

RAW PROVOCATIVE HUMANE PLAYS

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Out of Tune

a short play

by
Jenny Kirlin

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LOUISE and CHARLIE, both mid-thirties, sit across from one another at a small café table in the Atrium at Lincoln Center. Charlie furiously stuffs the last bite of sandwich in her mouth and crumples up the wrapper.

CHARLIE

(mouth full)

Let's go!

LOUISE

In a minute.

Louise sits there with a full half sandwich in front of her. Charlie checks the time on her phone.

CHARLIE

Lou, it's 7:57. The show starts at 8 and it's all the way in the back. Just wrap it up and stick it in your bag.

LOUISE

It's just across the street.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

And it starts in three minutes.

LOUISE

It won't start til 8:06.

CHARLIE

It starts at 8.

LOUISE

They don't actually start until 8:06. All of the shows. We'll be fine.

CHARLIE

(looking down at her heels)

It will take me that long with these shoes on.

LOUISE

Just another minute.

Louise lifts the sandwich to her mouth and doesn't take a bite. She puts the sandwich down. Charlie snatches the sandwich and begins to wrap it up.

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LOUISE (cont'd)

I really don't feel good, Charlie. I feel sick.

CHARLIE

Maybe it's the sandwich.

LOUISE

I'm serious.

CHARLIE

So am I. I hate being late. I don't want to be one those people.

LOUISE

I thought I was just hungry, but I feel nauseous.

CHARLIE

We can grab some pepto at intermission.

LOUISE

I don't think I can make it to intermission. You go ahead.

CHARLIE

I cancelled my plans when you said you got *King and I* tickets, because you said you wanted to see it together.

LOUISE

I already saw it.

CHARLIE

And you "wanted to watch me watch it."

LOUISE

How about tomorrow night? Maybe they'll let us exchange the tickets.

CHARLIE

It just won the Tony. It won't be easy to get tickets. We're right here. C'mon.

LOUISE

If I feel better, I'll come at intermission.

CHARLIE

We had a plan.

Charlie slumps back in her seat. She checks the time on her phone and puts it back on the table.

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LOUISE

You've only seen that terrible production in Flint. This is so, so much better than that. There are actual kids in this one.

Louise takes a ticket out of her pocket and holds it out to Charlie.

LOUISE (cont'd)

Please?

Charlie doesn't take it.

LOUISE (cont'd)

Go?

CHARLIE

We had a plan.

Charlie takes the ticket and puts it down on the table. She looks away.

Silence.

LOUISE

I'm pregnant.

Charlie looks back at Louise.

LOUISE (cont'd)

I was going to tell you after the show. But...

Louise reaches her hand up to Charlie's. Charlie slams her chair back and gets up to leave.

LOUISE (cont'd)

Charlie?

CHARLIE

You wanted me to go. I'm going.

LOUISE

Charlie!

Charlie stops.

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LOUISE (cont'd)
We're having a baby.

CHARLIE
We decided we weren't having a baby, Louise.

LOUISE
No, we didn't.

CHARLIE
And now you've decided--

LOUISE
I made a mistake. And I'm fixing it. I wanted to surprise you after the show tonight. I wanted to show you my pooch.
(looking down)
It's super tiny and you might just think I'm bloated or I ate too many nachos. But it's actually a baby. I bought sparkling cider.

A beat.

LOUISE (cont'd)
Char?

CHARLIE
How long?
(beat)
How far along are you?

LOUISE
Twelve weeks.

Charlie looks away.

LOUISE (cont'd)
You have to wait a couple of weeks to see if it works. And then I wanted to be sure everything was okay. And I knew we had tickets to see the show tonight--

CHARLIE
You're supposed to wait three months to tell people on Facebook, not three months to tell your *girlfriend*.

LOUISE
But I'm telling you now!

CHARLIE
Exactly.

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LOUISE

We talked about this for months, Char. It's what you wanted. You said you'd "already seen it." We would dress her in stripes all the time. We would sing to her every night before she went to bed. This is a good thing.

CHARLIE

You should have talked to me before you did this.

LOUISE

You've talked about wanting a baby since I've known you, Charlie.

CHARLIE

And then you ran out on me at the doctor's office.

LOUISE

I didn't run out on you. I ran out of the office. I was scared. And you have been holding that against me for six months now.

CHARLIE

No I haven't.

LOUISE

I barely see you anymore. And anytime I do, no matter what I ask you, you just answer yes or no. If you answer at all.

CHARLIE

That's not true.

LOUISE

And no matter how early I get up, you leave the apartment before I'm out of the shower.

CHARLIE

I've been busy.

LOUISE

I've been getting up so early! You've been avoiding me. And I miss you.

CHARLIE

I've been busy.

LOUISE

Why won't you let me fix it?

Charlie locks in on Louise.

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CHARLIE

Having a baby doesn't fix it, Lou. Having a baby without me does not fix it.

LOUISE

I'm not having a baby without you!

CHARLIE

This is the first time I'm hearing about it.

LOUISE

You leave before I'm out of the shower! The pooch isn't new.

Silence.

CHARLIE

You didn't think this through.

