

UNTIL WE
FIND EACH
OTHER

Brooke Berman

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brooke Berman's plays have been produced and developed across the U S at theaters including: Primary Stages, The Second Stage, Steppenwolf, The Play Company, Soho Rep, Williamstown Theater Festival, Naked Angels, M C C, WET, S P F, New Dramatists, New Georges, The Hourglass Group and the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center. In the U K, her work has been developed at The Royal Court Theatre, The National Theatre Studio and Pentabus. Plays include: HUNTING AND GATHERING (Primary Stages, named one of the 10 Best Plays of 2008 by *New York Magazine*); SMASHING (The Play Company, The O'Neill); UNTIL WE FIND EACH OTHER (Steppenwolf, The O'Neill); THE TRIPLE HAPPINESS (Second Stage, The Playwrights Center, The Hourglass Group), SAM AND LUCY (S P F, Cleveland Playhouse), A PERFECT COUPLE (WET), OUT OF THE WATER (Cape Cod Theater Project, ARS Nova), THE JESUS YEAR (New Dramatists Creativity Fund), The Liddy Plays (Rising Phoenix Rep, The Hangar Theater Lab, Williamstown Theater Company), and others.

Brooke is the recipient of a Berilla Kerr Award, a Helen Merrill Award, two Francesca Primus Awards, two LeCompte du Nuoy awards and a commissioning grant from the National Foundation for Jewish Culture. She is an alumna of New Dramatists, where she served

on the Board of Directors and developed countless plays. She has received support for her work from the MacDowell Colony and the Corporation of Yaddo and commissions from Arielle Tepper Productions and C T C in Minneapolis.

Her short play DANCING WITH A DEVIL was a co-winner of The Heideman Award at Actors Theater of Louisville in 1999, presented in *Life Under 30* at the Humana Festival, and nominated for an American Theater Critics Best New Play award. It has been published in numerous anthologies. Her short play DEFUSION has been produced in a number of festivals and as part of Christine Jones's Theater for One project at New York Theatre Workshop. (www.theatreforone.com/gallery/img_0470.htm)

Brooke attended Barnard College and is a graduate of The Juilliard School. She is a member of the Dramatists Guild, PEN and the M C C Playwrights Coalition.

Her memoir, *No Place Like Home*, is published by Random House and available in bookstores. More information: www.brookeberman.net.

UNTIL WE FIND EACH OTHER received its world premiere at Steppenwolf Theater Company in Chicago, directed by Anna D Shapiro. It was developed at Steppenwolf, at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford, CT, and in New York City through Rising Phoenix Rep, The M C C Playwrights Coalition and New Dramatists. Its early development in New York was funded by a grant from the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, and the play was initially directed by and developed with the invaluable Lindsay Firman.

And it shall come to pass afterwards that I will
pour out My spirit on all flesh; your sons and your
daughters shall prophesy, your old ones shall dream
dreams and your young people shall see visions.

Joel 3:1

...while tribes do allow for a certain sense of warmth
and connection, they ultimately cost us more than they
give us in a modern, cooperative global culture,"

Douglas Rushkoff

The Kabbalah, teaches us that galut, "exile", is the
fundamental reality and pain of existence... It teaches
that one of the causes of the exile is the alienation of the
masculine from the feminine in God...[and]that each of
us can effect the overturning of galut by dedicating all
our efforts to the reunification When the masculine
and feminine aspects of God have been reunited and
the female half of humanity has been returned from
exile we will begin to have our tikkun ("reparation").
The world will be repaired.

*Rita M Gross, Female God Language in a Jewish
Context*

PRODUCTION NOTE

In both workshop and production, we staged this play, as with most of my work, without scene breaks—each piece moving seamlessly into the next, as if collaged together, pushing the story forward. Thus, the pieces, while noted separately, by number, should not be treated as separate “scenes”. Sometimes, we spoke of the disparate elements of and characters in the play affecting each other like a pinball machine—the silver ball launches on its journey, crashes into everything it meets, and catalyzes a great, connected series of actions. If one can imagine Sophy taking a big mouthful of pills before the story starts – that might be the silver ball. Or perhaps the silver ball is the invocation, or prayer, of the prologue, creating sacred space.

