



ASHVILLE

BY LUCY THURBER



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The world premiere of ASHVILLE was presented by Rattlestick Playwrights Theater (David Van Asselt, Artistic Director; Brian Long, Managing Director) and Cherry Lane Theatre, on August 21, 2013. It was directed by Karen Allen; the set design was by John McDermott; the costume design was by Jessica Pabst; the lighting design was by Matt Richards; the sound design was by Bart Fassbender; the fight choreography was by UnkleDave's Fight-house; and the stage manager was Megan Schwartz Dickert. The cast was as follows:

CELIA Mia Vallet
JAKE Joe Tippett
AMANDA Aubrey Dollar
JOEY George West Carruth
SHELLY Tasha Lawrence
HARRY Andrew Garman
JOE James McMenamin

CHARACTERS

CELIA

JAKE

AMANDA

JOEY

SHELLY

HARRY

JOE

Note: The dashes in the text represent a quickness, a little break in thought to speed you on to the next thought.

ASHVILLE

Scene 1

Lights up on a row house in a small Massachusetts college town. It is morning. It is spring. Three of the apartments in the row house. We can see into three identical combination kitchen/living rooms, with the same front door off to the right of the living room. The same hallway at the back of the kitchen, leading off to a bedroom and bathroom. They are all decorated differently. A porch runs along the front of the entire row house.

Lights up on Celia's apartment. Celia, 16 years old, dressed and showered, stands watching Jake sleep. Jake, 22 years old, is passed out, in boxers with his shirt off, on a fold-out couch in the living room. Celia is expressionless as she looks at Jake. She moves her head, peering at him from different angles, still expressionless. Celia crosses into the kitchen and starts making breakfast. As she does —

Lights up on both Joey and Amanda's apartment and Joe's apartment. In Joey and Amanda's apartment, Amanda, 22 years old, is making breakfast. She puts a newspaper down on the table, carefully sets the kitchen table, and makes coffee.

In Joe's apartment, Joe, anywhere from early 30s to mid-40s, is passed out, fully clothed, on his couch.

Celia's Apartment

CELIA. (*Calling to Jake.*) Baby, wake up! Baby, breakfast is ready. (*Jake rolls over.*) Jake! Jake! Breakfast is ready!

JAKE. (*Opens his eyes.*) Celia ... Celia ...

CELIA. Baby, breakfast is ready — come to the table, baby —

JAKE. (*Stretching.*) Celia, Celia come and give me a kiss — Celia come and give me a good-morning kiss — baby come and give me a kiss — (*Celia goes to Jake. He pulls her down onto the fold-out couch bed and kisses her. Celia laughs and kisses him back, then pulls away.*)

CELIA. I made you breakfast.

JAKE. Good girl.

CELIA. Come on — come to the table — I made you eggs — I made you toast — I made you eggs — (*Celia pulls away from Jake and goes back to the kitchen area. Jake watches her ass as she goes.*)

JAKE. (*Calling after her.*) Are those new jeans?

CELIA. Yeah. You like them? (*Jake doesn't answer. He takes a second, gets up, follows Celia to the table, and sits.*)

JAKE. Is there coffee? (*Celia gives Jake a cup of coffee. He takes a sip.*) It's perfect baby. It's a perfect cup of coffee. (*Celia puts a plate with eggs and toast down in front Jake.*) Nice baby — nice — eggs well-done — toast just right — this is great baby. (*Celia goes back to the stove. Jake watches her.*) You're so pretty and damn, you've got such a fine ass. Baby, really, you've got a great ass.

CELIA. So you do like the new jeans?

JAKE. I do. I do like them. Come and give me a kiss.

CELIA. You talk like a baby, sometimes. Like a little baby. (*Ruffling Jake's hair.*) You're my little baby. (*They kiss. Jake checks his watch.*)

JAKE. Shit, I gotta hurry — (*He gives his attention back to his food.*)

CELIA. You still gotta drop me off at school —

JAKE. (*Checks his watch.*) You better hurry and get ready —

CELIA. I am ready —

JAKE. I gotta pick up Joey too —

CELIA. I am ready —

JAKE. Which means I'm gonna have my daily run-in with Amanda — God she is such a bitch —

CELIA. I like her —

JAKE. I don't know what he sees in that woman — she looks like a linebacker —

CELIA. You're crazy —

JAKE. I couldn't get my dick hard for her even if I had to hit it up with a hammer —

CELIA. She's beautiful and you know it —

JAKE. He's puttin' the nails in his own coffin and I told him so

too — that girl gets around — She's been with like every guy in this town —

CELIA. She hasn't been with you —

JAKE. What — ?

CELIA. You heard me — I'm gonna go get my bookbag. (*Motioning to Jake's breakfast.*) Finish up and then fold up the couch.

JAKE. Hey — (*Looks around and grabs a sweatshirt off one of the kitchen chairs.*) Take this. I don't want you to be cold —

CELIA. It's 70 degrees out —

JAKE. Now it's 70 degrees, what about later? Take it and just tie it around your waist —

CELIA. Are you serious, Jake? Don't start with your shit right now —

JAKE. Those jeans are awful tight, Celia —

CELIA. Jesus —

JAKE. I'm just saying they're tight — And I'm protective of you — I'm just saying I'm protective of you —

CELIA. Jesus, Jake. (*She takes the sweatshirt, ties it around her waist, then exits out towards the bathroom. Jake finishes, takes his plates to the sink, and then goes to fold up the couch and straighten up the living room area.*)

Joey and Amanda's Apartment

(*As Jake works in Celia's apartment, Joey enters into the kitchen/living room area. He is carrying a construction hat and a tool belt. Amanda smiles at him and hands him a cup of coffee. Joey takes it gratefully and sits at the table. Amanda gets milk from the fridge and hands it to Joey. Joey pours milk on his cereal. Amanda then leans back against the counter and sips her own coffee.*)

JOEY. I gotta hurry. Jake's gonna be here any second. Baby did you get a chance to make me lunch. (*As Amanda moves away, Joey grabs her hand and holds it for a minute. Amanda leans in and kisses him.*)

AMANDA. You know I did. It's in the fridge. You be good today, baby.

