

RAW PROVOCATIVE HUMANE PLAYS

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SABBATICAL

a one-act play by Kitt Lavoie

Lights rise on the David Rubenstein Atrium -- a public space across the street from Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

MARC, 36, sits at a cafe table, a rolling suitcase tucked under the table and his backpack on the ground next to his chair, his foot through the strap. A pamphlet sits on the table in front of him next to a battered bouquet of flowers. He scrolls through his iPhone.

After a moment, KATELYN, 36, enters from the street and winds her way to his table, a backpack slung over her shoulder.

She stands over the table. He looks up at her.

A tense moment of silence, then...

KATELYN

What are you doing here?

MARC

Happy anniversary.

KATELYN

What are you doing here, Marc?

MARC

It was a surprise.

She doesn't respond.

MARC (cont'd)

Happy anniversary.

A beat. Katelyn slides her bag off and sits across the table from Marc. She doesn't speak.

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Katie--

MARC (cont'd)

When did you get here?

KATELYN

Last night.

MARC

What have you been doing?

KATELYN

Walking. Calling you.

MARC

You didn't tell me you were coming.

KATELYN

It was a surprise.

(a beat)

It's good to see you. You look good.

Katelyn takes herself in. She doesn't really.

You, too.

KATELYN

Marc gestures across the plaza.

MARC

I tried to meet you after your show.

KATELYN

It closed.

MARC

I know.

Marc picks up the pamphlet from the table.

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MARC (cont'd)

The nice man at the information booth told me. The Met is dark in June. I think that's what he said. "Dark?"

KATELYN

Yes.

MARC

And that's why you weren't there.

KATELYN

Designers don't go to the show every night. Not once the show is open.

MARC

But the show is closed.

KATELYN

I'm just saying, that's not the way it works.

MARC

But the show is closed.

KATELYN

Yes.

MARC

And that's why you told me you couldn't come home. For our anniversary.

Silence. He picks up the flowers and takes them exasperatedly in.

MARC (cont'd)

You used to go to the shows.

KATELYN

Those were little shows. Phoenix shows. New York is different.

A beat.

MARC

What is this?

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KATELYN
What?

MARC
Why are you being like this?

KATELYN
I'm not being like anything.

MARC
I came all the way up here--

KATELYN
As a surprise.

MARC
For our anniversary.

KATELYN
We don't have an anniversary. We are taking a break.

MARC
We are not taking a break.

Katelyn breaks eye contact with him.

MARC (cont'd)
You are taking a sabbatical. That isn't a break. You go on sabbatical *from* someplace. And after a predetermined amount of time, you come back to it. When I spent a semester in Greece, I was on sabbatical from the university. I wasn't on a break from it.

KATELYN
Yeah, but you didn't make an agreement with it that you could fuck other universities while you were there.

Marc looks at her stiff-jawed.

KATELYN (cont'd)
I'm just saying it's a break.

MARC

I don't know why you're so angry at me.

KATELYN

How do you not know why I am angry at you?

MARC

It was my idea for you to come here.

KATELYN

For a year.

MARC

For a sabbatical. For a year. To give things a try in New York. That was my idea.

KATELYN

It hasn't been a year.

MARC

It has almost been a year. It was a year ago today I said you should come to New York. And in a few weeks it will be a year since you left. And it's our anniversary. And I wanted to spend it with you. And you need to tell me why that's so wrong.

KATELYN

You shouldn't have come.

MARC

We didn't say we weren't going to see each other. We didn't say we weren't going to talk. That's just been the last three months.

KATELYN

You shouldn't have come.

MARC

Well, I did.

They sit for a moment.

MARC (cont'd)

Can we go somewhere?

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Like where?

KATELYN

Someplace... else. Your place.

MARC

I've got a meeting in an hour.

KATELYN

It's Late for a meeting.

MARC

Katelyn shrugs.

Should I just leave?

MARC (cont'd)

She doesn't answer. He thinks about leaving, then...

Where were you? Last night?

MARC (cont'd)

She doesn't answer.

Kate?

MARC (cont'd)

I had my phone off. I didn't get your messages until this morning.

