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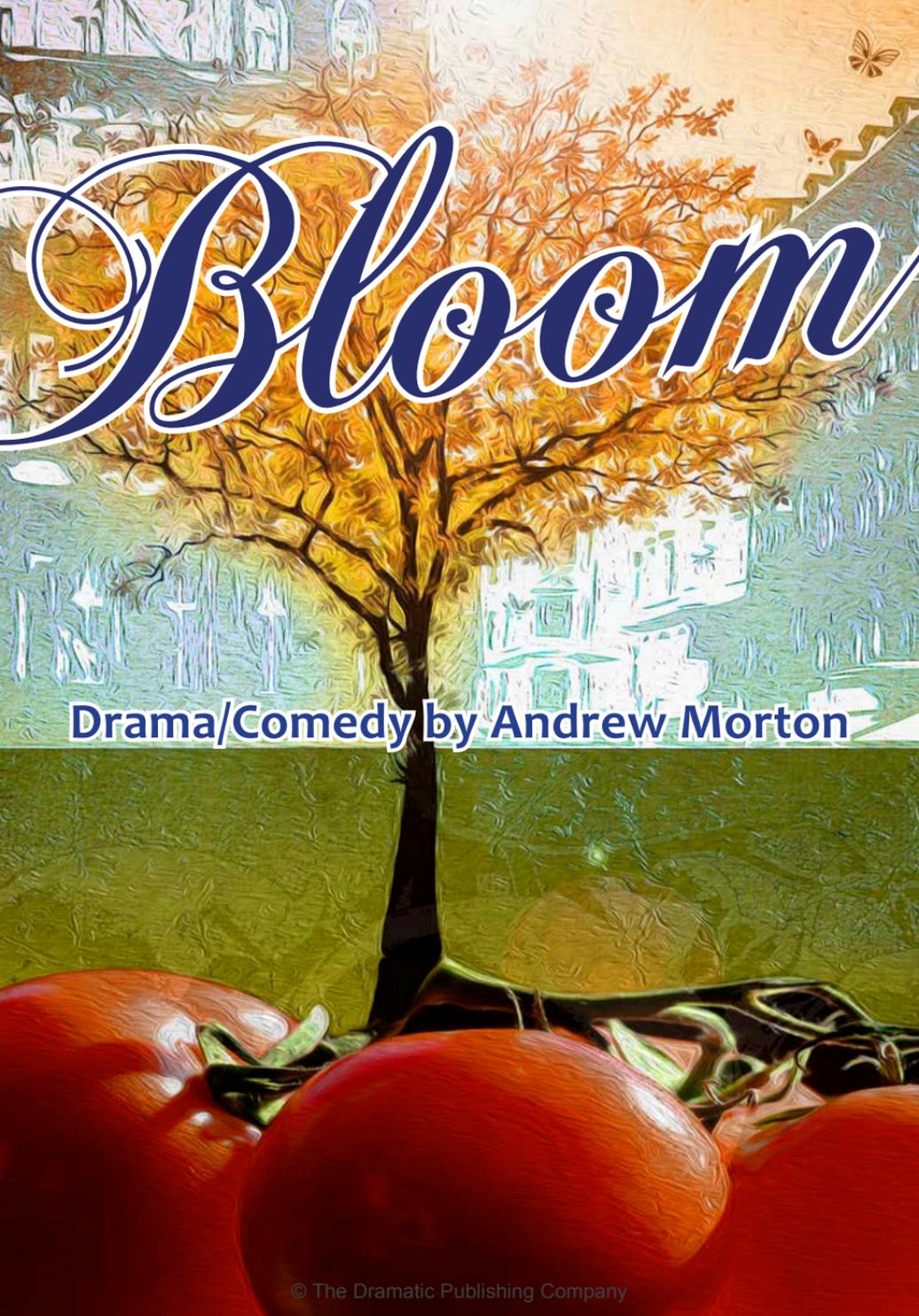
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*Dramatic Publishing*



# Bloom

**Drama/Comedy by Andrew Morton**

# Bloom

**Drama/Comedy. By Andrew Morton.** *Cast: 2m., 3w.* Following the death of his father, 15-year-old Daniel and his mother, Lisa, are forced to move to unfamiliar Flint, Michigan. After a violent outburst at his new school, Daniel's social worker, Michelle, suggests he spend a week working with her father, Bobby, an urban gardener of several abandoned lots in the middle of the city. A week soon turns into a few months, and, as the two men spend the summer tending the gardens, they begin to plant some much-needed hope in a neighborhood plagued by blight and help each other heal some old wounds. A finalist at the Write Now Festival and a winner of the Aurand Harris Memorial Playwriting Award, *Bloom* is a coming-of-age story about grief, gardening and growing up. *Unit set. Approximate running time: 1 hour, 45 minutes. Code: BL7.*

*Cover Design: Jeanette Alig-Sergel.*

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# Bloom

By

ANDREW MORTON



**Dramatic Publishing Company**

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Special thanks to Jeremy Winchester and my friends at Flint Youth Theatre for so beautifully bringing this play to life.