The play is deliberately structured in kaleidoscopic and accumulative movements. Scenes can and should overlap. The playing space should have movement to it and reflect the interconnectedness between the thoughts, needs, and memories of the characters. Everything is connected to everything else, everyone too. It a pulsing, holographic Universe. This is why Steve comes back at the end.

We also discovered that it made a great deal of sense for Sophy to be physically present on stage throughout the play, as if watching and motivating her cousin’s actions.

The tone is straightforward and bright, even funny. There is a buoyancy to its rhythms, even when these rhythms dip into the moody depths. The play should take us on a ride.

CHARACTER NOTES

Although Justin, Miriam and Sophy are psychic—and wrestle, to different degrees, with their respective psychic gifts—they should be recognizable, contemporary, funny and self-aware young people. They are passionate, intelligent and restless – but not, as Sophy insists, lost souls. She in particular should not feel like a lost soul or lost cause. By the time we meet Sophy, it's as if she has collected each of her past selves, accumulated and them so that she can participate in the story and also, propel her cousins forward. We should never feel that she's damaged or crazy.

There may be a stylized or anachronistic element to her costume. In the New York workshop, we staged her wrapped in Christmas lights around an old trench coat. In the Chicago production, she wore a headscarf and coat but beneath that, a sparkly dancer's leotard and fishnet stockings. She is a character who exists in and belongs to more than one world or level of experience.

There is a delight in performing for SOPHY, a delightfully performative quality to her monologues with the audience. As if she gets this one Greatest Hits Tour before she returns to the ether, to be renewed as a post-death soul. Death is not a bad/tragic thing for her or in the world of this play. The play holds no judgment on her choice. SHE should be visually integrated with the rest of the play, although her rules

of movement must be specific to the rules of a soul in transition.

Her physical presence and effect on Miriam is palpable.

Prologue

(Lights up on the three. They address the audience. The prologue is both direct and clear.)

SOPHY: *Baruch Ata Adonai—*

MIRIAM: Blessings. For Ye on the Road.

SOPHY: *Elohenu Melech Ha'Olam—*

MIRIAM: Sanctified be thy road trips—

JUSTIN: This is what I see. It's from the past: Three cousins. Two girls. a boy nearby. He spies on them. they run away. He climbs a tree. He watches them. He falls out of the tree. *(Not his fault)* One of the girls runs away to smoke a cigarette she's found in her mother's bag. The other girl and the boy go back up the tree and watch the whole world. It's green, the whole world. They tell each other they will never be apart. this is not said. it is understood.

SOPHY: Blessed art thou, O Lord Our God, who points us in the direction of tikkun olam—

JUSTIN: The healing of the world.

MIRIAM: Who lets us see the freeway in the dark, who points us in the direction of all the good detours—

SOPHY: Who helps us find each other, whenever we need to, again and again.

(They move into the first scene of the play.)

One

(MIRIAM and a lover. They are in her truck driving North. His name is STEVE. He fiddles with the radio. Passes N P R All Things Considered. Chooses fiddle music. They have been driving for a while.)

STEVE: Where are you going?

MIRIAM: Following signs.

STEVE: What signs? Road signs?

MIRIAM: Signs in my head. Dreams. Impulses.

STEVE: Sure.

MIRIAM: Messages—

STEVE: Sure.

MIRIAM: From my cousin sometimes.

STEVE: Oh.

MIRIAM: (*Very matter of fact here*) My mom died a year ago. I left.

STEVE: I'm—

MIRIAM: (*She cuts him off; doesn't want him to say he's sorry*) Where are you from again, Steve?

STEVE: Texas.

MIRIAM: Did I know that?

STEVE: I don't know. Didja?

MIRIAM: I don't know.

STEVE: Yeah.

MIRIAM: Know who I'm named after?

STEVE: No.

MIRIAM: Miriam.

STEVE: Yeah?

MIRIAM: From the Bible.

STEVE: I don't know who that was.

MIRIAM: The older sister of Moses. And she was a prophet. God struck her down with leprosy because, well the story is complicated but essentially she said that Moses wasn't the only one who could talk to God. She said she was talking to Him all the time, getting messages too. And no one liked that she said it, anything against Moses. So God gave her leprosy. Then He forgave her. Moses asked Him to. After that she just, like, made music. Interestingly enough, later on, Jesus would essentially make the same point. Or close. He said the kingdom of God is within. Go within. Have your own direct experience of God. All the great prophets—the Buddha, certainly—have discovered, discovered—that you can access it—in the human experience—without a middleman—a guy in between. Anyway, we don't know what really happened and what was just bad translation and propaganda.

