

PERUSAL SCRIPT

BURNING
DESIRE

a ten-minute play by
Eric Samuelson



Newport, Maine

© 2008 by Eric Samuelsen
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

CAUTION:

Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that

BURNING DESIRE

being fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States Of America, the British Empire, including the Dominion Of Canada, and the other countries of the Copyright Union, is subject to royalty. Anyone presenting the play without the express written permission of the Copyright owners and/or their authorized agent will be liable to the penalties provided by law.

Script and music copies must be rented from the Publisher and Royalty must be paid to the publisher for each and every performance before an audience whether or not admission is charged. A performance license must first be obtained from the publisher prior to any performance(s).

Federal Copyright Law -- 17 U.S.C. section 504 -- allows for a recovery of a minimum of \$250 and a maximum of \$50,000 *for each infringement*, plus attorney fees.

The professional and amateur rights to the performance of this play along with the lecturing, recitation, and public reading rights, are administered exclusively through LEICESTER BAY THEATRICALS without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be made. For all other rights, inquiries may be made to the authors through LEICESTER BAY THEATRICALS. Any adaptation or arrangement of this work without the author's written permission is an infringement of copyright. **Unauthorized duplication by any means is also an infringement.**

FOR PUBLIC PERFORMANCE RIGHTS YOU MUST APPLY TO THE PUBLISHER OR YOU ARE BREAKING THE LAW!

The possession of this PERUSAL SCRIPT, does not constitute permission to perform the work herein contained, in public or in private, for gain or charity. Proper prior application must be made, license granted and royalty paid before a performance may be given. Copies of this SCRIPT and all other rehearsal materials may be rented from:

LEICESTER BAY THEATRICALS
P.O. Box 536 Newport, ME 04953-0536
www.leicesterbaytheatricals.com
Printed in the United States Of America

THIS NOTICE MUST APPEAR IN ALL PROGRAMS, ON ALL POSTERS AND PUBLICITY MATERIALS AND INTERNET ADVERTISING/WEBPAGES FOR THE PLAY:

“BURNING DESIRE is presented through special arrangement with Leicester Bay Theatricals. All authorized materials are also supplied by LBT, www.leicesterbaytheatricals.com”

NOTE: Your contract with Leicester Bay Theatricals limits you to making copies of this document for persons directly connected with your production. Do not distribute outside of your cast and crew. Following your performance run you must destroy all photocopies, preferably by shredding them. If we sent you the document in printed format, you must return that document to us. If we provided you with an electronic PDF file, simply trash that on your computer so that it cannot be recovered. The electronic document may only be on ONE computer -- it may NOT be duplicated. This is also a part of your contract with Leicester Bay Theatricals.

BURNING DESIRE by Eric Samuelsen received its world premiere May 17, 2008 as part of the fifth annual SLAM at Plan-B Theatre. The following cast was directed by Kyle Lewis: Jayne Luke, Nancy McAfee and Tracie Merrill. Designed by Cheryl Cluff, Jesse Portillo and Randy Rasmussen. Stage managed by Jennifer Freed. Produced by Jerry Rapiet.

CAST of CHARACTERS

Andrea—elderly, dying.

Andi—Andrea, forty years earlier in life.

Mike—Andi's husband.

Tim—Andi and Mike's son.

Angel of Death

Note on notations: a double dash (–) should suggest an interrupted line. An ellipsis (. . .) should suggest a line trailing off.

BURNING DESIRE a ten-minute play by Eric Samuelsen. 2f 2m 1e either. Simple setting, contemporary costumes. Heaven, Hell, the Void, and... a fourth place — not often considered as we slip away into that unknown life ahead of all of us. One family comes to grips with what it might be. Premiered by Plan-B Theatre Company at their SLAM 2008. **ORDER #3263**

Eric Samuelsen taught at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio before joining the faculty at Brigham Young University in 1992. He became head of the Playwriting program at BYU in 1999. He has also taught as an adjunct faculty member in the Religion department. He retired from BYU in 2012.

