

Two (2) SLeePING *Babes*

By Samantha Oty

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

Samantha Oty's Two Sleeping Babes is a terrific and taut play that challenges us to examine our preconceptions about women and motherhood. Flash fiction theatre set in the 60's with a noir tone and a lens of misogyny, the play shows us the hypocrisy of a system that judges women more harshly than men and punishes them accordingly. Annie, a cocktail waitress accused of killing her children, is in no position to make her case in court, much less in the media. Even the way Annie grieves is under scrutiny:

ANNIE

Ha. You newies always bring that up. The fact that I don't cry. But why do I owe anyone my tears?

Whether or not the reporter (Johnny) interviewing her believes her spin on the story, the question is will it sell papers? This piece is a throwback to a different time that ricochets squarely in our own. It's no wonder the adage "You've come a long way, baby," came from a cigarette company. We've got a long ways to go.

(Spacing and font size are playwright's own.)

Two Sleeping Babes

A Short Play

By Samantha Oty

Cast O' Characters

Annie St. Claire

A young divorcee accused of killing her two daughters.

Jonathan Speck

A newspaper reporter who's written hit pieces against Annie.

Setting

A newspaper office in the 1960s.

It's late and JOHNNY is the only one working into the wee hours of the morning. A woman, dressed for a cocktail party storms onto the stage. She stops at the front door to primp her hair and adjust her bossom. She opens the door.

ANNIE

I'm looking for Johnathan Speck.

JOHNNY

Without looking up from his typewriter.

That's me.

Looks up

Mrs. St. Claire?

ANNIE pulls a gun out of her purse and points it at him, determined.

ANNIE

That's right, you son of a bitch.

She tries to pull the trigger but the gun is empty. JOHNNY lets out a sigh of relief.

ANNIE

Dammit! He told me this was loaded.

JOHNNY reaches into his desk and pulls out a bottle of scotch and two glasses.

JOHNNY

Who? Tony Romano? Or was it your other boyfriend? Pull up a chair, and we can have a drink.

ANNIE

You have a lot of nerve talking about me like that. I should sue you for slander.

JOHNNY

It's only slander if it's not true. And I gotta say, trying to shoot me the night before your trial--
Takes a drink and grimaces.

It's not a good look. Come on, one drink. You have a big day tomorrow.

ANNIE grabs a chair from another desk as he pours her a drink. She pulls a pack of cigarettes and a lighter from her purse.

ANNIE

Well, it can't make me look any worse. Thanks for all that by the way.

JOHNNY

I'm only reporting the facts.

ANNIE

You're reporting what you **think** are the facts.

JOHNNY

Your two daughters are found strangled in a park 100-yards away from your apartment. You show no signs of grief and spend your evenings at cocktail parties--

ANNIE

I'm a cocktail waitress. Where else am I supposed to serve cocktails?

JOHNNY

Neighbors say you bring home a new guy every night.

ANNIE

Well, that's just bullshit. We usually go back to his place.

JOHNNY

Then you come to the reporter's office with the intent of murder. Really, not a good look.

ANNIE

My husband--ex-husband--has been going out to bars every night. Why not report on that?

JOHNNY

He's a grieving father self-medicating.

ANNIE

Why does he get to use that excuse? I'm a grieving mother.

JOHNNY

You want the truth?

ANNIE

At this point, I don't think you're capable of telling it.

JOHNNY

The mother of two dead children going out to parties every night is going to sell a lot more newspapers than the dad drinking a few beers every night.

ANNIE

So, you're ruining my life to sell a few newspapers? TV must really be hurting business.

JOHNNY

Do I really need to run through it all again?

ANNIE

No. I get it. Ever since the divorce people look at me differently, and every week it seems like there's a new rumor floating around. Did Mrs. Lovitt tell you I locked my girls up in their bedroom, so I could entertain my gentlemen callers?

JOHNNY

She mentioned it.

ANNIE

Well, thank you for not printing it. Imagine how **that** would make me look.

JOHNNY

At least you don't entertain in front of them.

ANNIE

I'll drink to that.

ANNIE takes a sip of her drink.

Maryanne has--had--a sleepwalking problem. That's why I locked their door.

JOHNNY

Sure, makes sense.

ANNIE

And I **do** cry, you know? After I get home from work and I have to see their bedroom. Empty. I used to come home to a tired babysitter, and two little girls refusing to go to bed.

JOHNNY

So you only grieve in privacy? Tell me, if you were in our shoes, how would that sound?

ANNIE

I can't say because I'm not in your shoes. Just like you're not in mine.

JOHNNY

Good thing too. They don't look very comfortable.

ANNIE

Ha. You newbies always bring that up. The fact that I don't cry. But why do I owe anyone my tears?

