

Acting Edition

Jonah

by Rachel Bonds

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|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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JONAH was originally Produced in New York City by Roundabout Theatre Company (Scott Ellis, Acting Artistic Director; Sydney Beers, Managing Director) at the Harold and Miriam Steinberg Center for Theatre/Laura Pels Theatre on February 1, 2024. The production was directed by Danya Taymor, with sets by Wilson Chin, costumes by Kaye Voyce, lights by Amith Chandrashaker, sound by Kate Marvin, hair & makeup by Tommy Kurzman, illusions by Morgan Auld, voice and text coaching by Gigi Buffington, movement coordination by Tilly Evans-Krueger, and intimacy coordination by Ann James. The Production Stage Manager was Jennifer Rae Moore. The cast was as follows:

ANA Gabby Beans
JONAH Hagan Oliveras
DANNY Samuel Henry Levine
STEVEN John Zdrojeski

CHARACTERS

ANA – ages sixteen, eighteen to twenty-one, then later thirties/forty

JONAH – seventeen

DANNY – ages seventeen through early twenties

STEVEN – late thirties or early forties

And the offstage voice of Ana's **STEPFATHER**, middle-aged.

SETTING

A series of bedrooms, including: a boarding school dorm room, a bedroom in a house in the suburbs of Detroit, a college dorm room in Michigan, a bedroom at a remote writers' residency somewhere in the woods. The first two scenes take place outside the boarding school dorm. The setting there should feel only half-realized, half-imagined, a little fuzzy, still taking shape or coming into view. By the third scene, once they enter Ana's room, the sense of place can snap into focus.

TIME

The past and the present. But everything is slippery.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Intimacy – This play requires intimacy choreography. It must be handled with sensitivity and intelligence. I suggest hiring an Intimacy Coordinator and including that person in as much of the rehearsal process as possible. I've built the play to take care of both the actors and the audience; it is of the utmost importance to me. So proceed with thoughtfulness, check in with one another frequently, and as the great Intimacy Coordinator Ann James says, "move at the speed of trust."

Casting – It is my great hope that this play can hold all different kinds of bodies and thus, stories. These characters could be played by actors of any race/ethnicity and the story can and should shift a bit depending on what each of these actors brings to the stage. Have the vital conversations about what these casting choices mean for the story you're putting into the world and be mindful of what power dynamics are at play.

Language – The punctuation is key and will let you find the music of the play. Pauses are carefully built in. A slash (/) indicates an overlap in dialogue.

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*For everyone who
has ever felt
divided.*

JONAH. Hey wait up!

Hey! – Jesus you're walking fast, why are you walking so fast?

ANA. I have to be back in my room in ten minutes.

JONAH. Why?

ANA. And aren't you a day student?

JONAH. Yeah, but / I'm...

ANA. Because they check to make sure we're all in our rooms by nine.

JONAH. Oh, so where are you going?

ANA. To get something at the student center.

JONAH. What?

ANA. Why do you care?

JONAH. Can I walk with you?

ANA. Do what you want.

JONAH. What are you getting at the student center?

ANA. Why are you here so late?

JONAH. Charles King and I have a presentation for American History tomorrow, so we were working in his / dorm.

ANA. On what?

JONAH. Japanese internment camps.

I'm Jonah.

ANA. Ana.

JONAH. I know. You're from Detroit?

ANA. Why do you know that?

JONAH. Charles told me. Are you mad that I know that?

ANA. Goodbye.

JONAH. What are you getting in there?

ANA. *(Over her shoulder.)* Why do you care?! Candy!

(She goes to get candy. She comes back.)

JONAH. Ooh Sour Patch Kids. Those're the best.

ANA. Why are you still here?

JONAH. I'll walk you back to your dorm.

ANA. I don't need an escort.

JONAH. No, I know. But my car's back this way anyway and I don't want to walk by myself.

ANA. Why?

JONAH. Because there's bobcats around here. Did you know that? And rattlesnakes. Jesus Christ you walk fast.

ANA. Ms. Simons will fry my ass if I'm not in my room in two minutes.

JONAH. Oof, Ms. Simons is scary as shit, she's your dorm parent?

ANA. Yeah. Lucky me.

JONAH. Can I have one of those? I like the orange ones.

ANA. No. There are not rattlesnakes here.

JONAH. There are! I've seen them.

ANA. Where?

JONAH. Dead and squished on the road, but – I've seen them. There was one in our driveway once when I was a kid.

ANA. Dead?

JONAH. Yeah, my mom ran it over. Its guts were all over the gravel. Rattle was still intact, / though.

ANA. Eugh.

JONAH. I brought it in for Show & Tell.

ANA. With all the guts and shit?