MARC

I went to your apartment.

A moment.

I buzzed and buzzed. There was no answer.

MARC (cont'd)

Are you sure you had the right place?

KATELYN

Marc nods.

Let's just not, Marc.

KATELYN (cont'd)

It was our anniversary.

MARC

I stayed with a friend.

KATELYN

A guy friend?

MARC

Mark... we said we wouldn't ask. And we said we wouldn't tell. And I'm not going to. So...

KATELYN
(warning)

They are quiet for a moment.

We said we could see other people.

KATELYN (cont'd)

We also said we would be together after a year.

MARC

It hasn't been a year.

KATELYN

Either here or back in Phoenix. But a year.

MARC

It hasn't been a year.

KATELYN

They asked me join the Academic Council. As the non-tenured representative. And that's a big deal and I told them no, because I didn't know if we would be there or if we would be in New York. I have been keeping up our deal.

MARC

So have I. It hasn't been a year.

KATELYN

MARC

And, point of fact, we didn't say we could "see other people." We said, "if something happens, it happens." That's not "seeing someone."

KATELYN

I misspoke.

MARC

Did you?

Silence.

KATELYN

You haven't slept with anyone?

MARC

We said we wouldn't ask.

Katelyn looks at him - "Like I was saying..."

A beat.

MARC (cont'd)

No.

KATELYN

Well, you could have.

MARC

But I didn't.

KATELYN

But you could have.

MARC

But I didn't.

KATELYN

But you should have. That was the whole point of agreeing. That wasn't for me. That wasn't for me, it was for you. So you wouldn't get so...

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(indicating how he is being)
 ...crazy while I was away. I didn't care. That was for *you*.

MARC

No, *last night* was for you.

KATELYN

Jesus Christ! You shouldn't have asked.

MARC

You shouldn't have told.

KATELYN

I didn't.

Marc reaches into his pocket and pulls out a ring box and slams it on the table.

MARC

Happy anniversary.

Katelyn looks sheepishly around at the people at the adjoining tables. She gets quieter.

KATELYN

Marc. What are you doing?

MARC

Open it.

KATELYN

Marc--

He just looks away from her, pushing the box towards her. Katelyn tentatively picks up the box from the table. She flips it open. She looks up at Marc...

KATELYN (cont'd)

There's nothing in it.

MARC

I took it out last night. I don't know if I want you to have it anymore.

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Katelyn begins to gather her things.

KATELYN

You shouldn't have come.

MARC

You think?

Katelyn drops her things and sits back down. She looks straight at Marc.

KATELYN

I'm living with him.

Marc looks up at her.

KATELYN (cont'd)

Staying... with him. His name is Aaron. And I am living at his apartment. With him. That's why I wasn't at my apartment last night. I don't live there any more.

Silence.

KATELYN (cont'd)

But I told him it could only be until the end of July. Because I might be moving then. So I'm keeping to our deal, too.

Silence.

KATELYN (cont'd)

So. Now you know.

MARC

Why?

KATELYN

It's been almost a year, Marc. And I was lonely.

MARC

Then come home to me.

She looks away. At anything but him.

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MARC (cont'd)

Or fucking call. I've barely heard from you in three months.

KATELYN

You make me feel more lonely.

MARC

That's not something you say to someone.

KATELYN

We were supposed to be something different by now. The both of us.

MARC

Well, I'm sorry if I let you down.

KATELYN

That's not what I'm saying.

MARC

I think it is. I think that is what you have been saying every time we've talked since Christmas. Every time I tell you anything that is important to me, any time I tell you I tell you anything that is my life, you just treat it like it's Not New York. But you know what, that's my life. Up until ten months ago, that was *our* life. And now it's just some boring fucking embarrassment to you. You wanted to give your dream of a career in New York one last shot. And I said fine. I said more than "fine", I said *please* - take a year, have your adventure. Go be Odysseus and I'll be your Penelope and I'll wait here for you, wait eagerly for you to come home. And if things go well for you on your travels, fuck, I'll get on that boat and sail off with you there. I gave you what you wanted. But Odysseus had Scylla and Charybdis. And you have Aaron and a show at the Met.

