

# DESIRE

SIX ONE-ACT PLAYS BY  
ELIZABETH EGLOFF  
MARCUS GARDLEY  
REBECCA GILMAN  
DAVID GRIMM  
JOHN GUARE AND  
BETH HENLEY

BASED ON SHORT STORIES BY  
TENNESSEE  
WILLIAMS



DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.

DESIRE

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ATTACK OF THE GIANT TENT WORMS

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ORIFLAMME

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YOU LIED TO ME ABOUT CENTRALIA

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THE RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN A VIOLIN CASE AND A COFFIN

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DESIRE was commissioned and first performed by The Acting Company (Margot Harley, Producing Director). It was directed by Michael Wilson; the set and projection designs were by Jeff Cowie; the costume design was by David C. Woolard, the lighting design was by Russell H. Champa; the sound design and original music were by John Gromada. The cast was Kristen Adele, Megan Bartle, Juliet Brett, Brian Cross, Liv Rooth, John Skelley, Derek Smith, Mickey Theis, and Yaegel T. Welch.

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**THE RESEMBLANCE  
BETWEEN A VIOLIN  
CASE AND A COFFIN**

BY **BETH HENLEY**

BASED ON THE SHORT STORY BY  
**TENNESSEE WILLIAMS**

## **CHARACTERS**

ROE, 14

TOM, 11

MISS ALLEY, 30s

MOTHER, 40s

GRANDMOTHER, 60s

RICHARD MILES, 17

## **SETTING**

The play takes place in a small southern town in the 1920s. The style is spare and expressionistic.

There will be a stylized piano and a stylized violin. These props must have a mythic, shimmering quality.

# THE RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN A VIOLIN CASE AND A COFFIN

## Scene 1

*A tree. Waving light falls through branches.*

*Roe, 14, sits on a low branch wearing a light summer dress; an old lace curtain is draped around her like a veil.*

ROE. I, a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, have spent all my living on physicians and could not be healed.

*Tom, 11, enters wearing a crown of thorns and carrying a cross made of tree branches. Red berry juice is smeared on his palms and face, representing blood.*

*His every step is fraught with agony.*

*Roe comes down from the tree and solemnly reaches her arm to touch his shoulder with her fingers.*

TOM. Somebody hath touched me for I perceive virtue hath gone out of me.

*With frightening reality Tom falls to the ground.*

ROE. Lord it was I seeking to be healed. Having an issue of blood twelve years.

TOM. Daughter be of good comfort. Thy faith hath made the whole.

*Roe hands him her veil.*

ROE. Lord you suffer and bleed. My veil.

*Tom takes the veil and wipes the berry blood from his brow. Rising to his feet he returns the veil to her.*

TOM. Go in peace.

*Tom exits, trembling with agony.*

*Roe looks at the veil and sees the imprint of the face of Jesus.*

*Roe kneels.*

ROE. Thy face. My Lord's face is imprinted on this sacred veil. This veil.

*She looks for Tom. Worry crosses her face.*

Tom? Tom are you hurt? Tom!

*Tom enters with bouncing elation.*

TOM. What?

ROE. When you fell—I thought—

TOM. No, I was pretending!

ROE. Me too!

TOM. That was so real.

ROE. Yes!

TOM. Let's do the seventh Station of the Cross.

ROE. I have to go to my lesson.

TOM. It won't take long.

ROE. Miss Alley has given me a solo to play for the recital.

TOM. All you do is practice.

ROE. I have to. I'm gifted.

TOM. That's vain. You have the sin of vanity.

ROE. I do not! Mama is gifted. Did you hear her singing this morning?

TOM. She always sings when she knows Daddy has gone away on a long trip.

ROE. I have to go. You can play by yourself.

*Roe exits. Tom watches her go.*



## Scene 2

*Miss Alley's home.*

*The only object in the room is a piano stool with a swivel seat.*

*There should be a sense that this abode is surrounded by strangling vines.*

*Miss Alley darts around the room.*

MISS ALLEY. Where is she? My star pupil? In one minute she will be tardy.

*Roe enters.*

ROE. Miss Alley?

MISS ALLEY. Come in Miss Roe! I have been waiting—I have news for you! It's colossal! Inspiration came to me and I—You must remember me telling you about Richard Miles? The young man who recently arrived in town?

ROE. Yes, your new violin student.

MISS ALLEY. Inspiration came and I've spoken to him and I'm speaking to you. I have decided to include a Chopin violin and piano duet in the recital, featuring you on piano and Richard on violin.

ROE. Oh Miss Alley, thank you. Thank you! I love that duet.

MISS ALLEY. As does Richard Miles.

Here is the music.

You must learn the entire duet by heart. No sheet music will be allowed. This performance must be—What was I saying? Sublime. Yes, sublime.

# DESIRE

## SIX ONE-ACT PLAYS

based on short stories by Tennessee Williams  
by Elizabeth Egloff, Marcus Gardley,  
Rebecca Gilman, David Grimm,  
John Guare, and Beth Henley

**ATTACK OF THE GIANT TENT WORMS.** Billy and Clara are nearing the end of their summer vacation on Cape Cod, as their cottage is being devoured by billions of tent-worms. Worse, Billy has just gotten word from his oncologist that there are no more treatment options for his brain cancer. A darkly humorous exploration of which is more terrifying: bugs or death? (1 man, 1 woman.)

**DESIRE QUENCHED BY TOUCH.** In 1950s New Orleans, a black masseur must account for the disappearance of his favorite white customer. People don't just vanish inside massage parlors... (3 men.)

**THE FIELD OF BLUE CHILDREN.** Everything in Layley's life is going according to plan. She belongs to the best sorority at her university and has a devoted boyfriend who could easily become a devoted husband. But Layley suspects that there is more to life than stifling conformity. So she signs up for a poetry class in the hopes of expressing herself. There she meets Dylan, a sensitive poet with whom she enjoys a night of passion that opens up a truly revolutionary prospect: living a life of her own. (3 men, 4 women.)

**ORIFLAMME.** Oriflamme (noun): A red or scarlet banner; a knight's standard; a rallying principle... Sickly Anna Kimball, on her final day, reaches out for, and becomes, all of these. (1 man, 1 woman.)

**YOU LIED TO ME ABOUT CENTRALIA.** Jim, The Gentleman Caller, leaves the Wingfields' disastrous dinner party to meet his fiancée Betty's train. The evening won't turn out the way either of them expected. (1 man, 1 woman.)

**THE RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN A VIOLIN CASE AND A COFFIN.** Tom and his sister Roe's childhood comes to a painful end when Richard Miles, who moves in light, arrives in town with his violin in a case. (2 men, 4 women.)

*"...You can hear Tennessee Williams's dramatis personae echoing through this evening of one-acts..."*  
—The New Yorker

*"[DESIRE] is rife with agonized sexual longing, trembling Southern belles and spasms of violence. ... Most American playwrights working today owe some debt to Williams; it's a pleasure, even inspiring, to see six give back."*  
—Time Out New York

ISBN 978-0-8222-3673-3



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