

The 20-Year Crush

A Two-Act Comedy

By
Carl L. Williams

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Martie's idyllic memories of a poet from her college years rise again when he reappears, willing and able to continue the romance. Her regular-guy husband, who'd rather bowl than read poetry, seems a poor match against the dashing, artistic Brook Oliphant. Martie's best friend Janice, who also knew the suave poet when he was a teaching assistant, is drawn to Brook again as well, especially now that she is recently divorced. Suddenly, their nostalgic used-to-be's contend with the ordinary here-and-now – until the women meet one of the professor's current students. They discover that Brook uses the same old poem to romance all his lady friends and students. Will they separate his iambic from his pentameter or, at the very least, have him arrested for the reckless use of a concealed poem? Ultimately, Martie realizes the four rhyming lines Tom writes are much sweeter than Brook's "poetic license" will ever be.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

The 20-Year Crush, originally entitled *Poetic License*, won the 2002 Fort Bend (TX) Theatre New Play Contest and premiered there July 5 - August 3, 2002.

CAST:

Martie Kyle Debra Powell
Janice Starkwell S. Riley
Tom Kyle Adam Kaminsky
Brook Oliphant..... Don Gunther
Samantha Uberhausen Ashley Heathcock
Directed by Steve Carpentier.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 m, 3 w)

MARTIE KYLE: Publisher's editor, 40, attractive, bored with her life.

JANICE STARKWELL: Martie's best friend and neighbor, 40, slightly overweight, low self-esteem.

TOM KYLE: Martie's husband, 40, construction foreman, a big sort of guy, good-natured.

BROOK OLIPHANT: College professor and poet, 40s, attractive, charming, unethical in romance.

SAMANTHA UBERHAUSEN: A college student, 20, serious and self-possessed.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1: Living room in suburbia, Saturday afternoon.

Scene 2: The same, eight o'clock that evening.

Scene 3: The same, two hours later.

ACT II

Scene 1: The same, one week later, Saturday afternoon.

Scene 2: The same, two hours later.

PROPS

Keys and purse	Book of poetry
Bowling ball and bag	Phone
Serving tray	Glasses, ice bucket
Liquor bottle	Cokes
Magazines	Laundry and basket
Typed poem	Printed T-shirt

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: MARTIE sits reading a slim volume of poetry. Emotionally touched, she closes the book.)

MARTIE: So wonderful.

(A sudden KNOCK causes her to pull herself together. JANICE, dressed sloppily, opens the front door, sticks her head in.)

JANICE: Martie? Martie!

MARTIE: *(Excited.)* Janice, come in!

JANICE: I saw you drive in a while ago, and I just couldn't wait to hear. Did you see him?

MARTIE: *(Rises, eager to talk.)* I saw him, I talked with him, I bought his book!

JANICE: Let me see, let me see!

MARTIE: A genuine first edition. *(Hands HER the book.)*

JANICE: *(Reads cover.)* "Whispers from the Farthest, Whispers in the Near."

MARTIE: The title's from the first poem.

JANICE: By Brook Oliphant. Does it have his picture?

MARTIE: Inside the cover.

JANICE: *(Opens the book.)* Ooooo. He still looks *good* after twenty years. Is it touched up?

MARTIE: He looks the same as his picture.

JANICE: I wish I could've gone with you, but when the plumber is coming, you gotta stay by your sewer line.

MARTIE: Did he get it fixed?

JANICE: Yeah, but he tells me I've got aggressive roots. That is, my tree has aggressive roots.

MARTIE: That means they'll grow back and cause more trouble.

JANICE: I don't want to hear about trouble. I want to hear about Brook.

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MARTIE: There weren't that many people in line at the bookstore. I guess poetry's not a big seller.

JANICE: Did he recognize you?

MARTIE: Of course he recognized me--what do you think? Turn the flyleaf.

JANICE: An inscription!

MARTIE: (*Self-deprecating.*) Yeah, well

JANICE: "To Martie Montgomery, the brightest of students and the dearest of friends." Montgomery? Not Martie Kyle?

MARTIE: He knew me as Montgomery in class.