JOEY. I'm good every day.

AMANDA. Don't I know it. (*Kisses him again.*) I gotta go shower.

JOEY. I thought you had the dinner shift?

AMANDA. Kristy wanted to switch.

JOEY. Gotcha. (*He turns back to his breakfast. Amanda exits. Joey picks up the paper Amanda has left for him and reads.*)

Celia's Apartment

(Jake has just finished straightening the living room area. Celia comes onstage with her bookbag in tow. They prepare to go out the front door of the apartment, but before they do, Shelly and Harry, who is wearing boxer shorts and a t-shirt, enter.)

CELIA. *(To Shelly.)* Who the fuck is this and why aren't you at work?

SHELLY. I'm not feeling well.

CELIA. You look fine to me.

SHELLY. I'm not fine. Clearly I am not fine.

CELIA. Did you call in? *(Shelly doesn't answer.)* Mom, have you called in yet?

HARRY. Coffee?

CELIA. *(To Harry.)* Nobody's talking to you. Only speak when you're spoken to.

JAKE. *(To the room in general.)* Oh shit. Here comes trouble.

CELIA. *(To Shelly.)* Why haven't you called in yet?

SHELLY. Why is none of your business. I am sick. Can't you see I'm sick? I got a killer sore throat. I can't go in and spread disease to all the customers can I? That would be irresponsible. I can't call in. A sick person does not call in for themselves. How is a sick person supposed to call in? I don't see that. That doesn't work now does it honey?

CELIA. Don't be stupid, Mom!

HARRY. Coffee?

CELIA. *(To Shelly.)* Who is he? And why is he talking?

SHELLY. He's our guest.

CELIA. He's not my guest.

SHELLY. *(Pointing to Jake.)* You have a guest and I have a guest. You're not the only one with friends, you know?

CELIA. Where did you find him Mother? He looks like a bum.

SHELLY. I didn't find him. I know him. He's Harry and he's a man ...

HARRY. *(To Jake.)* You got a cigarette? Shelly? She got a cigarette?

SHELLY. Jake give Harry a cigarette. *(Jake reaches into his jacket and hands Harry a cigarette.)*

HARRY. You got a light man?

JAKE. *(Looks him up and down.)* Harry Miller.

HARRY. Yeah.

JAKE. I know you.

HARRY. Yeah?

JAKE. You ripped my dad off.

HARRY. Yeah?

JAKE. Don't "yeah" me motherfucker. You owe my dad 300 bucks.

HARRY. I don't know your dad. Shelly...?

SHELLY. He don't know your dad honey.

JAKE. Bullshit! You took our lawn mower. Celia he took my dad's lawn mower.

SHELLY. You leave him alone Jakey. Celia tell him to leave Harry alone.

JAKE. My dad's pissed as shit at this guy.

HARRY. Your dad has money.

JAKE. Yeah.

HARRY. It don't matter.

JAKE. Fuck you it doesn't.

HARRY. It don't matter what I was going to say. *(To Jake.)* You want some coffee? *(He makes himself coffee.)*

JAKE. Celia —

CELIA. Jesus. *(She sits down.)*

Amanda and Joey's Apartment

(Joey finishes reading his paper, takes his breakfast dishes to the sink and washes them.)

Celia's Apartment

HARRY. I like your house Shelly. It's comfortable here and you have a nice daughter. Last night we went dancing.

SHELLY. Did we?

HARRY. Yes, and ate steak.

SHELLY. I like steak. Don't I Celia?

CELIA. Jesus Christ —

HARRY. I'm hungry. I want a sandwich.

SHELLY. Celia make Harry a sandwich.

CELIA. I'm not makin him a fucken sandwich, Ma.

ASHVILLE

by Lucy Thurber

4M, 3W

Chronologically the second play in Lucy Thurber's The Hill Town Plays cycle, ASHVILLE is the story of Celia, sixteen years old and trapped in her poor white rural town, among people who can't hope for anything more than a good blue-collar job and a decent marriage. Celia wants something else in life, even if she can't articulate what that is. For a fleeting moment she thinks she finds the unnameable thing in her neighbor and tentative friend Amanda, but it may be that no one else can save Celia — only she herself can orchestrate her escape.

"The best thing about these five plays is the detailed and quite devastating portrait they present of the depressed industrial region of western Massachusetts ..."
—Variety

"[In Lucy Thurber's universe] ... time doesn't really pass so much as accrue. [Her] whiskey-soaked hillbilly head-butts are so stark, so deliberate, so recursive in their accursedness ... Distance is hard-won; pitiable and predatory men from the past — brothers, boyfriends, everything in between — are never far from the door; and progress always comes with a beery undertow of regression. ... It's the slow burn of a holiday in hell."
—New York Magazine

Also by Lucy Thurber
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DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.

ISBN: 978-0-8222-3355-8



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