Mr. Simmons saw my recipe for Mayonnaise Casserole in the *Gazette* / and he—

LEONARD. Ah c'mon. How would he ever see that?

CLAIR. I think he went to the university. He's meeting some old professor in that creative writing thing they have. And I betcha that professor saw my recipe and sent it to him. Oh, my ... tomorrow is going to be THE best day.

*(CLAIR goes to the box LEONARD organized for her and starts pulling out recipes.)*

CLAIR *(cont'd)*. And he wants me to make all my favorite recipes, and he's going to take some photographs and even some kind of video or something. He probably wants to talk about it with his colleagues, dontcha know. Oh dear ... what should I make? I've got the Cowboy Cornbread Trifle or the Root Beer Raisin Meatloaf ... It's the Fourth tomorrow ... I can whip up some M&M Macaroons and just use the red and blue M&Ms.

LEONARD. Now Clair, don't go getting head over heels about all this. There's no contract. There's no up-front money. Don't go off like some flibbertigibbet.

CLAIR. You're right. *(Breathing deeply.)* I need to calm down and get my head on straight.

LEONARD. Make a good first impression. Fix your hair, wear something ... professional, and for heaven's sake, get organized.

*(He hands her back all the junk mail she's piled upon his desk.)*

CLAIR. Yes. You're right.

LEONARD. I always am.

CLAIR. Always. Yes. You know. I'll come down to Delshire's later today. Maybe a new shirt / and some slacks.

LEONARD. Not today. We're getting ready for the Fourth of July sale. I don't like you to come there when I'm so busy. I won't even get home until nine tonight.

CLAIR. Do you want me to keep supper / hot for—

LEONARD. And don't worry about new clothes. Wear that new pair of shoes I brought home for you last week. They're sensible, clean ... responsible. You can always tell everything you need to know about a person by lookin' at their shoes. You have a lot of work to do here. *(Kissing her on the head.)* Now you get organized. See you at noon for dinner.

CLAIR. Chicken pot pie?

LEONARD. We had that for supper yesterday.

CLAIR. I'll freshen *(Pronounced "frayshen.")* it up for ya.

*(He sighs loudly, grabs his wallet, tucks it into his pocket then exits through the front door. CLAIR goes through recipe box.)*

CLAIR *(cont'd, quietly, to herself)*. This is going to be the best day.

*(Beat.)*

CLAIR *(cont'd)*. Can't sit still ... c'mon, Clair. Get organized.

*(She picks up the Windex and rag and puts on her yellow rubber gloves.)*

CLAIR *(cont'd)*. There! Now ... let's make this place sparkle, then we'll make our shopping list.

*(She immediately begins humming "Bringing in the Sheaves." She begins singing and cleaning plastic flowers. Then cleans casserole dishes.)*

CLAIR *(cont'd)*.

BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES,

BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES

*(She stops suddenly, then with a wicked little giggle.)*

BRINGING IN THE CHEESE

BRINGING IN THE CHEESE

I SHALL MAKE THE CASSEROLE

WITH MAYONNAISE AND CHEESE!

*(A knock at the door. ERICA walks in slowly. She wears black jeans, a chic black T-shirt and a brown leather jacket, a thick watch, silver bracelets and necklaces. Her hair is short.)*

CLAIR (*cont'd*). Oh! Oh my ... oh my, oh gosh ... Erica! Oh boy, what a surprise. Good heavens. You're in town. My little girl.

(*CLAIR pulls ERICA in and gives her a big hug.*)

CLAIR (*cont'd*). I'm so surprised to see you. Did you tell your dad? He sometimes forgets to—

ERICA. No, Mom. I didn't tell anyone I was coming. It was a spur-of-the-moment thing.

CLAIR (*taking off the rubber gloves*). When did your plane get in. I coulda picked you up.

ERICA. I drove.

CLAIR. All the way from New York City!?

ERICA. It's not a bad drive. It's pretty this time of year, all those wildflowers by the road.

CLAIR. So your bags are in the car? Let's go get 'em.

ERICA. No, we got in late last night and got a hotel room.

CLAIR. Nonsense. You're gonna stay—"we"?

ERICA. Yeah, Mom. I met someone really, really special. I wanted you to meet ... this person ...

CLAIR. Is he in the car? Back at the hotel?

(*CLAIR runs to look out the window.*)

ERICA. At the hotel. But I wanted to talk to you first ... before you two met. Is Dad around?

CLAIR. He already left for Delshire's. They've got that Fourth of July / weekend sale.

ERICA. Weekend sale. I figured he'd be sorta busy. So, I brought you this. My latest. I made the colors match the couch so maybe he'll want to keep this one up.

(*ERICA pulls out a large modern painting wrapped in brown paper. Although it has the same dimensions as the Norman Rockwell print hanging over the desk, the modern work shows a big fury "exploding" on the canvas. CLAIR excitedly opens it.*)

CLAIR. My, my! This is wonderful, Erica! Uhhh ...

(*ERICA turns it around, right side up.*)

ERICA. It's a self-portrait, Mom.

CLAIR. Well alrighty then. But we'll keep that to ourselves. Your father doesn't have to know that. We'll tell him it's ... a painting of ...

ERICA. Freedom.

CLAIR. Alrighty then. Here, you hang this up, and I'll get you some coffee. I just put on a fresh pot.

*(CLAIR begins to exit before ERICA speaks.)*

ERICA. Sounds great. And do you have any cinnamon butter crumb?

CLAIR *(offstage)*. You betcha!

*(ERICA hangs the painting, putting the old Norman Rockwell print to the side of the couch. She sits, obviously uncomfortable. She gets up, pokes around at old family pictures, old figurines. Holds up a picture frame made of popsicle sticks.)*

ERICA. I can't believe you keep this out in full view. Not exactly my best work.

CLAIR *(still offstage)*. What did you say, dear?

ERICA. This kindergarten project of mine. I thought you only brought it out when I came home for a visit. Not that I would blame you.

*(CLAIR returns with a tray loaded with coffee cups, creamer, sugar, spoons, napkins and coffee cake on plates. She sets it on coffee table.)*

CLAIR. Heavens, Erica. I love that precious little picture of you. It's your first piece of art. And now you're a big artist in New York City.

ERICA. Trying to be ...

CLAIR. You will be. Don't you worry. I know it. *(Taking the photo from ERICA.)* See that sweet little pink dress? You called it your / spinning dress.

ERICA. Spinning dress. Yes.

CLAIR *(cleaning the picture with her apron)*. You'd go around in circles so fast until it stuck straight out, like some ballerina. You loved that dress. You were such a little girl. Pink satin bows, pretty little socks with lace trims. I still have the dress, you know.

ERICA. You're kidding.

CLAIR. Oh yes. I'm going to turn it into a quilt. Or maybe I'll save it until you have a little girl of your own. And now that you've met someone ...

*(ERICA puts down her coffee and sits next to CLAIR on the couch. She takes CLAIR's hands in her own.)*

ERICA. Mom. I've got something I have to tell you.

CLAIR *(excited)*. Oh gosh ...

*(ERICA lowers her head. CLAIR lifts ERICA's chin up and, by habit, tucks her daughter's hair behind her ear. ERICA looks up at her mother, tears filling her eyes.)*

ERICA *(a big breath)*. I'm ... Mom, I'm gay.

*(CLAIR looks at ERICA, transfixed for a long moment.)*

CLAIR. Oh.

*(CLAIR turns away from ERICA, and we can see a multitude of memories on her face—skinned knees, first bicycle, homework assignments, ballet recitals, ponytails, first bra, first date, first school dance ... and that spinning dress. CLAIR looks back at the picture.)*

CLAIR *(cont'd)*. But the spinning dress ...

*(Beat. ERICA lets her mother absorb this. A close moment, filled with silence that articulates surprise, denial, acceptance. Big human concepts. It is a huge moment for both CLAIR and ERICA.)*

ERICA. Are you OK?

CLAIR *(regaining her composure)*. Oh ... my dear, dear Erica. *(Hugging her daughter.)* My baby ... are you OK? No one's tried to hurt you, have they? I know there's a lot of mean, mean people out there.

ERICA. Don't worry, Mom. New York is very diverse.

CLAIR. You're healthy?

ERICA. Never better.

CLAIR (*hugging ERICA again*). I love you just the way you are.

ERICA. You sound like Mr. Rogers now.

CLAIR. He was the best, wasn't he?

ERICA. You always sat down with me to watch him.

CLAIR. Mmm hmm.

*(Beat.)*

CLAIR (*cont'd*). Does this mean no wedding?

ERICA. Everyone can get married now.

*(Small beat.)*

CLAIR. Does it mean no grandchildren?

ERICA. No, Mom. You'll have grandchildren, I hope.

*(Smaller beat.)*

CLAIR. Oh ... (*Suddenly*). Does this mean I can't go to Chick-fil-A any longer?

ERICA (*cynically*). We'll see ...

*(Beat.)*

CLAIR. Wait—I'm trying to get this through my head—you had that boyfriend. Maybe you're a little bit bisexual? Or maybe this is something you're going through.

ERICA. I'm queer, Mom.

CLAIR. Don't say that word.

ERICA. But that's what I am.

CLAIR. I never let you use the word "weird" ... and now I'm not going to let you use that "Q-word" either.

ERICA. OK, we'll just stick with "gay" for now.

*(Beat.)*

CLAIR. But you had that boyfriend ... I thought for sure the two of you were going to get married.

ERICA. I tried for the longest time to make that work. I was so unhappy.

CLAIR. That's no good.

*(Beat.)*

ERICA. Then I met Penny.

CLAIR. Is that who you brought?

ERICA. Yes. And I'm dying for you to meet her. You'll love her. She's wonderful. She's funny and educated and friendly. She's in marketing, has her own business and does very well.

CLAIR. You didn't meet her at one of those gay bars, did you? Those places look so rough.

ERICA *(laughing)*. No. We met at a queer—at a *gay* picnic in Prospect Park.

CLAIR. Are you happy, my love?

ERICA. The happiest I've ever been, Mom.

CLAIR. Then I'm happy, too. Now come over here. You'll always be my little girl, no matter how festive you get.

ERICA. Gay.

CLAIR. Yes. Gay.

ERICA. Homosexual.

CLAIR. Hmmm ...

ERICA. Lesbian.

CLAIR. Do I have to use that word? For some reason it reminds me of the word *(Whispers.)* “*vagina.*”

ERICA. Then let's just say “gay” for now, OK?

CLAIR. That will be fine.

ERICA. So would you like to meet Penny?

CLAIR. You betcha!

ERICA. Mom ... I love you so much.

CLAIR. Me too.

*(Beat.)*

ERICA. There's one more thing I have to—

*(Phone rings.)*

CLAIR. Let the answering machine get it.

ERICA. OK, there's one more thing ...

*(V.O. recording. CLAIR's voice:*

*“So ... ya’ve reached the Wilsons, Leonard and Clair. But we’re not here, we’re over there. Just leave your number if ya dare. We’ll call ya back, so don’t despair. [LEONARD’s voice] Ah, geez Louise ... ”*

*CLAIR and ERICA sip coffee and enjoy hearing the familiar message while the V.O. plays out. Then, the representative from the publishing agency speaks.)*

VOICE. Hello, Mrs. Wilson. This is Williamsburg Publishing calling with a message from Mr. Simmons. He needs to change his appointment with you. Would you be available to meet with him tonight? I’m afraid that is the only time he has—

*(CLAIR jumps up immediately to get it.)*

CLAIR. Oh!! I’ve got to take this ... I’m sorry, Erica.

ERICA. It’s OK ...

CLAIR. Wilson residence ... Yes, this is she ... Oh, dear ... Yes. Of course. Yes. No, it’s no problem. Sure, sure, sure. It is no problem at all. So, tonight at six o’clock then? Alrighty ... Okey dokey. Bye now.

*(CLAIR hangs up the phone and lets out a slight scream of excitement and frenzy.)*

ERICA. What’s wrong?

CLAIR. Oh gosh, oh gosh. Mr. Simmons is coming tonight instead of tomorrow. And he’s bringing a photographer and something about a video. I’ve got to finish cleaning and get cooking.

ERICA. Mom, slow down. Who’s Mr. Simmons?

CLAIR. You won’t believe it. Mr. Simmons is an editor at Williamsburg Publishing. In Brooklyn, New York. Oh! Do you know him?

ERICA. No, Mom, I don’t know everyone who lives in New York.

CLAIR. He’s coming here this weekend on business, and he wants to meet me because ... because *(Lets out excited scream.)* he wants to publish a cookbook, *The Midwest Chef*, and he wants to use me. And geez Louise I gotta clean, make a shopping list. I don’t know what to do first.



# **Shattering**

By  
PAT MONTLEY

*Shattering* received its world premier production at Tacoma Little Theatre in Tacoma, Wash., on Jan. 24, 2020.

CAST:

DEEDEE .....Robin McGee  
JONAH.....Donovan Mahannah  
SONNY ..... Joshua Hector  
LABELLE.....Cynthia Kinyanjui

PRODUCTION:

Director .....Chris Serface  
Set Design .....Blake R. York  
Light Design..... Niclas Olson  
Sound Design ..... Dylan Twiner  
Properties ..... Frank Roberts  
Costumes.....Michele Graves  
Assistant Director.....Jeremy Lynch  
Stage Manager ..... Nena Curley  
Dramaturg ..... Kathy Pingel

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:

“*Shattering* was premiered in the American Association of Community Theatre’s AACT NewPlayFest by Tacoma Little Theatre in Tacoma, Wash.”

# Shattering

## CHARACTERS

JONAH: 14, African American; tough but vulnerable; bright but poorly educated; insolent but sensitive; recently released from juvenile commitment.

JACQUELINE DAWSON (DEEDEE): 59, African American; an astrophysicist and atheist; brittle and brisk; strict but caring; intent, committed; a natural educator; riddled with guilt, regret, grief and determination.

LABELLE: 14, African American, Jonah's girlfriend; lively, loyal and lovable; determined, hopeful and single-minded; pregnant; a talented singer.

SONNY: 24, African American, DeeDee's dead son, a Christian Fundamentalist; bright, well-educated and obsessed with words; committed and single-minded; insistently religious yet unforgiving.

TIME: The present.

PLACE: DeeDee's home in an urban neighborhood, USA.

## SCENES

Prologue

Scene 1: A Saturday in early April, late afternoon.

Scene 2: The next Saturday, midday.

Scene 3: Three weeks later; early May, early evening.

Scene 4: Two weeks later; mid-May, late evening.

Scene 5: Two weeks later; a Saturday afternoon in early June.

Scene 6: Thirty-six hours later.

