

...AND THE TWO ROMEOS

BY JENNIFER MAISEL

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THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION
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CAST:

STACY - ages 32 to 13

LIZZIE - Stacy's mother, actress also plays:

ALLYSON FERGUS – Stacy's former best friend

MS. ADRIA HAMPTON - - of the Raleigh Hamptons. Temporary guidance counselor who really doesn't want to know.

PTA MOTHER

NICK - always 10 years older than Stacy, also plays;

DAN - Stacy's father

GUY 2

RICHARD - always 15, actor also plays:

LIFESIZE TROLLDOLL,

BOY IN THE SCHOOL JACKET/JOSH STANLEY

GUY 1

BARTENDER

FIN - always 15, actor also plays:

LIFESIZE FROGDOLL,

MAN /STORE OWNER

MATTHEW,

PTA FATHER

GUY 3

BARTENDER

If desired the play may be cast with seven actors, no longer doubling the parts of Ms. Hampton/Lizzie and Dan/Nick.

ACT ONE

Moonterrain - a chalky cratered surface. A cafeteria table floats on.

RICHARD and FIN - always 15 - stand on opposite corners of the upstage behind STACY. If Stacy - a woman now - could float in zero gravity she would

RICHARD/FIN

After and before.
(They crumple to the floor)

STACY

I am a ghost with a body but without a grave.
At night I leave soft footprints in the gray dust.
At night I canvas craters and count constellations.
I have a vantage point for earth, a small round place of blues and greens, a bauble in the black sky surrounded by glittery beads from the chains that held it and broke.
You would think that from here earth can't touch me. You would think that from here any effects, any hate waves, would be severely diminished, having carried themselves through the every day air to the clouds, squirming through the atmosphere, finding an escape hatch in the ozone layer to transcend the stars to a place with no gravitational pull. Hate loves to fly.
Hate relishes growth.
Hate is fed and watered and nurtured and love,
Love doesn't count for shit anymore.

I am a ghost with a body but without a grave.
If only there were a way to rewind my life.
If only there were a way to rewind that moment.

I am 13 years old.

(Behind her, Richard and Fin rise from death raising their guns at each other.)

STACY/RICHARD/FIN

BANG

(Behind her "rewinding" - Richard and Fin point the guns at each other

Fin drops his gun

Richard puts his gun in his own mouth

Fin lowers his gun. Richard lowers his gun.)

STACY

I replay it in my head and I can't get it to be the smooth backwards motion of technology but the jerky way memory distorts and I think if only I could get my brain to replicate the machine then maybe, maybe -

(Richard and Fin look at each other a beat. Fin points his gun at Stacy from behind, Richard, face crumbling, points his gun at Stacy. Richard's resolve un-crumbles.)

STACY

Now! OK! OK. OK. OK.

3.

2.

1.

On three.

(She turns around to face them. They raise their guns.)

FIN

T-t-t-turn around.

(She turns to face away from them)

STACY

Now! OK! OK. OK. OK.

3.

2.

1.

On three.

(She turns to face around to face them. They raise their guns.)

FIN

T-t-t-urn around.

(Richard and Fin approach her. She touches each of their faces.)

STACY

Don't kiss me now. Kiss me then.

Kiss me there. Kiss me next time.

I'm not unhappy about this, you know. Happy. I'm happy.

(She turns to the audience - 32 - an adult looking back.)

The words don't go exactly backwards. They don't do that. And then it kind of skips a beat.

(Richard suddenly has both guns. He spins them like a cowboy)

STACY (13)

Don't do that.

RICHARD

What?

STACY

You might get – no, whatever.

FIN

H-h-hurt?

RICHARD

That's kind of the point isn't it?

STACY

Not like that. Not like an accident. Not like you didn't mean –

RICHARD

Maybe it'd be better if I just shot my face off "by accident".

FIN

Better?

STACY

No.

RICHARD

It'd take care of things. For you.

STACY

For no-one. That's not the way –

RICHARD

What?

STACY

We have a plan. Let's just stick to the –

(Richard pulls the guns on her fast. She visibly shirks back, putting up her hands for cover.)

RICHARD

Gotcha.

STACY

It's instinct.

RICHARD

This is a bad idea.

STACY

It's not. It's not it's not it's not.

RICHARD

So what does it matter how I go, huh? So what does it matter?

(He puts both guns to his head)

STACY/FIN

No.

STACY

Not like that.

FIN

Oh no no no. You you you said, Richard. It was your way and I -

STACY

Not like that.

(She goes to him)

You promised me. You promised you wouldn't leave me behind. You promised you wouldn't leave me to this place. You can't do that to me.

