

## THE RECIPE — A Play by Armin Wiebe

Growing out of the mid-twentieth century Mennonite culture situated between Manitoba's Red River and the Pembina Hills, my new play *The Recipe* is a comedy-drama featuring a plus-sized woman as romantic lead. The play wrestles with still-current issues of social class, body image, self-esteem, sexism, and a woman's reproductive options.

### SYNOPSIS

Oata is an abundant woman who has been tormented for her size since childhood and also has suffered community ridicule for her misfit father and her mentally ill mother. Out of loneliness and "Holem de grül, *needs* a woman not sometimes?" she seduces Yasch, another misfit, and shows him she can be a lot of fun. A whirlwind romance leads to an engagement ring and new standing in the community.

However, when she's about to tell him she may be pregnant, Tasch lets slip his obsession with skinny Sadie Nickel. Suddenly, Oata's narrative is disrupted. "Skin and bones? That's your dream?" -- Oata skewers him with the full wrath of a woman scorned. Should she, can she tell him now?

Meanwhile, her rival Sadie, fleeing a date with Pug Peters, also worries that her period is late and approaches Oata with a rumour that Oata's mother knows how to help. Though insulted, Oata searches her mother's midwife notebook and finds a remedy for when a woman's monthly period has not occurred.

Can such a recipe work? Should she try to help Sadie? Should she try to help herself? Is skinny Sadie the enemy? Or is she an ally? Is Yasch worthy of her abundance? Does she need pants with a man in them to run the farm?

Set in a time before Pierre Elliot Trudeau declared that the state has no place in the bedrooms of the nation, a time when contraceptives and abortions are hard to come by and still illegal, *The Recipe* is about a woman coming into her power in ways that surprise everyone, including herself.

### CHARACTERS:

OATA NEEDARP	AGE 20 (A sensual woman living in a larger body)
YASCH SIEMENS	AGE 23 (A landless hireling with dreams)
SADIE NICKEL	AGE 15 (A slender female)
PUG PETERS/MALE CALLER	AGE 20 (Cocky son of a farmer)
PASTOR'S VOICE	AGE 45 (Radio call-in preacher)

RUN TIME: 80 minutes

### DEVELOPMENT HISTORY & WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR:

Based on characters from my novels, *The Recipe* began during a Sarasvati Theatre FemFest workshop with Yvette Nolan. I then developed the play using my playwrights' group as a sounding board. Several drafts later, I engaged Suzie Martin for a director's and young woman's

perspective. Suzie's enthusiasm for the play and her hardnosed critique led to serious rewriting. Next, I approached Brian Drader at Manitoba Association of Playwrights who read the play and eagerly proposed a workshop with actors. The MAP Play Lab workshop, led by Suzie Martin (Brian Drader sat in for the readthrough) generated much valuable discussion and guided further rewrites. I also read an excerpt in a PGC Craft Bites session.

I think *The Recipe* is ready for the collaboration of a theatre and director/dramaturge willing to explore the play with an eye on production. Further pre-rehearsal development, perhaps including workshops, may be necessary to deepen the story and sharpen the drama for the stage. I expect this process to continue during rehearsals.

#### PLAYWRITING SUCCESSES:

My first stage play *The Moonlight Sonata of Beethoven Blatz* premiered at Theatre Projects Manitoba in 2011 to enthusiastic reviews and sold-out houses. Director Kim McCaw wrote:

When things weren't clear, we asked Armin for clarity. When some action wasn't possible with our resources, we asked him to give us another choice. When words or phrases didn't come off the tongue the way we needed, we asked for changes. In the end, we were ready to do whatever Armin gave us, but throughout the process he remained open and generous and ready at all times to find better ways for the play to do what it needed to do.

Ardith Boxall, then Artistic Director of Theatre Projects Manitoba, wrote:

As a playwright, Armin Wiebe is a producer's dream. Deadlines, rewrites, research, blogging, and promoting the play (and the company) are tasks that he rises to with skill, focus, and an unwavering sense of joy and clarity. His contributions artistically are unmatched; his contribution as part of the theatre's team is an added bonus.

A second production directed by Christopher Brauer had a thirty-five-performance run at Station Arts Centre in 2016.

*Wine and Little Breads*, the first play to feature my character Oata, received a staged reading at Prairie Theatre Exchange's Festival of New Works in 2018 and an Honourable Mention in the 2019 Herman Voaden National Playwrighting Competition.

*The Recipe* is a prequel to *Wine and Little Breads*. A possible third Oata play is in early stages of exploration.

However, the play's the thing, and to that end I offer the opening of *The Recipe*. Should the opening spark your interest, please contact me at [arminwiebe954@gmail.com](mailto:arminwiebe954@gmail.com) and I will be happy to submit the full script to you.

