

ANOTHER COUNTRY

by Julian Mitchell

Guy Bennett (17) - Tommy Judd (17)

The Play: Julian Mitchell's drama is set in 1930 in an English Public school for boys. Guy Bennett and Tommy Judd are destined, by heritage, to become members of the ruling class in England. They have in common a resistance to assuming their respective roles in that ruling class. Bennett feels he cannot fit into a society that is unwilling to accept his homosexuality—something he has struggled to come to grips with in himself. His love of another boy leads him to ridicule and physical punishment. Judd, a sophisticated intellectual, refuses to accept the political climate in England, preferring to commit his energies to the Marxist movement. His unmoving political convictions isolate him from the other students. Alike in their rebellious natures, Bennett and Judd become friends, providing support to each other as they struggle to resist conformity in an unyielding structure at school. Finally, each boy seeks "another country," one that is more suitable to the essence of their beings.

The Scene: Bennett has been caught passing a note to James, a young man at school whom he cares for deeply. The note, a frank declaration of his love, has led to a final showdown (late in the play) between Bennett and the boys who head the house—his fellow students. In previous disagreements, Bennett has been successful by blackmailing his way out of trouble, therefore allowing him to stay true to his beliefs. This has not worked this time. As the scene begins, Bennett has just returned from having been caned (a beating) by the heads of the house.

Special Note: The editors have selected this scene for advanced students and encourage in-depth examination into period and style.

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(It is evening. JUDD is working. The door is flung open and BENNETT rushes in, throws himself on the window-seat and hides his face. JUDD gets quietly up and shuts the door, then goes back to the table. Pause.)

JUDD: Didn't the blackmail work this time?

BENNETT: *(muffled)* I couldn't use it.

JUDD: I don't see why not.

BENNETT: *(still hiding his face)* Because. *(Pause.)*

JUDD: Because what?

BENNETT: *(turning his tear-stained face)* Because James has two more years here! And if I'd gone to Farcical they'd have reported him too!

JUDD: So what?

BENNETT: I couldn't do that! I love him!

JUDD: Guy—

BENNETT: *(sitting up)* You still don't believe me, do you?

JUDD: I think you may *think* you're in love with him.

BENNETT: Look—I'm not going to pretend any more. I'm sick of pretending. I'm—*(He can't find a suitable word.)*—I'm never going to love women.

JUDD: Don't be ridiculous.

(Pause.)

BENNETT: It's why Martineau killed himself. He'd known since he was ten, he told me. I didn't know. Well—I wasn't sure. Till James.

JUDD: You can't possibly know a thing like that at ten. Or now.

BENNETT: Oh, yes you can. *(Pause.)* It doesn't come as any great revelation. It's more like admitting to yourself—what you've always known. Owning up to yourself. It's a great relief. In some ways. *(Pause.)* All this acting it up—making a joke of it even to myself—it was only a way of trying to pretend it wasn't true. But it is.

JUDD: Of course it's not.

BENNETT: Tommy, when you come down to it, it's as simple as knowing whether or not you like spinach.

JUDD: I can never make up my mind about spinach.

BENNETT: Then perhaps you're ambidextrous.

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JUDD: No, I am *not*!

BENNETT: You see? You know.

(Pause.)

JUDD: You can't trust intuitions like that.

BENNETT: What else is there? Are you a communist because you read Karl Marx? No. You read Karl Marx because you know you're a communist.

(Pause.)

JUDD: Well—I'm very sorry.

BENNETT: Thanks! If that's how friends react—

JUDD: What do you want me to do? Get a horsewhip?

BENNETT: *(standing and feeling himself)* Not after Delahay, thanks.

JUDD: Why Delahay?

BENNETT: Barclay's lost his nerve. And Delahay has a very whippy wrist.

(Pause.)

JUDD: I apologise. You're quite right. It was patronising and unforgivable.

BENNETT: But you couldn't help it, could you? In your heart of hearts, like Barclay and Delahay and Menzies and Sanderson—in spite of your talk about equality and fraternity—you really believe that some people are better than others because of the way they make love.

JUDD: There's complete sexual freedom in Russia.

