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Good Enough

a play in one act

by Kitt Lavoie

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Synopsis

A Jewish college student has just met her fiancé's evangelical Christian family over Thanksgiving dinner. A late-night confrontation with her fiancé's younger sister drives home the difficulties she faces in her marriage—and how little she actually knows and understands about the man she is about to marry.

Playwright Bio

Kitt Lavoie is author of seventeen produced plays and musical books, including *Twice Rather Perish* and *The Median Line* (both winners of the Herbert J. Robinson Award for Dramatic Writing). His new full-length play, *Makes Three*, recently had its first public reading with The CRY HAVOC Company, which is also currently developing his newest full-length play, *A Writer for Children*. He has directed more than seventy-five shows in New York City, including the original productions of more than thirty plays. Kitt also regularly assists stage and television director Lonny Price, with whom he has recently worked on the Roundabout Theatre's Broadway revival of *110 in the Shade* (starring Audra McDonald and John Cullum), the American Premiere of *Night Season* by Rebecca Liefkowitz, and the PBS filming of the Tony Award winning John Doyle revival of Stephen Sondheim's *Company*. Kitt has also appeared onstage as Macbeth, Benedick (*Much Ado...*), and Roy Cohn *Angels in America*, among others, and has designed sets/lights for more than sixty shows. He holds a Master of Fine Arts in Directing from the Actors Studio Drama School, is a founding member of the Professional Playwrights Workshop at the Players Club and is a Member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers (SSDC). Kitt is Artistic Director and co-founder of The CRY HAVOC Company (www.cryhavocnyc.com). www.kittlavoie.com

Character Breakdown

Jessica A bright Jewish college student (20)

Michael A college student from an evangelical family, in the midst of a crisis of faith; Jessica's fiancé (20)

Elizabeth Michael's younger sister; terrified about what her brother's marriage will mean for her and her world (17)

Setting

A middle-class teenage girl's bedroom.

Time Period

Present day.

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Lights rise on a Midwest, upper-middle class teenage girl's bedroom. Stuffed animals, sports trophies, "A" papers tacked to a bulletin board. On the wall, among boy-band posters, hangs a poster reading "Glorify God In Your Body, And In Your Spirit, Which Are God's.— I CORINTHIANS 6:20." JESSICA, 20, stands over a suitcase open on the bed. She removes a tank top from the suitcase and lays it on the bed. She removes her sweater and shirt, then her pants, then her bra. As she does, there is a knock on the door. Before she can answer, the door opens a crack. Jessica grabs the tank top from the bed to cover herself. The door opens a bit more and MICHAEL, also 20, pokes his head in the room.

Jessica *(hushed)* What are you doing?

Michael *(hushed)* You okay?

Jessica *(hushed)* Close the door.

Michael slips into the room and shuts the door behind him. As soon as he is in, Jessica lets her guard down. She pulls the shirt on over her head.

Michael Don't put them away.

Michael slides up to Jessica. He begins kissing her neck and slides a hand up her shirt.

Jessica Is this really a good idea?

Michael Oh, this is a great idea.

Jessica Seriously. Your mom.

Michael They're all asleep. Tryptophan got them.

Jessica All of them?

Michael Dad and the cousins are watching *Sports Center* downstairs. They'll be fine.

Michael moves in and kisses Jessica. She kisses him back for a moment. A disgruntled, sports-highlight-inspired groan erupts from downstairs. Jessica pulls away.

Jessica This really isn't a good idea.

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Michael sits on the edge of the desk.

Michael Fine. Later, maybe? After everyone's asleep?

Jessica Maybe.

Michael I'll hold you to that.

Jessica Tuck me in?

Jessica goes to the bed and pulls back the covers.

Michael That's what you're wearing?

Jessica Yeah.

Michael *That's* what's gonna get me in trouble.

Jessica What do you mean?

Michael I mean my mom's going to be poking her head in the door to get you up for breakfast at 7:30 tomorrow morning.

Jessica And?

Michael And I know you've never slept with you, but you're a kicker. She comes in and finds the covers on the floor and you in your tank top and your little black panties—she's going to think I'm bringing a trollop into the family.

Jessica Well, aren't you?

Michael Yeah, but that's supposed to be our little secret.

Michael goes to the dresser. He opens one of the drawers and removes a nightgown.

Michael Put this on. Lizzie won't mind.

