

GOD SAID THIS

BY

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DRAMATISTS
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GOD SAID THIS had its world premiere in the 2018 Humana Festival of New American Plays at Actors Theatre of Louisville (Les Waters, Artistic Director; Kevin E. Moore, Managing Director), in Louisville, Kentucky, opening on February 28, 2018. It was directed by Morgan Gould, the scenic design was by Arnulfo Maldonado, the costume design was by Jessica Pabst, the lighting design was by Isabella Byrd, the sound design was by M.L. Dogg, the dramaturg was Hannah Rae Montgomery, and the production stage manager was Kathy Preher. The cast was as follows:

JAMES	Jay Patterson
MASAKO	Ako
SOPHIE	Emma Kikue
HIRO	Satomi Blair
JOHN	Tom Coiner

GOD SAID THIS had its New York City premiere at Primary Stages (Andrew Leynse, Artistic Director; Shane D. Hudson, Executive Director; Casey Childs, Founder) with the same cast, in January 2019. It was directed by Morgan Gould, the scenic design was by Arnulfo Maldonado, the costume design was by Jessica Pabst, the sound design was by M.L. Dogg, the lighting design was by Ryan Seelig, and the production stage manager was Jessica R. Aguilar.

GOD SAID THIS was originally written and developed at Primary Stages in the Dorothy Strelsin New American Writers Group.

GOD SAID THIS was initially developed as part of the 2016–2018 WP Theater Lab Residency.

CHARACTERS

JAMES, 50s or 60s. A recovering alcoholic. Inappropriate. Can be mean but can also be surprisingly sentimental. Seeking redemption but will never say he's sorry. Funny at times but mostly when he doesn't mean to be. Kentuckian.

MASAKO, 50s or 60s, his wife. Has cancer. A total optimist and a beam of light, though when sad, the tears often don't stop. Masako's resilience is her strength—even if it's not so obvious at first. Japanese immigrant.

SOPHIE, 29, their youngest daughter. Kind, patient, but imperfect. Her biggest fears have come to life and she is on the verge of a breaking point. Kentuckian. A Born-Again Christian.

HIRO, 36, their eldest daughter. New York transplant. Isn't always aware of how she affects others but is making a huge effort to be there for her family. Can be cool and collected but epiphanies hit her all at once to the point of overwhelming emotion.

JOHN, 37, Hiro's acquaintance from high school. A funny, straightforward, don't-take-no-shit kind of person. Kind of a jerk actually. But a respectable one. Sometimes has a dark anger behind his eyes. Kentuckian.

TIME

Now.

PLACE

The play takes place over four-ish days—mostly at the Markey Cancer Center in Lexington, Kentucky. Sometimes the characters are in cars, hallways, and Alcoholics Anonymous, but lighting and chairs can indicate the location.

PLAYWRIGHT NOTE

James, Masako, Hiro, and Sophie are a mixed-race family, please cast them accordingly. Give the AAPI performers the opportunity to play deeply flawed, complex people who are different from one another—who are not defined by their race. Don't let any of these roles be stereotypes in costuming or makeup and please no yellow-face. Also, don't put John in flannel.

Other things: John and Hiro are not meant to be romantic. Think about what they get from each other. Masako is the smartest, strongest person in the room. Sophie's Christianity is not a joke and should never be the butt of one. Her faith has helped her greatly in her life. Also—remember that Kentuckian doesn't always mean white. Red State doesn't always mean dumb. Poor doesn't mean uncomfortable. This is also a family who doesn't know what to do with each other. They don't know how to love each other but the love is there. Don't rush through it. Also, remember that James isn't a hero. He's done terrible things. Hiro isn't shallow or bratty—she's trying to be there. And most importantly, Masako is full of life.

GOD SAID THIS

ACT ONE

Scene 1

Day one. Sudden lights up on James. He's at an AA meeting. He speaks with a Kentucky drawl.

JAMES. Hi. Well y'all know my fucking name. But I'm James. James Rose. And I am an alcoholic.

Pause.

Today I just wanted to say what I've been thinkin' about. And what I've been thinkin' about is women. Damn women! There was a time in my life when every fucking woman in my life was hard on me. I dunno if they were all on their periods at the same time or what but they were hard on me. My wife. My mother. My daughters—the eldest especially. She never comes round that one. Even when I was sick she never came around. But now that Masako, that's my wife—now that she's sick—she's back. Least for the next few days. Wanted to be with *her* at the hospital.

(Mocking.) Women stick together. Tee hee. Hee.

