

Behind the Shed (Shed shed shed...)

By Giselle Muise

WHY I LIKE IT: *Drama Editor JANET EHRLICH COLSON writes...*

This play is so real you might wonder if it's a play at all, or if it's one of your own memories. Behind the Shed by Giselle Muise is a micro drama with a stunning arc in less than seven pages and layered characters that speak so naturally, you can almost hear the rise and fall of their breaths. Muise's writing is superb – the flow of language goes by like a piece of music with punctuation guiding the score. We are drawn into the scene, not as voyeurs, but as if we were part of it. Matt and Danielle are college students home for the holidays. They've known each other since childhood. Now they're in Matt's childhood bedroom, sharing a bed for the night. I don't want to give anything away, so I'll stop right there and let you wonder...

DANIELLE

...what if you didn't have to wonder?

MATT

Danielle.

DANIELLE

But what if you didn't?

(Spacing and format is playwright's own.)

Behind the Shed

by

Giselle Muise

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Cast of Characters

DANIELLE (F), 20s, a student home from college for the holidays, in a relationship

MATT (M), 20s, Danielle's longtime family friend, also home from college for the holidays, single

Setting

Matt's bedroom in his family home, Virginia Beach, VA

Time

The Present

(MATT's bedroom in his family home, after everyone else has gone to sleep. It's been tidied. DANIELLE lays next to him, both staring up at the ceiling, whispering)

DANIELLE

Hey, thanks again for letting me stay here.

MATT (playfully)

Duh.

DANIELLE

It's so strange, I feel like we haven't breathed the same air in so long.

MATT

You're telling me.

DANIELLE

So, catch me up. What's new? How's school?

MATT

School's school. I started helping out with the wrestling program—

DANIELLE

That's amazing!

MATT

Ha, thanks! Yeah, it's a welcome relief from everything else.

DANIELLE

Classes are no good?

MATT

I'm not really passionate about engineering?

DANIELLE

Who is?

(They laugh softly together)

MATT

I've actually been thinking about leaving.

DANIELLE

What would you do?

MATT

Go into the Navy, probably.

DANIELLE

(props up on her elbow to look at him)

No way.

MATT

I mean, that's what my dad did. And I've been thinking about it for a long time, even before school...I don't know.

DANIELLE

If that's what you want to do, do it. Why waste time doing anything else?

MATT

Yeah...what about you?

DANIELLE

Ugh, god, where do I start? (sincerely) School's school here, too. But, like, in a good way? I don't know, I always liked it—

MATT

And were very good at it—

DANIELLE

Thank you. I'm just surprised that people still don't give a shit. Like, you're paying to be there...I don't know, maybe when I get into more classes in my major...

MATT

What's your major again?

DANIELLE

Public Relations.

MATT (earnestly)

I'm sorry—what is that again?

DANIELLE

That's the thing, I *don't know*.

(They laugh again, a bit louder this time)

MATT

You could do something else.

DANIELLE

What else is there?

MATT

Theatre.

DANIELLE

...ugh, I don't know.

MATT

You know, someone very wise once told me, "If that's what you want to do, why waste time doing anything else?"

DANIELLE

She sounds very wise.

MATT

I never said she was a she.

(They laugh even louder. MATT shushes them, still laughing)

MATT

Shhh, everyone's asleep!

DANIELLE

(playfully whisper-yelling into the darkness)

Hey! If you're awake, clap twice!

(Silence. DANIELLE looks at MATT like, "See?" More laughter before they both begin to calm down)

DANIELLE

I'm never going to be allowed over here again.

(Beat)

MATT

Do you remember when you lived in the Swanton house, and you had that huge backyard with a shed?

DANIELLE

The one you kissed me on the cheek behind?

MATT (caught)

That's the one.

DANIELLE

And then we both ran into the house and sat on the couch, so nervous?

MATT

We were *so* nervous!

And then you left. Like, in a huge hurry!

DANIELLE

I was so nervous!

MATT

Why?!

DANIELLE

You're joking, right?

MATT

No...

DANIELLE
(knowing what she's doing)

Well...I was nervous because I really liked you!

MATT

You did not.

DANIELLE

Danielle.

MATT

OK, fine. But if you liked me, why did you leave?

DANIELLE

I—I didn't know what to do. We were, what, 8 or 9? (jokingly) I probably got a boner and ran home.

MATT

Ha ha, very funny.

DANIELLE

I don't know! I had never kissed a girl before that.

MATT

Really?

DANIELLE

Really.

MATT

Not even on the cheek?

DANIELLE

MATT

None of the many cheeks.

Ew. DANIELLE (amused)

What?! MATT

Nothing. DANIELLE

Good. MATT

(Silence)

MATT
And ever since that day, I've wondered what it'd be like to really kiss you.

(Beat)

Oh. DANIELLE

Yeah...I'm sorry if that comes off— MATT

No. DANIELLE

No what? MATT (nervously)

No, don't be sorry. DANIELLE

Oh. MATT

(Silence, then DANIELLE turns to face MATT)

DANIELLE
(Soberly, not pressing)
So, you're still wondering that?

MATT
Yeah. I'm still wondering that.

...what if you didn't have to wonder?
DANIELLE

Danielle.
MATT

But what if you didn't?
DANIELLE

(MATT turns to face DANIELLE)

Why waste time?
DANIELLE

(MATT kisses DANIELLE, deeply, passionately, holding her face in his hands. It continues until they are both certain they no longer have to wonder. DANIELLE pushes away suddenly)

I can't do this.
DANIELLE

Oh no, no—
MATT

I'm so sorry—
DANIELLE

No, I'm sorry—
MATT

It's just, I live with him—
DANIELLE

I know—
MATT

Please forgive me—
DANIELLE

Forgiven.
MATT

(They both sit up in silence for a moment, DANIELLE's head in her hands. MATT is still)

Should I go?
DANIELLE

MATT

You don't have to go. I won't do anything.

DANIELLE

OK.

(DANIELLE and MATT lay back down, facing away from one another, not breathing. They stare off either side of the bed in stark silence)

CURTAIN

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS:

Behind the Shed is wholly based on the longest friendship I've ever had, with a golden-hearted athlete and now-Navy-guy I met in elementary school. This night really happened, and we didn't speak for several years after. I recently started wondering, did I really make the unselfish choice I thought I did?

In writing, I discovered the answer was 'no.'

I also had him read this piece, though he didn't remember it the same way. His happy ending—or, happier ending—was my shame. His love, my need to be loved.

I am forever inspired by honesty in story, stage and music—and am built by the courage of Glennon Doyle, Jodi Picoult, Annie Baker and Sara Bareilles.

AUTHOR'S BIO:

Giselle Muise is a NYC-based actor, singer/songwriter, playwright and educator. Notable credits include: Jobsite Theater's *The Threepenny Opera* (Polly Peachum), TampaRep's *Stupid Fucking Bird* (Nina), and FringeNYC's *Full: The Musical* (Emily). Other credits include *Sweet Charity* (Nickie), *9 Parts of Desire* (Loyal) and *Shruti Gupta Can Totally Deal* (Shruti) at American Stage's 21st Century Voices: New Play Festival. Most recently, as a result of live theatre's brief hiatus, Giselle founded Theatre Unmasked—a virtual group that explores important contemporary stories and facilitates conversation around unique and marginalized voices in the theatre. Her passion lies in finding deep connection and self-actualization through theatre and music, as well as the written word.