

**Baptism Juxtaposed**

A Play in One Act

by Anna Meyer

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Kansas State University

*Cast of Characters*

Sam Zhu: *Young man in his teens*

Ethan Miller: *Young man in his teens*

Frankie Zhu: *Sam's father, late forties*

Chloe Suva: *Young woman in her teens*

*Set*

A silhouette beachfront inspired by Rockport, Boston. Upstage left is a shadow of a boat. Upstage right, a shadow of the beachfront condos. Downstage, the sand, and the ocean waves furthest downstage.

*Time:* 2013.

## Baptism Juxtaposed

(Darkness. Within the darkness, we hear the calm ocean tide. Swirling blue lights saturate downstage. ETHAN sits upstage right in a beach chair by the houses. SAM lies on a beach towel in swim trunks downstage left. It's the beginning of summer.)

SAM

(to audience)

It was 7:00 AM on a warm June morning. When I was on the beach, it took me back home. It was a cool morning. It was out of this world, hearing the ocean.

ETHAN

(beat)

Him and I were lifeguards. We could sense that our feelings were mutual. We smiled at each other and lay out on the warm sand hand in hand.

SAM

I wanted him to turn his head. I was anticipating what it would be like, laying in that cool morning breeze. I knew he was afraid. It would be my first time.

ETHAN

As I lay waiting, I suddenly got a warm kiss on my lips. He took the first step. And I panicked. I felt at first that I could suffocate—what if I would drown? (beat) It was different. Inviting, yet mysterious. Then I started to enjoy myself. It's just like what we do. Just like music. A dream. When I opened up, things became brighter. I didn't want to go back.

SAM

I wanted to get out of my loneliness. I could sense it was leaving my body.

ETHAN

My body seemed to be floating. I began to touch—feeling the excitement and sensing the danger.

SAM

I was amazed at how peaceful it was. I felt relaxed, away from everything. I don't know. It seemed safe.

ETHAN  
(beat)

Then all of a sudden, tragedy struck.

(Enter SAM'S FATHER with a fishing rod next to SAM with a disappointed scowl.)

SAM

My dad came. I struggled to get free. We look at each other and my dad says:

FRANKIE

All the things I done in my life that led up to the things like my son's birth had meaning until I saw this.

(FRANKIE walks upstage to the boat, head down.)

SAM

I stayed while my dad goes with the line to the boat.

ETHAN

I got caught up in some bushes. It brought to mind the feeling of being smothered. Like a lot of people being piled on top of you. I don't like being smothered so I identified that feeling with this sudden tragedy.

(SAM and ETHAN exit. FRANKIE sits on the bench in the boat. He baits his hook and casts it into the water.)

FRANKIE

Well, I first went down the steps onto the sand, and as I got to the pier, I took my strength and knowledge and started to the surface. When I looked around, there was anxiety. It was like I was looking at Jacques Cousteau on TV. I caught myself. We will lose this chest that we heard so many people talking about for generations. One bad move down into another part... where you see no bottom-infinity. The sound of water was very soothing. The key to recover. I slow down, say another prayer, and enter as the darkness surrounds me. I wished to find God there.

(blackout)

(Yellow lights up on SAM and CHLOE lounging in beach chairs by the

water. CHLOE brushes sand off his feet. FRANKIE sits in the background on the boat, keeping an eye from a distance.)

CHLOE

The sand is so hot.

SAM

Let's lay close to the water.

(CHLOE stands as SAM spreads a towel further downstage. They lay down. SAM rubs sunscreen on CHLOE's back.)

SAM

I liked the thought of going out to sea.

CHLOE

Go diving to cool your body off.

SAM

Come with me.

CHLOE

It's getting dark.

SAM

Let yourself go into the cool green, sky blue aqua water.

(SAM walks toward the water's edge. CHLOE trails behind.)

CHLOE

(to audience)

I enjoyed walking on the sand. But the thought of getting in scared me. I don't like the thought of being off of land. I did not want to get in the water, but I did. Once I entered the water, I felt pretty good being that I had a partner. As I went deeper, I started to feel a rush of excitement looking at the sights.

