



WE ARE HERE

BY TRACY THORNE



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For JVT, my first teacher.

WE ARE HERE was presented by New York Stage and Film Company and Vassar College at the Powerhouse Theater in Poughkeepsie, New York, from June 29 – July 11, 2010. It was directed by Sheryl Kaller; the set design was by Scott Bradley; the costume design was by Toni-Leslie James; the lighting design was by Russell H. Champa; and the sound design was by John Gromada. The cast was as follows:

BILLIE.....de'Adra Aziza
HAL..... Adam Rothenberg
VERA Adriane Lenox
EVERETT Larry Pine
SHAWN Uzo Aduba
ELI..... Michael Cummings

CHARACTERS

BILLIE: 27–32, mixed-race. Alluring, smart, and sure of herself ... that is, until she isn't.

HAL: 30–35, white. Billie's husband. Like Eeyore, but with a sense of humor. A truly decent guy.

VERA: Late 50s – early 60s, African American. Billie and Shawn's mother, has an unusually affirmative, take-no-prisoners point of view on everyone and everything.

EVERETT: Early 60s – mid-60s, white, patrician, Billie and Shawn's father. As his daughters say, "A boring white guy with soul."

SHAWN: 31–36, African American, Billie's sister. The smartest member of the family; also the most pissed off.

ELI: 13, African American, with a little kid's body and a young man's rowdy mind.

WE ARE HERE takes place in the the future, the present, and the past. In the scenes that happen in the past, Billie is 27 years old, Hal is 30, Shawn is 31, Vera is in her late 50s, and Everett is in his early 60s. In the scenes that happen in the present, everyone is five years older. As for the scene that happens in the future, well, who can know ...

WE ARE HERE

ACT ONE

Scene 1

The future.

Music begins to play. Something romantic. Something filled with longing. And love. Something like Johnny Hartman's recording of "I See Your Face Before Me." After a time, the house lights slowly fade. There is a moment in total darkness before stage light comes up to reveal Eli. He's off the ground and flying, floating in the dark, wearing headphones, listening to hip hop on his phone. And he's beyond happy. So too, the light reveals an also flying, also floating, Billie. She joyfully watches Eli listening to his hip hop soundtrack. However she, and we, hear only jazz crooning at its most elegant and lush. Eli moves to his music, spinning gracefully in space. Billie hovers, but doesn't move much at all. She can't take her eyes off Eli. As the crooning starts to fade, so do the lights on Billie and Eli. We hear a few bars more, and then they're gone. Blackout.*

* See Special Note on Songs and Recordings on copyright page.

Scene 2

The present. An imaginary place. Billie lies on the floor, staring straight up. Eli, standing, stares at Billie. The dialogue between them proceeds with great pace. In spite of their real conversation, Billie is clearly talking to herself.

ELI. I have an idea!

BILLIE. (*As if she's surprised to hear him speak.*) What?!

ELI. Play with me, Mom.

BILLIE. Play with you? Play what?

ELI. (*Enticing her.*) Séance! We could play séance!

BILLIE. That's crazy.

ELI. (*Better still.*) Okay, we could play doctor!

BILLIE. I don't think so.

ELI. (*Best yet.*) Forget doctor then, we could play funeral!

BILLIE. Why?

ELI. Why not? I liked my funeral.

BILLIE. Nice for you. I didn't.

ELI. You gotta admit, the song was nice.

BILLIE. Not nice enough.

ELI. So what, you're sad, Billie?

BILLIE. Yes.

ELI. All day?

BILLIE. Uh huh.

ELI. Every day?

BILLIE. What do you think?

ELI. I think that's funny.

BILLIE. You do?

ELI. Mos def.

BILLIE. Why?

ELI. 'Cause you don't *act* sad.

BILLIE. No?

ELI. You act mad. Like, really pissed off.

BILLIE. (*Finding it funny too.*) I guess that is funny.

ELI. How's that work?

WE ARE HERE

by Tracy Thorne

3M, 3W

WE ARE HERE weaves a joyful past with a devastated present and an indefinite future, as three generations of a family cope with an unimaginable loss: the death of a young boy. With compassion, wit, and music, everyone — including the child — searches for the will to endure. Each strong-minded, smart, funny member of the family must find his or her own way to peace. And also: everybody sings.

“WE ARE HERE swings between the joyful and blessed past ... and the pain-filled present as the characters try to figure out how to crawl back to life. The last scene, where Eli uses the family’s method of communicating love — singing — to show how much he treasured and appreciated his brief time on earth, is a heartbreaker.” —**DCTheatreScene.com**

“The surprise — and the very real skillfulness — of this play is the way it fools you. About fifteen minutes in, you’re all but convinced that you’re witnessing the kind of girly-world scenario best aired on something like the late-lamented Oprah show. But then Ms. Thorne, without warning, sucks both men and women into the vortex of the kind of tragedy from which there is no escape for anyone. It’s sneaky. And very effective.”

—**The Washington Times**

“... an intense, introspective drama.”

—**The Times-Herald Record (Middletown, NY)**

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