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***IN THE GUTTER***

*By, Brandon Tiehen*

*A dramatic one-act  
For two men, two women, two extras.*

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***CHARACTERS***

*Female:*

*TAMMY HANSON.....thirty-eight –year-old mother of  
Quincy Birch*

*CAROLINE RIVERA.....Seventeen-year-old friend of  
Quincy Birch*

*Male:*

*QUINCY BIRCH.....seventeen-year-old son of Tammy  
Hanson*

*TRENT HANSON.....forty-two-year-old husband of  
Tammy Hanson and step-father of Quincy Birch*

*Extras:*

*POLICEMEN.....police officer*

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*(THE HOUSELIGHTS ARE DIM, and after a couple seconds of silence, the lights fade in to reveal the living room of a house with a couch at C, and a chair or two on the right side and a small coffee table/end table on the left if desired, and there is a coat hanger near the couch and chairs. The fourth wall is that would be the television and the remote is on the end table. NOTE: All entrances into and out of the house to and from outside are at R, and any exits to other areas of the house are at L).*

*(QUINCY BIRCH and CAROLINE RIVERA enter R).*

*QUINCY. So what was your favorite part?*

*CAROLINE. Probably the ending. What about you?*

*QUINCY. Same... I loved the ending*

*(They sit on the couch).*

*CAROLINE. So, um, thanks for the movie.*

*QUINCY. Yea...*

*QUINCY. Yeah, you know I'd seen the ads on TV, but I never thought it would be as good as the original.*

*CAROLINE. There's an original?*

*QUINCY. Yeah. There's a book and movie from like 1980-something.*

*CAROLINE. (Begins giggling subtly)*

*QUINCY. What's so funny?*

*CAROLINE. You're just such a geek!*

*QUINCY. (Amused) What, how?*

*CAROLINE. You just remember the weirdest things.*

*QUINCY. Fine, I'll give you that.*

*(A moment of silence passes).*

*QUINCY. Well it's only like five if you want to stick around some more, maybe we can watch TV or—*

*CAROLINE. I have to go home; homework...*

*QUINCY. Common it's only Saturday! Just and hour?*

*CAROLINE. I know, but I just want to get it done.*

*(Another short moment of silence, as CAROLINE begins to get up. As she moves to leave QUINCY grabs her hand before realizing what he's done and letting go ashamedly).*

QUINCY. *Hey so before you go...*

CAROLINE. *Yeah?*

QUINCY. *I, uh...Um...*

CAROLINE. *Yes?*

QUINCY. *(Losing his confidence) Nah, I forgot. It's not important.*

CAROLINE. *(Laughs a little) Okay. Well I better go.*

QUINCY. *Okay. (As they hug) I'll see you later.*

CAROLINE. *(Coming out of hug, beginning to exit R) Bye!*

QUINCY. *Bye.*

*(CAROLINE exits L, and QUINCY shakes his head forlornly, slaps his forehead, and sits back down on the couch, grabs the remote, and begins watching television).*

*(After a couple seconds of silence, a loud bang is heard off L. The lights come up, and TRENT HANSON rushes on L, as if to be filled with rage. TAMMY HANSON follows desperately).*

TRENT. *No! I'm done with you!(Grabbing his coat from the coat hanger).*

TAMMY. *(Panicking, rushing on L) Where are you going?*

TRENT. *I'm just gonna grab a few things, and then I'm going out. (Angrily, exits R).*

*(TAMMY sits on the couch as she tries to avoid breaking into tears).*

QUINCY. *He'll be back. Don't worry about it.*

TAMMY. *(Near yell) How do you know, Quincy? Your stepdad just stormed out the door, and now I'm sitting here trying not to cry while my kid comforts me.*

*QUINCY. But he does this every time, Mom, and he always comes back. It's going to be okay. It's just another stupid argument.*

*TAMMY. You're probably right. But I just get tired of having the same fight day after day after day. You know?*

*QUINCY. Yeah.*

*TAMMY. (Angry at herself, but taking it out on him) No, Quincy, you don't!*

*QUINCY. Maybe not, but I'm trying. But you know, you just had an argument with Trent; you're probably really tired, why don't you just go relax. He'll come home later.*

*TAMMY. I guess. (pause) But even though he's my husband, is it bad that sometimes I don't want him to come home?*

*QUINCY. (turns off the TV) No, I mean, I don't always either.*

*TAMMY. Wait, what?*

*QUINCY. I don't know. I just don't always want him to come home. He's kind of a jerk. But hey, what I think right now doesn't matter. You just go relax.*

*TAMMY. It does matter. But okay.*

*(She gets up, and begins to exit L).*

*TAMMY. (As she exits, looking back) Love you.*

*QUINCY. Love you too, Mom.*

*(TAMMY exits L).*

*(QUINCY picks up the remote and turns on the TV).*

*(After a few seconds, TRENT enters R).*

*TRENT. (Heading to L) Hi.*

*(QUINCY does not answer).*

*TRENT. I said hi.*

*(QUINCY still does not answer).*

TRENT. Hello? Anyone home?