STEVE: You're Jewish?

MIRIAM: Yeah.

STEVE: Oh.

MIRIAM: (*Teasing him*) Know a lot of Jews, Steve?

STEVE: Not really.

MIRIAM: There are Jews in Texas.

STEVE: Not Abilene.

MIRIAM: Point taken.

STEVE: Houston maybe. Dallas too.

MIRIAM: Gotcha.

STEVE: Where are you from?

MIRIAM: There are Jews everywhere. Can we change the subject?

STEVE: Did you study this stuff? In college or something?

MIRIAM: Or something. Yeah.

STEVE: Yeah. *(Beat)* I took a religion class. I mean, it was a long time ago. In college.

MIRIAM: There you go.

STEVE: That thing you said about losing the Middleman. Luther said that. He was all about that. We studied Luther. In that class I took.

MIRIAM: Exactly. A lot of them said it.

STEVE: What's up with your cousin?

MIRIAM: Did I mention him?

STEVE: You did.

MIRIAM: He protects me from bad choices in love.

STEVE: Bad choices?

MIRIAM: Oh. Not you. I've made other bad choices.

STEVE: That's cool that you're Jewish.

MIRIAM: I don't know what you mean by that. But, sure.

Two

(Lights up on JUSTIN and TANGEE. TANGEE is his girlfriend. She is a very young mom. She is in her early twenties but acts older, has a four year old daughter. Is not Jewish. Smiles a lot. Strong willed. Like a bull. And a flight attendant, too.)

TANGEE: Glad I got the babysitter.

JUSTIN: The one Evelyn likes.

TANGEE: Evelyn loves her. She's a good girl, too.

JUSTIN: Have you heard from her dad?

TANGEE: The Fuckhead?

JUSTIN: Yeah. Him.

TANGEE: No.

JUSTIN: You might soon.

TANGEE: He's a fuckhead. Tell me about your day.

JUSTIN: It was good.

TANGEE: What'd you do?

JUSTIN: Um. You know. Worked. You know. Just worked. Music. Soundtrack. Can you guess what it was?

TANGEE: Are you trying to train me to be psychic like you?

JUSTIN: No. I like you the way you are.

TANGEE: Good. Because I don't know what you listened to while you were working.

(JUSTIN *shows* TANGEE a C D case.)

TANGEE: Okay. I never would have guessed that. (*Beat*) Sometimes you look at me like you're coming back from somewhere far away and you come back and recognize my face, and I like that.

JUSTIN: I'm not far away.

TANGEE: Sure you are. But I like that.

(*Perhaps as they kiss*)

TANGEE: They called from daycare. Evelyn wouldn't eat again.

JUSTIN: She misses her dad.

TANGEE: I love how you can just work from home. Don't you love that?

JUSTIN: Sure.

TANGEE: It's the greatest thing about this age. The age of technology.

JUSTIN: Information.

TANGEE: Excuse me?

JUSTIN: The age of information.

TANGEE: I thought that was the last age.

JUSTIN: Well. They still call it the age of information.

TANGEE: That's dumb.

JUSTIN: It's still information.

TANGEE: Shouldn't it have a new name? It's a new age.

JUSTIN: Well. No. It's still information. It's digital, but it's still information.

TANGEE: But that's dumb. It's a new century. We can't be in the same age. I want it to have a new name. And you know what I mean anyhow. About you working from home. Working from home is great. You can telecommute. I wish I could telecommute.

JUSTIN: Hard in retail.

TANGEE: I get other benefits. I get people.

JUSTIN: I don't get people.

TANGEE: You get me.

JUSTIN: That's a benefit.

TANGEE: You're good.

JUSTIN: I'm not.

TANGEE: You are though.

JUSTIN: I should tell you. My cousin's coming.

TANGEE: The crazy stripper?

JUSTIN: No. The other one.

TANGEE: Oh. With the truck?

JUSTIN: Yes. Her.

TANGEE: Oh. When?