KATELYN

Always the classics professor--

MARC

Instructor. Classics instructor. Because I gave up my shot at a faculty position in Lewiston so you could keep designing shows in church basements in Phoenix. So don't tell me I haven't been supportive of your career.

KATELYN

You said “give it a try.” Go to New York and “give it a try.” There was no part of you that ever imagined I wouldn’t end up coming home. Penelope never got on the fucking boat and you know it.

MARC

And yet here I am sitting with you in New York City and without a faculty position.

KATELYN

You wanted to move us to some shitty little town.

MARC

That’s where all the shitty little liberal arts schools are, Kate. So I don’t know what you want from me.

Silence.

MARC (cont’d)

Can we *go* someplace?

Katelyn checks her watch.

KATELYN

No.

Silence.

KATELYN (cont’d)

I’m just saying, why some little school in Maine? Why is that what you want for us?

MARC

So you would have come with me if the school was in New York.

KATELYN

Or New Haven.

MARC

Well, no one is asking me to teach in *New Haven*, Katelyn, so...

KATELYN

And it’s a shame, is what I’m saying. It’s where you used to be--

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MARC

As an undergrad--

KATELYN

It's what you said you wanted. It's what you talked about. You're too young to give up on that.

MARC

And I'm too old to not have a faculty position. So... Like I said, I'm sorry if I let you down.

KATELYN

That's *not* what I'm saying.

Marc shakes his head. Of course it is.

MARC

You don't see me complaining about how little you've done with your ten months here.

She glowers at him.

MARC (cont'd)

Sorry. Ten and a half.

KATELYN

I worked at Lincoln Center.

MARC

As an assistant.

KATELYN

At Lincoln Center.

MARC

As an assistant.

KATELYN

When did you become such an asshole.

MARC

About the time you moved in with someone else. I came here with a ring, Kate, so don't.

Marc stands and begins to gather his things.

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MARC (cont'd)

Good luck with your new life. I'm sure it's going to be spectacular.

KATELYN

I wasn't an assistant.

MARC

I don't care.

KATELYN

I wasn't an assistant. Sit down.

Marc looks at her.

KATELYN (cont'd)

Sit.

Marc sits back down. He looks at Katelyn. "Yes?"

KATELYN (cont'd)

I wasn't an assistant. I was a production assistant.

Marc looks at her. "And?"

KATELYN (cont'd)

It's not the same thing. I thought I got a job as an assistant costume designer. At the Metropolitan Opera. After being in this city seven months and getting *nothing* worthwhile. After sitting across the Christmas table from my mom and telling her about all the irons in the fire and how something was going to happen any day now. And how no, I didn't make a mistake coming here. Even though she didn't ask. And even though she was "gonna be proud of me... *no matter what.*"

(A beat)

But it wasn't a new staging. The show's been part of the repertory for years and... I was helping get costumes out of storage. For, like, three days. And I felt like an asshole because I told everyone I got this job at the Met. And so I just didn't tell anyone what it actually was... because it was humiliating.

MARC

Why didn't you tell me?

KATELYN

Because it was humiliating.

MARC

You don't have to be embarrassed in front of me.

She doesn't look at him.

MARC (cont'd)

It's still the Met.

KATELYN

And it's going to lead to nothing. There was another PA on the project. Twenty five. Just out of her MFA from NYU. They asked her to stay on for the next show. They told me "thank you very much."

MARC

It's okay.

KATELYN

It actually really isn't.

MARC

Katie--

KATELYN

It really isn't. Everything I've done.... I tell people I'm "doing a Sam Shepard play." But it's just a bunch of kids just out of college doing fucking *Fool for Love* in a black box in the Village. I could be their fucking mother, Marc.

MARC

If you had them when you were twelve.

KATELYN

One of their dads came to the show. He could have been one of our friends, Marc. He was like forty something and... And I'm on the phone lying to my mom about what I'm doing.

MARC

It's okay.

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Katelyn looks away. She shakes her head.

KATELYN

I'm waiting tables.

