



THE PRICE

BY ARTHUR MILLER
DIRECTED BY LOUIS CONTEY



Timeline
Theatre Company

YOUR GUIDE TO TIMELINE PRODUCTIONS

BACKSTORY



Dear Friends,

Welcome to TimeLine's 19th season and *The Price*, commemorating the 100th birthday of the celebrated playwright Arthur Miller.

This marks the third time that we've presented one of this master's plays, following up on two of TimeLine's most acclaimed productions—*The Crucible* in 2001, directed by Nick Bowling, and *All My Sons* in 2009, directed by Kimberly Senior.

With *The Price*, Miller becomes TimeLine's most-produced writer, perhaps not surprising since much of his work embodies our mission, exploring the ramifications of time and examining how social and political issues intertwine.

Quite often, Miller wasn't necessarily intending to craft "history plays." He was responding to contemporary issues and topics that were most urgent at the time he was writing. Now, with the perspective of distance, our viewing of so many of his works has deepened, providing capsules of a bygone era—a window into history. Yet his explosive writing still stings with a resonance today.

The Price, written approximately two decades after *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*, explores a theme similar to those seminal dramas—the elusive quest for the American Dream.

In this play—set within an attic filled with family relics—the baggage of time and the weight of life's choices

not only loom in the air, but shadow the characters' every move. Each has suffered through the Great Depression, following divergent paths out of it and emerging with starkly different and disconnected lives. They all have been stymied by time and their individual choices. And each is looking back with regret and uncertainty about when things went awry or how their lives and family ties could have been different . . . if only . . .

We're delighted to welcome back TimeLine Associate Artist Louis Contey, a director whose work floored me more than 20 years ago when I saw his production of another Miller jewel, *A View from the Bridge*. Still relatively new to Chicago, it was a defining moment for me—I grasped what Chicago theatre was, felt confident I was in the right city, and knew I had to find a way to work with Lou. Now a veteran of more than 10 TimeLine productions, Lou's acute vision and distinct connection to Miller's writing is exceptional.

Joining him is an all-star design team and cast, including the inimitable Mike Nussbaum who returns to TimeLine just months after appearing in Lou's production of *The Apple Family Plays*. What a true blessing it is to have this remarkable artist, and even greater person, with us for so much of 2015. He was born to play the role of Solomon in *The Price*, and it's been our goal to make this happen for the past few years.

As we embark on year 19 for TimeLine, we're grateful to all of you for continuing to support this theatre company, for engaging in thoughtful discussion and going along with us for new experiences of classic works and maiden voyages of bold new scripts. With *Spill*, *Sunset Baby* and *Chimerica* on the horizon this season, I couldn't be more excited by what lies ahead at TimeLine and with you.

We're honored to begin another year together by saluting a man who continues to mean so much to us. Happy 100th, Mr. Miller.

Best,

THE PLAYWRIGHT ABOUT ARTHUR MILLER

Arthur Miller ranks among the most well-known American playwrights, writing more than 50 stage, radio and screen plays as well as works of journalism, fiction and non-fiction.

He was deeply influenced by the Great Depression, World War II and the McCarthy era. Using family units, Miller's plays reflect his critical evaluation of the American Dream with a focus on individual decisions and personal morality in the face of an unfeeling society.

In 1947, Miller's first play appeared on Broadway. *All My Sons* (produced at TimeLine in 2009) offered a critique of World War II and the pursuit of money at the expense of lives. In 1949 his most famous play, *Death of a Salesman*, opened on Broadway. This story about Willy Loman, a tragic and failed businessman, won both the Pulitzer Prize and the Drama Critics Circle Award and ran for more than 700 performances. In 1953, Miller's own concerns with the House Un-American Activities Committee inspired *The Crucible* (produced at TimeLine in 2001), a critique of McCarthyism set during the Salem witch trials.

His other plays include *No Villain*, *They Too Arise*, *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, *An Enemy of the People* (based on Ibsen), *A View from the Bridge*, *A Memory of Two Mondays*, *After the Fall*, *Incident at Vichy*, *The Price*, *The Reason Why*, *Fame*, *The Creation of the World and Other*

Playwright Arthur Miller in 1966.