## PREFACE

A few years ago, I heard part of a recording of a South Africa Truth and Reconciliation hearing. A white security officer admitted to torturing and killing the husband and son of an elderly black woman. The judge asked her what justice should be done. The woman replied: “My husband and son were my only family. I want ... for Mr. Van der Broek ... to become my son. I would like for him to come twice a month to the ghetto and spend a day with me so that I may pour out to him whatever love I have remaining with me.”

This astounding story dogged me. Maybe because I live in Baltimore, shooting site for *Homicide: Life on the Streets* and *The Wire* (both of which harrowed my heart). In real life, we have a juvenile detention system in crisis, one of the highest murder rates in the United States (most of them drug/gang-related) and a tragic lack of respect between the police and the community they are supposed to protect. It’s an epidemic that haunts me whenever I open the paper, turn on the news or walk the streets.

This combination was my inspiration for writing *Shattering*. How could anyone be as forgiving as the South African woman whose son was murdered? What could be the effects of such forgiveness? How might a relationship between such a woman and her “adopted son” play out?

My research for creating the world of *Shattering* involved reading, viewing and attending anti-racism workshops and events and interviewing a teacher from the Maryland State Detention Center and an administrator/social worker in the Baltimore Juvenile Detention system. While attending a Kennedy Center Playwriting Intensive, I sought input on my initial efforts from Michael Oatman, then playwright-in-residence at Karamu House, and later from former Baltimore Center Stage dramaturg James Magruder. Actor and audience feedback at a DG Footlights reading featuring teen actors from the Baltimore School for the Arts resulted in further revisions. I also shared the script with African American friends and artist-colleagues and am especially grateful for input from filmmaker Najaa Young and photographer Kay Adler.

I attended the second week of rehearsals at the Tacoma premiere and, after hearing a read-through and getting feedback from the actors, made many edits to the language used by the two teens and gave permission to the actors and director to make additional language changes that would, in their opinion, make the diction more realistic. After the run, I read the stage manager's production book and viewed a tape of the performance to check for changes the actors had made in diction or wording and made more edits to the script. Finally, I sent this post-production script to Steven Butler, artistic director of the Actors' Warehouse and executive director of the Florida Theatre Conference, and incorporated suggestions he made.

As a white playwright, I fully understand the need for this kind of cultural trust, for corrective input at every step of the writing journey from a wide variety of people who know well the terrain I am only briefly visiting. So I am especially grateful for and humbled by the generous support—including questions, criticisms, suggestions and encouragement—given by my African American colleagues. I hope this resulting script proves worthy of their trust.

—Pat Montley

# Shattering

## Prologue

*(An electronic hum is heard. A large empty window frame is suspended at an angle. On one side, SONNY is being beaten up. He mimes this dance of violence. We do not see his two assailants or hear any of them speak. JONAH stands anxiously by, looking back and forth between the beating and the street corner behind him. On the other side of the frame, DEEDEE witnesses this. She is wild with distress, but we do not hear her screams. SONNY is stabbed in the chest, and he puts a hand to his heart. The hum grows louder. DEEDEE bangs on the window “glass” so desperately that her hand goes through it. There is a sound of violently shattering glass as JONAH and DEEDEE lock eyes, mirroring each other’s desperation. Blackout.)*

## Scene 1

*(The present. A Saturday in early April. Late afternoon.*

*An urban neighborhood. A large park separates an economically impoverished neighborhood of project housing on one side from a gentrified neighborhood of rows of townhouses on the other side. DEEDEE lives in one of these. Her tasteful house has no walls, so the projects are always a presence. There is a large, suspended picture window in the front room, from which a person inside could see—even touch—someone on the sidewalk outside. On the same plane as the window is the entrance, and outside this is a stoop.*

*We see an orderly but welcoming living/dining area: bookshelves, a sofa, wooden rocker, steamer trunk coffee table, a TV that is not the conspicuous center of attention, a desk with a cordless landline phone and desktop computer, and a small dining table with two chairs. A doorway leads to a kitchen [not visible], and there is a small bedroom with a window—possibly on a higher level.*

*We hear the sound of loud but unintelligible rap music booming from a car going by.*

*DEEDEE and JONAH enter. He has a visible tattoo on his arm—the word “Lords” over the drawing of a knife—and wears a GPS ankle monitor. She wears a small elastic wrist support. As she crosses to the desk to deposit mail, he lights up a cigarette. She sees this, takes a glass coaster from the desk, crosses to him, and holds it out to him. He looks at it, pretending not to know what she wants. She raises it. He takes a deep drag, blows the smoke in her face, then puts out the cigarette in the coaster. She puts out her other hand. He stares at her defiantly. She stares back. He slaps the pack of cigarettes and matches down on her hand. She pockets these and puts the coaster down.)*

JONAH. Jesus fucking Christ!

DEEDEE. Please don't do that, Jonah.

JONAH. You gonna give me shit about “taking the Lord's name in vain”?

DEEDEE. I don't care about that.

JONAH. What then?

DEEDEE. It shows a lack of imagination.

JONAH. Huh?

DEEDEE. What were you feeling when you said that?

JONAH (*taunting, thinking she will resist repeating it*). Said what?

DEEDEE (*matter-of-factly*). Jesus fucking Christ?

JONAH. I don't know ... pissed, screwed?

DEEDEE (*takes a thesaurus from the bookshelf and flips its pages at him. Teacher mode*). Were you irritated? Piqued? Nettled? Provoked? Exasperated? Wrathful? Mildly annoyed?

JONAH. What you talking about?

DEEDEE. Roget's Thesaurus. You could pick the exact word. You have choices, you know. (*Thrusts the book at him.*) Make them.

JONAH. I was just mad. I don't need this shit. (*Tosses the book.*) I made a choice to be mad.

DEEDEE. So you were angry because you don't like having someone else make the rules.

JONAH. Well, duh!

DEEDEE. Then say so.

JONAH. Say what?

DEEDEE. Say: “It makes me angry when I don't get to make the rules.”

JONAH. Then what?

DEEDEE. Then ... I hear you—I know what you’re feeling.

JONAH. So?

DEEDEE. So maybe—maybe this time is different from ... before.

Maybe—in this house at least—we *negotiate* the rules.

JONAH. I get to make ’em?

DEEDEE. You get to ... *suggest* ... *some*.

JONAH. One for every one you ... “suggest.”

DEEDEE. Fair enough. Let’s try.

JONAH. Me first! I get to have my girlfriend come over. She just lives over in the projects ... across the park.

DEEDEE. What’s her name?

JONAH. LaBelle.

DEEDEE. How old is LaBelle?

JONAH. Fourteen. Same as me.

DEEDEE. Is she a classmate?

JONAH. Yeah.

DEEDEE. Oooo ... kay ... agreed. *After* you’ve had a week to settle in, LaBelle may come to visit. Now it’s my turn to suggest a rule. LaBelle doesn’t spend the night.

JONAH. That ain’t fair!

DEEDEE. That’s “negotiating.”

JONAH. What you got against love?

DEEDEE. Nothing.

JONAH. Then why can’t she spend the night?

DEEDEE. Because people should sleep in their own beds. She should spend the night in her own home. With her own family. This is our home—yours and mine. LaBelle may spend the day here on Saturdays if she likes.

JONAH. Humph. Next time you go first.

DEEDEE. No TV until after seven.

JONAH. Except on weekends.

*(She makes a face.)*

JONAH *(cont’d)*. Football.

DEEDEE *(conceding)*. Football.

JONAH. I get to smoke one pack of cigarettes a day.



DEEDEE. One cigarette a day—

JONAH. Half a pack.

DEEDEE. The first week. Then nine cigarettes the second week.

Then eight—

JONAH. Whooooaa!

DEEDEE. Then seven, then six ... then one cigarette the tenth week.

Then none. (*Waving the pack toward the door, then putting the cigarettes on the windowsill.*) On the stoop.

JONAH. What kinda “nee-gotiatin” is that?

DEEDEE. The kind with your well-being in mind.

JONAH (*beat*). I won't go to church.

DEEDEE. Me neither.

JONAH. Really?

DEEDEE. Really.

JONAH. Never?

DEEDEE. Does that surprise you?

JONAH. What I care?

DEEDEE. Whoever cooks doesn't have to clean up.

JONAH. What's that mean?

DEEDEE. When I cook dinner, you clean up. We take turns. Week at a time.

JONAH. Why I have to cook?

DEEDEE. Because it's fair. Because it's good training in life skills.

Everyone needs to learn how to prepare his own food. (*Pulls a cookbook from the shelf.*)

JONAH. But I don't know nothing about cooking.

DEEDEE. Haven't you ever boiled a potato?

JONAH. Ain't no potatoes at the 7-Eleven.

DEEDEE. So what did you eat growing up?

JONAH. When I was little, my mama used to bring home leftovers from where she worked. Meatloaf, chicken stew. Some kinda tuna fish with noodles. Stuff like that. But I never seen her make it.

DEEDEE. And after that?

JONAH. After she ... after she don't work no more, we get our food at McDonald's. Sometimes KFC. I never fixed no dinner.

DEEDEE (*thrusts the cookbook at him*). Learn *The Joy of Cooking*.

JONAH (*tosses the book on the sofa. Looks around. Spots a silver baby cup on a shelf, examines it*). What's this for? Silver, right? Must be worth something.

DEEDEE. Sentimental value only—it's engraved. A baby cup.

JONAH. Awful fancy thing for a baby to drink out of. (*Puts it back.*)

DEEDEE. It's more for show—a gift to celebrate a birth.

JONAH (*indicating the sofa*). So. This where I sleep?

DEEDEE. No. (*Crossing to the bedroom.*) You'll have your own room. Come see it.

*(He follows her. It is clearly the bedroom of a teenage boy: football paraphernalia, a bookshelf, a large telescope on a stand by a window.)*

JONAH. Looks like somebody else sleeps here.

DEEDEE (*pointedly*). Somebody else did.

JONAH (*changing the uncomfortable subject*). Where's my TV?

DEEDEE. There's only one.

JONAH. What?!

DEEDEE. You saw it in the living room.

JONAH. *One* TV? Who has one TV?

DEEDEE. We do.

JONAH. What about a computer?

DEEDEE. A desktop. Also in the living room. You may use it for your homework.

JONAH. No laptop?

DEEDEE. At work.

JONAH (*looking around*). So what I sposed to do in here?

DEEDEE. Sleep. Read? Think? Take refuge. Cocoon. Explore the blissful, terrifying terrain of solitude.

JONAH. Lady, who you think you talking to? I don't know what them words mean.

DEEDEE. You will. You'll figure them out from the context. That's how one learns new words, develops a vocabulary. I don't believe in talking down to children.

JONAH. I ain't no "children."

DEEDEE. Or to teenagers. I will treat you like a literate adult in the hope that you will eventually become one.

JONAH. What if I don't wanna become your kinda ... whatever?

DEEDEE. That will be your choice.

JONAH. Where'd you learn to talk white?

DEEDEE. I don't talk "white." I talk educated. And so can you.

JONAH. And have everybody laugh at me for acting better than them? No way. Nobody I know talks like that.

DEEDEE. There are more people in the world than the ones you know. And you are smarter than most of them.

JONAH. I'm a ninth grader.

DEEDEE. With an IQ well above average. I've seen the test scores.

JONAH. Then why I get "D's" all the time?

DEEDEE. We're going to find out. And then we're going to do something about it.

JONAH (*dismisses this possibility with a grunt. Then, looking around*). What's this thing?

DEEDEE. A telescope.

JONAH. What's it for?

DEEDEE. You'll figure it out.

JONAH. Looks expensive.

DEEDEE. It was. That second one even more than the first.

JONAH. What happened to the first?

DEEDEE. It ... got broken.

JONAH. So what I get if I sell it on the street?

DEEDEE. A visit from your parole officer and another stint in the Juvenile Training Center.

JONAH (*opening a drawer*). Am I sposed to wear these?

DEEDEE. Up to you. If you do, afterwards— (*Lifting lid of clothes basket.*) they go in here. You do the laundry every other week.

JONAH. Aw, fuck!

*(She gives him a look.)*

JONAH (*cont'd*). I mean shit!

*(Another look.)*

JONAH (*cont'd*). What am I sposed to say?

DEEDEE. What you feel.

JONAH. I never done no laundry.

DEEDEE. So what do you feel? Inadequate? Incompetent?

JONAH. Stupid. I mean, I ain't no cleaning woman—it's stupid for me to be doing laundry.

DEEDEE. Is it stupid for you to be wearing clothes?

JONAH. Everybody wear clothes.

DEEDEE. Then everybody can do laundry. At least everybody in this house. *(Crosses to the living room.)*

JONAH *(following her)*. But how do I—?

DEEDEE. It's not astrophysics.

JONAH. Astro what?

DEEDEE. Machines are in the basement. Directions on the lids. Only thing you need to remember: dark clothes together—in cold water, light clothes in warm. Don't put my blouses in with your jeans.

JONAH. What? I gotta do *your* dirty clothes too?

DEEDEE. Only if you want me to do yours when it's my turn.

*(He's between a rock and a hard place.)*

DEEDEE *(cont'd)*. Or ... I could do my own laundry and you could do yours. *(Pointedly.)* Every week.

JONAH. Yeah.

DEEDEE. Yeah, what?

JONAH. Yeah, I do my own.

*(She gives him a look.)*

JONAH *(cont'd)*. When I get to it.

DEEDEE. Who did your laundry ... before?

JONAH. Before what?

DEEDEE. In your last ... where you lived last.

JONAH. Foster mother.

DEEDEE. Did you ... did you like her?

JONAH. Yeah. *(Pointedly.)* She didn't make lotsa rules.

DEEDEE. So. I'll leave you to ... look around.

*(Beat.)*

DEEDEE (*cont'd*). It's ... it's good you came on a Saturday. That gives us the weekend to ... get ... settled.

JONAH (*sarcastic*). Yeah. Right.

DEEDEE. The bus comes at eight on school days. You catch it on the corner of Eastern and Park. Brings you back around four. Plenty of time to do your homework.

JONAH (*sarcastic*). Sure.

DEEDEE (*puts a hand in her pocket*). Oh. Here's a key.

*(She extends it to him.)*

JONAH. What's this to?

DEEDEE. The house.

JONAH (*taken back by the trust this implies*). This house?

DEEDEE. How else you going to get in? I get home around five-thirty or six, most days. Work is close by.

JONAH (*taking the key*). So that's why you live here?

DEEDEE. What do you mean?

JONAH. You got enough ... you could live anyplace. I mean this is a nice street and all, with its fixed-up, expensive houses, but ...

DEEDEE. But the larger neighborhood ... this part of the city ... has its problems. Yes. I guess I wanted to be part of the solution.

JONAH (*turning away*). Yeah. We seen how that worked out.

