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Dramatic Publishing



COULD ANGELS BE BLESSED

by

NANCY KIEFER



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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(COULD ANGELS BE BLESSED)

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COULD ANGELS BE BLESSED

**A Play in Two Acts
For Five Women and One Man**

CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

LUCY CLIFFORD . . Caroline's very shy daughter; early 20s
LOTTIE DUGAN a woman in her 40s
CAROLINE CLIFFORD a neighbor; in her 40s
POLLY RALEIGH Lottie's sister; in her 40s
MARLENE RALEIGH . Polly's attractive daughter; early 20s
DOMENIC COZZA an attractive man, late 20s

SCENE:

**The adjoining backyards of the Raleigh, Clifford
and Dugan houses on the west side of Cleveland.**

TIME:

Summer, 1945.

Act One - Scene One: Shortly before dawn
- Scene Two: Later that same day

Act Two - Scene One: The next morning
- Scene Two: Later that same day
- Scene Three: The next day shortly before dawn

COULD ANGELS BE BLESSED held its world premiere production at the Kulas Auditorium, Department of Communications, John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio, March and April 1993 with the following artists:

Cast

Lucy Clifford Jennifer V. Wagner
Lottie Dugan Sarah Morton
Caroline Clifford Dianne Millstein
Polly Raleigh Lisa Cocchiarale
Marlene Raleigh Carrie Lichtman
Domenic Cozza Andrew Zucca

Director James F. Beck
Assistant Director Patrick J. Scullin
Scenic and Lighting Designer James F. Beck
Stage Manager James E. Parker
Costume Design Mark Kobak
Assistant Costume Design Naima Hadden

ACT ONE

SETTING: *We are in the adjoining backyards of the Dugan, Raleigh, and Clifford houses.*

AT RISE: *It is shortly before dawn. LUCY is sitting alone in the yard, looking up at the sky. She has a book of Edgar Allan Poe's poetry on her lap.*

LUCY. "And all my days are trances...and all my nightly dreams are where thy grey eye glances...and where thy footstep gleams...in what ethereal dances...by what eternal streams."

(Enter LOTTIE. She crosses the yard to the Clifford porch; does not see LUCY in the dark. When she sees her, she is startled.)

LOTTIE. Lucy! You scared the life out of me!

LUCY. Why?

LOTTIE. Why?! Because I didn't expect anybody to be sitting out here in the dark at three o'clock in the morning. That's why.

LUCY. I sit out here all the time at night, Mrs. Dugan.

LOTTIE. At *night*, yes. But at three in the morning?

LUCY. It's later than three. Look at the sky. The stars are fading, getting dimmer. It's close to morning.

around. And men like her. Not the kind of men I'd like to see her with, but still, men like her. Now Lucy...well, Lucy'd faint if a man looked at her. As a matter of fact, she *did* faint when that Winn boy tried to kiss her.

CAROLINE. She didn't *faint*. She got a little dizzy, but she did *not* faint.

POLLY (*ponders CAROLINE; hesitates*). I have a theory about Lucy. You probably won't want to hear it, but I think you need to.

CAROLINE. Well, if I *need* to hear it, then you better go ahead and tell me.

POLLY. There are some women who, for reasons still unknown to modern science, are afraid of—(*In a hushed voice.*) The marital embrace.

CAROLINE (*laughs*). The *marital* embrace?

POLLY. Lower your voice, for heaven's sake, Caroline! That's what the nuns at my high school called—(*Whispers.*)...*sex*. I think there's a term for those women.

CAROLINE (*laughs*). Vampires?

POLLY. No! (*Whispers.*) *Frigid*. I think Lucy is one of those women. She's petrified of men and marriage because it would force her to be...well, *intimate* with someone.

CAROLINE. I was *petrified* on my wedding night, Polly.

POLLY. Oh, that's different! So was I! And I'm sure Lottie was, too. All good Catholic girls are terrified on their wedding night. If they're not, that means they've had a little too much experience before takin' their vows. (*Sarcastically.*) I suspect Marlene won't be too *shocked*, huh?

CAROLINE (*laughs*). I can't believe we're sitting outside in our nightgowns at six o'clock in the morning, talking about *sex*.

POLLY. Don't say that word, Caroline! What will the neighbors think?

CAROLINE. I don't know about your *theory*, Polly, but I will admit that Lucy's always been a...a strange girl. Never wanted to go out on a date. Never mentioned getting married someday or being a mother. The only man she ever seemed comfortable around was Freddie. There was a time when I hoped...oh, never mind.

POLLY. You hoped what?

CAROLINE. I hoped...that maybe Lucy and Freddie—

POLLY (*cuts her off*). Don't say it!

CAROLINE. Don't say what?

POLLY. Don't say that you hoped Lucy and Freddie would get married.

