



WHAT EVERY GIRL SHOULD KNOW

BY MONICA BYRNE



DRAMATISTS
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WHAT EVERY GIRL SHOULD KNOW

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WHAT EVERY GIRL SHOULD KNOW was commissioned by Little Green Pig Theatrical Concern (Jay O’Berski, Artistic Director) and received its world premiere at the Cordoba Center for the Arts in Durham, North Carolina, on April 19, 2012. It was directed by Lucius Robinson; the choreography was by Clare Byrne; the lighting design was by Steve Tell; the costume design was by Chelsea Kurtzman; the set design was by Lucius Robinson, Canby Robinson, Kiernan McGowan, Dana Marks, and Jay O’Berski; and the stage managers were Kiernan and Siobhan McGowan. The cast was as follows:

ANNECarolyn McDaniel
THERESA Marie Garlock
LUCY Alice Rose Turner
JOANSkylar Gudasz

WHAT EVERY GIRL SHOULD KNOW was produced as part of the New York International Fringe Festival (a production of the Present Company), opening at the Robert Moss Theater at 440 Studios on August 15, 2013. It was directed by Jaki Bradley, assistant-directed by Ashley Gunsteens, and produced by Brandon Smithey; the choreography was by Ricky and Jeffrey Kuperman; the set design was by Jaki Bradley and Michael Minahan; the lighting design was by R. S. Buck; the sound design was by Anthony Banda; the costume design was by Chelsea Kurtzman; the properties design was by Christine Zagrobelny; and the stage manager was Kate Sylvester. The cast was as follows:

ANNE Maggie Raymond
THERESA Danielle Beckmann
LUCY Emma Meltzer
JOAN C.C. Kellogg

AUTHOR'S NOTE ON DANCE AND MUSIC

The dances are integral parts of the narrative, and each can last several minutes. The narrative function of each dance is given in the text. The music used for the production should be raw, explosive, and masculine. For example, the original Durham production used Jane's Addiction, while the FringeNYC production used Amanda Palmer mashed up with liturgical music. The exception may be the Comfort Dance, whose narrative purpose is to console, calm, and distract.

CHARACTERS

ANNE, 15 years old.

THERESA, 15 years old.

LUCY, 14 years old.

JOAN, 15 years old.

SETTING

Fall 1914, Lower East Side, New York.

St. Mary's House, a Catholic reformatory for girls and boys.
The girls' housing. Spare but comfortable conditions.
A room with four beds and small bedside tables.

WHAT EVERY GIRL SHOULD KNOW

Scene 1

8:00 P.M.

*Darkness on set, which remains until Lucy turns on the lights.
Rhythmic rustling noises.*

ANNE. Lucy. LUCY.

LUCY. WHAT.

ANNE. Did you get it?

LUCY. Would you quit asking me every two seconds? We're not all as talented as you are.

ANNE. She needs the clothespin. Theresa, get the clothespin.

THERESA. You can't honestly expect me to locate the clothespin right now.

ANNE. What, are you close?

THERESA. I'm taking my time.

ANNE. Who are you thinking about?

THERESA. The most noble conspiracy of heaven and earth could not compel me to tell you right now.

ANNE. Fine, I'll just go again.

LUCY. I don't even know what it's supposed to feel like. How am I supposed to know it's happening?

ANNE. It's like you're riding a bicycle up a hill, and then you go over the hump of the hill, and then you're going downhill and you don't have to pedal anymore.

THERESA. And then you coast. Through apple orchards. And every apple is ripe.

LUCY. I'm lost.

THERESA. Then think of it like this. Have you ever been to Coney Island?

ANNE. Yeah, and she summers in Paris.

LUCY. Anne, shut up. No, I've never been to Coney Island.

THERESA. Have you at least seen the ocean?

LUCY. I think so.

THERESA. Well, when you stare at the sea, you can see the waves swelling up over and over, like there's a darkening where there wasn't one before, and then the darkening deepens, and races towards you, and starts to tip and tumble over itself, and you can see a rim of white at the top —

ANNE. All right, all right, all right.

LUCY. But ... I get to see the wave by rubbing? How am I rubbing differently from how you're rubbing?

THERESA. Darling, first, don't call it rubbing. That's vulgar. Think of it as ... rolling. Like rolling dough with a good, firm rolling pin.

ANNE. She's not dough, Theresa.

THERESA. Well, what would you call it?

ANNE. I don't know, something like ... pushing? Thumping? ...

THERESA. ... Massage ... or plucking, like plucking a harp ...

ANNE. A harp? What the hell are you *doing* over there?

LUCY. You guys! You are not helping!

THERESA. Well, whatever you call it, the friction is only a part of it. You have to think about someone you like.

LUCY. Define "like."

THERESA. Someone you'd like to take a stroll with, maybe get a ginger ale, down on the boardwalk ...

ANNE. Oh, Christ. Lucy. You think of someone you want to throw down and ride.

THERESA. I was getting to that.

LUCY. Anne, who do *you* think of?

ANNE. Me? I think of John. Every time.

LUCY. Wait, who's John.

ANNE. I told you a hundred times. The Negro who lived in my tenement.

LUCY. You can do that?

ANNE. Do what?

LUCY. Be with a Negro.

ANNE. The people who think you can't be with a Negro are the same people who think the Virgin Mary never took a shit.

LUCY. It just never occurred to me.

ANNE. Theresa. Tell Lucy who you think about.

THERESA. Ah, well, I tend to think of great men from the annals of history.

LUCY. Like Moses?

THERESA. Darling! Have some imagination. I mean Henry the Eighth of England, or Alexander the Great, or Genghis Khan.

ANNE. Who the hell is Genghis Khan?

LUCY. I think he was Jewish.