(gesturing across the street)

At Cafe Fiorello. I have a shift at nine. That's where I have to be.

MARC

What happened to the money we saved?

KATELYN

New York is expensive.

MARC

And the Sam Shepherd kids, they're not paying you?

Katelyn shakes her head.

MARC (cont'd)

This isn't what we agreed.

KATELYN

It's what you do when you're building a career.

MARC

You said you were coming to be a professional. No shitty little jobs--

KATELYN

It isn't what I expected.

MARC

You're thirty six. That's not cute anymore.

KATELYN

You think I feel adorable? I feel old and stupid. And that's why you shouldn't have come.

They sit quietly. Katelyn pulls her iPhone out of her pocket. She unlocks the screen and passes it over to Marc. He picks it up and looks at it.

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MARC

Is this yours?

KATELYN

Scroll down.

He does. He reads.

KATELYN (cont'd)

“Amateurish and unfocused.” I was so proud of my work on that. I thought it was good.

She buries her head in her hands.

MARC

It's only one review.

KATELYN

It's the only review I've gotten since I've been here.

A beat.

KATELYN (cont'd)

I told you I had the Met show tonight because I was going to come home to surprise you. For our anniversary. I thought I had finally done something I could come home and tell you about and not feel like I was on some bullshit PR mission to justify my life. And then that came out... And then you showed up...

(a beat)

Am I any good at this? Like, at all?

MARC

Of course you are.

KATELYN

I mean, like, good. Like professional good. Like I can do this good.

MARC

I don't know.

Katelyn looks at him.

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MARC (cont'd)

I don't know enough about it.

KATELYN

(re: the review)

They do.

(a beat)

Why did you let me do this? If you didn't know?

MARC

Because I wanted you to be happy.

(re: the review)

Baby, I don't care about this. I don't. Look at what you've done. You worked at the Metropolitan fucking Opera. You got a review for a show in New York City. You did that. When you left ten months ago, you said it didn't matter what happened. You said you were going to give it a shot. It didn't matter if you succeeded or failed, you would have given it a shot. And look at what you've done. I'm proud of you, Katie.

A silence.

KATELYN

I found my limit, Marc. And it's not where I thought it would be. That's why Aaron doesn't matter. God, he doesn't matter. He's an idiot. But when he saw that review he said he was going to find that guy and "punch him in the fucking soul." And you know, it felt good.

MARC

Is that what you want? For me to threaten to punch people in the fucking soul?

KATELYN

No. No. Just to stick to our deal and give me a chance to come home with just a little fucking dignity. Just a little bit. Because my year is almost up. And then I'm coming home. Because I didn't make it. I didn't even come close.

(a beat)

There is no part of me that thought I wasn't going to make it here. If I really gave it a shot. And now I am mourning the death of the person I thought I would be. And it's really awful to do with you with you looking at me. You know?

(beat)

It hasn't been a year...

MARC

I shouldn't have come.

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She smiles at him.

Marc reaches into his pocket and pulls out the ring. He holds it between them and turns it over in his hand. They both look at it.

MARC (cont'd)

We've been together twelve years, and we've spent all this time waiting for the universe to tell us it's okay. Waiting for our lives to settle down so we can start a life together. But maybe "settling down" isn't something life does. Maybe it's something people do.

(a beat)

I was ten years old when my dad was my age. You know?

KATELYN

This is not who we talked about being. Either one of us.

MARC

No, but then... life. Most people don't end up being the people they said they'd be when they were twenty-two.

KATELYN

We weren't supposed to be most people.

MARC

No one thinks they're going to turn out to be most people. But most people do.

Marc takes Katelyn's hand. She gazes out across the plaza towards the Met.

KATELYN

I failed at this, Marc.

Marc kisses her hand.

MARC

I don't care.

Marc lifts the ring and moves to slide it onto Katelyn's finger. But before it gets there, she balls her hand into a fist. She punches him in the mouth. Then once again for good measure.

She scoops up her things and shambles towards the door, wiping the blood from her hand onto her bag as she does - leaving Marc alone and bleeding.

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