CAROLINE. The thought did cross my mind. They seemed so *suited* for each other. They were both so quiet and shy and they spent so much time together. Freddie would go to the library and wait for Lucy to finish, then walk her home. I can still see the two of them coming down the street together. They'd sit in the yard at night and read poems to each other. They seemed so...*right*, somehow.

POLLY. Your daughter's *big* problem is she's the *right* kind of woman for a man like Freddie Dugan, Caroline. I don't know about that letter my sister found, but you know as well as I do that Freddie didn't like girls. (*Exits.*)

(*LUCY enters.*)

LUCY. I wish Mrs. Raleigh would leave me alone.

CAROLINE. She means well, Lucy. She just wants to see you happy. (*Takes LUCY's face in her hands.*) You look so tired, you poor thing. Have you been up all night?

LUCY. Yeah...my room was hot, so I came out here to sit.

CAROLINE. Lucy...have you thought any more about going back to work? Mr. Claxton said you could come back any

time, and you could work part-time if you like. He's such a nice man. I met him downtown just last week and he said the 19th century classics and poetry department of the library just isn't the same without Miss Clifford and her *marvelous* sense of organization.

LUCY (*ignoring CAROLINE'S remark*). I saw Freddie again last night, Ma.

CAROLINE. You saw Freddie?

LUCY. I told you that I see him sometimes.

CAROLINE. I can't tell you how much it troubles me when I hear you say that, Lucy.

LUCY. He was sitting on his back steps, reading. I could hear his voice. He said, "and all my days are trances...and all my nightly dreams are where thy grey eye glances—"

CAROLINE. You realize that it's just your imagination, don't you?

LUCY. ...He seems so real.

CAROLINE. Freddie's dead, Lucy. He's buried in Riverside Cemetery a few feet away from your father.

LUCY. I know, but he promised me he'd come back. In every letter he wrote me, he promised he'd come back. He's here, Ma.

CAROLINE. You have twenty-two years worth of memories of Freddie. *That's* what's here. Those memories.

LUCY. You remember the night he came back. I knew he was dead before the telegram came. He came to see me, Ma. And you smelled the roses. You said so yourself. It was January. There were no flowers in the yard.

CAROLINE. That was a very strange coincidence, Lucy, and that's all.

LUCY. No, it wasn't! He came back just like he promised. Mrs. Dillon said that when an angel passes by you, they leave the scent of roses in the air.

CAROLINE. When you start to talk like this, I get very afraid.

LUCY. But you smelled the roses, too!

CAROLINE. I will not discuss this again! We talked and talked about this and we decided that you had a peculiar dream and it was just a coincidence that the telegram came the next day. And I will not discuss it again! (*Exits into house.*)

LUCY. But you smelled the roses, too. (*Watches her mother disappear into the house.*)...but you smelled the roses, too.

SCENE TWO

SETTING: *The adjoining backyards.*

AT RISE: *It is later that day. MARLENE, dressed for work, enters and knocks on the Clifford's back door. LUCY comes to the door.*

MARLENE. My mother said to tell you to get ready to go. They're leaving in half an hour.

LUCY. To go where?

MARLENE. That stupid Moose Club. Where else? That's the only place they ever go.

LUCY. I already told her I didn't want to go.

MARLENE (*sits down on the steps and starts to apply her make-up*). Since when does my mother take no for an answer? Come out here, Lucy. I got somethin' to ask you. (*LUCY comes out on porch.*) What do you think of Calvin?

LUCY. Calvin?

MARLENE. Yeah, Calvin Kramer. You seen 'im around here. I introduced you to 'im once.

LUCY. Oh, that guy with the red hair?

MARLENE. Yeah, he's got curly red hair and a moustache. What did you think of 'im?

LUCY (*laughs*). He reminds me of a pirate.

MARLENE. Now that you mention it, he does kinda look like a pirate. Do ya like 'im?

LUCY. Oh, yeah, Marlene. He seems like he'd be a lot of fun.

MARLENE. ...He's a lot a' fun all right. (*Lowers her voice.*) If I tell you somethin', you got to promise not to tell your mother.

LUCY. I'm not a blabbermouth.

MARLENE. I know, so that's why I'm tellin' you this. Calvin asked me to marry him.

LUCY. Did he really? You haven't known him very long.

MARLENE. What's that got to do with anything?

LUCY. Well, what did you say?

MARLENE. ...Nothin' yet. I ain't sure I wanna settle for him. I think I can do better than Calvin. There's this other guy I like. He comes into the bar every Friday night and last week he brought me flowers. He's got a better job than Calvin, too. He's in detective school.

LUCY. It doesn't sound like you're ready to get married, Marlene.

MARLENE. Oh, I ain't. Not right this second. I just told ya this in case I change my mind and I *do* marry Calvin. We're gonna run off and do it. Probably go up to Niagara Falls. After I leave, you can tell my mother if you want to.

LUCY. Why don't you just tell her yourself?

MARLENE. Oh, imagine what she'd say! She thinks Calvin's the scum a' the earth.