Miller's plays reflect his critical evaluation of the American Dream with a focus on individual decisions and personal morality in the face of an unfeeling society.

Business, *The Archbishop's Ceiling*, *The American Clock*, *The Last Yankee*, *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan*, *Broken Glass*, *Mr. Peter's Connections*, *Resurrection Blues* and *Finishing the Picture*.

Miller received numerous awards including six Tony Awards (among nine nominations), two Emmy Awards, an Academy Award for his 1996 screenplay of *The Crucible*, the National Medal of Arts, the PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation for Theater Award for a Master American Dramatist, the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize, the National Book Foundation's Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters, the Jerusalem Prize, and Kennedy Center Honors. The National Endowment for the Humanities selected him for the Jefferson Lecture in 2001 and his lecture was published as "On Politics and the Art of Acting."

He was married three times, to Mary Grace Slattery, Marilyn Monroe, and Inge Morath. Born on October 17, 1915, Miller died at home on February 10, 2004, after battling cancer, pneumonia and congestive heart disease.



Members of the cast and production team at first rehearsal of TimeLine's *The Price* in July.

Playwright Arthur Miller had conceived of a trilogy of plays that included *All My Sons*, *Death of a Salesman*, and a third play that he had been calling *Plenty Good Times*. While the third play never came to fruition, a scene from it became the source material for *The Price*.

The Price premiered at the Morosco Theatre in New York City on February 7, 1968. The cast featured Pat Hingle as Victor Franz, Kate Reid as Esther Franz, Arthur Kennedy as Walter Franz and Harold Gary as Gregory Solomon. The morning after its premiere, Clive Barnes in *The New York Times* declared, "It is superbly, even flamboyantly, theatrical ... a play that will give a great deal of pleasure to many people and deserves a long and profitable run." It was nominated for a Tony Award for Best Play (losing to Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*) and ran for 429 performances.

The Price has had three Broadway revivals: 1979 at the Playhouse Theatre; 1992 at Roundabout Theatre, which earned a Tony Award nomination for Best Revival; and 1999 at the Royale Theatre. Miller also adapted *The Price* for a 1979 TV movie.

"The sources of a play are both obvious and mysterious. *The Price* is first of all about a group of people recollected, as it were, in tranquility. The central figures, the New York cop Victor Franz and his elder brother, Walter, are not precise portraits of people I knew long, long ago, but close enough, and Gregory Solomon, the old furniture dealer, is as close as I could get to reproducing a dealer's Russian-Yiddish accent that still tickles me whenever I hear it in memory."

– Arthur Miller, "The Past and Its Power: Why I Wrote *The Price*," *The New York Times*, November 14, 1999

The play has received numerous international and regional productions, including at Duke of York Theatre in London (1969); The Young Vic Theatre in London (1990); Williamstown Theatre Festival (1999); Gloucester Stage, Mass. (2006); The Gate Theatre, Dublin (2014), Mark Taper Forum, Los Angeles (2015); Olney Theatre Center, Washington D.C. (2015); and Artists Repertory Theatre, Portland, Ore. (2015), among countless others. In the Chicago area it has previously been produced at Northlight Theatre (1984), National Jewish Theatre (1993), Writers Theatre (2002), Shattered Globe Theatre (2007) and Raven Theatre (2012).

THE INSPIRATION

Although he frequently insisted that his work was not autobiographical, it is irresistible to read many of Arthur Miller's plays in terms of his life. *The Price* is no different.

Miller's father Isidore lost his money in 1928 and the family, which once had employed a driver, moved to a more modest home. Miller's brother Kermit, considered by many in the family to be more intelligent and athletically gifted, stayed and worked with Isidore while Arthur saved his money and went to the University of Michigan to study journalism and playwriting. Isidore died shortly before Miller finished *The Price*, and Miller's sister Jane said that Kermit's wife always resented Arthur's success.

"We invent ourselves, Vic, to wipe out what we know."

– Walter, in *The Price*

However, as Miller suggested in a 1999 article in *The New York Times*, personal family struggles were not his only source of material. Miller had grown up during the Depression and had seen numerous neighbors in similar situations. He interviewed a childhood friend, Sid Franks, when he was working on the play he called *Plenty Good Times*—an abandoned play that would provide source material for *The Price*. Franks graduated from college and had joined the New York police force as well as having lived with his father, a former banker, in a Manhattan walkup.

