

On the Horizon

---

A short play

By Michael Bassett

(c) Michael Bassett  
310 S Michigan Ave, #2301  
Chicago, IL 60604  
(708) 655-1916  
carat13@mac.com

ON THE HORIZON, A SHORT PLAY

Lights up on a stage that reflect what the players see as an absolutely stunning panoramic of Lake Michigan on a beautiful spring day.

The stage is bare but for an overturned school chair in one corner, and an old school desk in another corner. A school bag sits propped on the desk. ERIN, 21 stands down stage center. She wears a stylish cardigan over a tee shirt and blue jeans -- cuffed high. She fashions a colorful scarf around her neck that brings together the entire ensemble. Her fashion sense is very much her own.

THE FIVE LADIES stand upstage at the edge of light. They are all roughly the same age and height and similarly conservatively dressed -- though they are different enough to distinguish between them. They face upstage. Standing side by side, they form a line as they momentarily block MICHAEL from the audience. When they move they move together, stylized and choreographed.

We HEAR Michael, 22 upstage.

MICHAEL

(O.S.)

We've been through this.

ERIN

I know.

MICHAEL

(O.S.)

So what's the problem?

ERIN

What's the problem? What's the problem? Really? You're asking me that.

MICHAEL  
(O.S.)

You're leaving today.

ERIN

I know!

MICHAEL  
(O.S.)

Are you not leaving today?

ERIN

I said, I know!

MICHAEL  
(O.S.)

Erin.

ERIN

I know. Did I not say that!? Geez!

The Ladies turn around towards Erin and part ways allowing Michael to enter the space. He is wearing suit pants and a white tee shirt. He is barefoot and remains barefoot throughout. He stands immediately in front of The Ladies.

MICHAEL

We talked about this. Didn't we talk about this? Is she downstairs? She is, isn't she? You know she's probably waiting for you.

ERIN

So, she'll wait.

MICHAEL

Erin --

ERIN

She's wait, she'll wait. She knows where I am.

MICHAEL

Does she?

ERIN

She knows I'm with you. She'll wait.

MICHAEL  
You shouldn't keep her --

ERIN  
I said I know!

MICHAEL  
It's not like you're gonna be alone --

ERIN  
Yeah right.

MICHAEL  
You're not --

ERIN  
Are you coming with me?

MICHAEL  
(he exhales)  
You are not going to be alone. You know that, don't you. Say it.

ERIN  
I know that.

MICHAEL  
Say it, please!

ERIN  
(begrudgingly)  
I'm not gonna be alone.

He goes back upstage and exits through The Ladies. Once again, they turn to face him upstage, hiding him from view.

ERIN  
(Cont'd)  
Mom's never been up here. This is where the sisters slept -- their dormitories. The classrooms only went up to something like the 9th floor. Mom's was the last class to graduate from here -- before they took over the college.

MICHAEL  
(O.S.)  
I remember that.

ERIN

She loved it here.

MICHAEL

(O.S.)

I know.

ERIN

She said the sisters always looked out for her. After everything that happened especially. They helped her through it all. That's why I went here.

He reemerges from The Ladies putting on a light blue dress shirt.

MICHAEL

I know.

ERIN

Well, not here. After they merged, I mean -- but still.

MICHAEL

I know, I know.

She goes over to her bag sitting on the desk. She rummages through and finally finds what she's looking for. It's a photograph. She hands it to him.

ERIN

Your twenty first birthday.

MICHAEL

Ha! Where did you find this?

ERIN

Surprise!

MICHAEL

That's funny. Geez, would you look at me. Wow, I am really *not* a very good looking guy.

ERIN

Yes you are!

MICHAEL

Nope. Not at all. But you -- wow. I mean, come on! Look at you --

Erin takes back the photograph and walks away from him. She stands center stage facing the audience. She tries desperately to hold herself together. He sees this and waits. She breaks down. He takes it in from a distance. After a moment he once again steps through The Ladies upstage.

ERIN

I don't want to go.

MICHAEL

(O.S.)

Yes, you do.

ERIN

No, I don't!

MICHAEL

(O.S.)

Erin --

ERIN

Stop it, damn it! Stop trying to comfort me like I'm 8 years old or something -- stop trying to make everything right all the time. And stop trying to say the right thing, damn it! Just stop!

He enters by stepping through The Ladies while tucking in his shirt. After a moment...

ERIN

I'm scared.

MICHAEL

I know --

ERIN

I don't think you do --

MICHAEL

Of course you're scared. You're supposed to be scared. That's the nature of this point in time -- of where you are in your life.

ERIN

Come with me? Can't you? I mean -- I'd feel so much better if you could just come with me.

MICHAEL

You know I can't do that. I have to stay here. We knew this day was coming. I knew it, you knew it. Look, I know you're scared but after today -- tomorrow -- tomorrow you'll be sitting on that plane and you're whole life will have shifted forward.

