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Dramatic Publishing

“A bracing vision of the subtle intimidation and outright hostility faced by women who bring charges of sexual assault in the Army.” —Charles Isherwood,
The New York Times

One Night



Drama
by
Charles Fuller

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“Offers a glimpse into the psyches of wounded veterans and the immense challenges they face as they return to civilian life, their souls and families shattered.”

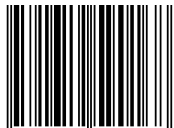
Maryland Theatre Guide

One Night

Drama. By Charles Fuller. *Cast: 2m., 1 to 2w.* After surviving a fire in a homeless shelter, two Iraqi Freedom vets, Alicia G. and Horace Lloyd, are sent to a motel where they will be safe for the night. Both are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder—Alicia as a consequence of a gang rape by three fellow soldiers while in Iraq and Horace from battlefield pressure as an Army sniper. They have been together for more than nine months, Horace acting as a kind of helpmate to Alicia, who was so traumatized by the rape that she can't even consider having a normal relationship with a man. Exhausted and having reached a motel they thought would provide them with shelter, Alicia and Horace find themselves instead in a highway bordello. Here, throughout one night, old wounds are opened and the truth of events they both hoped were over emerge from the past to color the rest of their future. *Unit set. Approximate running time: 1 hour, 35 minutes. Code: OAI.*

Contemporary Theater Festival at Shepherd University at Frank Center Stage, Shepherdstown, W.V., featuring (l-r) Jason Babinsky and Kaliswa Brewster. Photo: Seth Freeman. Cover design: Susan Carle.

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One Night

By

CHARLES FULLER



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(ONE NIGHT)

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“Originally commissioned and developed by Cherry Lane Theatre, New York, N.Y., Angelina Fiordellisi, Artistic Director, James King, Executive Director.”

In memory of my son
Charles H. Fuller, 3rd

One Night was commissioned by Cherry Lane Theatre in New York City and produced by Cherry Lane Theatre and Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre. The play opened Nov. 6, 2013, and closed Dec. 3, 2013.

Cast:

Horace Grantham Coleman
Medic/Lieutenant/Captain/ Interviewer K.K. Moggie
Major/State Trooper/
Troop 1/Fire Marshal Matthew Montelongo
Meny Cortez Nance Jr.
Alicia G. Rutina Wesley

The play was subsequently produced by the Contemporary American Theatre Festival, at Shepherd's University in Shepherdstown, W.Va. The play opened July 11, 2014, and closed Aug. 3, 2014.

Cast:

Meny Willie C. Carpenter
Horace Lloyd Jason Babinsky
Alicia G. Kaliswa Brewster
Medic/Lieutenant/Captain/Interviewer Shauna Miles
Major/State Trooper/Troop 1/Fire Marshall Brit Whittle
Troop 2 Matthew Burcham

One Night

CHARACTERS

ALICIA G: Veteran of Iraq, 27- to 39-year-old woman. Homeless, soft-spoken, suffering from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a consequence of serving in Iraq as the lead non-commissioned officer (NCO) in a supply convoy and the victim of sexual assault by her comrades in arms. A trained army sergeant, she is troubled by flashbacks but through therapy is struggling to overcome the psychological damage. She should never be portrayed as weak or unprincipled.

HORACE LLOYD: Veteran of Iraq, 24- to 30-year-old man. Homeless as well, macho, mildly brash but can be gentle and caring. A sniper also suffering from PTSD as a consequence of serving two tours of duty in Iraq. He has been given commendations for the number of “kills” he has accumulated but is tormented by fear of being captured or fired on by the enemy.

MENY: Former police officer, 50- to 60-year-old man or woman. A shrewd, intelligent, businessperson and seasoned former vice cop who owns and operates the motel where Horace and Alicia wind up.

ARMY MAJOR / STATE TROOPER / TROOP 1 / FIRE MARSHAL: Played by same actor, 30- to 40-year-old man.

MEDIC / LIEUTENANT / CAPTAIN / INTERVIEWER: Played by same actor, 25- to 35-year-old woman.

