

A
MOURNING
HOLLOW

A PLAY BY

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Polychoron Press

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"Best way to cheer yourself up is to try to cheer somebody else up."

- Mark Twain

"The nice part about living in a small town, when you don't know what you are doing someone else does."

- Immanuel Kant

A MOURNING HOLLOW was first produced in St. Louis, Missouri at the Tesseract Theatre Company. It opened October 30th, 2015. The performance was directed by Taylor Gruenloh and Brittanie Gunn; set design by Katie Palazzola. The cast was as follows:

DANIEL.....Maurice Walters II
MICHELLE..... Bre Love
RANDY.....Michael McPartland
MARTY.....Mikayla Sherfy
CLAIRE.....Katie Palazzola
BYRON.....Kelvin Urday
GRACEY.....Jackie Zigler
CAMERON.....Kelvin Urday
MELANIE.....Bre Love
RAYRAY.....Michael McPartland
SOLOMON.....Maurice Walters II
ELIZABETH.....Lily Dodenhoff
MRS. HUMPHREYS.....Mary Palazzola
OFFICER GODSON.....Bre Love
TESSA.....Jackie Zigler
SOPHIE.....Mikayla Sherfy
NINA.....Lily Dodenhoff
ROGER.....Christopher Null

A MOURNING HOLLOW received a developmental staged reading as part of the Hollins Playwrights Festival at the Hollins University Playwright's Lab on July 24th, 2016 directed by Taylor Gruenloh. The cast was as follows:

DANIEL.....	Mike Johnson
MICHELLE.....	Krystal Ramsay
RANDY.....	Taylor Cobb
MARTY.....	Elizabeth Hedrick
CLAIRE.....	Elizabeth Kelly
BYRON.....	Michael Mansfield
GRACEY.....	Bella Lerch
CAMERON.....	Stephen Baltz
MELANIE.....	Loretta Whitman
RAYRAY.....	Nathan Kellner
SOLOMON.....	Owen Merritt
ELIZABETH.....	Kelly Anglim
MRS. HUMPHREYS.....	Martha Boswell
OFFICER GODSON.....	Mary Jean Levin
TESSA.....	Emma Sala
SOPHIE.....	Gwyneth Strobe
NINA.....	Vanessa Mills
ROGER.....	Simon Adkins

SCENES

CREPUSCULAR RAYS

By Taylor Gruenloh

Setting: Outside the local vet's office

TURTLE SEANCE

By Caitlin McCommis

Setting: Plains Hollow Park

YOU, ME, AND ALICE

By Anne G'Fellers Mason

Setting: Plains Hollow Cemetery

GRACEY & CAMERON: A STORY OF KRYPTONITE

By Eric Eidson

Setting: A bench in the park

THE HALLOWEEN DANCE

By Laura King

Setting: Melanie's front porch

FINDING NINA

By Liesl Ehmke

Setting: Haunted Hollow's Haunted House

HOMEBOY

By Kevin D. Ferguson

Setting: Mrs. Humphrey's living room

ON THE INSIDE

By Wendy-Marie Martin

Setting: High school house party

EVERYBODY HURTS

By Shane Strawbridge

Setting: Melanie's front porch

CHARACTERS

CREPUSCULAR RAYS

Michelle – the local cat lady, socially awkward

Daniel – new vet in town, charming

TURTLE SEANCE

Randy – Marty’s ex-boyfriend

Marty – over it

YOU, ME, AND ALICE

Claire – high school English teacher, Byron’s wife

Byron – high school science teacher, Claire’s husband

GRACEY & CAMERON: A STORY OF KRYPTONITE

Gracey – a lovable, quirky, comic nerd

Cameron – an awkward, insecure, comic nerd

THE HALLOWEEN DANCE

Melanie – janitor at Plains Hollow High School

RayRay – new student at Plains Hollow High School

FINDING NINA

Solomon – workaholic

Elizabeth – a local pet psychic

HOMEBODY

Mrs. Humphrey’s – older woman in town

Officer Godson – new officer in town

ON THE INSIDE

Tessa – a shy, young woman

Sophie – an exotic, young woman

EVERYBODY HURTS

Nina – Solomon’s ex-girlfriend

Roger – Melanie’s ex-husband

PLACE

The small town of Plains Hollow, Missouri. A cozy little sanctuary nestled in the southwestern part of the state. Close enough to a big city to feel part of the world, but far enough away to maintain its small town culture.

TIME

Halloween night. A partly cloudy sky, on a lovely autumn evening.

ACT ONE

Scene One: Crepuscular Rays

Daniel is walking out of the vet's office. He's dressed nicely. All of a sudden Michelle enters with a dolly and a series of animal crates. The kind you'd transport a cat in. She has five of them. Strapped to the dolly.

