

LEAVING EARTH

By Alexis Kozak

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS:

Three separate things led to the writing of this play.

First, in 1998, en route to LA to pursue acting careers, my four best girl friends and I (I was the only guy) took two weeks to drive cross country via the southern route, stopping everywhere, including a very memorable layover in Roswell, New Mexico. We were ALL huge The X Files fans at the time, as you can imagine.

Second, my mother loved constellations and looking up at the night sky. Last week, I took my son's \$20 Toys R Us-bankruptcy telescope out into the driveway and looked first at the North Star and then, after switching lenses, at the moon for a good long while.

Third, I had taped a newspaper article from last September, when Storm Area 51 was happening, into my writing journal. It was a wonderful article, with lots of different people interviewed, and several one-line stories of who they were and why they were headed there. Along with, like, one quote from each. It was a playwright's dream. I have been carrying that article around with me for the better part of a year. It has a great picture of two ladies in the desert, wearing alien masks. That, and I remembered something about one of the interviewees quitting her job at Dairy Queen to head west. So, given the Corona Virus teaching-from-home situation and our gorgeous production of Mamma Mia! Indefinitely on hold (I teach high school theatre), I found myself with time (and time to spare!) on my hands. I am thrilled to have gotten the chance to get these two women out of my brain and down on paper. And, I will admit this to myself, but I won't say it out loud, I see this as, potentially, the first scene of a full-length play. Could my high school do this next year or the year after? That's a thought. But again, I didn't say that out loud. Hell, I didn't even THINK it!

This play took eight drafts. It has only been performed by me, reading it out loud, at my writer's desk, in what my wife calls my office, which is actually a laundry room. My go-to playwrights are Bertolt Brecht, Sam Shepard, David Mamet, and William Shakespeare...none of whose influences I can identify in this play. (Spacing is playwright's own.)

LEAVING EARTH

a ten-minute play

by

Alexis Kozak

CHARACTERS

HAYLEY female, late-teens to early-20s.

LU female, late-teens to early-20s.

TIME AND PLACE

The present. The living room of Lu's parents.

SETTING: (Living room of Lu's parents.)

HAYLEY

You promised you were coming.

LU

That was before I knew we were actually going.

HAYLEY

We're gonna be the first. We are gonna be the fricking first.

LU

You think they are gonna open up Area 51 and just invite us in?

HAYLEY

(Swiping through her phone.)

It says it right here. "Storm Area 51. They can't stop all of us. Let's see them aliens."

LU

It's a fine line between "inviting" and "storming," wouldn't you say?

HAYLEY

Aren't you dying to see what's inside?

LU

"Let's see them aliens", Hayley? Really?

HAYLEY

I've been to Lookout Point, and I've seen what I've seen. So have you.

LU

That is middle school kids messing with the high school kids who go out there to have sex.

HAYLEY

That's what they want us to believe.

LU

Everybody knows it.

HAYLEY

I don't know it. And until I see some proof, I *won't* know it.

LU

It's kids with laser pointers and...

HAYLEY

"And" what?

LU

Fireworks, flashlights,—I don't know—drones.

HAYLEY

Then how come they don't just tell us that?

LU

I don't know.

HAYLEY

And why don't they just make it stop?

LU

I'm not the mayor or the police chief or whoever.

HAYLEY

Because they can't stop it. Because they don't know what it is either.

LU

Come on, Hayley.

HAYLEY

I just want the truth.

LU

You think Area 51 is going to have the truth for here? Area 51 is a million miles away.

HAYLEY

That's where they have all the answers, Lu.

LU

We're gonna get arrersted.

HAYLEY

Yeah? Well maybe it'll be worth it. *All* the top secrets of the whole world: extraterrestrial life, space ships, bombs, electronics, technology, chemicals, viruses, the Russians, other planets. Maybe it's high time that stuff saw the light of day.

LU

Maybe that stuff is secret for a reason.

HAYLEY

(Of her phone.)

Well, about two million people disagree with you. And they are gonna be there on Friday to show it.

LU

You are gonna drive three thousand miles based on a Facebook post?

HAYLEY

Two thousand, but who's counting?

(Lu consults her phone.)

LU

You said it was a couple of days away.

(Of her phone, looking at map directions.)

This says seventy-two hours.

HAYLEY

No way seventy-two hours.

LU

That's what it says.

HAYLEY

That's way off.

LU

Look at it. Tell me what it says.

HAYLEY

Okay. So, seventy-two hours. So what?

LU

That's seventy-two hours *there*. The time *there*. And then, seventy-two hours *back*. I have to be back at work on Monday afternoon at the latest. You know how Charles is. He's not gonna give me that many days in a row off. Plus, I need the money.

