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Dramatic Publishing

DELILAH'S WISH

By

MARIAH L. RICHARDSON



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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(DELILAH'S WISH)

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For
Tonda Case-Daffner
and all who have a wounded inner child, singing.

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Delila's Wish was commissioned by Metro Theater Company in 2007.

Delila's Wish premiered at the Lee Auditorium/St. Louis History Museum, February 27 and 28, 2010. The director was Nicholas Kryah, producing director was Carol North, production manager was Sarah Rugo, sound design by Adam Rugo.

CAST

Mariah L. Richardson

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director Nicholas Kryah
Producing Director Carol North
Production Manager Sarah Rugo
Sound Design Adam Rugo

DELILAH'S WISH

CHARACTERS *

DELILAH an eight-year-old girl

* Up to 7 male and 6 female actors may be added to play silently to give presence and/or sometimes to speak words that are attributed to them by Delilah.

It's summer, and Delilah's mother has been serving in the war in Iraq since New Year's. All the fun things; the orphan home parade, bomb pops, cicadas singing are happening and Delilah has to do them without Momma. But there is plenty happening in the neighborhood and it's one season closer to Momma coming home.

SUMMER – MORNING

(We hear the moslem call to prayer, African drumbeats, Jewish prayers, gospel music playing on the old-time portable boom box radio. The radio sits on the window-sill. Then we hear the voice of the radio announcer.)

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Another roadside bomb killed six US soldiers in Baghdad today. We want to send our prayers to those brave men and women from the reserve unit out of Lambert Field for their safe return. The forecast for today... Hot. Expect temperatures in the uppers nineties. The Cards are on the road...

(Delilah is up in the tree. She is adjusting the yellow newspaper sleeves that she has tied to some of the branches. She comes down out of the tree, takes a sip of water from her canteen, turns off the radio.)

DELILAH

Another bomb. I wish they would *just* stop. Why are people like that? And why do boys always want to blow things up. Like the other day, Stanley was finally off of punishment and we was sitting here and I was reading him a story, since he don't read so good and he likes for me to read to him. In the story they lived happily ever after. And Stanley says, "What about the dragon? Do they go back and kill the dragon?" I say, "No...the fairy prince turns into a cow and gives magic milk." Stanley says, "Aah, that's just stupid." I say, "That's the story." And we get into this big ol' argument. He says they should go back and kill the

dragon with some M-16s and a hand grenade and...I go, "Stanley, don't say that. Killing isn't good. The dragon is just doing what dragons do. Maybe if we didn't go into the place where the dragon lives then he wouldn't attack us." He says, "You're suppose to kill the dragon. And conquer the land. Like when the Northside gang comes over here, Poochie and Roy Roy say..." And I stop him right there. Roy Roy and Poochie, that's why he don't get to come outside now. Then he gets to talking about being a man when he just ten years old. I had gotten a letter from Momma and I showed it to him. My momma says that a lot of kids be getting killed in Iraq. Stanley say, "What she say about the bombs? I betcha they blow up everything. Kabloom!" And I just wanted to hit Stanley in the head with my book but I don't. I just wish that my momma was home. That why I'm tying these yellow ribbons to this tree. Well, they really newspaper sleeves but they yellow.

(She begins to sing.)

Tree, tree this is my tree. Tree of peace for Momma and me. Dandelion snow and purple fire carry my words as cicadas song. Summer song of peace.

(She stops singing.)

"I love you, Delilah. And I'll be home as soon as I can"... that's what Momma said when she left. And, I'm here. Here in St. Louis. St. Louis, Missouri. Named after a French king, King Louie the ninth. But, everybody call our city St. Louis. I don't know why. I don't know no French people. Just black and white and Mexican and some other

kind but no French. You know what? We went to the Annie Malone Children's Home parade the other day. That's the black people parade. Grandmomma said that when she was little she marched in that parade. She was a majorette. She was twirling a baton. She showed me her old baton but I couldn't do it. I just kept dropping it and then I almost hit myself in the head when I threw it in the air. At the parade we saw all the high school bands and drum and bugle kids and the black cowboys on real horses. We had fun. It's hot. Yellow sun cooking red bricks hot. Really, really hot. I had to hurry up and eat my bomb-pop, it was melting right down my hands. That how it is in St. Louis in the summer. But it feels good when you sit under the trees in the shade. Momma says that there aren't many trees in Iraq. But our tree keeps me cool whenever it gets too hot. I'd sit here all day if Grandmomma would let me. Momma coming home by time the leaves change and the cicadas stop singing. I come here after I fall deep asleep inside of me and I dream and sing and dance.