Other Characters:

TROOP 3

MAN'S VOICE

WOMAN'S VOICE

TROOP 2

AUTHOR'S NOTE

One Night takes place in real time and was written to be performed by characters of every color, ethnic and racial group serving in the all-volunteer United States Military. Horace and Alicia can be members of any color, ethnic or racial group. Meny, as well the other characters, may also be of any color or ethnic group.

The staging of the play ought to be accomplished as simply as possible. The sound of trucks and the lighting are major components of the play's setting. The sound must be carefully applied without allowing it to overcome dialogue, while the lighting should always be used to create past time and the introduction of Alicia's apparitions and Horace's disturbing memories. I would caution the use of photo images or music as they relate to the "rape" scene and flashbacks.

The two actors who have multiple roles should bring different personalities to the characters they are portraying. A lieutenant is different from a private first class (PFC), a state trooper from a fire marshal, etc.

The voices from the adjacent room are another layer of the play and should always be heard by the audience. The overall music of the play should be hip-hop. In the case Meny is a woman, her remarks to Alicia should relate to her dead daughter.

One Night

AT RISE: 2008. *Night. A motel room somewhere along a road parallel to a highway in the United States. The room is stark but not rundown. Onstage are two twin beds, both made-up, with an end table between them. On the end table are a phone and a lamp with a skewed lampshade. A card table, with fold-up chairs on opposite sides of it, sits on a rug, C. A single chair sits beside the rear wall and the bed at L. It is upstage of a window with blinds, an entry door and light-switch at L. Offstage, a blinking blue neon light reflects every now and then through the window in no particular pattern. A small portable flat-screen TV is somewhere in the room. UR of the beds is a door that leads into a bathroom, which is only visible when the light inside it is turned on. Inside, we can see what looks like the top of a water closet, faucets, sink, rim of a tub and full-frame of a square mirror; all of which is real to the players. There is a half used roll of paper towels and bar of soap on the sink. A box of tissues and two rolls of toilet paper are on the floor outside the bathroom door. At R, there is a free space that leads offstage. Before stage lights rise, in the distance, we hear the fading hum of big-rigs and small trucks that rush by so closely and with a roar so loud, they can drown out conversation, until they begin to recede into the distance. This sound will occur sporadically throughout the play from L to R and R to L. As the lights rise, voices approach the entry door. All action in the play is seamless.*

MENY (*offstage, friendly*). Everybody calls me *Meny*—short for *Mensing*—Doug *Mensing*. Dampness swells the *frickin'* door.

(Slight pause. There is some minor struggling with the door, and then we see the doorknob turn.)

HORACE *(offstage)*. Why doesn't my cellphone work?

(The door suddenly opens.)

MENY *(offstage)*. Low clouds—we're in a valley—sometimes you can't call out but for some reason or other, you can get calls *in*—explain that one?

(MENY, a low-key, smiling, middle-aged person with greying hair, wearing a hat and yellow raincoat, which he opens and shakes a bit, enters. On his hip is a holster with a pistol in it. MENY "grand-gestures" a couple into the room ahead of him as he flicks on the lightswitch beside the door. HORACE LLOYD, a thin man, enters. He is testing a cellphone, carrying a mildly soiled manila envelope and wearing a running suit and baseball cap with "ARMY" on them. He is with ALICIA G., an attractive woman who also enters. She has a blanket over her shoulders and is dressed in a nightgown over unlaced desert camouflage combat boots. HORACE and ALICIA are shivering a little, damp and obvious victims of some catastrophic event. A loud truck passes, and ALICIA and HORACE give each other troubled glances as it does. MENY notices and gestures expansively, continuing to talk.)

MENY *(cont'd, quickly)*. This was all I had left. Good ole' number 18! *(Gestures.)* That door locks with the turn of a knob! We're usually *jammed* with truckers on weekends—and this just happens to be *prom* night! Damn kids everywhere! You two are lucky.