RICHARD

You'll have -

(He looks at Fin who has entered his own world rocking back and forth)

STACY

You think he'll last a day? You're what keeps the world from crashing in. He'll disintegrate. The three of us. You're the one who always said it. The three of us - Richard.

You promised me - You promised him.

(Richard goes to Fin and hands him the gun. Fin stops rocking. They get up and go to Stacy.)

STACY

Don't kiss me now. Kiss me then. Kiss me there. Kiss me next time. I'm not unhappy about this, you know. Happy. I'm happy.

RICHARD/FIN

Happy?

STACY (32)

The problem is even if you could rewind your life, it goes forward the same way it did before. Faster.
I focus on food fight stain that looks like my grandma's cameo.
Waiting for the next shot.
Hoping for the next shot.
Praying.
Turning.
And then forward -
The glistening red on the five fingers that used to possess my skin.
The no going back.
The sweet relief, his face -
The look on my mom's face when she first sees me.
The blood splatter like raindrops on the back of my shirt.
A path clearing for me through the school halls.
The clean linoleum tiles where the bloodstained ones used to be.
The clean linoleum tiles marking where their bodies were.
The clean linoleum tiles more permanent than chalk outlines.
The smell on her breath when I come home from school.
The air of a city where no one knows who I am.
The first time I transformed the world into black and white.
Untitled #9 rising in the developer.
The pink line of the pregnancy test rising to the surface in a not dissimilar way.

I am a ghost with a body but without a grave. To think I could bear fruit, proliferate, propagate is blasphemy. According to them I should be six feet under. Decay is my proper punishment. My movement among the living means one thing - contagion.

(NICK - always 10 years older than she is - appears)

NICK

How can everything in your life still be about that - about them?

(Richard and Fin watch as Nick and Stacy's unmade bed rolls onto the moonsurface: their apartment. STACY makes the bed. A new energy.)

STACY

I am 32 years old.
(to Nick)

STACY

If you would pause and reflect for a moment, you would notice - everything in my life isn't still about that. My life is about other things.

Work.

You.

Us.

Hospital corners.

Which pillow is feather and which one is allergen protected.

F-stops.

Discounts on lenses.

Figuring out if there's room for actual food in the refrigerator once I make sure all the film's in.

It's a very full life without concentrating on nostalgia.

NICK

Nostalgia?

STACY

Past transgressions.

Whatever. I mumble something in my sleep and you need to make a federal case of it and ruin the entire weekend?

Where do you want to go? Come on, take me out, we'll pretend it's a date. We never really had a first date.

NICK

We did too - you moved in.

STACY

We could go for a drive.

NICK

Let me just go hot-wire a car.

STACY

To the park then. We'll get sandwiches and you can read me poetry on the Great Lawn.

(he snickers)

All right, magazines then. Only if you promise we won't buy any you've written articles for this month.

NICK

Only if you buy me one of those ice cream things with the soggy cone.

STACY

It's our first date and you're not paying?

NICK

It'll be a spontaneous gesture on your part somewhere mid-date. I will find such a spontaneous gesture endearing and ask you out again - and pay again.

STACY

Only if we get an extra kind of meaty sandwich and lure other people's dogs to our blanket and pretend they're ours.

NICK

Deal.

STACY

We should get a dog.

NICK

A dog?

STACY

We should get a dog.

NICK

You can't even bring yourself to tell me your period's 6 weeks late and you want a puppy?

(she looks at him)

I have a calendar too, you know.

Beware of unscripted sex on gallery floors.

(Stacy lies back on the bed - on strike.)

STACY

I have changed my mind about our date. I need to stay home and wash my hair. I need to stay home and take a nap. There's a really interesting documentary on some channel somewhere I want to watch.

NICK

Sorry.

STACY

You're not sorry.

NICK

It just came out.

STACY

You knew the groundrules going in.

NICK

I know.

STACY

Groundrule number one. No kids.

NICK

I know.

STACY

I didn't make you any promises I'm not keeping.

NICK

I know.

STACY

Then what are you starting here Nick? What?

NICK

It just isn't easy the way I thought it would be easy.

STACY

You actually thought it would be easy.

NICK

Somehow - I did.

STACY

You were mistaken.

NICK

I was.

STACY

I'll alert the media. They'll want to know. They always do. Easy - God! Easy.

NICK

Let's go. Let's go to the park.

STACY

It's ruined.

NICK

It can be un-ruined. Help me un-ruin it.

STACY

I can't move - the bed has a gravitational pull all of its own.

NICK

We'll rescue the day.

STACY

Before I was born my mother called me It-sle because she didn't know if I was going to be a boy or a girl. It-sle Bickford.

NICK

Let's go.

