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*Dramatic Publishing*

# **BLUE SURGE**

by  
**REBECCA GILMAN**

**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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“Rebecca Gilman has an unerring ear for the ways mismatched people relate, an open heart for the ways they louse things up.”

“*Blue Surge* never cheats and yet manages to surprise as it unfolds with increasing intensity. The climax is suave, shatteringly beautiful, and absolutely right.”

Peter Rainer (*New York Magazine*)

[Rebecca Gilman is] “a force to be reckoned with in the American theatre of the new millennium.”

*The Wall Street Journal*

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The world premiere of *Blue Surge* was presented by the Goodman Theatre in Chicago, Illinois, on July 9, 2001. It was directed by Robert Falls. Sets were designed by Walt Spangler, costumes by Birgit Rattenborg Wise, lights by Michael Philippi and sound by Richard Woodbury. The dramaturg was Tom Creamer, the production stage manager was Alden Vasquez and the stage manager was Laxmi Kumaran. The cast was as follows:

Curt . . . . . JOE FORBRICH  
Sandy . . . . . RACHEL MINER  
Doug . . . . . STEVE KEY  
Heather . . . . . REBECCA JORDAN  
Beth . . . . . AMY LANDECKER

The original New York production of *Blue Surge* was presented by The Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival, George C. Wolfe, producer, on April 21, 2002. It was directed by Robert Falls. Sets were designed by Walt Spangler, costumes by Birgit Rattenborg Wise, lights by Michael Philippi and sound by Richard Woodbury. The assistant director was Valentina Fratti, the production stage manager was Katherine Lee Boyer and the stage manager was Jennifer O’Byrne. The cast was as follows:

Curt . . . . . JOE MURPHY  
Sandy . . . . . RACHEL MINER  
Doug . . . . . STEVE KEY  
Heather . . . . . COLLEEN WERTHMANN  
Beth . . . . . AMY LANDECKER

*Blue Surge* was created with funds from the Prince Prize for Commissioning Original Work, which was awarded to Rebecca Gilman and the Goodman Theatre in 2000.

# **BLUE SURGE**

A Play in Two Acts  
For 2 Men and 3 Women

## **CHARACTERS**

CURT, 38

SANDY, 19

DOUG, 38

HEATHER, 25

BETH, 38

## **TIME and PLACE**

A mid-sized city in the Midwest, in the present.

Note: Sandy and Heather are plain, Midwestern girls. They do not look like movie stars.

# ACT ONE

AT RISE: *A room in a massage parlor, somewhere in the Midwest, in the fall. There is a straight-backed chair and a platform, built to be a massage table but it is larger. The room is brightly lit and businesslike. A small boom box sits on a shelf next to some jars and bottles.*

*CURT and SANDY enter. CURT is fully dressed in jeans, sweatshirt and coat, a little nervous. SANDY wears a short silk robe and high heels. She is young, thin and flat-chested, not a knock-out at all.*

SANDY. Okay. Before we start the massage, I need you to sign this thing— *(Hands him a piece of paper.)*

CURT. What is it?

SANDY. Just a thing. *(He starts to read it. She looks at him.)* It just says that we're not responsible for any pre-existing medical conditions. *(He's still reading.)* So, just basically, you need to sign it before we can get started.

CURT. Okay. *(He signs it, hands it to her.)*

SANDY. Okay— *(Looks at paper.)* Bill. I just gotta take this out front, so why don't you go ahead and get undressed and when I get back we'll get started.

CURT. Okay.

*(She exits. CURT looks around, then takes off his work boots, shirt, pants. When he gets to his underwear he stops. He's wearing briefs. He decides to leave them on. He sits down on the chair and waits. Beat. SANDY returns. She takes a look at him.)*

SANDY. You're going to leave your underwear on?

CURT. Should I take them off?

SANDY. No. However you're comfortable's fine. *(Beat. They stand there.)* So what do you want?

CURT. What can you offer?

SANDY. Well, a full body massage is twenty-five, or I can do just your back for fifteen.

