

(DRAFT: 11 Jun 2021)

LOST IN PLACE: MARLENE & GINNY

A play in one act
By Craig Houk



© 2021 by Craig Houk
1711 11th Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
617-515-1838
hok1969@gmail.com

LOST IN PLACE: MARLENE & GINNY by Craig Houk

SYNOPSIS

Early into a world-wide pandemic, Marlene and her mother-in-law, Ginny, decide to get fancy and make martinis. Their fun, however, is interrupted by that damn lesbian from next door, who's hell-bent on stealing their rutabagas. Seems Dwayne, Marlene's infant child, has slept through the whole ruckus.

CHARACTERS

MARLENE Female, Late Thirties

GINNY Female, Late Fifties

TIME

Present.

SETTING

A small American town. Autumn. Dusk. The Lumley living room.

(AT RISE: Two armchairs several feet apart. GINNY sits in one of them. She's absentmindedly watching TV; the volume is on low. A landline phone sits on a small table nearby. A moment passes before MARLENE enters. She has a fresh spit-up rag draped over her shoulder and a full bottle of baby formula in her hand. She sits in the other armchair. Silence.)

MARLENE

Whatta you watchin'?

GINNY

(Preoccupied.)

What's that?

MARLENE

I asked you what you're watchin'. On the TV here.

GINNY

Can't you see for yourself?

MARLENE

Well, I can see there's a commercial on, but I ain't got no idea what program you're watchin'.

GINNY

Oh. I guess I wasn't payin' attention. I think it's, uh... whatta you call it...? Well, it's that cop show; always ends with a courtroom scene...

MARLENE

...Law and Order...

GINNY

...That's the one. Anyway, they got a marathon goin'; every episode over the last - shit, I don't know - fifty thousand seasons.

MARLENE

I like that show. Oh, and that fella who plays Lennie Briscoe is a goddam comedic genius.

GINNY

Jerry Orbach. Damn fine actor. Dead, though.

MARLENE

Oh yeah? I didn't know that.

GINNY

Yep. He died years ago. Some kinda cancer, I think.

MARLENE

That's too bad.

GINNY

Yep.

(Silence.)

Sounds like Dwayne finally settled down.

MARLENE

Yeah, well he's restin'.

GINNY

His fever break?

MARLENE

I believe it has.

GINNY

Oh, well that's good. Poor little guy. He's been sick for weeks.

MARLENE

Almost four months now.

GINNY

That long? S'awful. Just awful. Virus don't care about who it infects, not even an innocent little baby.

MARLENE

He's all right now.

(Silence.)

Have you talked to Barb, lately?

GINNY

Dammit, Marlene. That ain't funny and you know it?

MARLENE

I agree. It ain't.

GINNY

And besides, Barb hasn't spoken to me since... well, you know damn well since when.

MARLENE

Can you blame her?

GINNY

Shit, you're never gonna let that go, are you?

MARLENE

Oh, I don't know, Ginny. Maybe someday, I suppose.

GINNY

Well, I've apologized about a million times now. I don't know what more I can do.

MARLENE

Thanks to you, I've learned to sleep with one eye open.

GINNY

Oh, for... Ain't I the one who went ahead and put a lock on your bedroom door? And a loaded gun in your nightstand? For your protection?

MARLENE

Yeah, that was you.

GINNY

I mean, come on. It's not like I'm gonna try and kill you again. What would be the point? And you know, maybe I oughta be the one worryin' about whether you're gonna try and kill me.

MARLENE

You're nuts.

GINNY

It ain't so farfetched. Maybe you wanna get back at me, you know? Payback and all that?

MARLENE

I suppose I haven't ruled it out.

GINNY

See there. You've got the gun. And you've got the means and the motive.

MARLENE

Is that your closin' argument, Mr. McCoy?

GINNY

As a matter of fact, it is. So, do you think we could just drop it altogether? Hm? And maybe never speak of it again?

MARLENE

Hell no.

GINNY

Fine then. I don't give a rat's ass anymore, anyway.

(Silence.)

I need a drink. You want one?

MARLENE

Sure.

GINNY

What'll you have?

MARLENE

Surprise me.

GINNY

Well, I used to make a mean martini. Haven't had one of them in ages. Whatta you think? We can be all classy and shit.

MARLENE

Sounds good.

GINNY

Gin or vodka.

MARLENE

Gin.

GINNY

Good. I prefer gin too. Vermouth or prussic acid?

