

the things we pull
up
(out of the ground)

or

at night by the river in the middle of daytime

by maguire wilder

characters

she

ana/ma

abi/nurse

alice

river

notes

*the river could potentially be played by a collection of people. they would not be played by men.

**dialogue that includes a / indicates that the following line should cut it off.

***dialogue that is in parenthesis like this (*character :: dialogue*) or (*dialogue :: character*) is not meant to be spoken, but felt.

“I put one foot in the river. It was very cold but so far that was all. When you’ve just stepped in you can’t tell what’s going to happen. The water laps around your ankles in any case.”

Caryl Churchill, *Far Away*

by the river. 15 years after things stopped growing.

(ava sits by the river)

AVA

we don't get a lot of planes around here. they just don't fly over. too far from an airport, and i guess no one goes this way to get anywhere else .

just the boats

the boats that go down the river

usually not passenger

usually just fishing

and even then

we don't get a lot of boats around here

,

i saw a helicopter once

i don't know how anything can be that loud

,

today when the plane flew over

i had this dream

for the first time ever

for the first time ever i imagined

that plane stopping

flying down ,

maybe it lands in the river

and it picks me up

and it carries me to somewhere far away

and to somewhere i've been before

to somewhere i've never been before

to somewhere i've been so many times and longed for since i left

this plane takes me there

and i know

i recognize

i understand that it's louder to be inside of the plane than it is to be under it

and that in that way a plane is kind of like a hurricane

i get that

and i would be willing to risk it

to endure it

,

today when the plane flew over

i remembered this lesson from the history book when we went to school

that planes used to fly over cities or villages and drop stuff down

like candy

or sour straws

or carrots

things they needed

medicine

and i remembered that they would drop things down because there was no other way for the people to get them

and i know that i don't live in a city

or a village

that we live

essentially in

the middle of nowhere

that there is nothing but the river and the dirt and the house
and that the house barely has two rooms
barely a toilet
barely a shower
that it is barely there
and that once it was beautiful and strong
and it's probably not on any map or suggestion of a map
but some part of me just thinks
dreams
that even though there is so little here
my mom and i are enough
and that
although we have so many things that we need
we also do not
we haven't grown ripe fruit
we haven't grown a vegetable
there was a day when it all just stopped
stopped growing
years ago
mom tells me that it started gradually
that it was subtle, back then
that you could still pretty much guarantee you would get what you need
that you could still confidently rely on other people to give it to you
that that reliance wasn't a risk
and then suddenly
something shifted
and that stopped being the case
and everyone was on their own
,
we are starting to run out of seeds
we are starting to run out of care
we are starting to accept what the store down the road sells at a discount as luxury
and while i think there is some good in that
there is so much that we don't have that we need so desperately
so when i saw that plane
i thought that maybe someone remembered us
that maybe in this desolate and empty place
someone was flying over
and looked down
and saw me
in my empty field
with my knees covered in dirt
and my eyebrows grown together
and said
maybe she needs something
maybe she just needs one thing
and maybe i have that thing in my bag and i can drop it down for her
for her to have as her own
so that she will no longer need to dig in the dirt, to dig in the river
so that the small collection of things she keeps as her own
(a water bottle , a hair tie, the cap of a pen)
will no longer need to come from the ground

but that they will come from the sky.

(a snail is crawling)

(she steps on it)

(the river starts to sing a song of waiting)

(it sounds like a thousand guitars all in different keys trying to play the same thing)

(it is upbeat)

(it is everything you could want)

(ava starts to dance)

(it is a holy dance)

(a holy dance is done in your bedroom at 3am)

(she is 15)

(she holds her hands above her head and sways)

(she is jumping)

(she can't do this inside because the floor would break)

(she can do it here)

(she uses the river as a dance partner)

(this is a dance they've known since they were 6 years old)

(the river whispers :: i believe in you)

(she responds with a giggle)

(they hold each other)

(it is a middle school dance in the school gym)

(it is sticky and sweaty)

(it is the prom she never got to have)

(the prom she would have hated having)

(she has never been so happy)

(she is her mother and she has never been so happy)

(she is so happy and she is her mother and wherever her mother is her mother must be so happy)

(her mother feels it from miles away in the kitchen)

(something like joy)

(something like joy spreading)

(something like joy spreading for the first time in a long time)

(from so far away)

(something)

(thank god you're here :: the river says to the mother far away)

(i'm glad to be back :: the mother responds)

(i missed you :: the river says)

(have you met my daughter? she was born into you)

(she holds me like you did)

(Abi appears from the river. she is her age and ana's age at once)

ABI

hi

AVA

hi

.....

by the river. a month before things stopped growing.