CURT. Okay. *(CURT reaches in his pants and pulls out sixty dollars, hands it to SANDY.)*

SANDY. Sixty dollars? What's that for?

CURT. I thought, maybe, we could do something a little extra?

SANDY. Like what?

CURT. Well. How about a full-release massage?

SANDY. What's that?

CURT. A full-release massage.

SANDY. I'm not familiar with that term. What does that mean?

CURT. Okay. *(He gets more money from his wallet.)* Would you know what I was talking about for a hundred?

SANDY. Look, I know what you're doing, and you're not gonna get laid, okay? You're not gonna get a handjob, you're not gonna get a blowjob. I'm a masseuse. I'm trained in the art of therapeutic massage. I have a license.

CURT. Okay—



SANDY (*overlapping*). It's insulting when people come in here and they insult my profession and they think I'm a whore.

CURT. Okay, I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. (*Beat.*) So I guess I'll just take the fifteen-dollar one.

SANDY. What?

CURT. You said there was a fifteen-dollar one?

SANDY. Oh. You mean the back massage?

CURT. Yeah.

SANDY. Oh. Okay. (*Small beat.*) I guess you better get on the table.

CURT. Yeah.

SANDY. Okay. (*CURT gets on the table. It's not a real massage table, so he has to hold up his head. SANDY turns and looks vaguely at the shelf behind her.*) Let me just find some oil here. (*She takes down a bottle and opens it. Trying to be nice; as if nothing happened.*) So. What do you do?

CURT. I work construction.

SANDY. Oh yeah? (*She clumsily squirts a lot of oil on him.*) Oops.

CURT. Do you mind not putting so much on me? I don't want my shirt to stick to me.

SANDY. Sorry. (*She wipes the oil off with a towel.*)

CURT. What's that smell?

SANDY. The oil. It's called "spice."

CURT. It smells like BENGAY.

SANDY. Yeah. I was wondering what it smelled like.

CURT. Do you have anything else?

SANDY. We have one smells like coconut. (*She gets the bottle for him, lets him smell it.*) It always reminds me of Panama City.

CURT. What's that?

SANDY. A city. In Florida.

CURT. I've never been to Florida.

SANDY. No way, you should go.

CURT. I guess I don't really want to smell like any thing. Is my point.

SANDY. Your choice. *(Turns back to the shelf.)* How about baby oil? Unscented.

CURT. Okay. *(She gets the baby oil and rubs some on her hands, then she begins awkwardly rubbing his back.)*

SANDY. Construction, huh?

CURT. Yeah.

SANDY *(beat)*. That's funny about the BENGAY. I hadn't thought about BENGAY in a long time.

CURT. Yeah?

SANDY. My dad used to wear it.

CURT. What'd he do?

SANDY. He was a trucker. His neck got stiff.

CURT. Is he still alive?

SANDY. Sure he's alive. I don't know where he is, but he's alive. *(CURT laughs.)* I guess that did sound kind of funny, didn't it?

CURT. Yeah. *(Beat.)* It reminds of me of high school football. BENGAY. They were always rubbing it on you. If you ripped your arm off they'd rub BENGAY on it.

SANDY. Who'd you play for?

CURT. Hewitt.

SANDY. No way. I went to Huffman.

CURT. Huffman? Huffman always kicked our ass.

SANDY. Yeah, but our cheerleaders were cows. *(They laugh. Beat. They're both self-conscious.)*

CURT. How long have you been doing this?

SANDY. I've been a massage therapist for three months.

CURT. How old are you?

SANDY. Twenty-one.

CURT. No you're not. (*She thinks about this then she pokes him.*) Ow.

SANDY. Did that hurt?

CURT. Yes.

SANDY. There's a knot in your back. Right there. (*She pokes at it.*)

CURT. Ow!

SANDY. How do you think that happened?

CURT. It's a tension thing.

SANDY. Well you need to relax.

CURT. Well could you help me relax?

SANDY. I am. I'm giving you a massage.

CURT. No you're not you're just poking me. (*Small beat.*)

SANDY. Sorry. (*She rubs his neck.*) Is that better?