THERESA. No, he's Mongolian. He conquered the Orient. And he had many concubines.

LUCY. That sounds awful. I would want just one man who's all mine.

ANNE. So. Who puts the wrinkle in your twat?

LUCY. Well ... there's Patrick.

ANNE. Which one?

LUCY. The red-haired one.

ANNE. Which one?

THERESA. Ooooh, I think I know! The one who rings the bells at Mass?

LUCY. Yes.

THERESA. I've fancied him myself a few times. His earlobes are rather long.

ANNE. If anyone on this earth would give a shit about earlobes, Theresa, it'd be you.

THERESA. God is in the details.

ANNE. Well, I can't see it. He's puny and greasy.

LUCY. (*Getting up and turning on the light.*) Hey, you asked. I answered. Anyway, weren't you supposed to go again? Don't mind me, just keep rubbing and I'll read the newspaper.

ANNE. No, I have to stop. If I do it more than three times in a row then there's not as much payoff.

THERESA. Is that so? I've never had enough time for three.

ANNE. Just out of curiosity, how much would be enough time for you?

THERESA. 'Til the seas boil and the moon turns to blood.

ANNE. Jesus. You need to learn to get there faster. What if you only have two minutes?

THERESA. I can't imagine circumstances that would beget the scenario you describe.

ANNE. If Satan's chasing you.

THERESA. Why is Satan chasing me?

ANNE. Because he got bored doing other things.

THERESA. I think if Satan were chasing me, I would run.

ANNE. You're no fun. Let me see the logbook. Yeah, I've only ever gotten to three. It stops feeling good — the hill has a sharper peak, but then the ride back down isn't as steep.

THERESA. A plateau effect.

ANNE. Yeah, that.

THERESA. We'll have to make note of that. "There exists an upper limit, a point of diminishing returns."

LUCY. But what if you really were being chased by Satan? Or what if you were here alone in the room and he just appeared to you, with horns and red skin and everything, and you couldn't get out? What would you do?

ANNE. Fight.

THERESA. That's your answer to everything. I'd be so curious to talk to him. Ask him a few questions, set a few things straight, have a little fun.

LUCY. I think you should just drop down on your knees and start praying.

ANNE. You wouldn't pray. You'd just ignore him.

LUCY. How can you ignore a big red smoking demon?

ANNE. Because it's a big red smoking demon. It's easier to pretend he's not there.

LUCY. That's ridiculous.

ANNE. What if I told you he was standing behind you right now?

LUCY. Anne, that's ... Anne. That's not funny.

ANNE. He's right there.

LUCY. Stop it.

ANNE. And the only thing that's protecting you is if I keep my eyes on him.

LUCY. (*Jumping up and looking back.*) Stop it!

ANNE. Wow, you are easy. Stop being so suggestible.

LUCY. If he were really here, I'd be brave.

THERESA. I believe you would, Lulu. (*Marking down.*) Three for Anne.

LUCY. Mark me down for zero again.
THERESA. Take heart, darling. Just keep thinking about Patrick.
About kissing his pink lips.
LUCY. But then I'd get pregnant.
ANNE. You idiot, you can't get pregnant from kissing.
LUCY. How am I supposed to know?
THERESA. Has anyone ever kissed you?
LUCY. No.
ANNE. I'll kiss you.
LUCY. Agh!
THERESA. Anne, for heaven's sakes.
ANNE. The girl needs to know you can't get pregnant through kissing.
LUCY. How about I just believe you.
ANNE. Fine. (*Beat. Retreat to beds.*)
THERESA. So, Lucy, what's going on in the world?
LUCY. Same thing. Are we going to war. Are we not going to war. Thirty thousand Canadians crossed the Atlantic to fight for the Allies. Blah blah. I want to read about something exotic. What do you think people in the Orient are doing right now?
ANNE. Eating flowers.
THERESA. Rubbing themselves on pillows and thinking about George Washington.
LUCY. Ew! He's dead.
ANNE. That doesn't stop Theresa.
THERESA. I like a certain distance from my subjects.
LUCY. Where do you think you go when you die?
THERESA. To heaven, to play harp with baby angels.
ANNE. Or hell, to play poker with baby demons.
LUCY. Or maybe they go to the Orient.
ANNE. Then where do Oriental people go when they die?
LUCY. Coney Island.
ANNE. Well, that makes sense. (*Knock on the door. It's Joan.*)
THERESA. Can we help you?
JOAN. This is room fourteen?
THERESA. It is.
JOAN. Then this is where I'm supposed to be.
THERESA. In our room?
JOAN. In this room, yes.
THERESA. Why?

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In a Catholic reformatory in 1914, three teenage girls (Anne, Theresa, and Lucy) pass the time with masturbation rituals, though they're innocent of the "sinful" nature of their act. Then a belligerent new girl, Joan, shows up, bearing illegal contraband: birth control materials distributed by the women's-rights activist Margaret Sanger. The girls start reading the material and jokingly pretend to venerate Sanger as a saint, but then they undergo a profound conversion experience. They begin to follow Sanger's life in the newspaper, pretending that they're traveling on their own, assassinating enemies and taking lovers at will. Through their letters to each other, they reveal their pasts, marked by abuse. The girls slide deeper and deeper into their illusion, to the extent that objects from their fantasy world start appearing in the real one — including a baby.

"As tight as it is timely ... as pertinent as the latest attack on Sanger's great legacy, Planned Parenthood."
—**SFGate.com**

"Top to bottom, start to finish, WHAT EVERY GIRL SHOULD KNOW is an excellent piece of theater ... as long as the war over women's reproductive rights rages on, [this is] a story people need to keep telling."
—**NYTheatre.com**

"Historical but vibrant, full of [young women's] mischievous energy ..."
—**TheDailyBeast.com**

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