



# KINGDOM CITY

BY **SHERI WILNER**



DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.

KINGDOM CITY  
Copyright © 2018, Sheri Wilner

All Rights Reserved

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that performance of KINGDOM CITY is subject to payment of a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth), and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including without limitation professional/amateur stage rights, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all other forms of mechanical, electronic and digital reproduction, transmission and distribution, such as CD, DVD, the Internet, private and file-sharing networks, information storage and retrieval systems, photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is placed upon the matter of readings, permission for which must be secured from the Author's agent in writing.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for KINGDOM CITY are controlled exclusively by Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 440 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016. No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance the written permission of Dramatists Play Service, Inc., and paying the requisite fee.

Inquiries concerning all other rights should be addressed to Abrams Artists Agency, 275 Seventh Ave, 26th floor, New York, NY 10001. Attn: Ben Izzo.

#### **SPECIAL NOTE**

Anyone receiving permission to produce KINGDOM CITY is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears, including printed or digital materials for advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. Please see your production license for font size and typeface requirements.

Be advised that there may be additional credits required in all programs and promotional material. Such language will be listed under the "Additional Billing" section of production licenses. It is the licensee's responsibility to ensure any and all required billing is included in the requisite places, per the terms of the license.

#### **SPECIAL NOTE ON SONGS AND RECORDINGS**

Dramatists Play Service, Inc. neither holds the rights to nor grants permission to use any songs or recordings mentioned in the Play. Permission for performances of copyrighted songs, arrangements or recordings mentioned in this Play is not included in our license agreement. The permission of the copyright owner(s) must be obtained for any such use. For any songs and/or recordings mentioned in the Play, other songs, arrangements, or recordings may be substituted provided permission from the copyright owner(s) of such songs, arrangements or recordings is obtained; or songs, arrangements or recordings in the public domain may be substituted.

*For my parents,  
Bernice and Arthur Wilner*

The world premiere of KINGDOM CITY was produced in 2015 by La Jolla Playhouse (Christopher Ashley, Artistic Director; Michael S. Rosenberg, Managing Director), La Jolla, California. It was directed by Jackson Gay, the scenic design was by Robert Brill, the costume design was by David Israel Reynoso, the lighting design was by Paul Whitaker, and the sound design was by Nicholas Drashner. The dramaturg was Gabriel Greene. The cast was as follows:

MIRIAM BLOOM .....	Kate Blumberg
DANIEL BLOOM .....	Todd Weeks
CRYSTAL MATHIS .....	Katie Sapper
KATIE MERKLE .....	Cristina Gerla
MATT ROSS .....	Austyn Myers
LUKE OVERBEY .....	Ian Littleworth

KINGDOM CITY was developed through the Launch Pad program at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Department of Theater and Dance (Risa Brainin, Director) in February 2010.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Selections from *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller are included in the script for *Kingdom City* with express permission of the Arthur Miller 2004 Literary and Dramatic Property Trust.

The playwright would like to thank Rebecca Miller, Julia Bolus of the Arthur Miller Trust, Patrick Herold of ICM and David Friedlander, Esq., for their help in securing this permission.

*Kingdom City* was inspired by the *New York Times* article, “In Small Town, ‘Grease’ Ignites a Culture War,” by Diana Jean Schemo.

## **CHARACTERS**

MIRIAM BLOOM, 36–45, a theatre director. New Yorker, Jewish.

DANIEL BLOOM, 36–45, Miriam’s husband. A novelist, also a Jewish New Yorker.

CRYSTAL MATHIS, 17, a high school senior.

KATIE MERKLE, 16, a high school junior.

MATT ROSS, 16, a high school junior

LUKE OVERBEY, mid-20s. An evangelical youth minister.

## **SETTING**

Kingdom City, Missouri, a small town about one hundred miles outside of St. Louis. Locations include a small cabin, a high-school cafetorium, an all-purpose room in a church, and various outside settings. Scenery should be minimal and sparse so that each new scene can begin immediately after the prior. Unless specified in the text, the use of blackouts between scenes is discouraged.

## **TIME**

Sometime between 2006–2014.

