

BRICKYARD AND BUFFALO

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A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

BY

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## SYNOPSIS

It is the weekend of Ann's high school graduation and 18<sup>th</sup> birthday at the modest home on the corner of Brickyard and Buffalo Roads that she shares with her eccentric mother, Linda. Visiting for the weekend to celebrate with Ann are her much older sister, Camille, and fearless, funny and rather alcoholic Aunt Emmy. While Ann has made plans to move in with Camille for the summer before starting college, Linda struggles with the separation.

When Ann's father doesn't arrive for her graduation party, she confronts the women of her family for an explanation. The revelation that her birth mother is actually Camille and that she has no known father changes Ann's plans as well as Camille's and challenges what it means to be a mother, daughter and sister for these women.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

- LINDA: Middle-aged (late 50s or early 60s). Linda wants everything around her to be pleasant. She speaks in analogies as a coping mechanism to avoid addressing things directly and has never gotten over her husband abandoning her.
- ANN: Graduating from high school and turning 18. She has been rather sheltered, but also embraces the romance of a bucolic country life. She is ready to break away from Linda and yearns for a closer relationship with her big sister, Camille, who has invited Ann to live with her.
- CAMILLE: 35-years-old, single, Linda's older daughter. She lives 300 miles away, works as a waitress, never went to college and, as a recovered substance abuser, still struggles with her choices in life.
- EMMY: Linda's sister and the girls' aunt – a big personality and a big drinker. Emmy dishes out opinions liberally. She is both direct and compassionate.

## PLACE

A small town somewhere in northwestern Pennsylvania.

## TIME

In the recent past, or at least before everyone had a cell phone.

## NOTE ABOUT THE WRITING

A slash (/) in the middle of any line means that the next line should begin then.

ACT 1  
Scene 1

*SETTING: The modest kitchen of a low-end 1970's construction home. It is very cheerful. The sink is centered on the upstage wall with floral curtains on the window above it. The cupboards are yellow and the appliances are showing signs of age, but everything is clean and bright. One might call it "precious." There is a door to the outside and driveway STAGE LEFT and another exit STAGE RIGHT that leads to the hallway and rest of the house. It is evening and the lighting should show that it is dark outside the window.*

*AT RISE: LINDA and ANN are sitting at the kitchen table. ANN's head is in one of her hands. There is a teapot in front of her and she idly plays with a spoon in her cup of tea. LINDA is folding laundry on the kitchen table as they talk.*

LINDA

It's just like giving birth. That incredibly empowering moment that you have worked so hard for and the thrill of knowing you did it. That you did it all by yourself – so powerful and – affirming – just –

ANN

I can't believe you are doing this.

LINDA

What? You know how proud I am of you. I'm just affirming your achievement: that moment of letting go when you have to just surrender to what's happening and – open up to it. You're going to be beautiful and wonderful and strong and relieved – definitely relieved - but sad, too. There's a sadness that comes from knowing all that waiting is over and all the pain and preparing – well, it's the relief and the sadness and the achievement all wrapped up in one bundle of -

ANN

You are comparing my graduation to giving birth.

LINDA

Well, well but - it *is* like birth.

ANN

No. No, I don't really think it is.

LINDA

*(Not hearing her.)*

Every journey you take in life is like that very first journey – the resonance and similarities – it's, it's a transition – just like that first beautiful passage through the birth canal.

ANN

Mom, you're grossing me out.

LINDA

It's not gross.

ANN

Birth canal?

LINDA

*(beat)*

I think you have...body issues.

ANN

What?

LINDA

You still don't use tampons-

ANN

Mom...

LINDA

Anyway, it's incredibly empowering and life changing and - and you did it, Honey – and nobody can ever take that away from you.

ANN

Can we just stay on topic? Please?

LINDA

Of course, of course. I am right here with you and I'm not going to leave you at any step of the way. It's your journey – it's yours to do and nobody can do it for you...but you will be so empowered by it and –

ANN

That is, like, the tenth time you have used the word, “empowered!”

LINDA

I don't understand what's upsetting you.

ANN

And I don't understand what part of this conversation is about my graduation.

LINDA

I'm just worried about you, Ann. This is a very big step and you may – well – I'm just worried about you.

ANN

A moment ago you were proud of me.

LINDA

And I am. Yes. I am. But it's all so distracting for you. It's as though you're more focused on the gifts and all the little cute outfits and booties than on what's really important: that transcendent moment of giving birth –

ANN

I am *not* focused on the gifts, and I am *not* having a baby!

*(Catching herself, calmly.)*

I am not having a baby – I'm graduating.

LINDA

Of course, of course. I know that. I know that. I know that. But you...do you know? Do you? Do you know what I have been through? What I have to offer you? You can't do this alone, you know.

ANN

You – really? Really? Because you were also just saying how I have to do this myself and nobody else can do it for me and - blah, blah, blah.

LINDA

*(pause)*

Is that what you think of everything I have opened myself up to you with here today? “Blah, blah, blah?” That’s what my life experience is to you?

ANN

*(Slowly, trying to stay calm and be reasonable.)*

Mother, Mom, I’m like, you know, in a few days I’m going to graduate. I’m going to graduate, and on the very next day after that, I’m turning 18. Both of these things are going to happen. They are real. Not like, like this fantasy of yours about *labor* and *birth* – which are not going to happen, and are not facts – my graduation *is* happening. And when it does,

*(beat)*

I’m leaving.

