

Youngblood Monday Lunch: Episode 3

Eden Whiskey by AJ Clauss

presented by the Ensemble Studio Theatre

[Youngblood Monday Lunch Theme Song Begins]

Singer: [Sung] Lunch in the morning, lunch at night
Lunch whenever you feel that it's right
There's no bad time
For lunch.

Mysterious Voice: [Whispered] Also Time isn't real.

[Theme Song Ends]

RJ Tolan: Hello everybody and welcome to episode three of the Youngblood Monday Lunch. My name's RJ Tolan, I'm here with Graeme Gillis.

Graeme Gillis: [Distant, yet confident] Hello there!

RJ Tolan: Together we run the Youngblood program for early career playwrights at the Ensemble Studio Theatre in New York City. And we are so happy to be bringing you new short plays in podcast form here as part of the Youngblood Monday Lunch.

Over the years we've gotten really used to the challenges of doing short plays by the members of Youngblood in - in an in person theatre setting and welcoming an audience in and getting our writers that crucial experience of seeing their work in front of an audience. And that always has its wrinkles and its complications, and things crop up at the last minute and people have to run out for props or realize we don't have enough, uh, champaign for the mimosas. Doing these for a podcast involves a whole new set of - of lock down, quarantine, challenges.

The special feature of this episode was a - was a frantic electric scooter ride through Sunset Park Brooklyn, to deliver a working USB microphone to one of our actors. And it just reminded me that we really want to thank everyone who's been working with us on these episodes. The actors, and the directors, and the designers who are working from their home and are working over Zoom as they rehearse and are putting these all together without the ability to be there in person. And without the ability to see the response from an audience and that requires a special kind of commitment and a special kind of sacrifice from them. And we're so glad to have them doin' it with us to create these new plays for you.

Graeme's gonna tell you a little bit more about today's episode.

[Musical transition similar to the theme song]

Singer: This is the Youngblood podcast,
Hear a play and eat some lunch!

Graeme Gillis: Spring is springing, here in Hell's Kitchen. The home of the Ensemble Studio Theatre. Dogs are barkin', horns are honkin', and this mighty neighborhood roars to life. Maybe you're sitting in the park, eating a submarine sandwich. Or maybe you're running on a Peloton...eating a submarine sandwich. Or maybe it's not lunch at all, and you're sitting on your fire escape at four in the morning, staring into the moonlight. But wherever you are, and whenever it is, you can roar to life along with this mighty neighborhood! And this mighty theatre. So YOU roar to life, and WE'LL roar to life, and we'll ALL roar to life together! Go ahead! Roar to life! Right now! I'll wait.

[Slight pause]

Graeme Gillis: See that felt great, didn't it!?

Today's play is presented with support from the EST Sloan Project. That is a collaboration between the Ensemble Studio Theatre and the Alfred P. Sloan foundation to present new plays about science and technology.

RJ Tolan: We want to acknowledge, before we start, that EST and all of New York City are located on Lenapehoking. The unceded traditional territory of the Lenni Lenape People. We want to pay respect to the Lenape People, to their continuing presence throughout the Lenape Diaspora and to acknowledge Indigenous peoples who live, work, create, and contribute, to communities here in Lenapehoking and across the continent. If you've never had the chance to see the website www.native-land.ca, it's worth checking out. You can see the native and Indigenous histories of the land that you are on.

Graeme Gillis: The EST Sloan Project celebrates science and progress. But it's important to acknowledge that many discoveries in this country have been made with the unacknowledged, unpaid labor, and the suffering of Black, Brown, and Indigenous people. We want to honor their sacrifices and contributions to the progress of science and to the theatre we create to celebrate that progress.

RJ Tolan: We could not be happier to share with you today's play, which is Eden Whiskey by Youngblood playwright, AJ Clauss.

[Banjo-y, blue grassy, musical interlude]

[Sound of a recorder clicking on]

KIM: Okay! It's recording. Raby do you want to-- here-- sit closer to the microphone so- so everyone can hear you--

CRICKET: Sweetie let her do it!

KIM: I'm just getting her started.

CRICKET: Raby, tell your mom to *siddown!*

KIM: She has to present this in front of her class.

