



# SHEEPDOG

BY

KEVIN ARTIGUE



DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.



SHEEPDOG  
Copyright © 2020, Kevin Artigue

All Rights Reserved

SHEEPDOG is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth), and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise), or stored in any retrieval system in any way (electronic or mechanical) without written permission of the publisher.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for SHEEPDOG are controlled exclusively by Dramatists Play Service, 440 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016. **No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance the written permission of Dramatists Play Service and paying the requisite fee.**

All other rights, including without limitation motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

Inquiries concerning all other rights should be addressed to WME Entertainment, 11 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10010. Attn: Michael Finkle.

#### NOTE ON BILLING

Anyone receiving permission to produce SHEEPDOG is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears, including printed or digital materials for advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. Please see your production license for font size and typeface requirements.

Be advised that there may be additional credits required in all programs and promotional material. Such language will be listed under the “Additional Billing” section of production licenses. It is the licensee’s responsibility to ensure any and all required billing is included in the requisite places, per the terms of the license.

#### SPECIAL NOTE ON SONGS/RECORDINGS

Dramatists Play Service neither holds the rights to nor grants permission to use any songs or recordings mentioned in the Play. Permission for performances of copyrighted songs, arrangements or recordings mentioned in this Play is not included in our license agreement. The permission of the copyright owner(s) must be obtained for any such use. For any songs and/or recordings mentioned in the Play, other songs, arrangements, or recordings may be substituted provided permission from the copyright owner(s) of such songs, arrangements or recordings is obtained; or songs, arrangements or recordings in the public domain may be substituted.

*Dedicated to Naomi Wallace  
For shining a light  
And to Rebecca Naomi Jones  
For sharing her heart*

SHEEPDOG was originally produced by South Coast Repertory (David Ivers, Artistic Director; Paula Tomei, Managing Director), Costa Mesa, California, in April 2019. It was directed by Leah C. Gardiner; the set design was by Myung Hee Cho; the costume design was by Leah Piehl; the lighting design was by Cameron Jaye Mock; the sound design and original music were by Martín Carrillo, with additional original music by Howard Fredrics; and the stage manager was Darlene Miyakawa. The cast was as follows:

AMINA .....	Erika LaVonn
RYAN .....	Lea Coco
FEMALE VOICES .....	Melody Butiu
MALE VOICES .....	Ricardo Salinas

SHEEPDOG was presented as part of the New Works Festival at Long Wharf Theatre (Joshua Borenstein, Managing Director) in September 2018.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The author would like to thank Leah C. Gardiner, Jerry Patch, Jen Silverman, Michael Walkup, Ben and Lisa Donovan, SPACE on Ryder Farm, Officer Douglas Dunwoody, Officer Nakia Jones, Sergeant Tryna McCaulley, and Mansfield Frazier.

## CHARACTERS

AMINA, early 30s, African-American, ten-year vet of the Cleveland Division of Police (CDP).

RYAN, early 30s, white, five-year vet of the CDP.

### Voices

DISPATCHER

HUSBAND

YVONNE

SERGEANT

ZARAGOZA

ESTEBAN

TEENAGER

CHIEF

### PLACE

A home in suburban Cleveland.

### TIME

Summer 2017.

### NOTES

The world outside of Amina and Ryan can be built and created through sound (this includes offstage characters).

**Bold text** indicates Amina's lines spoken directly to the audience.

*Characters with dialogue in italics* indicate voiceover, or otherwise somehow “outside” the play.

# SHEEPDOG

*Amina speaks to the audience.*

AMINA. If you had to say *why*

If someone grabbed you by the scruff and forced you

To look

To stare at his body until it starts making sense

You wouldn't be able to do it

Say *why*

Not because you *can't*

Because you *won't*

Because the *why* of it overwhelms you

Puts you on your knees looking up for a God you stopped believing  
in years ago

The day in high school you wrote on the back page of your *Harry  
Potter* "I am an atheist"

Shit you could use that god now

You're not a forensic psychologist

You're a patrol cop

You don't deal with *whys* you deal with objective reality

What you can see, hear, grab on to

The ugly that's right in front of your face

And that's what you've started calling it

You versus The Ugly.

You *love* the Ugly, you thrive in it

The Ugly is not your enemy

The Ugly is raw, unfiltered *life*

The Ugly is Fairfax, Central, Kinsman

It's Cleveland, *east* side baby, your home

Which you haven't been afraid of... until now

*Ryan appears. Amina takes her hand and adjusts his face in the light, examining it.*

Everything you depend on...

Your uniform, duty belt, even your shoes with their special orthos for your fucked up feet

It all feels up for grabs

So you go full Nancy Drew and put it *all* on the line

Now here you are

You open the door, step into your living room

*(Softly.)* Ryan?

*Breathe*

Stick to the plan

RYAN. Hey hon. In here.

AMINA. He's cooking? The fuck

RYAN. So far not good.

I burned the asparagus. Salmon is underdone. But I nailed the potatoes.

AMINA. Can I talk to you please?

RYAN. Um. Sure. Just give me one sec...

AMINA. He's in a good mood

Seems better

You should do this tomorrow

RYAN. Trying not to burn the house down.

What's up?

AMINA. Can you sit with me?

RYAN. Um, sure.

*He sits.*

What's going on?

Hon?

AMINA. Pause. Rewind. Go back.