JONAH. No, no, just the – rattle. Everyone was like, whaaaaaaaaa, Jonah, you are awesome.

ANA. Goodbye.

JONAH. I like you!

ANA. No you don't!

(She leaves him outside the dorm and goes up to her room, sits on her bed, and eats five Sour Patch Kids, one by one, contemplating. Then she crawls across the rug and peeks out the window. She stands up and looks down at him on the sidewalk. He waves. She lifts her shirt over her head and stares down at him, topless. Then pulls the shade.)

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JONAH. Hey.

ANA. Hey.

Why are you out here?

JONAH. I'm a student monitor. One night / a week.

ANA. Not of this girl's dorm you're not.

JONAH. No – I monitor the computer lab on Tuesday nights. Are you going to get candy?

ANA. Why?

JONAH. Because I'll walk with you.

ANA. Aren't you supposed to be monitoring?

JONAH. No, I was done at eight.

ANA. Have you just been standing out here waiting for me?

JONAH. ...No.

ANA. Have you?

JONAH. I – don't know.

Why did you do that?

ANA. What?

JONAH. The other night. I didn't –. I don't want you to feel like you have to –.

ANA. I don't have to do anything. I do what I want.

JONAH. Okay. But. Why did you do that?

ANA. Because I wanted to.

JONAH. But why?

ANA. Did you have a problem with it?

JONAH. I -. No. Yes? I don't know! - I'm just trying to figure it out.

ANA. There's nothing to figure out.

JONAH. I'm just confused.

ANA. They're breasts. That's it. They're not some mysterious voodoo shit. You don't have to get all -stuttery about them.

JONAH. Okay. I -. Sorry. I. Misunderstood.

ANA. Are you a virgin?

JONAH. I - why?

ANA. It's okay if you are.

JONAH. ...I know.

ANA. Are you?

JONAH. I mean...yes.

ANA. Okay.

JONAH. Okay what?

ANA. So all you've been thinking about for the past week is my boobs.

JONAH. I mean...

ANA. Don't lie.

JONAH. You're seared in my memory now. You'll never be un-seared.

ANA. Hm.

JONAH. ...Are you a virgin?

ANA. ...

You can walk me to the student center. I have ten minutes.

JONAH. Okay.

JONAH. Oh, Christ – are you – God you walk so fucking fast you know that?

ANA. You take the Lord's name in vain a lot.

JONAH. Oh shit, are you really Christian? / I'm sorry.

ANA. No. I mean. I was raised Catholic, but –.

JONAH. But?

ANA. But I don't go to church anymore.

JONAH. Oh.

Do you still believe in God?

ANA. ...I don't know.

...Do you?

JONAH. I –. I don't know. Sometimes I think I do, I mean I want to, and then...

ANA. What?

JONAH. Then I think it's all really silly shit we made up so we wouldn't be afraid and honestly, really, there's probably just black nothingness after we die.

ANA. ...Yeah.

JONAH. Which, yeah...makes me afraid. So then I want to believe in heaven and seeing people I – yeah, that I miss, but then I know I just want that because it feels less scary than believing they're just black empty nothingness now.

ANA. But if they're nothingness then they don't feel pain anymore. Pain doesn't exist. Nothing exists. They don't care if they're nothingness. They're free from all that.

JONAH. That's true.

ANA. Who do you miss?

JONAH. Uh. My mom's dead, so.

ANA. / Oh.

JONAH. Wait, so, did you have to do confession and all that?

ANA. Yes.

JONAH. Eugh.

ANA. What?

JONAH. That's so weird.

ANA. I mean, yeah, / it's...

JONAH. With the man behind the curtain listening to you talk about jerking off and everything you did wrong and everything?

ANA. I didn't talk about that.

JONAH. No, no, of course you didn't, but...that's what I'd be in there for. Like every few hours, I'd have to go in the box with the man to talk about masturbating. That would be so awful, I'm glad I'm not Catholic.

ANA. Every few hours?

JONAH. I mean, not every few hours, but – a lot.

ANA. Girls masturbate too. You know that right?

JONAH. I –. I mean, I guess I know that but I don't really know it.

ANA. We do.

JONAH. A lot?

ANA. Yeah.

JONAH. ...You. Do?

ANA. Yeah.

JONAH. A lot?

ANA. I mean...what else is there to do around here?

(He laughs.)

JONAH. Aw man.

ANA. What?

JONAH. I like you.

ANA. I have to go. I'm gonna be late for roll call.

JONAH. I don't want you to.

ANA. Well I'll -. "Wave" at you from my window.

JONAH. You don't have to do that.

ANA. I do what I want, Jonah.

JONAH. ...Okay.

I really like you.

ANA. Shut up.

^^^^^^^^^^

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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