

Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest you read the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

When We Get Good Again

By

JAMES MCLINDON

Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: www.dramaticpublishing.com, or we may be contacted by mail at: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., 311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play that are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

©MMXXIII by
JAMES MCLINDON

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(WHEN WE GET GOOD AGAIN)

ISBN: 978-1-61959-294-0

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., of Woodstock, Illinois.”

In addition, all producers of the play must include the following acknowledgment on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and on all advertising and promotional materials:

“*When We Get Good Again* was originally produced by Circuit Playhouse, Inc., as a world premiere, opening on Jan. 10, 2020, at TheatreWorks on the Square in Memphis, Tenn. Michael Detroit, Executive Producer.
Jordan Nichols, NewWorks@TheWorks Producer.”

When We Get Good Again was originally produced by Circuit Playhouse, Inc., as a world premiere, opening on Jan. 10, 2020, at TheatreWorks on the Square in Memphis, Tenn. Michael Detroit, Executive Producer. Jordan Nichols, NewWorks@TheWorks Producer.

CAST:

TRACY Brooke Papritz
PERRY Gabe Beutel-Gunn
ROY Josh Tucker
NADIYA.....Caroline Simpson

PRODUCTION:

Director Courtney Oliver
Production Manager/Technical Director..... Phillip Huguen
Stage ManagerAnthony T. James
Costume Designer..... Grace Wylie
Lighting Designer Terry Eikleberry
Scenic DesignerMegan Ward
Sound Designer..... Carter McHann

The play was also produced at the Miami University Center for the Performing Arts in Oxford, Ohio.

CAST:

NADIYA.....Jordan Meyers
PERRY Tanner McCormick
ROY Jesse Dever
TRACY Jamie Chmielewski

PRODUCTION:

Director Lewis Magruder

When We Get Good Again

CHARACTERS

TRACY (w): College student, around 21.

PERRY (m): Around 30.

ROY (m): College hockey player, around 21.

NADIYA (w): Ukrainian college student, 18.

SCENES:

ACT I

Scene 1: The Lords of Java Coffee House in December; 12 days until the end of finals week.

Scene 2: The coffee shop, the next day; 11 days to go.

Scene 3: The coffee shop, two days later; nine days to go.

Scene 4: The coffee shop, two days later; seven days to go.

ACT II:

Scene 1: The coffee shop, the next day; six days to go.

Scene 2: The coffee shop, the next day; five days to go.

Scene 3: The coffee shop, the next day; four days to go.

Scene 4: The coffee shop, the next day; three days to go.

Scene 5: The coffee shop, two days later; one day to go.

Scene 6: The coffee shop, later that day; still one day to go.

PRODUCTION NOTES

CASTING: All characters may be any race.

SETTING: A corner of the Lords of Java Coffee House (definitely not a chain) in a small New England college town, the kind where they sell fair-trade, organic coffee and the soy milk container is bigger than the half-and-half one because it has to be. A big handwritten sign announces: “The 12 Days of Reading Period and Finals Week: Days Remaining” The number underneath when the play begins is “12.” The condition of the shop will wilt over the course of the play as the pressures of finals week affect the student workers and patrons alike. A woody, pleasingly worn folksiness to the place is a nice approach as is a bulletin board or two overburdened with college-style notices. A number of games available to patrons sit on a counter including a Jenga game in progress. The work of local artists might adorn the walls. Several tables and chairs, probably mismatched, as well as a worn sofa and an easy chair or two for the patrons are all that are really essential. The coffee shop has two entrances, both offstage, one R and one L.

DIALOGUE: Words inside parenthesis before a dash are there primarily to inform the actor of what she would have said had she not been interrupted by another or herself. Some or all of this material may be spoken if necessary to help sell the interruption.

When We Get Good Again

ACT I

Scene 1

(A corner of the Lords of Java Coffee House. It is December, as evidenced by the holiday decorations, which are decidedly ironic. The big finals countdown sign is set to “12.” PERRY sits at a table with a laptop, cup of coffee and cellphone. He is writing intently, occasionally pausing to look something up in a book. He is non-athletic, smart, full of nervous energy and driven by a core insecurity that he tries to cover with bravado. His attempts to exude command and power meet with varying degrees of success. He sports a winter scarf for style as much as warmth in a part of the world where both are often lacking. TRACY enters, looking around. She is very bright, very guarded and not very affluent, the last of which she may attempt to cover with a little thrift shop flair. She spots PERRY and approaches his table.)

TRACY. Are you Perry?

PERRY *(glancing up at her briefly)*. Maybe.

