

BLOWN YOUTH

By

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"... Men have natural strength. Women have to find their strength, and when they do find it, it comes forth with bitterness and it's erratic ... Women are restless with each other. They are like live wires ... either chattering to keep themselves from making contact, or else, if they don't chatter, they avert their eyes ... like Orpheus ... as if a god once said "and if they shall recognize each other, the world will be blown apart."

-*Fefu and her Friends*, Maria Irene Fornes (1977)

CHARACTERS

CELIA: mid-twenties-early thirties, American

ANNE: mid-twenties-early thirties, American

SHIA: mid-twenties-early thirties, Lebanese-Arab

AUDRE: mid-twenties-early thirties, American

RAY: mid-twenties-early thirties, American

MARGARET: mid-twenties-early thirties, French

JO: mid-twenties-early thirties, Tanzanian

WHERE

A house in New England.

An abstracted kitchen

Space is flexible-outside scenes need not be imagined literally

WHEN

ONE: One day in 2005

TWO: One week in 2015

THREE: One day in 2003

notes on rhythm:

This play is like a returning memory.

The scenes exist in isolation like islands in an archipelago

We never see the whole map at once

notes on staging:

The first several scenes in PART ONE follow the structure from Schnitzler's *La Rhonde*-one character always migrates into the next scene. It helps us track the action of the play if the pattern is apparent -perhaps their names pop up in projections. For example, a projection reading **JO and CELIA** in Scene One might bleed into **CELIA and RAY** in Scene Two.

The sound of a tape on fast-forward might lead us in and out of scenes in PART ONE as in the transitions the actors move rapidly to their new positions and freeze, thawing when the tape stops. The time these transitions take might narrow as the act narrows to the finish. We lose the convention in PART TWO where transitions are fluid, adult.

PART ONE

1.

Projection reads **CELIA and JO. 2005.**
A house in New England

*White, free standing, blue gabled.
With that sense of self-containment New England houses have.
Like an island founded on deep rock.*

CELIA and JO are in the kitchen.

CELIA
All I want is to play a great role.

JO
What kind of role?

CELIA
One you have to put your hand into the fire for.

JO
You mean you have to be brave?

CELIA
You have to be crazy brave.

JO
And you want to be crazy brave?

CELIA
I want to be everything!

JO
So why don't you play one?

CELIA
Because this company is the only one in town worth auditioning for and they only do Shakespeare all year so there's a lot of competition for female parts because there just aren't

VOICE OFFSTAGE
MOM!!!

JO
No...

CELIA
Again?

JO
I know-

CELIA
There /just aren't-

JO
Wait /a sec-

CELIA
But-

JO
Tchsh!

They wait.

CELIA
I'm not surprised intelligent women kill themselves.

JO
What?

CELIA
I totally get Sylvia Plath.

JO
Who?

CELIA
She was a /really famous poet

JO
Suicide is selfish, these women you're talking about are not smart.

VOICE OFFSTAGE
MOM!!!

JO
Oh my god /stop her!

CELIA
How am /I supposed to stop her?

OFFSTAGE
MOM!

JO
What did you say?

OFFSTAGE
MOM!

JO
I'm gonna kill her!

CELIA
There should be more parts.

JO
Oh..what?

CELIA
What did you say?

OFFSTAGE
MOM!

JO
WHATEVER IT IS YES!

An ominous thump offstage.

JO
Oh shit.

CELIA
No don't go /wait!

JO
I can't wait! There might be a dead child upstairs.

JO exits.

CELIA puts the kettle on.

CELIA(*calling*)
I WAS JUST SAYING THAT
THERE AREN'T GREAT ROLES FOR WOMEN!

JO(*calling*)
CELIA....IS THE KETTLE ON?

CELIA
Oh shit.

CELIA quickly turns the kettle off.

CELIA
I'M GONNA PUT MY HEAD IN THE OVEN!

JO re-enters. She collapses into a chair.

CELIA
The reason I like Shakespeare he lets you talk without interruption.

JO

Take Faizah off my hands tonight.

CELIA

With him there's nothing between me and my feelings except this translucent language....

JO

I must sleep.

CELIA

...language that feels just like the thing itself you know-not just some stand in.

JO

She's easy. Pours her own cereal. Wait, what do you mean "stand in?"

CELIA

Well words are like...proxies right? For the real thing. They're fillers.
So we spend most of our lives just filling the air with things that aren't real.

JO

But I say something I mean it so it's real!

They look at each other, mutually baffled.

JO

So what's the situation?

CELIA

What do you mean?

JO

Why am I here at eight in the morning?

CELIA

So we can talk.

JO

Uh huh.

CELIA

Ray say's we're not going to make our payment.

JO

Why don't you put an ad in the paper?

CELIA

Too tacky. You move in.

JO

You want me to live here?

CELIA

Yes!

JO

You think I have the time for yoga? Shopping at wholefoods or whatever? I don't know what you do in this house but I know it takes a lot of time and a lot of words.

CELIA

But it would be so easy because we know you! Every-time someone new moves in it's like we have to go through it all again-the explaining how it all works, how we think blah blah blah.

JO

It's the blah blah blah. That's the problem. Blah blah blah in your mind. Blah blah blah all over this house.

JO notices a tape on the table.

JO

What's this?

CELIA

Nothing.

JO

What's "nothing?"

CELIA

I watch it when I have an audition. It's like a, a ritual. It helps me prepare.

JO

Like praying? Something like that?

CELIA

Something like that.

JO

I didn't think you prayed.

CELIA

I don't. That's why I need this. Please, just think about it! You're coming to the party right?

JO
What party?

CELIA
Oh my god!

JO
You didn't invite me.

CELIA
Whoa-yes we did!

JO
You didn't. And anyway I have work.

CELIA
Then come after the party.

JO
Maybe.
Maybe when I come pick Faizah up.

CELIA
Jo. Live here with us. Please.

Pause

JO
You know, I won't be able to be you if I live here, right?

CELIA
You don't need to be like/ me...

JO
I mean, I won't be like you *all*.
I'm still tired.
I'm still homesick.
My English is still second-hand.
And I have a little girl.

CELIA
In this house we believe in community.

JO
Does that mean free babysitting?

CELIA
Uhm well

JO
Your community, what is it for?

CELIA
It's for, I mean it's for whatever you want but it's just- Margaret makes those kinds of decisions.

JO
It's ok. Don't look bad.

CELIA
Sad.

JO
Whatever. Your face is wrong. Make it right.

CELIA
Are we ok?

JO
We're ok.

...are you two okay?

CELIA
Me and Margaret? Of course. We're perfect.

JO
Like everything else in this house huh?

CELIA
It's a good idea Jo. As women, you know, we really have to be there for each other, we have to support each other/we have to

JO
Ok I'm going to be late for work.

CELIA
Blah blah blah.
I guess we can't help it.

JO turns to go.

CELIA

Jo...wait. Do I look fat in this?

JO

Who are you in the play?

CELIA

The young woman who kills herself.

JO

Why do you have to be the depressing one?

CELIA

She's the only young part for a woman.
Nevermind.

JO

Be yourself. You're beautiful Celia.

JO exits.

CELIA

You think so?