QUINCY. Yeah. Three people; I've been here, mom is upstairs, and you just walked in.

TRENT. (With rising anger) Okay smartass, cut the crap. Why did she go upstairs?

QUINCY. Why would you care? You treat her like crap anyways

TRENT. Well, if it's any consolation, once I divorce her, you probably won't have to ever see me again. I know you'll be happy about that.

QUINCY. (Now angry) Oh that's such a cheap shot! Stop acting like you know me!

TRENT. Well you see, the problem is that you don't know anything.

QUINCY. Oh screw off.

TRENT. (Also now angry) Excuse me?

QUINCY. (Standing, beginning to walk past TRENT) I said screw off!

TRENT. (Shoving QUINCY back) Don't walk away when I'm talking to you!

QUINCY. (Violently shaking him off) Get your hands off me!

TRENT. Now you listen to me. If you think you can just speak to—

QUINCY. No you listen to me. You come walking in here all ignorant and "king of the house," thinking you're so untouchable. But if you don't realize that nobody even wants you here, you have one hell of a surprise coming. To be honest, I don't know why you even come home anymore! It's not like you do anything when you're here! And not only that, but you treat your wife—my mother—like crap. And if me saying this still doesn't get it through your thick skull and into... into your little dog brain that you need to change the way you are with us, then why don't you just leave for good? And also—

TRENT. (Now yelling) Shut up! Okay? Shut up! You have no authority to speak to me this way! I won't have it! (Beginning to remove his belt) You need to be taught some respect and I'm gonna teach it to you!

TAMMY. *(rushing between the two, standing protectively in front of QUINCY)* What's all the yelling?

QUINCY. *(Referencing the belt)* Well, apparently, I'm about to be taught some respect.

TRENT. *(Quickly rebuckling his belt)* No, everything's fine. I'm just grabbing some cash, then I'll be on my way.

TAMMY. *Well when you get home, you can sleep on the couch.*

TRENT. *Who said I'd be back tonight? I need some serious time to think... (Exits L)*

TAMMY. *(Feeling insulted, silently exits L).*

*(CAROLINE enters R a few seconds after TRENT leaves).*

CAROLINE. *Hey, the door was open, so I just let myself in. I forgot my phone.*

QUINCY. *Oh yeah, it's right here. (Picking it up from the table and handing it to her).*

CAROLINE. *Awesome thanks.*

*(Awkward pause as Caroline begins to leave).*

QUINCY. *Sure thing. (Pause) Hey, I know you're just here to pick up your phone, but the offer to stick around still stands.*

CAROLINE. *I guess my homework can wait a little bit.*

*(CAROLINE sits down with QUINCY on the couch).*

CAROLINE. *So what are we watching?*

QUINCY. *Married with Children.*

CAROLINE. *Oh my dad talks about that show!*

QUINCY. *Yeah, it's great!*

*(TRENT enters L).*

QUINCY. *I'm recording a lot of the episodes and putting them on a DVD... Hey so what I wanted to ask is...are you maybe... free later this week? Just you know... to... to*

*come over and... (Losing his confidence) help me with my homework.*

*CAROLINE: (mildly disappointed) Oh, yeah definitely!*

*TRENT. (Heading R) He's not having anyone over, because he's grounded!*

*QUINCY. Wait—what? Since when was I grounded?*

*TRENT. Since now.*

*QUINCY. Hey, Caroline, I'll meet you in in my room, okay?*

*CAROLINE. (Realizing the situation). Oh yeah, sure. (Exits L).*

*QUINCY. (Sarcastically, to TRENT) Can I help you with something?*

*TRENT. Watch your tone.*

*QUINCY. Why should I?*

*TRENT. I'm the man of this house, so I deserve some respect.*

*QUINCY. Man? Oh okay. See, I thought my mom was gay and married a very masculine-looking woman.*

*TRENT. You think you're so funny, don't you?*

*QUINCY. I mean yeah, but mainly I'm just fed up with you.*

*TRENT. You're fed up with me?*

*QUINCY. No, not by you, by your evil twin. Whatever. Just get out of here, Trent.*

*TRENT. Who the hell do you think you are?*

*QUINCY. (Pauses) I think that I am someone who is kicking you the hell out of my house!*

*TRENT. (Laughs) Your house? You aren't kicking me out.*

*QUINCY. Yeah, my house! You don't belong here! We were doing just fine before you came into the picture and—*

*TRENT. I don't want to hear it! I said—*

*QUINCY. (Heading L) Oh, I'm sorry! I couldn't hear you! You're breaking up! Bye! (Exiting L).*