DEEDEE. If you ever need to call me at the lab, the number's on speed dial on the phone in the living room. Number four. (*Takes a slip of paper from her pocket, holds it out to him.*) This is the number. In case you ever need to call me there from school.

JONAH. Can I get a iPhone?

*(He turns back to her. She shakes her head. He grunts, disgusted.)*

DEEDEE. Not my rule. But a good one.

*(He ignores the slip of paper she's holding out. She puts it down.)*

DEEDEE (*cont'd*). I'll be calling the school twice a day—at ten and two. Just to make sure you're ... doing OK.

JONAH. You mean just checking up on me.

DEEDEE. Just while you're on probation.

JONAH (*awkward pause*). Why ... why you doing this?

DEEDEE. I ... think ... maybe I ... (*Shakes her head.*) I don't really know.

JONAH. You some kinda ... wacko?

DEEDEE. I guess we'll find out, won't we? (*Looks at her watch.*) Supper's in the Crockpot. Be ready in five minutes. This week I'm cooking.

*(DEEDEE exits. JONAH pockets the key, crosses back to the bedroom. He looks around, takes a shirt from a drawer and holds it up to him. It is ten years out of style. He tosses it back and goes to the telescope. He begins to examine how it swivels and pumps, looks into the wrong end. He gets up, runs his hand along books on a shelf, pulls out a small spiral notebook, looks inside at the handwriting then tosses it on the bed. He takes out the key and plays with it for a moment, then pockets it again. He picks up the notebook again, flips it open and reads for a moment. SONNY enters through the wall.)*

SONNY. This is my room.

JONAH. Not for a long time. Them shirts ain't fit you for ten years. Where you been, Sonny boy?

SONNY. It's a long story.

JONAH. People down at the mission say you good at telling stories.

SONNY. It's not that kind of story. Anyway, this is still my room.

JONAH. Looks like it's mine now.

SONNY. Isn't that ironic?

JONAH. I what?

SONNY. Irony. My favorite word. You'll be coming across it all the time. It's probably on the page you're open to now. "A development in a narrative opposite to and in mockery of the expected result." The opposite of "poetic justice." Unpoetic justice? Poetic injustice?

JONAH. You sound like the kinda guy don't need that T-saurus.

SONNY. Ah, well. Mr. Roget and I are long-time comrades. It was ... an "arranged friendship."

JONAH. Bet I know who done the arranging.

SONNY (*imitating DEEDEE*). “You have choices, you know!”

Only you better make the ones she wants.

JONAH. Did you?

SONNY (*referring to the journal*). Read it and find out.

DEEDEE (*offstage, calling*). Jonah! Dinner’s ready.

*(JONAH and SONNY study each other. Lights.)*

## Scene 2

*(A week later. Saturday midday. Living room. LABELLE, 14, wearing only underwear and a T-shirt but covered by a light-weight throw is asleep on the sofa. Her jeans and shoes are strewn on the floor, as are JONAH’s shirt and shoes. He sits at the table in his jeans, reading a cookbook. She wakes up.)*

LABELLE. Ummmm ... I had me a nice little nap ... and the best dream ever.

*(He looks up.)*

LABELLE (*cont’d*). I dreamed it was the end of the longest four months of my life and you was out of juvey and you was inside me, coming and coming and coming home. And all the while, Patti LaBelle was singing.

JONAH. What she singing?

*(Perhaps LABELLE sings just the first line of the chorus of “Joy to Have Your Love,” imitating the style of her namesake.)*

LABELLE. Ain’t that the sweetest dream ever?

JONAH. Yeah, that dream almost as sweet as you, LaBelle.

LABELLE (*putting on her jeans*). Songs about falling in love are my favorite. When did you do it?

JONAH. Do what?

LABELLE. Fall in love?

JONAH. With who?

LABELLE (*crossing to him*). You think I wanna hear about you falling in love with somebody else?

JONAH. I ain’t thought about it.

LABELLE. Well think about it now.

JONAH. Let's see ... was it when you knocked your tray into my lap in the cafeteria? Or maybe when you dropped your book on my foot in math class?

LABELLE. I can't help it you was always in the wrong place. Come on—you just stalling.

JONAH. A'ight, a'ight. It was at the park—the basketball court. You was sitting on the bench drinking a Coke and wearing them red sunglasses that's way too big—cover up your whole face. You was sitting next to Tonya and she musta said something funny 'cause you laughing and falling over silly, not paying no attention to the game. Then I come up for a foul shot. And things get quiet. And I'm bouncing the ball, looking at the hoop, but I'm seeing you out the edge of my eye. And then you call out—

LABELLE (*calling out*). Hey, bro—stop thinking about how fine you look in them fancy Jordans and bury the damn ball!

JONAH. I know right then I got to get behind them sunglasses.

LABELLE. And that's when you fell in love with me?

JONAH (*pulls her onto his lap*). No, that happened after. Tonya eat so much junk during the game that she got sick afterwards—threw up all over the bench. But you stayed right there—held onto her the whole time she puked. Reggie come along and made fun of her and you rapped him upside the head with your Coke bottle so hard he near fell over. I know then I want somebody who would ... somebody that loyal ... and that fierce ... to be there for me.

LABELLE. I am here for you, Jonah. I always will be.

(*They kiss.*)

LABELLE (*cont'd*). What you reading?

JONAH. Cookbook.

LABELLE. Well, ain't that something? You gonna make me a Patti LaBelle Sweet Potato Pie?

JONAH. Did you know meatloaf ain't nothing but smashed up hamburgers?

LABELLE. What's the matter with hamburgers? Why you want to go and smash 'em up?



# **On Pine Knoll Street**

By  
MARK CORNELL

*On Pine Knoll Street* received its world premier production at The Sauk in Jonesville, Mich., on Feb. 6, 2020.

CAST:

THELMA ..... Anne Conners  
MARILYN ..... M.J. Dulmage  
CURTIS..... Trinity Bird  
KRISTIE ..... Andrea Ortell  
MITCHELL ..... Keegan Oxley

PRODUCTION:

Director ..... Trinity Bird  
Stage Manager ..... Allison Cleveland  
Dramaturg ..... Kathy Pingel  
Scenic Design..... Bruce W. Crews  
Costume Design..... Roene Trevisan  
Lighting Design ..... Tracy McCullough  
Sound Design ..... Joella Hendrickson  
Properties Design..... Travis Blatchley  
Set Dressing ..... Cyndi Baldermann  
Assistant Stage Manager..... Shannon Chen  
Light Board Operator..... Angela Forant  
Sound Board Operator ..... Joella Hendrickson  
Origami ..... Derrick Oxley

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:

*“On Pine Knoll Street* was premiered in the American Association of Community Theatre’s AACT NewPlayFest by The Sauk in Jonesville, Mich.”

# On Pine Knoll Street

## CHARACTERS

THELMA (w): 87.

MARILYN (w): 52.

CURTIS (m): 40.

KRISTIE (w): 38.

MITCHELL (m): 9.

**TIME:** Spring of a recent year to fall of the following year. The play covers about a year and a half.

**PLACE:** A small house in a small Southern college town.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

Scene shifts should be made by characters in full view of the audience and thought of as a continuation of the story. For example, when Marilyn puts up the reminder signs, it is not merely to get the signs on the walls. It is at first because she wants to help her mother and later on because she is frustrated. Characters may relate to one another if they share a shift. Although shifts should be efficient, at no time should they feel rushed.

Between Scenes 8 and 9, the snow should remain on the stage.

When needed, use lighting—dawn, midday, dusk, night—to indicate the passage of time.

---

For Lucile.

# On Pine Knoll Street

## ACT I

### Scene 1

*(In the black, we hear a Celtic lullaby, “Dream Angus.” As the lights rise, the music lulls to a murmur. It is a spring morning in a small house in the South. There is a living room, a small kitchen with an eating area and a door to a bathroom. The living room has a large window, a closet and a hallway that leads to the back bedrooms. There is a utility room through the kitchen. The house is earth-toned, except for the kitchen, which is neon magenta. There are three potted plants—a cactus, a palm of some kind and some succulents. In the living room, THELMA, dressed a little garishly, sits in an old Barcalounger with a cane leaning against it. She is wrapped in an afghan. On the side table next to her is an old boom box from which the lullaby plays. Some cat toys are on the floor. On the other side of the room, MARILYN stands at a small kitchen table going through pills in a plastic receptacle, talking to CURTIS, who is distracted by the room’s unusual decor—sculptures, paintings, metal works, papier mâché, candles, etc.—all featuring vaginas.)*

MARILYN. As you can plainly see, Curtis, all the pills are distributed evenly for each day of the week, and separated by a.m. and p.m. All you have to do is put the appropriate pills on a saucer for her, and she’ll take them with her morning and evening meals. Easy, right? Just make absolutely sure the pill box goes back on top of the fridge.

*(She notices that CURTIS is distracted.)*

MARILYN *(cont’d)*. Curtis, are you listening to me?

CURTIS. Yes. Sorry.

THELMA. He’s hypnotized by the vaginas.

CURTIS. I wouldn’t say hypnotized.

MARILYN. You've been in my house before, right?

CURTIS. I don't think so. I would have remembered.

MARILYN. You came to my Super Bowl party this past year.

CURTIS. No, I didn't. I've only ever come as far as the porch, trick or treating with Mitch.

MARILYN. Curtis, I know you've been in here.

THELMA. He hasn't, Marilyn. Obviously. Nobody's ever going to forget a dozen smiling hoo-haws.

*(CURTIS laughs.)*

MARILYN. Mom. *(Gesturing to the art.)* These are leftovers from my gallery in Miami, Curtis. It's art, OK?

CURTIS. Yeah, it's definitely art.

MARILYN. I know what you're thinking. I'm not gay.

THELMA. She's gay.

MARILYN. Mom! Calling someone gay is not funny!

THELMA. I'm not trying to be funny.

MARILYN. *I'm not gay.*

THELMA. God forbid you should come out to your own mother.

MARILYN. Can we not do this right now, please?

THELMA. I watched my next-door neighbor in Key West come out to her mother, and it was beautiful.

MARILYN. Curtis, you've said "hello" to my mother, haven't you?

CURTIS. Yes, but I'll say it again. Howdy, Thelma. How are you?

THELMA. Fine as frog's hair.

MARILYN. "Howdy?" Who says "howdy?"

THELMA. Sweetie, he probably doesn't know that saying "howdy" makes him sound like a dipshit.

*(CURTIS laughs.)*

MARILYN. I'm sorry to ask you to step in at the last second, Curtis, but I'm in a bind and my mother's nurse was—

THELMA. She fired Lanying. Who wasn't a nurse. *I was a nurse.*

MARILYN. Lanying was stealing Mom's pills.

CURTIS. Lanying? The hoarder Chinese lady up on the corner?

THELMA. You don't know she was stealing anything, Marilyn.

MARILYN. A bottle of Bumex is missing.

THELMA. Who in the world would steal a diuretic?

MARILYN. She's a hoarder, Mom. A hoarder kleptomaniac.

THELMA. Goodness gracious, if that's true, then why in God's name did you let her in this house?

MARILYN. OK, Mom, that's enough. Can't you sit in silence, please?

THELMA. I'm not a piece of furniture, dear.

MARILYN. Anyway, Curtis, I'll be back super early Monday morning, so you're off the hook after Sunday night.

CURTIS. I'm always around, so this is no big deal.

MARILYN. Mom, you sure you can handle making your own meals?

THELMA. I have made one or two meals in my eighty-seven years, honey. And plenty of those were for you.

MARILYN. Do we need to go over again how to use the microwave?

THELMA. Open. Close. Start. What's the mystery? I'm not a child.

MARILYN (*to CURTIS*). Mom has a stack of Kashi dinners in the freezer. Have one with her. You could even sit and read with her. Or do one of Mom's puzzles, if you want. She'd like that. They're down here.

*(She points to a stack of them at the bottom of a bookshelf.)*

MARILYN (*cont'd*). A lighthouse, a bunch of kittens, here's one that's a pile of jelly beans. I dare you to try that one.

THELMA. How's your daughter, Curtis?

MARILYN. He has a son, Mom. I told you. (*To CURTIS.*) I told Mom a little bit about you before you came over.

THELMA. What's your son's name?

CURTIS. Mitchell.

THELMA. Mitchell? That's a last name, you dummy. How old is he?

CURTIS. Nine.

MARILYN. I mentioned to her that you stay home with him.

THELMA. So is he at home by himself right now?

CURTIS. My wife is at home with him.

THELMA. She doesn't work, either?

CURTIS. She's a professor at the university.

THELMA. Oh, well, la-dee-da. Why isn't she off at the university?

CURTIS. It's Saturday.

MARILYN. Stop badgering him. And Curtis works, too, Mom.

He's a writer. I told you.

THELMA. What do you write?

CURTIS. Short stories.

THELMA. Good for you. I like Hemingway. And Fitzgerald. And Steinbeck. All the biggies.

MARILYN. All males, too.

THELMA. What's wrong with that? I like men.

MARILYN. You sure you can handle the cats, too, Curtis?

CURTIS. I can handle it.

MARILYN. I keep the water bowl and the food bowl here by the fridge.

*(She walks over. He follows.)*

MARILYN *(cont'd)*. The food is in the kitty cookie jar. Where is the kitty cookie jar? Mom, stop moving things. Here.

*(She finds it on the counter, opens it.)*

MARILYN *(cont'd)*. Give them exactly a scoop and a half in the evening and the morning. Make sure the water is filled up and fresh. Don't top it off. Got it?

CURTIS. Yup.

MARILYN. "Yup?" First howdy, now yup?

THELMA. Now who's badgering him?

CURTIS. Yup and howdy were words my dad used. What can I say? I'm turning into my father.

MARILYN. Let me introduce you to the cats, Hoss. They're hiding in the closet.

THELMA. Sounds familiar.

MARILYN. Give it a rest, Mom.

*(MARILYN pulls wide a partially open closet door.)*

MARILYN *(cont'd)*. Curtis, say hello to Snatch and Twat.

*(CURTIS turns to THELMA.)*

THELMA. See? Ho-mo-sex-u-al.

MARILYN. Mom!

THELMA. If she tells you the shelter named them, she's lying.

MARILYN. Wakey-wakey, babies! Snatch, Twat, this is Curtis. Say hello to the cats, Curtis.

CURTIS (*flatly*). Hello.

MARILYN. Snatch likes to be called Snatchy and Twat likes to be called Twa-Twa. Try speaking to them again. From the heart.

CURTIS. Mornin', Snatchy! Mornin', Twa-Twa!

MARILYN. They know when you're faking it, Curtis. Come on. Let me show you the all-important litter box in the utility room. They use it like there's no tomorrow.