Thank you,  
Armin Wiebe

*NIGHT. MOONLIT PRAIRIE ROAD. Pickup truck. No headlights. YASCH drives. OATA snuggles beside him. Dashboard lights.*

OATA: Yasch, I need to talk with you something.  
*Sensation of truck turning off the road onto double dike.*  
Where go you?  
*Jolt.*  
What want you on the double dike?  
*Bump.*  
Put on lights at least. Want you the Mountie to hold us up again?  
*Lurch.*  
Yasch, what's loose with you? Say me something.  
*Rattle.*  
Say me some—Düsent! There's a car!  
*Truck inches up to the back of a parked car.*  
Isn't that Pug's—Hey, you'll hit it!  
*Bumpers touch. Engine strains as the truck pushes the car.*  
What do you? Stop!  
*Yasch flicks on headlights. They see a bare-bottomed male scramble from the back seat and dive to grab the steering wheel to keep the car from veering into the ditch.*

OATA: Gott im Himmel! That's a bare narsch!  
*Yasch slams the brakes. They watch as the naked male settles behind the wheel. The car starts up, spins tires, and lurches away in a flash of red taillights.*  
That was Pug Peters, not?  
*Truck idles. Clink of bottles. Psst of bottle cap.*  
Is that beer?

YASCH: Want some?

OATA: Keep that stink away from me.  
What's loose with you?  
You scare me, Yasch.  
You would push a car with people into the ditch?

YASCH: He makes me so mad.

OATA: And it bothered you not that I was with?

YASCH: I stopped before I did them anything.

OATA: But if I wasn't with?

YASCH: Calls me dow-nix 'cause my Futtatje has no farm and...

OATA: And over that you would push his car off the dike?

YASCH: She was in the backseat.

OATA: Holem de grül.  
Where you wanted to be.  
With skinny Sadie Nickel.

OATA: Gott im Himmel, Yasch, after all we've done together?  
And now you have your shorts on backwards over somebody that's fifteen?

YASCH: Sadie was in there with. . .with Pug's bare narsch.  
*Slurps beer.*  
And I no way even tried nothing with her. I just pitched and she played catcher and then Ha Ha Nickel fired me.

OATA: For fartzing around with Sadie.

YASCH: No! I told you I no way tried nothing with her.

OATA: Your milk sure tasted like sow thistle when Ha Ha sent you to seed for me.

YASCH: I was feemäsijch mad!

OATA: Because?

YASCH: Cause Sadie went with Pug to the movie show by Neche and now she is with that two-faced Schwengel in the backseat.  
*Swigs beer.*  
Fifteen just. Too young for me. Too young for Pug Peters.

OATA: But you want her still.

YASCH: Can't a person have dreams?  
*The truck engine sputters and dies.*

OATA: Skin and bones? That's your dream?

YASCH: Dievel, I'm out of gas.  
*Yasch shuts off the lights. Moonlight bathes the scene. Oata opens her door casting a large shadow as she steps out in her pink tent dress (pink stockings, pink high heels, pink purse) and rotates, wide-armed.*

OATA: Yasch Siemens, I thought you dreamed big.  
*Oata walks away from the truck.*

*She wipes her eyes with her sleeve.*

What for did I wear high heels and nylons to Christian Endeavour anyways?

*A crow caws. Yasch drinks and tosses the bottle.*

YASCH: Oata wait.

*Yasch gets out of the truck, slinks after Oata. Oata keeps walking as he catches up.*

OATA: Pug is maybe right. Only a dow-nix runs out of gas and makes a woman walk home on the double dike in her best shoes.

*Oata stumbles. Bends to take off a shoe.*

YASCH: I-I didn't know.

*Oata takes off the other shoe, brandishes both at Yasch.*

OATA: Am I old shoes so soon that with me right beside, you chase after skinny Sadie?

*Oata flings a shoe at Yasch. Yasch catches it reflexively.*

YASCH: I meant not.

OATA: What is that dream you have?

*Oata flings the other shoe. It bounces off Yasch and drops to the ground. Yasch stoops to pick it up.*

OATA: I want to hear this.

YASCH: *(cradles the shoes)* Nah, well...I...

OATA: The well has water, so pump.

YASCH: I-I how can I say?

OATA: With words, Yasch. Words like you made dirty verses about me in school.

YASCH: For that I shame myself and I said you sorry, I—

OATA: So say me something now.

Thanks for reading. Please contact Armin Wiebe at [arminwiebe954@gmail.com](mailto:arminwiebe954@gmail.com) to request the full script.