JUSTIN: I'm not sure.

TANGEE: Will she stay long?

JUSTIN: I don't really know.

TANGEE: She used to live here.

JUSTIN: Yes. This is her house.

TANGEE: Did she call?

JUSTIN: Not exactly. I just have that feeling. You know. How I get that. It's in my hands.

TANGEE: Really?

JUSTIN: How was your day?

TANGEE: You get that a lot don't you? Those feelings?

JUSTIN: It's not a big deal.

TANGEE: It is a big deal.

JUSTIN: I won't tell you.

TANGEE: No. I like that you tell me.

JUSTIN: Right. You like hearing the weird things from the freak.

TANGEE: No. That's not it—

JUSTIN: Sure it is.

TANGEE: No. First of all, you don't tell me hardly anything let alone anything weird. And you're not a freak. You're kind of cute.

JUSTIN: Uh-huh. So she might show up. My cousin.

TANGEE: With the truck.

JUSTIN: Yes. And things happen when she's around. Freak things.

(SOPHY *addresses the audience.*)

SOPHY: Welcome Ye of the Congregation of the Broken Hearted. Welcome Motherless Children. Welcome you who wrestle with Angels. I used to wrestle with angels too. But not anymore.

I, Mistress Sophy, am the Spiritual Leader of the Congregation of the Broken Hearted, Musical Director of the Chorus of Falling Angels. Usher of the coming times, the world that is to come, constantly constantly constantly coming..... I know about constantly coming. And I bet you'd like to, huh? Want me to share? Because for a limited time only, for a drink and a good meal, for fifty bucks, maybe a hundred (*Cause rates are going up*) I'll tell you what I see and what I know. I'll look into your soul and tell you what I pick up. Want that? Fifty bucks to look at your soul, a hundred and I'll throw in a blowjob. No, I'm just kidding. I don't do that anymore.

Hey, I could be Elijah for all you know. Capitalism makes everyone a whore.

Maybe just maybe... I'm gonna tell you some secrets. For getting found. Cause getting lost is a thing of the past. And now we're all getting found.

Four

STEVE: You said your mom died?

MIRIAM: Last year.

STEVE: I'm sorry.

MIRIAM: It's not your fault.

STEVE: I know.

MIRIAM: I just hate when people say that. It's like—

STEVE: They just don't know what to say, that's all.

MIRIAM: No. It's like they have to say something and there's this thing that they say because that's what everyone says and it doesn't mean anything—it makes me mad.

STEVE: A lot of things make you mad.

MIRIAM: Yeah. So?

STEVE: So nothing. I'm just saying, a lot of things make you mad.

MIRIAM: I guess they do. *(She smiles; new topic.)* I'm an empath. Know what that means, Steve?

STEVE: No.

MIRIAM: It means I can feel what you're feeling.

STEVE: Is that why you're such a bitch right now?

MIRIAM: It is. Kind of.

STEVE: What am I feeling?

MIRIAM: Proud of yourself. For calling me a bitch. You like it that I didn't get offended. And you feel sort of guilty for asking about my mom. You hope I don't get sentimental because you hate watching women cry. And—oh—excitement— You're wondering if we'll have sex again.

STEVE: Will we?

MIRIAM: I don't know. You want to?

STEVE: I don't know.

MIRIAM: Yeah. We'll see.

STEVE: Your mom—*(Catches himself saying "I'm sorry" and stops)* It's rough.

MIRIAM: *(She shrugs)* Whatever. People die. People die all the time. It's a big part of life.

(SOPHY takes the narration—breaking into the storytelling—hijacking the audience away from her cousin.)

SOPHY: I've been a lot of people. Just in this one life.

Sophy—Birth through sixteen. Sophia means wisdom.

Star—sixteen, high school, unwashed hair, trying not to come home, trying so hard, hanging out, hanging out, hanging out, call me Star, yeah cause that's my name—

Satya—means truth in Sanskrit. Did you know I once danced with a group of Hare Krishnas and went home with them to pray and they told me I could be Satya, I could be truth, and so when I am dancing I am truth. (Even when I'm lying, I'm truth.)