*(CURTIS follows MARILYN into the utility room. MARILYN continues to talk, although we can no longer understand what she is saying. THELMA leans forward to get at a book that is open and face down on the coffee table in front of the couch. But it's too far away for her to reach. She leans back and tries to get at it with her foot, but no luck. She strains hard, but can't reach it. She grabs her cane and stretches out and touches the book with it. After great effort, she pulls the book off the coffee table and onto the floor. Then she drags it along the floor and to herself. She leans down and picks it up. She holds up her arms in victory. MARILYN and CURTIS return.)*

MARILYN (*cont'd*). I'll pay you ten a day for the cats and five for Mom.

CURTIS. You don't have to pay me, Marilyn.

MARILYN. I paid Lanying, I can pay you.

*(CURTIS' cell rings.)*

CURTIS. Excuse me. Sorry, I usually have it on silent, but Kristie wanted me to ... *(Pulling the phone out of his pocket. He answers.)*

Hi, Kristie, everything OK? *(Beat.)* Kristie, this shouldn't be a surprise. This is who he is. *(Beat.)* No, you can. You can do it. *(Beat.)* OK. I'm coming now. *(Beat.)* Yes, right now. *(Beat.)* Yes, I promise. *(He hangs up.)* I need to go.

MARILYN. Just one more thing. Mealtimes are eight in the morning and six in the evening for both Mom and the cats. Lunch for Mom is one, but that's a non-pill meal, so you don't have to be here for that.



CURTIS. I'll be back at six, then. See you soon, Thelma. Have a great trip, Marilyn. Where are you going anyway?

MARILYN. To Wrightsville Beach. With some friends.

THELMA (*air quoting*). "Friends."

MARILYN. It's my book club.

THELMA (*air quoting*). "Book club."

MARILYN. You've met all these women, Mom. They're not lesbians.

THELMA. What book club meets two hours away on the beach?

MARILYN. Ours does. We always go to the beach the weekend before Memorial Day.

THELMA. Stop pretending! You go to the beach and gay it up!

MARILYN. Mom!

THELMA. In Key West, nobody pretended. We let it all hang out. And I mean *all of it*.

CURTIS. Well, Wrightsville sounds fun. Gotta go.

*(He exits quickly out the door.)*

THELMA. He left in a hurry.

MARILYN. Sometimes things get crazy, I think, at home. I see his kid running back and forth across their yard sometimes.

THELMA. Sounds normal.

MARILYN. Back and forth, though? Like a tennis ball?

THELMA. You could use a little back and forth. With a man.

MARILYN. You know, Mom, I really wish you would stop with the relentless jokes. They're hurtful. Especially in front of other people.

THELMA. You know what's really hurtful, Marilyn? That you would pay a man more money for taking care of your cats than taking care of me.

*(THELMA turns the volume knob up on her boom box and the Celtic lullaby gets louder. She reads her book. MARILYN stands there a moment and then exits. Lights fade. The music should continue in the scene change.)*

## Scene 2

*(As lights come up, the Celtic lullaby fades, but is still slightly audible from the boom box. It's just past six that evening. Above*

*the kitchen table on the wall is a taped 8.5x11" sign that says "hearing aids." Nearby are freshly cut peonies in a glass vase. Sitting at the table, where the pill box rests, THELMA eats. Every time she is about to swallow her food, THELMA takes a pill from a saucer and puts it in her mouth, then swallows. Sitting with her, CURTIS watches, curious.)*

THELMA. You don't have to sit right on top of me. I know how to take a pill. I'm not completely *non compos mentis*.

CURTIS. You always swallow your pills with food?

THELMA. We had a housekeeper when I was growing up, a Scottish lady, whom we called Mrs., just Mrs., even though she wasn't married, and she believed that food carried medicine with love and that love always beat illness.

*(He smiles. She eats. He watches her.)*

THELMA (*cont'd*). You have got to be bored senseless.

CURTIS. Me? No. Nothing bores me. Nothing.

THELMA. Really? Marilyn didn't mention you were dim-witted.

*(He chuckles.)*

CURTIS. You don't have anything to drink. Let me get you something.

*(CURTIS groans as he gets up. Grabbing the pill box on the table, he goes into the kitchen and puts the pill box on top of the fridge.)*

THELMA (*as CURTIS goes into the kitchen*). First you bring peonies from your garden, then you grab the mail, now a drink? No one likes a do-gooder.

CURTIS. It's my tragic flaw. What do you want to drink?

THELMA. Ginger beer. Have one with me. Life's short. Let it rip.

*(CURTIS laughs, getting a Stone's ginger beer from the fridge.)*

CURTIS. Tempting, but I'll pass, thanks.

*(Twisting open the bottle, CURTIS gives THELMA her beer.)*

THELMA. Your loss.

*(THELMA takes a few huge swigs.)*

CURTIS. My mother liked Stone's ginger beer, too. Not like you like it, but ...

THELMA. Invite her over. We'll toast our ailments.

CURTIS. She passed away about two months ago.

THELMA. Then for God's sake, don't invite her over.

*(Smiling, CURTIS sits.)*

THELMA *(cont'd)*. I shouldn't be insensitive, but I have to joke about death, otherwise I start thinking about it seriously, and the next thing you know, I'm back in church or walking in front of a speeding bus.

CURTIS. My mother *loved* death jokes. The more grim, the better.

THELMA. Good for her. How did she die?

CURTIS. An aneurism. In her sleep.

THELMA. There are worse ways.

CURTIS. It was hard not getting to say goodbye.

THELMA. When I was a nurse, I learned the only thing harder than not saying goodbye is saying goodbye.

CURTIS. She was a good mother. She found it easy to be good. My brother and I were lucky. I miss her.

THELMA. I can't remember a time in my life when I haven't missed my mother. My parents were Presbyterian missionaries and always gone. She died when I was sixteen, and then she was gone-gone.

CURTIS. How's the food? What is that?

THELMA. Who knows? I burned it beyond recognition. That microwave is defective.

CURTIS. Smells good, though.

THELMA. Grab a fork.

CURTIS. Thanks, but I have to be careful about what I consume.

THELMA. Consume? Lord, you're not one of those irritating vegan-types, are you?

*(CURTIS laughs.)*

THELMA *(cont'd)*. Oh, God, you are. Vegans are ripping this country apart.

CURTIS. *Vegans* are?

THELMA. Yes, with their fascist views on food, their political correctness baloney, nurturing everything, looking to the moon for answers. If you refer to God as a she, I am going to punch you right in the mouth.

CURTIS. I'm not a vegan. I've just got acid reflux. (*Sarcastic.*) I'll have something really yummy when I get home, like plain steel cut oats with shredded coconut. Mmmm!

THELMA. Ha! You know, for a home dad, you don't stay home much.

CURTIS. I can count on one hand the number of times I've been away from my son.

THELMA. Oh, shut up.

CURTIS. It's true.

THELMA. He doesn't go to school? Does social services know?

CURTIS. I homeschool him.

THELMA. Grandparents don't take him off your hands once in a while?

CURTIS. My in-laws live in New Zealand. I think. They kind of do their own thing. And my family's in California.

THELMA. You don't go back there? Or they come out here?

CURTIS. No. My wife always felt judged by my parents. Devout Catholics. Latin Massers. Old school.

THELMA. Oh my, that's terrifying.

CURTIS. Yup. My parents' house has holy water in a dish by the front door.

THELMA. Holy crap. So send your father out here. Put him up in a hotel if your wife can't have him under her roof.

CURTIS. After my mom died, my father followed a couple weeks later.

THELMA. Goodness gracious sakes alive.

CURTIS. He'd been sick with prostate cancer for years. He died with sixty-four dollars to his name. And he was the hardest working man I've ever known.

THELMA. *Sixty-four dollars?*

CURTIS. Everything he earned, he gave to others.

THELMA. Spouses going one right after the other is not uncommon. Somehow, though, I've managed to stick around for twenty-three years since my husband knocked off. So you've never gotten a babysitter?

CURTIS. Nope. So who looked after you with your parents always gone?

THELMA. Our housekeeper.

CURTIS. The Scottish lady? She didn't have a name?

THELMA. Margot Angus. But she was just Mrs. to me. She wanted me to call her that even though she wasn't married.

CURTIS. Yes, you said that. She's responsible for the Celtic lullabies?

THELMA. She would sing them while she worked.

CURTIS. So did you grow up in Scotland?

THELMA. India. That's where the church sent us. There's a photo of my school on the wall there.

*(He follows her gesture, rising, to a large photo on a wall nearby. He groans as he gets up.)*

THELMA *(cont'd)*. That's the second groan I've heard out of you.

CURTIS. Back trouble. When my son didn't walk, I carried him. When he cried, I carried him.

THELMA. Back problems. Stomach problems. I think you're still carrying him.

CURTIS *(peering in at the photo)*. Whoa. "Woodstock School. 1951." Which one are you?

THELMA. The hot momma with the giant grin in the front row.

CURTIS *(finding her)*. I think I can see every single one of your teeth.

THELMA. I was a happy child.

CURTIS. How did you end up in the US?

THELMA. You don't really want to hear my whole story, do you? I'm eighty-seven. It'll be epic.

CURTIS. You could give me the highlights.

THELMA. Well, a lot of it I don't remember, which is fine with me.

In fact, there's a lot more about my life I'd like to forget but can't.

CURTIS. I'm the opposite. There's a lot more I'd like to remember.

THELMA. Like what?

CURTIS. I'd like to remember what it was like when I walked for the first time.

THELMA. You're kind of an odd duck, you know that?

CURTIS. My son has taught me that every milestone in life is precious.

THELMA. For my girls, every milestone had to happen as soon as humanly possible. And when they didn't, they complained. But they were my life. And my husband hated that I chose my grumpy girls over him, so he chose other women over me, and then when he got sick, I chose forgiveness over resentment, and nursed him all through my fifties all the while I was being a real nurse at Cook County Hospital.

CURTIS. I hope he appreciated it.

THELMA. He eventually said "thank you" by dying. His last words were "OK, that's enough."

*(CURTIS laughs. She laughs, too.)*

THELMA *(cont'd)*. Oh, I shouldn't speak poorly of the man. He wasn't all bad. He loved the one thing about me that I loved the most.

CURTIS. What's that?

THELMA. I could dance.

CURTIS. So what are we doing sitting here? Let's dance!

THELMA. Now?

CURTIS. Why not? Weren't you the one who said "let it rip"?

THELMA. Don't you need to feed the cats?

CURTIS. I already did. Water, too. Scooped the litter box, even. Come on, Thelma, dance with me.

*(He puts out a hand for her.)*

THELMA. But I just ate. I'll cramp.

CURTIS. What's your next excuse? You're eighty-seven? All the more reason to get up and dance!

THELMA. I haven't danced in twenty years!

CURTIS. What in the world are you waiting for?! On your feet, Thelma!

THELMA. But I don't have my Greek tunic!

CURTIS. I don't know what that means.

THELMA. Isadora Duncan always wore her Greek tunic when she danced.

CURTIS. We'll imagine. Come on. Take my hand.

# **Goat Song Revel**

By  
DAN BORENGASSER

*Goat Song Revel* received its world premier production at the Manatee Performing Arts Center in Bradenton, Fla., on Feb. 6, 2020.

CAST:

CHORUS ..... Catherine Burke  
JOB ..... Jason Lipton  
DIONYSUS ..... Daniel Pelissier  
SATAN ..... Joseph Smith  
GOD ..... Caroyn Zaput  
MESSENGER ..... Michael Herring

PRODUCTION:

Director ..... Kathy Pingel  
Production Manager..... Kristin Ribble  
Stage Manager ..... Sophia Coscia  
Set Design .....Ralph Nurmela  
Light Design.....Nick Jones  
Sound Design .....Mark Toebben  
Costume Design ..... Susan Sajec  
Mask Design .....Larry Engler

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:

“*Goat Song Revel* was premiered in the American Association of Community Theatre’s AACT NewPlayFest by the Manatee Performing Arts Center in Bradenton, Fla.”



# Goat Song Revel

## CHARACTERS

JOB (m): The biblical Job.

GOD (a)

SATAN (m)

DIONYSUS (m): Greek god of the theatre.

MESSENGER (a): Stock character from Greek drama.

CHORUS (w): One person named Doris.

TIME: Biblical times.

SETTING: A single room in the house of Job with five doors.

## CHARACTER NOTE

Both GOD and MESSENGER may be played by an actor of any gender. Please change pronoun references as needed.

# Goat Song Revel

## ACT I

### Scene 1

*(The house of JOB—a simple, rustic room. On one side, there is a table surrounded by four chairs. On the other side, there is a desk and chair. On the far side of the room is a cupboard with shelves holding candles, earthen dinnerware and chalices. On the other far side of the room is a doorless cabinet to hang up clothing.)*

*There are five doors: one for GOD, one for SATAN, one for DIONYSUS, one for JOB, and one shared by the CHORUS and the MESSENGER.*

*JOB enters the darkened room with a lantern, sits at his desk and reviews his ledger. After a few moments, the stage lights come up full, blinding him. After he rubs his eyes, he sees the five doors, which strike him as odd.*

*Then, a one-person CHORUS unexpectedly enters, wearing an expressionless mask. She whirls and dances toward the audience.)*

CHORUS *(to the audience)*. The gods of our antiquity,  
Protect us from iniquity.  
Especially Dionysus, yes!  
The god of wine and drunkenness.

*(She glances around.)*

And, yet, 'tis not a classic setting,  
A far more foreign place, I'm betting.  
But very soon we'll see the light.  
We trust the gods to make things right.

JOB. Who are you?

CHORUS *(to the audience)*. Generically, I am the chorus.  
Specifically, the name is Doris.

JOB. One person? You're more like the soloist.

CHORUS (*to the audience*). What one is this who doth demand?  
And boldly makes his entrance grand?

JOB. My name is Job. This is my house. (*He gazes out at the audience, trying to figure out who the CHORUS addresses.*)  
Who are you talking to?

CHORUS (*to the audience*). I am the source of exposition.  
And help to deal with all transition.

JOB. Ah ... you mind if we drop the rhymed couplets? And just talk.  
(*Off her silent stare.*) Just for now. While it's only the two of us.

(*She's quiet, but then nods.*)

JOB (*cont'd*). What's going on here?

CHORUS. I think we're in a Greek drama.

JOB. A what?

CHORUS. Greek drama. A chorus is usually found in a Greek drama.

JOB. And you're the chorus?

CHORUS. Yes.

JOB. The entire chorus?

CHORUS. So it would seem.

JOB. Is that normal?

CHORUS. Not really. There are usually about a dozen of us.

JOB. Must be a pathetic drama.

CHORUS. It may be a budget thing.