Michael tosses the nightgown to Jessica, then goes to the door and leans against it. Jessica pulls off her tank top and pulls the nightgown over her head.

Michael It went well, I think.

Jessica You think?

Michael Better than I hoped, honestly. Yeah. I think they appreciated you going tonight.

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Jessica finishes dressing and gets in bed. Michael goes to tuck her in.

Jessica Your dad's nice.

Michael Yeah.

Jessica And your mom, too.

Michael Yeah. Sorry about that grace thing. I don't know what she was thinking.

Jessica It's okay. It took me back.

Michael You did good, though.

Jessica Well, I've got a lot to be thankful for.

Michael Me, too.

They kiss.

Jessica I love you.

Michael I love you, too.

Michael gets up and heads for the door. He stops and turns.

Michael I will be back. And when I come back, I will fuck you.

Jessica Deal.

Michael So no sleeping.

Jessica No sleeping.

Michael leaves. Jessica lays there for a moment, then sits up. She leans over the bed and retrieves her book bag. She takes out a book, sits up, and begins to read. After a moment, there is a light knock on the door.

Jessica Hello?

The door slowly opens. ELIZABETH, 17, leans her head in.

Elizabeth Sorry.

Jessica Don't be sorry. Come on in.

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Elizabeth enters the room.

Elizabeth Sorry. I just need... I forgot something.

Elizabeth goes to the far side of the bed. She picks up a stuffed sheep from the floor.

Elizabeth Sorry. He helps me sleep better.

Jessica No problem.

Elizabeth heads for the door. Jessica returns to her book. Elizabeth stops at the door and turns around.

Elizabeth What are you reading?

Jessica *The Bacchae.*

Elizabeth What's it about?

Jessica It's for a class.

Elizabeth Is it good?

Jessica Pretty good.

Elizabeth What class?

Jessica Sex, Religion, and Prehistory.

A beat.

Elizabeth Oh.

Elizabeth stands awkwardly in the doorway for a moment. She turns to go.

Jessica You don't have to leave.

Elizabeth It's okay. You're reading.

Jessica I'm just killing time. It's earlier than I'm used to.

Elizabeth Okay.

Elizabeth shuts the door. She sits on the edge of the bed.

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Jessica Thanks for the room. I didn't mean to displace you.

Elizabeth It's okay. I don't mind. I get the pullout downstairs.

Jessica Well, that's good.

Elizabeth It's one of the advantages. Mom always puts me in with the little cousins, but since I'm the oldest, I usually get the best seat or whatever.

Jessica That's something. My mom used to do the same thing. Drove me crazy.

Elizabeth I know.

Jessica But you'll be headed out of here soon. Do you know where you're going yet?

Elizabeth Either Regent or Emmanuel.

Jessica Oh right.

Elizabeth You know them?

Jessica I think.

Elizabeth They're in Georgia and Virginia.

Jessica That's a good distance. Not too close, not too far.

Elizabeth They're Christian schools.

Jessica Oh.

A beat.

Jessica I like your family.

Elizabeth Thanks.

A beat.

Elizabeth Were your parents mad you went to a Christian school?

Jessica St. Joe's isn't really a Christian school. It's "in the Jesuit tradition," but isn't really religious anymore.

Elizabeth Still, my parents wouldn't like me going to a Jewish school, I don't think.

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Jessica I have a feeling you're right. And it's too bad.

Elizabeth Why would that be too bad? I don't want to be with people who don't believe like I do.

Jessica It's too bad because there are other things out there. Things you should expose yourself to.

Elizabeth I don't want to "expose myself." That's where temptation comes from.

Jessica It's also where you learn things. About yourself. And the world. And how else will you overcome temptation if you don't face it?

Elizabeth I don't want to overcome temptation. I want to avoid it.

Jessica There are things out there you have no idea about. And believe me, if you did, you would know that God didn't make them for you to avoid.

Elizabeth Don't talk to me about God.

Jessica How else will you learn—?

Elizabeth Not from you. I hear he doesn't go to church anymore. Michael. Except Sunday mornings. Mom said.

Jessica He goes. Not a lot of people we know go more than once a week.

Elizabeth That's why I want to go to a Christian school. It's easier to pull someone off a chair than to pull them on to one. That's what my Dad says.

Jessica What does that mean?

Elizabeth If you're on a chair, it's easier for someone to knock you off than for you to pull them up onto it. That's why you should stay with your own kind—

Jessica "With your own kind." Wow.