Arthur Miller, his brother Kermit, and their mother, Augusta.



THE TIMELINE:

ARTHUR MILLER'S LIFE AND WORK

October 17, 1915 Arthur Ashe Miller is born to Isidore and Augusta Barnett Miller on East 112th Street in Manhattan. Isidore, a Polish immigrant, owns the Miltex Coat and Suit company.

1923 Miller sees his first play at the Shubert Theatre with his mother.

1928 The Miller family moves to East Third Street in Brooklyn after Isidore's business fails.

1932 Miller graduates from Abraham Lincoln High School, but initially is not admitted to college because of low math grades. He will spend the next two years working a variety of jobs, including at his father's business, where one of the salesman will commit suicide by throwing himself under a subway train.

1934 Miller is finally admitted to college at the University of Michigan, where he begins his playwriting career and wins the prestigious Hopwood Award.

1938 Miller graduates from college and joins the Federal Theatre Project in New York City. Over the next five years he will write radio plays and hope to find a producer for his stage plays.

1940 Miller marries Mary Grace Slattery. They will have two children, Jane and Robert.

1944 Miller's first Broadway production, *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, opens. It has a short run and is poorly received by critics, but receives the National Theatre Guild Award.

1947 *All My Sons* opens at the Coronet Theatre on January 29. Miller wins the New York City Drama Critics' Circle Award and the Donaldson Award for Best New Play.

Arthur Miller's place in the American theater cannon is assured. However, in 1968 when *The Price* debuted, several critics accused him of being out of touch. Audiences seemed to be waiting to see what this critic of the American Dream would have to say about Vietnam, and instead he presented them with a more domestic play about the weight of history between two brothers and the price of their choices.

That same year, Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* took home the Tony Award for Best Play. So critics also wondered if theatrical styles and tastes had changed, leaving the more intimate, conversational and "well-made" theatre of Miller behind.

But in spite of somewhat mixed reviews, *The Price* was still a hit, running for 429 performances.

Miller was annoyed at critics for saying he avoided politics in the play. He was actively protesting the Vietnam War and had signed his name to a full-

page ad against the war. In 1968, he even was elected as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention.

Miller had an opportunity to correct the record and respond to critics in his 1999 essay in *The New York Times*, "The Past and Its Power: Why I Wrote *The Price*." In it, he argued that he wrote *The Price* not only in response to the Vietnam War but also in response to the rise of Absurdist theater, which he enjoyed but felt risked trivializing the war.

He said: "One had to feel the absence—not only in theater but everywhere—of any interest in what had surely given birth to Vietnam, namely its roots in the past."

However obliquely, Miller was again using the past to understand the present.

It is Miller's focus on the past, his need to try and understand the origin of conflict, that opens up *The Price*'s critique of America. It is more than using the insanity of the Salem witch trials to illuminate the overreach of the House Un-American Activities Committee, as he does in *The Crucible*. In *The Price*, personal history and choices are intertwined with national history. If Victor and Walter Franz's father never recovered from the loss of his fortune during the Great Depression, it is both personal and national.



Brownstone Row in New York City, a place like the family home in *The Price*. (New York Tenement House Department, New York Public Library)

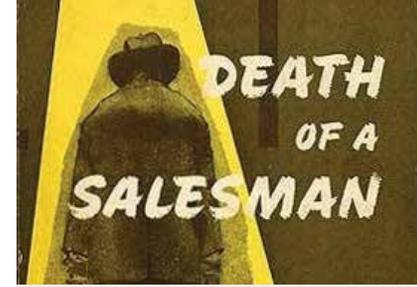
"*The Price* grew out of a need to reconfirm the power of the past, the seedbed of current reality, and the way to possibly reaffirm cause and effect in an insane world. It seemed to me that if, through the mists of denial, the bow of the ancient ship of reality could emerge, the spectacle might once again hold some beauty for an audience. If the play does not utter the word Vietnam, it speaks to a spirit of unearthing the real that seemed to have very nearly gone from our lives."