JOB (*indicating the five doors*). What are all these doors?

CHORUS. They're not yours?

JOB. No. Just that one.

CHORUS (*pointing at her door*). Well, that's the door I came out of—you don't want to go in there. I don't know what the other three are for. (*Beat.*) You're positive they're not yours?

JOB. Yes, I'm positive. (*Beat.*) So what happens next?

CHORUS. Just go about your business. The play should unfold.

JOB. You're sure this is a play? Not a dream?

CHORUS. It's possible, I suppose. But I generally don't show up for dreams.

JOB. And what ... what will this play be like?

CHORUS. That depends.

JOB. On what?

CHORUS. Whether it's a comedy or a tragedy.

JOB. Which is it?

CHORUS. I'm not sure yet.

JOB. But how will I know?

CHORUS. Oh, you'll know.

*(As the CHORUS heads toward her door, JOB makes a move toward one of the other doors.)*

JOB. Maybe I can find out by opening these other doors.

*(The CHORUS quickly steps over and lays a cautioning hand on his arm.)*

CHORUS. No! I wouldn't do that!

JOB. I don't want to just sit around and wait.

CHORUS. You shouldn't take any chances. What if you fell down a flight of stairs? Or were asked a riddle by the Sphinx? Or killed your father and married your mother? Suddenly, the play is a tragedy. Bide your time. You'll find out soon enough.

JOB. All right. *(Beat.)* For now.

*(The CHORUS once again prepares to exit.)*

JOB *(cont'd)*. Ah ... one thing ... I've never been in a Greek drama before. There was that little Yiddish play on Sabbath a couple of years ago ... but a Greek drama? I'm a little apprehensive.

CHORUS. Don't worry. I'll be back. Probably. *(Beat.)* In the meantime, I'll see what I can find out.

*(She exits through her door, and, after a moment, JOB exits through his door.)*

*SATAN, with a pointed tail and wearing all black with a cape, enters through his door, along with a huge puff of smoke that billows into the room.*

*He looks around expectantly, then grimaces knowingly and sits at the table. After a moment, he begins thrumming his fingers, obviously impatient.*

*After an almost uncomfortable period of time, GOD, in a long, flowing robe, hurries in from his door.)*

GOD. Sorry, Old Scratch.

SATAN. You're late, eternal one. You're always late.

GOD. I said I'm sorry.

SATAN. It's a power thing, isn't it?

GOD. Is this the way it's going to be? Why are you always so hot under the collar?

SATAN. Comes with the territory.

GOD (*glancing around*). Why'd you pick this place? Where's our cribbage board?

SATAN. I'm tired of cribbage. I want to play a new game.

GOD. What's wrong with cribbage?

SATAN. No more games of chance. I don't like games of chance.

GOD. What are you saying? Are you suggesting—

SATAN. No, no. I know you don't cheat. At least not on purpose ...

GOD. Careful ...

SATAN. What are you going to do—condemn me to hell for eternity? Oh, wait—you already did that.

GOD. You've certainly got an attitude today.

SATAN. Yeah, well, sorry I can't be all whoop-dee-doo for you.

GOD. OK. Ease up, will you?

SATAN. Maybe I'm just tired of always playing the heavy. Ever think about that?

GOD. Don't blame me. You were the one who got a little too big for his britches.

SATAN. Anyway—since you chose the last game, I'd like to pick this one.

GOD. But I like cribbage.

SATAN. Well, I'm tired of it. (*Beat.*) It's a perfectly fair request. How about it?

*(Beat.)*

GOD. I suppose.

SATAN. Yes!

GOD. What's the new game?

SATAN. One I made up. It's called Job.

GOD (*eyeing the room*). This *is* Job's place, isn't it?

SATAN. You didn't know?

GOD. Please. I'm not in prescient mode around the clock. Sometimes I enjoy the unexpected—a little surprise—just like anyone. Especially when I visit Earth. How's the game work?

SATAN. We have Job here, who, as you know, is incredibly pious—I'd say obnoxiously so, but that's just me. Anyway, it seems he's been enjoying great good fortune lately.

GOD. He's done all right.

SATAN. All right? I'd say a lot better than all right. The guy's got seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred she-asses. Plus a wife, seven sons and three daughters. We're talking huge tub of butter here.

GOD. OK, so he's prosperous. What's the game?

SATAN. We take turns putting him through terrible indignities till he cracks and curses you. Whichever one of us breaks him, wins.

GOD. What if he doesn't break?

SATAN. What if he doesn't break? That's a good one.

GOD. I mean it—what if he doesn't?

SATAN. OK, OK. Then, you automatically win, and we go back to cribbage. Happy? So, are we on?

GOD. This doesn't seem like something a benevolent deity would do.

SATAN. I have two words for you.

GOD. What?

SATAN. Mount Vesuvius.

GOD. That was different. It was a natural disaster—not quite so personal.

SATAN. Hey—you giveth and you taketh away. Your ways shouldn't be subject to the logic of mankind. I bet Job thinks he deserves his prosperity because he's a (*Finger quotes*.) “righteous” man.

GOD. Not bad, Old Scratch. You always were persuasive.

SATAN. Then, we're on?

GOD. With one change ... *and* ... one condition.

SATAN. What's the change?

GOD. I don't participate. You get five chances to test him to see if he'll curse me. You do it—you win. You don't—I win.

SATAN. And the condition?

GOD. Job is not to die. *(Beat.)* Agreed?

SATAN. Agreed. And, of course, no foreknowledge or divine intervention on your part.

GOD. Of course.

*(GOD and SATAN head for their respective doors.*

*Before they exit, DIONYSUS, wearing a mask and robe and holding a bunch of grapes, enters from his door and heads upstage to speak to the audience, not noticing GOD and SATAN.*

*Spotting DIONYSUS, GOD glances at SATAN, who shrugs as if to say, "I have no idea." Then, the two quickly exit.*

*DIONYSUS hears the doors and turns, but they have already disappeared.)*

DIONYSUS *(to the audience)*. Welcome, loyal devotees of me, Dionysus—god of fertility.

Also wine, 'cause of your undoing,  
And the theatre, like this you're viewing.

*(He glances at his surroundings.)*

Yet, I see no warriors or kings  
In these humble offerings.  
Tragedy demands a fall from power,  
So mayhap a comedy comes this hour.

*(The CHORUS enters and is both pleased and surprised to see him. She kneels before him.)*

CHORUS. Oh, great god Dionysus, we honor you and dedicate this performance to you.

DIONYSUS. And you are ... ?

CHORUS. The chorus.

DIONYSUS. You may rise.

*(The CHORUS rises.)*

DIONYSUS. A one-person chorus? Sounding like a comedy.

CHORUS. You think so?

DIONYSUS. Look at this place. Could it be more rustic?

CHORUS. And that makes it a comedy?

DIONYSUS. A little more likely than a tragedy.

CHORUS. Job will be so happy to hear this.

DIONYSUS. Who's Job?

CHORUS. The protagonist. *(Beat.)* I think.

DIONYSUS. What's he like?

CHORUS. Nice enough.

DIONYSUS. Any nobility in him?

CHORUS. Doubtful.

DIONYSUS. Powerful? Prosperous?

CHORUS. Maybe. Hard to say.

DIONYSUS. Still might be a comedy.

CHORUS. A question, oh esteemed god of theatre.

DIONYSUS. Yes?

CHORUS. Why the five doors?

DIONYSUS. Are they his?

CHORUS. Just that one.

DIONYSUS *(pointing)*. Well, that's mine.

CHORUS *(pointing)*. And that one's mine.

DIONYSUS. The other two?

CHORUS. No idea.

DIONYSUS *(considering it)*. Five doors ... it could be a farce.

CHORUS. A farce?

DIONYSUS. A farce. Also a comedy, although in a farce, the action's more important than the characters. A bunch of doors can create a *lot* of action—with misdirection, confusion, characters bumping into and avoiding each other.

CHORUS. And then?

DIONYSUS. Hilarity ensues. *(Beat.)* Theoretically.

*(At that moment, SATAN's door opens. He steps out with a cloud of smoke, takes one look at DIONYSUS and CHORUS, and immediately goes back in, cape swirling, slamming the door.)*

CHORUS. Was ... was that hilarity?

DIONYSUS. Ah ... no. *(Beat.)* That was just weird.



CHORUS. Who in Hades was it?

DIONYSUS. No idea. *(Beat.)* But I intend to find out.

*(They are quiet for a moment.)*

CHORUS. If ... if this is a farce and the action is more important than the characters ... ah ... aren't we the characters?

DIONYSUS. That's right. It means we're stereotypes or caricatures.

CHORUS. I'm a stereotype? A caricature?

DIONYSUS. If this is a farce—yes.

CHORUS. And ... and you, too?

DIONYSUS. Yes.

CHORUS. But, oh great one, you are a god. You cannot be a stereotype or caricature.

DIONYSUS. You think I like it?

CHORUS. I ... I don't know what to expect. I've never been in a farce.

DIONYSUS. I know. The farce was after your time. All sorts of plays cropped up after *our* golden age of drama. Back then, there was just tragedy, comedy and satyr plays. *(Wistfully.)* Tragedy—now there was a genre for you. Nice ... clean ... powerful. You had your hubris, your *deus ex machina*, your catharsis ...

CHORUS. I love the catharsis.

DIONYSUS. But after that? Look out. Dramatic mayhem. Absurdist, neoclassic, naturalistic, historical, allegorical, pastoral. You name it—someone will write it.

CHORUS. What can we do?

DIONYSUS. First thing—find out what kind of play we're in.

CHORUS. And then ...

DIONYSUS. If it's a farce, change it.

CHORUS. You can do that?

DIONYSUS. I've never tried. But I'm a god. I ought to be able to. *(Beat.)* I must go. I have other plays to sanction. But I'll be back. And if you find out anything, knock on my door.

CHORUS. Yes, oh most worshipful god of frenzy and madness.

*(As DIONYSUS exits through his door, JOB enters before the CHORUS can exit.)*

JOB. You're back. *(Beat.)* Any news, chorus ... ah ... choral person?  
Do you mind if I call you Doris?

CHORUS. No.

JOB. Any news, Doris? Are we ... are we in a comedy or tragedy?

CHORUS. Still hard to say. Let me ask you a few questions.

JOB. Certainly.

CHORUS. Are you a king or nobleman?

JOB. No.

CHORUS. That's good. Tragedies frequently happen to the nobility.  
Are you rich and prosperous?

JOB. Yes.

CHORUS. That's bad. Tragedy involves a fall from power or position, and prosperity can count as position. Are you a great warrior or hero?

JOB. No.

CHORUS. That's good. Tragedies also strike down mighty warriors and heroes. Are you prideful?

JOB. I'm proud of being a righteous man. I'm proud to be a servant of God.

CHORUS. That's bad. Pride is often considered a tragic flaw.

JOB. So which is it?—Tragedy or comedy?

CHORUS. It's not altogether clear yet. I was told by the god—

JOB. God? You spoke to God?

CHORUS. Well, yes. In fact, one of the doors *(Pointing.)*—that one—is his.

JOB. In my house? Here in my home? I am blessed beyond belief.

CHORUS. I suppose.

JOB. Will he appear to me? Will I see him?

CHORUS. Possibly.

JOB. You know what this means?

CHORUS. What?

JOB. I'm not in a tragedy. Isn't that wonderful? It must be a comedy!

*(He jumps up and hooks arms with her, dancing and whirling in a circle, until she slows him up.)*

CHORUS. Sir! Please! We don't know that yet!

JOB. But look at me—I'm happy. I've always tried to be righteous and avoid evil. And, now, I've been rewarded with a sacred portal.

CHORUS. You don't know much about Greek drama, sir.

JOB. Please, call me Job.

CHORUS. Very well—Job. Often a tragedy will start on a positive note and then go downhill.

JOB. What? Is that possible?

CHORUS. I'm afraid so.

JOB. But why give me all my good fortune and this divine door, and then take it away?

CHORUS. To increase the potential for pity and terror.

JOB. It must be working because I'm feeling pity for myself. And I'm starting to be terrified of what could happen.

CHORUS. No. Not you. The audience. The audience is supposed to feel pity and terror.

JOB. What audience?

CHORUS. If we're in a play, there's probably an audience.

JOB. Where?

CHORUS (*pointing toward the audience*). Probably out there somewhere.

JOB (*glaring out toward the audience*). Accursed snoops!

CHORUS. Now, Job, don't get yourself all worked up. This could still be a comedy. But if you get too bitter and angry—too serious—it may tip into tragedy.

JOB. Maybe you're right.

*(After a moment of mental adjustment, he puts his hands in his pockets and does a little two-step jig toward the door.)*

JOB (*cont'd*). Gosh, I sure am feeling good today. (*Winking at CHORUS.*) I bet it's a beautiful day outside. Think I'll go for a little stroll. Care to join me, Doris?

CHORUS. Ah ... no, thanks, Job. I don't think I should use any door but my own.

JOB. As you like. Maybe I'll check on the livestock.

*(JOB exits through his door.)*

*The CHORUS pauses a moment, glancing after JOB with a look of concern, and then leaves through her own door.*

*As she disappears, GOD steps out of his door, eyes the room carefully and then goes to the table and sits.*

*From time to time, he looks toward SATAN's door, with much the same impatience and table-thrumming that SATAN showed initially while waiting for him.*

*Finally, SATAN dashes in, smoke billowing and cape fluttering.)*

GOD. Now who's late?

SATAN. Was anyone here when you came in?

GOD. No. *(Beat.)* How about, "Sorry, creator of the universe, I was running a little behind"?

SATAN. No one? You saw no one?

GOD. No. *(Beat.)* Every time I start thinking you might be getting better—

SATAN. There was a stranger wearing a mask. Know who that was?

GOD. Who?

SATAN. I don't know. I'm asking you.

GOD. We saw one person with a mask earlier.

SATAN. Different mask. Different person.

GOD. No idea.

SATAN. No idea?

GOD. You said no foreknowledge or prescience, remember?

SATAN. Something weird is going on.

GOD. It's the human race—what can I tell you?

SATAN. Who wears a mask? Someone with something to hide.

GOD. Must be one of your people.

*(SATAN glances around.)*

SATAN. Is it me or are there a lot of doors in here? *(Pointing.)*

That's mine. That's yours. That's where the first masked person came from. That leaves two unaccounted for.

GOD. One could be Job's.

SATAN. That's right. And the other may be for the other masked person I saw. Although you'd think that all the people wearing masks would have the decency to use the same door. *(Beat.)* That the way you figure it?

**Proprioception**  
**(A Play About the Delicate Dance of Living)**

By  
MARILYN MILLSTONE

*Proprioception* was premiered by Rover Dramawerks (Carol M. Rice, Artistic Director) in Plano, Texas, on Sept. 9, 2021.