*TRENT. We aren't on the phone! Get back in here! (QUINCY Exits L). Little piece of—*

*TAMMY. (Walking on L, stopping just in view) Little piece of what?*

*TRENT. Nothing. He was just being a jackass..*

*TAMMY. I heard the entire thing and I have to say that he had every right to be.*

*TRENT. Oh, so you're siding with your gremlin child now?*

*TAMMY. I'm not siding with anybody.*

TRENT. *Yes you are, you're saying—*

TAMMY. *(Yelling) I know what I said!*

*(Silence).*

TRENT. *You were siding with him and you know it.*

TAMMY. *No! I wasn't! Jesus Christ, Trent! Will you just stop being such a child?*

TRENT. *I'm a child?*

TAMMY. *Yes!*

TRENT. *Woman, if you think that low of me, then maybe we should just end this marriage now!*

TAMMY. *Why being like this? I thought we were doing okay?*

TRENT. *(Finally snapping) Oh my God! You're fricking crazy! You're a psychopath! You're an insane sociopathic little bitch!*

TAMMY. *(Beginning to break into tears). Trent, please, let's just sit down and talk.*

TRENT. *(Heading to exit R) Yeah. That sounds like a great idea! We can talk tonight...over the phone. Sound good?*

TAMMY. *(Rushing in front of him) Wait, where are you going?*

TRENT. *Out.*

TAMMY. *You say that every time! You can't just run from all your problems!*

TRENT. *(Furious with rage, but maintaining a calm, yet angered voice) Get out of my way.*

TAMMY. *Please don't leave again.*

TRENT. *Get the hell out of my way!*

*(TRENT shoves TAMMY aside to the floor. He stops for less than a second, pauses as if about to apologize before shaking it off. Storms out R).*

*(TAMMY gets up slowly, stares after him for a second, then exits L).*

*(The sound of a slamming door is heard).*

*(QUINCY and CAROLINE both come on L).*



QUINCY. *So you've never seen it?*

CAROLINE. *Nope.*

QUINCY. *Okay. Well you're crazy.*

CAROLINE. *(Playfully) Oh shut up. (Pause). Hey, if it's not too personal, what was the deal with you and Trent?*

QUINCY. *Oh... It's nothing, its not a big deal.*

CAROLINE. *That seemed like a big deal. Are you okay?*

QUINCY. *Yeah... He's just been especially jerk-y lately.*

CAROLINE. *Oh... I'm sorry.*

QUINCY. *It's fine... I'm used to it.*

CAROLINE. *It's not fine, it really, really sucks. You and your mom deserve better.*

QUINCY. *Thanks, but it's okay.*

CAROLINE. *Really?*

QUINCY. *Yeah.*

*(TAMMY comes on L, clearly upset but trying to retain some dignity).*

TAMMY. *Did you guys... want any snacks? Some drinks maybe?*

QUINCY. *No... Hey Mom are you okay?*

TAMMY. *I'm fine.*

QUINCY. *Mom, is that a bruise?*

TAMMY. *I'm fine, Quincy.*

QUINCY. *(standing up and moving towards her) Mom, did he hurt you?*

TAMMY. *It's not a big deal, he just--*

QUINCY. *He just what? I swear to God I'm going to kill him if--*

TAMMY. *It's nothing. He was trying to leave and I kept blocking him, it's my fault really.*

QUINCY. *(Furious) Mom, what did he do?*

TAMMY. *He just... pushed me a little. It doesn't even hurt any more.*

QUINCY. *I'll kill him!*

TAMMY. *Please don't do anything. I'm okay, really.*

*QUINCY. No! I'm going to find him, and you can't talk me out of it!*

*(QUINCY rushes off R).*

*(TAMMY sits down next to CAROLINE).*

*TAMMY. I'm sorry you have to see this.*

*CAROLINE. (Trying to comfort TAMMY) No, it's okay.*

*TAMMY. No it's really not. You shouldn't have to do this for your friend's mom.*

*CAROLINE. Honestly, it's okay. My mom just got divorced. I have some experience with women in bad relationships.*

*(CAROLINE manages to get a smile out of TAMMY).*

*TAMMY. You really don't have to stay. Aren't you uncomfortable?*

*CAROLINE. Like I said, my mom just went through this, so it's not anything I'm not used to. There's actually something I've been thinking for a while that might help. I don't think it'll help my mom at this point, but maybe it'll help you. You just... you can't let him get you down. You have to remember that there's Victims and there's Victors in this world. Victims let life get the best of them. Victors get the best of life. It's up to you which you choose to be.*

*TAMMY. Thanks, Caroline. You don't have to do this.*

*CAROLINE. It's no problem.*

*TAMMY. Thank you, really. I see why he calls you "Sweet Caroline."*

*CAROLINE. He calls me that?*

*TAMMY. Yeah.*

*CAROLINE. That's so sweet!*

*TAMMY. (Beginning to cheer up) Yeah. His ringtone for you is the song.*

*CAROLINE. Oh my God, that's so cute.*

*TAMMY. He really likes you.*

*CAROLINE. Wait, what?*

TAMMY. *(realizing the implication)* He really does care about you.

