



ULTIMATE BEAUTY BIBLE

BY **CAROLINE V.
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DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



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*For Virginia McGraw,
who was beautiful in every way*

The world premiere of ULTIMATE BEAUTY BIBLE was produced by Page 73 Productions (Michael Walkup, Producing Artistic Director; Jennifer Lagundino, Managing Director) at the New Ohio Theatre, opening on November 3rd, 2016. It was directed by Stephen Brackett, the set design was by Daniel Zimmerman, the costume design was by Sarah Laux, the lighting design was by Masha Tsimring, the sound design was by M.L. Dogg, and the production stage manager was Megan Schwarz Dickert. The cast was as follows:

DANIELLE	Eboni Booth
LEE	Nadine Malouf
TIFFANY	Ariel Woodiwiss
AUTUMN	Molly Griggs
SETH	Sathya Sridharan
KIT	Alex Breaux

ULTIMATE BEAUTY BIBLE was developed, in part, at SPACE on Ryder Farm.

CHARACTERS

The casting of this play should reflect the racially and culturally diverse city in which it's set.

DANIELLE, 31, associate beauty editor

LEE, 31, associate accessories editor

TIFFANY, 32, associate lifestyle editor

AUTUMN, 23, editorial assistant

SETH, 28, call center receptionist

KIT, 31, video editor

SOME DUDE, 30s, some dude (*played by the actor who plays Seth*)

MODEL, "18"

(Model can be played by the actress who plays Autumn, but if desired in your theater, you may cast a different actor.)

SETTING

The very recent present. The City.

DIALOGISTICS

Words in [brackets] are thought, implied, never spoken (but words in parentheses, like these, are spoken).

... indicates a shift between characters (external, between two people, as opposed to internal, within the character).

If a character says "ha" or "ha ha" they are saying the words, not laughing.

/ indicates overlapping dialogue.

A NOTE ON PACE

Faster is almost always better. Find the moments to slow down carefully.

You see them on the bus in the morning: girls reading the newspaper, girls with lending-library novels, and girls simply staring off into space. ...Each of them is a self-contained little mask, decorated with cosmetics, keeping its private thoughts secluded in a public vehicle.

—Rona Jaffe, *The Best of Everything*

A monster is a person who has stopped pretending.

—Colson Whitehead, “A Psychotronic Childhood”

*I loved you for your beauty
That doesn't make a fool of me
You were in it for your beauty too*

—Leonard Cohen, “Closing Time”

ULTIMATE BEAUTY BIBLE

1. Millionaire

Danielle, Lee, and Tiffany sip drinks at a bar. Danielle begins the joke she is telling with a wry cheerfulness. As it goes on, her speech gets quicker, more frantic and dark.

DANIELLE. So there's this millionaire, and he's trying to decide between three women, decide which one would be the best to marry. He's been uh "seeing" all three of them, but it's time to settle down. And he doesn't know how to decide between them—

TIFFANY. Wait I'm confused, this is someone we know?

LEE. No, it's a *joke*, it's a joke right?

DANIELLE. It's a joke, yes.

LEE. I wish she'd bring that carafe I asked for

TIFFANY. Okay but I just wanted to say that I *do* know this girl who was dating a very short guy who worked for a ruby importer—

DANIELLE. So he, The Millionaire, gives them each ten thousand dollars, and tells them to use it to prove why they're the best match for him.

And the first one takes her ten thousand dollars and buys herself all these beautiful clothes, dresses, gets her hair done and high-end makeup and perfume, gets some Botox—

LEE. Smart girl.

DANIELLE. She looks great, stunning, like a queen. And she says to The Millionaire, "See what I did for you, honey? I made myself beautiful for you." And the second one takes her ten thousand dollars and buys The Millionaire a set of golf clubs, and equipment

for his boat, and boxes of Cuban cigars, and his favorite kind of caviar.

TIFFANY. Last time I had caviar I threw up for three days
By the end I looked like an angel

DANIELLE. And the second woman says to The Millionaire, “See what I did for you, sweetheart? I got all the things I know you like, because I know you so well and love you so much.”

And the third one takes her ten thousand dollars and invests it in the stock market, and triples the money. And she says to The Millionaire, “See what I did for you, darling? I grew your net worth, so you know that we will always be able to take care of each other.”

And The Millionaire doesn’t know what to do. He’s even more conflicted than before. The first one made herself beautiful for him, the second one was thoughtful and attuned to his needs, and the third one was smart and resourceful, a true life partner.

So he thinks. And he thinks and he thinks and he turns it over in his brain and he, and he prays on it and thinks some more and then he marries the one with the biggest tits.

Danielle laughs and laughs.

Lee looks at her, concerned, completely divorced from her phone now.

Tiffany looks at her too, and smiles, like you do when you don’t get the joke.

Aw c’mon, laugh! I never remember punchlines

I found out today I have ovarian cancer.

...

That’s why I said the drinks were on me.

(Fondly.) You didn’t think that was weird?

Greedy bitches

Lee searches Danielle’s face to see if she’s kidding. She isn’t. Lee reaches for Danielle. She was going for her hand, but ends up grasping her hard somewhere near her elbow.

Tiffany watches them both. She doesn’t know what to do.