CAST:

MIKE SHEFFIELD ..... Jason R. Davis  
ESTHER ABRAMSON ..... Sue Doty-Goodner  
RANDY AYERS ..... Bennett Frohock  
KYLIE JASPER..... Jill Lightfoot

PRODUCTION:

Director ..... Carol M. Rice  
Set Design ..... Erica Remi Lorca  
Costume Design/Production Photography ..... Stacy Winsett  
Lighting Design ..... Kenneth Hall  
Sound Design ..... Robbi D. Holman  
Dramaturg ..... Kathy Pingel  
Associate Production Dramaturg ..... David Cockerell  
Stage Manager ..... Sara Jones

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:

*“Proprioception* was premiered in the American Association of Community Theatre’s AACT NewPlayFest by Rover Dramawerks in Plano, Texas.”

# **Proprioception**

## **(A Play About the Delicate Dance of Living)**

### **CHARACTERS**

**MIKE SHEFFIELD:** A 33-year-old Black man of average height, muscular. Loves to party but still graduated at the top of his doctoral class in physical therapy.

**ESTHER ABRAMSON:** An elegant 89-year-old woman who speaks with a slight German accent.

**RANDY AYERS:** A 27-year-old Caucasian graduate student, muscular, congenial. Also plays **FERNANDO**.

**KYLIE JASPER:** A 28-year-old Caucasian prima ballerina, slender, muscular, luminously attractive. Even though she is currently walking with a cane, she maintains the regal bearing of a dancer. Also plays **MIME** and **SAMANTHA**.

**TIME:** October 2015.

**PLACE:** A physical therapy building in Santa Fe, N.M.

**PRODUCTION NOTES:** The scenes involving Esther should be paced to reflect her background: she's an elderly lady from a slow and distant time and place. Also, transitions between scenes should be as brief, fluid and seamless as possible.

# Proprioception

## (A Play About the Delicate Dance of Living)

### PROLOGUE

*(Lights rise on a life-sized plastic skeleton of the human body, DC. Enter the MIME, dressed androgynously, perhaps in a black bodysuit with hair tucked in a black cap and wearing a full-face mask. The MIME circles the skeleton, then begins gently, curiously, lifting—then dropping—first a finger of the skeleton's right hand, then the wrist, forearm, arm. Turns the skeleton's head slowly, gently, curiously from side to side. Raises the skeleton's left foot, bends the ankle, then the knee. Tilts the torso; rights it. Waltz music begins to play. The MIME faces the skeleton like a lover; then slowly, tenderly lifts the skeleton's right arm and grasps the right hand; then MIME and skeleton begin to waltz—gingerly at first, in small steps, then in ever bigger, grander steps, until MIME and skeleton are waltzing quite gracefully around the stage. After perhaps three minutes, MIME waltzes the skeleton UC, drops the skeleton's right arm and exits. Waltz music ends.)*

### ACT I

#### SCENE 1

*(Lights rise on MIKE SHEFFIELD's physical therapy office. A life-sized plastic skeleton of the human body stands UC. A set of ankle weights, a large floor-exercise ball and a stationary bike are in a corner. Nearby is a freezer for cold wraps and a cabinet for warming wraps. DL is a desk with a swivel chair behind it. On the desk is a neat stack of papers, a laptop, a standing photo [with the image facing away from the audience] and a baseball mitt with a ball in it. Hanging on the wall behind the desk is a portrait of baseball great Roberto Clemente. DR are two patient therapy tables. ESTHER ABRAMSON is lying on her back on one of the tables, her legs bent with a bolster under her knees. MIKE is standing next to her. RANDY AYERS is near the warming cabinet, folding towels.)*



MIKE. Great job today, Esther. Lots of progress in your range of motion. We're gonna ice you down now, OK?

ESTHER. It's freezing in here already, my dear man. Why add insult to injury?

MIKE. You already know the answer.

ESTHER. Then why ask me the question?

MIKE. Just to get a rise out of you. Makes my day more entertaining.

*(MIKE pats ESTHER's arm affectionately and signals RANDY to come put an ice wrap around ESTHER's left knee.)*

MIKE *(cont'd)*. By the way, Esther, we keep the office a balmy seventy-six degrees.

ESTHER. Uh-huh. When's the last time you had your thermostat checked?

*(MIKE and ESTHER share a laugh.)*

RANDY *(to MIKE)*. Your next patient is here. You know who she is, right?

MIKE *(shrugging)*. I read up on her. Why?

RANDY. Nothing. It's just that she's—she's—

ESTHER. Randy, you're blushing!

RANDY. I am not, Esther. I got sunburned biking yesterday.

ESTHER. Uh-huh. It rained all day yesterday. *(Reaching out and patting RANDY's arm.)* I have bad knees, Randy. *(Touching her temple.)* Not Alzheimer's.

MIKE. Nice comeback, Esther. *(To RANDY.)* If she's here, please bring her in.

*(RANDY exits and returns with KYLIE JASPER, who walks slowly, with a cane.)*

ESTHER. My goodness! You're Kylie Jasper, aren't you?

*(KYLIE glances at ESTHER but does not reply.)*

ESTHER *(cont'd)*. I've seen you in everything. We have front-row seats! You were like floating lace in *Les Sylphides*. And in *Le Corsaire*—

MIKE. Esther! You know the rules! No fraternizing.

ESTHER. I just want Ms. Jasper to know how much I—

MIKE (*warningly*). Esther!

ESTHER (*hand up, indicating she has just one more thing she must say to KYLIE*). I just wanted to say that you're even lovelier close up than on stage. And I'm sure I speak for all your admirers when I say that I'm *so* sorry about what happened to you. (*To MIKE.*) There. I'm done. Wasn't such a crime.

*(ESTHER smiles at MIKE and lies back down. MIKE shakes his head and smiles, allowing ESTHER to have the last word.)*

MIKE (*to KYLIE*). Why don't we go sit at my desk. We'll have more privacy there.

*(MIKE gestures toward his desk, watches as KYLIE slowly walks there with her cane. He gestures for her to sit at the chair next to his desk—deliberately making no move to assist her—then sits in his chair behind the desk. RANDY busies himself with towel folding but steals glances at KYLIE.)*

MIKE (*cont'd*). Give me a moment, please, Ms. Jasper, to review your records.

*(MIKE pulls out KYLIE's file and tries to read. KYLIE interrupts.)*

KYLIE. Could you call me Kylie? "Ms. Jasper" makes me feel ... about as old as that woman over there. Don't bother reading my files; it doesn't matter. If I can't dance again before the end of the season, I'm out. They won't renew my contract.

MIKE. They actually said that to you?

KYLIE (*bitterly*). They don't have to. Do you know how many "sweet" supple young ballerinas there are in the *corps*, nipping at my heels, hoping I'll bow out?

MIKE. OK, let's try to ease up a little on the anger.

KYLIE. Oh yes, *let's*.

*(Beat.)*

MIKE. Pardon me?

KYLIE (*heatedly*). “Let us try to ease up on the anger?” Like you and I are in this together? We’re not. Not unless you’ve been getting up at dawn every day of your life to go to dance class. No sleeping in on Saturday mornings, no coming home after school to watch TV and eat a snack. Just practice, practice, practice, practice and then, two months ago, I finally get what every ballerina dreams of: I get promoted to principal dancer. Then this. (*Pointing to her injured leg.*) I’m twenty-eight years old and my career is over.

MIKE. That’s how you see it?

KYLIE. That’s how it is.

MIKE. And yet here you are.

(*MIKE and KYLIE make and hold eye contact.*)

MIKE (*cont’d*). I seem to have forgotten my manners. Let me introduce myself. I’m Mike Shef—

KYLIE. I know who you are, Doctor Sheffield. I read that big *Sunday* magazine profile about you. Said you’re the best at what you do.

MIKE. I don’t know if I’d say that.

KYLIE. Oh I see. You’re the modest type.

MIKE. Nope. Just don’t evaluate myself that way. (*Beat.*) So why don’t you tell me what’s led you to come here today.

KYLIE. You don’t read the papers? Watch TV news?

MIKE. I do. But I’m interested in your perspective.

KYLIE. On what?

MIKE. Well, for starters, tell me exactly how you tore your ACL.

KYLIE. *I* didn’t tear my ACL. My ACL *tore* when the puny little apprentice subbing for my partner dropped me during a lift.

MIKE. A freak accident, then.

KYLIE. Or an accident involving a freak.

MIKE. Well, it was an accident. At least we can agree on that.

KYLIE. A totally preventable accident, but yeah, OK an accident.

(*Beat.*)

MIKE. So your records indicate that the surgery to repair your ACL went well.

KYLIE. Really.

MIKE. In that there were no complications.

KYLIE. Right. The career I've been building since I was six ends in a single snap and ... there are no complications.

MIKE. There were no *physical* complications, nothing out of the ordinary that would impede your recovery.

KYLIE. That's a comfort to hear, Dr. Shef—

MIKE. Call me Mike. I'm not into titles. *(Beat.)* Your records also indicate that you started rehab at another practice in town that specializes in working with dancers. I'm more of a ... general p.t. guy. So what brings you here? *Why me?*

KYLIE. I read your reviews online. People said you work them hard but you're not judgmental. *(Long pause, then in a hoarse whisper.)* I'm sick of being judged.

MIKE *(quietly)*. I know what you mean.

KYLIE. I doubt it. No one calls you on the carpet if you gain an ounce. Or you don't quite raise your arm high enough. *(Demonstrating, with exaggerated effect, then dropping her arm.)* Do you think I'll be able to dance again?

MIKE. That depends. On you. On your body. How you heal. *(Beat.)* Do you want to dance again?

KYLIE. Wow. What a ridiculous question.

MIKE *(evenly)*. Is it?

KYLIE. I've just been promoted to principal dancer. Prima ballerina.

MIKE *(calmly)*. Yes. You mentioned that. *(Beat.)* Do you want to dance again?

KYLIE. Dancing is all I've ever done, since I was six. Like I said.

MIKE. That's a long time. Did you ever think about quitting?

*(Beat.)*

KYLIE. No. Well. Yeah. Sophomore year of high school. I quit for a while.

MIKE. Why then?

KYLIE. Jesus. You ask a lot of questions.

MIKE *(smiling again)*. Occupational hazard.

KYLIE. It was stupid. *(Beat.)* I wanted boys to like me, and boys like girls with breasts. Ballerinas can't afford to have breasts;

companies won't hire you if you do. They spoil the vertical line—you know, that anorexic look men are so drawn to. How come boys like girls with breasts and men like them flat as pancakes?

MIKE (*smiling*). Some men. (*Beat.*) Anyway, clearly you went back to dancing. Why'd you change your mind?

KYLIE. Boys turned out not to be worth it.

(*Beat.*)

MIKE. Uh-huh. (*Beat.*) Has to be more to it than that.

(*Beat.*)

KYLIE. You don't let up, do you?

(*MIKE smiles, waits.*)

KYLIE. So a couple of months after I quit, I ride my bike over to the dance school. Peek in through the window. All the girls are at the barre. Stretching. Giggling. Then Jonathan strides in, sits down. Tosses back those gorgeous blond curls. Strikes the first chord. The girls lift their chins. Press their shoulder blades back. Do their first *port de bras*. (*Demonstrating.*) I feel this stab of longing. That's when I realize: dancing isn't just something I do. It's *who I am*.

MIKE. I can work with that. (*Beat.*) Randy, I need to do a private exam on Kylie. Time for our dear Esther to go.

(*RANDY crosses to the table where ESTHER is lying.*)

RANDY. Spa day's over, my lady. Let me remove the wrap and help you down.

(*RANDY removes the ice wrap from ESTHER's left knee and extends an arm to help her off the table. ESTHER ignores his help and eases off the table by herself.*)

RANDY (*cont'd*). And that's why they call you all the greatest generation.

ESTHER (*tenderly touching RANDY's arm*). My dear, if only getting down off a table was all we had to do to earn that label. (*Smiling warmly at him.*) But thank you.

*(ESTHER leans down, puts on her shoes, unfolds her walker, stands up and smiles at everyone.)*

MIKE. Come brighten my day on Wednesday, Esther.

ESTHER. Wouldn't miss it for the world! *(To KYLIE.)* In my religion, we have a saying: may you go from strength to strength. *(Beat.)* I would wish that for you.

*(KYLIE offers a tight smile and nods, watches as ESTHER, shuffling with her walker, slowly exits.)*

KYLIE. How long has she been in rehab?

MIKE. That's confidential.

KYLIE. Jesus. I just wanna know how long—

MIKE. Kylie. Let's get you up on the table.

*(MIKE motions to RANDY for assistance.)*

KYLIE. Oh yes, "let's." Why can't you just say, "Get up on the table, Kylie?"

MIKE. Because you can't. Not—

*(Ignoring MIKE, KYLIE sets down her cane and attempts to mount the table on her own. MIKE stands, arms folded, watching, choosing not to intervene. KYLIE supports herself using her non-injured leg, but she cannot bend her right knee and so cannot push herself up onto the table. Without the cane, KYLIE begins to lose her balance. Just before she falls, MIKE catches her. He signals to RANDY. Together, they lift her onto the table, placing her on her back, legs extended.)*

MIKE *(to RANDY)*. We place a bolster under her injured knee, like so, *(Sliding a bolster under KYLIE's right knee.)* so there's no strain on it.

KYLIE. I'm sorry. I just—

MIKE *(maintaining composure, but just barely)*. I get that you're an athlete, Kylie, and athletes always feel the need to test their limits. But don't test *my* limits that way again. *(Beat.)* Now. I need to examine the surgical site.

RANDY. May I observe?

MIKE. You may, Mister Ayers. With Ms. Jasper's permission.

KYLIE. Ah! Now we're back to titles. *(With great pomposity.)* But of course, Mister Ayers. Permission granted! You see, Doctor Sheffield? I aim to please. Now could we *please* drop the formalities?

*(RANDY tries, unsuccessfully, to stifle a laugh. MIKE shoots him a "don't encourage her" look and begins gently probing the area around her right knee. KYLIE watches him carefully.)*

KYLIE. Look. There's something I should tell you. It's not in your records. I didn't report it to my surgeon. I was afraid he'd tell Sergei—the artistic director of the ballet. My boss. Promise me you won't tell him. He'll never let me come back if he finds out.

MIKE. Everything we say in here is confidential.

KYLIE. I was whisked off to the ER two weeks ago. By ambulance.

*(MIKE stops the physical exam, looks at her.)*

MIKE. What happened?

KYLIE. I was practicing stepping off curbs on my injured leg.

MIKE. Two weeks after surgery? Why would you do that?

