

In The Blue

A full-length play

By Lynn Rosen

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Revised 1/13/14

In The Blue

TIME:

The present and various pasts.

PLACE:

A half-finished suburban community in the woods in upstate New York. Only a handful of families live here. It's mostly sandy lots and foundations awaiting homes.

SETTING:

Lydia and Bill's living room. It looks like an Irish country house .

Within it other settings will emerge - for example, Detective's office - made with simple things from within the house.

The idea of transformation - of things not being what they seem - is paramount. So chairs become a car, a couch becomes a boat, etc.

CHARACTERS:

Lydia Unger (aka Brigid) - 40s-50s. Red head, fading beauty, a prosaic middle-class housewife. Or is she? In love with all things Irish - she seeks poetry and passion.

Bill Unger (aka Finn) - 40s-50s. Lydia's husband. A former football star in decline. He is a constant disappointment to himself and others. Longing to be more heroic.

Julie Unger (aka Pip) - Mid 20s. Daughter of Bill and Lydia. Currently an upper east side WASP but formerly a bohemian artist. Sassy, pointy, brittle. A tender heart lives within her cold exterior.

Detective Jacobs (aka Tin Man) - 30s-40s. Great detective, by-the-books, serious, not a fun bone in his body, which makes him funny. Longing for more color in his life.

Thug (aka Mac) - 20s. From Ireland (Irish accent). Sexy, cocky, charismatic, dangerous. Often explodes with rage and violence, but also desperate for love.

SLASH MARKS (/) indicate where dialogue is interrupted.

Please note: Dialogue has a tension and precision to it.

Characters are often pretending to be someone they're not - this can lend a heightened quality to their interactions. But their needs must always remain very real and grounded.

PROLOGUE

A dark stage.

In the dark we hear CALM WATER, BIRDS, BREEZE. What a serene and idyllic visual image this creates. Lovely.

Then we hear SOMETHING OR SOMEONE HEAVY FALL INTO THE WATER.

Then the sound of SOMETHING DISTURBED ATOP THE WATER. A BOAT?

BIRDS SQUAWK.

Then the sound of HIGHWAY and CARS.

A CRY is heard - an animal cry? A person cry?

The audience's visual image of this place should begin to morph into something not so idyllic.

A GHOSTLY GUST OF WIND.

BUBBLES.

CALM again, as if this thing, whatever it was, never disturbed the water.

Now that the unseen environment has transformed into something unsettling and unpredictable we are ready to begin.

The Chieftain's "Away We Go Again" plays us in...

Act One

Detective's office - a table, chairs. Present day.
**Lydia wears a red dress, her tea steams -
these are signs that we are in present time.**

Lydia seems the bereaved wife trying to be upbeat. A "Who me?" innocence. But she has a secret which empowers her and pokes at her.

Detective is terse, urgent, businesslike. He has a secret too but he holds his cards close to his vest.

Dialogue is tense and taut.

DETECTIVE

And then what happened?

LYDIA

Same as I've been saying for the last three weeks, Detective.

DETECTIVE

Enlighten me again, Mrs. Unger. I'm trying to find your husband.

LYDIA

Of course. I guess you're "good cop" then?

DETECTIVE

All cops are good. At the start.

LYDIA

And where are you on the spectrum of your journey, Detective?

DETECTIVE

I am...where I am.

LYDIA

(Feigning enlightenment)

Ah.

DETECTIVE

You see?

LYDIA

Yes. And Bill is... (Gets emotional) Where he is. Wherever that is.

DETECTIVE

Do you need a moment?

LYDIA

Thank you. (Barely a beat) I'm ready. Sad but ready.

DETECTIVE

Great. And then what happened?

LYDIA

Then Bill said he was going for a row in his boat in the lake by our house.

DETECTIVE

The one we dragged for his body.

LYDIA

Lakes are *loovely*, as the Irish say. The source of myth and masterpiece. I *looved* our lake. Until Bill revealed it was man-made, then it lost its appeal.

DETECTIVE

This disappointed you. In him. In the lake.

LYDIA

(getting carried away)

No. I mean do I prefer a lake made by glacier? Its waters once travelled by poet and Druid? Perhaps!

(she contains herself)

But no, not disappointed in any profound way. May I? Parched.