Elizabeth With people who believe like you do. Because they won't knock you off.

A beat.

Jessica It may be getting a little late.

Elizabeth Do you make him go to your church?

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Jessica No.

Elizabeth That's not what I heard.

Jessica We went to my cousin's Bat Mitzvah.

Elizabeth Did he wear one of those hats?

Jessica To be respectful.

Elizabeth I saw you in church tonight. Just standing there during the benediction. I didn't think that was very respectful.

A beat.

Jessica I'm not going anywhere, Elizabeth. And I want you to like me. So maybe we should call it a night, yes?

Elizabeth It's not that I don't like you...

Jessica It's okay. I understand.

Elizabeth I don't want to go to bed yet. Susan and Lauren are still up. They'll want to sleep with me in the big bed. Is your book good?

Jessica Yeah.

A beat.

Elizabeth You can call me Liz.

Jessica Okay. Liz. This is better, yeah? (*re: the trophies*) You play soccer?

Elizabeth Varsity.

Jessica I used to play, too. What position?

Elizabeth Left wing.

Jessica I was defense.

Elizabeth Neat.

A beat.

Jessica You going to play in college?

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Elizabeth I don't think so. Probably not.

Jessica Yeah, I didn't either.

Elizabeth Were you good?

Jessica Pretty. I hear you are, too.

Elizabeth From who?

Jessica From Michael. He's very proud of you. You're lucky. My brother Jason is fourteen years older than me. We could never really be friends like you and Michael are.

A beat.

Jessica Can I ask you something?

Elizabeth (*nervously*) ...Yeah.

Jessica Your mom. What does she think of me?

Elizabeth What do you mean?

Jessica I mean, I don't want to put you in a bad position. I don't think Michael would tell me if she did. But, like, has she said anything?

A beat.

Elizabeth I don't think you should marry Michael.

Jessica That's not what I asked.

Elizabeth Or, I don't think he should marry you. She cried. My mom. When he told her. She thought he was going to marry Bethany. His girlfriend from high school. She's from our church, and Michael said he loved her. He can say he loves you, but he said he loved her, too. And when he was home a few weeks ago, Mom had Bethany over to dinner. Did he tell you that?

Jessica No.

Elizabeth She stayed to watch TV after. Mom says that is a better match.

Jessica Well, he's twenty years old. He can make his own decisions.

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Elizabeth He *can't* make his own decisions. “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” Second Corinthians.

Jessica Whatever Jesus said, it's up to Michael to decide what Michael wants.

Elizabeth Paul said it. And there are more important things than what Michael wants.

Jessica Like what?

Elizabeth What He wants. I know you don't believe in that. But it's true.

Jessica True for you.

Elizabeth True enough.

A beat.

Jessica This is really going to be a problem?

Elizabeth Big. Yes.

Jessica You know her. What can I do?

Elizabeth Like I said. Go.

Jessica Short of that.

Elizabeth Nothing.

Jessica Well, then...

A beat.

Elizabeth You could at least wait.

Jessica What difference would that make?

Elizabeth Just wait until you get out of school. Maybe, I don't know, maybe if they got to know you better—if they saw you were serious after another year—maybe it would help.

Jessica I think getting married is pretty serious.

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Elizabeth He can't get divorced, you know. It would kill my mom, and he just could never do it. He wasn't raised that way.

Jessica I don't have any intention of divorcing him.

Elizabeth Who does it hurt you to wait?

Jessica We shouldn't have to. We want to be married and we want to have a family and who's to tell us we shouldn't?

A beat.

Elizabeth Are you pregnant?

Jessica What kind of question is that?

Elizabeth It happened to a girl at our church. Are you?

Jessica No.

Elizabeth People don't just get married that quick. They used to, but not anymore. Not unless they're pregnant.

Jessica Well, that's just not true.

A beat.

Elizabeth Do you have sex with him?

Jessica Excuse me?

Elizabeth Michael. Do you have sex with him?

Jessica I don't think he would like me talking to you about this.

Elizabeth Have you had sex with anybody else?

Jessica And I don't think *I* want to talk to you about this.

Elizabeth It's very hard for him to be good sometimes. All boys. And I know he wants to be good. If you don't help him, he can't be.

Jessica Help him by saying "no"?

Elizabeth Does he ask?

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A beat.

Jessica I don't know how to talk to you about this without lying to you. And I don't want to lie to you. I think we should just let this go.

A beat.

