

Monica Raymond
From A to Z

This play tracks the relationship of Annie and Zafiya through forty years of U.S. history and all the letters of the alphabet. In this scene, it's 1968. Annie is Zafiya's literacy tutor in a juvenile detention center.

SCENE 12

READER

Lilies. Languor. Lake.

Bird and insect sounds. Water plashing, wind in the grass.

ZAFIYA

What is this? "Send this child to camp?"

ANNIE

I told them I thought we needed a field trip.

ZAFIYA

You are *good*, girl. Bet you can talk your way out of anything. All them slime-chiatrists, you just tell them what they want to hear.

(slapping herself) What are these things? Chiggers?

ANNIE

I guess.

ZAFIYA

Bet you could walk out of Macys in one of them fur coats, everybody think you come in with 'em. Waltz your way out of the A& P with pork chops in your hip pockets, girl, nobody even blink twice.

ANNIE

I try not to do those things.
I mean I don't really need things like fur coats.
It's just the way I was raised, I guess.

ZAFIYA

(swatting) Damn chiggers.

ANNIE

When I was growing up, we lived pretty close to this lake.

ZAFIYA

This lake?

ANNIE

No. Another one. And I would always go there when I wanted to think things through.

ZAFIYA

Shh. Listen. What is that?

ANNIE

It's a crow calling.

ZAFIYA

Maybe a big old vulture'll fly over. Maybe there's a dead white man in the woods he'll just keep on eating.

ANNIE

L. Lake. Lilies.

ZAFIYA

A lily is a flower that stands up.

ANNIE

These are water lilies. The Buddhists say water lilies are like people. Because they're rooted in mud but they can flower into something beautiful.

ZAFIYA

'Spose *I'm* the mud?

ANNIE

I didn't say that. (*pause, then suddenly*) I'm pregnant, Zafiya.

ZAFIYA

Tyrone the daddy?

ANNIE

Uh huh.

ZAFIYA

You told him?

ANNIE

You're the first one I've told.
I wanted to talk to someone who had—been through it. And I didn't really know anyone...

ZAFIYA

Your mama must've been through it. She had you.

ANNIE

Yuh. I guess. She'll totally freak, though. I feel like I have to know what I'm doing before I confront her.

ZAFIYA

"Know what you doing?"

ANNIE

I mean, am I going to have it, or have an abortion, or have it and give it up for adoption. I mean I want to have Tyrone's baby, sure, but it's just that we've never talked about it and I don't know if he's going to

want to have a baby with a white girl, plus he's busy working for "the people" and it's not like he has any money to support a kid. I mean sure a kid I'd have with Tyrone would be totally adorable and really revolutionary—

And then there's the whole thing with Berenice—

I'm sorry, Zafiya, this must all sound just like "Love of Life," like some soap opera...

ZAFIYA

The lily can be the soap.

ANNIE

What?

ZAFIYA

The lake be a bathtub, and that pink flower there be the soap in a green dish.

ANNIE

Oh, Zafiya.

ZAFIYA

And you be singing the opera of your days.

(pause) How big this lake? Can you see the other side?

ANNIE

Just barely. I think that brown line's trees.

ZAFIYA

I'm going in.

ANNIE grabs ZAFIYA

ANNIE

Zafiya, no!

ZAFIYA

Don't hold me, I'm going

ZAFIYA plunges forward again.

ANNIE

Can you even *swim*?

ZAFIYA

No, but that don't matter. Don't hold me back, girl, or I have to hurt you.

ZAFIYA pushes against ANNIE. They tussle.

ANNIE

You'll drown!

ZAFIYA

I don't care if I *do*, it better than going back.
I won't be some piece of meat for them doctors. You seen me, I tried everything—I ain't going back.

ANNIE

I *promised*—

ZAFIYA

Think I care what you promise? I drown *myself*, ain't nothing to do with you.

ANNIE

Don't drown yourself. We'll figure something out.
We could go back and I could find out *exactly* what you need to do—

ZAFIYA

I ain't going back.

ANNIE

I wish you would've told me before—

ZAFIYA

So you could do what? Never take me nowhere?

ANNIE

I can't just leave you here.

ZAFIYA

Why not?

ANNIE

In the woods? I can't.

ZAFIYA

All right, then. How 'bout this? You drive to some gas station. And I go to the commode. And I don't come out again. And you go looking. And you don't find me nowhere.

ANNIE

And you do what?

ZAFIYA

Ain't your concern. Only drive around a bit before heading back. Tell 'em you got lost.
You gonna call the cops?

ANNIE

The pigs? I couldn't.

ZAFIYA

That's good.
You drive around, wait till it's good and dark before you go back. You ready?

ANNIE

OK.

ZAFIYA

We gonna get in the car. We stop at a station, and I go out to the—

ANNIE

I know what's going to happen.

I better give you some--here, here's thirty, that's all I've got.

ANNIE scribbles on some paper from her purse.

And this is my phone number. If you ever need me, call, OK?

ZAFIYA

Thank you.

ANNIE

You'll be okay?

ZAFIYA

I don't know about that. But night's coming on. And night is gonna be my friend.

You know where we are? You know how to get yourself back home?

ANNIE

I'm lost, Zafiya.

Lost.