

SPRING AWAKENING

THEA: Professor Breakneck said he could be first if he tried.
MARTHA: He's got a nice profile, but his friend has got more dreamy eyes.
THEA: Moritz Stiefel? He's so stupid.
MARTHA: We've always got on quite well.
THEA: He's embarrassing to be with. At Hans Rilow's party he gave me some chocolates. They were all melting. He said he'd forgotten them in his trouser pocket.
WENDLA: You know what, that time—Melchi Gabor told me he didn't believe in anything. Not in God, or a future life. He didn't believe in anything any more in the whole world.

WHAT I DID LAST SUMMER

by A.R. Gurney, Jr.
Charlie (14) - Ted (16) - Bonny (14)

The Play: Set during summer vacation, 1945, on the Canadian shores of Lake Erie near Buffalo, New York, this warm-hearted memory play is the coming of age story of fourteen-year-old Charlie Higgins. World War II is just winding down, and Charlie Higgins and his mother and sister are attempting to carry on with their lives as best they can while Mr. Higgins is serving in the Pacific. Charlie's mother, Grace, has been finding it increasingly difficult to make Charlie behave, so she has decided to send him to boarding school in the fall. But Charlie rebels; he takes a part-time job to earn spending money rather than tutor Latin. He approaches Anna Trumbull, a Tuscarora Indian know in the area as the "pig woman." Anna is a bohemian spirit devoted to organic living and self expression. She finds a kindred and impressionable spirit in Charlie, whose mother, it turns out, was once one of Anna's prize students. Much to Grace's consternation, Anna stretches Charlie's mind and soul by teaching him painting and sculpture, and filling him with radical ideas about life which eventually cause him to reject the conservative values of his family. This crisis results in a showdown between Grace and Anna in which the conflicting values of Materialism and Idealism are brought into sharp focus. At the end of the summer, Charlie leaves the tutelage of Anna Trumbull with a new sense of himself and his purpose in life.

The Scene: Charlie and his friend Ted have been vying for the attentions of Bonny. Bonny has opted for the more experienced and older Ted, however, despite the disapproval of her mother and father. Ted is waiting in his car for Bonny to show up for their first date.

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(Ted comes on from U.L. singing "Pistol Packin' Mamma." He gets into his "car," adjusts the "mirror," combs his hair, and then waits impatiently. Bonny backs On nervously from U.L.)

TED: *(Rolling down the "window," leaning out.)* Come on.

BONNY: He's not here yet.

TED: Who? Don't tell me you asked Charlie!

BONNY: He said he'd meet me in the driveway right after supper.

TED: You and your buddy system... You'd think a guy could ask a girl for a date without her bringing along another guy.

BONNY: Charlie's not just another guy.

TED: Do you think you could at least wait for him in the car? Or would your dad think you were necking with a Canuck?

BONNY: I can wait in the car, Ted. *(Ted gets out, crosses around the front and opens the door for her. She gets in uneasily. She sneaks a peek in the "mirror" while he crosses back.)*

TED: *(Getting into the "car.")* Did you tell your folks you were going to the Cyclone?

BONNY: I decided not to. I told them we were all going to see *Dumbo*.

TED: "All." I love that "all."

BONNY: They're at least letting me drive in your car, Ted. That's something, at least.

TED: Yeah well, look. Here comes your buddy. *(Charlie comes on from U.L.)*

CHARLIE: Sorry.

TED: Where were you?

CHARLIE: I fell asleep.

TED: Asleep? At eight in the evening?

CHARLIE: I was tired. O.K.? I've been working for two women. *(Charlie starts to get in next to Bonny. Ted reaches behind Bonny, to pull forward the "seat.")*

TED: Get in back, O.K.?

CHARLIE: How come I can't sit in front?

TED: It's a floor gearshift. Get in back.

BONNY: He's just gotten his license, Charlie.

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TED: I just want him in back.

BONNY: Be reasonable, Charlie. *(Charlie reluctantly gets into the back, shoving Bonny forward by the "seat." Bonny closes the "door.")*

TED: And we are off. To the Cyclone! *(He starts up the "car.")*

CHARLIE: *(Leaning forward, between them.)* Don't you think you better put on your lights first, Ted?

TED: *(Quickly putting the "lights" on.)* I was planning to do that.

CHARLIE: *(Sitting back.)* Oh yeah. Sure. Right. You bet. *(They drive.)*

TED: So, Charlie. How's the Pig Woman?