# KINGDOM CITY

## ACT ONE

### Scene 1

*Daniel's writer's cabin—a former storage shed now tastefully furnished. It's located a few hundred feet away from the house that he and his wife Miriam are renting for the year in rural Missouri.*

*It is an afternoon in late September. Miriam is dressed completely in black. Daniel wears a plaid shirt.*

MIRIAM. No.

DANIEL. Yes.

MIRIAM. No.

DANIEL. Why not? You'd actually have something to do here.

MIRIAM. I have *a ton* of things to do / here.

DANIEL. You're done.

MIRIAM. What?

DANIEL.

The house looks great. And this place / looks *so* much like a writer's cabin, it gives me an inferiority complex.

MIRIAM.

That is *not* what I meant—

MIRIAM. It's a storage shed with a used desk from Craigslist.

DANIEL. But...just look at that desk!

MIRIAM. What's wrong with it?

DANIEL. It's so...Pottery Barn-pretentious I sit down and feel... judged by it—

MIRIAM. Daniel, its last owner used it for *scrapbooking*. So relax and enjoy.

*She takes his hand and leads him to the chair.*

DANIEL. Miriam—

MIRIAM. Because *who knew*...there's something about a man and Pottery Barn furniture that really turns me on.

*She kisses him here, and throughout the following.*

DANIEL. I know what you're doing.

MIRIAM. Then feel free to join in at any time.

DANIEL. (*Kisses her.*) I will. I will join way the hell in... (*Stops.*) After you return that call.

MIRIAM. Ouch.

DANIEL. Sorry but *who knew*? There's something about a woman with a job that really turns me on.

MIRIAM. I just quit my job—

DANIEL. Because it didn't give you time to direct. But this is a *directing* job.

MIRIAM. At a high school!

DANIEL. So?

MIRIAM. So...I didn't upend my life and schlep all the way to / Missouri to—

DANIEL. I know / but—

MIRIAM. I need this entire year / to—

DANIEL. A year's a long time. Especially in Missouri. It's like dog years here.

MIRIAM. Even better! I need all that time to...remind myself who I am and...what kind of work I / want to do.

DANIEL. OK / but—

MIRIAM. I'm beyond the age where I can just say yes to whatever offer—. I came here with you to forget everything about that soul-sucking job and refocus my thoughts so the *day* we're back in New York, I get right back / to directing.

DANIEL. Did he say how much it pays?



MIRIAM. Yeah. Get this. The grand sum of seven hundred and fifty dollars.

DANIEL. Wow!

MIRIAM. I know! For *six weeks* of work—

DANIEL. No, I really meant “Wow.” That’s a lot of money for a school out here.

MIRIAM. It’s not even half our rent back home.

DANIEL. But we’re not paying our rent back home. The subletter is. So that would be seven hundred and fifty dollars of *found* money. We usually *lose* money, so finding some would be great. My fellowship barely covers our bills and...and you did say you’d look into teaching if / things got—

MIRIAM. He didn’t ask me to teach.

DANIEL. Directing a high school play usually involves teaching. Or can be made to look that way on a resume.

MIRIAM. No one in New York will care about a teaching job in Kingdom City, Missouri.

DANIEL. Ouch.

MIRIAM. You know I didn’t mean... Yours is a completely different situation.

DANIEL. It’s a teaching job in Kingdom City, / Missouri.

MIRIAM. It’s a lot more than that. You are the Cecil B. Jones Artist-in-Residence at Lancaster / College.

DANIEL. I’m the Cecil B. Jones *scam* artist in residence. That’s what it / feels like—

MIRIAM. They’re so lucky to have you.

DANIEL. I’m lucky they don’t know I can’t write for shit. Because this is shit.

*He holds up some manuscript pages.*

MIRIAM. It is not.

DANIEL. It is! There are all these phony...implausible things that happen but every time I try to take something out and put something more truthful in, the whole thing collapses.

MIRIAM. Daniel, breathe.

DANIEL. Take that job so I can! Take it so I know at least one of us will actually be doing something *productive* here—

MIRIAM. I am! I brought like a hundred plays to read... And there are all those grants and fellowships I'll apply / for—

DANIEL. The drama club director slipped and fell a week after we got here. How many more signs from the universe do you need to prove it's perfect?

