



Arts Engagement
and Education

ECHO

"Uncle Bill hardly remembers you, you know that?"

From *ELEEMOSYNARY*

By Lee Blessing: <http://www.leeblessing.com>

Gender: Female/Female Presenting

Style: Contemporary Dramatic

Age Range: 15-17

Link to Buy Script: www.amazon.com

Plot Summary:

Eleemosynary focuses on the lives of three Westbrook women: seventy-five-year-old Dorothea; her middle-aged daughter, Artie; and Artie's sixteen-year-old daughter, Echo. Dorothea, an admitted New Age eccentric, has complicated the lives of the two other Westbrook women by imposing her thwarted dreams on them, which has alienated Artie not only from Dorothea but from Echo as well.

As the play begins, Echo directly addresses the audience, spelling out "eleemosynary" and defining it as "of or pertaining to alms; charitable." Having successfully spelled it to win a spelling bee as a child, eleemosynary is Echo's favorite word.

Echo explains that her seventy-five-year-old grandmother, Dorothea, has been raising her, but things are about to change as Dorothea has just suffered a stroke. The stroke has taken away Dorothea's ability to speak, but Echo insists that she can hear her grandmother's thoughts. The audience, Echo says, can also hear Dorothea's thoughts.

During the course of the play, Echo tries to bring the three women together. Blessing presents fragmented vignettes of the lives of the three women as they struggle to define themselves both as individuals and as part of a family unit. In this poignant and mature study of familial relationships, Blessing highlights the human need for connection and forgiveness.

Before this moment:

Artie is still struggling to connect with Echo as a mother figure. They haven't spoke in nearly two years and Dorothea has had a stroke and soon after dies. Artie and Echo suddenly find themselves in the house as practical strangers. They have their first argument because Artie started to burn wings and books of levitation saying that she didn't want Dorothea to be ridiculed when guests arrived for her funeral.

Echo took offense saying that they were her (Dorothea's) things insisting that they could just be put away because people would not be looking all through the house. Through going back and forth Artie tells Echo that her favorite brother and Artie's Uncle Bill would be coming with his wife and kids. She then tells Echo that they are a normal family and she would like her to stay with them saying that she's bad for her and she has always been.

Echo e pleads with her mother even after their arrival telling her " I can get you to love me. More of the time. *Most of the time*"

Monologue: Scene VII

Uncle Bill hardly remembers you, you know that? I asked him what you were like as a little girl, and he couldn't even say. He remembers Grandma even less. He didn't have one interesting thing to say about her – about Grandma. They don't have a single picture of her, either. Not even in their minds. To them, she's just a woman who lived a big, embarrassing life. They all think they've saved me just in time. Not just from Grandma – from you, too. (A beat.) So I started wondering if they weren't right. Maybe the smartest thing would be to forget you completely. And Grandma. After all, what did I ever get from the two of you, except a good education? You especially – what were you ever to me, except a voice on the phone now and then? And I looked around the new room where I was staying, and it was real nice and... blank, the way a thing is before you put any time into it. I thought, I could live a whole new life here. I could invent a whole new me. I could be Barbara if I wanted to, not Echo. I could fit in. I don't mean I'd become like Whitney and Beth. I'm not that crazy. But I could become like Robinson Crusoe, and adapt myself to a strange and harsh environment. I could live in a kind of desert. I could even flourish. Like you have. I could live without the one thing I wanted. But I kept hearing your voice. That voice on the other end of the phone, hiding behind spelling words, making excuses – or so energetic sometimes, so... wishing. I don't even remember what you said, just the sound of it. Just a sound that said, "I love you, and I failed you." I hate that sound. And I will never settle for it, because no one failed me. No one ever failed me. Not Grandma and not you. I am a prize among women. I'm your daughter. That's what I choose to be. Someone who loves you. Someone who can make you love me. Nearly all the time. I'm going to stay with you. I'm going to prepare you for me. I'm going to cultivate you. I'm going to tend you.

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