CRICKET: What's that gotta do with it?

KIM: I'm saying *behave*.

LITTLE RABY: Can I start?

KIM: Yea baby go for it.

LITTLE RABY: Hello my name is Raby Eden and this is my Grandma Cricket.

CRICKET: Thank you so much for having me on your show Raby, *yee-haw!*

LITTLE RABY: Is your real name Cricket?

CRICKET: No my name is Eleanor Lilli Eden but everyone calls me Cricket, and I was born in 1942.

LITTLE RABY: What do you do?

CRICKET: Well I'm the fifth generation owner of Eden Whiskey here in Bardstown, which started as just one woman, and that was your namesake, that was Raby Jones. And then she married Charles Eden back in, uh, lemme see, uh... it was-

LITTLE RABY:...*she's doing it again*

CRICKET: What? What'd I- What'd I do?

KIM: She has a whole list of questions she's supposed to get through, she wrote them out.

CRICKET: Well she needs to hear about the Whiskey?

KIM: No it's just questions about your life in a larger sense, it's not about Eden Whiskey.

CRICKET: Oh...okay, so? Uh, right Raby honey let's try again. Sorry.

LITTLE RABY: What was your favorite invention?

CRICKET: Hmm...That's a tie between the Motel 8 and the fly-swatter.

LITTLE RABY: What was your favorite decade?

CRICKET: What?

KIM: Just pick a decade.

CRICKET: Time doesn't really feel like that to the people who lived 'em kiddo, it's just one year to the next and then all of a sudden it's- it's a whole bunch of 'em.

KIM: Mom...

CRICKET: *The Sixties.*

LITTLE RABY: Where were you when we landed on the moon?

CRICKET: I was here on Earth.

LITTLE RABY: uh-hm...

[Laughter]

KIM: Maybe shouldn't have done this before we started drinking!

LITTLE RABY: Can I try it?

CRICKET: [Laughing still.] That's up to your mother

LITTLE RABY: It's for research.

KIM: No.

LITTLE RABY: Mom, it's for school.

KIM: Finish your questions and then: *we'll see* .

CRICKET: Fire away!

LITTLE RABY: What's more important: a good job or true love?

CRICKET: That question's a boobytrap, I'm not answering that.

LITTLE RABY: How do you spell boobytrap?

CRICKET: *Booby Trap.*

KIM: I'll answer for her and say that, Eden Women have chosen a good job over the other option, mostly.

CRICKET: Well, your Great-Great was one of the very first *divorcees* in the state. She was Kentucky Royalty.

LITTLE RABY: How did you and grandpa meet?

CRICKET: Your granddaddy worked here at the distillery, right- ya' know started after school, so we were friends for years.

LITTLE RABY: Does everybody make whiskey?

KIM: No, they don't, just a lot of people you know make Whiskey. And you don't have to make Whiskey when you grow up, that's completely up to you.

CRICKET: See, this is why you don't work in sales. Baby, if you're LUCKY we will CONSIDER letting you carry on the Eden legacy but it takes a LOT to do what me and your momma do.

KIM: It'd take a lot less if you'd just let me manage.

[Clock chimes]

CRICKET: I'm taking a victory lap, I told you that.

KIM: Yeah you said that last year!

CRICKET: Yeah, mmhmm...And what's the rush?

LITTLE RABY: Did grandpa do what you do?

CRICKET: He was a cooker, that was back when we'd just gotten our great big slow cooker, you remember which one that is? That's where he worked. You remember what happens in the slow cooker?

LITTLE RABY: Uhm...

KIM: C'mon you know this.

CRICKET: Alright come on now. The yeast does what?

LITTLE RABY: Starches to sugars!

CRICKET: Aha! Simple sugars!

LITTLE RABY: Simple sugars, before it's alcohol!

CRICKET: So, alright, that was granddaddy, way back when, and he was watching me burn through my first two marriages faster than we rotated the barrels...[Laughs.] And we was already drinking buddies, and by that time, well most people who work at the distillery ended up- we ended up movin' out here cause it's easier, and, so, it felt, easy an' *that's* what we did. Not very romantic for ya.