I listen to the cicadas singing in one big voice or in a round like the drums in Junebug's drum circle. Junebug is our neighbor. I'm gonna marry him when I grow up if Stanley don't stop being on punishment. Junebug is twenty-two and he got a baby boy. Grandmomma take care of him at night when Junebug go to school. Junebug raising him all by himself. His girlfriend didn't want the baby but Junebug did. So, Grandmomma helps. I help too because he is so cute and he go right to sleep after we give him his bath. He a good baby. I bring him out here to sit with me under the tree but he try to eat the dirt and stuff. But I think he likes the tree. When he get big we gonna carve his initials in it

too. Mr. Horowitz's initials are in it. And, Miss Lily's. That's Mr. Horowitz's wife. She dead. This tree kinda belong to all of us.

The Doblinas live on the other side of the lot. They told Grandmomma they was gonna have the tree cut down. And Grandmomma got the city on them and they found out that they can't just cut down people's trees just because. They kinda mean. Mr. Horowitz got really mad at them. Say they is pushy. Said they was trying to take over the neighborhood. With fancy cars and Starbucks. Mr. Horowitz? Mr. Horowitz lived on this block almost a hundred years. He always got stories to tell. Like when he marched with Martin Luther King and he helped black people get a chance to vote. He went to Alabama and Mississippi and right here. Grandmomma helped, too. She didn't go to Mississippi and Alabama, she just helped here. That was back in history. His family moved here before there were Jews. He's eighty years old. He and Grandmomma drink coffee every day. Somebody keep stealing his newspaper. Don't leave nothing but the plastic sleeve. I tie them on the tree for the soldiers and for momma. Grandmomma probably gonna send me to the store to get him another one.

To Mr. and Mrs. Abu's store. They talk funny 'cuz they from another country. I thought it was where Momma is, but Mrs. Abu said they is from Iran and not Iraq. But they are right next to each other. They moslems. Not the kind that sell bean pies and wear bow ties. The kind like Mr. Abu. He be praying all the time. He got a special rug. I think it could have some kind of magic like a magic carpet like in *Aladdin*. I don't know but he praying all the time.

Mr. Horowitz don't like them. He say, "Aah those people." He says that Moslems don't like Jews or Christians. Say they kill you in your sleep. Blow up your car with a bomb. Grandmomma car in the shop. We ride the bus right now. He kinda grumpy. When he say stuff about the Abus, Grandmomma get on him. "God don't like ugly." That's what she say to me when I get salty and say mean stuff. But, I don't say mean stuff about the Abus because Mrs. Abu is always nice to me. When they first moved over here and opened their store I was a little baby. And I didn't know that they could blow up your car. And when I was big enough to go to the store by myself Mrs. Abu helped me count my change. And she sent some coffee from Iran for Grandmomma to try. I asked Mrs. Abu why they hate Jews and Christians. Grandmomma says we are Christians and I don't want to be blown up. Mr. Abu come out from the back of the store. I guess he was finished praying and he said that they don't hate Jews and Christians. That where they come from they all lived together. He said he hate ignorance. That made me think of Roy Roy and Poochie. Grandmomma say they ignorant 'cuz they think the streets is better than going to school or getting a job. They in jail now.

Two weeks ago on Saturday morning I was watching my cartoons when there was this loud boom. We all ran outside. Me, Grandmomma, Mr. Horowitz. Stanley peeked out the screen door. He was still on punishment. Junebug was coming down the street with the baby. We looked down at the corner and the Abus' front window on their store was all broken out and Mr. Abu was trying to put out the fire. Mrs. Abu was crying and there were police cars and the

fire truck came. I was scared. People were running. Grandmomma told me to stay in front of the house. I wanted my momma. I just started crying 'cuz I was still in my pajamas and didn't know what was going on. All I could think about was that the war was here. I ran to my tree, closed my eyes and kept wishing real hard. Junebug came and got me and picked me up. I was so scared. I asked him if this was the war. He said no, it was just Roy Roy and Poochie. It turns out that they was being mean to the Abus because Mr. Abu told them they couldn't come into the store no more 'cuz they be stealing. They called Mr. Abu a terrorist. And, they tried to blow up his store. What's a terrorist? Momma is suppose to be fighting them. I don't get it, she could just come home and fight them here. Junebug said that Roy Roy and Poochie was acting like fools. That really scared me.

Want to hear a joke? I love this joke. Ooh, ooh... What did the dad tomato say to the son tomato when he was lagging behind? Ketchup! I crack me up.