TRACY. Well ... you texted you'd be wearing a purple scarf and you're the only one here in the Lords of Java Coffee House *(wearing a purple scarf)*—

PERRY. This “Perry” guy texted he'd be wearing a purple scarf.

TRACY. How do you know what Perry texted if you're not Perry?

PERRY. No, you just said Perry sa(id)—look, how about you identify yourself.

TRACY. I'm Tracy, I texted you about a paper, and you're Perry, Perry.

PERRY. So you keep calling me. So, maybe I'm Perry—

TRACY. Oh my god.

(TRACY pulls out her phone and taps to call a contact while PERRY talks. He doesn't notice.)

PERRY. And maybe I'm not. But I need to verify (your identity)—

(PERRY's ringtone sounds.)

PERRY *(cont'd)*. Excuse me. *(Answering the phone.)* Hello?

TRACY. Hi, Perry.

PERRY *(realizing, pause)*. OK, so I'm Perry.

TRACY. Awesome. Let's go, I have to be at work in a few minutes—

(TRACY starts to sit at his table.)

PERRY. No! You never sit at my table. You sit there. *(Points.)*

TRACY *(sitting as directed at the adjoining table)*. Why?

PERRY. Don't look at me when we talk. And don't ever call me Perry again. My code name is Pierce. We follow N.A.I. protocol to avoid trouble: No. Apparent. Interaction. N.A.I. We never apparently interact, we're just two people randomly sitting next to each other, OK? You have the money?

TRACY. Cash is a pain in the ass. You should let me just transfer it to you.

PERRY. No paper trail. Do you have cash or not?

TRACY *(digging it out of her pocket)*. Yeah, right here—

PERRY *(hissing fiercely)*. Stop it, stop it, STOP IT! You don't just hand it to me. Go and order a double-bacon breakfast sandwich and a glazed cinnamon roll. Put the money in the paper bag, then return to your seat—

TRACY. Won't the money get all sticky?

PERRY. Put it outside the wax paper, and then wait till I tap my heel twice. (*Demonstrating.*) That means no one is looking. Then you will push it to the floor.

TRACY. Won't everyone look up when all this food falls on the floor?

PERRY. You know what, forget it. Just leave. C'mon, go, go.

TRACY. OK, OK, sorry. Where's the paper?

PERRY (*pointing to his laptop and smiling*). It's been sitting right here in front of you this whole (time)—

(TRACY grabs the laptop and begins to read the paper. PERRY lunges for it, but she holds it out of his reach.)

PERRY (*cont'd*). Hey! Give that back!

TRACY. People are staring, Perry ...

(Remembering himself, PERRY looks around the coffee shop, then sits back down. He is quietly freaking out.)

PERRY. Shit! Are you campus po-po, cuz this café is across the street from campus, so you've got no jurisdiction—

TRACY (*spotting something*). What is this crap? "The ideal world for which Dickens argued was actually a return to the benevolent, paternalistic rural England that had existed prior to the Industrial Revolution"?

PERRY. What's your problem?

TRACY. My problem is it's 180-degrees wrong.

PERRY. Because that world never actually existed, except in Dickens' sentimentally fevered imagination, right?

TRACY. Exactly, he was—wait, you know it's wrong?

PERRY. Of course. That right there is one of the many reasons why my service is so awesome.

TRACY. Because you sell term papers with mistakes!?! (*Putting his laptop back on his table.*) Well, thanks for screwing up my A-average!

PERRY. A couple of unimportant strategic errors, that's key. What do you think happens when a lousy student suddenly hands in a brilliant analysis of *Bleak House's* themes? Her professor gets suspicious and Googles excerpts until they find the original article that the writer in Mumbai or Manila or wherever plagiarized. And she's screwed, suspended or expelled, all because her term paper service has no feel for the game.

TRACY. Well, and because she cheated.

PERRY. Just like you.

(TRACY stares at him, but does not respond. An awkward pause. PERRY, ever the salesman, steers away from it.)

PERRY (*cont'd*). I went to school in the Valley, I know the professors and the curricula of each of the Five Colleges. That's why my locally sourced term papers are in such high demand—

TRACY. If you're so great, why'd you assume I'm stupid?

PERRY. Hey, many paths lead to my door: lazy and rich, functionally illiterate, substance-abusing, English as a second language. But never smart before. Why are you and your A-average even here?

TRACY. I need to graduate in three years to save money, which means I'm working two jobs to pay for it. I've got four papers and two finals due by tomorrow alone.

PERRY. No shit.

TRACY. I could churn out a C in a couple of hours, but I need A's for law school.

PERRY. Two hours? That's fast, even for a C paper.

TRACY. Yep.

PERRY. Well, one C will hardly keep you out of law school.

