



GIDION'S KNOT

BY **JOHNNA ADAMS**



DRAMATISTS
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Originally produced at the Contemporary American Theater Festival,
Shepherdstown, West Virginia,
Producing Director, Ed Herendeen;
Associate Producing Director, Peggy McKowen; Managing Director, James McNeel.

GIDION’S KNOT was originally produced at the Contemporary American Theater Festival (Ed Herendeen, Producing Director; Peggy McKowen, Associate Producing Director; James McNeel, Managing Director) in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, in July 2012. It was directed by Ed Herendeen; the set design was by Margaret A. McKowen; the costume design was by Danae McQueen; the sound design was by Jamie Whoolery; the fight director was Aaron Anderson; and the stage manager was Catherine Fay Wallis. The cast was as follows:

HEATHER Joey Parsons
CORRYN Robin Walsh

CHARACTERS

HEATHER, 40s–50s

CORRYN, 40s–50s

PLACE

A fifth-grade classroom in a public school
in the Lake Forest suburb of Chicago.

TIME

Early April. The present year.
Monday. 2:45 P.M. to 4:15 P.M.

NOTE

When a character name is followed by an ellipsis, as such:

HEATHER. ...

this indicates a nonverbal response to the previous line.

The ellipsis line may be played in many ways: as a pause, a beat, a look, a movement, a silence, a smile, a sudden thought, or it can just be used to give the scene some air, some room, some tension, etc. When several ellipses lines are strung together it is helpful to think of them as bouncing nonverbal responses, e.g., one character shrugs, another character reacts to the shrug with a toss of her head.

A slash (/) in the middle of a character's line indicates an interruption. The next speaking character should begin her line where the slash appears.

GIDION'S KNOT

A fifth-grade classroom.

Twenty desks are arranged facing a blackboard. Each desk has a cubbyhole filled with books, pencils and other detritus of childhood.

To the side there is a teacher's desk where Heather Clark sits grading papers.

The walls are filled with bright and cheerful posters of Greek and Hindu gods (Zeus, Aphrodite, Hera, Vishnu, Ganesh, Shiva, Buddha, Kwan Yin, etc.).

Children's writing assignments (poems, stories, reports, etc.) fill every part of the walls not covered with gods or lesson notes. There are probably 50 posted assignments.

Five or six decorated foam core boards on one wall, featuring reports on Greek mythology and Alexander the Great.

It is 2:45 P.M. Classes end at 3:00 P.M.

Heather grades her papers and from time to time sips from a cup of tea on the desk in front of her. Her cellphone is on the desk beside her.

She looks at the phone. She picks it up and checks to see if she has a message. Nothing. She puts the phone down and leaves her hand on it for a long time, staring at it.

She goes back to grading.

There is a knock at the door. She is surprised. No one knocks. People just walk in. She stands, a little uncertain.

HEATHER. Yes? *(Another knock. The knocker can't hear her through the door. She goes to the door and looks out a moment through a small window. She opens the door.)* Yes? *(Corryn Fell enters hesitantly.)* Are you looking / for...?

CORRYN. I have a parent-teacher conference. Is / this — ?

HEATHER. Do you know the room?

CORRYN. I thought ...

HEATHER. If you go to the office and speak to the office manager she can tell you which room you're looking for. Just give her the teacher's name.

CORRYN. The office manager?

HEATHER. Carole. She's at the desk.

CORRYN. Thank you.

HEATHER. All right. *(Corryn goes out. Heather returns to her desk. She stares at her phone. Another knock, then Corryn pokes her head back in cautiously.)*

CORRYN. I'm sorry. The office?

HEATHER. It's down the hall and to your left — at the end of the hall there.

CORRYN. Oh. Okay. Thank you. *(Corryn leaves. Heather stands for a long moment in the middle of the room. She goes back to grading papers. Something breaks inside her. She stops and puts her head in her hands, taking deep breaths, almost hyperventilating, trying not to sob. She shakes her head, and under her breath —)*

HEATHER. God ... oh god ... god ... *(She gets up and walks around the room. She picks up her cellphone and puts it down. She almost has herself under control. A knock at the door.)* Oh god. *(She crosses to the door as Corryn comes back in.)*

CORRYN. I'm / sorry —

HEATHER. Down the hall and to your left —

CORRYN. I found it. I found Carole.

HEATHER. You need directions to the room?

CORRYN. You're very helpful, aren't you? I mean, you're irritated and not very good at hiding it, but still ...

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. I'm sorry. That came out —

HEATHER. Yes. It did.

CORRYN. ...

HEATHER. Do you need help finding the room?

CORRYN. No, I found the room.