Chaya—My rabbi gave me that name. And I went back and forth for a while, Sophy and Chaya, til Israel. But when I came back from Israel, I needed to be Star again cause I needed the money. Star makes money. And then, my Rabbi appeared again. He found me when I was about to lose my soul all over again, and this time, he called me Found. He called me that, and I was. Found.

Can I bum a cigarette?

MIRIAM: (*To STEVE*) Can I bum a cigarette?

(*They both take cigarettes from STEVE, who sees only MIRIAM; and their lines can overlap here.*)

SOPHY: Thanks, Baby. You're nice.

(*From this point on SOPHY can be integrated and overlapping with the other two.*)

MIRIAM: Thanks. You're nice.

(*MIRIAM and STEVE drive.*)

MIRIAM: I met this old guy outside the Safeway—when I lived in California—

SOPHY: I meet people all the time.

MIRIAM: He was maybe fifty, and he used to just hang out in the parking lot, and he had a theory about the

way the universe is put together. He said “It’s all colors, see—there are the reds and the greens. And all of life, all the visuals, (he could see energy), it all breaks down to either one or the other as a dominant trait”. He could see, visually, these two base colors and their ratios in all the things of the material world. He was in that parking lot just about every night. And sometimes I’d go and buy him coffee and hang out. He was my favorite kind of stranger.

STEVE: The kind you talk to.

MIRIAM: The kind that gets it.

SOPHY: The prophet kind.

MIRIAM: —who tells you things you need to know.

SOPHY: Do you like the Doors? Because I fucking *love* the Doors. A lot of those songs were for me. I mean, I wasn’t alive yet, but on a cosmic level—they’re for me. My husband was a musician. Oh, I was married once. In Israel. But lets not talk about it. Lets talk about wandering prophets and holy strippers and glee. Lets talk about glee. And the beautiful Doors. And all the doorways I’m in and out of all time. Cause right now I’m in the in-between, but pretty soon, I’ll be moving all the way across. To whatever it is that meets us, greets us, refashions and lets us loose.

STEVE: You’re that kind of stranger.

MIRIAM: I know.

STEVE: The kind that gets it.

MIRIAM: I’ve been told.

STEVE: I could be that kind of stranger too.

SOPHY: Yes. You could.

MIRIAM: Yes. You could.

STEVE: Yes. I could.

MIRIAM: In our religion, we call it Elijah. He's a wandering prophet, and anyone could be him, anyone. We're supposed to welcome him.

STEVE: You sure did that.

MIRIAM: I guess I did.

STEVE: I could know things for you.

MIRIAM: Like what?

STEVE: You're scared of your family. You're running.

MIRIAM: Don't you think it's way too easy to tell a wild thing that they're running?

STEVE: I don't know. I'm running too. That's how I can see it in you.

MIRIAM: I guess so.

STEVE: And now we go our separate ways?

MIRIAM: Yes. Now we go our separate ways.

STEVE: Well. We've got a few miles left. Til Akron.

(MIRIAM and STEVE drive.)

SOPHY: Sometimes they blur into one. My names. Who I've been. Who I am. Sometimes it's like becoming a new person and sometimes it's more like running from an old one. Sophy, the old one, talks too much and can't contain herself. I don't want to talk anymore. I want to stop bleeding on the table and staining all your furniture. I don't want to talk anymore, or leave stains. I never learned containment.

What's your name? I may have the gift, but it's not like a circus thing in a tent. I can't guess your name. But I can tell you where you're hurt and what you need. And I might be what you need. I really just might. Want me to be what you need?

Five

(MIRIAM *drops* STEVE *in Akron.*)

MIRIAM: So this is it. Akron.

STEVE: Should I say we'll be in touch?

MIRIAM: Not unless you want to.

STEVE: Okay. I won't.

MIRIAM: Thanks for the company though. It was nice.

STEVE: Thank you. For being that kind of stranger.

(MIRIAM *and* STEVE *kiss.*)

STEVE: You taste sweet.

MIRIAM: I wish I were. Sweet.

STEVE: Taste okay to me. Good luck with your family.

MIRIAM: Thank you. (*She knows she will need it*)

Six

TANGEE: You said something about love.

JUSTIN: What did I say?

TANGEE: You know.

JUSTIN: No. What did I say?

TANGEE: I cried when you said it. (Inside. I mean, I cried inside. Not so you could tell.) My ex would never have said something like that. He was a fuckhead.