KYLIE. Because that's what my physical therapist told me to do. *(With derision.)* Jeff-rey. *(Beat.)* I'm a professional dancer, Mike. Tell me to do a certain step, and I'll do it. So I did it. And this pain rips through me and everything starts spinning and I literally go deaf and it feels like I'm dying. *Really dying.*

MIKE *(quietly, glancing at RANDY)*. The vasovagal response. Did you faint?

KYLIE *(nodding)*. Passed out right on the street.

MIKE. Hit your head?

KYLIE. Yep. Got a knot the size of a ping-pong ball on my forehead.

MIKE. A concussion?

KYLIE. No. That was the first thing the ER guy checked. Should I sue him?

MIKE. The doctor?

KYLIE. No. Jeffrey.

MIKE. Your physical therapist.

KYLIE. Yeah. I went to see him a few days after it happened. He'd never even heard of—what did you call it?

MIKE. The vasovagal response.

KYLIE. Yep. That. He acted like it was all in my head.

*(MIKE returns to examining KYLIE's knee.)*

MIKE. Just so I know, are you in the habit of suing people?

KYLIE. No. I'm in the habit of dancing.

*(Beat.)*

MIKE *(carefully bending her injured knee)*. How does this feel?

KYLIE. Stiff. Sore. *(Beat.)* Have you ever seen me dance?

MIKE. I'm not really into ballet. But my assistant is, I think. Randy, you were certainly impressed when Kylie came through the door, weren't you?

RANDY *(deeply embarrassed)*. Uh. Yeah. I—greatly—admire ... I mean ... like Esther, I'm ... transported by the way you dance.

KYLIE *(almost hissing)*. Danced. Past tense.

MIKE. What are you doing to take your mind off this? Are you getting out?

KYLIE. You're joking, right? Have you noticed that I can't walk?

MIKE. I didn't ask if you were running marathons. I asked if your ... companion? Friends? Family? Are they getting you out?

KYLIE. My parents are back east. I don't want them to come out.

MIKE. Why not?

KYLIE. My father thinks I should be married by now and tending to babies. He'd be thrilled if I packed it in and came home.

*(KYLIE turns her head away.)*

MIKE. What about your mother?

KYLIE. All she'd do is feed me lots of food and sympathy. I don't want that either.

MIKE. What about friends?

KYLIE. Yeah. I thought I had a lot of them. It's called being part of a ballet company. *(Beat.)* They all came to the hospital right after it happened, brought me bouquets and feather boas and stuffed animals and things. It was all so ... theatrical. But after that ... nothin'. *(Quietly.)* Just nothin'.



MIKE. That must be hard on you. *(Beat.)* Let's test your quad strength.

KYLIE. Oh yes, *let's*.

MIKE *(smiling)*. Lie on your back, please. Can you do a slow straight-leg lift with your non-injured leg?

*(KYLIE quickly and easily raises her left leg straight up, nearly touching her knee to her nose.)*

MIKE. And slowly lower back down.

*(KYLIE complies.)*

MIKE. Good. Now your right leg.

KYLIE. I can't.

MIKE. Try.

*(KYLIE visibly exerts herself. Her right leg remains flat on the table.)*

MIKE *(cont'd)*. I see.

KYLIE. You said there were no complications!

MIKE. There aren't.

KYLIE. I don't believe you.

MIKE. I'm not asking you to believe me. I'm asking you to believe your body. The body has its own wisdom. Its own internal clock for healing. We just have to find ways to make the clock tick again. Meet your body where it is and work from there. *(Beat.)* I think the first thing we need to do is deal with your isolation. I don't think it's healthy for you. So. Kylie. I have a proposition for you.

KYLIE. Really. And we've only just met.

MIKE. I want you to do your first month of sessions jointly with Esther. Assuming Esther agrees to it, which I think she—

KYLIE *(incredulous)*. ESTHER? YOU MEAN THAT OLD WOMAN WHO WAS JUST HERE?

MIKE. I mean that LADY who just got down off that table by herself, at age eighty-nine, after having had knee replacement surgery a month ago. And who said she adores you.

KYLIE. This is ridiculous. Am I not *worthy* of your undivided attention?

MIKE. The way I see it, my job is to help you achieve the results you want. And in my professional opinion, I think you'll benefit from sharing time with Esther. I think she'll benefit too. In all the years I've been working with her, I've never seen her sparkle the way she did when she saw you today. So I think it's a win-win for everyone.

KYLIE. Win-win? What you're proposing is ... ludicrous! It's insulting!

MIKE. I'd call it unorthodox, which is what I'm known for. Insulting is what I'd say you've been to me since you arrived. Not that I mind. Just that I noticed. *(Beat.)* Look. I enjoy working with athletes of your caliber. But for this to work, it has to be on my terms, not yours. So ... Esther's appointments are Mondays and Wednesdays at nine a.m. Call the office if you'd like us to schedule you in. *(Smiling.)* If you'll excuse me, I need to prepare for my 10:30.

*(MIKE extends his hand to KYLIE, but she does not shake it.)*

MIKE *(cont'd)*. Mister Ayers, if you would please show Ms. Jasper out.

*(MIKE exits. KYLIE stands, leaning on her cane, looking in the direction where MIKE has exited, dumbfounded.)*

KYLIE. You have *got* to be kidding me!

## SCENE 2

*(Lights slowly rise on MIKE's physical therapy office. MIKE is sitting in his desk chair; RANDY across from him. They are drinking coffee.)*

RANDY. It isn't like Esther to be late. Has she ever been late before?

MIKE. Not that I can recall. But it gives me a chance to serve as your esteemed mentor. Your adviser emailed me that you've got a big exam on Friday. You feelin' good about it?

RANDY. Only if you agree to take it for me. *(Beat.)* I kind of clutch under pressure.

MIKE. So lemme quiz you.

*(RANDY groans.)*

# **The Cayuga Canal Girls**

By  
LAURA KING

*The Cayuga Canal Girls* received its world premier production at Phoenix Stage Company in Oakville, Conn., on Oct. 2, 2021.

CAST:

MARTA ..... Lori Poulin  
LUCY ..... Deborah Goodman  
MARIANNE ..... Cheyenne Walent  
JANE ..... KC Ross  
ELIZA ..... Teresa Alexandru

PRODUCTION:

Director ..... Ed Bassett

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:

*“The Cayuga Canal Girls* was premiered in the American Association of Community Theatre’s AACT NewPlayFest by Phoenix Stage Company in Oakville, Conn.”

# The Cayuga Canal Girls

## CHARACTERS

MARTA (w): Late 40s or early 50s, pure, uptight, meticulous.

JANE (w): Late 40s or early 50s, loyal, self-sacrificing, tough.

MARIANNE (w): Late 40s or early 50s, racy, bawdy, mouthy.

LUCY (w): Late 40s or early 50s, controlling, pacifying, smart.

ELIZA (w): A few years younger than the others, broken, lost, angry.

SETTING: Emily's living room and a bridge along a canal bank.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This play would not have been possible without the support of some outstanding theatres and theatre artists. Special thanks Ed Bassett, artistic director of Phoenix Stage Company, and Kathy Pingel, AACT dramaturg. The play was also developed through readings at the Baltimore Playwrights Festival and Onion Man Productions (Atlanta), as well as in a workshop class with Roland Tec.

Sincere thanks also go to the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation and the AACT NewPlayFest for supporting new work.

# The Cayuga Canal Girls

## ACT I

*(Seneca Falls, New York. Present day.*

*Lights up low on a bridge. Half of the bridge deck with a railing and one end of the bridge are seen. The end of the bridge leads down to a canal bank. The sound of a xylophone playing a slow version of "Far Above Cayuga's Waters." At the end of the song, the lights fade on the bridge, but the shadow of the bridge hovers over everything. Lights come up on a disheveled living room in front of the shadowed bridge. The living room can be realistic or suggestive but should project a claustrophobic feeling. Amid bags of trash and newspapers, the room contains old photographs, scrapbooks, yearbooks and other memorabilia [e.g., high-school letterman jacket, old corsages, graduation cap, etc].*

*MARTA is arranging the food brought in by neighbors. The doorbell rings.)*

MARTA (*grumbling*). Who is it now?

*(Another doorbell ring.)*

MARTA (*cont'd, calling out*). I can't come to the door. Just leave the food. I'll get it soon.

LUCY (*offstage*). Marta, is that you?

MARTA. Lucy?

LUCY (*offstage*). Can I come in?

MARTA. Are you alone?

LUCY (*offstage*). Yes. You invited me, remember?

MARTA. Then come in. Quick.

*(LUCY enters carrying an armful of flowers.)*

LUCY. What's going on?

MARTA. I didn't want anyone to see the place like this.

*(LUCY notices the mess.)*

LUCY. What happened?

MARTA. I know. It's a disaster. I've been cleaning all morning, but I don't seem to be getting anywhere. I clean one pile and there's another one underneath.

LUCY. Don't knock yourself out. Everybody will be over at the church anyway.

MARTA. You're forgetting about the dish-to-pass.

LUCY. Are we still doing that?

MARTA. Service, burial, dish-to-pass dinner. That's how it goes.

LUCY. How can I help?

MARTA. You're here. That helps. I'm really glad to see you.

LUCY. Me, too. It's been too long.

*(The women awkwardly move to hug, but the flowers are in the way.)*

MARTA. Those are beautiful.

LUCY. Picked them up at Wegman's on the drive here.

MARTA. Did it take you long?

LUCY. Felt like forever.

MARTA *(taking the flowers from LUCY)*. Here. Let me take those. I'll try to find a vase. Have a seat. I got the couch cleared off anyway.

*(LUCY sits, and MARTA puts the flowers on the table and looks for a vase.)*

LUCY. Why don't we all go to Red's Place instead?

MARTA. You can't go to a funeral and then to a bar! You sound like Marianne.

LUCY *(smiling)*. I guess I do.

MARTA. Have you seen her yet?

LUCY. They're on the way. Jane got a sub to cover her classes for the day, so they left bright and early.

MARTA. I'm sure Marianne loved that.

LUCY. I texted them to come by here first. We could all go over together.

MARTA. Sounds good. Maybe they can help me clean up, too.

LUCY. Did you get in touch with Eliza? Is she coming over?

MARTA. I told her to go right to the church.

LUCY. Good idea. She doesn't need to see all this.

MARTA. That's what I thought.

*(MARTA and LUCY are quiet for a moment.)*

LUCY. Marta, what happened?

MARTA *(looking around the room)*. I guess Emily hadn't felt like cleaning lately.

LUCY. Not the room.

MARTA. I know.

LUCY. Did they tell you anything? I couldn't find out much online.

MARTA. No. Just that it was an accident.

LUCY. Is that what they said?

MARTA. Likely an accident.

LUCY. Was there a chance that she—

MARTA *(abruptly)*. No.

LUCY. I'm sorry.

MARTA *(changing the subject)*. Can I get you a drink? I think there's some soda in the fridge.

LUCY. Sounds good.

MARTA. Be right back.

*(MARTA exits into the kitchen. LUCY looks around the room. She starts to go through the papers and trash, looking for something, although she's not sure what. MARTA re-enters carrying two glasses.)*

MARTA *(cont'd)*. All she has is seltzer.

LUCY. That's fine.

*(MARTA hands LUCY a drink. They sip their drinks.)*

MARTA. I can't believe you're really here.

LUCY. Me either.

MARTA. And look at you. So professional. I usually look better than this but, you know, the cleaning.

LUCY. You look good.

*(Awkward pause. More drink sipping.)*



MARTA. So, how are things going?

LUCY. Fine. Good.

MARTA. Really?

LUCY. Of course. Why?

MARTA. Emily mentioned she was worried about you.

LUCY. She did? When?

MARTA. She called me two weeks ago. Said something about you sounding frazzled. She wanted me to check on you.

LUCY. She caught me at a weak moment per usual.

MARTA. Everything OK?

LUCY. Just growing pains with the practice.

MARTA. How is your practice?

LUCY. Fine. Great. I had to hire another therapist to handle the patient load.

MARTA. Who'd have thought so many people needed mental health care?

LUCY. Lucky me.

MARTA. I guess.

*(More pausing and sipping.)*

LUCY. I'll miss those middle-of-the-night Emily phone calls.

MARTA. She always knew right when to call to get you at your most vulnerable.

LUCY. I know! I would tell her things I hadn't even told myself yet.

MARTA. She said she could always smell when bad things were about to happen.

*(MARIANNE and JANE are heard outside.)*

MARIANNE *(offstage)*. Hey, is anybody home?

MARTA *(whispering)*. It's Marianne.

LUCY. They made good time.

MARIANNE *(offstage)*. Are you guys in there?

MARTA. Why is she bellowing like that?

LUCY. Are you gonna let her in?

MARTA. You do it.

LUCY. You invited her.

MARTA (*with a tinge of desperation*). Please.

MARIANNE (*offstage*). Hurry up, Jane.

JANE (*offstage*). I'm coming. Stop yelling.

MARIANNE (*offstage*). Hey, open the door.

LUCY. Come on in.

*(JANE and MARIANNE enter carrying grocery bags.)*

LUCY (*cont'd*). You made it!

MARIANNE. Finally. Jane refused to take 80 so we drove 17 forever.

JANE. I wanted to take the scenic route. It was only a half-hour longer.

MARIANNE. At least she let me stock up before we left the city.

JANE. Give us a hand.

*(LUCY takes one of the bags from MARIANNE.)*

LUCY. What is all this?

MARIANNE. Fortification.

JANE. We were afraid nothing would be—

MARIANNE. Open on Sunday so—

JANE. We came prepared.

*(JANE and MARIANNE enter the room.)*

MARIANNE (*looking around*). What the hell happened to this place?

JANE. That's the first thing you say?

MARIANNE. Well, seriously, what the hell?

LUCY. Put your stuff down first.

*(LUCY takes a bag from MARIANNE and puts it on the table. JANE follows her and puts her bags on the table. MARTA and MARIANNE stare at each other.)*

LUCY (*cont'd*). You've got enough food here to feed the whole town.

JANE. Don't crush the half-moon cookies. I've been jonesing for them ever since we left the city.

MARIANNE. She wouldn't eat one until we got here. Said they were hometown cookies.

LUCY. Oh, Jane. I've missed you and your chocolate cravings.

JANE. I've missed you too, Luce. You look great.

*(LUCY and JANE hug.)*

MARTA. Doesn't she?

MARIANNE. Like the centerfold to *Enterprising Woman* magazine.

LUCY. I'm ready for my close-up, Mr. DeMille.

MARIANNE. What about me? Hasn't anybody missed me? Don't I look good?

JANE. I see you every day.

LUCY. Well, I don't. Give me a hug, you gorgeous thing.

