

# THEN WAVES

A play by

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# THEN WAVES

## CHARACTERS

BRADY:           A Man  
 CAILIN:          A Young Man (Also COLLIN)  
 RYAN:            A Man  
 THEE:            A Woman

## SETTING

The hometown in summer. Before.

## SCENES

### ACT I

Of the Girl with the Golden Hair

#### SCENE 1

Out of darkness. On a hill.

#### SCENE 2

On a hill.

#### SCENE 3

On a hill. Before.

#### SCENE 4

On a hill.

### ACT II

Of the Rifle and the White Rose

#### SCENE 1

Out of darkness.

#### SCENE 2

Thee's house.

#### SCENE 3

On a hill.

#### SCENE 4

Out of darkness. On a hill.

#### SCENE 5

Thee's house.

#### SCENE 6

On a hill.

#### SCENE 7

On a hill.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THEN WAVES received readings during the summer of 2008 at the Living Theatre and Poliglot Theater in New York and was developed by the Playwrights' Center in their 2009-10 Ruth Easton New Play Series. It premiered at the Players' Guild Theater in Canton, Ohio during the summer of 2010 under the direction of Craig Joseph.

ACT I

*OF THE GIRL WITH THE GOLDEN HAIR*

## SCENE 1

Out of darkness. On a hill. CAILIN on a red bench to the left side of a flag pole. THEE onstage.

THEE

Stabat Mater dolorosa  
iuxta crucem lacrimosa,  
dum pendebat Filius.<sup>1</sup>

CAILIN

Of the girl with the golden hair  
I know how to speak.  
She inspires me.  
She is a muse.  
So let's begin with the maiden  
to get to where this needs to go.  
To get this story to crest  
and cascade  
and fall.  
There was a girl with golden hair I know.  
Fine golden hair of that kind  
you know. That kind  
that glows in soft light  
and ripples over broad shoulders  
that just a generation ago would have  
dug, and hoed, and cut and sewn.  
She loved me. I could see it in her eyes.  
As young as we are, I could see it there  
expanding toward the burst.  
She threatened to kiss me once.  
Right there behind the counter  
where she worked  
slinging coffee to hipsters  
and men in suits  
and hipsters in suits  
and the suits were all torn  
and worn to burning.  
Said she'd use her tongue  
when she'd kiss me.  
Threatened to get all French

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<sup>1</sup> CAILIN: The grieving Mother stood  
beside the cross weeping  
where her Son was hanging.

CAILIN  
(cont.)

on me and embarrass me.  
But I don't mind.  
I don't mind the French.  
I'd like to go to France one day  
with the girl with the golden hair.  
See the sites.  
Tour Paris.  
Get sunburned in Nice.  
You know:  
Quietly screw in random hostels  
while strangers sleep nearby  
and talk about tripping mushrooms  
in Amsterdam but never actually do it  
because we've ran out of our weak dollars  
and the banks' weak dollars  
which we make believe are our own  
already tripping.  
High on youth  
and pheromones.  
The smell of her hair.  
It's a dream.  
But it isn't going to happen now.  
We won't see Paris.  
We won't quietly screw in hostels  
while strangers cover their heads  
with too-hard pillows and try to ignore  
the damned, horny yanks.  
It won't happen  
since he's come home all twisted,  
since he brought back  
with him what he did.  
Some devil.  
It's going to stop time.  
And that's true.  
I used to think one day he'd get better.  
And since he was the root cause  
of all our problems,  
my mother's and mine,  
his changing would change the world.  
We used to think that if we ignored it  
for long enough it would go away.  
That time would change him.  
But it's not true.  
That's not how the world works.

CAILIN  
(cont.)

The world.  
The world. The world. The world.  
In the world things  
come in bursts,  
then they come in waves.  
Even time comes that way  
and it doesn't always come  
the way you'd like it to, I've learned.  
And the waves are never what they seem, either.  
Let me give you some examples.  
A person can wave hello.

THEE

Hello.

CAILIN

A person can wave goodbye.

THEE

Goodbye.