MIRIAM. How is it perfect for a New York Jew to direct at *Kingdom City* High School? Just imagine me dressed in black talking to corn-fed goyim about Stanislavsky, Beckett, and Brecht.

DANIEL. What if you *didn't* dress in black and talk to them about Stanislavsky, Beckett, and Brecht?

MIRIAM. I could wear pastels and talk about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

DANIEL. I bet there's a happy medium.

MIRIAM. Like earth tones and Thornton Wilder?

DANIEL. Sounds like a plan.

MIRIAM. Sounds like a sitcom. You know what the kids here are like.

DANIEL. I love / my—

MIRIAM. They wish us "a blessed day" everywhere we go. Every single teenage cashier, waiter, supermarket bagger. "You have a blessed day." It's terrifying.

DANIEL. You're right. It's so much better in New York where they wish you'd go fuck yourself.

MIRIAM. They do not. Don't start bashing New York like they do / here.

DANIEL. If you bash Kingdom City you can't get mad when they bash New / York.

MIRIAM. Yes, I can, because we're from New York. We are New York. And it's not like we'd ever fit in here anyway with everyone being so...churchy.

DANIEL. But your kids won't be churchy. Isn't the drama club always the Sodom and Gomorrah of high school? You'll get all the non-churchy kids who don't blend in and are *dying* to meet someone

like you. Just think about some kid...some girl. A young “you”

*Crystal, 17, appears onstage. Miriam sees her as if they were in the same space and watches her.*

with *huge* ambitions and stars in her eyes, growing up *here*. A place with no theatres, museums, the nearest movie house twenty miles away. And then imagine her meeting *you*. Miriam Bloom, New York City theatre director extraordinaire.

*Miriam might wince at the exaggeration. She looks across the stage at Crystal.*

You could change their lives. Wouldn't that be amazing?

*Crystal looks at Miriam with expectation. Miriam studies her for a moment but then grows uncomfortable as the object of her gaze. She turns back to Daniel.*

I really think you have to say yes, Mir. If you want to get back to directing, then...you have to get back to directing.

*Katie appears on a different part of the stage. Crystal rushes over to her and starts fussing with her hair. It appears as if Miriam is watching them. Maybe she smiles at the sight of these girls.*

The principal said he needs your answer soon—

MIRIAM. No. He said he needs my answer “a-sap.” He literally said “a-sap.”

DANIEL. Here's my phone.

MIRIAM. I'll call from the house. So you can *get back to writing*.  
*She leads him back to his desk.*

DANIEL. This desk really is a turn on for you.

MIRIAM. No. *You* sitting at this desk is really a turn on for me.

*He sits down.*

DANIEL. Then hurry back.

MIRIAM. A-sap.

DANIEL. A-sap.

# KINGDOM CITY

by Sheri Wilner

3M, 3W

When displaced New York director Miriam Bloom finds herself in Kingdom City, Missouri, she reluctantly agrees to direct a high school production of *The Crucible*. As the play unlocks the students' dark secrets, a local youth minister threatens to cancel the play, creating a firestorm in this small conservative town. Inspired by actual events that occurred in 2006, KINGDOM CITY strives to present an even-handed examination of the fears and concerns that arise when the welfare of children is at stake.

*"In its striking intensity and genuinely thoughtful content, playwright Sheri Wilner's seriocomic study of the contradictions and ramifications of censorship...is as potentially major [an] American play as we've seen since Richard Greenberg[s]...Take Me Out."* —**Los Angeles Times**

*"...a penetrating comment on moral repression and censorship... smartly written... Wilner's craftsmanship shines..."* —**San Diego City Beat**

*"[KINGDOM CITY] takes seriously both the kinds of pressures adolescents face and the complicated balance that those who have power over them must find between caring for and coddling them. ...Wilner explores the issues at hand with considerable wit and insight, and weaves in themes and even passages from The Crucible...in some wonderful and surprising ways."* —**San Diego Union-Tribune**

*"With often brutal (and refreshing) candor, Wilner gives an articulate voice to both sides of a controversy..."* —**The News-Gazette (IL)**

ISBN 978-0-8222-3740-2



DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.

9 780822 237402