BENNETT: That's not a lot of comfort at the moment, actually. *(Pause.)* Martineau killed himself because he simply couldn't face a lifetime of *that*.

JUDD: But you said it was a great relief, knowing.

BENNETT: Oh, don't you ever listen? I said, in some ways. It's also a life sentence. *(Pause.)* Poor Martineau! He was just the sort of pathetic dope who'd've got caught the whole time. Spent his life in prison, being sent down every few months by magistrates called Barclay and Delahay.

(Pause.)

JUDD: I'm sorry, but I don't see how you can be so sure about it.

BENNETT: Because I *love* him!

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JUDD: Come on!

BENNETT: You've never been in love. You don't understand. *(Pause.)* Everything seems different. Everything seems possible. You can really believe life could be—it's so obvious! It's madness what we have now. Strikes and beating and Twenty Two and—how many unemployed are there?

JUDD: Three million, seven hundred and fifty thousand.

BENNETT: God, are there really?

JUDD: Yes.

BENNETT: Well—there must be a better way to run things. And when you're in love, it all seems so easy. *(JUDD looks disapproving.)* Don't cluck at me, Tommy. You don't know what I'm talking about. *(Pause.)* We've been meeting every night. In Gridley Field pavilion. We don't just—actually we don't more often than we do. We just—hold each other. And talk. Or not talk. Till dawn last night. *(Pause.)* Maintaining ecstasy.

JUDD: Is he getting beaten, too?

BENNETT: No, no. He never got the note. They couldn't pin anything on him. And after Martineau and Robbins—Barclay doesn't want anyone in Longford's even suspecting. *(Pause.)* I understand all about Martineau now. He was in love with Robbins, but Robbins wasn't with him.

JUDD: Don't let your imagination run away with you.

BENNETT: For Robbins it was just a game. Assignment—excitement—hands fumbling with buttons in the dark—all perfectly normal! School practice! But then poor Martineau—he went and told him. And Robbins was revolted—disgusted! He shoved him away. *That's* not what he'd come for! And Martineau knocked something over and Nickers came in to see what was happening and—

JUDD: Yes.

BENNETT: Robbins furiously buttoning. Martineau—sobbing and sobbing with his trousers down. *(Pause.)* Think of that for a lifetime. *(Pause.)* Think of the names. Pansy. Nancy. Fairy. Fruit. *(Pause.)* Brown nose.

(Pause.)

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JUDD: Do I detect just a touch of self-pity?

BENNETT: Probably.

JUDD: Fight it. Every time someone calls you a name—thump him.

BENNETT: Thanks! And spend my whole life locked up?

JUDD: The suffragettes didn't get the vote by whining.

BENNETT: Suffragettes!

JUDD: You have to change the fundamental social attitudes, Guy. You have to make people *see*. It always comes down to that.

BENNETT: It does with you.

BLUE DENIM

by James Leo Herlihy and William Noble

Arthur (15) - Ernie (15)

The Play: First produced on Broadway in 1958, *Blue Denim* is a compassionate drama concerning the communication problem between the younger and older generations. The plot centers around Arthur Bartley, son of a retired Army Major, his mother, sister, friend Ernie, and his girl friend, Janet, and concerns the crisis that develops when Arthur finds out that he and Janet are about to become parents. Arthur is scared and alone; he can't turn to his parents for help, they just don't seem to speak the same language. When Arthur and Janet decide that an abortion is the only answer to the problem, Arthur turns to his friend Ernie for advice on how to handle the situation. Ernie advises against such action and urges Arthur to talk to his parents. The boy tries to do so, but is unable to make himself understood; his parents seem unwilling to truly listen. Ultimately, the play depicts the insecurity of youth and the failure of many parents to ever really come to know their children.

The Scene: Arthur and Ernie are in the basement of Arthur's house. Arthur has asked Ernie over to talk to him about a "serious" problem. Ernie is playing solitaire and Arthur has just picked up a wad of bed sheets that his sister has hurled down the stairs.

Special Note: While the issues and concerns of *Blue Denim* remain timely, the language is that of the late 1950's when the play was written. Because of this, the play may be best served when set during this period.