He pours her water.

DETECTIVE

So you're sure it was six p.m. when Bill left for a row on the lake?

LYDIA

Yes, because I always watch the six o'clock weather when Bill rows so I can plan the gardening.

DETECTIVE

So he says he's going for a row and then?

She is about to put her water on his desk. He slips a coaster under it.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

Leaves rings.

LYDIA

Sorry. And then I said, "Be back before dark, my love. I love you."

DETECTIVE

And pardon me for being dense but you're sure you said that?

LYDIA

Yes. Well, your tone makes me doubt, doesn't it?

DETECTIVE

The truth is the truth, right?

LYDIA

Right. Well.

DETECTIVE

No?

LYDIA

Yes, no, yes, it is.

DETECTIVE

(Studies her)

You seem nervous today, Mrs. Unger.

LYDIA

No, I'm fine. Considering my husband is missing. Or dead.

DETECTIVE

Of course...So. You said, "Be back before dark," etcetera.

LYDIA

And then he said "Returning makes the leaving bearable," and went for his row. He could be lyrical that way. He was almost Irish that way. Except he was Polish.

DETECTIVE

Was?

LYDIA

Is. I hope and pray.

DETECTIVE

He didn't seem troubled? Didn't mention anything about finances or insurance or?

LYDIA

You've asked me this a million times.

DETECTIVE

Pretend I'm confused.

LYDIA

No, everything was normal as far as I knew. (Correcting) *Know.*

LIGHTS SHIFT. We see **BILL** somewhere mysterious. A motel? Rumpled business suit.

BILL

(On phone - nervous, excited)

Yes, this is Bill. I mean not Bill. This is Tom. No, wait this is...(with relish) *Thor.* Yes, I'm Scandinavian. And a little Polish. Well, *mostly* Polish. I got your number from *Big Owen?* And discretion is...? Fine. How do we...? Oh, multiple choice like the SATs? Great, I aced that. Well, I did fine. Well, thank god for football scholarships...Yes, I was good. (With regret) I was... (Perks up) Yes, ready!... (He proceeds to choose a woman by multiple choice) Ok, I choose: A - Blond. B - Lithe. Actually, can I change that one to, to C - curvaceous? Try something new, Thor!...Oh god, I don't even know what that means. C - Brazilian style?...What? Ok. Well. I want to feel like if I were gone she'd weep. I want to feel cherished and...Oh, you mean what do I want from the woman *sexually?* Sorry. My head's in the, in the clouds. Well... (Intensely, dreamily) I want it all. Whatever there can be between two people. Even what I don't know about. *Especially* what I don't know about, or maybe what I've forgotten - I want it. I want it intense and passionate and real. *I want it all.*

LIGHT SHIFT. Back to interrogation. Tea steams.

DETECTIVE

I'll be honest, Mrs. Unger. I'm concerned about you.

LYDIA

You're sweet.

DETECTIVE

Because your story keeps changing.

Tell me again about your last night with Bill three weeks ago and let's go from there.

LIGHTS DOWN on Detective.

Three weeks ago. Lydia turns her chair downstage and puts a drab coat over her red dress. Bill pulls a chair next to her. They drive in a CAR. It's tense. No eye contact.

Lydia casually tosses off zingers with a smile, but she's up to no good - punishing Bill. Bill is bracing for a fight. He knows he fucked up tonight. He will try to stay positive, but it's hard.

BILL

That was good.

LYDIA

Mm.

BILL

Dinner was good. Being around young people is good.

LYDIA

Mm.

BILL

I didn't know the restaurant was so casual, ok?

LYDIA

It's totally fine.

Of course the restaurant *is* called Touchdown, Bill.

BILL

I thought of moon landings, Lydia. I didn't know I was taking you to a sports bar, obviously. Touchdown made me think of space and romance - the great unknown.

LYDIA

Yes, I'm sure a space dinner would be very romantic, Bill. Seeing Uranus under the Heineken clock.

BILL

I didn't know, Lydia.

LYDIA

I'm just teasing, Bill. I know you planned this special night to the best of your ability, ok?

BILL

(Sensing a slight)

Ok.

LYDIA

Ok. Slow down.