Finally, to my family: thank you for your constant love and support.

For David.

*Bloom* was a Dorothy Webb prize winner at the 2013 Write Now festival (David Saar and Janet Allen, artistic directors) and was presented as a rehearsed reading on March 14, 2013, at the Tempe Center for the Arts in Tempe, Ariz.

Cast:

Michelle ..... Yolanda London  
Bobby ..... Mike Traylor  
Daniel ..... Stephen Hersack  
Lisa ..... Angelica Howland  
Ashley ..... Alexandra Ncube

Production Team:

Director ..... Jeremy Winchester  
Dramaturg ..... Amy Jensen  
Dramturgical Intern ..... Emily Goodridge  
Production Assistant ..... Elena Barbaro  
Stage Manager ..... Samantha Monson

*Bloom* received its world premiere production at Flint Youth Theatre (Jeremy Winchester, executive artistic director) in Flint, Mich., May 9-25, 2014.

Cast:

Michelle ..... Deirdre S. Baker  
Bobby ..... Rodney Creech  
Daniel ..... Merek Alam  
Lisa ..... Beth Guest  
Ashley ..... Layla Meillier

Production Team:

Director ..... Jeremy Winchester  
Set Design ..... Tim McMath  
Costume Design ..... Shelby Newport  
Lighting Design ..... Andrew D. Smith  
Sound Design ..... Jeremy Winchester  
Stage Manager ..... Bary Lehr

# **Bloom**

## **CHARACTERS**

MICHELLE: a social worker, 30s.

BOBBY: a gardener, 60s.

DANIEL: 15-year-old.

LISA: Daniel's mother, 40s.

ASHLEY: Bobby's neighbor, 16.

## **SETTING**

Flint, Mich. Late spring and summer.

## **AUTHOR'S NOTE**

Street names, nearby towns and other indicators of place are real to the community of Flint, Mich., but they may be changed if a production wishes to relocate the play to a similar, post-industrial setting.

# Bloom

## Scene 1

*(Lights up on the backyard of a modest home in Flint, Mich. The sounds of the city are heard: dogs barking, the occasional siren in the distance, voices shouting.)*

*On the house there is a boarded up window and a door leading into the kitchen. There is a small deck with two old chairs and a table, on which sits a jug of iced tea. Assorted gardening tools lean against the house. In the garden are a large rectangular raised bed and a few old car tires that are now used for planting. There are no plants in the bed or the tires, just dirt. BOBBY enters from inside the house with a glass of iced tea. MICHELLE follows him.)*

MICHELLE. So?

*(BOBBY doesn't answer. He takes a drink.)*

MICHELLE *(cont'd)*. I really don't have time for this.

BOBBY. Don't I get some time to think it over?

MICHELLE. What is there to think over?

BOBBY. I don't need any help.

MICHELLE. Mrs. Campbell told me you collapsed in the street last week.

BOBBY. No I didn't.

MICHELLE. She said she saw you!

BOBBY. You know what she's like! I was just taking some junk to the curb and I tripped.

MICHELLE. That's not how she described it. Did you hurt yourself?—

BOBBY. When did you talk to her anyway?

MICHELLE. At Kroger's. She said she hadn't seen you since and was getting worried. She assumed I already knew.

BOBBY. It wasn't a big deal! Collapsed ...

MICHELLE. OK. (*She checks the time on her phone.*) I don't have long. I really need an answer from you.

BOBBY. No.

MICHELLE. No?

BOBBY. Yes. My answer is no.

MICHELLE. But—

BOBBY. Don't start—

MICHELLE. Give me a good reason *why*—

BOBBY. Because I don't have time to be baby-sitting one of your messed up kids!

MICHELLE. He's not messed up, Dad.

BOBBY. Oh yeah? Why's he working with you then?

MICHELLE. He's just ... going through a lot right now.

BOBBY. Such as?

MICHELLE. Why do you need to know? You've clearly made your decision.

BOBBY. Because I know how these conversations go. You ask for my opinion and I give it. You disagree, and then you don't shut up about it until you get your way. It was exactly the same way with your mother!

MICHELLE. So you'll do it then?

BOBBY. Nope. My answer is still no.