CURT. Yeah. (*She rubs.*)

SANDY. How come you're so tense?

CURT. I don't know. My job.

SANDY. Maybe you should find some other line of work.

CURT. I don't know how to do anything else.

SANDY. Maybe you should learn.

CURT. I never went to college. I don't know what else I'm going to do. (*Beat.*) Sometimes, I get so tense I can't move my head.

SANDY. That's awful.

CURT. Yeah. When it happens, I feel like I have a big stump on my shoulders. (*Small beat.*) Which I pretty much do. Have a big, scowling stump on my shoulders.

SANDY (*laughs, thinks*). Okay. I got just the thing for you.

CURT. Oh yeah?

SANDY. Yeah. This is something I do. Now lay down flat, okay?

CURT. What are you going to do?

SANDY. Just trust me, okay? Lay down. (*CURT turns his head to the side and lies down.*) Now close your eyes and just breathe slow. Deep and slow. (*She begins gently rubbing circles on his back, the way a mother would rub her child's back.*) Good. Now think about a place you like. Some place you really like to be at and try and imagine that you're there. Maybe a place with flowers, or the beach. It's a warm place. It's sunny. Or it's cool, shady. Nice though. Wherever it is. But you have to pick it. It's someplace you really love. (*Beat.*) One of those streets by the lake maybe. With the houses? With the yards?

CURT. Yeah?

SANDY. Whatever. You pick it. Now imagine you're there. And all your worries...all your worries are faded off. Because it's where you want to be. This isn't something in the future. You're there now and you're going to stay there. In your good...secret place. (*She rubs his back for a long while, silent. She stares into space. Pause. Then SANDY is suddenly self-conscious. She stops, steps back, stands there for a moment, looking at him. He doesn't move. SANDY doesn't know what to do. She tentatively taps him on the shoulder. Softly.*) Are you asleep?

CURT. What? (*He reluctantly looks up.*)

SANDY. You okay?

CURT. Yeah. (*Embarrassed.*) Thanks. That was nice. (*He sits up.*)

SANDY. Sure. (*SANDY picks up the money he put down and counts out fifteen dollars, holds out the rest.*) Here's your change.

CURT. Keep it. I...took up your time.

SANDY. Thanks. Do you want me to dress you?

CURT. What?

SANDY. Sometimes, clients like it if we help them get dressed?

CURT. No. That's okay. I can do it. (*He starts getting dressed. SANDY cleans off the table. CURT watches her.*) So when's the last time you went to Florida?

SANDY. I don't know. (*Beat.*) Senior year.

CURT. When was that?

SANDY. Last spring. Why?

CURT. No reason. Just making conversation while I awkwardly get dressed.

SANDY (*laughs. Beat*). When I was a kid, when my mom'd take me to the doctor, if the doctor made me take my shirt off, my mom would take it and sit on it. Because it was always so cold in the doctor's office and he'd put that cold stethoscope on you and all. Then when the examination was over, my mom would hand me back my shirt and it'd be all warm, from where she was sitting on it.

CURT. That was nice.

SANDY. I always think something like that would be nice around here. Maybe a little warming oven or something. Or those heat lamps, like in restaurants. Then your clothes would be all toasty. (*CURT smiles, finishes getting dressed.*)

CURT. Thanks for the massage.

SANDY. I'm sorry I poked you.

CURT. That's okay.

SANDY. I don't really know what I'm doing.

CURT. It's okay. Neither do I. (*Blackout.*)

## SCENE TWO

*The same room, a week later. DOUG enters with HEATHER. HEATHER is wearing a teddy and high heels.*

HEATHER. You want a massage today, honey?

DOUG. Oh yeah.

HEATHER. Okay, you'll need to sign this form here. (*She finds a piece of paper, he signs without looking at it.*)

Okay. Why don't you get undressed, and I'll take this up front, then when I come back we can start.

DOUG. Sweet. (*She exits. DOUG strips completely without reservation, remains standing, naked. HEATHER enters.*)

HEATHER. Excellent. Now what would you like?