– Arthur Miller, "The Past and Its Power: Why I Wrote *The Price*," *The New York Times*, November 14, 1999

Miller asks the audience to interrogate the past and the present. What was it that their father lost? What was the dream he had bought into, which the stock market crash destroyed? Miller then makes the audience witness to the ways this fracture continues to fragment the lives of Victor and Walter.

That vague thing we call the American Dream is the narrative of the exceptional individual. The idea that one person, through hard work, may attain success—and how that success is almost always measured in financial terms.

Miller has the audacity to suggest that America is not a meritocracy. Is either Walter or Victor more deserving of success? In fact, Miller undermines the notion of what success is by giving us two men who have both found life disappointing. He leads us into a room stacked with expensive, heavy furniture, which no one now wants. These are the trappings



1949 *Death of a Salesman* opens at the Morosco Theatre on February 10. The play wins Miller the Pulitzer Prize, the New York City Drama Critics' Circle Award, the Tony Award, the Theatre Club Award and the Donaldson Award for Best New Play.

December 28, 1950 Miller's adaptation of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* opens at the Broadhurst Theatre.

1953 *The Crucible* opens at the Martin Beck Theatre on January 22. It wins the Tony Award and the Donaldson Award for Best New Play.

1955 Two one-act plays, *A View from the Bridge* and *A Memory of Two Mondays*, open on September 29 at New York's Coronet Theatre.

1956 Miller divorces Slattery. He marries Marilyn Monroe on June 29. He is subpoenaed by the House Un-American Activities Committee.

1957 Miller is convicted of Contempt of Congress for refusing to name suspected Communists.

1958 Miller's conviction for Contempt of Congress is overturned and he is elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters.

1960 Miller's screenplay of *The Misfits* begins filming in Reno, Nevada.

1961 Miller and Monroe divorce. *The Misfits* is released. His mother, Augusta Miller, dies.

1962 Miller marries Inge Morath. They will have two children, Daniel and Rebecca.



"The American Dream is the largely unacknowledged screen in front of which all American writing plays itself out ... whoever is writing in the United States is using the American Dream as an ironical pole of his story. People elsewhere tend to accept, to a far greater degree anyway, that the conditions of life are hostile to man's pretensions." – Arthur Miller

of the greed of a previous generation, a father willing to take from his children.

Again the personal becomes political. Walter asks of their childhood, "Was there ever love?" Victor asks the national question of why, when the economy collapsed, were all these "busted businessmen" left to sleep in Bryant Park? Miller puts to the test the myths of both the benevolent father and the benevolent nation.

It is these questions that still resonate for a contemporary audience. We are still recovering from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. We are witnessing the greatest economic disparity between rich and poor since the Great Depression. For example, a recent study by the Economic Policy Institute found that 50 years ago a CEO earned 20 times as much as employees. By 2013 that number had ballooned, with chief executives earning 300 times as much as employees.

And we are still carting around the unwanted furniture of previous generations and wondering what happened to the American Dream. It is only the wise Solomon in *The Price* who knows we cannot escape the trauma of the past and reminds us again and again, "With used furniture you can not be emotional."

Men sleeping in New York City's Bryant Park during the Great Depression. (Ewing Galloway, New York Public Library)



THE PRICE OF THINGS THE FINANCES

In addition to any metaphorical significance of the play's title, the prices of specific items appear again and again in *The Price*. In 1968 when the play was first performed, these monetary figures would have been familiar to the audience. Forty-seven years later, those numbers may need some clarification.

The buying power of a dollar has changed a lot over time due to inflation. For instance, an item that cost \$100 in 1968, adjusted for inflation, would cost \$685.75 in 2015. As a further example, if the Franz family had \$2 million in 1929, that amount, adjusted for inflation, would have been equivalent to \$4 million in 1968 and \$27.8 million in 2015.

So, adjusted for inflation: A \$45 suit in 1968 would be a \$307 suit in 2015. A New York City Police Sergeant who made about \$6,981 in 1960 would make about \$47,704 in 2015. A surgeon who made about \$76,000 in 1967 would make about \$519,344 in 2015.