Silence. Then punishment continues.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

(Feigned amusement)

"Here's yourz guys'ez winze." Our waitress said that. What a creative linguist.

BILL

I'm sorry her poor grammar reflected my poor choice in restaurants, Lydia, and possibly my poor character.

LYDIA

I found it charming, you misunderstand.

BILL

Detour? Every week something/ new.

LYDIA

I mean perhaps I hoped for candles on the table to cast the warm glow of youth upon us.

BILL

We're practically dead already. Why bother?

LYDIA

Perhaps I hoped for more care on our *anniversary* but who needs care when we have each other. Merge. *Merge*.

BILL

(Out window)

Jackass!

They swerve.

LYDIA

That young couple whispered about us because we sat there with nothing to say. "Sad," and "So sad," I heard them say.

BILL

People who truly know each other don't need to talk. They are at ease in the silence.

LYDIA

Yes. It's nice to enjoy so much ease.

Awkward silence. Then more punishment.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

And that young man eating the corn dog? The girl's lover?

BILL

Do you have to use that word? Just say boyfriend.

LYDIA

Her *lover* touching her under the table?

BILL

(Tillated)

He was? Like her knee or her ankle?

LYDIA

Oh, Bill. There are other things to be found under the table.

BILL

I know. I remember!

LYDIA

He called me old. You must not have heard or you would have defended me.

BILL

I didn't hear him, Lydia.

LYDIA

That's what I said. Why are you so worked up?

BILL

I must have gone somewhere...somewhere else.

LYDIA

(Genuinely)

Where? Where do you go when you're so silent? Tell me for once? Bill?

Silence. He's elsewhere in his mind, his worries.
She turns on IRISH MUSIC to fill the void.

BILL

Lydia.

He turns the music off. More punishment.

LYDIA

Guess I shouldn't have worn a *new* dress tonight. But Sandy wore a nice dress when Frank took her to Barnacles for lobster night so I thought/ why not?

BILL

Sorry I didn't take you to Barnacles for lobster night, Lydia.

LYDIA

Haven't had lobster since our honeymoon in Galway. Remember that pub? When silence was beautiful and the ease...

BILL

(Out window)

Lights! Lights!

LIGHTS SHIFT - MUGS CLINK,
CHIEFTAINS plays. We're in a Galway pub in the past. It's their honeymoon. Lydia looks adoringly at Bill and he at her. He's a different man - confident, joyous. She's dreamy, content. The pace slows down. She narrates this memory.

LYDIA

Our ease had a friction. A friction to singe your hair, burn your floorboards.

BILL

We escaped them all, Lyd. Bet they're pissed we eloped.

LYDIA

Unlike anything we knew. The height of our joy. The start of our end.

BILL

Wish I'd brought my accordion so I could play you a song. May I sing to you instead?

He hums "Oh Danny Boy" to her.

LYDIA
(A whisper to Bill)

What happened?

BILL
I'm sorry if life has been...you know, Lydia?

LYDIA
If life?

LIGHTS SHIFT - back to the car. Pace quickens. Bitterness resumes.

BILL
If life! If life! Things don't pan out sometimes. Get it?

LYDIA
Raccoon!

They swerve.

Well, maybe I do lack perspective, Bill. I guess that's what happens when one lives in a half-empty suburban community in the woods.

BILL
Half *full*.

LYDIA
I feel like deprived Cormac mac Airt out there - raised by wolves, speaking wolf.

BILL
I don't understand when you speak in Celtic myth.

LYDIA
But I guess it's not your fault we bought into the Utopia Village baloney.

BILL
We're living in a burst bubble, Lydia. Nobody saw it coming.

LYDIA
Go faster. (He speeds up) Not *that* fast. (He slows) Oh, come on.

He pulls car over and spews.

BILL	LYDIA
I'm doing my best damn it! God damn it!	<i>So am I.</i> Watch your mouth, mister! I wore
God fucking fucking damn it!	a new dress for you!

BILL
(Growl of frustration)

Grrrrrrrrwwwaaaaaaaah.

They are both appalled by this unmanly and
inhuman noise. Beat. Then they drive on in
horrified silence a few beats. Then...

LYDIA

Faster please. I need to be home for Colombo.

BILL

After I watch the weather. I need to see if I can put the cars on the lot/ tomorrow.

