

M.I.A.

A One-Act Play

**by
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Cast of Characters:

Billy: An eighteen year old U.S. Army enlistee.
The Sister: Billy's younger teenage sister.
Shannon: Billy's girlfriend, eighteen.
The Mother: Billy's mother, thirty-eight to fifty-five.
Friend #1: A classmate of Billy's.
Friend #2: A classmate of Billy's

Scene:

A bare stage with three raised platforms.

Time:

1967

Director's Note:

This play is a memory and as such it is important to establish the proper mood at the beginning. Pre-show music identifiable with the late sixties and the Vietnam Era are highly recommended. Billy's presence is meant to be felt everywhere in the play even though he has no lines. It is the director's responsibility to create a sense of communication between Billy and the other characters without direct inter-personal contact. This can be done through creative blocking and the use of multiple levels. The audience plays an integral part in the play as they are drawn into the action by a number of asides. The levels need only be a few steps, risers, or ramps.

Dedication:

This play is dedicated to the families of MIA's, not only of the Vietnam War, but all wars, to my fellow veterans, and to my friends from the class of 1967.

Setting:

The stage is bare with the exception of three platforms or risers of different heights positioned DL, DR, and UC. These platforms form a semi-circle on the stage. There are four distinct acting areas, the three platforms and the main-stage area CS. It is important that each of these areas can be lighted separately. There is a backdrop of either a lighted cyclorama or a black curtain. Lighted on the back curtain or cyclorama are large numerals displaying 1967 or the POW/MIA flag.

At Rise:

During the Blackout we can hear the sound of incoming helicopters and strains of Billy Joel's "Goodnight Saigon" or some other song reflective of the Vietnam War. The lights come up slowly to half. There is a light mist of fog as Billy enters from the wings dressed in an Army uniform and carrying an army duffle bag. He sits on the duffle bag CS on the floor of the main-stage area with his hat in hand and his head down. As the music fades the rest of the cast enters from different sides of the stage calling out for BILLY as if they are searching for a lost child. BILLY does not respond, but sits as though in a trance.

(Overlapping)

SISTER: Billy...Billy?

MOTHER: Billy...

SHANNON: Billy? Billy, where are you? Billy...

FRIEND #1: Billy...Billy

FRIEND #2: Billy...

(The lights come up on THE SISTER who has crossed to the CL platform. FRIENDS #1 and #2 cross to the DR platform and THE MOTHER crosses to the UC platform as SHANNON positions herself on the main-stage floor close to BILLY. BILLY remains seated with head down.)

SISTER: (Aside, speaking to the audience.) In high school, Billy was a hero, football star, good student and a generally great guy. I was the great guy's little sister. I didn't mind being his little sister, because I loved him very much. Billy was always looking after me, which was sometimes annoying, but mostly flattering. There wasn't a girl in the entire class of 1967 who wouldn't have loved to be annoyed by Billy. Now, as I think back...it all seems like such a long time ago.

(The lights remain up on THE SISTER, and come up on FRIENDS #1 and #2 on the platform DR.)

FRIEND #1: Poor Shannon.

SISTER: (Aside) Shannon was Billy's best friend and the only girl he had ever dated in high school. Her family lived right next door and she and Billy had grown up together. It wasn't your classic boyfriend, girlfriend relationship. They were just...the best of friends.

(The lights fade on THE SISTER AND FRIENDS #1 and #2 and come up CS on SHANNON and BILLY.)

SHANNON: (Addresses BILLY who does not focus on her but appears to be lost in thought.) Why Billy, why? I thought we would go to college together. You can get into any college you want, you don't have to do this. Let someone else fight for their country, it doesn't have to be you! Why are we fighting anyway? It isn't even our country. People are protesting this war all over...some are even running to Canada. (Pause) I know that you could never do that, but...come to college with me, afterward if the war is still going on...maybe then. I don't want you to leave me. (Angry) You could be killed! And for what? For a cause half the country doesn't even believe in. (Pause) I know you believe in it. I'm sorry...I'm sorry Billy, I'm sorry.

(SHANNON sits on the step going up to the UC platform as the lights rise on THE SISTER DL.)

SISTER: (Aside) Billy was always his own person. He had found something he felt he had to do, and he was going to do it. It was July, 1967.

(The lights come up on all of the areas. BILLY rises, picks up his duffle bag and crosses slightly DC where he stands facing out unresponsive as the others wave and call after him.)

MOTHER: Goodbye, son. Take care of yourself...be sure to write...I love you.

FRIEND #1: Bye, Billy.

FRIEND #2: So long, Billy.

(SHANNON and THE SISTER cross CS one on each side of Billy.)

SHANNON: Well, what can I say? Bye Billy...I know you feel you have to do this, I know that, but...I love you. I love you, Billy.

SISTER: I'll miss you, Billy. I'll write, I promise! (Aside) Then...Billy left.

(Billy starts to move slowly away crossing DR and slowly circling US until he eventually is UC on the platform, sitting in the shadows on his duffle bag.)

SISTER: (Aside) He wrote Mother and me all the time. We couldn't wait to get the mail and open his letters.

--- END OF FREE PREVIEW ---