Jessica Someday we'll have a relationship where we can talk about these kinds of things. Soon, I hope. But right now, it just isn't a very good idea. Okay?

A beat.

Jessica Michael tells me you play the flute. I used to play the clarinet.

Elizabeth rises.

Elizabeth I'm going to go to bed.

Jessica Alright. I'll see you in the morning.

Elizabeth goes to the door. She stops and turns.

Elizabeth I pray for him. All the time. That he'll live a good life, and not stray too far from the path.

Jessica Goodnight, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth I just need you to tell me. If he asks.

Jessica Goodnight.

Elizabeth He does, doesn't he? Bethany said, when I asked her, she said he asked. That's why they're not together anymore.

A beat.

Elizabeth You have to tell me.

Jessica I really don't.

Elizabeth *Please?*

Jessica Why?

Elizabeth Because I need to know if it is working. I've been praying and praying and if he still wants it, it isn't working.

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Jessica Wants what?

Elizabeth Sex.

Jessica (*laughing*) Of *course* he wants it. I don't want to shatter your world, Liz, but they all want it. No amount of praying is going to make that go away.

A beat.

Elizabeth I'm sorry.

Jessica It's alright. I know it's hard for you—

Elizabeth No, I mean, I'm sorry. It's my fault.

Jessica It's not your fault.

Elizabeth It's my fault. I should have told him "no." The first time he asked.

Jessica Asked what?

A beat.

Elizabeth I'm sorry. I used to let him... I used to let him touch me, at night sometimes. And do things.

They are quiet.

Elizabeth I'm sorry. I prayed and I tried to fix it.

Jessica It's alright.

Elizabeth I hoped and I hoped that he didn't ask. I didn't want to have to tell you.

Jessica You didn't have to tell me.

Elizabeth I did.

Jessica I knew.

A beat.

Elizabeth How did you know?

Jessica He told me. Months ago. That you two... played around when you were younger. It's nothing to be embarrassed about. It happens more than you think.

Elizabeth I didn't want to. I prayed not to anymore, but he kept asking. I wanted to save myself. For my husband.

Jessica He didn't have sex with you?

Elizabeth *No.*

Jessica He said "playing."

Elizabeth Mostly looking. And he would touch me. And rub on me.

Jessica Rub on you?

Elizabeth On my... on my behind. He'd lift up my pajamas and just rub on me.

A beat.

Jessica All the way?

Elizabeth What does that mean?

Jessica I mean... did you have to clean up?

Elizabeth Yeah. He always did.

They are quiet a moment.

Jessica Look. Liz. It doesn't take much. For a little kid to finish. Thank you. I'm glad you told me. I'm glad you felt you could. And I understand. I had a neighbor boy, you know. It's part of growing up. I know you probably don't talk about sex much with your friends. But it's natural.

Elizabeth It isn't natural. It was a sin.

Jessica You didn't do anything wrong.

Elizabeth It was a sin what he did.

Jessica Elizabeth—

Elizabeth "Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit." It was a *sin*. What he did to me.

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Jessica Did he make you do it?

Elizabeth Yes.

Jessica He *made* you.

Elizabeth I didn't want to.

Jessica You prayed and prayed.

Elizabeth Yes.

Jessica Did you ever tell him? That you didn't want to?

Elizabeth I said we shouldn't.

Jessica But you didn't say you didn't want to?

Elizabeth It was a *sin*.

Jessica That doesn't mean anything.

Elizabeth Sin is real.

Jessica Did you tell him "no?"

Elizabeth I told him—

Jessica Did you?

Elizabeth I prayed and—

Jessica *Did you tell him "no?"*

Elizabeth No.

Jessica Then you did it. You. You did it.

Elizabeth I didn't want to.

Jessica But you did.

Elizabeth begins to tear up. Jessica hands her a box of Kleenex from the bedside table. Elizabeth takes the box, but does not use it.

Jessica I'm not trying to be cruel. There is power in that. *You* did. And I am sorry that you think that makes you "evil" or Michael or whatever, but it's something kids do sometimes. It's something I did. And maybe I wish I didn't, but there's nothing wrong with me.

Elizabeth It was wrong.

Jessica You were young.

A beat.

Elizabeth I cried sometimes.

Jessica He was young.

A beat.

Elizabeth He isn't young anymore.

Jessica No. And he's getting married to someone he loves.

Elizabeth But he still wants it.

Jessica We all want it.