CAILIN

Good. Bye.

THEE

There are tidal waves. And heat waves.

CAILIN

And shock waves.

THEE

And killer waves.

CAILIN

Tubular. Dude.  
And you can love waves  
or hate them.  
If you're surfing.  
If you're drowning.  
If your boat's going down.  
If your boat's going under then  
you've got permission to hate them.

CAILIN  
(cont.)

You've got every reason to.  
Your boat afloat on top  
swaying with the waves.  
And there are alpha waves.

THEE

And omega waves.

CAILIN

My doleful mother.  
Are there omega waves?  
It doesn't matter.  
I think there are omega waves.  
We can't even see those waves.  
Light waves.  
Sound waves.  
But they make everything.  
So truth also must come in waves.  
If truth's a part of everything  
And everything's in waves.  
well then, truth too...  
first one, then the other,  
then waves.  
And there are other waves.  
Waves of grain.  
Golden waves of grain.  
And a flag can wave.  
Or it can hang limp like...  
Limp like no wind will ever blow it again  
Like no wind would bother.  
Or dare.  
Like it's good and dead.  
Or it's resting for the next right moment,  
and the wind is just its own will  
and desire to wave,  
and the flag and the wind are one.  
If flags could feel  
Surely it would be so.  
You never see a picture  
of a flag hanging limp,  
flaccid,  
sad.  
And someone told me once

CAILIN  
(cont.)

that red always symbolizes blood.  
And someone else said once  
that red's the first color the human  
eye catches, when we look at a rainbow.  
So if you put those things together  
well then there's something about us.  
About our instinct.  
And blue is the last color we recognize.

THEE

I'm feeling blue.  
I'm red with anger.  
Green with envy.

CAILIN

White/

THEE

As a ghost.

CAILIN

And feelings can come in short, staccato bursts.

THEE

Or in waves.

CAILIN

And blood can come in rivers.

THEE

Or in waves.

CAILIN

And the rain can fall in sheets.

THEE

And then waves.

CAILIN

And it can surely rain blood,  
just as surely as it can rain fire.  
God once rained fire.  
Now man rains fire.  
We have the power.

CAILIN  
(cont.)

Some men do.  
There are men and then  
there are men.  
There are two kinds of men  
I think.  
And between them,  
a front.  
And the front is the storm  
raining water and fire  
and building up for something  
more. A baptism  
of peaceful tidings  
when the blood burns  
and the rivers flood.  
Some vast, gushing  
flow. In sheets. In waves.  
It might take a long time  
before it rains blood.  
But if enough bodies fall,  
bleeding, and go unburied  
then I could see it.  
I could see it happening one day  
in our lifetime.  
And nobody'd be to blame for it.  
No. Nobody'd be to blame.  
Because we don't know any better.  
Do we, Mom?  
Do we?

End Scene

## SCENE 2

On a hill beneath the flagpole. Summer dusk. There is a red bench. Heat like suffocation. Dry, insomniac air. THEE onstage with CAILIN and BRADY. SHE watches but is not there.

CAILIN

Cuius animam gementem  
contristatam et dolentem  
pertransivit gladius.<sup>2</sup>

I know.

BRADY

I know you know.

CAILIN

Oh.

BRADY

I know how you know. She told you. The bitch knew all along and she told you. She kept it from me. She kept it from me, and she kept it from you. You should hate her as much as I hate her. For lying to you.

CAILIN

She didn't tell me anything.

BRADY

People can deceive you with silence, Cailin.

CAILIN

That's not a lie, though. A lie takes words.

BRADY

You're too young to understand.

CAILIN

No. She didn't tell me anything. So it can't be a lie.

BRADY

Then how did you know?

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<sup>2</sup> BRADY: Through her weeping soul,  
compassionate and grieving,  
a sword passed.

CAILIN

I've always known.

BRADY

You're lying.

CAILIN

Fuck you. Whatever. You wouldn't even know if I were lying. You're so fucked up anyway. You want to fight everybody.

BRADY chokes CAILIN. HE throws CAILIN to the ground.

