

## A YEARNING ( 'YERMA' )

Federico Garcia Lorca adapted by Ruth Carter

- AMAR: Come in, Darshna, come in. It's so nice to see you. You're looking well.
- DARSHNA: Yes. How are you Amar?
- AMAR: I'm - the same. Let me get you a drink, something to eat.
- DARSHNA: I have to get back or my mother-in-law will be having one of her turns. You're lucky in a way. Just you and Jaz. All to yourselves.
- AMAR: (*melancholy*) All to ourselves. (*Attempting to brighten up*) You've been shopping. Something nice?
- DARSHNA: (*excited*). You'll never guess.
- AMAR: Not MORE shoes!
- DARSHNA: It finally happened.
- AMAR: What?
- DARSHNA opens the bags to show her: a set of baby clothes and a rattle. Baby knitting wool.*
- AMAR: In five months! That's wonderful ! You're sure?
- DARSHNA: Absolutely positive.
- AMAR: It's so wonderful. How does it feel?
- DARSHNA: I don't know. Different. A bit odd. Like I can't quite believe it.
- AMAR: (*holding on to her*). Different? How? Darshna, tell me, the night it happened, were you carried away - did you cry out with happiness that time? The moment when it happened did you know immediately, or has it come as a complete surprise?
- DARSHNA: I suppose it was a bit of a surprise. And yet at the time ... I did feel ... I don't know Amar. I'm just so glad it's happened for me.
- AMAR: I expect it WAS different that night.
- DARSHNA: Don't go on about it Amar. It's embarrassing.
- AMAR: Sorry, I just - (*She can't complete the sentence.*)
- DARSHNA: (*taking pity*). Look, have you ever held a live bird shut in your hand?
- AMAR: Yes. When I was in my village we caught birds.
- DARSHNA: Well it's the same, but in your blood.
- AMAR: How beautiful!
- DARSHNA: I'm still daze about it all. You know me, Amar, bags of confidence, but as soon as it was confirmed, I realized I don't know anything about births or babies. I'll have to talk to my Mum.

AMAR: Of course, you know! It's a natural thing. Your body was made for you to have a child. It knows. Just be sure you don't rush around too much and when you breathe, breathe as softly as if you had a flower between your teeth.

DARSHNA: 'Flower between my teeth?' Where d'you get that one from!

AMAR: I've heard my aunties in my village. It's all they talk about. Babies and husbands. You pick it up. That's how you learn at home. Listening in on the wise women.

DARSHNA: They say later on it starts kicking you, pushing you to get out.

AMAR: Yes, and that's when you love it the most, when you can really call him, 'my child'. It's a good sign. He 's feeling his way inside you. Getting to know you.

DARSHNA: Amar!

AMAR: (*shyly*). Darshna what did Manjit say when you told him?

DARSHNA: Nothing much. (*Smile*) Grunted a bit. You know what he's like. He's not a talker.

AMAR: But he loves you very deeply, doesn't he?

DARSHNA: I suppose so. Yea. I suppose he does. Doesn't put it into words like, but when he lies real close to me, you know, his eyes they quiver like two leaves in a breeze.

AMAR: The moment it happened, d'you think he knew?

DARSHNA: He could tell.

AMAR: He knew?

DARSHNA: On our wedding night he kept saying it, repeating it over and over 'come on baby' over and over, his mouth pressed against my cheek 'come on' so that now I think of my baby like something he slipped into my ear. But you're the expert, Amar, you know more about these things than I do. Than most of us do.

AMAR: Much good it does me! You are so lucky Darshna! So lucky.

DARSHNA: Doesn't seem fair. Of all the girls who got married when you did, you're the only one -

AMAR: (*cutting in*). That's how it is. And there's plenty of time. It took Kiran three years and in the village there was a woman who had to wait twelve years before it happened. But you're quite right, two years and twenty days is too long for me to wait. Eaten up with longing, counting each day, waiting each month. Inside me, I'm wasting away. It isn't fair. I dare not tell Jaz, but sometimes I feel so bad I go to the park just to press my back against a tree, to feel it growing. If I go on like this, I'll go mad.

DARSHNA: Amar, you've got to stop crying on in this way. You're sounding like a demented old woman. Moaning on isn't going to help, is it? One of my mother's sisters had a baby when she was forty! He came out perfect, lovely looking baby as well. And so healthy.

AMAR: Was he?

DARSHNA: He was a terror. Made a noise like six Bhangra dancers in competition with a heavy metal band. He used to pee on us all and pull our plaits and when he was, **TRINITY** four months old he used to scratch our faces. They were quite sharp **TRINITY** the nails of his.

Little tiger, he was and really strong.

AMAR:( *laughing*). But he was a baby. Babies can't really hurt.

DARSHNA: You reckon!

AMAR: My eldest sister when she was feeding her first baby I remember her breast were covered with scratches, cracked and sore and it really hurt her, but it was a good pain, healthy. The old women in the village said it was a wholesome pain.

DARSHNA: Well my sister, the one who's married to the councilor, she's got four and she reckons children bring you pain, wrinkles, thick hips and aggravation.

AMAR: Of course you have to suffer, but nobody said having a child is like arranging a bunch of flowers! Why have them if you're not prepared to suffer to see them grow, It is said we lose our blood to make a child. So we must suffer. But that is good, healthy, beautiful. Every woman is made with enough blood for four or five children and if it's not used her blood turns to poison. As mine will.