But you said it. And it reminded me of this guy I used to know, he was my roommate's boyfriend before I married the Fuckhead, and he used to say that when love comes, well, something about sticking out your chin. Like you just have to stick out your chin. And I was thinking about that after you said what you said.

JUSTIN: What did I say?

TANGEE: That you'd follow love. That if someone came along who altered your idea of love, you'd say yes, you'd go. And I cried when you said it (inside) because I wanted it to be me. That you'd say yes to. I want it to be me.

JUSTIN: It's not a person. I wasn't talking about a person. I'd be saying "yes" to love. Not a person.

TANGEE: I know. But I want it to be me.

JUSTIN: But it's just not a person. You say yes to Love itself, not a person.

TANGEE: Sure. I know that. (*Beat*) Evelyn likes you.

JUSTIN: She misses her dad.

TANGEE: She loves you; I love you. (*In a rush*) It's okay. You don't have to say it back. I know you don't like saying it. It's okay. I just needed to tell you. Okay, so that was a nice moment. Lets go out. Do you want to go out?

JUSTIN: I don't mind saying it.

TANGEE: No. It's fine. I know you don't like saying it, but I just need you to know—I am not a casual person, and— (Evelyn doesn't miss her dad; she doesn't know her dad) —

JUSTIN: I'm not a casual person.

TANGEE: Am I someone you could love?

JUSTIN: We're just getting to know each other.

TANGEE: So am I someone you could love?

JUSTIN: It's early. We're just starting to get to know each other—

TANGEE: No. If you were in love with me, you'd know.

JUSTIN: I don't think about things that way.

TANGEE: I do. And you would.

JUSTIN: It's early.

TANGEE: Sure. But, for the record, I am not a casual person. I don't just do this. What we're doing. I have to like someone. And I think about things. I have a child. I have to think, for my child, about things that have substance.

JUSTIN: I'm not a casual person.

TANGEE: And I just want you to know, if we ever got serious, I would be willing to convert. If that's an issue for you. Because it isn't for me.

JUSTIN: Convert to what?

TANGEE: Judaism.

JUSTIN: You'd convert to Judaism.

TANGEE: Yes. I don't mind. I don't have a personal relationship with Jesus or anything.

JUSTIN: I see.

TANGEE: And I love all the food. What we had at the holiday. I could make that. What's the fish called again?

JUSTIN: Gefilte.

TANGEE: Right. I could make that.

JUSTIN: I don't really like gefilte fish.

TANGEE: Yes, but I'm just saying. I could make it.

JUSTIN: Well. I appreciate that you would—but, I don't think about things that way. And... it's not something I'm overtly looking for—a Jewess. It's not exactly one of the things I'm—

(This is interrupted by the arrival of MIRIAM. Who still has keys.)

MIRIAM: Well, welcome me home. *(Noticing TANGEE)* Oh. Hi there.

(TANGEE *jumps up.*)

TANGEE: I'm Tangee. Justin's girlfriend. Friend.

JUSTIN: I knew you were coming.

MIRIAM: Of course you did.

Seven

SOPHY: A sex worker exchanges sex or sexual energy or a sexual performance or images for money. Call girls, exotic dancers, porn models, phone workers and professional dominatrixes are all sex workers. The sex industry refers to the community or non-community of places and ways in which sex workers do their jobs. Escort services, adult film makers, actors and distributors are all examples of the sex industry. (*She removes her outer layer to reveal "stripper garb"*) The kind of work I did was very supportive of my personality structure. I was a bad waitress. I hate desks. Social work really ripped me up. You can't do that and be empathic. It messes you up. I'm the type to bleed for money and feed the hungry—they're just hungry. And for the record, I have never had actual intercourse for money. I did other things.

In the old days, sex workers were emissaries and carriers. We carried the word and made it flesh. We were vessels. Priestesses. I remember that. Dancing on the steps of the temple and how you paid us to come into the Word itself. To touch the Divine through our bodies. Learning mouth to mouth and face to face.

So if I take your mouth to my face, we are exchanging ancient knowledge. Information. Some of it has to be exchanged this way, without words. And it all runs together, the information and the fluids. Liquid light. An exchange of knowledge.

Want to exchange some knowledge?