BRADY

Told you not to swear, Son.

CAILIN

Go fuck yourself. Fuck. Four letters.

BRADY kicks CAILIN.

BRADY

Used to feel bad kicking my own kid. Always thought that was a kind of sin, a man beating his own kid. Boy or girl. Didn't matter either way. Girls worse of course. But sometimes you gotta slap a girl or she'll go wild. Might even bring home a... You know. You know in "Araby" they'll kill a girl if she dishonors the family. Saw that happen once. Saw the body. Animals. And my father – well you know how my father was. He was my father. And a man has to make order out of chaos. To mold the shit into something hard. You are my son after all. And you are soft. It's like some goddamned Bible story. Are you Abraham or Cain or Abel or Isaac or what the fuck are you? I can't remember those stories. They're all jumbled in my head. I read them, and they don't make any sense.

And they're ugly to me. The Father makes the universe, and it is fucked and scrambled like eggs. It is not perfect. God is vengeful and eats breakfast at all hours. God has indigestion. And I'm the Tobasco sauce on those eggs. Red and hot. God likes Tobasco. Seven letters. You like Tobasco sauce on your eggs?

CAILIN

No. I fucking hate it. I hate Tobasco. You know that. Anyway I'm a vegan.

BRADY kicks CAILIN.

BRADY

Wrong answer. I might just break a rib if I'm not careful. You're lucky. You're a lucky boy today, Cailin. I brought my dancing boots, but I could have just as easily brought my shitkickers. You know why they're called shitkickers? They can kick the shit right out of somebody if you're not careful. That's logical, isn't it? You know the first thing that happens when someone dies? They lose their bowels. So next time you're watching a movie and they hang a guy, look for the shit on his boots. If it's not there, you know they're lying to you. Cinematic magic.

BRADY nudges CAILIN with his boot.

BRADY leans down and pulls CAILIN's phone from his pocket. HE removes the battery and throws it to one side.

Why don't you stand up for yourself, huh? That a vegan thing too? You eat so many plants you become a fucking plant? Get trod on. Cut down. Hewn. You're the wheat and I'm the scythe. What is it? Well?

CAILIN

You'd kick my ass is why.

BRADY

You're right. And more than that. I would kick more than your ass, Cailin. I'd kick your chest right in. I'd leave your ass alone for the next guy. How'd you like that? This is the real world we're talking about here, Cailin. No books here now. No Mom to coddle you. I'd like to kick a rib right through you and maybe gnaw on the fucker. A rib's really Biblical, isn't it? Break a rib off and feed it to your fucking mother with potatoes. She's a meat and potatoes kind of a woman. Don't know how you ended up getting shot out of her. Your mom gave birth to a plant. It's Garden of Eden time here... Genesis. Old Testament. Raining blood and fire.

How'd you like that, if I rained blood and fire, Cailin? I can do it. I raise my goddamned hand and set it upon you, the heavens part... and... Fuck it.

You know I brought you here to ask you a question? That was all. I didn't mean it all to come out now like this. Through my goddamned boots. But there it goes again. Here it comes. Right out of my best dancing boots.

BRADY kicks CAILIN.

BRADY

Yee. Haw.

CAILIN

Stop. Stop please.

BRADY

Oh I'll stop. Give me a rib and I'll stop. You've got an extra one? Or was it Eve who's got an extra one. I can't remember. It was so long ago since it happened, and anyway: I wasn't there to see it.

BRADY kicks CAILIN.

Just one little rib, Cailin. Give it up.

CAILIN

Can't give you any, Brady. They're inside my abdomen.

BRADY

Oh. Oh right. Well answer my question then.

CAILIN

Brady/

BRADY

Call me Dad.

CAILIN

Dad.

BRADY

Daddy.

CAILIN

Daddy.

BRADY

Pappa. Pa. Fucking call me Pappy.

CAILIN

Pappa. Pa. Pappy.

BRADY

So here's my question. It's going to sound a little bit funny, Son. It's going to sound like it's not me talking. You know?

CAILIN

Yeah.

BRADY

"Yeah" what?