SAM

It was cold and we went down and down. I was crying underwater. I could not wait to get back to land so I could start to live my life again.

(Lights up on FRANKIE.)

FRANKIE  
(watching SAM)

I feel good from what I see. The key to recovery. I watched in silence, very humble, and very grateful, yet the puzzle still remained. I found God, a wife that would have kids, and financial security. Thank God I didn't quit when tragedy struck.

(blackout)

(Lights up on ETHAN sitting in the beach chair downstage near the water.)

ETHAN

We listened in silence as we rocked back and forth through the white-capped waves. I couldn't comprehend it. Wow! What happened! The whole experience was so real. We were full of joy as we walked hand in hand. Our hearts were excited. Seagulls were loud. The sun was warming up as our spirits were. I had that feeling on my mind. I pictured having a car jack trying to pry it open. Nevertheless, I moved on. I trusted my friend. To love at every moment in our journey through life is the sole purpose. Thus, we prepared to love in this life.

(blackout)

(Lights up on ETHAN and SAM standing downstage. It's the end of summer, now and the water is cold, and they're fully clothed.)

ETHAN

I'm pretty frustrated that you decided to talk to my mom about us. It really should have been me if she as going to find out.

SAM

Yeah, I'm sorry. I should have asked you. I only mentioned that because of the way you've been treating me since I started dating Chloe.

ETHAN

Nothing changed with us, so I don't really see what you mean.

SAM

Well, by the time you brought the topic of us up again, I was already caught up with her.

ETHAN

I really don't like you acting like I'm the reason you decided to date her exclusively. That was your decision.

SAM

No, I agree with that. That's not what I'm saying.

ETHAN

You've always said that unless you bring something up, the way you're feeling about me is the same and that I don't need to worry about you changing your mind and not telling me. But I have to say that feels exactly like what you've done this summer.

SAM

Yes, I get what you're saying, but I haven't just suddenly changed my mind about you. Like when we were seeing each other over your birthday weekend, there was a huge fucking part of me that was like, "Wow, what the fuck am I doing?"

ETHAN

(beat)

I was obviously also there feeling those things, too. But the reality is that you have decided to date someone else exclusively. I really can't have you telling me how you still feel romantically about me.

SAM

I know, that's why I didn't bring it up before. But you were assuming that I was over it, and that's just not how I feel. I can't just shut off my feelings.

ETHAN

That's very hard for me to say because I feel the same way about you, but the difference is that when I dropped you off at the airport, or when we tell each other goodbye, I'm left feeling sad and alone while you're immediately going to your girlfriend's house.

SAM

I hear what you're saying, and I agree with you. It's not fair.

ETHAN

I've worked really fucking hard all summer to get to a place where I've felt at peace with the fact that you and I aren't together. I

was anxious about your visit. But then we were together, and I was like *okay, everything's good. It's just Ethan and Sam. The ride or dies.*

SAM

I know. I felt the same way.

ETHAN

*It's okay to not fully know what you want or to have romantic feelings for more than one person, when it concerns your romantic feelings about me specifically, I would appreciate if at this point in time those things could be left unsaid.*

SAM

(emotionless)

I didn't mean to make you feel this way at all. I won't bring it up again.

(ETHAN exits. SAM remains. He wanders upstage toward the boat silhouette.)

SAM

(to audience)

I went to the boat. My friend and I could speak no words. We were too silent. I pictured myself going down deeper and deeper. I wondered what I want or wish to be inside. First came the thought of a beautiful woman to accompany me forever and light up my life, but no. That hasn't been the solution for me. But I wanted to get out of my loneliness.

(Enter FRANKIE with his tack box. He sits down next to SAM. FRANKIE pats SAM on the knee and holds out a fishing rod.)

(Enter ETHAN downstage right in a sweater. He spreads a blanket and sits, knees up, alone. He puts his head in his knees.)

SAM

(looking at ETHAN)

On the boat looking out over the sun, I can see the beach and the house from afar. I should have been more attentive. I'm sorry.

(SAM takes the fishing rod and nods at his father.)