LYDIA

But he's naming the killer tonight.

BILL

They're reruns. You already know.

LYDIA

There are nuances, Bill.

BILL

I make the money. When you get a job/

LYDIA

I'll get a job as soon as we can afford a second car again, Bill.

BILL

I'm working/ on it.

LYDIA

Who'd want me anyway? I'm invisible - like a constellation at high noon.

BILL
(Out window)

It's called a turn signal!

LYDIA

Besides, I'm busy writing a book, Bill. Laugh if you want.

BILL

I'm not laughing.

LYDIA

I was Associate Editor of our college lit journal *The Mad Jester*, you may *not* remember, before you whooshed me away from my burgeoning life.

Bill sighs.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

And I've been very fertile lately mind-wise. Things spur one. Like a stranger came by yesterday, Bill. *Looking for you.*

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK. Yesterday breaks in.

BILL

Who was it?

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

LIGHTS SHIFT. The two pasts - Bill and Lydia in the car and this one - will mingle. Lydia takes off her coat, puts on an apron, steps into her living room and into yesterday. She opens her door - chain on. **THUG** has on shades, leather coat, knit cap. He's incognito. On seeing her...

THUG

Feck.

BILL

You opened the door to a stranger? Where do you think we live? Denmark?!

LYDIA

(Thrilled)

I did, Bill. Because no one ever drops by, and my heart was racing, *and I did it.*

BILL

He wasn't... Irish, was he?

THUG

(Irish accent)

William Unger in the gaff, Ma? I fancy a chinwag.

LIGHTS DOWN on Bill. Only yesterday now.

LYDIA

Oh. Are you here to talk to Bill about a lot? Are you a realtor?

THUG

I am a business man.

LYDIA

Oh wow.

THUG

And I have an *interest* in Utopia Village.

LYDIA

(Enamored)

You're Irish?

THUG

No, I'm Jamaican, mahn. Is William here, sweetheart? We made an appointment last week.

LYDIA

Bill? Oh, he's hardly ever here. For all I know he may not exist at all.

THUG

Yeah. (Yells) *Cuz if Bill heard me I know he'd show himself forthright!*

LYDIA

(Worried, faux casual)

So...What line of business are you in?

THUG

Me? I'm in the business of changin' the landscape.

LYDIA

(Excited by the idea)

Oh, like topiaries or?

THUG

Yeah, like that.

You the wife?

LYDIA

I think I'm more than that. Must we put people in boxes?

THUG

Sometimes.

What's this place supposed to look like? An Irish country house?

LYDIA

Yes! Oh wow. No one ever sees that. They think it's a barn.

THUG

I'm a little more civilized than most.

HEAVY METAL RING TONE - he gets a text.

THUG (CONT'D)

The office. Back to your dish rags, Ma.

LYDIA

Is that how you imagine me? Washing dishes? A passel of kids?

THUG

I don't imagine you at all.

LYDIA

For your information I don't have a passel of kids, I'm more liberated than that. And I wasn't washing dishes, I was writing a book. Set in Ireland actually. An epic adventure.

THUG

Wow, you lonely ladies are effed in the head.

He starts to go.

LYDIA

And I'm not lonely for your informa...Do you have to go? You seem so nice.

THUG

Yeah, I'm simply delightful.

LYDIA

"I'm simply delightful," he says full of self-loathing yet secretly pleased to be thought of by someone other than himself. For once."

Affected by this truth, Thug stops his going.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

That's something I'd write, if I were to write about you.

THUG

Am I to be impressed? Hell, I've been written about. In high school I played soccer...

LYDIA

(Enamored)

Oh, a "football" hero? In *Ireland*?

THUG

Donegal semi-finals four years straight. I'd get my name in the paper cuz I was deadly. I was *savage*. Of course, *Tom Haverford*, "The Have," got actual articles. "How do you do it The Have?" cuz he was faster than me, which bugged me cuz he was good at lots a stuff - English, calculus. But soccer was it for me. I was like, "Can't you just slow down, The Have? Can't I feel what it's like to win for once?" But nooo. He got all the awards too. And birthday parties from his Ma. I seen 'em through the fence. But know what I got? The high school art teacher. She thought I was deep cuz I was troubled yet I liked to paint clouds. Great knockers. Lots of rings like a gypsy. Gypsies are hot.