As a playwright, Samuelsen has had twenty-seven plays professionally produced in Utah, Indiana, Louisiana, New York, and California. Some of his plays include *Gadanton*, which has seen three professional productions across the country, *A Love Affair with Electrons*, *Family*, *The Plan*, and *The Way We're Wired*. He is resident playwright at Plan-B Theatre Company in Salt Lake City, who designated their 2013-14 season a 'Season of Eric, including productions of six of his plays.

He is a member of the Playwrights' Circle, and the Dramatists Guild. He is three-time winner of the Annual Award in Playwriting offered by the Association for Mormon Letters (AML) and he became president of AML in 2007. In 2013 the organization awarded him the Smith Pettit Award for his lifetime work as a playwright.

He has been a staff writer for the on-line satirical magazine *The Sugarbeet*. He was also featured in the book *Conversations with Mormon Authors*, edited by Chris Bigelow. He is a noted Ibsen translator, and has also published scholarly articles on 19th and 20th century Scandanavian Theatre, and more recently, on LDS drama and film. He blogged at *Mormoniconoclast.com*. Eric died in September of 2019 after a long battle with polymyositis. This has left a huge hole in the Theatre Community within, and outside of, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

BURNING DESIRE

(ANDREA lays in bed, breathing unsteadily, at times her breath catching in her throat. Close to a death rattle. MIKE sits in DL chair. Enter TIM.)

TIM: They didn't have blueberry.

(No response.)

I asked. Egg, wheat and plain. They did have cream cheese. I figure, enough cream cheese—

MIKE: Yeah.

TIM: I'm a moron. I'm sorry, I should of gotten Danish instead. This is Mom, right: Danish. Duh. I got thinking bagel, but you really didn't specify, and the Danish, they had cheese, raspberry—

MIKE: It's okay.

TIM: Tunnel vision. You start thinking bagel, bagel, bagel. Anyway...Come to think of it, why they even have bagels or Danish is a little baffling. I mean, olive branch, I get that, but— .

MIKE: I don't get the gothic thing. The look.

TIM: No. No, it's really not her.

(Pause.)

It's as unlike her as it's possible for a place...I mean, neat freak Mom. And so gloomy, seriously, she had lamps in every room--

MIKE: Yeah.

(Looks around.)

This is wrong.

(Harp flourish. Enter ANGEL OF DEATH.)

ANGEL: Looks like it's time!

ANDREA: *(Sitting up.)* What? I'm sorry, but—?

ANGEL: *(Taking her pulse.)* Oh, that blood pressure's just falling falling falling.

(Enter ANDI, watching them.)

ANDI and ANDREA: I'm not ready.

ANGEL: Well, of course you're not ready, silly! Hardly anyone ever is. People can have *months* to prepare, terminal diagnosis, no resuscitate orders, wills prepared, family gathered, excruciating pain. Still, I walk in, and what do I hear? I'm not ready! Wait! Not yet!

ANDREA: You're...an angel of death?

ANGEL: Good for you! It gets so tiresome, having to explain that every time.

ANDREA: I'm in some sort of...waiting room?

ANGEL: That's certainly one way to think of it.

ANDREA: And from here? Where do I go?

ANGEL: You know, in just a few more seconds—

ANDREA: No. Wait. You're supposed to be someone familiar to me. A family member, or...I thought I knew things. I thought I knew what would happen. I didn't expect—

MIKE: Nothingness.

ANGEL: Void.

MIKE: Cessation of thought.

ANGEL: Sleep.

MIKE: Eternal blackness.

TIM: You really think so? What about the stories, the 'go to the light' visions, parents or grandparents, or anyway angels, or beings, or—

MIKE: You're in med school. What's the medical literature—

TIM: Okay, oxygen deprivation to the brain, a hallucination, a reversion to childhood myth.

MIKE: I think it's over. We get our threescore and ten, and then we're done. Immortal as long as someone remembers us, sure, or some vestige, something we wrote, a symphony or a poem or—

TIM: Does Mom know?

