

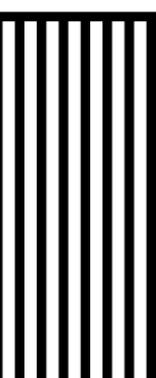


COST OF LIVING

BY
MARTYNA MAJOK



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



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The world premiere of COST OF LIVING was produced by the Williamstown Theatre Festival (Mandy Greenfield, Artistic Director; Michael Sag, General Manager) in July 2016. It was directed by Jo Bonney, the scenic design was by Wilson Chin, the costume design was by Jessica Pabst, the lighting design was by Jeff Croiter, the sound design was by Ben Truppin-Brown, the original music was by Justine Bowe, the movement consultant was Thomas Schall, and the production stage manager was David H. Lurie. The cast was as follows:

EDDIE Wendell Pierce
ANI Katy Sullivan
JESS Rebecca Naomi Jones
JOHN Gregg Mozgala

COST OF LIVING was originally produced Off-Broadway by Manhattan Theater Club (Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director; Barry Grove, Executive Director), in association with the Williamstown Theatre Festival, opening on June 7, 2017. It was directed by Jo Bonney, the scenic design was by Wilson Chin, the costume design was by Jessica Pabst, the lighting design was by Jeff Croiter, the original music and sound design were by Robert Kaplowitz, and the movement consultant was Thomas Schall. The cast was as follows:

EDDIE Victor Williams
ANI Katy Sullivan
JESS Jolly Abraham
JOHN Gregg Mozgala

FOLKS

EDDIE. late 40s. male.

ANI. early 40s. female. pronounced “Ah-nee.”

JESS. mid 20s. female.

JOHN. mid 20s. male.

PLACE

The urban east of America. Jersey.

The near present.

The prologue, scenes seven, eight, and nine occur on the same Friday night in December, a week before Christmas. The rest of the play spans the months of September through December.

DIALOGISTICS

Slashes // indicate overlap.

Ellipses ... are active silences.

[Square brackets] are words intended but unspoken.

(Non-italicized parentheses) within dialogue are meant to be spoken.

A NOTE ON JOHN’S LANGUAGE

John has a speech pattern that manifests itself in a kind of halted way of speaking. This is due to the vocal tension of his cerebral palsy. The breaks and spacing in his lines are meant to simulate that halting rather than to indicate any sort of poetic recitation.

SOME NOTES ON PERFORMANCE

Self-pity has little currency in these characters' worlds. Humor, however, has much.

For the Jersey mouth, the word “fuckin” is often used as a comma, or as a vocalized pause, akin to the word “like.” [“I can’t like, decide, y’know.” = “I can’t fuckin, decide, y’know.”] It’s a word with extra purpose. It’s not necessarily *just* a container for anger.

A NOTE ON CASTING

Please cast disabled actors in the roles of John and Ani.

Please assemble a cast that looks like North Jersey and its beautiful diversity. In the prologue, Ani’s full name can be Ania Lucja Skowronska-Torres or Ani Luz Hernandez-Torres or Ani Li-Torres or Ānanda Singh-Torres, amongst many options. Ani’s full name should be chosen to suit the actress playing her. Also in the prologue, *Na zdrowie* can be replaced with *Salud*, or *صحتك في*, or *건배*, etc., to suit the actress playing Ani. In scene eight, the phone call should be translated into a non-English language to suit the actress playing Jess.

“And I believe I can do this in an ordinary kitchen with an ordinary woman and five eggs... She and I and the kitchen have become extraordinary; we are not simply eating; we are pausing in the [lonely] march [of living] to perform an act together, we are in love; and the meal offered and received is a sacrament which says: I know you will die; I am sharing food with you; it is all I can do, and it is everything.”

—Andre Dubus, “Broken Vessels”

“There’s something about taking the cart back instead of leaving it in the parking lot. It’s significant. Because somebody has to take them in. And if you know that, and you do it for that one guy, you do something else. You join the world. You move out of your isolation and become universal.”