MICHELLE. Excuse me. I need to get by.

DANIEL. Ms. Gallund?

MICHELLE. I asked you to please move so I can get by.

DANIEL. Right. Sorry, I didn't know if you were actually coming. I waited for a while and I just locked back up.

MICHELLE. Where's Dr. Behlman?

DANIEL. Dr. Behlman couldn't make it.

MICHELLE. I was told the doctor would be here.

DANIEL. Well. It's Halloween night. He's got a few children that still trick or treat.

MICHELLE. I called the emergency line.

DANIEL. You called one of our volunteers at their home. Tessa. And she called me.

MICHELLE. I told her I wanted Dr. Behlman.

DANIEL. And I told her that Dr. Behlman has kids he should be out with tonight and that I would take care of the emergency.

MICHELLE. That's not what I wanted.

DANIEL. I also assured Tessa that you wouldn't call her at her house again. Is that okay?

MICHELLE. That's not...*(Michelle hears the animals start making noises in the crates. Michelle kneels down to talk to them.)* Oh, it's okay, guys. I'll fix this. Just remember what we've been working on. Breathe. Just breathe. That's it, Kevin. Good boy.

DANIEL. What seems to be the problem?

MICHELLE.*(stands up fast.)* That I wasn't respected enough to actually be given what I asked for. I asked for Dr. Behlman. I got you. That's the problem.

DANIEL. Whoa. Let's take it easy.

MICHELLE. I will not take it easy! *(The animals make noises and she talks to them again.)* It's okay. It's okay. Mommy's not upset. No, no, no. We've talked about this. Mommy just needs to be assertive once in a while. Don't give me that look, Catherine. Okay. We take a deep breath in... and we let a long breath out... good.

DANIEL. Is one of your cats having health problems?

MICHELLE. This. This is why I get upset. No one listens to me. Did the emergency line tell you nothing about my call?

DANIEL. Ms. Gallund, you didn't call an emergency line. You called Tessa. At her parent's house. And you started yelling at her.

MICHELLE. I wasn't yelling.

DANIEL. She got scared.

MICHELLE. (*the animals make more noise*) Mommy doesn't yell. She's been working on that, that's right. Brittany, you quick sucking on your tail right now. We had this talk last week.

DANIEL. Okay. Let's start over. What exactly is the emergency? And before you start talking assertively, please know that nothing can be done about Dr. Belhman. He's not coming tonight. I'm here. Like it or not.

MICHELLE. Fine. And I know when I'm being talked down to. I know when I'm being made fun of. So stop it.

DANIEL. I'm sorry. What's the problem with your cats?

MICHELLE. These are not cats. They are my ferrets.

DANIEL. Oh.

MICHELLE. And Phillip is sick.

DANIEL. Okay. Which one is Phillip? (*Daniel walks towards the crates.*)

MICHELLE. What are you doing?

DANIEL. Taking a look.

MICHELLE. Please don't go near them.

DANIEL. How am I supposed to examine them if I can't go near them?

MICHELLE. I haven't made up my mind if I'm going to let you examine them.

DANIEL. Oh. Okay. You'd have to wait until Monday for Dr. Behlman then.

MICHELLE. He comes in on weekends all the time.

DANIEL. And that's why I was hired. To be on call nights and weekends. Let him spend more time with his family.

MICHELLE. That's not fair! (*The animals make more noise.*) Well, I'm sorry! Mommy gets cranky sometimes! If you all would prefer to suffer out there, in the cold world, fending for yourselves, being lonely, and having no one take care of you, you just let me know. We'll arrange it, okay!?

DANIEL. Ms. Gallund...

MICHELLE. Michelle. My name is Michelle. I don't like being called *Miss*.

DANIEL. My name's Daniel. I might be new to town, but I'm not new at caring for animals.

MICHELLE. I come see Dr. Behlman because he's a specialist.

DANIEL. Dr. Behlman's a ferret specialist?

MICHELLE. Yes. He wrote his thesis paper on ferret breeding.

DANIEL. Well... I think I can sum that paper up for you in a few sentences.

MICHELLE. Now you're making fun of your new boss.

DANIEL. I'm making fun of this situation.

MICHELLE. You think I'm being difficult.

DANIEL. Michelle. Why don't we take your business inside?

MICHELLE. My *business*? Is that what this is to you? *Business*? This is my *family*!

DANIEL. I meant your group of ferrets. A group of ferrets is called a business. I thought you'd know that.

MICHELLE. I knew that. I just forgot. I'm upset right now.

DANIEL. I'm not here to upset you. I'm here to help your sick animals.

MICHELLE. Animal. It's just one that's sick. Philip.