ERIN

You think that's what this is?

MICHAEL

What?

ERIN

You don't have any clue about women, you know that? You have absolutely no clue about what this is --

MICHAEL

What --

ERIN

Come with me! Why do you have to stay in Chicago?

MICHAEL

You know the answer to this --

ERIN

Why?! Who makes these decisions, huh?!

MICHAEL

I'm staying in Chicago.

ERIN

But why?!

MICHAEL

I'm staying right here. You know that! You've always known that so don't make this about me.

ERIN

You'll forget me.

MICHAEL

No, I won't.

ERIN

Yes, you will! It's what happens! It's exactly what happens so don't tell you don't know --

MICHAEL

Hey! Listen to me -- I will not forget you.

ERIN

Whatever.

MICHAEL

Whatever? Did you just say whatever to me? Whatever. Wow. I've been dismissed with a word. Whatever Ladies! You hear this?

He walks back and exits upstage through The Ladies.

ERIN

It feels like I'm dying.

MICHAEL

(O.S.)

You're not dying, trust me! Well, metaphorically maybe --

ERIN

I love you. Hey, did you hear me? I said I love you!

He enters with a necktie in his hand.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry. What did you say?

ERIN

I said -- you heard what I said.

MICHAEL

I always love hearing you say it.

ERIN

Don't forget me, okay?

MICHAEL

Turn around.



ERIN  
What.

MICHAEL  
Just turn around and look out. There's not a cloud in the sky.

ERIN  
Are you ignoring me?

MICHAEL  
Just look! Tell me what you see.

ERIN  
Windows.

MICHAEL  
Yeah. And out the windows?

ERIN  
Water. Sky. Lake Michigan. You.

MICHAEL  
Anything else?

ERIN  
There's a bird right there.

MICHAEL  
Anything else.

ERIN  
Actually I think that's just a smudge -- on the window. Yeah, it's a smudge.

MICHAEL  
Anything else?

He walks back and through The Ladies. Erin stays staring out the windows.

ERIN  
It's so clear. Not a single cloud.

MICHAEL  
(O.S.)  
What do you see?

ERIN  
Canada.

MICHAEL  
(O.S.)  
Canada?

ERIN  
You have to really squint.

MICHAEL  
(O.S.)  
I think that's Indiana.

ERIN  
Nope. That's Canada.

MICHAEL  
(O.S.)  
Michigan maybe.

ERIN  
Hey, you asked me what I see. I see Canada.

MICHAEL  
(O.S.)  
Keep looking.

ERIN  
It's funny -- you go through these years -- I was talking about you with my mom this morning. With Mom.

MICHAEL  
(O.S.)  
Nobody's even supposed to be up here.

ERIN  
We took a walk along the lake front this morning, just me and Mom. She showed me where you went in -- where you, you know -- where they found you.

MICHAEL  
(O.S.)  
The Ladies could have made it very difficult.

ERIN

She never showed me the place before -- I mean, of course I knew it was Lake Michigan, but I didn't realize it was so close to campus. You can see the spot from here. It's right over there. Right down over there. She never showed me the specific place but it's right down over there.

MICHAEL

(O.S.)

The Ladies can be very particular.

ERIN

Now I'll never forget where it is.

MICHAEL

But they made it easy -- they made it as easy as they could for me. You know why?

He enters through The Ladies. As he enters, The Ladies help him with his suit coat. They each take a turn addressing him, straightening his tie, wiping his jacket, etc. -- and smiling at him.

MICHAEL

(Cont'd)

They took care of me. They took care of your mother. They took care of you too.

ERIN

It's so beautiful.

MICHAEL

What else do you see?

ERIN

The line. Just that thinnest of lines on the horizon.

MICHAEL

Just a line from there to there. From here to where ever you want to go.

ERIN

Dad?

MICHAEL

Yes, my beautiful daughter?

ERIN

I wish -- I wish I just had --

MICHAEL

Oh, honey -- I know.

ERIN

It's just --

MICHAEL

Do I look like I don't know all that? You think The Ladies don't remind me of all these things? You think they don't see the beautiful woman you've become?

She goes over to her bag -- she removes a pair of dress shoes and places them on the ground.

ERIN

Mom said you didn't have any when they found you.

He picks up the shoes and hands them to The Ladies. He turns back and goes to Erin. He hugs her.

ERIN

I love you, Dad.

MICHAEL

I love you too, Baby. My daughter Erin.

He turns to leave.

ERIN

Will you tell the ladies -- Tell them, thank you? Okay?

MICHAEL

Turn around and look out. See all that in front of you? You can tell them.

Michael exits through the ladies. The Ladies face Erin and smile.

LIGHTS OUT