*(LUCY and MARIANNE hug.)*

MARTA. I can't believe you're all here.

JANE. It's sure been a long time.

*(MARTA crosses to JANE and hugs her.)*

MARTA. It's wonderful to see you again, Jane.

JANE. It's good to see you, too. It's great to be back home.

MARIANNE. Speak for yourself.

JANE. You said you *wanted* to come back.

MARIANNE. I said I *needed* to come back.

LUCY. Well, I for one am glad you're both back.

JANE. Me too.

MARTA. How have you been, Jane? Anything new?

MARIANNE *(teasingly)*. Anyone new?

JANE. That's your department.

MARIANNE. You don't tell me anything.

JANE. Oh, please. You know me better than anyone.

MARIANNE. I don't know anything about your love life.

JANE. And I know everything about yours.

MARIANNE. I admit it. I play the field.

JANE. And I'm still waiting for that one woman.

LUCY. Only a matter of time.

MARTA *(awkwardly)*. Yes, I'm sure that you'll find ...

MARIANNE, LUCY & JANE. *Her*.

MARTA. Of course, her.

JANE. From your lips.

MARIANNE. And what about you, Marta? Any torrid romances?  
Any passionate affairs?

MARTA (*smiling shyly*). Not lately.

JANE. Well, you look good, Mart.

MARIANNE. Like the sweet little virgin we went to high school  
with. You could still be a sophomore.

MARTA. Lord have mercy. Once was enough.

MARIANNE. What about me? How am I holding up?

MARTA. You look more beautiful than the last time I saw you.

MARIANNE. “There is flattery in friendship.”

JANE. Don’t get her started on Shakespeare. She’s writing a new book.

LUCY (*to JANE and MARIANNE*). Sit down. You must be tired after  
your drive.

JANE. Once we got out of the city we were good. Made it in four—

MARIANNE. And a half—

JANE. Four and a half hours.

MARIANNE. Took us eighteen years to get out of the Falls and  
only four and a half hours to get back.

LUCY. You know no one ever really gets out of the Falls.

MARTA. Especially me.

*(LUCY, MARIANNE and JANE laugh.)*

LUCY. One thing I haven’t missed is this heat.

JANE. I love summer in the Falls.

MARIANNE. Outside, where it belongs. Turn the air on, Marta.

MARTA. I’ve tried. It’s not working.

JANE. It’s supposed be a record breaker this summer.

MARTA. Highest temperatures and worst drought in seventy years.

MARIANNE. Maybe we should do our rain dance.

JANE. Oh, please. No!

*(MARIANNE starts to sway and wave her arms.)*

LUCY. Oh, Lord. I forgot about that.

MARTA. What are you doing?

MARIANNE. The Seasons in Song and Dance!

JANE. Sixth grade. Don't you remember?

MARIANNE. I was April showers. Thank you very much.

*(MARIANNE curtsies.)*

JANE. Lucy and I were clouds. Marta, you were a mayflower, I think.

MARTA. Yes!

MARIANNE. And Emily was the maple tree.

JANE. That's right! She was supposed to stand strong and still center stage.

MARIANNE. But the minute the rain dance started, she had to join in.

*(The women laugh and then are silent for a moment.)*

LUCY. So, what time do we have to be at the church?

MARTA *(checking the time)*. Oh, shoot. We only have an hour. I've got to get this place cleaned up.

MARIANNE. Why?

LUCY. Dish-to-pass.

MARIANNE. Shit.

MARTA *(to MARIANNE)*. You don't have to stay if you don't want.

MARIANNE. I wouldn't miss it. Make sure you sit me next to Debra Watson.

JANE. That ought to keep conversation lively.

MARTA. We'll all be sitting on stacks of newspaper if we don't get this place in order.

*(MARTA distributes cleaning supplies to the women.)*

JANE. I just don't get it.

LUCY. What?

MARTA. Somebody give me a hand.

JANE. Does this seem like Emily to you?

MARIANNE. When was the last time you saw her, Marta?

MARTA. I came by about a week before the accident.

LUCY. Did you sense anything was wrong?

MARTA. She wouldn't let me in. She said the place was a mess and she was on her way out.

MARIANNE *(muttering)*. True enough.

LUCY. Anything else?

MARTA. For Pete's sake, Lucy. What do you want me to say?

There's no big mystery.

LUCY. I didn't mean to upset you.

MARTA (*obviously upset*). I'm not upset!

JANE. Maybe we should head over to the church now.

MARTA. I've got to clean up first.

MARIANNE. Why don't we just go to Red's Place after?

(*MARTA shoots LUCY a meaningful look.*)

LUCY. That idea's already been vetoed.

MARTA. I have to clean this up sometime.

MARIANNE. And this is your job because ... ?

MARTA. Nobody else was here.

LUCY. We're here now. We'll help you.

MARIANNE. But first we're having a drink and catching up.

(*MARIANNE rummages through the grocery bags.*)

MARTA. There's no time!

LUCY. One drink and then we'll get to work. I promise.

(*MARIANNE retrieves two bottles of scotch from the bags.*)

MARIANNE. Ladies, meet my good friends Johnny Walker and Glen Livet.

MARTA. Isn't it a little early?

MARIANNE. Special circumstances. It's not every day one of your best friends shuffles off this mortal coil.

(*MARIANNE retrieves plastic cups from the bags and pours drinks for all the women.*)

JANE. How's Eliza?

LUCY. We haven't seen her yet.

MARTA. I've talked to her a few times since the accident.

LUCY. She's meeting us at the church.

MARTA. Did any of you talk to her?

JANE. I don't have her number.

LUCY. I sent her a card.

MARIANNE. I'm better in living color.

LUCY. We'll talk to her today.

*(MARIANNE finishes pouring all the women drinks.)*

MARIANNE. Shall we toast?

MARTA. I don't know if that's appropriate. It's not a party.

MARIANNE. It's a farewell party.

LUCY. I don't think it would hurt to toast.

MARIANNE *(holding out her glass)*. May we be in heaven half an hour before the devil knows we're dead.

MARTA. That's what you want to say?

LUCY *(raising her glass to interrupt)*. To absent friends.

*(The women look at one another and then toast.)*

ALL. To absent friends.

*(They all drink except for MARTA. They are lost in thought for a moment.)*

MARTA. I think it'll be a nice service. I gave Father John lots of stories about Emily.

MARIANNE. I hope you cleaned them up first.

JANE. That'll be at your funeral.

MARTA. I think the turnout will be good. I used the high-school alumni list to make sure everyone knew.

MARIANNE. You didn't write one of your ridiculous invites, did you? "It seems like yesterday we were teens, so young and hopeful and full of dreams. But thirty years have passed and now we're old. So come bury Emily before she turns to mold."

MARTA. Of course, I didn't. Besides we're not burying her. She was cremated.

JANE. Really?

MARIANNE. Aren't you worried about papal disapproval?

MARTA. It's what Eliza wanted.

MARIANNE. I guess there are worse things. She could have wanted her stuffed and put up in the parlor.

MARTA (*ignoring MARIANNE*). It won't feel like a real funeral without a coffin.

MARIANNE. Or bronzed and placed in the high-school trophy case.

MARTA (*ignoring MARIANNE*). What choice did I have? Eliza's next of kin.

MARIANNE. Or propped up on the front porch so people could wave to her as they go into town.

MARTA. This isn't funny!

MARIANNE. Come on, Mart. It doesn't matter what they do with you when you die because we all end up in the same place anyway.

MARTA. I wouldn't be so sure if I were you.

MARIANNE. Touché.

MARTA. I'm only saying none of us really knows where we'll end up.

MARIANNE. No, what you're saying is that while you're floating on a cloud playing the harp, I'll be chain smoking in the fiery pits of hell.

JANE. I thought you quit smoking.

LUCY. All right, enough. Let's remember why we're all together again.

MARTA. We're not all together.

*(The women are quiet for a moment.)*

JANE. I think what matters is that we're here today for Emily.

MARIANNE. What does Emily care if we're here or not?

LUCY. Then let's be here for Eliza.

JANE. She's going to need us.

MARIANNE. You're right.

MARTA. I'm sorry. It's just that ever since they found her, things have been a mess. None of you were here. Not even Eliza. I was the only one.

JANE. Who found her?

MARTA. Robert MacLean.

MARIANNE. Bobby Mac? What's he been up to?

MARTA. Compulsively checking water levels to see if he can fish yet.

MARIANNE. Must have been a hell of a shock when he found Emily floating in the canal.

MARTA. He went straight to the sheriff's office and told Cal what he'd found. Cal didn't know how to get in touch with Eliza, so he came to me. They needed someone to officially identify the body.



# **Author Biographies**



Photo: Rosie Tracy.

## Pam Harbaugh

**Pam Harbaugh** was the theatre critic and arts writer for 25 years at *Florida Today* newspaper on Florida's Space Coast. While writing for the newspaper, she also ran the Space Coast's successful Junior Theatre Workshop program, which she had begun at the 13th Street Theatre in New York City. Now a freelance writer for *Vero News* and *Florida Theatre On Stage*, she devotes the bulk of her time to playwriting and directing. Her play *Casserole* was one of six winners in the 2020 national competition sponsored by the American Association of Community Theatre. Her earlier play, *Snowfall*, a drama, was a winner at the New Works Festival at the Henegar Center in Melbourne, Fla. She was the resident director for the inaugural season of Theatre on the Edge, which was awarded Best New Theater Company by the *Orlando Weekly*. She studied acting at the Lee Strasberg Acting Institute in New York City and received her theatre degree at the University of Central Florida. She continues to serve on the American Theatre Critics Association's Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award committee which hands out annual awards at the Humana Festival of New American Plays. She is the proud mother of two fierce daughters.

## Pat Montley

**Pat Montley**, a Dramatist Guild member, has had 20 plays published, separately or in anthologies or textbooks. Her plays have enjoyed readings at the Kennedy Center, Baltimore Center Stage, Rep Stage (Md.) and the Abingdon Theatre Company (New York City), and productions at Nebraska Repertory Theatre, Manhattan Theatre Source, The Clurman Theatre, Nat Horne Theatre, Baltimore Theater Project, Tacoma Little Theatre and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. She was one of 50 playwrights nationally commissioned by Center Stage to write a monologue for its “My America” project. Her work has been supported by a Kennedy Center Playwriting’ Intensive, by residencies at the Millay Arts (N.Y.) and the Djerassi Resident Artists Program (Calif.), and by grants from the Robert W. Deutsch Foundation, the Maryland and Pennsylvania Arts Councils, the Shubert Foundation, the Mary Roberts Rinehart Fund, and Warner Brothers. Montley has a Ph.D. in theatre from the University of Minnesota and has taught playwriting in Baltimore at Johns Hopkins University, Goucher College and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and in Pittsburgh at Chatham University, where she chaired the theatre department.



Photo: Patricia Roseman.

## Mark Cornell

**Mark Cornell** has had more than 85 of his plays produced in theatres around the world. Most recently, his AACT NewPlayFest award-winning play *On Pine Knoll Street* premiered at The Sauk in Michigan. His play *The Other Half* won the 2019 Charles M. Getchell New Play Contest and will premiere in the spring of 2022. In the fall of 2019, his play *Carolyn Adams* premiered at The ArtsCenter in Carrboro, N.C. Other plays include: *Sprucehaven B* (Rising Sun Performance Company at FRIGID Festival), *At Birth* (Hornel New Works Festival at Phoenix Theatre) and *Two Turtle Doves* (Common Ground Theatre in Durham, N.C.). His short plays have won numerous awards, including the L.W. Thomas Award for *Bad Thing* at Theatre Oxford, best playwright at the Pittsburgh New Works Festival and the Short+Sweet Award in Brisbane, Australia, for *The Rental Company*. He recently finished shooting his first feature film, *The Invite*, which he wrote and directed. He is an ensemble member with Moonlight Stage Company, playwriting partner with Paul Newell at Full Nelson Theater, and co-creator of Marked Men Films with Mark Jantzen. Cornell has an M.F.A. in playwriting from UCLA and lives in Chapel Hill, N.C.

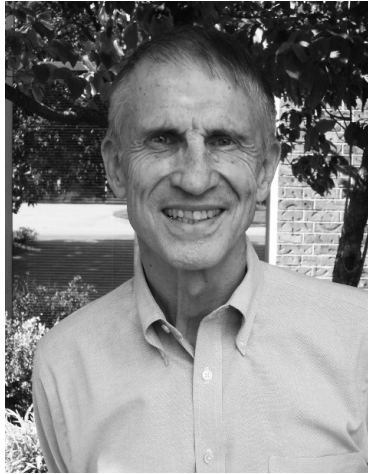


Photo: Franklin Everts.

## Dan Borengasser

Many of **Dan Borengasser**'s plays have been produced or have received staged readings. Four of his plays (*A.R@UNI.GOV*, *The Kindness of Strangers*, *The Canterbury Tales Revisited* and *Sense & Insensibility*) have been published. Borengasser's plays have been produced in theatres across the country from New York to Los Angeles, as well as in Canada, Mexico, India, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and the Philippines. Several short screenplays have been produced, as well as a feature-length film he helped write titled *The Donor Conspiracy*. A number of radio plays have been produced and broadcast nationally. For more information, visit: [www.danborengasser.com](http://www.danborengasser.com).



Photo: Bill Apter.

## Marilyn Millstone

**Marilyn Millstone's** playwriting is rooted in her background as a news and feature journalist. Her full-length dramas, one acts and monologues have been produced by Barrington Stage Company (Mass.), Birdhouse Theatre (Ga.), Chagrin Valley Little Theatre (Ohio), Fells Point Corner Theatre (Md.), Silver Spring Stage (Md.), Hudson Warehouse (N.Y.), the Rockford New Play Festival (Ill.), the End of the Road Festival (Ala.) and the Short+Sweet Festivals in Sydney (Australia) and Dubai. Millstone's first play, the semi-historical drama *The Sculptress*, was produced by Baltimore's Fells Point Corner Theatre and won two prizes at the 2011 Baltimore Playwrights Festival. Her award-winning short comedy *Compos Mentis* (produced six times in America and twice abroad) has recently been published by Art Age Publications. Two of Millstone's monologues (including one from *Proprioception*) were selected for *Best Women's Monologues of 2019*, published by Smith & Kraus. She holds an MFA in playwriting from Spalding University in Louisville, Ky.



## **Laura King**

**Laura King** is an award-winning playwright with an MFA in playwriting from the Playwrights Lab at Hollins University. She is a proud member of the Dramatists Guild and has served as the guild's Atlanta representative. King's plays are available at Stage Rights, YouthPLAYS and Applause Books. For more information, please visit: *[laurakingplaywright.com](http://laurakingplaywright.com)*.