—Andre Dubus, “Dancing After Hours”

*“Czemu tak się rozsypujemy? Człowiek to głupio inżynierowany.”
“Why do we crumble like this? People are stupidly engineered.”*

—Paweł Majok

COST OF LIVING

Prologue.

An empty space. An empty stage. That is, a bar in December. Specifically, St. Mazie's bar in post-Bloomberg Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

One might call it a hipster bar.

A man. Eddie Torres. An unemployed truck driver. He looks out of place here.

Eddie Torres is a man who understands that self-pity and moping are privileges for people who, in their lives, have friends and family who unconditionally love them and will listen to their shit. Anything he tells you, he hopes will be entertaining or funny or interesting because he knows you're not obligated to stay and listen to him. When he slips into sadness, he bounces back fast. He would have made a great uncle.

He nurses a glass of seltzer.

EDDIE. The shit that happens is not to be understood.

That's from the Bible.

The shit that happens to you is Not To Be Understood.

So, see, this fucked me up a little when one day comes this call from Columbia Presbyterian. Is this Mister Torres? There's been a complication. I'm 49 and I've done nothin but love the fuck outta this woman for two decades and a year almost. Nothin. Who deserves that?

And a week from her birthday. Seven days.

We were gonna go to Maine. For her birthday.

See the trees.

I leave the lights on now, every room.

Smoke signal: I'm still here.

Holidays are hard.

Christmas next week—that's gonna be hard.

But listen to me holy shit the GLOOM. Get a drink. On me. Made a promise to myself. A penalty. I start talkin gloom, I get it in the WALLET. Lemme buy you a drink. What do you want? Order what you want, I'm payin. This place is my fuckin SWEAR jar.

Order what you want. Go ahead.

Me myself personally, I'm off it. That first day you wake up to find you are *not* in a pool of some kinda liquid, my friend? Vomit, say, or piss? That day? That day is a beautiful fuckin gift upon yer life, man. You are grateful for that day. And you are ready.

That day's the day it's all gonna change.

Signs are real.

This I know cuz I used to drive trucks. Cross-country. Loved it. Loved every aspect of the job. The scenery. Every aspect. The fuckin *scenery*. Utah? Jesus H, man. Utah's gorgeous and no one even knows!

But then I got popped for a DUI. In a car. Blocks from home.

Lost my CDL.

Shit's Creek.

So I got the memories. And some unemployment.

That life is good for people. I was thankful for every day they ain't invented yet the trucker-robots.

That life is good. The road. Sky. The scenery.

Except the loneliness.

Except in the case of all the, y'know, loneliness.

This was what my wife was good for.

Not that this was the only thing.

But everyone what's married there's, y'know, the *fuuuuuck* days.

Like, *fuuuuuck* what did I do. What did I actually fuckin do here.

Cuz, y'know, you married a *person*. And a person's gonna be a person even if they're married.

That's a lesson. That's a lesson for yer LIFE right there.

But still I

I still

still loved her.

She would text me. On the road.

At night. In motels.

Which, alone, can be, can drum up certain feelings.

This is why there's Bibles in motels.

We're all of us, in motels, on the road to somewhere we ain't at yet and that makes us feel feelings.

Roads are dark and America's long.

And I mean this wasn't *poetry*, these texts.

This wasn't like, y'know... (*Tries to remember a verse of a poem, can't.*) ...*poetry*.

"Thinkin Of You."

"How's Things?"

"Yer check came today?"

"Off to bed."

"Good night."

That little buzz in my pocket or on the nightstand, that's the rope gets tossed down to you at the bottom of that well. When the thoughts come. Y'know. The Thoughts. That loneliness. The texts, they're like, climb on up outta there, y'know. Get up outta those thoughts, y'know, cuz "Thinkin Of You."

