

At first glance, Manjula Padmanabhan's one-act play, *Blind Date*, might be seen as a simplistic exercise in writing, however, a closer look reveals a creative mixture of absurdism and theatricality that asks of its readers/performers, "What is choice?" "What is free will?" And, perhaps above all, "What does it mean to be an individual when hampered by a lack of individuality?" *Blind Date* introduces us to not just one but two sets of mixed-gender, conjoined triplets who, while struggling in their shared body also wrestle with these philosophical questions from their unique if not realistic perspective.

When asked what motivated the play, Padmanabhan says it sprang from three points of inspiration: one was her play *The Sextet* (six brief pieces "about some feature of sexual behavior"), another was her "irritation with the so-called 'sex comedies' that were the most popular form of English-language theatre in India," and the third she notes as, "extremely superficial: while glancing at a theatre-site I read a notice inviting entries for a 'Worst Play Script' competition. That sounded to me like a very odd proposition. After all, why would one want to win such a competition?" The result is a sexy, little romp, that most definitely does not win that competition!

Instead, we meet Annie, Buddy, and Candy, our first conjoined triplets as they wait for their blind date with a second set of conjoined triplets. In what could only be characterized as histrionics, the impossible multi-plet engage in an inescapable, unrelenting, and provocative sibling argument regarding free choice—or the denial of choice, which is in itself a choice—as well as the pros and cons of "freedom to" versus "freedom from", the desire for personal pronouns, and even the possibility of revenge upon one another by not allowing the two shared

arms to work together to accomplish everyday tasks such as closing a watchstrap, tying shoes, buttering toast, or, in terms of hygiene, putting toothpaste on a toothbrush or applying deodorant.

Ultimately, however, and regardless of what appear to be trivial arguments between Annie, Buddy, and Candy, when their blind date does arrive they have much to be grateful for, not the least of which is the love they have for one another despite their inability to truly form individual and independent selves. Unlike our first multi-plet, Eks, Why, and Zee consist of one very loud, obnoxious, and sexually motivated, female, middle sibling who, unlike Buddy, appears to be in total control of her dimwitted and at times even grotesque brothers on either side. Shocked and offended by Why's push for a sexual encounter in their customized, BMW van waiting just outside the restaurant doors, Annie and Candy prove their strength and courage by standing up to Why's verbal demands and save Buddy from the sexual savagery that awaits him. What we discover, however, is that Buddy does, in fact, have choice, despite sharing arms with his sisters, and chooses to stop Why in her tracks, giving him the sense of individuality they all long for.