HEATHER. No one was there? If you ask Carole —

CORRYN. This is the room.

HEATHER. No. No, I don't —

CORRYN. 418.

HEATHER. No, I don't have anything.

CORRYN. Two-thirty. I'm a little late.

HEATHER. I don't have anything scheduled.

CORRYN. Yes. I wrote it down. (*Corryn pulls a crumpled piece of paper out of her purse.*) Two-thirty. April 5th. Room 418. Ms. Clark.

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. You're Ms. Clark.

HEATHER. Yes.

CORRYN. I set it up. Here — (*Corryn gives Heather the paper.*)

HEATHER. That's strange, I — I'm sorry.

CORRYN. That's all right. You forgot, I guess.

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. I can come back. You're unprepared, I can see that.

HEATHER. No, it's fine. Come in.

CORRYN. Thank you very much. And thank you for making time.

HEATHER. I don't think you were at open house.

CORRYN. No.

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. I set it up with Carole, I guess. I called her. Friday afternoon.

HEATHER. About?

CORRYN. About my son.

HEATHER. Who is your son?

CORRYN. Gidion.

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. ...

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. ...

HEATHER. ... oh god ...

CORRYN. We set up a parent teacher conference. The principal was supposed to come, too.

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. I guess she forgot.

HEATHER. No. Of course not. It's just —

CORRYN. ...

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. I missed open house. So we never got to meet.

HEATHER. You're Gidion's mother. Mrs. Gibson.

CORRYN. No. That was his father's name. Ms. Fell.

HEATHER. Mrs. Fell.

CORRYN. You can call me Corryn.

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. You sent a note home with my son. Asking to meet with me.

HEATHER. Mrs. Fell.

CORRYN. Telling me he was suspended.

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. There was a voicemail message, too ... Saying to call.

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. And I called and set something up. I guess with Carole maybe. Someone in the office. She didn't tell you?

HEATHER. No, she did.

CORRYN. You forgot.

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. Well. We set this up.

HEATHER. Yes.

CORRYN. So here I am.

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. ...

HEATHER. Mrs. Fell —

CORRYN. No, it's Ms.

HEATHER. Ms. Fell.

CORRYN. You can call me Corryn. If you'd like.

HEATHER. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I'm so very, very sorry.

CORRYN. Thank you.

HEATHER. I didn't forget. I just. ... I didn't think you'd —

CORRYN. You sent a note home with my son. And left a message. Asking to meet with me. How could I not come?

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. He's my son.

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. You look pale. Have I given you a shock?

HEATHER. Oh god.

CORRYN. I didn't mean to.

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. We did have an appointment.

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. ...

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. What did you want to talk about?

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. About my son?

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. Was it his grades?

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. Attendance? Excessive tardiness? Running in the halls?

HEATHER. I don't ...

CORRYN. The reason you suspended him?

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. I'd really like to know. I've been wondering. Your note was vague. The voicemail was cryptic. I've been up for about 72 hours. I can't sleep. I can't sleep because I've been playing this conversation out over and over again in my mind, wondering how it will go. You were more vocal in these little fantasies. You contributed. You explained. ... I don't know why you ... did this to him. I don't know what happened.

HEATHER. ...

CORRYN. He looked devastated. When he handed me the note.

He was shaking. He —

HEATHER. God! ... oh god ...

CORRYN. ...

HEATHER. ... god

CORRYN. I'm sorry.

HEATHER. I don't know / what —

CORRYN. I didn't mean —

HEATHER. God. / I just —

CORRYN. Would you like me to get you some water?

HEATHER. I didn't think —

CORRYN. You look bloodless.

HEATHER. I didn't think you'd keep the appointment. It never occurred to me that you would keep the appointment.

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2W

Over the course of a parent/teacher conference, a grieving mother and an emotionally overwhelmed primary school teacher have a fraught conversation about the tragic suicide of the mother's son, Gidion. Gidion may have been bullied severely — or he may have been an abuser. As his story is slowly uncovered, the women try to reconstruct a satisfying explanation for Gidion's act and come to terms with excruciating feelings of culpability.

"... resonant ... [a] particularly eloquent study of people caught between the competing demands of reason, morality and family ... harrowing ... a narrative that is as elegant as it is chilling."

—**The Washington Post**

"... heart-stopping ... the show has pathos and suspense in bucketloads ... Within a lean eighty minutes, the show raises profound questions about parenting and education and documents the gut-wrenching force of maternal loyalty."

—**The Washingtonian**

"GIDION'S KNOT is as sad as life itself, and as funny and startling as well ... a beautiful, disturbing story." —**DCTheatreScene.com**

ISBN 978-0-8222-2967-4



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