DANIEL. But you brought the whole gang?

MICHELLE. I never separate them.

DANIEL. Never?

MICHELLE. No. Why would I? I know I'm protective. I know that. People make fun of me for being protective.

But I'm only protective of lives that can't take care of themselves. These animals. They all came from owners that weren't protective. Actually, they were the exact opposite of protective. They were neglectful and irresponsible. These animals came to me for a reason.

They found me. And I'm their mother. And I don't let just anyone near them. And I don't know you.

DANIEL. Well... My name's Daniel. You know that already... Just moved here two weeks ago. From Kansas City, so this whole small town thing is kind of a freak out. I've been a vet for six years. I know that's not as long as Dr. Behlman -- and I didn't write a thesis on the mating habits of ferrets -- but I like to think I'm good at my job. Funny enough, I've been told -- over and over again -- that the only thing I'm any good at *is* my job.

MICHELLE. Who told you that?

DANIEL. Someone who didn't want to keep reminding me of it. I, umm... I got hired here because I have a reputation for not saying "no" to calls on nights and weekends. Even when plans were made.

MICHELLE. I see. Did you have plans tonight?

DANIEL. Oh. No. I don't know anyone here yet, really. A married couple brought their terrier in earlier, though. Said I would enjoy the Haunted Hollow festival. Even gave me a brochure for a cemetery tour.

This town really celebrates Halloween, doesn't it?

MICHELLE. I guess.

DANIEL. What exactly is Haunted Hollow? (*Michelle lets down her guard without knowing it and gets slightly excited about the idea of Haunted Hollow.*)

MICHELLE. It starts with a parade down Main Street. Then everyone goes to Hill Field. Lot's of kids running around, games, costume contests... I think. I've never been.

DANIEL. How come?

MICHELLE. They don't allow pets. (*The animals make noise again.*) It's okay. It's okay. I would never leave you for some stupid festival. Do I look like somebody who goes to hay mazes and ghost houses? (to Daniel) Mr. Franklin has a bit of a sassy attitude lately.

DANIEL. Do they get out of the house often? I mean, not in their crates?

MICHELLE. There's no reason to let them outside. They have a strict diet and are toilet trained. And it's safer inside.

DANIEL. I ask because I think they're responding to the sky right now. See... (*Daniel goes and turns the crates so they face the sky better.*)

MICHELLE. What are you doing?

DANIEL. Just... giving them a better angle. There. Ferrets are crepuscular. They like dawn and dusk.

MICHELLE. I know that.

DANIEL. Right. Well, you see the sky there? When it's dusk, like right now, and the sun is behind a set of clouds, but you can still see the crisp rays of light? Like right there? That just spread from the sky all the way to the ground? Those are crepuscular rays. Actually, when you look at that sky, it feels like a perfect night for Halloween.

MICHELLE. I always hated Halloween.

DANIEL. Who hates Halloween?

MICHELLE. My family.

DANIEL. You and your ferrets?

MICHELLE. No. My mother. She never liked it. And I lost interest in it pretty quickly.

DANIEL. Even as a kid?

MICHELLE. I was home schooled until high school. My first Halloween at Plains Hollow High, the students got to wear costumes to school. My mom wouldn't buy me a costume, so I made my own. It looked stupid and kids made fun of me.

DANIEL. What was your costume?

MICHELLE. Just a cat.

DANIEL. That sounds like a pretty typical Halloween costume. Couldn't have been that bad.

MICHELLE. I made it out of actual cat hair.

DANIEL. Oh.

MICHELLE. From all the shedding around the house.

DANIEL. You guys had a lot of cats back then?

MICHELLE. Just nine. The kids at school starting calling me 'The Cat Lady' and it's stuck ever since.

DANIEL. Well... now... you're the ferret lady, right?

MICHELLE. I don't think that's very funny.

DANIEL. Sorry. I was just trying to... I don't know what I was trying to do.

MICHELLE. (*Michelle puts her back to the crates.*) They don't know that the town makes fun of me. They like me.

DANIEL. I'm sure it's not the whole town.

MICHELLE. It's not like I don't go to the store or I'm afraid to walk down Main Street on the weekends. It's really only Halloween that gets to me.

DANIEL. What about your mom? Can you hang out with her on Halloween? Instead of fighting your way into the vet clinic after hours?

MICHELLE. My mom passed. About eight months ago.

DANIEL. I'm sorry.

MICHELLE. We usually spent Halloween together.

DANIEL. What would you guys do?

MICHELLE. Watch Thanksgiving movies. (beat) And I'm not fighting my way into the vet clinic. I was perfectly prepared to stay at home alone tonight.

DANIEL. Which one is Phil?