JANICE: I wonder if he'd still recognize *me*. After all, I've added a few pounds ... five or ten ... okay, twenty or thirty.

MARTIE: You were way too thin in college.

JANICE: That's the great thing about friends ... they know just when to lie. So tell me what he's like. Is he still ...? (*Makes a wordless, all-encompassing gesture.*)

MARTIE: Charming? Intelligent? Thoughtful? Yes, all those things.

JANICE: And married by now, I suppose.

MARTIE: I didn't ask him.

JANICE: Hmmmm.

MARTIE: I just didn't think of it. I told him *I* was married.

JANICE: How did that come up? "Hello, I'm married"?

MARTIE: He asked me.

JANICE: Hmmmm.

MARTIE: Will you stop that?

JANICE: So, did you tell Tom where you were going this afternoon?

MARTIE: Why shouldn't I tell him?

JANICE: No reason at all not to tell him.

MARTIE: He knows I like poetry.

JANICE: Does he know you like poets?

MARTIE: Janice, enough. Read.

(JANICE opens the book to the first poem. MARTIE looks transported as Janice reads.)

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JANICE: "Crescent wishes on silver midnights,
dreaming past the dying
and aware.

Unseen fires behind the lights,
stirring through the blackness,
everywhere between.

Whispers from the farthest,
then whispers in the near,
all one whisper, beckoning.

Unheard answers, longed for
in promises of forever.

Falling thoughts from rising too high,
reaching toward wonders--
what sleep? what dawn?"

MARTIE: Brook was always so good with language.

JANICE: And not just language.

MARTIE: You should be ashamed.

JANICE: Well? It's true. At least everyone said it was true.
Not that I would know, of course.

MARTIE: Campus rumors. I doubt if there was a girl in class
who wasn't infatuated with him.

JANICE: Men like Brook are hard to find, and don't think I
haven't looked.

MARTIE: Lately you seem to have developed a one-track
mind.

JANICE: With no train in sight. Eligible men our age are an
endangered species.

MARTIE: I don't know why you're complaining. I see men
coming in and out of your house all the time. Plumbers,
electricians, painters

JANICE: Oh, ha ha ha. I should've taken cash instead of the
house when Frank divorced me. Nothing but one repair after
another, and I have to pay all these guys. But dating ...
that's a different story. A short story.

MARTIE: How about that guy who moved in down the street?
He's single and looks able-bodied, always out working in his
yard. Maybe you could casually walk by and ask him about
fertilizer or something.

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JANICE: That's it ... the subtle approach. Hey big boy, how would you like to come over and mow my grass? Besides, I already paraded by him, smiled, said hi. No response.

MARTIE: What does he know? It's his loss.

JANICE: I feel like a pork roast that's still in the meat case a week after its "sell-by" date.

MARTIE: You're exaggerating.

JANICE: Facts are facts. I'm not some cutesy little lamb chop that can flick her skirt and catch every man's eye.

MARTIE: You don't have to catch every man's eye.

JANICE: I couldn't even hold on to a stupid middle-aged man who suddenly wanted to dump his wife and stick her with a house starting to sag as much as she is.

MARTIE: I am not giving you any more sympathy on this. You enjoy it too much.

JANICE: You're the meanest best friend I ever had. (*Looks at book again.*) Why couldn't life stay the way it was in college? When everything was still possible ... when everything was

MARTIE: Poetic.

JANICE: Yes.

MARTIE: Instead of mundane.

(At that moment, TOM enters through the front door with a bowling ball bag. MARTIE quickly takes back the book.)

TOM: What a game I had today! Hi there, Janice.

MARTIE: You must've broken 200.

TOM: I bowled 170. But that's close.

MARTIE: Yes, it is, dear.

JANICE: Were the lanes crowded?

TOM: Not bad for a Saturday.

JANICE: Happen to see anybody we know?

TOM: (*Uneasy.*) Uh ... no, no I didn't. (*Changing the subject.*) What's the book?

MARTIE: The book? Just something I picked up at the mall.

TOM: Oh, yeah ... you said something about going shopping.

JANICE: (*Knowing tone.*) Shopping?

MARTIE: I stopped in the bookstore and picked this up.

End of Freeview

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