Truckers got wild imaginations.

Lots of time to think.

Just not much time to do much with all we been thinkin except what don't take time at all.

And what's cheap.

(Toasts.) *Salud.*

(Remembers, re-toasts.) *Na zdrowie.* * She taught me that.

Sips his drink.

And sleep. And we sleep.
If we can.

So I started
textin her.
After she
passed.
Like every few days.
“Thinkin Of You.”

“Off to bed.”

“Hope yer well.”

...

“Miss you.”

I’d lie a little too.

“Job hunt’s goin good.”

And joke.

“My love to Jesus.”

“Slip in a good word.”

...

“What are you wearing.”

It was nice.

To talk.

To think of her, I mean.

It was just a nice thing that happened.

I owe you another, by the way. For the gloom.

Tries to change the subject/mood.

* Pronounced [naz drove-yeah]. See note on casting.

So I was hopin that, for like community service, they'd gimme a gig that was around people. Like bringin food to old people or like, bein in plays. Walkin puppies, somethin like that. Brushin cats. But I'm painting fences in Livingston. Humane Society's full up. So now my phone's got all this paint and shit on it now, on the cover. "Thinkin of you."

...

I prolly shouldn't be here. At uh, at St. Mazie's here. In uh, in Williamsburg here. All you young people here. With yer fashions. With yer... Pabst.

Prolly shouldn't be here.

Sips his drink.

This is seltzer, this.

For now.

It's maybe not good for me, right now, to be here.

Too close, y'know how sometimes you get so close? You just get a little too close? Moths, man. Like a moth. I know I shouldn't be here but I'm, tonight I'm, I'm comin home from paintin fences, right? Take the train. Bus. Walk. I'm home. Shower. Eat. Like usual now. Alone. And I'm sittin in my house, my apartment, my home, and I'm lookin at the boxes. All the boxes. Of her stuff. And I'm thinkin how this was her mug. Her bowl she liked. The chair. And I'm tempted. Not gonna lie. I'm tempted as all fuckin fuck. Not even 7 yet. Places will be open. Stores. And, even if they're not, then bars. I can do whatever I want. I remember I can do what I want cuz why not, actually. Actually, why the fuck not.

And that's when the phone buzzes.

On the table.

I didn't scream.

But shit I jumped.

...

"Thinkin of you

COST OF LIVING

by Martyna Majok

2M, 2W

Eddie, an unemployed truck driver, reunites with his ex-wife Ani after she suffers a devastating accident. John, a brilliant and witty doctoral student, hires overworked Jess as a caregiver. As their lives intersect, Majok's play delves into the chasm between abundance and need and explores the space where bodies—abled and disabled—meet each other.

"[COST OF LIVING] slams the door on uplifting stereotypes. ... Tremendous emotion flows around the impediments Majok has placed in the characters' paths. ... In both of [the play's] stories... the biggest handicaps are the universal ones: fear and disconnection. ... immensely haunting... [Majok] is exquisitely attuned to the many varieties of alienation hiding in plain sight in America."

—The New York Times

"...[COST OF LIVING] provides a piercing look at the obstacles faced by disabled people and, more importantly, the human condition in general. ... the characters, dialogue and situations resonate with emotional truth about loneliness, financial desperation and the vulnerability of disabled people forced to rely on others to assist them with basic human needs."

—The Hollywood Reporter

"...a deeply human depiction of life with disability. ... [The play] doesn't condescend to any of the characters. Ani and John may be in wheelchairs, but that's the least interesting thing about them in Majok's script... Majok mines their senses of humor, diverse personality traits, and opportunities to be both likable and hateful. ... As much as COST OF LIVING is a play about disability, it also very much focuses on what it takes to survive in a world where you are the forgotten. ... Life isn't easy, no matter what you look like, and Majok doesn't sugarcoat it."

—TheaterMania.com

Also by Martyna Majok
IRONBOUND

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