**Shift.**

DISPATCHER. *Control to 5-4-9.*

AMINA. 5-4-9 go ahead.

Back two and a half years



DISPATCHER. *5-4-9. Could you respond to 1623 East 78th Avenue on the report of a domestic dispute. I have the caller, Mrs. Beckworth on the line, says her husband just tried to strangle her. Said he doesn't have access to any weapons, but he's been drinking and is quite agitated.*

AMINA. **It's 1:00 A.M. when you respond**

5-4-9 copy.

**1:08 when we pull up to the house**

5-4-9 arriving.

**You see the victim**

**Out on her front porch**

**Drunk**

**Tangled with a wind chime**

**You notice her neck**

**Red marks...from his fingers**

**Suddenly, to your left—**

HUSBAND. *You fucking bitch you hit me she fucking—*

AMINA. **The husband emerges like a bear**

**You keep eyes on the wife**

**Watch your partner's six**

HUSBAND. *Okay man okay I'm not SHIT I was just SHIT—*

RYAN. **Keep your hands where I can see them!**

AMINA. **The suspect has on a jacket with big front pockets**

RYAN. **SIR!**

AMINA. **Suddenly BOOM the bear charges**

**And down they go**

**The man takes his fist and**

**SMASH**

**Into your partner's nose**

**And now he's running**

**And now you're running after him**

**East on Central**

**Like you did as a little girl to buy chips from the corner store**

**This is your neighborhood**

5-4-9, get me some more cars up here! ABPO! Suspect took off on foot, East on Lex towards 79th!

Suspect is a white male, bald, wearing a red jacket!  
In pursuit!!

He climbs up a fence  
Disappears into a backyard...

You reach the fence, think about waiting for backup  
But instead...you summon your inner Jackie Joyner and with all  
your strength swing one leg up, then the other  
Pause to steady before letting gravity do the rest

As you drop...  
Your feet expect to hit the ground but  
The ground, it's not there  
It's farther than you thought  
Eventually you land and when you do you hear a POP

You find yourself on your back  
Howling at the east Cleveland moon  
Which really is like any piece of shit moon

Two days later, after an MRI, you give your partner a quick anatomy  
lesson

In the knee, the ACL prevents the lower leg from rotating inward.  
When an ACL tears—you listening?

RYAN. Look at your knee, it's fucking huge.

AMINA. I know.

RYAN. Nasty.

AMINA. And until the swelling goes down, I can't have surgery.

RYAN. How long will that take?

AMINA. Could take weeks. And recovery takes months. And it  
might not ever...

I can't lose my job.

RYAN. You won't.

AMINA. If I'm not medically cleared I'm done.

RYAN. You will be.

AMINA. My mom, what's going to happen to her?

RYAN. Your mom will be fine.

AMINA. You know she hides bills from me?  
Unpaid medical bills, a stack this high.

RYAN. Look at me: If you need to borrow money, I got your back.

AMINA. What? You don't have to...

RYAN. I have savings. I'm good, if you need it.

*A beat.*

AMINA. I'm not asking you to do that.

RYAN. I know, I'm offering.

AMINA. Thank you.

*A beat.*

RYAN. Come on, let's get ice cream.

AMINA. I don't want any.

RYAN. Who doesn't want ice cream.

AMINA. **You learn a lot during recovery**

**About pain...**

**About Disability and how screwy the system is**

**And you learn about Ryan**

RYAN. What happened to you sucks, but you'll come back. Maybe not a hundred, but you'll be back.

AMINA. **He spends more and more time at your place**

**Grocery runs, errands...**

**You see his provider instinct, his need to give, which you learn to accept**

**Which is *not* easy for you**

**Some days, you feel like giving up it all hurts so much**

**And you do**

**Six weeks post-op, two weeks into PT, you say screw that elliptical**

**And you give up**

*She opens a bag of chips and gives up.*

What are you doing?

RYAN. Your exercises. Come on.

AMINA. Why?

RYAN. Because you can't skip.

# SHEEPDOG

by Kevin Artigue

1 man, 1 woman

Amina and Ryan are both officers on the Cleveland police force. Amina is black, Ryan is white, and they are falling deeply and passionately in love. When an officer-involved shooting roils the department, small cracks in their relationship widen into a chasm of confusion and self-doubt. A mystery and a love story with high stakes and no easy answers, SHEEPDOG fearlessly examines police violence, interracial love, and class in the 21st century.

*"...riveting and thought-provoking... a mesmerizing, sometimes edge-of-your-seat drama that morphs seamlessly from a romance origin story, to a morality play, then, finally, an intriguing detective mystery..."*

—**BroadwayWorld.com**

*"[SHEEPDOG] delves into fraught issues of race... [Artigue] looks through a humanized lens at the impact of a police shooting from a largely unexplored angle, the personal impacts on the shooter's life. ...while concentrating on the personal, Artigue doesn't lose sight of the larger issues behind his events."*

—**OCRegister.com**

*"...a thought-provoking two-character drama... SHEEPDOG is both impressive and important as it thrusts the viewer into matters of his or her own conscience."*

—**Los Angeles Times**

*"A bang-up, must-see and intensely emotional [play]... 85 heart-stopping minutes... all of the parties involved in police reform, from the mayor on down, should sit down and watch together."*

—**Chicago Tribune**

ISBN 978-0-8222-4085-3



DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.