LOUISE

You're supposed to be happy. And I did. You can't just walk into the doctor's office and get a baby. You have to make an appointment. I made a plan.

CHARLIE

You lied to me.

LOUISE

That was part of the plan.

CHARLIE

I don't need you to have a baby for me.

LOUISE

Yes you do.

(beat)

I'm sorry. But that's not my fault.

Silence.

CHARLIE

I don't want you to have a baby for me.

LOUISE

Well, I am.

CHARLIE

You shouldn't have kept this from me.

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LOUISE

How did you not know? I'm terrible at keeping secrets. You've just been super bad at noticing.

CHARLIE

Why would I ever think that my girlfriend was pregnant?

LOUISE

I've been sick every morning for a month. I balled my eyes out at The Avengers Age of Ultron!

CHARLIE

You cry at everything!

LOUISE

Our freezer is full of hot dogs!

CHARLIE

I just thought you liked hot dogs.

LOUISE

I don't think I do?! And I didn't touch the mint juleps at Katey's Kentucky Derby party. *I am a walking cliché.*

A beat.

LOUISE (cont'd)

I wanted to see *The King and I* with you tonight because I know you can't go to the theater without wanting to talk about it afterwards. And I would be the only one there, so you'd have to talk to me. And when we got home, you'd want to sit on the couch and read what Brantley had to say, and I would sit down next to you and complain that my belly hurt and ask you to rub it for me. And I think you would have... even if it was just to get me to shut up. And then you would notice how it felt a little hard. And you would ask me if I was doing sit ups, and I would laugh, because I never... and then I would tell you that I went to see Dr. Fein. And you would realize. And you would smile again.

A beat.

CHARLIE

I don't want a baby, Louise.

A beat. Louise just looks at her.

LOUISE

There is a baby right now inside of me that you told me you wanted. And now you don't want to have a baby with me anymore.

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CHARLIE

It's not that I don't want to have a baby with you, it's that I don't want to have a baby. I was so relieved when you ran out of that office. My entire adult life whenever I've thought about having a baby, I've thought about being pregnant. That's what I wanted. And thinking about all the strange cravings you would have and how your body would be changing and to hear you try to explain to me what it felt like to have someone kicking you inside made me so jealous I didn't want to look at you. I kept having nightmares of the day you started to show that I would start to hate you. And I don't want to hate you and I'm so afraid I'll start to hate the baby too.

LOUISE

You could never hate our baby.

CHARLIE

I don't know that! I can't promise that! I hate *you* right now because you can just announce that you're pregnant. Because you have that option.

LOUISE

You don't hate me.

A beat. Louise looks to Charlie, searching.

CHARLIE

I do. A little. And I feel like a fucking monster for feeling that way, but in a million years I never would have guessed you would go back.

LOUISE

Well... I did...

CHARLIE

Yeah.

A beat.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

I can't do this, Lou.

LOUISE

What?

CHARLIE

I can't do this.

LOUISE

What does that mean?

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CHARLIE

I don't know. But I can't do it.

A beat.

LOUISE

You got me pregnant. It's already done.

CHARLIE

I did not do this to you. I have spent the last six months feeling like I don't know who I am anymore and feeling like I can't talk to you about it because you don't understand.

LOUISE

I want to understand, but I can't if you don't talk to me.

CHARLIE

It's just so final. There is this experience that I have taken for granted my entire life that I would have. There was never a question that it would happen. Like *the most basic* human experience. But I will never get to now. And I only get one life, Lou. So it's like I never get to do it... like ever. And I didn't choose that. But it doesn't matter, because it's so permanent. And life just never really felt like that before. And right now, that's all it feels like.

(beat)

I have been so jealous of you. Because it's not something you want.

LOUISE

Charlie...

CHARLIE

I just want everything to go back to the way that it was, when I didn't have a baby because I *didn't* have one and not because I *couldn't* have one.

A beat.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

I can't have a baby, Louise.

LOUISE

But we can.

CHARLIE

It's going to hurt too much.

LOUISE

It won't hurt too much. It will hurt. A lot. But becoming a mom is supposed to hurt. *I'm going to have to push a baby out of me.* And it's going to hurt so much. But that was okay because it was going to be our baby. But now... Charlie...

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once this baby gets to know me, it's going to know that it's fucked. Because I have no idea what to do with a baby. I never thought I'd have one. And now I am. And I hope it gets to know you too, because otherwise...

(beat)

A baby is a whole other life, Charlie.

(beat)

And I'm so scared. I don't think I can do it without you.

Louise looks down and checks the time on her phone. She looks back up at Charlie.

LOUISE (cont'd)

It's 8:06.

CHARLIE

It's okay. I've already seen it.

A beat. Charlie looks across the table at Louise's belly and the still kind of non-existent baby bump. She breathes in and starts to sing (poorly and out of tune, but really trying).

CHARLIE (cont'd)

(singing)

Getting to know you
Getting to know all about you.
Getting to like you,
Getting to hope you like me.

Louise joins her, quietly at first. And then a little louder.

BOTH

(singing)

Getting to know you,
Putting it my way,
But nicely,
You are precisely,
My cup of tea...

Lights down. End of play.