KIM: Runs in the family.

LITTLE RABY: Done! Now can I try the Whiskey?

[Laughter]

[Banjo-y, blue grassy, musical interlude]

CRICKET: [Singing] *Dear Rabyyyyy...Happy Birthday to you!*

RABY: That was so sweet oh my gosh thank you.

CRICKET: Oh...Can't believe I forgot your twenty-eighth birthday.

RABY: Twenty-ninth.

CRICKET: Oh. Well crap, can't believe I forgot that one too.

RABY: It's been a year since I've seen you, that's-- isn't that like.../the longest-

CRICKET: [Interrupting] Wait. What's that for, are you recording me?

RABY: Yeah, is that okay?

CRICKET: Just cause?

RABY: Yeah, just to have.

CRICKET: Oh what, in case I die?

RABY: No! Just to have! I like listening to your voice, I just like having them, anytime I'm missing you.

CRICKET: Well if you just called me you could hear my voice.

RABY: I know.

CRICKET: I'm not going anywhere, I- I promise.

RABY: What makes you say that?

CRICKET: I promised your mom I'd stick around 'til you got your shit together.

RABY: Ha-ha...

CRICKET: Well...looks like I've got a few more years, at least.

RABY: I have this voicemail of hers I keep listening to. It's nothing special, she's just drivin' home, but it's the only one I have I guess and it's made me, sorta've obsessed to try and find her voice in other places .

CRICKET: Oh, babygirl...

RABY: And so I was cleaning out some of her stuff and I found this interview I did with you from when I was-- I think it was like sixth grade? You remember that?

CRICKET: Well, you were always poking those little toys at me! We used to pretend you had your own radio show.

RABY: I thought it might be fun to do it again, but like, ask you some better questions this time.

CRICKET: You can turn me to whatever page you want, sweetie.

RABY: I love that.

CRICKET: But...you gotta have a glass of whiskey with me.

RABY: Really?

CRICKET: I don't write the rules I just follow 'em.

RABY: Okay, grandma, yeah!

[The sound of a thick cork being pulled out of a bottle]

RABY: Which one is this?

CRICKET: So, this is a new blend, uhh, not quite out yet but we got a great deal on some French Oak a few years ago.

RABY: I thought you were a traditionalist?

CRICKET: Yeah well now we're sophisticated.

RABY: Really?

CRICKET: We're international baby, I was- I was pretty surprised myself the difference it makes.

RABY: So the difference in the flavor's between a Kentucky summer here and the same summer somewhere else?

[The sound of whiskey being poured into two glasses]

CRICKET: Exactly. Cheers!

[The sound of clinks, and sniffing, and sipping]

RABY: Oooh yeah

CRICKET: Mmm

RABY: Yeah you're right, it's totally not the same.

CRICKET: So...?

RABY: Alright! So...I guess I'm looking for something you maybe wouldn't've told me as a kid?

CRICKET: [Laughing and coughing a bit] You want skeletons?

RABY: Like I dunno, did you ever break the law, or or do something wild?

CRICKET: [Laughing] Uh... well...uh...alright well this probably isn't what you're looking for but uh, my friend Dottie and I used to get a pack of cigarettes? After school? And we'd drive back and forth on highway 36 until we'd smoked 'em.

RABY: All of 'em?

CRICKET: [Laughing] So I guess- I guess we probably weren't smokin' 'em right cause we never got sick... but, ohhh-mmm-mmm, we felt *nasty* as hell.

RABY: That's the worst thing you can think of?

CRICKET: [Laughing and coughing] Well cuz- Just cause your grandma has tattoos, you think she's got some gnarly story!

RABY: It's not the tattoos, it's you, it's your essence!

[The sound of bullfrogs and rickets]

CRICKET: Phew...so for the last hundred years, we've been coming out here for the same meteor shower and have to count *ten* shootin' stars. Every summer, and that's how we got the ten stars on the bottle.

RABY: And how many have you / seen tonight?

CRICKET: [Interrupting] Oooooooooooooohweee! Whooooo! Oh that was a good one. Did you see that?

RABY: I keep looking away cause my neck hurts!

