

## Cast of Characters

CARRIE

ETHEL

## Production Notes

The “ / ” indicates the moment when the following line should begin to overlap.

The play should begin with the band wrapping up a cheesy wedding-appropriate song as the lights come up. It works best if the band is placed either stage right or stage left.

## Acknowledgments

*Axel F* premiered at Ars Nova (Jason Eagan, Artistic Director; Jon Steingart and Jenny Wiener Steingart, Executive Producers), as part of *Playlist*, a collection of short plays by the Ars Nova Play Group, opening January 22, 2009. The cast, band, and crew were as follows:

CARRIE.....Cassie Beck  
ETHEL.....Aya Cash

Guitar.....Lucas Papaelias  
Bass.....Deborah Smith  
Drums.....Ray Rizzo

Director.....Sam Gold  
Lighting and projection design.....Richard Dibella  
Sound design.....Zane Birdwell

Licensees must give the following credit on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play

*Axel F* premiered at Ars Nova (Jason Eagan, Artistic Director; Jon Steingart and Jenny Steingart, Executive Producers), as part of *Playlist*, a collection of short plays by the Ars Nova Play Group, opening January 22, 2009

## AXEL F by Liz Flahive

(A wedding. CARRIE, [30s] wears a brightly colored dress and holds notecards and a drink. She smiles at people in the audience. Clearly she's waiting for someone. ETHEL [20s] her younger sister, runs up to join her. She wears a black dress and her hair is kind of messy compared to her sister's hair. She's also holding a drink. There is a small wedding band/combo [ideally Drums, Guitar, Keyboard] stage right that goes on break as the play begins.)

CARRIE. Ohhhh...!

ETHEL. (Looks at her, then at her own dress.) What.

CARRIE. You changed your dress...!

ETHEL. Yeah.

CARRIE. That looks nice.

ETHEL. (Distracted:) Yeah.

(A pause. ETHEL looks at CARRIE.)

CARRIE. Just. We haven't done pictures.

ETHEL. Uh. What was that out there.

CARRIE. That was the ceremony.

ETHEL. And they took pictures.

CARRIE. We haven't done formals yet. You're supposed to wear a color. Here.

(CARRIE takes off her sash and ties it around her sister's waist.)

ETHEL. This is a color.

CARRIE. C'mon. Hands up. See. Now you're still wearing a color!

ETHEL. I look like a sad present.

CARRIE. You're welcome.

ETHEL. Thank you.

CARRIE. Do I look okay? Without it?

ETHEL. Without what?

CARRIE. The sash.

ETHEL. Oh. Your... Yeah. / Of course!

CARRIE. I mean, whatever. I'm sure it's fine.

ETHEL. You look great.

CARRIE. I just don't want her to say anything.

ETHEL. She hasn't said anything to me all day.

CARRIE. *(Peacekeeping:)* Okay.

ETHEL. *(Annoyed / mocking:)* Okay. *(Beat.)* What's the sand thing? Dad said to ask you about the sand thing.

CARRIE. Oh, after the speeches we're all going to come up onto the dance floor and pour different colored sand into a vase.

ETHEL. What? Why?

CARRIE. It's like a unity candle. But it's sand. Each kid gets a different color sand to...

ETHEL. And then what. They keep it in their living room and look at it? Fuck that. *(Beat.)* What color are you.

CARRIE. Purple.

ETHEL. What am I?

CARRIE. Orange. Orange, I think.

ETHEL. *(Really annoyed about orange:)* God... *(A beat.)* Do you want to trade?

CARRIE. Seriously.

ETHEL. I don't know. Orange. What am I.

CARRIE. Ethel. Can you just...

ETHEL. What. Okay.

CARRIE. Okay?

ETHEL. Okay. A vase full of sand! That's beautiful!

CARRIE. *(A beat.)* Did you sign the guest book?

ETHEL. Jesus!

CARRIE. What? / Dad told me to tell you to sign the guest book.

ETHEL. I'm not an idiot, Carrie.

CARRIE. Look. He wants to make sure we both sign it. And that we write something nice. To both of them.

ETHEL. Like in case she forgets I'm here. I'm here. Forever and ever and ever.

CARRIE. Okay, I need to... Can I tie that tighter? It makes you look fat when it's loose.

ETHEL. Oh my god. Let's try and look fat in the pictures. That's a great idea.

CARRIE. No. Suck in. Can you... *(ETHEL sucks in her stomach, CARRIE ties the sash tighter.)* Thank you.

ETHEL. She asked me to "bustle her train." I pretended I didn't hear her.