TRACY. One C might keep me out of Harvard or Stanford.

PERRY. Wow. So, you want to be rich and powerful.

TRACY. I want to do public interest law.

PERRY. Oh, so you want to be poor and gadfly-ish.

TRACY. I'm already poor.

PERRY. Then you should want to be rich.

TRACY. I've had enough of rich kids the last two and a half years.

PERRY. So they've had a few advantages, get over it.

TRACY. A few? Like private preschools, grade schools, high schools and tutors? And I'm not even counting the ones whose parents Photoshop them onto the water polo team and bribe the college coach to get them in. Which they don't even need to do because a kid with an alum for a parent has a seven times greater chance of getting into most colleges than—

PERRY. How do you even know that?

TRACY. I researched it.

PERRY. Why?

TRACY. Because ... I wasn't sure I could do this.

PERRY. Do what? Stick it to the man by buying a term paper?

TRACY. Fuck you.

PERRY. Besides, you hardly need a Harvard law degree to get landlords to turn up the heat or whatever.

TRACY. There aren't very many public interest jobs. To get one where you can make a real difference, you pretty much do have to go to Harvard.

PERRY. Ah, idealism. I had friends who went to law school to do something groovy: Civil rights, women's rights, LGBTQIA rights. But \$200,000 of debt later, they're all pretty much doing corporate rights.

TRACY. The best schools forgive your loans. Which is another reason I need A's.

PERRY. Oh, got it, Jean Valjean. You can break the rules as long as you're serving a greater good.

TRACY. It's the same grade I would've gotten if I didn't have to work twenty-five hours a week. (*Scanning the paper on the laptop again.*) I guess if I fix that mistake, it's really ... (*Grudgingly.*) pretty OK.

PERRY. Oh, god, stop, I'm blushing. How smart are you anyway?

TRACY. 4.0 smart.

PERRY. Where do you work?

TRACY. Food service. I'm a dishwasher, it's awesome.

PERRY. What if I told you, you could work half as hard for twice as much?

TRACY. What, you mean work for you?

PERRY. Well, don't say it like I asked you to run my meth lab.

TRACY. No thanks.

PERRY. I don't corrupt these kids, you know. They're just gonna buy a paper somewhere else.

(A very long pause.)

TRACY. What if we get caught?

PERRY. How? We use this back corner behind the baristas cuz it's always empty. Clients only meet their writer, writers only meet me. Learned that from a master's thesis I sold on revolutionary cells in Tsarist Russia.

TRACY (*like a statement rather than a question*). You don't have any other writers, do you?

PERRY. That's proprietary info. If a writer ever gets caught, he can't give anybody else up, even under torture, cuz he won't know anybody else.

TRACY. I would totally give you up under torture. And not very much torture either. *(Pulling out the money.)* Here.

PERRY. Put that away! Sit down and wait for the all-clear—!

TRACY. I'm gonna be late for work! *(Pulling a memory stick out of the side of the laptop.)* I assume the paper is on this? *(Tossing the money on the ground.)* There's your money.

(TRACY walks off. PERRY hisses after her.)

PERRY. Tracy! Think about what I said!

(TRACY EXITS. PERRY puts his foot on the money, then notices TRACY's hat. He picks it up and gazes at it, then pockets it. Attempting to look casual, he reaches for the money until his head rests sideways on his table. He can't quite get it. Lights down.)

Scene 2

(The coffee shop, the next day. Eleven days remain until the end of finals week. PERRY and ROY sit side-by-side, looking straight ahead. PERRY surveys the room, in control as always around ROY, and enjoying it. ROY, a student and hockey player, looks around, then turns to PERRY.)

ROY. I don't think anybody's looking—

PERRY *(hissing)*. N.A.I.!

(ROY immediately looks straight ahead. PERRY relaxes.)

PERRY *(cont'd)*. OK, she's starting on a latte. What do you need?

ROY. Hell, Pierce, we've got, like, practice every day this week for the holiday tournament in Maine, so—

PERRY. Tell me what, not why, Roger. I'm not your girlfriend.

ROY. Yeah, OK, well, modern American fiction, I need a term paper—

PERRY. No worries. What else?

ROY. Econ 350, game theory.

PERRY. For Goldstein? No worries. What else?

ROY. Poli Sci for Ericsson.

PERRY. God, please, not his Reagan rhetoric course.

ROY. Yeah, the take-home final.

PERRY. OK. Worries. He hates the hockey team so he's gonna go through your paper with a fine-tooth comb. Why does he hate you guys so much anyway?

ROY (*smiling*). No reason.

PERRY. C'mon, Roger.

