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CONCORD
THEATRICALS

Acting Edition

Alabaster

by Audrey Cefaly

Winner of the 2017 David Calicchio Emerging American Playwright Prize at Marin Theatre Company, Mill Valley, CA

Jasson Minadakis, Artistic Director | Keri Kellerman, Managing Director

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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ALABASTER was first produced by Florida Repertory Theatre (Greg Longenhagen, Artistic Director; John Martin, Executive Director) in Fort Myers, Florida on December 20, 2019 as the first of an eleven-theatre National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere. The production was directed by Jason Parrish, with a scenic design by Richard Crowell, costume design by Charlene Gross, lighting and projection design by Rob Siler, sound design by Katie Lowe, and original outsider folk art by Sara Morsey. The production stage manager was Ruth E. Kramer. The cast was as follows:

JUNE Rachel Burtram
ALICE Dana Brooke
WEEZY Carolyn Messina
BIB Sara Morsey

ALABASTER then received an eleven-theater National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere with support from the David Goldman Fund for New American Plays. Participating Theaters: Capital Stage (Sacramento, California), 16th Street Theater (Berwyn, Illinois), Kitchen Dog Theater (Dallas, Texas), Shrewd Productions (Austin, Texas), Know Theatre of Cincinnati (Cincinnati, Ohio), Phoenix Theatre (Indianapolis, Indiana), Williamston Theatre (Williamston, Michigan), Salt Lake Acting Company (Salt Lake City, Utah), New Jersey Repertory Company (Long Branch, New Jersey), and Oregon Contemporary Theatre (Eugene, Oregon).

CHARACTERS

ALICE – a renowned photographer

JUNE – an Alabama outsider artist

WEEZY – a goat (and daughter to Bib)

BIB – a very old goat (and mother to Weezy)

Neither Bib nor Weezy should be dressed like goats. While they may have the occasional goat “feature,” mostly they walk and talk just like humans. The goats are not caricatures. They are as real as any human. They have their own goat language, which – in moments of joy and grief and everything in between – is genuine and specific. They *bleat* and *bah* as goats do, with intention, creating a real dialogue between characters. We should be able to see their faces, their expressions, etc. This is vital.

SETTING

Somewhere near Alabaster, Alabama, mid-July. Portrait of an old farmhouse, mid-morning. The focal point is a master bedroom. An assemblage of outsider art, stacks of barn wood, and art supplies fill the corners of this sun-lit room along with a large old bed. The room should look more like a working art studio than an art gallery.

Also in this picture is a yard, a porch, and a space for Weezy and Bib (a pallet of straw and a small goat barn).

This place, a virtual canvas, gains color and crispness as the story moves along, reflecting at any moment the mood or perspective of what the players experience as well as their point of view through the “viewfinder.” Projections are encouraged but not required.

TIME

Present day.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This is not a *friendly* farm. Death is known to the inhabitants of this realm and to the creatures lured into its clutches in a way that changes them forever. In this story, which spans a single day, we are experiencing four “women,” each at a crossroads, each facing a wall of fire. Though at times it may seem like they are simply exchanging pleasantries, they are quite literally fighting for their lives. In “come to Jesus” moments like these, worn down by the never-ending savage blows of life, we are faced with our own mortality. We understand time as a luxury. Weezy is an all-seeing, all-knowing instrument of *the Divine*. She is of another realm and of a higher purpose.

In this world. On this day. The time for pleasantries is over.

Resist the urge to play things “nice.”

Important Note: The scars (predominantly seen on June’s face and back) may be manifested in any number of ways (e.g. prosthetics, tattoos, or even projections); so long as they and the SEVERITY of them are CLEARLY visible to the audience. This is not negotiable. This is a play about scars. Do not attempt this play unless you can commit to the scars.

*For Carolyn
my rock...
my barkeep...
my hero...*

ACT I

Scene One

(AT RISE: Saturday, mid-morning. WEEZY enters the light. She addresses the audience as she addresses nearly everyone else around her: with a neutral, no-nonsense, no-bullshit tone.)

WEEZY. *(More dry than convivial.)* My name is Weezy, I am a goat, I am aware that I am a goat.

(Looking around at the audience.)

We are presently on a small farm in the backwoods of North *Alabama*.

(Beat.)

So *that's* happenin.

(Beat.)

We are in –

(The unmistakable sound of a goat is heard.)

BIB. *(From off.)* Mmaaahaaaahaaaaahaaah!

WEEZY. We'll get through it together.

(Beat.)

We are in *Alabaster*, Alabama. Right near Gip's Place,* of which you might have heard, the last remainin juke joint in the state of Alabama. It's BYOB, which's nothin

* Mr. Gip passed away during the premiere of this play. The future of Gip's Place is unknown.

to do with this story, but is useful information on a Friday night.