LYDIA

Oh, that's good. May I write it down?

THUG

Knock yourself out. (Then, trying to be poetic) Cuz, like, I got my path and you got yours but we all end up in the same silent place.

LYDIA

You have so much passion. It's contagious.

THUG

Yeah?

He takes off his shades - gives her a flirty look.

LYDIA

I just mean maybe I could write a character like you. I've been kinda stuck.

THUG

Yeah, right. Like I want to inspire your gay Fabio romance book.

LYDIA

I've never even read one of those books.

THUG

Don't bother. They're terrible. No mystery to 'em. No craft. (Off her look) My *Mam* read 'em, *not me*. It wasn't like my guilty pleasure or anything. I've gotta go!

LYDIA

Wait! What if I write a best seller about you? You'd get lots of hot Gypsy sex.

THUG

Hey, I shag all the girls I want up, down, and sideways. They just annoy me with their silly thoughts and their hot little bodies. But what I don't get ever is...nevermind.

LYDIA

What? What do you want? Love? Respect? Go on. I'm a poet. Anything you say will be beautiful to me.

THUG

Well. I'd want to be...like The Have. Like a winner? Honorable and *beloved* and shit.

LYDIA

I can do that.

She types. She brainstorms.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

"A stranger approaches. And in him are carved all the edges of a sword." Yeah? "He had spent the day, this man they call..." They call?

THUG

(Sheepish)

Owen.

LYDIA

Owen?

THUG

No... (A great thought) *Macnannaan*.

LYDIA

Macnannaan? Like Macnannaan mac Lir? God of the sea? With cloaks of mist?

THUG

You know your stuff.

She opens the door wide to him. He enters.

LYDIA

Owner of the sword Fragarach which elicits the truth from those before him.

THUG

Right? So cool! (Wields his pretend sword Fragarach) Tell me the truth! Now! Fragarach!

LYDIA

“Mac, rider of waves, strides the Ballyknow pier cloaked in menace and mystery.”

THUG

No menace. Mac is only noble and good. Can't we make him that?

She takes in his plea. They lock eyes. Then...

LYDIA

“Mac strides the Ballyknow pier cloaked in *honor, bathed in virtue.*”

THUG

(Entranced by this idea of himself)

Bathed in virtue. Oh, you *are* good.

LYDIA

“By day, Mac lives off the bounty of the sea.”

THUG

Like his father, the bravest fisherman in Donegal, yeah?

LYDIA

“By night he fights the sea's scourges but tonight the scourged *soul* of a woman calls to him. A fierce woman named...A fierce woman named....”

Inspiration! She rises...

LYDIA (CONT'D)

(Irish accent)

“*Brigid O'Bronaugh.* Brigid O'Bronaugh red hair aflame, stands on her boat in the Ballyknow Quay. To Brigid *The Fierce*, the sea air tastes of every cloister of the earth. She takes a breath and China, India, *escape* fill her body. *In her mind* she can go anywhere. To the stars! The moon!”

LIGHTS SHIFT. We go to the Ballyknow with her. We hear WATER, WIND. See stars, moon.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

“If only she could live in her mind, she thinks. For real life pales in comparison.”

THUG

“Mac hears this soul’s yearning song.”
Could she be a soul Mac once loved and lost?

LYDIA

Yes. “As Mac walks toward Brigid’s slip, each step seems to say, ‘Brigid. O’Bronaugh.’”

THUG

(Whispered)
Brigid. O’Bronaugh. Brigid. O’Bronaugh.
Brigid. O’Bronaugh. Brigid. O’Bronaugh.

LYDIA

“Within her boat, Brigid hears someone approach. She feels her slumbered pulse quicken. She knows...Mac approaches. And fate swirls about her in a startling”

HEAVY METAL RING TONE - Thug’s cell.
LIGHTS SHIFT to reality. They feel awkward and embarrassed, but also excited and alive.

THUG

I uh...I gotta go. So uh yeah, tell William a *man was here on business*. He’ll know.

LYDIA

Will you be back?

THUG

Back? What for?

He points his truth sword, Fragarach, at her.

LYDIA

For uh Bill. And the book.