(3 girls (ana, alice, and abi) are laying on the ground)

(they are in bathing suits)

(one of them (ana) is drumming on the ground)

(it's subtle and quiet at first, and then she starts to drum on the ground harder)

(she presses her ear to it)

(she keeps drumming)

(her drumbeats echo)

(she listens to the echo)

(the echo spreads)

(she starts to laugh)

(she starts to laugh so loudly)

(her laugh mixes with the echo from her hand)

(they are one)

(she turns and starts to drum on alice's stomach)

(alice laughs)

ALICE

stop it i'm ticklish

ANA

oh yeah??

ALICE

yeah, yeah i am

(alice keeps laughing)

(her laughter mixes with the echo and ana's laughter)

(alice starts to drum on the ground)

(it's a different beat, in a-rhythm)

(it starts to echo)

(there is a cacophony of sound)

(in the cacophony,)

(ana gets up. reaches out to alice)

(alice takes her hand. they start to slow dance)

(alice :: i missed you)

(ana :: i missed you too)

.....

in a room. 3 weeks before things stopped growing.

(abi and ana are in a bedroom. it is purple. it is young. it looks like it's not supposed to be a bedroom. ana is in the closet)

ANA

should i come out?

ABI

if you want

ANA
i don't know i don't think i look good

ABI
come out lemme see

ANA
wait no
no
it's okay
i wanna wait for your sister
if that's alright

ABI
yeah
yeah that's fine

(there is silence)

(there is waiting)

(and waiting in silence)

ABI
i'm sure you look great

ANA
i don't know
i'm nervous

ABI
don't be, we're just your, i mean it's just a few friends—um. yeah. yep.
you know what, maybe i can play some music. i will. i will play some music.

ANA
no
no music
i don't want to waste the sound

ABI
oh
okay
that's fine

ANA
thank you

(there is more waiting)

(there is more silence)

(there is more waiting in silence)

ANA

you know what maybe this is dumb
maybe i should change I don't think—

(Alice runs in carrying a cheesecloth tied into a bag)

ALICE

hi! hi! i'm here. what did i miss? what's going on? where is she?

ABI

she's in the closet
we were waiting for you

ALICE

oh
okay
i brought oranges from work if you
if you want them
they're a little expired but it was all we had left
busy day today

ABI

how bad is it?

ALICE

it's bad.

ANA

hi al

ALICE, peeking through the slats in the closet

hi there
you gonna come out or am i gonna have to come in?

ANA

i look stupid

ALICE

oh come on

ABI

couldn't you suffocate in there?
couldn't you suffocate in there and die?

(Alice :: are you serious???)

ALICE

we wanna see it!
we really really do!!

ANA

i'm telling you
i look stupid
i look so stupid
i've never looked stupider in my whole life

ALICE
i'm sure that's not true

ANA
it is

ABI
well how will we know if we can't see you to agree with you

(Alice :: what the fuck abi)

ABI
it's a valid point

ANA
yeah i know it is that's why i'm trying to come up with a valid retort

ALICE
look
um
if you don't come out then we're going to eat these oranges without you
and we don't know when we'll get oranges back again
they have to circulate to allllll the other stores first
and then back to us
and i did bring three...
you know what, stay in there
you don't need this ripe, juicy, fruity, fleshy, gorgeous, magnificent orange do you?
you'll be fine if/Abi and I

ANA
WAIT ugh fine fine fine fine fine fine fine fine fine

(Ana stumbles out of the closet)

(she is wearing a wedding gown)

(she is wearing a wedding gown so beautiful it hurts)

(it's old, so it's a little yellow)

(but just the right shade)

(it's all lace and buttons up the back.)

(long sleeves.)

(she looks like a bride.)

(she looks like exactly what a bride should look like.)

(she is beautiful, if just for a moment, she is so strikingly beautiful.)

(and there is silence)

(true silence)

,
,
,
,
,

ANA
well?

ALICE
i

(Alice starts to cry)

ALICE
i

ANA
oh no no no
stop that no

ALICE
it's fine
it's okay

ABI
you look really beautiful, ana

ANA
thank you

ALICE
yeah
yeah what she said

ANA
stop crying! gosh
you're embarrassing me

(they both fall quiet.)

(it is like none of them know what to do)

(or say)

(or)

ALICE

can i touch you
in that dress
it looks like you're made of
i don't know
like you're made of porcelain
like one fingerprint would ruin you
like one touch and you'd just
you'd crumble

ANA

not from you
any touch from you is
it's
it's

(they are so close to touching that they are practically one body, one being, one—)

ABI

are you excited ana?

(they stumble apart)

ANA

what?

ABI

are you excited to get married?

ANA

oh um , yes
yes sure
i am excited
of course i am

ALICE

of course you are
why wouldn't you be

.....

by the river. a week before things stopped growing.

(ana and alice sit by the river.)

(it's the middle of the day.)

(ana is in her underwear, her wedding dress is laying on the ground next to her.)

(alice has a sharpie and is drawing on ana's arms.)