HAYLEY

Well Monday's not gonna happen.

LU

Then I'm gonna get fired. And I can't get fired. You know Earth doesn't have a lot of jobs.

HAYLEY

Earth has plenty of jobs.

LU

Not the kind any Earthling *wants*.

HAYLEY

Who the hell goes and names a town Earth anyway?

LU

I don't know. Mr. Earth?

HAYLEY

Then you've gotta spend your whole life saying stupid things like, "Earth doesn't have a lot of jobs." Or, "Where are you from?" "I'm from Earth." Alright, *forget* seventy-two hours. I can do it, in, like, I don't know, probably like forty-eight.

LU

Phones don't lie.

HAYLEY

Seventy-two hours?, that's with *stopping*.

LU

No, that's straight through.

We'll switch off. HAYLEY

But I don't drive stick. LU

You'll learn. HAYLEY

When? LU

On the road, girl. HAYLEY

Ugh...Ow! LU
(Stomach pains.)

What's wrong? HAYLEY

I got my period. LU

Oh, no. No, no, no. HAYLEY

What? LU

I changed my mind. You're not coming. HAYLEY

Hey! LU

You're the *worst* when you have your period. HAYLEY

I am not! LU

HAYLEY

Oh, you don't even *know*. The moon does strange things to *all* of us, Lu, but for you, it's a whole different level.

LU

Like what?

HAYLEY

It gives you crazy weird powers of bitchiness.

LU

Shut up.

HAYLEY

See?

LU

I said, shut up.

HAYLEY

Well, it does.

LU

I know they say it's based on the moon, or whatever. But how does that even make any sense? How can it be based on the moon?

HAYLEY

Well, the moon's a cycle and your period's a cycle. They're both cycles.

LU

Yeah, but the moon's up there, and we're down here. So, how can they be connected?

HAYLEY

You think it's just *random* that the moon is on a twenty-eight day cycle and *you* and *I* are on a twenty-eight day cycle? Just saying, what are the chances of that?

LU

I don't know.

HAYLEY

I'll tell you what. When we see the aliens, *that* is the first question you get to ask them.

LU

Ick. I gotta go to the bathroom again.

(Lu exits to bathroom. While Lu is offstage, Hayley unzips her backpack/duffel bag and takes out a case of soda.)

HAYLEY

You're not allowed to be sick.

LU

Okay.

HAYLEY

Whatever happens: no being sick. Got it?

LU

Yeah. I got it, I got it.

HAYLEY

At least not in my car.

(Sound of toilet flushing. Lu enters.)

I got us something. Close your eyes.

(Revealing the soda.)

Ta da!

LU

Diet Pepsi.

HAYLEY

This is, like, road trip rocket fuel!

(Playfully.)

Aaaaaand,

(Hayley takes out a carton of cigarettes.)

Boom!

LU

Cigarettes? I don't smoke.

HAYLEY

I know.

LU

Neither do you.

HAYLEY

But we gotta smoke 'em.

LU

I've never smoked a cigarette in my life.

HAYLEY

But the guy. From the show. The Smoking Man.

LU

Seriously? I don't even know *how* to smoke a cigarette.

HAYLEY

If we're wearing alien costumes, then we are definitely smoking cigarettes.

LU

We don't have alien costumes.

HAYLEY

(Playfully.)

Magic Bag!, the young woman said "alien costumes"?

(Hayley pulls out two rubber alien masks—traditional green heads with almond shaped eyes.)

LU

(Screaming!)

Aaaahhhh! Holy shit! These are amazing! Literally, amazing!

HAYLEY

Like, what does one *do* at three a.m. in the middle of the desert besides dressing up like a couple of aliens and smoking cigarettes and drinking Diet Pepsi?

LU

These are so great.

HAYLEY

Aliens *love* Diet Pepsi, by the way. Or so they *say*. *We* are going to find out for *sure*. Plus, it'll be a good way to meet people and make friends. People *love* people who have cigarettes. Why?, nobody knows. We just know it's true.

LU

Hayley, look. I wish I could. I really wish I could.

HAYLEY

Lu, stop talking. Just stop talking. For crying out loud. You are twenty-two years old. If not now, when? If people don't show up to *this*, what do you think is gonna happen *next* time people have questions that need to be answered? And the time after that, and the time after *that*? *Next* time people have questions that need to be answered—whatever the question is—people are going to say, "Eh, nobody showed up last time. Why bother?" And if that happens enough

times, nobody is *ever* going to get *any* answers to *anything*. In fact, people are just going to stop *asking questions*. If *they* have to tell the truth—if the *government* has to tell the truth—, then *everybody* has to tell the truth. About *everything*.