Autumn Interlude One: The Moonlight on the Pond

Autumn is a thoughtful, attractive, self-possessed young woman. Autumn has raided the work-clothes section at Forever 21 and H&M, but accessorized her outfit with better-quality jewelry and shoes. She is barefaced. She speaks toward the fourth wall, to another woman, younger than her.

AUTUMN. I grew up in one of those no-TV-no-radio-no-mirror households.

I went to a very small school, but other than that I always thought I lived a fairly normal life. Waking up in the morning, learning, playing, eating. Nothing strange about that! I had a lot of little girl friends, but they lived very nearby and we all learned together.

I grew up in a small
Neighborhood
that circled a pond. At night you could see our lights glowing back off the water.

There was a
Tradition where I grew up, that I've since learned isn't very common. The year a girl turns 16, she and the other 16-year-old girls in the Neighborhood take a special trip to the pond late at night. A night with a full moon is preferable, but sometimes the clouds don't cooperate. After some singing, all the girls look in the pond at the same time and look at their reflections. The night sky combined with the moon and the stars make them—us—see themselves, or, ourself. Myself. As clearly as possible.

I couldn't tell what I was looking at, at first, my night on the pond. I didn't expect myself to be rippled. I didn't expect the wind to blur me so quickly.

Some of my friends snuck to the pond early to look at themselves. Not me. The waiting felt important. And you know what? I was not disappointed when I finally saw myself.

Later on, when I went away to college, I saw a proper made-to-be-a-

mirror mirror. But I always secretly think I looked best in the pond. Moonlight is so flattering!

There's no way to stop a reflection. I always washed our windows like my mother asked me, sparkly, hoping for a glimpse of myself. But they were dark, the windows. They were a word I actually learned here: "Matte."

When I first moved to The City, I always sat in the middle of rooms. The windows here were so different. I thought I was going to fall through one and onto the sidewalk.

When I started here, last year, people noticed my aversion.

I didn't want to be seen as the girl who sits in the middle of the room and can't be near windows. I could tell it was odd. Our Editor made me sit right by her in meetings, and she always sits next to the window.

I couldn't look at that big window that reaches up to the ceiling. Every time, for months, it would make me feel so sick to see it.

Gradually, it's gotten easier. I am almost completely over my fear. Other fears have taken that one's place.

2. Little Black Dot Eyes

Danielle and Lee's apartment; Danielle sits on their small couch. She wears a T-shirt and pajama pants and looks grungy, a far cry from her poise and put-togetherness of Scene 1.

She has her smartphone on speaker. Hold music plays. She has her computer open on her lap. If we see the screen, we see that she is watching a video of an animal who is friends with another animal.

We hear a soothing, female voice on speaker.

VOICE ON SPEAKER. Thank you for holding. Centura Health Plans appreciates your business. Many questions, including questions about benefits, can be answered on our website, Centura Health Plan dot com.

Synthy hold music.

Danielle watches the animal video.

Thank you for your patience. Due to high call volume, your estimated wait time is ten minutes. This is not an exact estimate.

DANIELLE. Choke on a rusty cock you fucking slut

The music plays.

Then, a tinny male voice is heard.

SETH. *(From the phone.)* Hello and thank you for calling Centura Health Plans this is Seth how can I help you

Danielle snatches the phone up from the floor.

We now see Seth, seated at a small desk in front of a computer monitor. He is elsewhere.

DANIELLE. Hi! Hello hello, so yeah, I have a question. I have like a few, actually, a few questions—

SETH. Sure, I'd be happy to answer any question you might have, would you mind just confirming your member ID number?

DANIELLE. I already entered it.

SETH. Ah sure

DANIELLE. At the prompting of three different robots with the three cuntiest voices I've ever heard.

SETH. I'm sorry

I just need it *one* more time

DANIELLE. A as in apple B as in boy 124573489221 Q as in question

SETH. Thank you...

Waits for his computer to spit up a name.

Danielle! Thanks Danielle How can I help you today?

DANIELLE. I'm calling to check on a referral authorization that should have gone through.

SETH. Okay I can absolutely check that for you, it'll just be oooooone moment

Seth checks, his eyes darting back and forth over the information on his monitor.

I apologize for the silence

I'm just trying to verify one thing here...okay...you still with me Danielle?

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2 men, 5 women

Danielle, Lee, and Tiffany have scaled the masthead of *Crimp* magazine, gaining access to the best the city has to offer—nightlife, men, and the beautiful baubles showcased in every issue. But when workaholic Danielle is forced to face her mortality, she begins to wonder what it's all worth. In this dark comedy, questions of romance, sex, ambition, and loyalty spin Danielle and her friends out of control as they consider the possibility of life without each other.

*“McGraw’s wry and artful **ULTIMATE BEAUTY BIBLE**... is a play for anybody who has ever believed that the right lipstick, the right shoes, the right lover might meaningfully alter the course of one’s existence. Which is a lot of us.”*

—**The New York Times**

“McGraw offers a...satisfyingly complex array of characters, relationships, and musings on life... McGraw question[s] whether people can in fact change from the outside in, or whether our outsides merely mask what’s underneath.”

—**TheaterMania.com**

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