(ALICIA goes to a bed, sits down and leans over on her hands exhausted, her breathing slightly labored. HORACE, sets the envelope on the table and sits beside her. He lays his arm around her shoulders gently. There is affection for her in his gesture. MENY closes the door, studying the room and staring at ALICIA.)

HORACE. You OK, Alicia?

(ALICIA shrugs and nods. Realizing his arm is around her, she makes a soft move to free herself. HORACE lets her go. She appraises her surroundings.)

ALICIA. It's kind of tight in here, Horace.

(Simultaneously with HORACE's line, MENY, self-conscious about gawking at ALICIA, moves to the TV, picks up a remote and turns the TV on. Nothing appears on the screen.)

HORACE *(gently)*. Take it easy.

(She nods and slows her breath. MENY tries the remote several times with no luck. HORACE rises and moves around the room testing his cellphone in different places—by the bed, near the door. Nothing seems to work.)

MENY *(aside)*. It'll probably surprise you but I quit this sanctuary-for-hire *shit* six months ago.

(ALICIA frowns at the language but does not look up at MENY. MENY slips the remote into a pocket. He can't take his eyes off her.)

HORACE. *Chill* on that language, all right? The *fire* jarred her enough.

(ALICIA begins to roll her head from side to side, stretching.
HORACE sits in a chair at the table, still trying his cellphone.)

MENY (*at once*). Sorry, miss.

ALICIA. This place feels like the NCO Club beside the CHU,
Horace.

HORACE (*looks up*). Don't go back there—OK?

MENY. How many people lived in that *shelter* you two were
staying in?

(NOTE: Whenever ALICIA is in the present, she speaks normally when the sentence is not too long, but if the exchange is more than two quick sentences or is a string of sentences, she will slow down and think for an instant before going forward to the next thing she says.)

ALICIA (*looks up*). Thirty—40. Place was divided—men—
women—couples in double cubbies—bathroom—stove—
wasn't much. Had to check in every night—Like prison
without the bars—fire took everything.

MENY. Shame. I walked away from *catastrophe loaded*
folks—too many bodies, too much hassle! I had a family in
here once—six of 'em—no shoes, no clothes—*faked a fire!*
Let gas fill their kitchen, *damn* near blew themselves up!
(*Winks.*) You guys didn't set *your* fire did you?

(HORACE glances at him. ALICIA shakes her head, incredulous, and cuts him off, annoyed.)

ALICIA. Can you *fix* the TV?

MENY (*smiles*). Sure—I was just joking, miss!

(*He takes out the remote and points it at the TV again several times. Nothing happens.*)

HORACE (*points*). Why the gun?

MENY (*off the cuff*). Sometimes, *overnights* get *frisky*. I used to be a cop. (*To ALICIA, defeated.*) I don't know *what's wrong* with the TV, miss.

HORACE. You don't look like a cop. (*To ALICIA, throws his hands up.*) Can't get *anything* out of this! (*He stands and paces.*)

MENY. I was always undercover—Canned me for a single shot of bourbon.

(*MENY clicks the TV off, sets the remote down and drifts toward the bathroom.*)

HORACE. I've got to get through to *somebody*!

(*MENY opens the bathroom door. We hear loud voices at once, offstage, coming from the room on the other side of it. HORACE, startled, stops at once.*)

MAN'S VOICE. NO! I bought an *hour and a half*, Jennifer—Did I say you have to *love him*? Who said that? This is a *boobs and ass video damn it!*

(*MENY enters the bathroom and flips on the light. We can see in but not the people whose voices we hear. MENY shakes his head at what he hears. ALICIA straightens. MENY picks up paper and empties an ashtray. HORACE, about to laugh, starts pointing at the bathroom. It's not funny to ALICIA.*)

WOMAN'S VOICE (*hard voice, snaps back*). I can't make love to somebody I don't like, *Bucky!*

ANOTHER MAN'S VOICE. You ain't no flower of the desert, *bitch!*

MAN'S VOICE (*overlapping, excited*). This is not love, Jennifer—Yah' hear me? This is *acting!* *Acting*—Not love, OK?
MENY (*at once, threatening*). Bring it down in there—my guests are trying to sleep!