CRICKET: Oh I can feel her with us. I can your feel your mom.

[Pause.]

RABY: Was that number nine?

CRICKET: One more and we're jumping in the river!!

RABY: I'm not jumping in the river it's September!

CRICKET: [Laughing] *Oh you are jumping!*

RABY: Oh my god so I'm vaguely remembering mom coming in wet as a kid and hugging me a couple times and now I know why!

CRICKET: It's always been something we do, my grandma did it, her grandma did it, everybody jumps in the river, and now it is your turn!

RABY: No!!

[The sound of crickets fading out to a soft song]

VOICEMAIL BOX: You have one saved message. First saved message.

KIM: It's your momm... You're in class, but uhh how's your throat? Wheww..just driving home from Indy, went to Sam's Club and got you some new bedding. When ya come home this weekend, remind me- Wait, is today Tuesday? Are you in class? Yeah and uhh, is Jess coming this weekend? You never gave me an answer and- It's totally up to you babe, we just need to know for dinner. We can tell your grandma whatever *you* want- Oh shit! That was my exit. Frick.

[The sound of a turn signal]

KIM: Okay I should go. Bah!

[The sound of a turn signal]

[The sound of numbers being pressed on a phone]

[Kim humming]

KIM: Oh my god-- Siri end call-- goddamnit -- ugh-- hang the frick u--

[The sound of someone hanging up]

CRICKET: [Muffled] ...it's not sad, it's-

RABY: [Muffled] But I don't want you to do all this alone, I wanna help.

CRICKET: No, you went to school for a reason, this isn't about the whiskey.

RABY: But I don't want you to be alone.

CRICKET: Look, honey even if your granddaddy was still here and your mom was still, and everybody I knew and loved was still here there'd still be a way to feel far away... that's- that's just science.

RABY: I guess...

CRICKET: You have this idea of what I'm like and I have this idea of what your's is like. And we're both trying to call it the same thing. But that's what I mean about-- see once it's got a name baby, it's got a course. Now, remember- remember where the word whiskey comes from?

RABY: It's always about the whiskey.

CRICKET: [Laughing] Naw, naw, It starts with a U....

VOICE OF SIRI: *Usquebaugh: Old English and Gaelic word meaning--*

CRICKET: *-Water of life, and before that, the closest thing was called aqua vitae, and and that gets us back to the Middle Ages.*

RABY: Okay.

CRICKET: Which was basically- [Giggling] is their way of aspirin, I mean everybody made it, *everybody*, and everyone got *good* at making it. And started playing with herbs and spices to make it taste better, and *then* people realized they could make money off it so *they* started to ban people making home-brews, so you know what happens?

RABY: Wait do I?

VOICE OF SIRI: Witches: a concept that alludes to a nasty woman that predates the bible and used every century thereafter to execute hundreds of thousands of women who were single, widowed, or on the edge of society; under pretense of sorcery when in fact they were brewing spirits, or, just living their fucking life.

RABY: That's not at all what I-

CRICKET: Cause if we was brewin' we could be brewin' anything!

RABY: uhhh... [Laughing]

CRICKET: [Laughing] It's all the same thing, baby, YEAST is everywhere, do you want another beer?

RABY: Oh, I think I'm water-city for the rest of the night.

CRICKET: Oh yeah, yeah I should probably-

RABY: Do you think they ever tried to age it and make somethin' stronger?

CRICKET: Oh no I think, I think they were too busy drinkin' it.

[Laughter]

[Silence]

CRICKET: Your mom...she used to remind me when it was your birthday. She kept me up. Maybe I got used to it....So...no excuse but...I'm sorry about this one.

RABY: It's okay grandma.

CRICKET: Well...I guess we're not gettin' to ten.

RABY: I uhm, have one more question.

CRICKET: Last one and then we're gonna / go on inside.

RABY: [Overlapping.] Okay I guess uhm,

CRICKET: What Raby?

RABY: Suppose like...if I were to get married, could you, or would you walk me down the aisle? / It sounds even worse out loud like I'm hearing myself and

CRICKET: [Interrupting.] Are you gettin' married?

