

# MIDNIGHT ALLEY

# ON OR OFF

## Rumours Buzzing Campus

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Midnight Alley may not be seen. Yesterday the Administration strongly suggested that the UNB Drama Society drop its proposed performance of *Midnight Alley* — scheduled for next Saturday night in Memorial Hall. The play was to have been UNB's entry into the Regional Drama Festival. Reasons given for this were that it is not a good piece of theatre and that it may be a bit strong for Fredericton audiences.

The cast of *Midnight Alley* have been rehearsing since the first week in December at four rehearsals a week, lasting from five to six hours. The sets have been in preparation for several months, and the cast of fifteen (including eleven students) is almost ready to go on stage. Advanced ticket sales have amounted to \$1,000 and expenditures have reached a height of between \$600. and \$700. Posters, and publicity arrangements are well on their way to completion.

### The Play Itself

*Midnight Alley* deals with life. The setting is a big city — the seamy side of a big city. And the main characters are two prostitutes, a small-time operator, an impressionable youth, and an evangelical racketeer.

But:

Why these characters?

Why this setting?

Because only in this way can the play express — with stark, brutal, and sometimes beautiful reality — life, stripped of the evil of pretense — the veil which another play might lift gently and apprehensively. In this way, the tone of the play is similar to the tone found in the works of Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams and Eugene O'Neill.

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*Midnight Alley* does not deal with a specific setting and specific characters — in the sense that the characters express concepts such as — individuality, conformity and basic morality or Good and Evil.

The following two scenes are taken from the play:

1.

Sean, the innocent, seeking knowledge approaches the bitter, cunning, crooked Joes and asks:

Sean: Which is worse Joes, greed, hypocrisy, superiority, artificiality, swipin' apples the way we used to do?

Joes: Swipin' apples, because it ain't on a big enough scale. I know a guy — who got a year for stealing a five-buck watch. I know another guy who got six months for a seventy-grand stock-swindle. I think that's why they got that rag tied around the eyes of the Justice Statue. If she could see what's going on in the world she'd take that sword of hers and stick it up the keisters of half the lawyers in the world.

2. In Another Scene

Sean having just discovered that Model T, the tragic figure of the play with whom he falls in love, is a prostitute, returns home in anguish that night not knowing what to do.

Mother: Is the fence too high for young legs to overstep?

Sean: I guess I'm afraid of the wire — I hadn't thought it might be barbed. What are you doing up?

Mother: When you are away I must lay down and I must

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sleep. As soon as you come home, I must wait up... even though it makes you angry. It is not a recrimination — it is a privilege.

Sean: I wish age 'could help me... but it's the province of experience instead.

Mother: Does she mean so much to you?

Sean: Yes...

Mother: This is not the long finger of guilt?

Sean: No... no, mother... I swear it.

Mother: There is no need to swear. Every word, the little uttered piece of a man's soul, should be its own oath. To swear only indicates a fear of being misbelieved. Why is one pledge to be honoured above another?

Sean: Do... you have to go back to bed right away? Are you too tired just... to sit with me a few minutes?

Mother: Such a question! (moving to the chair) When you want me, I am here. (she takes his coat and keeps it in her hands). When you wish to speak, I shall listen. Or I shall keep silent — for in silence there is the deeper well of peace and sympathy.

Sean: Why do you think I need sympathy?

Mother: Does a mother need words to know the anguish of her son?

(She sits quietly, holding the coat. He walks the length of the stage before he speaks to her).

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Sean: And do I need words, mother... chronicles, diagrams, histories... before I can know if I really love her?

Mother: There is a more profound language... one which dips through the heart, which darts through the skies of trust and confidence, with nestles murmuring against the breast of faith. This is a language which may speak what recorded syllables are inadequate to describe.

Sean: But can it be only an extension of that same series of recognizable sounds — or can it go against the grain, speak in contrary terms to what the ear may be told?

Mother: The ear and the tongue are for men; the heart is for lovers; the soul is for God.

Sean: I've got to ask you something... but, please, don't say anything to Chris. Would you welcome a girl into your house... would you be afraid to take her hand as your daughter... if you knew that she...

Having now read two of the scenes from the play the following questions remained to be answered.

Is this statement by the young naive idealist Sean — "When the individual exists only to conform, he ceases to be an individual" — only an ideal?

Will the rumour buzzing campus become reality?

Will *Midnight Alley* be seen?

Will You be the judge?