(The cafeteria table floats back on with RICHARD. He plants a sign that reads NUTS ONLY on the cafeteria table and sits down. Stacy sits at the table, opens her lunch bag and pulls out a sandwich.)

RICHARD

You could kill Allyson Fergus with that.

STACY

Where it all began.
I am 13 years old.

(Nick and the bed float away.)

RICHARD

The smell on your breath alone could do her in.
(Stacy realizes he is speaking to her.)

STACY

I know.

RICHARD

All this is for her, you know. The queen of the no peanut rule. Segregating us peanut butter lovers to the far reaches of the cafeteria just because she might get a pimple.

STACY

Hive.

RICHARD

Whatever.

STACY

Her throat closes.

RICHARD

She says.

I think she likes sending kids to sit under this sign. Not realizing that ironically this table is actually the great leveler of the social hierarchy that she instituted herself –

STACY

Well I don't think Allyson –

RICHARD

No, no, I don't know what kind of credit I'm giving her. She doesn't have that kind of power. Power beyond the creation of a table nobody wants to eat at because they might end up talking to someone that might –

STACY

Allyson is my friend.

RICHARD

Do the world a favor. Go whisper in her mouth.

STACY

Allyson's my friend.

RICHARD

Offer her a bite of your lunch.

STACY

I don't know if you should be talking about her like that.

RICHARD

She's your friend – you really should know.

STACY

That's not what I –

RICHARD

She's your friend.

STACY

Yeah.

RICHARD

Yeah, I've see you around with her.

STACY

You have?

RICHARD

She has kind of an interest in being noticed. And you don't. You want to skulk around in her shadow.

STACY

No.

RICHARD

But actually, I noticed that - so you must be a sucky skulker -

STACY

You noticed me.

RICHARD

Why not?

STACY

I don't know - you're -

RICHARD

Not in your league?

STACY

Not in my grade.

RICHARD

Shouldn't you be trashing someone's clothes right now? Shouldn't you be making fun of someone who doesn't sit at your table?

Shouldn't you be making someone feel like shit for just existing -
(Stacy takes her sandwich out of her lunch bag and takes a huge bite)

It's one of Allyson's stupid dares -

(Stacy laughs so suddenly that peanut butter sprays out of her mouth at him.)

STACY

Oh, oh my god. Uck. Sorry.

RICHARD

Oh, you've killed me, you've got me.

(He collapsed onto the table. She giggles.)

STACY

Good try, nut table boy.

RICHARD

(in girl's voice)

Haven't you figured it out yet? I'm Allyson in disguise. I'm here to test your loyalty to the great goddess me and you failed by bringing the wrong lunch to school.

(Stacy takes a huge bite of her sandwich and opens her mouth wide)

STACY

Come on and kiss me Ally.
Give me lots and lots of tongue.

(ALLYSON enters -)

ALLYSON

Stacy. Stacy! What are you doing?

STACY

Run for your life?

ALLYSON

Why are you sitting over there?

STACY

Stay back!

ALLYSON

What?

STACY

I'm armed!
(she holds the sandwich out like a weapon. Allyson backs away.)

ALLYSON

Jesus Stacy!

STACY

Just stay calm, ma'am and no one will get hurt.

ALLYSON

Bitch.
(Allyson goes.)

STACY

I'm just looking out for your well being!
Ally!
(a moment)
Oh crap.

RICHARD

That didn't work.

STACY

It didn't not work.

RICHARD

She doesn't listen to you the same. She doesn't laugh at you the same. All of a sudden you're at the same lunch table but you're not sitting next to her anymore and you don't know why.

STACY

Nothing changed with her.

RICHARD

She catch you in something? I've seen it happen before. And you're wondering and wondering who it is or what it could be, what you did wrong and you go over it again and again and again -

STACY

Nothing changes with her.

RICHARD

You brought peanut butter to school.

STACY

I like peanut butter.

RICHARD

You like peanut butter that much.
(Silence. She offers it out to him.)

STACY

Want some?

RICHARD

Never touch the stuff.

STACY

You sit here every day.

RICHARD

Oh, Christ, you're bored!
(She takes another huge bite of the sandwich)

STACY

I'm hungry.
And - I wanted to sit here.

(they look at each other a moment. Stacy gestures to the "NUTS ONLY" sign.)

STACY (CONT)

Mostly because I like the sign.

(FIN enters, sits down at the table and pulls his sandwich out of his bag, throws half at Richard.)

FIN

Roast b-b-beast.

(He eyes Stacy curiously. Ms. Hampton's monstrous desk floats on with MS. HAMPTON perched upon it.)

RICHARD AND FIN

Totally misunderstood teen is sent to the school guidance counselor for like...guidance.