
Strange Snow

Steve Metcalfe

Premiere: Manhattan Theatre Club, New York City, 1982

Setting: The Flanagans' house

Martha Flanagan is a shy high school teacher who spends her Friday nights at home correcting papers and her Saturday mornings cleaning up the beer cans emptied by her brother David, a moody Vietnam vet who makes his living as a trucker. Big-boned and formerly fat, Martha still sees

herself as "a battleship. With the face of an icebreaker." She has given up on romance . . . or so she thinks.

It's well before dawn when a boisterous stranger leaps onto Martha and David's front porch and starts hollering. Martha runs downstairs brandishing a golf club and threatens to call the police. The man on the porch is Joseph "Megs" Megessey, a fast-talking, rowdy mechanic and Vietnam buddy of David's. It's opening day of trout season, and Megs has come by to fetch David. Infectiously cheerful, he grabs the contemptuous Martha and dances her around the kitchen, crooning about trout. She's half shocked and half charmed. When a hungover David staggers downstairs, she surprises them both by downing a beer and agreeing to come on the fishing trip.

The trip is a fiasco. Nobody catches any fish, Martha gets soaked to the skin, and David, who's not at all thrilled by his sister's attraction to "crazy" Megs, gets so drunk that Megs has to carry him into the house. Martha changes to warm clothes and heats up some soup. Megs gushes with praise, but she fends off his compliments.

MARTHA

Look, I'm not one of those pieces of fluff you see in men's magazines. Does that make me less a woman? It does not. (Pause.) And I'm a fool because for some stupid reason I think it does. And so I buy contact lenses and clothes I can't really afford. You think I'd learned by now. You think I'd have learned at the start. (Pause.) The soup is almost hot. (Pause.) David had to even get me a date for my high school formal. I was on the decorations committee, the tickets committee. I put together the whole thing. Nobody asked me to go. David rounded up his friends and told them one of them had to invite me or he'd beat them all up. I think perhaps they drew straws. I didn't know. Suddenly I was invited, that's all that mattered. I was so happy. Well, it was something that couldn't be kept quiet,

(MARTHA crosses downstage stage right of table.) David's blackmail. I heard rumors. I confronted David. He wouldn't admit what he'd done but I knew. (Pause.)

[MEGS: You go? (Pause.)]

I got very sick the night of the prom. A twenty-four-hour thing. David meant well.

Streamers

David Rabe

Premiere: Long Wharf Theatre, New Haven, 1976

Setting: Army barracks

Streamers takes its title from Army slang for parachutes that don't open, an image of senseless and violent death that pervades the play. A diverse group of Army draftees waits to be shipped out to Vietnam. Martin hates the Army so much that he tries to slit his wrists. Three other draftees are sharing a barracks room. Roger is a streetwise black man, Richie is openly gay and Billy is a homophobic college dropout from Wisconsin. One night, after lights out, he tells his roommates the following story. (Note: Somewhat later, Richie asks Billy if "Frankie" is Billy himself. Billy flies into a violent rage, which may or may not be a cover.)

BILLY

I . . . had a buddy, Rog . . . and this is the whole thing, this is the whole point, a kid I grew up with, played ball with in high school, and he was a tough little cat, a real bad man sometimes. Used to have gangster pictures, up in his room. Anyway, we got into this deal, where we'd drive on down to the big city, man, you know, hit the bad spots, let some queer pick us up . . . sort of . . . long enough to buy us some good stuff. It was kinda the thing to do for