RABY: Mhm

CRICKET: [Muffled, crying laughter.] Are you shitting me??

[More muffled crying laughter.]

CRICKET: Now, what's his name?

RABY: Jessica?

[Silence]

CRICKET: Of course I'm gonna walk you down the aisle baby, and I'm gonna try my best not to steal the show because I already know what I'm gonna wear and it's a revolution.

RABY: Well wait, cause we've got some time, we wanna be done with school before we--

CRICKET: [Interrupting] Aw, is she still in law school?

RABY: Yeah

CRICKET: So, now y'all are gonna do it here.

RABY: Really?

CRICKET: Are you kidding? Now come- All the Eden women get married here!

RABY: But everyone's divorced..?

[Whooping laughter]

CRICKET: Yeah but it's free!

RABY: It would be nice to have it here

CRICKET: You tell me when 'n I'll shut it down

RABY: Thank you.

CRICKET: There's ten!! / Look!

RABY: No! What?!

[Overlapping]

CRICKET: That's ten!!!!

RABY: You weren't even looking up at the sky!

CRICKET: I know but I could feel it!!!

[Cricket and Ruby's voices trail away]

RABY: Oh my god wait!

CRICKET: Well come on out and get WET!

[Cricket is distantly hooting and hollering]

RABY: Oh my god!!!

[Cricket and Raby laughing and hollering]

[Splashing fades into banjo-y, blue grassy, musical interlude]

RABY: Hey Grandma... it's me... it's Raby. The doctor said you've been having a good week. I brought you some diet coke, I'll put them by your socks. Jess came too, she's getting some work done today but...I thought, maybe, if you're up, if you're awake...Maybe we can all have some dinner tonight? The doctor said you can eat solids again.. And she said maybe even some Whiskey...?

[Pause]

RABY: Yeah? Yeah I see you smiling. Okay...Oh! [Distant.] Actually I brought you something, I wanted you to hear this...You remember the archivist at the Distillery who's been making us digital? [Closer.] We've been finding all these pieces of you-- but I wanted-- listen to this:

[A button clicks]

RECORDING OF CRICKET: Okay, okay everybody....And we're gonna step inside here and follow me all the way back

RABY: You hear that Grandma? That's you!

RECORDING OF CRICKET: We're gonna come on down this way. Op! Now watch your heads!

[Laughing.] I guess people weren't this tall two hundred years ago. [Laughter.] Alright, now first question is do y'all smell that smell?

[General hubbub from patrons.]

RECORDING OF CRICKET: Mmmmmhhhhhhh yeah that's my favorite smell! That's what we call the Angel's Share, that's the vapors coming outta the barrels, and we say it's the share of the alcohol goin up to the angels. So I hope y'all will understand when I get up there, I'll be first in line, cause whoever's letting people in is gonna be happy as hell to see me!

[Laughter]

RECORDING OF CRICKET: Alright so, for us to be considered a bourbon, we can only use our barrels once. They have to be charred, and made of American Oak. We get our oak from the Independent Stave Company not far from here, and they leave all of our wood

out in the weather for one Kentucky Summer. Lays out in the sun and the storms and that's to season the wood and get rid of the bitter. And then the wood gets burned for half a minute, and that's to caramelize the sugars in the wood, and now, ohhhhhhh, we're talking some sweet sweet wood ready for a swim.

[The sound of thunder]

RECORDING OF CRICKET: Phew! That's what happens when an angel falls down.

[Laughter from the crowd]

RECORDING OF CRICKET: [Chuckling] I appreciate that. Alright so, now it's time to fill the barrels. Eden alcohol at this point is a-hundred-thirty-proof, so we cut it with our fresh water, clean, clean from the limestone stream and put it in the barrel at a-hundred-and-ten. We send all the barrels up to the very top of our warehouse where they'll be there for three Kentucky Summers. Now why's that? Can anyone describe what a summer here's like?

RANDOM PATRON: Suffocating...

RECORDING OF CRICKET: Well..that's a lil extreme...Anyone else?

DIFFERENT RANDOM PATRON: Hot?