So, all the women in my life are together again in Kentucky. Well minus my mother. Don't miss her much, may she rest in hell. But every other woman is here. And it's making me wanna. It's making me wanna drink.

I ran away from problems before I was sober. I liked to disappear. I liked to forget everything and have me some fun I couldn't remember. And now? I feel everything! My wife's sickness. I feel that. My eldest daughter's hate—I feel that too. And well—the younger one—she loves Jesus so she don't hate. But I can feel her looking at me with this

sympathy which gets to me more 'cause well—I don't need nobody feelin' bad for me.

What else?

Oh.

Been tryin' to sell some of my shit down at the flea market. Y'all should come by. I got these cool ass rocks. I got a Facebook page about it. People seem to like it. Or actually, they do "like" it. Clickity clack.

Pause.

So yeah. That's what I've been thinking about. And I thought I'd let you know.

We hear a Japanese choir sing a gospel song. This takes us into...

Scene 2

Same day. Hospital. Masako lies in the hospital bed. The Japanese choir music plays from her phone. She's relaxing, wearing a soft cancer-specific hat. She's connected to a chemotherapy drip. Sophie is on the couch, reading something like Gone Girl and she's riveted. A few beats. Then, Masako rises, unbeknownst to Sophie. She takes her hat off, scheming. We see her balding head for a brief moment before she puts on another hat—a cute funny one with two long braids attached. She speaks with a Japanese accent.

MASAKO. *(Softly.)* Sophie.

Sophie doesn't hear her over the music. Masako turns off the music.

(Dramatically.) SOPHIE!!!!!!

SOPHIE. *(Scared.)* WHAT. WHAT. MOM WHAT'S WRONG?

MASAKO. ...My hair grew back.

Sophie sees her mother with the fake braids and laughs.

SOPHIE. Wooow.

MASAKO. It's miracle!

SOPHIE. With God—anything is possible! Thank you, Jesus.

MASAKO. Thank you, Jesus!

They laugh.

SOPHIE. Feelin' okay?

MASAKO. Just little nausea.

SOPHIE. Already? The chemo's not started yet on the drip I don't think. Want me to call the nurse?

MASAKO. No, no. I just feel nausea when I come here. It's the thinking about hospital food. Just seeing lady with hospital food I feel nausea automatic.

SOPHIE. Well she isn't very nice.

MASAKO. *Colleen.*

SOPHIE. Right. *Colleen.*

MASAKO. See. I say her name right. But she cannot say mine. She call me (*With a country accent.*) Maseiiko! And one time, Yoko! I can't wait for this be over.

SOPHIE. Well, just think—by Friday—no more chemo!

MASAKO. And no more cancer.

A sad pause. Sophie doesn't respond to this but instead looks at Masako with worry. Her mother's future is uncertain and the optimism can be heartbreaking.

Cancer no baka.

SOPHIE. Cancer no baka!

Pause.

It's been a long six months of treatment huh.

MASAKO. Sooo loong.

SOPHIE. They say the last stretch is the toughest but you won't be alone. Not for a second.

MASAKO. I so sorry I worry everyone. Such inconvenience!

SOPHIE. You love that everyone's here. You love it.

MASAKO. (*Coy.*) Maaaybe.

Pause.

I hope everyone get along!

GOD SAID THIS

by Leah Nanako Winkler

2 men, 3 women

When Masako is diagnosed with a rare and aggressive form of uterine cancer, her dispersed family is brought back to their Kentucky town to care for her. Hiro, the older daughter and a New York City transplant, struggles to make peace with the demons she inherited; the younger daughter, Sophie, negotiates her faith in the face of her mother's illness and her own broken dreams; their father, James, is a recovering alcoholic seeking forgiveness and redemption; and a friend, John, worries about the legacy he'll be able to leave his only son. Forced together in a time of need, five estranged people come face to face with their own mortality.

"GOD SAID THIS...shines. ...I was moved by the way Winkler removed all sugarcoating from the unbearable process of chemotherapy. In a script written with wry, honest wit under extraordinary personal circumstances, Winkler's voice grips and seduces."
—**The Independent (CA)**

"Winkler has written rich characters with dialogue that has an unpretentious familiarity to it coupled with undercurrents of complex wrought emotion."
—**WFPL, Louisville Public Radio**

"[GOD SAID THIS shows] Winkler's talent for creating relatable characters and for writing scenes that give actors room to sink their teeth into a role. ...[its] message will make you want to go hug a loved one and to me that means it did its job."
—**Lexington Herald-Leader (KY)**

"[WINKLER] grounds her story in authenticity, and...[gives] the characters unique yet identifiable voices."
—**BroadwayWorld.com**

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