Elizabeth Not that bad.

Jessica Yes, that bad.

Elizabeth Not that bad to do what he did to me.

Jessica He didn't do anything to you. And it's not fair for you to say to anyone that he did.

A beat.

Elizabeth You don't care?

Jessica I just understand what was going on. What *is* going on.

Elizabeth Because of what he told you?

Jessica Because of what he told me. He got past it. It took him a while. But he did. You will, too.

Elizabeth He's broken. He's broken and I prayed to fix him. It didn't work, did it?

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Jessica Oh, Jesus Christ. Go to bed.

Elizabeth I—

Jessica This was a bad idea.

Elizabeth He *wants* to be good.

Jessica We don't need you to save us, Liz. Go the fuck to bed.

A beat.

Elizabeth Michael shouldn't marry you.

Jessica 'Cause I'll fuck him up more?

Elizabeth turns to go. She is almost out the door when...

Jessica Hey.

Elizabeth turns.

Jessica I'm sorry. Listen, we're going to be sisters. Like it or not... Look, Liz, it's okay. I understand... I did the same thing. With my brother.

Elizabeth You did?

Jessica Yeah.

Elizabeth When?

Jessica When I was nine.

Jessica and Elizabeth look at each other a moment.

Jessica I did the same thing. When he told me he was marrying Ruth, I told her every bad thing I could think of. And she married him anyway. No one's ever going to be good enough for your big brother.

A beat.

Elizabeth I'm not making anything up.

Jessica I didn't say you were.

Elizabeth looks at Jessica a moment, then turns and leaves with the sheep and the box of Kleenex tucked under her arm. Jessica sits alone a moment. The door slides open and Michael slips in, dressed for bed.

Michael Hey, girly.

Jessica Hey.

Michael They're all in bed. What did Lizzy want?

Jessica To talk.

Michael To grill you?

Jessica Sort of. She was a little desperate to protect her big brother from the Big Bad Non-Believer.

Michael A little late for that.

Jessica She asked if I was pregnant. She says no one gets married this fast anymore unless they're knocked-up.

Michael She said "knocked-up?"

Jessica No.

Michael What did you tell her?

Jessica "No."

Michael Good.

Jessica Do you think your mom knows?

Michael I don't think she could even make herself imagine. Besides, Lizzy's always been the smart one.

Jessica She'll know I lied.

Michael And that will be the least of our problems. Move over.

Michael begins to climb into the bed.

Jessica I think we shouldn't. Not tonight.

Michael Come on. We're leaving tomorrow.

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Jessica And we'll be home tomorrow night.

Michael You're going to deny me the distinct thrill of doing you while my parents are asleep down the hall?

Jessica Next time.

Michael We'll be married next time. Come on. I'll be quick, I promise.

Jessica throws a look to the door.

Jessica Okay.

Jessica begins to pull her nightgown up over her head.

Michael No, no. Leave that on. In case someone comes. Just take off your underwear.

Jessica removes her underwear as Michael clicks off the lamp and climbs into the bed. The room is quite dark. They kiss.

Michael *(in the dark)* Hey.

Jessica *(in the dark)* Hey.

They kiss some more.

Jessica *(in the dark)* Alright. Let's go.

Michael *(in the dark)* Hold on. Not like that. Roll over.

Jessica *(in the dark)* Like this?

Michael *(in the dark)* No, just... just lay flat. Yeah. And pull this up.

Michael lays atop Jessica. He can be heard rubbing against her under the covers. His breathing gets heavier. After a moment, Jessica lets out a little sob. Michael immediately orgasms...

Michael *(in the dark)* Oh... God...

Michael tries to regain his breath. Jessica cries softly.

Michael *(in the dark)* You okay?

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Michael reaches instinctively for the bedside table. He does not find what he is looking for.

Michael *(in the dark)* Just hold on one second. Let me get something.

Michael gets out of bed, pulling up his pants, and goes to the door. Michael swings the door open, revealing Elizabeth standing in the hallway.

Michael *(to Elizabeth)* Hey.

Elizabeth *(quietly)* Hey.

Michael You should be in bed.

Michael whisks past Elizabeth. Elizabeth stands awkwardly in the doorway for a moment, listening to Jessica's quiet sob. After a moment...

Elizabeth Jessica?

Jessica Close the door.

Elizabeth I—

Jessica *Close the door.*

A beat. Elizabeth closes the door, leaving Jessica alone.

Blackout.

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