JOHNNY

It's just a little odd--

ANNIE

I have to keep going with my life. It doesn't matter that my girls are gone. Rent is still due on the first.

JOHNNY

And the men?

ANNIE

I get hungry. They pay for dinner.

JOHNNY

Look, it was nice chatting with you but--

ANNIE

Listen. Just because I go on dates doesn't mean I killed my daughters. Did anyone tell you our neighborhood had a peeping tom a few weeks before they were killed? Probably not.

JOHNNY

You're getting a fair trial--

ANNIE

Fair? You think there's anything fair that a "jury of me peers" equates to twelve married men? Is it fair that you've all had it out for me since before they found my girls? How is any of this fair?!

JOHNNY

I'm sorry.

ANNIE

That's the thing. You're not. This doesn't affect you does it? Not as long as you get your paycheck.

JOHNNY

I'm just reporting what I see.

ANNIE

Sure, but you've never spoken to me. No ever talks to me, yet they all seem to know 'the seductive divorcee with two dead kids'.

JOHNNY

Have you considered that's why people don't like you? Yes, you don't owe anyone your grief, but you could at least act like you care.

ANNIE

I care. I've always cared about my daughters more than anyone in the world. My ex-husband has been going out to bars and meeting with hookers--even before the divorce--yet I'm the criminal for trying to keep a roof over my head.

Beat.

ANNIE

Is that the reason I'm on trial? Because I don't live the way **they** think I should?

JOHNNY

Well... It certainly doesn't help.

ANNIE

It's bullshit. We get conned into thinking if we're good girls everything is going to be perfect. They don't tell you how hard it gets. How unfair the real world is. I did my best.

She stands and begins walking toward the exit.

JOHNNY

Did you kill your daughters, Mrs. St. Clair?

She turns and lets out a defeated laugh.

ANNIE

I guess we'll find out.

She exits.

BLACK OUT

END OF PLAY

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS: *So, like every basic white girl, I'm very much into true crime. And I'm a huge supporter of The Innocence Project and other organizations trying to help the wrongfully convicted. I also had it in my mind that I would write one new ten-minute play a month through 2020. Well, I wrote the second (and last) play in that series after watching a short documentary on Alice Crimmins, who in the 1960s was accused of killing her children and was later convicted.*

What I found interesting about the case is the same thing I find interesting about a lot of high-profile cases: the way the media affects the outcome.

*Let's use Scott Peterson as an example. That is arguably one of the most famous missing person/murder cases of the century. It was almost impossible to watch the news without it coming up, and it later went on to inspire *Gone Girl*. With that much media coverage painting Peterson as suspicious, how could he possibly get a fair trial? That's not to say he's innocent. I just think it would be damn near impossible to find a jury of his peers who didn't already whether or not he killed his wife.*

And a similar situation happened to Alice. Regardless of her actual innocence, she was a divorcee in the 1960s known to go on dates with a lot of men. She was also hot, so she had that going against her. In the end, it really felt like Crimmins was on trial for not being the idyllic mother the culture at the time wanted her to be...especially since there was no real evidence tying her to the murder of her children.

AUTHOR'S BIO: *Samantha Oty* graduated from Radford University with a degree in English, technical editing and writing. She received her master's degree in publishing from The George Washington University in 2017. She is totally not two ten-year-olds in a trench coat. Her first play, *Demolition Lovers*, was written in her sophomore year of high school and won the 2010 New Voices playwriting contest. Sadly, due to a conflicting trip to Europe, it would be another two years before she would see it performed. She has been writing plays ever since. Her work has appeared in *Junto Magazine* and in [5th Wall Production](#)'s Rough Draft Reading series. When not writing plays, she's talking about horror movies with fellow writer and friend, Stormy Skies, on [Real Horrorshow](#) or writing new travel content for [Postcard Press](#). Samantha lives in Virginia with her boyfriend and guinea pig.

Publication Credits

Demolition Lovers - Performance, Christiansburg Highschool, 2012

Please Don't Go - Ten Minute Play Workshops (Podcast), 2013

Long Abandoned - Junto Magazine, 2016

Like a Porcelain Doll - Workshop, 5th Wall Productions, May 2016

New Year's Eve at the Stop-n-Go - [Workshop](#), Pharmacy Theatre, June 2020

Let's Hope You Feel Better - [Workshop](#), Pharmacy Theatre, December 2020

Long Abandoned - Barely Seen, 2020

End of the World at the Quality Mart - Independent Movie, Post-Production

*Based on *New Year's Eve at the Stop-n-Go*

New Year's Eve at the Stop-n-Go - Production, Pharmacy Theatre, December 2021