DOUG. I don't know what I'm in the mood for today.

What do you think we should do?

HEATHER. Why don't you tell me what you want?

DOUG. What can you offer?

HEATHER. I don't want to make an offer, because sometimes, people have different things in mind, then I offer up something and it sort of stymies their imagination.

DOUG. You're cute.

HEATHER. Thanks. What do you want to do?

DOUG. Um, what about a full-release massage?

HEATHER. Sure.

DOUG. How much does that cost?

HEATHER. Forty.

DOUG. Oh. Well what can I get for a hundred?

HEATHER. A hundred can definitely buy you some fun.

DOUG. Would you fuck me for a hundred?

HEATHER. I'd fuck you for two.

DOUG. Two. Hey. How much do you charge for anal?

HEATHER (*decides*). Four. So. What'll it be?

DOUG. Oh! Well, um, hang on a second. (*He reaches for his pants, pulls out a wallet. Shows her his badge.*)

Okay. What I really want is...you're under arrest for solicitation!

HEATHER (*overlapping with "arrest"*). Oh fuck me!

DOUG. You have the right to remain silent.

HEATHER. I didn't do anything!

DOUG (*overlapping*). Anything you say may be used against you in a court of law.

HEATHER. You totally entrapped me! This was total entrapment!

DOUG (*overlapping*). You have the right to an attorney. If you cannot afford one—

HEATHER. This is so fucking not gonna stick!

DOUG. One will be appointed to you by the court.

HEATHER. I can't believe this! I'm calling my lawyer right now. You picked the wrong person to fuck with, buddy.

DOUG. Do you understand these rights as they have been read to you?

HEATHER. Fuck you. You don't have anything on me.

DOUG. Oh yeah? (*He reaches into his jacket pocket.*)

HEATHER. Yeah. What do you think? I never been busted? (*DOUG pulls out a tape recorder.*) Oh you taped that? Excellent. Glad to hear it. Dumbass.

DOUG. I'm not the dumbass. You're the dumbass, sister. Your dumb ass is grass. We're shutting this place down. Call in the undertaker, because the wrecking crew is here. (*HEATHER starts to giggle.*) I don't care if you respect the man, as long as you respect the badge.

HEATHER. You should put on some pants. (*Blackout.*)

### SCENE THREE

*Curt and Doug's office at the police station, later that day. It has a table and chairs, and a telephone. There might be a two-way mirror. SANDY, in sweatpants and a sweatshirt, sits alone. CURT enters, carrying a file. He and DOUG both wear their street clothes (jeans, flannel shirts, work boots) at the station.*

CURT. Hi.

SANDY (*surprised*). Hi.

CURT (*consults the file*). Sandy?

SANDY. Yeah.

CURT. You hit the jackpot today, Sandy. I'm letting you go.

SANDY. Seriously?

CURT. Yep.

SANDY. I don't have to pay a fine or anything?

CURT. No. I should warn you though; next time, you won't get off so easy. You don't have a record. I'd like to see you keep it that way.



SANDY. Yessir.

CURT. I just need you to answer one question. Did you know I was a cop? (*Beat. She doesn't answer.*) Off the record.

SANDY. Yeah.

CURT. How?

SANDY. You did n't take off your un der wear.

CURT (*mad*). Seriously?

SANDY. That's how we know.

CURT. Because I didn't take off my underwear? Jesus Christ.

SANDY. But then I wasn't sure. I mean, you went ahead and asked for a massage.

CURT. I didn't want to blow my cover.

SANDY. See? I didn't know.

CURT. Is that why you were so nice?

SANDY. What?

CURT. You were just...you didn't have to do all that. The visualization thing.

SANDY. I don't know.

CURT. Where'd you learn that?

SANDY. I don't know.

CURT. Is that what you do? In a massage?

SANDY. I guess.

CURT. With everybody?

SANDY. I don't know. It depends. (*Beat.*) So can I go?

CURT. Yeah.

(*DOUG enters.*)

DOUG. Can you believe this shit? I totally did not entrap that girl.