*(beat)*

I’m leaving Brickyard Road.

*(pause)*

LINDA

You really hit it right on the head there when you said “labor” - and any woman who has been through it will tell you how important that support person was to her. Your labor coach is more important than your doctor or nurse, or, or,

*(not able to come up with “husband”)*

or any *other* person in the room with you. You need that person. That is the person who never leaves you and who you know you can count on. And Honey, that’s me. I am that person for you.

*(pause)*

ANN

Maybe we should just figure the rest of this out tomorrow? As long as the food is figured out – that’s probably all that matters anyway...and the guest list. You did that, right? The guest list? Did you do that?

LINDA

Hm?

ANN  
The guest list?

LINDA  
*(Distractedly.)*  
The guest list?

ANN  
Yes?

LINDA  
Yes.

ANN  
Everyone?

LINDA  
Yes.

ANN  
Yes??

LINDA  
Yes.

ANN  
Good.

*(beat)*  
Good.  
*(She starts to get up and put away the tea things.)*

You know, it would mean a lot to me if –

*(A bit of tea splashes out of the pot as she clears it from the table.)*

LINDA  
Tea!! Your teaspoon! Oh Honey. Oh shoot, that white blouse, tsk, oh shoot.

ANN

It's like – what? You can't even see that. I can't even see that. No, that's like – no, nothing.

LINDA

No?

ANN

No.

LINDA

No?

ANN

No.

*(pause)*

LINDA

Good.

*(pause – relieved – cheerful again)*

Good.

(END OF SCENE)



ACT 1  
Scene 2

*SETTING:* The next day, afternoon.

*AT RISE:* CAMILLE enters carrying a small suitcase and purse.

CAMILLE

*(calling out)*

I'm here!

*(She puts her things down and looks around as though seeing everything for the first time. After a minute, she goes to the refrigerator and looks inside. She considers eating something in a Tupperware container, but decides against it and closes the refrigerator. LINDA enters from the hall.*

LINDA

Oh! You're here so early – my goodness – Your sister will be so surprised when she comes home. We didn't expect you until later. My goodness-

CAMILLE

What? I told you I'd be early – before Ann got home. Remember?

LINDA

It's OK. It's fine.

CAMILLE

It's not OK?

LINDA

Of course! We just expected you later.

CAMILLE

I just walked in the door –

LINDA

And here you are!

CAMILLE

And already you think I've screwed up.

LINDA

No no! Just say, "Hello Mother. How are you? I've missed you!"

CAMILLE

Hello Mother. How are you?

*(beat)*

I've missed you.

LINDA

How was the drive? You must be famished. Let me just get you something to eat.

*(LINDA goes to the fridge and takes out the same Tupperware CAMILLE rejected and starts to spoon the contents onto a plate.)*

CAMILLE

I'm not hungry. Listen, I worked the night shift so I could leave early and we'd have time to talk

-

*(pause)*

- about what's going to happen with Ann.

LINDA

*(Preparing CAMILLE's food.)*

It's good you're eating something now, because dinner will be kind of late. I haven't even been to the grocery store yet; there's been so much to take care of. You know, Camille, I always said you didn't eat enough – you never have. I say your body is like a garden: You have to feed it and water it and keep the sunshine in view – that's what I always say.

CAMILLE

When is Ann getting home?

LINDA

*(Putting the plate in the microwave.)*

Hm? On the bus. And this will be just the thing to tide you over: it's casserole from yesterday... Tuesd-...this week. It's very filling – just the thing for a tired traveler.

CAMILLE

Have you talked to her?

LINDA

Who?

CAMILLE

Ann!

LINDA

I talk to Annie every day!

CAMILLE

But this is it – this is the weekend. This is - what is she expecting?

LINDA

Well she's expecting a very nice little party, of course. And we're expecting Aunt Emmy and Uncle Bud to be here tonight, too. And, oh, I still have to get to the grocery store! There has to be at least something in the oven when they arrive. I can't be preparing it just as they walk in. It has to be in the oven. I was planning to roast a chicken – actually, I'll probably need to roast two-

CAMILLE

Please Mom, can't we just figure this out now so it's – understood?

LINDA

You have always been a little grumpy when you're tired. Right after you have something to eat, you should go lie down and have a rest.

CAMILLE

Yeah, Mom, no. I – I don't need to rest. I need to talk.

LINDA

Oh, you poor thing - you're over-tired...and no wonder, you've been driving all day - and on an empty stomach.

CAMILLE

I'm fine.

*(Microwave rings. LINDA takes the plate out and puts it on the table for CAMILLE.)*

LINDA

Oh, that's good. Here you are. Now, you'll find the bed linens are on the pullout couch. I had to save the spare room for Bud and Emmy, of course, but you should be comfortable - and I'm just going to run out to the grocery store for dinner things. I won't be thirty minutes – not even – not but a minute.

*(Grabbing her purse and starting to exit.)*

CAMILLE

But when does Ann get home?

LINDA

*(Leaving.)*

Back in thirty.

CAMILLE

Mom...Mom! We have to talk!

*(LINDA leaves.)*

CAMILLE

Shit.

(END OF SCENE)