(BIB, a very old goat, slightly disoriented (possible dementia), enters and calls to WEEZY.)

BIB. Maahaaaahaahaa...

(BIB walks toward WEEZY.)

Maaaaaah...

WEEZY. *(To the audience.)* That's my mama. *Bib.*

(BIB notices the audience. She is highly put out at the sight of so many unexpected visitors. She looks at WEEZY and back at the audience.)

We don't get many visitors.

BIB. *(To WEEZY - "What's all this, Field of Dreams?")*
Mmah-Maaah...

(During the following, BIB works her way across the yard to her pallet at the goat barn giving certain audience members a suspicious side-eye and griping along the way. At times, she stops and re-routes herself. It is obvious she has directional issues. WEEZY helps BIB along as necessary (ad lib) using directional comments (i.e., "Around the garden, Mama... right.")

WEEZY. *(To the audience.)* She's sick. Old and sick.

(To BIB.) You stay off those beet greens, Mama, you know how they like to repeat on ya.

(To the audience.) I didn't always know my mama. I was taken from her when I was real little.

(BIB settles onto her pallet.)

I have no memory of her from before. But she's here now. Right.

(To BIB.) OK, Mama?

(BIB closes her eyes.)

(Lights up on a large sunlit bedroom filled with stacks of barn wood, paintings, cans of house paint, and art supplies. On the bed, a woman sits dressed in a robe, nervously sipping from a coffee mug and looking anxiously around the room. Her face, arms, shoulders, torso, back, and legs are covered in scars (puncture wounds, abrasions, gashes, and surgical scars).)

(To the audience.) That's June. June and me, we have a connection.

(To JUNE.) Right, June?

(JUNE shoots WEEZY "the bird" then goes back to looking around the room nervously. In the midst of all this, there are camera bags, video and lighting equipment lying around the room.)

(A photographer (ALICE) enters the bedroom as if returning from a related task. She begins setting up her tripod and video camera, pointing it in the direction of the bed.)

And that's a new person. She's not from around here.

(To JUNE.) Just remember, June. You asked her to come.

(JUNE nods nervously in response.)

(Note: JUNE and WEEZY are able to see and hear each other as if there were no walls between them. For the duration of the play, WEEZY moves wherever she likes; she has full command of the stage, and sits and walks wherever necessary to communicate with and observe the other players. Her default position, however, is in the lawn chair next to her ailing mother, BIB. ALICE is unaware of WEEZY's presence.)

(**WEEZY** tucks **BIB** into bed and watches the action unfold, eating popcorn, drinking beer, and occasionally commenting on the scene to the players and sometimes directly to the audience, as if watching a daytime soap.)

JUNE. (*Nervously.*) Did you get somethin to eat? People talk about eatin when they don't know what to talk about.

ALICE. I had a snack on the plane.

JUNE. Never been on a plane. I don't really know anybody I could fly to, anyway. Well, I know you now, I could fly to you. Times Square, maybe.

ALICE. See a show?

JUNE. Nah. I wanna eat *street food*. Mystery meat. On *sticks*. Stand there in the middle of it, feel big or feel small.

(*Beat.*)

You live in Brooklyn right?

(**JUNE** takes a sip from her coffee mug.)

ALICE. That's debatable.

(*Off JUNE's look.*) I'm kind of sorting that out.

(*Beat.*)

Is that coffee?

JUNE. Variation on coffee.

ALICE. What's the variation?

JUNE. I use Bourbon instead.

ALICE. Instead of / what?

JUNE. (*Overlapping.*) Instead of coffee.

(**JUNE** offers **ALICE** a sip.)

ALICE. Tempting.

JUNE. Gotta be somewhere.

ALICE. It's the work, ya know?

JUNE. The *work*.

ALICE. Nothing personal.

JUNE. Do you know Annie Leibovitz?

ALICE. I do know Annie.

JUNE. What's she like?

ALICE. She's hilarious. And very real. And miles ahead.

JUNE. I read some place it's the photographer's job to make their subjects comfortable. She does not...*subscribe* to this notion.

ALICE. (*Playfully.*) Well, we're not *wedding planners*. I'm not supposed to console you, I'm supposed to *capture* you.

JUNE. (*Suggestively.*) I bet that was meant to sound dangerous.

ALICE. (*Playing along.*) Did it not sound dangerous?

JUNE. It did not sound dangerous.

ALICE. OK, define dangerous.

JUNE. (*Sipping from her mug.*) Clowns. Banana slugs. *Me.*
(*Beat.*)

We used to let outsiders just come and go but things have gotten so desperate.

ALICE. (*Playing along.*) Oh yeah?

JUNE. It's the inbreedin, we lay traps.

(*Suggestively.*) Amazin what we catch.

ALICE. Really...?

