



Leave of Absence

Lucia Frangione

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The booming bedroom community outside a large Canadian city is blown apart when fifteen-year-old Blake challenges long-held views of spirituality and sexuality. A student at the local Catholic high school, Blake confides in her best friend, Tracy, that she feels sexually attracted to her. At first encouraged and then rebuffed, Blake is eventually betrayed. Then, increasingly at risk among her peers, Blake finds the watchful and strict eyes of her Catholic school are no protection.

Vulnerable to collectivized hatred, she remains unprotected by the adults who guard her freedom – her mother, the school principal, the local priest – all respond in different ways, some liberally supporting her emerging sexuality; others quite conservatively vilifying her as a deviant, outside the church and outside the community. Ultimately, they do not act to protect her, and in their inaction, they are absent, truly unable to help. The audience is left with the question: Like these characters, what have we left undone? What ethics surround the absence of acting in response to another's need?

At the centre of this searing drama of bigotry and transcendence is the brutal dehumanization of the other – of both the bully and the victim. The outcome challenges the Roman Catholic church's response to the same-sex marriage rulings in Canada. *Leave of Absence* won the ACTivist theatre Amnesty International Playwright contest in 2011.

Cast of 3 women and 2 men.

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