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Far Away (Nick Hern Books Drama Classics)



Synopsis

"Chilling... Churchill's play seems to reinvent drama with every other line." - Village Voice "A masterpiece from one of the most valuable playwrights working today. Churchill is that rare dramatist who imagines different forms and even invented languages every time out." -Chicago Tribune "Deeply disturbing. Far Away has the picturesque form and gentle rhythms of a fairy tale told at bedtime. But it also finds a grating alarm in traditional sounds of comfort, from the lapping of a stream and the lilt of a lullaby to the hesitating confidences exchanged by a boy and girl falling in love"; I can think of no contemporary playwright who combines such scope of imagination and depth of purpose." -Ben Brantley, New York Times Far Away opens on a girl questioning her aunt about having seen her uncle hitting people with an iron bar. Several years later, the whole world is at war - including birds and animals. The girl has returned to her aunt to take refuge and begins to describe her journey: "There were piles of bodies and if you stopped to find out there was one killed by coffee or one killed by pins, they were killed by heroin, petrol, chainsaws, hairspray, bleach, foxgloves, the smell of smoke was where we were burning the grass that wouldn't serve...â" Caryl Churchill has written for the stage, television and radio. A renowned and prolific playwright, her plays include Cloud Nine, Top Girls, Far Away, Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?, Bliss, Love and Information, Mad Forest and A Number. In 2002, she received the Obie Lifetime Achievement Award and 2010, she was inducted into the American Theater Hall of Fame.

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Customer Reviews

"Far Away," by Caryl Churchill, is a play with three speaking roles (one of which, according to the book's opening pages, was played by 2 actors). The title page notes that the play was first performed in London in 2000. The opening sections of the play have an ominous, Twilight Zone-ish flavor; there is a mix of surreal, absurdist imagery with dialogue about death and violence. The play opens with Joan, a girl who is staying at the home of her aunt, Harper. But as the two talk, it becomes clear that something secret and very disturbing is happening on Harper's property. There is some really weird dialogue in this play. Sample: "Mallards are not a good waterbird. They commit rape, and they're on the side of the elephants and the Koreans." I don't think that the final section of the play quite sustains the imaginatively nightmarish quality of the opening parts, and I found the ending somewhat abrupt; but still, "Far Away" is a remarkable text from a noteworthy theatrical voice.

I first saw this play in Dublin in the summer of 2004. The only other play of Carol Churchill's I had seen was Cloud Nine. But this one blew me away. True, it is abstract and surreal, but just like subtext, what is under those strange hats and talks of "the darkness" and "the silence" choosing sides in the times of war, is very important to what is going on in our world today. Through simple language (the play only has one monologue and the time only spans an hour), images of love and war, innocence and torture, Carol Churchill shows us the worst of humanity in times of war. The workers in the hat factory, the little girl on the farm discovering what secrets can contain, the aunt who no longer cares for her family and only the "mission". All of these characters show us what can happen when we lose our humanity. I think that one of the very last lines of the play really says it all about war, changes in life, and even in Churchill plays: When you first step in, you don't know what's going to happen.

This short play has few characters. The action shows a young girl who witnesses violence by her uncle. The violence is explained away and justified by her aunt. The following acts shows that the rights of all have been lost and the resulting society is a maniacal and cruel place.

Caryl Churchill never fails to impress. Far Away is my favourite play as it explores political issues in a poetic, metaphorical way. It allows for the reader to really think for themselves and to form opinion.

I have no complaints about the purchase of this book. However, the play itself is not one of my

favorites.

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