However, there are other factors that affect prices and incomes over time, such as mass production, supply and demand, cost of materials and competition. For example, the price of gasoline is tied to production, and supply and demand. And specifically, the market for resold items—like those being appraised in *The Price*—depends on tastes, age, quality and condition, and may have little to do with the original cost of the items.

Advertisement showing prices for grocery items in 1968. (San Luis Obispo Tribune)

SPECIALS		PRE-CHRISTMAS SALE	
7 FULL BATH	YOUNG GIANT FOOD	EVERYTHING FOR YOUR HOLIDAY NEEDS — AT YOUNG'S	
AGED TENDER PORTERHOUSE STEAK 1.09	BONELESS SIRLOIN TIP ROAST 89¢	DUBOQUE CANNED 5-LB. CAN HAM 3.98	WELL-TRIMMED CLUB STEAK 95¢
FRYER PARTS 49¢	STEAK 58¢	Round Steak 85¢	OYSTERS 69¢
LEAN CHUCK ROAST 48¢	SIRLOIN STEAK 95¢	ROAST BEEF OR AS YOUNG TOMS 35¢	WELL-TRIMMED CLUB HAM 49¢
Park Steak 59¢	Pork Loin Roast 58¢	SAUSAGE 39¢	WIENERS 55¢
OCEAN SPRAY—300 Can Cranberry SAUCE 19¢	CRISCO Shortening 68¢	LIBBY'S—NO. 2½ CAN PUMPKIN 19¢	Sliced Bacon 65¢
COFFEE \$1.29	7-UP DRINK 5-51	TAMS 29¢	Pitted Olive Olives 35¢
			Sweet Nubbins 39¢

1964 *After the Fall* opens on January 23 and *Incident at Vichy* opens on December 3, both at Washington Square Theatre. Miller covers the Nazi War Crime Tribunals for the *New York Herald Tribune*.

1966 His father, Isidore Miller, dies.

1968 *The Price* opens on February 7 at the Morosco Theatre. Miller is elected to be a delegate to the Democratic National Convention.

1970 *Fame* and *The Reason Why*, two one-act plays, are produced at the New Theatre Workshop.

1972 *The Creation of the World and Other Business* opens on November 30 at the Shubert Theatre. It is poorly received by critics.

1983 Miller directs *Death of a Salesman* at the People's Art Theatre in Beijing, China.

1993 *The Last Yankee* opens on January 21 at the Manhattan Theater Club. President Bill Clinton awards Miller the National Medal of Arts.

1995 The international Arthur Miller Society is founded.

1996 The film version of *The Crucible*, starring Daniel Day-Lewis, is released. Miller will receive an Academy Award for writing the screenplay.

2001 "On Politics and the Art of Acting," a long essay, is published. Miller receives the National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters.

2002 *Resurrection Blues* opens on August 9 at the Guthrie Theatre.

2004 *Finishing the Picture* opens on October 5 at the Goodman Theatre.

February 10, 2005 Arthur Miller dies.

October 17, 2015 The Centennial of Arthur Miller's birth.



Louis Contey

During rehearsals, Artistic Director PJ Powers (PJP) interviewed director and TimeLine Associate Artist Louis Contey (LC) about his love for Arthur Miller and the experience of directing *The Price*.

PJP: What was your first Arthur Miller experience?

LC: Reading *The Crucible* in high school. It had such a powerful effect on me that I spent the summer reading every one of his plays that I could find. I was most impressed with Miller's characters—they were common everyday people with problems and emotions much like those of my own lower middle class family.

PJP: The first production of yours I saw was Shattered Globe's *A View from the Bridge*—22 years ago—and it was honestly a definitive production for me, not only of Miller, but also of Chicago theatre.

LC: It was the first of Miller's plays that I got to do. It is also my personal favorite. I knew those people so well, they were from my neighborhood, members of my family. Their heritage was my heritage.

It was difficult to stage in a tiny space, but that intimacy created such a unity between audience and actor that the theatre was on fire during every performance.

PJP: How have you changed as a director since then?

LC: I've ripened with life experience, certainly. It was nearly half my lifetime ago. I approached that play as a young man would, seeing the things ahead and not the experiences left behind.

