

**THE THEATER MIRROR, New England's LIVE Theater Guide**

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## "What Happened in Boston, Willie"

### Reviews of Current Productions

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### "Diffusion of Loss"

Reviewed by Red Dragonfly

**"Diffusion of Loss" is a brand new play by a brand new playwright, Jennifer Dubois. It was picked up by the 11:11 Theatre Company and showcased at the Midway Studios in South Boston—a warehouse turned theatrical space, which, if you can find it is part of the adventure. The story centers on Mara, a savvy college girl who is just about to move to LA with her father in order to go to a prestigious photography school. Mara is sassy and condescending. She totally disrespects her parents, and like the typical "bad girl," she sleeps with Eric, her best friend Robin's boyfriend. She is vibrantly played by actress, Brooke Casanova, while 11:11's very own Brian Tuttle graces the stage as Eric. A real treat to see! Where Mara embodies the epitome of selfishness, Robin appears to be the typical angel. She is definitely the "good girl" who is "slightly uncomfortable all the time," always thoughtful, and nice, but boring or "blank," as Mara would say. A strong performance of Robin by Melissa Baroni.**

**Nan, played with considerable range by actress Debbie Friedlander, is a disappointed wife and beaten down mother who, at times shows signs of life and vitality, but becomes easily overwhelmed by either her strong-willed daughter or despairs over her non-responsive husband, Bob. Bob, who is delightfully depicted by Murray Wheeler, is the typical "don't get involved" husband and father who is leaving Nan to move to LA. He has long lost his passion for his wife and is cynical, realistic, non-confrontational, and sees his family with the eyes of the present. This contrasts and is a source of pain to Nan who tends to be nostalgic, always seeing the man she first loved in Bob.**

**"Diffusion of Loss" brings to life the strained dynamics of a failed marriage and dysfunctional family. Amidst it is Mara who is, perhaps through self-preservation and/or indulgence, very skilled at manipulating people and her environment to suit her own needs. She seems incapable of sacrifice, loyalty, or genuine remorse. When her paths are crossed, her plan of action is to up the ante, regardless of the cost to others. She must at all times garner a degree of control that keeps the others who serve her needs at her mercy. The play ends on a climactic note of desperation as Mara attempts to regain control through extreme measures.**

Director Jennifer Collins Hard keeps us visually engaged from scene to scene as she places characters either in the living room or on the front porch moving fluidly and naturally with the rhythms of the everyday. We see boxes being packed and unpacked, laundry being folded, tea being brought in and out—all activities that lend to the ambiance of home. Unfortunately, for someone sitting in the back row, actors' faces are lost as soon as they sit on the ground. Having the stage on risers or some sort of platform would have provided a more visually accessible performance.

Additional kudos to Jennifer Collins Hard for her riveting direction of the many fight scenes, most notably the one between Eric and Robin and then later between Eric and Mara in Act Two.

A detail that I personally found distracting: the lack of (even a pretend or mimed) doorway between the living room and the front porch. Without it, the actors seem to glide through a wall that the audience was asked to believe existed.

Effective set design by Adam Harper. Unfortunately, actors' faces were often lost to the shadows due to poor lighting.

Overall, "Diffusion Of Loss" displayed a delightful array of characters and provided some truly poignant moments. An excellent effort on behalf of all involved. I would have liked to see the strong performances and direction bolstered by certain key production details that could have been used more effectively to bring this play to a level that it deserved.

"Diffusion of Loss" (14 - 22 April)

[THE 11:11 THEATER](#)

Midway Studios, BOSTON MA

1 (781)893-9171

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