MIKE: What I believe, or don't believe, my faithlessness? She knows. It's not something we talk about.

TIM: Because she, she definitely—

ANDI: *(Entering.)* I believe that when we die, we go to heaven.

ANDREA: Yes! To heaven, to God, who loves us, our Father—

ANDI: Where we're greeted by friends and loved ones. And a loving Heavenly Father.

(Kisses MIKE.)

MIKE: I didn't know you were up.

ANDI: I've been up for hours. You know me: the first summer light filters through the shades and there I am, wide awake.

TIM: I didn't hear you.

ANDI: Just. . . you know, projects.

TIM: Your scrapbooks. Mom, you've immortalized my every, paltry, I mean going back to kindergarten, you've—

ANDI: The time will come, I promise, when you're married, or, you know, your bride will—

MIKE: I just thought I heard you in the bathroom. That's what woke me, the shower.

ANDI: I'd already been up.

ANGEL: Think of it like...a really long sleep.

ANDREA: I don't want to sleep! I never slept! I was a poor sleeper, my entire life, and it gives me no comfort, to, to think—

ANGEL: Oh, you silly! You think I'm here to provide comfort!

ANDREA: Why else?

ANGEL and TIM: Oxygen deprivation to the brain, a reversion to childhood myth—

ANDREA: No!

ANGEL: Sleep's not bad! It's better than number two, infinite burning, a fiery lake, roasted on spits by demons. Boy, that one never sounded fun.

ANDREA: I don't believe in hell, I believe in heaven, I believe—

ANGEL: And for all I know, you could be completely right! Look, I'll be honest, I don't actually know what happens after I leave. Could be anything: heaven, hell, the fourth thing.

ANDREA: The fourth...?

ANGEL: Well, void's number three. Heaven, hell, void. And one more possibility.

ANDREA: I don't understand.

ANGEL: You old scamp. And now you want answers! So cute.

ANDI: *(Miming a coffee pot.)* I brewed another pot of coffee.

MIKE: Thanks.

(She mimes pouring him a cup.)

ANDI: Tim?

TIM: Thanks.

(He holds out his mimed cup. Although he's at the R chair, and she's by the L table, she mimes pouring it for him as though he's there.)

ANDREA: Why am I here, this place, this—?

ANGEL: Too gloomy? We've had complaints.

ANDREA: This isn't my bed, my house. This isn't a hospital, or a hospice, or—

ANGEL: Just a little something we cook up for certain special customers.

ANDREA: I asked if I could come home. I don't have anyone, not anymore, but I did want to—

ANGEL: Die at home. So sweet.

ANDREA: But this isn't familiar, this isn't anything I ever knew!

ANGEL: This is where you lived.

ANDREA: No. I had a family, a home.

ANGEL: *(As though to an infant.)* Oh no, you didn't! Sweet old thing.

ANDI: Tim.

ANDREA: My life, my entire life--

ANDI: Tim.

ANDREA: I *made* a home.

ANDI: Tim!

TIM: Mom, I'm just, I'm—

ANDI: You will treat me with respect, young man. You will speak to me, to your mother—

TIM: Dad, can you help me make her understand?

MIKE: Honey...

ANDI: Yes, Mike. Yes, I think we'd both like to hear what you think of the way your son—

TIM: I have not spoken disrespectfully, I have not raised my—

ANDI: You willfully, you *willfully*—

TIM: No, no, I —

ANDI: No, you don't get to talk. No. No, you will sit there, and you will listen to me, and you will obey me, and you will *not, not* argue every single, every single—

TIM: But you have no intention of listening to...Okay, I'm out of here.

ANDI: Tim!

(He's gone.)

Mike. So. What are you going to do? You're his dad. Are you going to step up here? Are you going to support your wife?

ANDREA: And he didn't. He never did.

ANGEL: Well, too late to worry about that now.

ANDREA: Not fair. For a mother to bury her son. To have to identify the body and...and Mike was less than useless.

TWO MORE PAGES TO THE END OF THE SCRIPT