THUG

You blush.

LYDIA

I don’t.

THUG

It’s cute.
I’ll be back. *Maybe*. In the meantime, don’t open the door to strangers, darlin’. Don’t you know there are bad people out there.

LYDIA

But I felt like I kinda knew you.

THUG

But you kinda don't, Brigid. (Puts on shades) You kinda really don't.

Thug exits. LIGHTS SHIFT. Back to Lydia and Bill in car.

BILL

What did he want? Did he say anything?

LYDIA

He said he saw you last week? And he said to tell you, "A man was here on business."

BILL

He said that?

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

Last week. LIGHTS DOWN on Lydia. Bill hides under the table.

THUG (OFF STAGE)

William Unger of Utopia Village? (Beat) Open the door, William. I need to borrow sugar for the pie I'm bakin' ya. (Beat) *Open the fuckin' door!*

Bill opens the door a crack to THUG who now wears hoodie and cap - a different disguise.

BILL

Oh, hi. Didn't see you there.

THUG

Your payment is due, William Unger. *Today.*

BILL

Wait now. I have a week. On my *anniversary* we said.

THUG

How romantic. But Owen said it's due today and Owen's apt to lose his shit, so.

BILL

I heard that Big Owen Mulligan was a kinder, gentler money-lender.

THUG

He's complicated. (Peeks inside) What's this gaff supposed to be? A barn?

BILL

An Irish country house. My wife she...*we* liked Ireland. (Idea!) *And* as you, good sir, seem to *be* from Ireland why, I wonder if we couldn't all be great friends.

THUG

Oh, William. I must look really stupid to you.

BILL

No. You look *so smart*.

THUG

You got a family, William?

BILL

Why? He wouldn't go after my family?

THUG

I'm just guessin' said family don't know about your secret vices. *Yet*.

BILL

Now look. I have a week left. Owen can't just change the plan.

THUG

Oh yeah? Well, you *planned* to keep me out but watch this.

Thug grabs Bill and shakes him, enraged...

THUG (CONT'D)

I just! Changed! The plan!

He throws Bill against a table.

THUG (CONT'D)

But! I'm a nice guy. And your house is Irish which is cool. One week.

BILL

Thank you.

THUG

At twenty percent interest. (Bill starts to protest) *You're welcome*.
Next I'm back, William? I'll mean business.

LIGHTS SHIFT. Thug exits.

Back to Bill and Lydia in the car.

BILL

He said he means business?

LYDIA

What's wrong?

BILL

Nothing. Just...You can light the burner if the gas goes out? You know I keep my "in case" file with all our deeds in the desk? Tell Julie too.

LYDIA

Bill, what is going on?

BILL

Lydia, I. Lydia, I... (He wants to say he's a scared, alone, ashamed) I'm going for a row.

They arrive home. Bill gets out and walks away.

LYDIA

Bill?...Bill!...Great, Bill! Happy anniversary, Bill! *If life!* Nothing changes! *Ever!*

LIGHTS SHIFT - Detective and Lydia present day. She sheds her coat. Red dress. Tea steams.

DETECTIVE

So you had a good time the night of your anniversary?

LYDIA

Great time.

DETECTIVE

And yet it took you four days to report your husband of twenty-seven years missing.

LYDIA

I was in shock. I thought of Julie missing her dad, all our years of joy, and I just faded away...like a blue chair against a blue wall.

The detective catches Lydia turning her foot seductively. She sees him see her and stops.

DETECTIVE

You're right, Mrs. Unger. Your story *hasn't* changed. It's how you *tell* it that's different. There's more ardor. Suddenly you're Picasso and not (Checks his notes) Renoir.

LYDIA

No, I'm all about Renoir. Though Julie is as good a painter as he was if you ask me.

DETECTIVE

(Secret feelings for Julie slipping out)

Oh yes. Her apples.

LYDIA

What?

DETECTIVE

(All business again)

And you don't seem nervous. I was wrong there too. You seem...roused.

LYDIA

Roused? Believe me, I am not roused. *I am at a crossroads.* And Julie is a mess. Well, you know. You've met with her.

DETECTIVE

(Hopeful)

Has she mentioned me?

LYDIA

What?

DETECTIVE

Nothing.