CARRIE. I did it.

ETHEL. Shit. You did? I'm sorry.

CARRIE. It was easy.

ETHEL. You shouldn't have to bustle anything for her.

CARRIE. It's fine. She's happy.

ETHEL. Really? What gave it away. The little bag of mints at each place setting that say "So Happy Together." *(Seeing the cards:)* God! You wrote yours down? I thought we were going to wing it.

CARRIE. *(Shrugs.)* I / just...

ETHEL. Whatever, I don't understand why we both have to give a speech.

CARRIE. She wants everyone to like her. Publicly.

ETHEL. It's for her fucking friends. You know what that sunburned one with the updo said to me? "Congratulations on your new mom."

CARRIE. I know. I called her a cunt.

ETHEL. Carrie!

CARRIE. Only a cunt would say something like that.

ETHEL. Oh my god, did she hear you?

CARRIE. Can you hear me?

ETHEL. Shit dude.

CARRIE. I'm 33 years old. New mom. Fuck you.

ETHEL. Yeah. "Fuck you, Cheryl."

*(They both turn away slightly, people are looking, maybe even "Cheryl" has turned around.)*

CARRIE. *(A little quieter:)* That's her name?

ETHEL. I don't know. I guess so. I don't know any of these people.

CARRIE. I'm sorry. Come here. / I have to re-tie that again.

ETHEL. No. Stop it. Stop. I don't care how I look.

**CARRIE.** I do.

*(CARRIE messes with the bow, finally satisfied.)*

**ETHEL.** There's no one to sleep with at this wedding. God. Look at the band.

*(They look over at the band.)*

**CARRIE.** What about that guy.

**ETHEL.** No. Really? That guy?

**CARRIE.** Oh I don't know. *(Making trouble:)* Uncle Mark is here.

**ETHEL.** Oh. Now who's the cunt.

**CARRIE.** You had a crush on him.

**ETHEL.** I was 7! He had a parrot! Leave me alone.

*(The band begins to rev up for the speeches.)*

**CARRIE.** Oh god. / Here we go.

**ETHEL.** The first day of the rest of our lives.

*(CARRIE walks up to the microphone where the band is set up. She adjusts the microphone. She looks at the cards. She's not a relaxed public speaker but she's trying really hard.)*

**CARRIE.** Dad and Melanie. I'm so happy that you're both happy. *(Growing emotional but still reading:)* Happiness becomes more important with each passing year. As you grow older and spend more time together, may that time be filled with happiness. And joy. So. I would like to raise my glass and toast the happy couple. To Dad and Melanie.

*(CARRIE raises her glass. She hands the mike over to ETHEL, happy to be done, and moves off to the side.)*

**ETHEL.** Hey. Helloooo. So. I'm going to wing it because I'm the irresponsible daughter without a job. Uhm. So. My dad and I hated each other from like 1984-1992. Now I think he's a lot nicer because he still pays my car insurance.

*(ETHEL looks at the drummer. He gives her a delayed rim shot.)*

**CARRIE.** *(Laughs.)*

**ETHEL.** So. For all of you I don't know and uhm, new step family people or whatever, I wanted to tell you a little something you might not know about my dad. Yeah. When I was little, I had a lot of problems or whatever and on top of everything, wouldn't go to sleep. And I'd crawl into my parents bed but I was like 11 or 12 and totally too old for that. Mostly I wanted to wake up my mom because

if I did she'd take me downstairs and watch TV with me. But she was sick at that point so... So my dad would wake up and walk me back to my room. Like right away. No "Do you need a drink of water or..." And I told him I wouldn't go to sleep unless he sang me a song and, shit, okay, some Background! The other thing I hated about my dad is that he didn't like anything I liked. He never listened to music. He only read non-fiction.

*(The drummer gives her a rim shot.)*

**ETHEL.** *(To the band:)* No. That's not... *(Back to the mike:)* Anyway. The next night I was being an asshole and trying to wake up my mom and he grabbed my arm and walked me back to my room. And he sat down next to my bed and he sang me this song. Because that's the kind of guy my dad is. He taught himself a song because I told him I needed it to sleep. And tonight. I'd like to play it for him. And his new...lady.

*(ETHEL starts to play "Axel F." After a few bars the band joins her and then takes over. When she gets to the point of not being able to keep up, she stops playing and walks over to her sister. The band continues without her. After a moment.)*

**CARRIE.** Mom hated that song.

**ETHEL.** I know. But he likes it. So.

*(They drink their drinks and look out at the room full of people. The band keeps playing.)*

*Lights out.)*

**End of Play**