MICHELLE. Jesus, Dad.

BOBBY. Watch your mouth!

MICHELLE. Well I'm not leaving until you change your mind.

BOBBY. Grab a chair then.

MICHELLE. Just let me bring him around to meet you and I'm sure you'll change your mind. There has to be something he can do around here.

BOBBY. Where is he now?

MICHELLE. In the car.

BOBBY. You just proved my point! What were you going to do if I wasn't home?

MICHELLE. You're always home.

BOBBY. That's not true!

MICHELLE. When was the last time you went somewhere?

BOBBY. I go to—

MICHELLE. Other than church. Or the market?

*(Pause.)*

BOBBY. I came to Nicole's birthday party.

MICHELLE. That was three months ago! Now you've got that other lot from the city, you're going to have much more to do!

BOBBY. I already told you I can manage! I'm in great shape for my age. Doctor Cohen told me so.

*(DANIEL appears. He is wearing a loose fitting T-shirt, basketball shorts and flip-flops.)*

MICHELLE. Daniel. Is everything OK?

*(Pause.)*

DANIEL. Yeah. Can I use the restroom?

*(MICHELLE looks at BOBBY.)*

MICHELLE. Of course. This is my father, Mr. Graham.

DANIEL. Hey.

BOBBY *(mimicking him)*. Hey.

MICHELLE. Go straight through the kitchen and it's on your right.

*(DANIEL goes to enter the house.)*

BOBBY. And take your shoes off!

*(DANIEL stops. He kicks off his flip-flops and goes inside. MICHELLE's phone rings.)*

MICHELLE. Excuse me. *(She answers.)* Hello. No, I'll be back soon. What's—You're kidding me. Again?! Oh that girl ... Give me 15 minutes. Thanks for letting me know. *(She hangs up.)*

BOBBY. What now?

MICHELLE. Just an incident at the school.

BOBBY. What kind of incident?

MICHELLE. It's nothing.

BOBBY. Well go if you need to. Just make sure you take that kid with you.

MICHELLE. OK, I get it, Dad. You clearly don't need the help. So how about you do this for me? I've got 40 other cases I'm dealing with right now. He's a *good* kid and I just thought that working outside and getting to know someone new would be a really positive experience for him.

BOBBY. Why isn't he in school?

*(Pause.)*

MICHELLE. He was suspended last week.

BOBBY. What did he do?

MICHELLE. It was just a minor thing.

*(BOBBY waits for an answer.)*

MICHELLE *(cont'd)*. He threw a chair and broke a window.

BOBBY. And that's all?!

MICHELLE. Yes! Believe me. We deal with much worse.

BOBBY. Anyone would think you work in a prison. It's about time you found another job!

MICHELLE. I like my job!

BOBBY. Well why did he do it?

MICHELLE. He's a teenage boy. Someone said something, and he overreacted.

BOBBY. What happens if I say something and he overreacts again?

MICHELLE. In my professional opinion, I'm sure this was just a random thing. He and his mom just moved up here to live with some relatives. He sleeps on a couch in their basement. She works full time and is going to school, and he's 15 years old. Do you want me to keep going?

BOBBY. Where is his father?

MICHELLE. Dead.

BOBBY. Really?

MICHELLE. Why would I lie about a thing like that? He doesn't talk about it much. All I know is that he passed away before they moved here.

*(DANIEL reappears. He puts on his flip-flops.)*

DANIEL. Thank you.

MICHELLE. Daniel, go wait in the car please.

*(DANIEL exits.)*

BOBBY. You know your mother had some tricks, but you ... ?

MICHELLE. What?

BOBBY. That story! You were saving that for your endgame, weren't you?

MICHELLE. So it's a yes?

*(BOBBY shrugs.)*

MICHELLE *(cont'd)*. Thank you.

*(MICHELLE kisses him.)*

BOBBY. You owe me big time!

MICHELLE. I know. I'll go get him now. *(She goes. From offstage.)* Daniel! Sorry, you can come back! And bring your bag with you! *(She returns.)*

BOBBY. And what exactly am I supposed to do with him?

MICHELLE. Put him to work. You haven't planted for the summer yet, have you?

BOBBY. No.

MICHELLE. So there you go.

BOBBY. But do I have to talk to him?

MICHELLE. Oh he's very quiet.

BOBBY. And how long do I have to do this for?

MICHELLE. He's suspended for another week. After that, you never have to see him again. He must not have heard me. *(She exits. From offstage.)* Daniel!