MICHELLE. It's Philip. I'd appreciate it if you used his full name.

DANIEL. Philip. You got it.

MICHELLE. He's the one on top. Then it's Brittany, Mr. Franklin, Kevin, and Catherine.

DANIEL. Mr. Franklin?

MICHELLE. He's very formal.

DANIEL. The only thing we can really do for Philip tonight is run some basic tests. Wouldn't get any results until next week. He looks a little dehydrated, I gotta say.

MICHELLE. He's been shedding quite a bit lately. More than usual.

DANIEL. Is it okay if I run the tests on Philip tonight?

MICHELLE. Yeah. I think that'll be okay.

DANIEL. Good. Hey, does Philip like mazes?

MICHELLE. Mazes?

DANIEL. Yeah. I hear ferrets are good at mazes.

MICHELLE. Yeah. Him and Catherine. Mr. Franklin thinks it's childish.

DANIEL. What about Kevin and Brittany?

MICHELLE. They'd rather just cuddle.

DANIEL. After I take a quick blood sample... We could probably get down to Haunted Hollow before it's dark.

MICHELLE. Oh no.

DANIEL. Let Philip run the hay maze.

MICHELLE. No. I'm not going to Haunted Hollow.

And I wouldn't let Philip do that.

DANIEL. Okay. Some of the symptoms might suggest depression.

MICHELLE. Philip is not depressed.

DANIEL. It's hard to tell.

MICHELLE. Why would Philip be depressed? He's got everything he needs.

DANIEL. Just a theory.

MICHELLE. You can't be depressed if you have good boundaries from those that would cause you to be depressed. My mom taught me that.

DANIEL. Your mom put up a lot of boundaries?

MICHELLE. She made sure the rest of the kids in town didn't come near me when I needed to be alone.

DANIEL. Protective mom.

MICHELLE. And there's nothing wrong with that. There was never a time she wasn't there for me. Not one time. Until...

DANIEL. Sorry. Again.

MICHELLE. It's fine. I'm fine. And Philip's fine.

DANIEL. I thought he was sick.

MICHELLE. He is. I meant he's not... He's got real problems.

DANIEL. Real problems? As opposed to what?

MICHELLE. I'm sorry. I don't want you looking at my ferrets anymore. I have to go. *(Michelle goes to grab the dolly with all the crates stacked on it.)*

DANIEL. Michelle. Stop.

MICHELLE. I'll call the girl at the emergency line tomorrow and insist on Dr. Behlman.

DANIEL. There's no-- I'll tell Tessa not to listen to you, to not answer her phone.

MICHELLE. What is wrong with you?

DANIEL. I'm trying to help.

MICHELLE. You're trying to analyze me, trying to say my ferret is depressed. Which means you think I'm doing a bad job raising him.

DANIEL. I never said that.

MICHELLE. You implied it.

DANIEL. I didn't. I promise.

MICHELLE. I'm not stupid. I know when people are thinking, "What's this girl's problem? How did she become so weird?" Yes. I might be weird. But you're the first to say that I'm not taking care of my family. And that's just not true.

DANIEL. That's not what I was saying.

MICHELLE. What were you saying?

DANIEL. I-- It's just—

MICHELLE. What? It's just what?

DANIEL. I made a promise, okay? A promise to myself, that after I moved here, that I would try to bond with people. That I would take an interest in other people's lives. You know? And not just their pets. I thought that... that if I could make some friends. Build some actual friendships. If I could do that, then... I could try to fix things with my ex-girlfriend. I know it's stupid, but... Hell, I spent an hour listening to a high school science teacher tell me horrible jokes today. Just because I need to learn how to be with people. I mean... the jokes... they were bad, Michelle. But I kept laughing and he kept telling them. And now, I meet the person in town I probably relate to the most, and I'm

just trying to be helpful, give some advice, and that's going oh-so-well! And now I just want to bring your sick ferret inside and run some tests, because that's what I do well.

MICHELLE. Around here it's hard to tell when someone is taking an interest or being judgmental.

DANIEL. I didn't do a good job of differentiating between the two.

MICHELLE. No. You didn't it. *(beat)* We can go inside and run those tests.

DANIEL. Good. *(beat)* I still think a hay maze would be fun.

MICHELLE. They don't allow pets, remember?

DANIEL. I'm the new vet for night and weekend calls. And it's a weekend night. They have to listen to me.

MICHELLE. I'll think about it.

DANIEL. Really?

MICHELLE. I'll think about it.

DANIEL. Well, alright. Okay, Michelle. And Phillip, and Brittany, and Kevin, and Catherine, and Mr. Franklin. Would you like to step inside my office? *(Michelle takes the dolly and exits with Daniel.)*