(*Silence. ALICIA shakes her head. HORACE goes to the door of the bathroom.*)

HORACE (*teasing*). Frisky overnights?

ALICIA (*disappointed*). Is *this* where we have to stay?

HORACE (*shrugs gently*). It's not Atlantic City but it's all we can do right now. Try to rest.

ALICIA. That's hard to do in *here*.

(*ALICIA kicks off her boots and lays down, staring at the ceiling. MENY's voice rises from the bathroom.*)

MENY. I can't be blamed for what people are capable of behind closed doors. This is *America, folks say or do, whatever they want to say or do, as long as nobody gets hurt, right?*

(*ALICIA turns away from him, disgusted. MENY clicks off the bathroom light and re-enters the room, closing the bathroom door.*)

MENY (*to ALICIA, mildly embarrassed*). Housekeeping didn't even put towels in there. I'll get you some, an' a couple face cloths, an' soap. Seems I'm paying full-time *money* for part-time *sweat*.

HORACE. Where's the *mini-fridge*?

MENY (*smiles*). I'll get you another remote—but you hit the *jackpot, buddy*—this is *not* Atlantic City!

HORACE (*ignores MENY*). I'ma try outside again.

(ALICIA sits up.)

ALICIA. Don't go too far. *(Mildly troubled.)* It's feeling uncomfortable—

HORACE. I'll stay by the door.

(ALICIA, hands on her forehead, closes her eyes. HORACE moves toward the entry door, opens it and steps just beyond the door frame, holding his cellphone up and talking back to MENY, who drifts toward him, glancing salaciously at ALICIA. ALICIA shivers a little.)

HORACE. What about clothes? We're half naked—the shelter woman gave us these chits.

ALICIA. It's cold!

(HORACE exasperated, steps back inside, closes the door and removes the chits from his pocket. MENY looks at the chits, his back to ALICIA. Simultaneously, from R and crossing slowly, as if lost, into the room from the free space, a hatless young woman enters in special light. She is a MEDIC, a PFC, wearing dusty U.S. Army camouflage combat fatigues, a blue medical mask and pushing a cart with a dark, blood-streaked medical waste container loaded with syringes, bloodied gauze and disposable medical supplies inside it. ALICIA fearfully turns away from her at once, facing the audience. The MEDIC stops. Exhausted, she shakes her head and, defeated, throws up her hands in ALICIA's direction. MENY and HORACE at the door do not see the MEDIC. MENY examines the chits and shrugs. NOTE: All apparitions of ALICIA's arrive in special light and only she can see them. Also, whenever ALICIA is in the past in Iraq, her speech pattern is normal.)

MENY *(puzzled)*. She didn't say anything to me about clothes.

(MEDIC pulls down her mask.)

MEDIC *(at once to ALICIA, exasperated)*. Sarge, where's the burn pit?

MENY *(at once, to HORACE, pointing outside)*. There's a mall, couple miles down the one-o-five. Opens around 8:30, 9 o'clock in the morning.

HORACE *(at once)*. Nine o'clock?

MEDIC *(exhausted)*. I know they're yanking my chain but please— *(Slowly)*. I'm new around here! I've been pushin' this crap all over the base!

(ALICIA waves off the MEDIC. MENY notices. HORACE stops trying his phone. MENY gestures HORACE to the room phone, mildly unnerved by ALICIA.)

MENY. You can always use this phone.

HORACE *(notices ALICIA)*. How do I know who's listening, Meny? With all your *frisky overnights*— *(Suddenly, to distract MENY)*. You don't really expect my wife and me to spend a night in here?

MEDIC *(overlapping, gesturing to cart)*. What the hell do I do with this, sarge?

MENY *(at once, annoyed)*. *One night?* Is that all?

(HORACE nods when suddenly ALICIA's expression turns anxious and troubled.)

ALICIA *(annoyed)*. You can't smell it, or see the smoke, *private*? Look up in the sky, then hit the road, OK?