ROY. OK, a couple years ago, he failed our goalie, Tommy, and so we didn't even make the playoffs. Tommy gets up on the keg at our breakup party and goes, "Real teammates would've had my back," and we're all like, "Crap, he's right, we suck!" So, you know, then we had a duty, right?

PERRY. To do what?

ROY. Cover Ericsson's house with toilet paper. Dude, an entire pallet of Scott's tissue from Costco, the YouTube video is epic—

PERRY. I can't help you on that one. It's a bear and I'm just too backed up right now—

ROY (*turning toward him*). Pierce, man, don't tell me this—!

PERRY. N.A.I.!

ROY. Dude, I'm a borderline fail as it is. I can't get suspended senior year, man, we're fifth-ranked in the country.

(*TRACY enters.*)

PERRY. Look, I don't want to lose (a top client either, but)—

TRACY. You should really look at people when you talk to them, Perry. The barista will think you've gone off your meds.

(ROY bursts out laughing. PERRY is embarrassed. ROY suddenly remembers N.A.I. and stops.)

ROY. Yeah, I don't know him.

(TRACY sits on the other side of PERRY. ROY is nervous.)

PERRY. At ease, Roger. Eyes forward, Taylor.

(As they talk, ROY and PERRY look straight ahead.)

TRACY. Who's Taylor?

PERRY *(quietly to her)*. Taylor is your code name because you will tailor your work to the client's needs. I'm Pierce because of my piercing intellect. *(Nodding sagely.)* Branding. He's Roger because he's very agreeable, like "Roger that." Eyes forward now.

(TRACY complies.)

PERRY *(cont'd)*. Taylor, from the swanky girl's college across the river, is the newest member of my little family.

TRACY. I didn't say that.

PERRY. Then why are you here? Taylor, meet Roger.

TRACY. It's really Tracy.

ROY. Oh, hey, I'm really Roy.

PERRY. Roy! I mean, Roger! Jesus, c'mon, you guys!

ROY. Sorry, Perry—

PERRY. It's Pierce! Roger, would you excuse us for a few minutes?

ROY. Um, yeah, sure.

(ROY exits. As they talk, PERRY and TRACY look straight ahead.)

PERRY. I knew I'd convince you—

TRACY. I want fifty percent of what you charge for a paper.

PERRY. The going rate is ten.

TRACY. Maybe in Manila it's ten, but I'm here, English is my first language, and I know the courses and professors, so I get more.

PERRY. Twenty percent. Final offer.

TRACY. I'd rather wash dishes.

(TRACY starts to walk away. PERRY waits as long as he can.)

PERRY. All right, I'll give you a third! *If you can start immediately.*

TRACY *(pause)*. OK.

PERRY. How many more can you take on?

TRACY. Just a couple. I'm going to see if I can get by with that and keep one of my other jobs.

PERRY. And will that mean you're only half cheating?

TRACY. Fuck you.

PERRY. Oh, and your favorite expletive reminds me, I've been tolerant up till now, but you cannot act out like that around my clients. If you're that pissed your parents went long in mortgage-backed derivatives or crypto or whatever it was that could make the family of a white girl at your school poor, please, take it out on them.

TRACY. My dad hasn't worked in four years.

PERRY. And he's already blown through his golden parachute?

TRACY. Machinists who get laid off don't get parachutes when their company moves offshore. My mom's a teacher's aide.

PERRY. Oh.

TRACY. I was lucky. I got a partial scholarship, so I didn't have to join the army to pay for college, assuming I lived.

PERRY. No wonder you're so angry. (*Sincerely.*) Hey, I'd be angry, too.

TRACY. So when do I get paid? For this to work, I need to earn.

PERRY. You will. I'll tally up over break and pay you by New Year's.

TRACY. That's too late. I haven't paid tuition for next semester yet.

PERRY. Ohhhhhhh. So. You weren't quite making it, even working two jobs. Were you?

TRACY. I was going to ask for more shifts in the spring.

PERRY (*relishing it*). But that's too late. You can't register for next semester till you've paid. Which means, you'll have to register late, and won't be able to get into all the courses you need to finish off your major. Which means the whole graduate-in-three-years-to-save-a-bundle thing won't be happening, will it? And that'll cost you, what? Tens of thousands more to graduate? So ... I can pay you less. Cuz you. Are. Desperate.

(*A long pause.*)

PERRY (*cont'd*). Taylor, come on, you're family now! I'm not gonna screw you. We'll get you paid off in time to register, I promise.

TRACY. Really?

PERRY. Yeah, really. But—always remember this—I am very loyal.

TRACY. OK.

PERRY. Which means you need to be loyal back. So, like, get with my program and lighten up on the Days of Rage.