CHARLIE: Fine.

TED: Is it true she doesn't wear any underpants?

BONNY: Oh honestly...

CHARLIE: No.

TED: No she doesn't? Or no it's not true?

CHARLIE: She wears underwear, Ted.

BONNY: Of course she does.

TED: How do you know, Charlie? Have you looked?

CHARLIE: Knock it off, Ted. O.K.?

BONNY: Yes, Ted. Stop teasing. Really. *(They drive.)*

TED: What does she pay you, Charlie?

CHARLIE: Never mind.

BONNY: My father says it's rude to talk about money.

TED: Hey look. I'm just a poor Canuck who wants to know what the rich Americans are paying their help this summer.

CHARLIE: She's not rich.

TED: That's why she only pays a quarter.

CHARLIE: There are more things in this world than money, Ted.

BONNY: Yes, Ted.

TED: Such as what?

BONNY: Look out for that car! *(Ted swerves. They all lean. Ted straightens the "wheel.")*

CHARLIE: Jesus. Drive much?

TED: I saw him.

CHARLIE: Uh huh. You betchum, Ted.

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TED: I want to know what the Pig Woman gives you that's more important than money, Charlie.
CHARLIE: Things you wouldn't understand, Ted.
TED: Such as what? *(Silence from Charlie.)*
BONNY: Such as what, Charlie?
CHARLIE: Whose side are you on, Bonny?
BONNY: I'm just curious, Charlie. What does she give you?
CHARLIE: She...teaches me things.
TED: *Teaches* you? You mean, like a...*teacher*?
BONNY: What does she teach you, Charlie?
CHARLIE: She... I don't have to tell.
TED: You don't have to ride the Cyclone, either. *(He stops the "car." They all jerk forward.)* Maybe we'll just sit here by the side of the road until we hear about those wonderful, secret, piggy things.
BONNY: Oh, Ted.
CHARLIE: Fine with me. Maybe there are more important things than riding some dumb machine in an amusement park.
BONNY: Oh, Charlie.
TED: O.K. We sit.
CHARLIE: You know what amusement parks are, don't you? Amusement parks are places where people fritter away their potential.
TED: Fritter away their what?
CHARLIE: Potential. Potential.
BONNY: What does that mean, Charlie?
CHARLIE: It means that everyone's got this potential, if they only use it right. I've got it, you've got it, Hitler's got it, even Ted's got it.
BONNY: Is that what she teaches you, Charlie?
CHARLIE: Sure. And she's trying to bring mine out.
TED: Yeah well tell her I got some potential right here in my pants.
BONNY: That's disgusting, Ted.
CHARLIE: Yes, Ted. Knock it off. There are ladies present.
TED: Want to make something out of it, Charlie.
BONNY: Oh stop!
TED: Or don't you have enough potential?
CHARLIE: I'll make something out of it, Ted.

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TED: O.K., then let's get out of the car, you dumb little creep.
CHARLIE: *(Pushing against Bonny's seat.)* O.K., you crude Canadian townie hick!
TED: *(Leaping out of the "car.")* You'll be gumming your food, buster!
BONNY: Oh God!
CHARLIE: *(Holding his ground.)* I'm not scared of you! *(They square off. Bonny is out of the "car" by now, and comes between them.)*
BONNY: Oh stop! Please! Ted, you're two years older!
CHARLIE: Just a year and a half. *(They face each other. Then Ted backs off.)*
TED: You're lucky there's a woman around, Charlie.
CHARLIE: *(Making his knees shake, like a cartoon character.)* I'm scared, Ted. Help. Gasp. Shriek. *(He starts Off L.)*
BONNY: How will you get home, Charlie?
CHARLIE: Who has to go home? I've got other places to go besides home! *(He runs Off. Bonny returns to the "car." Ted tries to close the "door" for her. She slams it shut herself.)*
TED: *(To Bonny; through the "window.")* Still want to go to the Cyclone?
BONNY: I don't know... *(Ted moodily gets into the "car." Elsie comes out with her book, settles D.L. in chair to read.)*
TED: Or do you want to just sit out here, in the middle of nowhere?
BONNY: Maybe you'd better take me back, Ted.
TED: Knew it. Home to Daddy, eh? *(They drive. Bonny looks out the window. Ted turns on the "car radio." Music comes up: a wartime song like "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition.")*