(Marlene shoots Ginny a look.)

I'm just screwin' with you. Vermouth it is.

(Ginny exits. Marlene sits quietly for a moment. The phone rings.)

MARLENE

Well, who the hell could be callin' us?

(She gets up and answers the phone.)

Hello...?

(She puts her hand over the receiver and calls off to Ginny.)

Aw, Jesus. It's one of them lesbians!

GINNY *(Off.)*

Which one!?

MARLENE

Rhonda!

GINNY *(Off.)*

Well, what the hell does she want!?

MARLENE

(Back to the phone.)

No, yeah, I'm here, Rhonda... Yeah, sorry about that. My mother-in-law was just hollerin' at me about somethin'. You know how she gets...

GINNY *(Off.)*

...Go to hell, Marlene...

MARLENE

(On the phone.)

...Mm hm... Well, no, I ain't seen Adele at all today; didn't realize it was my day to keep track of her... My apologies Rhonda, I was just tryin' to be funny... I'm sorry, what? Check where...? Our backyard...? Are you serious...? Well, ok.

(Off to Ginny.)

Ginny!

GINNY *(Off.)*

Keep your pants on! I'm just about finished with these drinks!

MARLENE

It's not about the drinks! I need you to look out the kitchen window! See if Adele is fumblin' about in the backyard!

GINNY *(Off.)*

Why the hell would she be back there!?

MARLENE

I don't know! Just take a look!

(Back to the phone.)

Hang on, Rhonda. We're checkin'.

GINNY *(Off.)*

Well, I'll be damned! She sure is back there! Looks like she's makin' off with a bunch of our rutabagas, stuffin' 'em into her cargo shorts!

MARLENE

You're lyin'!

GINNY *(Off.)*

I am not! Come see for yourself!

MARLENE

(Back to the phone.)

Rhonda... Yeah, well listen, your... your lady pal is hijackin' our rutabagas. I'm gonna head out back now, but I suggest you get your ass over here asap... Yeah, all right. Bye.

(She hangs up the phone. Almost to herself.)

Dammit.

(Marlene heads off. We hear the sound of a screen door opening and slamming shut. The stage is empty. We hear Marlene off.)

Hey Adele...! Yeah, I'm talkin' to you, old lady! Put them rutabagas back where you found 'em and get the hell off my property, you hear me...!? Now listen, I am deadly serious! Just empty your pockets and go home...! Yeah, well you can give me the bird all day long; I don't care! Just get the fuck outta here...! Go!

(Silence. Ginny enters with two martinis. She sets hers down somewhere near her chair and Marlene's down somewhere near hers. She then settles in and begins sipping her drink. We hear the sound of a screen door opening and slamming shut. Marlene enters in a huff.)

MARLENE

Can you believe that bitch?

GINNY

Ok, now. Sit down and enjoy your martini. I found some olives, so I decided to make 'em dirty.

MARLENE

That took some real balls.

GINNY

What's done is done. Just sit down and relax.

(Marlene relents and lets out a big sigh. She then settles into her chair. She begins to sip her drink. Silence.)

Did she leave the rutabagas?

MARLENE

She did not.

(Marlene looks to Ginny, exasperated. Ginny starts to laugh quietly. Her laughter gets louder and louder until Marlene joins in. Their shared laughter lasts a moment and then subsides. They both let out a sigh and continue to drink. Silence)

GINNY

We should check on Dwayne, don't you think?

MARLENE

Let him rest, Ginny. He's fine.

GINNY

You sure? I mean, I just can't believe we haven't heard a peep outta him. Especially considerin' all the ruckus.

MARLENE

Leave him be. I'll look in on him in a bit.

GINNY

(Skeptical.)

All right.

(They drink. Silence. Ginny rises out of her chair.)

You know what? I'm just gonna peek in. Just to make sure he's okay.

MARLENE

What did I just say?

GINNY

Yeah, I heard you, Marlene, but there ain't no harm in it. So, why don't you just shut up about it? Okay?

MARLENE

Fine. Suit yourself.

(Ginny exits. Marlene drinks quietly. A long moment passes before Ginny re-enters. She is pale and appears spooked.)

GINNY

(Quietly.)

Marlene...

MARLENE

Yeah, Ginny?

GINNY

What have you done?

MARLENE

(She takes another sip of her martini and then turns to Ginny.)

I think he's suffered enough. Don't you?

(End of play.)