Or do we get to keep a fence around all the things in life that are true, but that we don't want other people to know about?, because that's a lot of fences. Is that the world you want to live in?

LU

Three a.m.? The middle of the desert? People we don't know? We could get murdered and killed.

HAYLEY

“Murdered *and* killed.” You sound like your parents. What happened to the fearless girl I grew up with? The tough-as-nails, take-no-prisoners, bad-ass high school chick that wasn't afraid of anything?

LU

This is her. This is who she grew up to be. I'm *not* all those things you said. I never *was*. *You* were. *You are*. I've always been the follower-alonger. It didn't look that way maybe, because I would bring energy or something. But I was always following you. You were the map maker. You were the one leading us into uncharted territory. Hell, you even went places where there were no maps yet: boys, booze, everything. You were the one with the nerve.

HAYLEY

And did I ever get us lost?

LU

Yeah. All the time. But in a good way.

HAYLEY

Then follow me today. Get in the car with me right now. People used to do that, you know?, all the time. Just get in the car and drive? Nobody does that anymore. They just go where they're going, and that's it. No sense of adventure. No chance to get off the beaten path. I mean, how do you think aliens got here in the first place? You think they came here on purpose? Like this place is so great? If you had the entire universe to choose from, why the hell come here? Of all the places. This is the kind of place you only find by mistake. I bet you a couple of aliens got in their space ship, gassed it up, and just started flying. No map, no anything.

LU

(Truly realizing for the first time Hayley's depth of belief. Not freaked out. If anything, impressed.)

You think they're real.

HAYLEY

Would I go all the way out there if I *didn't*?

LU

I mean *really* real.

HAYLEY

You think we're the only ones out here? We can't even *see* the other side of the moon. The other side of the *moon*. The *closest* place to us, and we can't even *see* it? We don't even know what is *there*? Not to mention the rest of the entire, infinite, ever-fricking-expanding multiverse. So, "Do I think they're real?" Yeah, I think they are real.

LU

(Picking up the masks.)

You think they look like us?

HAYLEY

I think some being out there probably asked them the same question about us.
(Beat.)

Whaddya say?

LU

(From *Mork and Mindy*.)

... "Nanoo, nanoo"?

HAYLEY

"Nanoo, nanoo" means "hello."

LU

How do you say, "Yes," in Klingon?

HAYLEY

(Pronounced sort of like "Luke.")

"Lu'q."

LU

Well then, "Lu'q."

HAYLEY

Really?! Yes! That's what I wanted to hear!

LU

Can we swing by my job on the way? I gotta at least tell Charles I won't be back on time.

HAYLEY

You're not gonna chicken out on me, are you? What if he says, "No"?

LU

Then I wanna see the look on his face when I tell him he can take my job and shove it.

HAYLEY

Atta girl! Grab your stuff. I'll be in the car.

(Hayley grabs her own bag. Pause. Hayley looks at Lu with new respect.)

Say "adios" to this place, because we are gonna blow this popsicle stand!

LU

Do I have to say it in Spanish?

HAYLEY

You can say it in any language you want.

(Hayley exits. Lu sits for a moment, a satisfied look on her face.)

LU

Goodbye, Earth.

LIGHTS DOWN

END PLAY

AUTHOR'S BIO:

I teach high school theatre in New Jersey, and I am also a playwright. I studied Theatre Arts and English at Rutgers University. I spent my early 20s in Los Angeles, chasing the dream. In 1998, en route to LA, my four best girl friends and I (I was the only guy) took two weeks to drive cross country via the southern route, stopping everywhere, including a very memorable layover in Roswell, New Mexico. We were ALL huge "X Files" fans at the time, as you can imagine.

Sometime after that, I got an MFA in Playwriting from Boston University, and now teach high school theatre in Middletown, NJ, where I often write the fall play.

My mother loved constellations and looking up at the sky. This week, with nothing but time, for the first time in a long time, I took my son's \$20 Toys R Us bankruptcy telescope out into the driveway and looked first at the North Star and then, after switching lenses, at the moon for a good long while.

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I have some published short plays: "A Graveyard Where Dead American Playwrights Go" and "Shakespeare Gets an MFA" with Heuer Publishing, an adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" and a high school scene book called "The Greatest of All Time" with Eldridge Publishing, and some scenes and monologues in the Smith and Kraus and Applause Books' "Best of..." Series.

Click this link

<https://www.alexiskozak.com/work-in-progress/selected-for-100-monologues-from-new-plays-2021>

to read my monologue which will be published

by Applause Books in the forthcoming anthology

100 Monologues from New Plays 2021!!