Miller has a great gift for expressing the depth of a man's unfulfilled desires and ambitions. It's a common theme in his writing, and only Miller gets at the core of it in the American character. I feel that as a man in my fifties, having spent nearly 30 years in the arts, I understand his contempt for the standard of success often referred to as "the American Dream."

PJP: I feel like whenever I hear you talk about Miller, I see you at your most emotional, passionate state. Why does his writing resonate with you so much?

LC: I respect the pureness of his purpose. Miller's writings force us to confront ourselves as honestly and directly as we can. The characters may delude themselves about who they are and what their purpose in life is. But the moral to the story is always to look at ourselves, judge our lives honestly, have some compassion for the misfortune of others, and never, never hide from the truth no matter how unbearable it might be.

PJP: In what ways does *The Price* resonate with TimeLine's mission?

LC: Time. How Time frames everything, from the major events of an era to the smallest personal choices. We learn from the past if we are sensible enough to examine what has happened and understand its impact on what we are doing now. TimeLine has always been very good at presenting the concept of perspective, or as Solomon says in the play, "the viewpoint."

PJP: What's surprised you in rehearsals so far?

LC: I'm impressed by how quickly the actors slip into Miller's rhythms and patterns of speech. It's a testament to the quality of the writing. I am not surprised by the quality of the acting, it is top notch. When you have skilled and talented professionals, the process is always about new discoveries.

PJP: Can you talk about the environment you've created in our space in collaboration with designer Brian Sidney Bembridge?

LC: The play's central visual metaphor is an attic crammed with furniture. It represents not only the past lives of the main characters, but the choices good and bad that they and their long deceased parents made. The moral weight of all these choices just looms over every moment of the play.

Miller's central theme is that the choices and decisions we make in the past have consequences in the present. He frames this theme within the context of Time. Time catches up with us if we wait too long to deal with important issues.

Brian and I determined that while the action of the play takes place in real time, time seems to have stood still in this room, waiting to be unraveled. We decided that we wouldn't build a realistic space, and we didn't feel the need to adhere strictly to the laws of physics! The furniture could be stacked in such a way as to reflect the looming avalanche of consequences that are about to fall on the brothers.

PJP: Many directors would love the chance to work with Mike Nussbaum once in their lives. This is your third play with him *in 2015!*

LC: Mike is a monument to Time. He is so perfect for the role of Solomon, the furniture dealer. Mike's own endurance and stamina as a force in Chicago theatre lends great moral weight to the play. He's a wonderfully intuitive actor with great instincts, a generous collaborator, and a very funny guy. I feel very blessed to be working with him again.

PJP: If you could pick one Miller play to re-visit or direct for the first time, what would it be?

LC: DEATH OF A SALESMAN! Need you ask? Not only is it Arthur Miller's masterpiece, I believe it is quite possibly the best American play ever written. For me it sums up the entire social contract of the entire 20th Century—what this nation has grown into, from the Great Depression to the present day. Self-esteem tied to financial success.

The moral lessons of Willy, Biff and Happy should be told as often as possible. I wanted this to be the first play that I directed 32 years ago. It comes up frequently, but I've never gotten close. I'm still waiting.

This is an edited version of our interview with Lou. To read more, visit our blog Behind the 'Line via timelinetheatre.com.

BACKSTORY: THE CREDITS

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Backstory is published four times each season.

Our Mission:

TimeLine Theatre presents stories inspired by history that connect with today's social and political issues.

Our collaborative artistic team produces provocative theatre and educational programs that engage, entertain and enlighten.

WHAT IS THE FLEXPASS?

The best way to enjoy TimeLine 2015-16 season! Use your admissions in any combination and select the plays and dates that work for you.

Now on sale: Premium, Anytime, Weekday and Preview FlexPasses available in 4-Admission and 3-Admission packages. Pay as little as \$60 and up to just \$204 to see all that our 19th season has to offer!

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the great
treasures of
this city.
”

– Chicago Sun-Times

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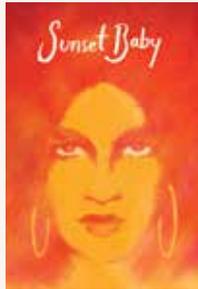
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