RECORDING OF CRICKET: Hot! HOT. That's what makes that alcohol go in and out of the barrels again and again, is pulling all that flavor from all that wood. And that's Eden Whiskey! Little bit of alcohol, little bit of wood, and a whole lotta' Kentucky /Now I've got a question for you: who's thirsty?

DOC: [Interrupting and overlapping] ...excuse me...hello?

RABY: Oh!

DOC: It's Dr. Blake.

[Recording turns off]

RABY: Oh! Hey doc, sorry, hi, how's it / goin'?

DOC: Hi Raby.

RABY: Good to see you, oh my gosh.

DOC: How long are you in town?

RABY: Uhh yeah good question.

DOC: She's having a good week.

RABY: Mmmhm...

DOC: Would you like to step out? Maybe we can catch up in the hall?

RABY: Yeah of course. ...Grandma? I'll be right back, I'll be right outside.

[The sound of a recorder click]

CRICKET: Alright, alright now... if you're gonna drink with us you have to toast like an Eden Woman.

KIM: Just a sip Raby, you're not gonna like it.

LITTLE RABY: Yes I am!

CRICKET: Yah-haw you tell her!

LITTLE RABY: I'm gonna like it, mom.

CRICKET: Stand tall baby!

KIM: Is your only use as her grandma to inspire anarchy?

CRICKET: Now alright, now... you gotta smell it first. Hold it right under your nose and breathe in with your mouth.

[The sounds of sniffing]

LITTLE RABY: Smells like you, grandma.

KIM: That's so funny, I think it does too, yeah.

CRICKET: Alright Kim! Kim! Get a picture of this.

KIM: Oh hang on! Hang on! Don't do it Raby h- hang on!

CRICKET: This is an eighth generation Eden about to sip the blood of Christ!

KIM: Ugh Mom you can't-- that's why she gets in trouble at school!

[The sound of giggling, a sip, and then coughing]

CRICKET: Oh I'm sorry baby!

KIM: Is it gross?

[Pause]

LITTLE RABY: That's...DISGUSTING!

[Women laughing]

KIM: Well we don't have to worry about her stealing inventory anytime soon.

CRICKET: Aww...well give it time, kiddo...everything tastes better...

[Sound of a recorder click, and rewinding]

[Banjo-y, blue grassy, musical interlude]

Graeme Gillis: You've been listening to a new play: EDEN WHISKEY by AJ Clauss

Directed by Lilli Hokama

Featuring Helen Coxe as Kim

Carolyn Mignini as Cricket

and Lilli Stein as Raby

Sound design by Allison Kelly

RJ Tolan: The staff of the Ensemble Studio Theatre are

Artistic Director: Billy Carden

Executive Director: Susan Vitucci

Associate Artistic Director, Co-Director of Youngblood, and Program Director of the EST

Sloan: Graeme Gillis, that's him right over there...

Director of Play Development, Associate Director of EST Sloan: Lindsay Firman

Co-Director of Youngblood: RJ Tolan, that's me!

General Manager: Liz Uchtman

Production Manager: Jack Plowe

Development Manager: Aaron Hock

Brand Marketing Manager: Harrison Densmore

Communications and Audience Services Manager: Samantha Sembler

Finance Director: Jonathan Suárez

Literary Associate: Nikomeh Anderson

Production and Operations Producing Apprentice: Mariel Sanchez

Development Assistant: Joey Nasta
and Facilities Manager: José Sanchez

Graeme Gillis: EST is encouraging all our audiences to contribute to Black Girls Do Stem. That's a non profit that envisions a future with equitable representation for Black women in all the S.T.E.M fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Their mission is to inspire curiosity about the S.T.E.M fields in Black girls in all communities through education, access, and opportunity. You can find them at [BGDSTEM.com](https://www.bgdstem.com). We encourage you to contribute to their important work and a more equitable future.

RJ Tolan: Thank you so much for being with us for episode three of the Youngblood Monday Lunch! Subscribe on whatever your podcasting platform of choice may be. We look forward to seeing you next Monday, and sharing another short play with you then. Thanks for coming everybody, be well.

Graeme Gillis: [Distant] Thanks everybody!

[Musical transition similar to the theme song]

Singer: Lunch!

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Ensemble

Studio

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