JUNE. *Really.*

(*Pause.*)

ALICE. (*Suggestively.*) What do you use for bait?

(*An electric pause.*)

(*Interrupting cell phone: ALICE's phone rings with some VERY UNPLEASANT RINGTONE.*)

JUNE. Who the fuck is on your shit list?

ALICE. My dad.

JUNE. *Solid.*

(ALICE digs for the phone in her backpack and dismisses the call.)

ALICE. Sorry.

JUNE. Alice?

ALICE. Yeah?

JUNE. Breathe.

ALICE. That's my line.

(ALICE takes a deep cleansing breath. JUNE, WEEZY, and BIB (almost in unison) take a deep cleansing breath.)*

JUNE. You need a break?

ALICE. I'm good.

(ALICE resumes setting up her equipment.)

JUNE. So, how many women have you...ya know...

ALICE. You're number seven.

JUNE. Lucky seven. You just go from city to city...

ALICE. Pretty much.

JUNE. *(Intentionally ambiguous.)* Got a favorite?

ALICE. Savannah.

JUNE. *(Playfully.)* Is she pretty?

ALICE. What – oooh, you're asking me to pick a favorite woman.

JUNE.

ALICE.

Sure.

No way.

JUNE. *(A new tack.)* Do they all have scars like me?

(Pause.)

Guess not.

ALICE. What are you asking?

JUNE. I thought that was pretty straight forward.

* *Breathing* is an important and recurring motif in this play. These moments lead us into new territory and create a togetherness, an *intimacy*. All breaths should be audible to the audience.

ALICE. Ya think?

JUNE. (*Dryly.*) I don't know what to think, I'm makin shit up.

ALICE. What was the question?

(WEEZY keeps her attention focused on the action but talks for the benefit of the audience. She may rise from her chair and enter the playing space or the audience space when it suits her.)

WEEZY. (*To the audience.*) June likes to push.

JUNE. (*To ALICE.*) Do they all...have scars...like me?

WEEZY. (*To the audience.*) I used to think it was the PTSD from her injuries, but then I remembered, nope, she's always been a bitch.

(The energy of the conversation now takes on a more adversarial tone as JUNE begins to "push.")

JUNE. (*To ALICE.*) Hello?

ALICE. No and yes.

JUNE. Good answer, / duh.

ALICE. (*Overlapping.*) It's not about the scars.

JUNE. You're takin pictures of people with scars but it's not about the scars, what's it about, then, Alice, tell me.

ALICE. (*Pointedly.*) I think it might be hard to tell *you* anything.

(Beat.)

I dunno, *fear*?

JUNE. Rings a bell.

WEEZY. (*Directed mostly at JUNE.*) Fear of the unknown, fear of self-discovery, fear of *happiness*, even.

ALICE. These women – some of / these women are –

JUNE. (*Overlapping.*) Why not men?

ALICE. (*Overlapping – continuous.*) ...in a lot of pain because – NO. *Men*? Why do people / always ask me that?

JUNE. (*Overlapping.*)

It's whatever, do / your
thing.

WEEZY. (*Overlapping.*)

(*To JUNE.*) Let her talk!

ALICE. (*Overlapping.*) Can I finish?

(*Pause.*)

It's not about the scars, / the scars are a way in.

JUNE. (*Overlapping.*) You're gonna tell me / they're
beautiful?

WEEZY. (*Overlapping - exasperated, under her breath.*) Oh
my God.

(**ALICE** *waits for JUNE to settle.*)

ALICE. They're a way *in*.

JUNE. *In.*

ALICE. I want to be careful here because it's not like I'm an
expert on scars or anything, but – what I'm learning
is...every scar, every woman, is *different*. Some women
are still in the early stages, others have...made peace?
I guess? (*Softening.*) With their physical worlds?

JUNE. And now you're in it.

ALICE. I feel pretty lucky. Not everyone gets to do what I do.

JUNE. (*Calculating.*) Why the switch?

ALICE. *Switch?*

JUNE. From the celebrities.

ALICE. My assignment work, you mean?

JUNE. (*Put off by the choice of words.*) *Assignment. Work.*

JUNE.

ALICE.

I'm not painting you in.*

Have you been reading
my diary?

ALICE. I needed a change.

JUNE. Just all of a sudden...

(*Beat.*)

* I'm not trying to paint you into a corner with your art; it's your art, your prerogative.

You spend just as much time with Demi Moore as someone like me, what's the difference, really?

ALICE. Is that a serious question? It's more intimate, obviously.

JUNE. Not obviously. I've seen your celebrity shots, those are some scarred up motherfuckers.

ALICE. I can see I have to choose my words more carefully.

JUNE. Because you weren't before?

ALICE. That's not how I meant it.

JUNE. It's how *I* meant it.