*(BOBBY walks over to the raised bed. He sticks his hand in the dirt and feels it. MICHELLE reappears with DANIEL. He carries a backpack with him.)*

MICHELLE. All right then. Daniel, I've told my father about what happened at school last week and he's very kindly agreed to let you help him get his garden ready for the summer. Does that sound like fun?

DANIEL. Not really.

MICHELLE. Better than being stuck at home. Or in class, right? You two can decide exactly when you need to be here and what you'll do, but I want to hear all about it next week, OK? Any questions?

DANIEL. No.

MICHELLE. Well I'll be back around three, and I can run you home then.

DANIEL. It's not far. I can walk.

MICHELLE. I'd rather you didn't.

DANIEL. Why?

BOBBY. Because you're fresh meat! That's why.

MICHELLE. I'll call your mom and let her know where you are. But don't walk home alone, OK? You two have fun!  
*(She starts to leave.)*

BOBBY. That's it?

MICHELLE. Just give me a call if you need anything! *(Her phone rings again. She answers.)* I'm on my way!

*(She mouths the words "thank you" to BOBBY then exits. The two men stand together in silence.)*

BOBBY. You like iced tea?

DANIEL. Yeah.

BOBBY. You want some? It's homemade.

DANIEL. No thanks.

BOBBY. Suit yourself.

*(He pours himself another glass then goes inside. DANIEL waits for a moment, unsure of what to do. Eventually, he sits down on the edge of the deck, opens his bag, takes out a sketchbook and a pen and starts drawing. BOBBY appears at the screen door and watches him for a while. Eventually, he steps back outside.)*

BOBBY *(cont'd)*. So my daughter says you just moved into the area?

*(DANIEL doesn't respond.)*

BOBBY (*cont'd*). Hello?

(*DANIEL continues to ignore him. BOBBY takes the sketchbook from him.*)

DANIEL. Hey! What are you doing?!

BOBBY. I'm trying to have a conversation with you!

DANIEL. Give it back!

BOBBY. But it's rude to ignore people when they're talking to you—

DANIEL. Give it back!

(*DANIEL takes the sketchbook from BOBBY.*)

BOBBY. Fine. But you put it away.

(*DANIEL puts the sketchbook back in his bag. He sits down again.*)

BOBBY (*cont'd*). Let's try this again shall we? My daughter tells me you've just moved into the area?

DANIEL. Yeah.

BOBBY. Whereabouts?

DANIEL. Illinois Avenue.

BOBBY. Near the park?

DANIEL. Kind of.

BOBBY. You like it here?

DANIEL. What do you think?

BOBBY. Why not?

DANIEL. Because there's nothing to do around here.

BOBBY. Well you know it wasn't always like this.

(*Silence.*)

BOBBY (*cont'd*). So my daughter said something about a chair ... ?

DANIEL. It was an accident.

BOBBY. You must be stronger than you look. You play any sports?

DANIEL. Nope.

BOBBY. Well do you watch any?

DANIEL. Yeah.

BOBBY. Can you answer a question with more than one syllable?

*(Pause.)*

DANIEL. Sometimes.

*(BOBBY chuckles. Pause.)*

DANIEL (*cont'd*). I like hockey.

BOBBY. OK. Well that's something! You ever go to any games?

DANIEL. I used to.

BOBBY. Used to?

DANIEL. Yeah. But not anymore.

BOBBY. Why not?

DANIEL. I just don't, OK?

BOBBY. All right.

*(Pause.)*

BOBBY. How about girls?

DANIEL. What about them?

BOBBY. Do you like them?

DANIEL. I guess.

BOBBY. Do you have a girlfriend?

DANIEL. No.

BOBBY. Well why not? I had plenty of girls chasing after me when I was your age.

DANIEL. Good for you.

*(Silence.)*

BOBBY. Look kid, I'm sorry. I don't usually socialize with people your age. People of any age really. If you don't want to talk, that's fine by me. We can just sit here. No point in wasting breath if there's nothing to say, right?

DANIEL. You got a TV?

BOBBY. Do I *have* a TV?

DANIEL. Yeah.

BOBBY. Why do you ask?

DANIEL. So I can watch it.

BOBBY. You're not watching TV.

DANIEL. Why not?

BOBBY. Because one: we have work to do. And two: I don't have one.

DANIEL. You're lying.

BOBBY. About the work, or the TV?

DANIEL. The TV.

BOBBY. Go in and see for yourself.

DANIEL. Who doesn't own a TV?

BOBBY. Plenty of people!

DANIEL. Weird people. What do you do without one?

BOBBY. I work out here in my garden, I read, I listen to the radio ...

DANIEL. The radio?

BOBBY. Yes. It's a machine with something called a dial, which you can turn, and sometimes music plays.