(On the wall behind the beds, a fleeting image appears of a ferocious, smoking burn pit. The MEDIC sees it, straightens at once and pushes the cart before her. MENY is shocked.)

MEDIC. Don't get pissed at me—that fat-ass gunner pointed to you—*claimed you knew everything!*

(MENY looks around suspiciously as the image fades.)

MENY. Your *wife*, is she all right?

MEDIC *(behind MENY's line, exiting L)*. How do I know who's who? I just *deployed* a week ago!

HORACE *(to MENY)*. Yes! *(Sharp.)* Alicia!

(The instant the MEDIC exits, we hear a loud, echoing gunshot, and ALICIA shudders. She starts counting quietly. MENY is totally confused.)

ALICIA. Twelve, 11, 10, nine, 73, eight, seven, six, five—99, four, three, two, one, *everyone is in the sun!*

(HORACE moves to the bed, gesturing to ALICIA as she looks up at him, panting a bit.)

HORACE *(to MENY)*. This is *Operation Iraqi Freedom*. We're both *vets*. She'll be all right. I'm still in the room, *honey*.

ALICIA *(to MENY)*. He's not my husband.

HORACE *(gently)*. I *am* your husband, Alicia. Stay with me now. *Here*—not Iraq, OK? Take it one breath at a time.

(ALICIA takes a couple deep breaths.)

HORACE *(cont'd)*. That fire's got her jangled! Smoke alarms, red trucks, sirens, hoses snaking over things like wet pythons—*(Distracted.)* And it's *one night*. That's what the shelter woman told us. And we've been together little ova' a year.

(ALICIA shakes her head, "No." MENY is very uncomfortable.)

MENY. Well, I can't give you anything else— (*Abruptly, lowers voice.*) Can I ask you something? (*He turns away from ALICIA.*)

MENY. Are there a lot of you vets coming back like—like, this?

HORACE. Enough.

ALICIA. Like me, right? I heard you.

MENY. Didn't mean nothing by it, miss.

ALICIA (*out of nowhere*). I lost a son, OK?

(*MENY drifts toward the door, mystified by the two of them.*)

MENY. You lost somebody in the fire?

(*HORACE ignores the question and changes the subject.*)

HORACE (*sounding curious*). Is this some kinda' hot-sheet whore-house?

(*MENY stops beside the door.*)

MENY. I run a *legitimate* business, buddy! (*Affronted.*) I'll bring you some towels and a new remote. I did Miss Emory a favor, and I respect our armed forces, OK? But, I don't need this kinda' hassle. You don't like it, get out! I can fill this suite *faster than a rat shits!*

HORACE (*snaps back*). We aren't goin' anywhere!

(*MENY, exasperated, shakes his head and exits, leaving the door open.*)

MENY (*offstage*). Crazy bastards!

(*The room is silent for a moment.*)

ALICIA. It's cold in here, Horace.

(HORACE moves to the door and closes it.)

HORACE *(to ALICIA)*. Are you seeing that *medic* again—the cart—the blood and body parts?

ALICIA *(softly)*. Sometimes.

(ALICIA nods. HORACE sits down beside her. ALICIA looks down at the distance between them and shifts slightly away. HORACE is instantly affronted.)

HORACE. You've got to stay in the moment, Alicia. The war's been over more than *18 months* for you!

ALICIA. Its not, Horace.

HORACE *(rises and paces)*. When then?

ALICIA. How do I know? Have *yours* stopped?

(HORACE shoves a chair under the table. Changes the subject.)

HORACE. Aren't you glad we're out of that *temporary*?

ALICIA. We have no place to go.

HORACE. I'll find some place else!

ALICIA *(disappointed)*. Another shelter?

HORACE. OK! *(Softer.)* OK!

(ALICIA stares at him for a long moment and shakes her head. HORACE is frustrated, paces toward the door, angry at himself and the room.)

HORACE *(to himself)*. Stains on the rug! Broken lamp! *(He opens the door wide and yells.)* This place is a dump, Meny! *(He lingers for a few seconds and then turns back to ALICIA.)* I don't *see* things, OK?—Or—Or have flash-backs like you do!