ALICE. I'm listening.

JUNE. Why...the switch?

ALICE. I told you, I needed a change.

JUNE.

You needed a change because you needed a change?

I'm not polite company.

ALICE.

And it was admittedly a pat response, but it's what people say in polite company instead of the alternative.

Which is the horrible truth of their *lives*.

(*Beat.*)

ALICE. Is that OK? Is that OK, June? If I hang back on that question. Until I know you? A little better?

(*Beat.*)

JUNE. (*Bratty.*) I think you would make a shitty wedding planner.

WEEZY. (*Disapprovingly – throwing popcorn at JUNE.*)
Booooh!!!! Booooooooh!!!

JUNE. (*To WEEZY.*) Would you – I got it!

ALICE. Got what?

JUNE. (*To ALICE, self-correcting.*) I've got...an *apology*.

WEEZY. (*To JUNE.*) *Asshole*.

ALICE. No. Actually, I'm sorry. Can we start over?

JUNE. Sure.

ALICE. Great.

(WEEZY enters the bedroom area and uncovers a pile of paintings as ALICE looks up and around at the art in the room.)

I love all your pieces.

JUNE. Thanks.

ALICE. I haven't had a good look, but I'd like to.

JUNE. Sure.

ALICE. *(Positioning the camera.)* Did I see Jim Sudduth over there? You're a collector, obviously. I collect a bit myself.

JUNE. Am I *scar-ier* than Hollywood?

(ALICE adjusts the light on JUNE. JUNE watches her.)

ALICE. By an order of magnitude. But, I wouldn't come all this way just to cover in a corner.

JUNE. You can if you want to.

ALICE. I don't want to.

JUNE. You don't want to?

ALICE. *(Pointedly.)* I don't want to.

(Another electric pause.)

You answered my ad.

JUNE. Oh, that was my neighbor, Peachy Sawgrass.

ALICE.

JUNE.

Peachy Sawgrass.

She told me – I know, it's a name – she told me you were lookin for women.

ALICE. Ah. I guess you found it online?

JUNE. I don't do *online*. I'm dumb and I have a dumb phone and I like it that way.

ALICE. *(Stunned.)* Really?

JUNE. No shit.

ALICE. So...if you don't do *online*, how did you find *me*?

JUNE. *(“Duh.”)* The library.

ALICE. Your local library has my books?

JUNE. Birmingham. I called Aggie Nolan at the Five Points branch, she sends me stuff.

ALICE. You have your own personal librarian?

JUNE. She's my cousin, she's also a librarian, she told me she saw your pictures one time at the Corcoran when she went up there on a school trip to DC. She wanted me to ask you why people in your pictures look so sad all the time and then I looked at your pictures and I saw it too. The sadness, I mean. Or maybe that's new information. To you?

(Beat.)

Are you gay?

WEEZY. *(To JUNE.)* OH MY GOD.

ALICE. You ask a lot of questions.

WEEZY. *(To JUNE.)* SERIOUSLY?

JUNE. Are you?

ALICE. Does it matter?

JUNE. No.

(Beat.)

Are you attracted to me?

(Pause.)

ALICE. No. No, I'm not attracted to you.

JUNE. Really?

ALICE. You're not my type.

JUNE.

DAMN! Not. Your.
Type?!

Wow...

(Mostly to WEEZY.)
Whatever.

WEEZY.

NICE!

(To JUNE.) You deserved that one.

She's just tryin to do her job, June. Would you relax?

JUNE. *(Bratty. Half to WEEZY, half to ALICE.) Assignments and clients and jobs. Oh, my.*

ALICE. You're pretty impossible.

JUNE. So many words.

ALICE. Maybe we should stay focused on the work.

JUNE. Yeah, OK.

ALICE. Are you ready?

JUNE. Born ready.

(ALICE sits in a chair next to the video camera and pulls out a note pad and a pen. Despite all of JUNE's bravado, she now becomes visibly nervous, as one would at a dentist's office when implements of torture become visible to the patient.)

ALICE. OK. So, these questions...just say skip, OK, if you can't or don't want to answer.

JUNE. Skip?

ALICE. Yeah. Ya know, like if I ask you –

JUNE. NEXT QUESTION!

(Beat.)

My head pops off from time to time, just to warn ya.

(JUNE turns to see WEEZY amused but shaking her head with disappointment. She sticks her tongue out at WEEZY.)

(ALICE smiles at JUNE who takes a big breath. ALICE follows with a big breath. WEEZY, not wanting to be rude, takes a reluctant breath. BIB, still snoring, takes a sleepy staccato-style catch-up breath and then exhales softly.)

ALICE. You're very brave, sitting there. OK...just so you know the order, I'm going to ask about the scars first so I can get the video. We'll do the photographs separately when we get the light.

JUNE. Fine.

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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