CAROLINE. *That's not what you said. You said he really likes me?*

TAMMY. *He does.*

CAROLINE. *Really?*

TAMMY. *Yeah.*

*(CAROLINE smiles to herself)*

TAMMY. *What?*

CAROLINE. *Nothing.*

TAMMY. *No, what?*

CAROLINE. *Really, it's nothing.*

*(A couple loud bangs/sounds that indicate violence is heard off R.).*

*(QUINCY comes running on R, partially black-eye).*

CAROLINE. *Quincy what's going on?!*

TAMMY. *You found him?*

QUINCY. *Yeah! He was just at the Burger King down the street.*

TAMMY. *Is he here?*

QUINCY. *(Frantically sarcastic) No I just rushed inside for no reason!*

TAMMY. *Why isn't he coming in?*

QUINCY. *Because it's naptime.*

CAROLINE. *Quincy, what'd you do?*

QUINCY. *I don't know, I guess he hit his head wrong?*

TAMMY. *You killed him?!*

QUINCY. *No! He's just out cold.*

TAMMY. *Where?*

QUINCY. *...The driveway...*

TAMMY. *(To CAROLINE) I'm so sorry you had to be here for this.*

CAROLINE. *It's okay, things could have gone worse.*

QUINCY. *How?*

TAMMY. *That's not important. Anyways I'm gonna call the police. (Runs off L) .*

CAROLINE. (To QUINCY) What happened between you two?

QUINCY. I found him at Burger King and confronted him, and we started yelling back and forth. Then we ended up outside shoving and then fighting. And then I ran home and he followed me, so I did what I felt I had to.

TAMMY. (coming on L). I've called the police. They're on their way

(Sirens).

TAMMY. That must be them. (Rushes off R).

CAROLINE. (To QUINCY) What'd you do to him?

QUINCY. I don't know. This whole day is just kind of a blur...

CAROLINE. What will the police say?

QUINCY. I don't know.

CAROLINE. Well, I know your mom will have your back.

QUINCY. True (Suddenly reacting to severe pain in his ribs, lets out a yell).

CAROLINE. (Grabbing him in her arms tightly) I'm just glad you're okay.

QUINCY. (In pain) Well I'd be more okay if you weren't holding me so tight.

CAROLINE. (Letting go quickly) Oh, sorry!

QUINCY. No, I'm okay. It's just my ribs.

(A POLICEMAN and TAMMY rush on R.)

POLICEMAN. Is anyone hurt?

QUINCY. No, we're fine.

POLICEMAN. (To CAROLINE and QUINCY) Who are you?

TAMMY. They weren't involved.

POLICEMAN. Okay, well, I'm going to need a witness.

(TAMMY, CAROLINE, and QUINCY exchange looks).

TAMMY. (To POLICEMAN) I'll explain.

POLICEMAN. Would you come outside with me please?

TAMMY. Yes, sir.

*(TAMMY and POLICEMAN exit R as TRENT is escorted out).*

CAROLINE. *(To QUINCY)* So what now?

QUINCY. *I don't know. Anything could happen at this point.  
You know?*

CAROLINE. *Yeah...*

*(A semi-long pause).*

QUINCY. *I'm so sorry you were here for all of this.*

CAROLINE. *No it's perfectly okay.*

QUINCY. *(Yelling) No! It's not okay! (pause. Now speaking  
calmly) It's not... You know, I thought we would be friends  
forever. And after all this...*

CAROLINE. *Quincy, we will always be friends. Always.*

QUINCY. *But how do you know, Caroline? I'm just the kid  
that sat near you in class freshman year.*

CAROLINE. *And why do you think I chose you as my partner  
that day?*

QUINCY. *Because you felt bad for me?*

CAROLINE. *Because I thought you were sweet. You were  
always so quiet, but when you spoke in class it was just so  
articulate and meaningful.*

*(a moment of silence passes).*

CAROLINE. *Quincy, I... (taking his hand softly)...I want you to  
know that we will always stick together...always.*

QUINCY. *Yeah?*

CAROLINE. *Yeah. So today was rough. Who cares? The  
bottom line is that everyone is okay and we are still here  
together.*

QUINCY. *I guess you're right...*

*(Moment of silence).*

QUINCY. *Hey Caroline?*

CAROLINE. *(sitting up) Yeah?*

*QUINCY. I um. I know it's bad timing and all, with everything going on. But. I uh...*

*CAROLINE. (Somewhat anxious, yet holding back excitement) Yes?*

*QUINCY. I uh...I wanted to ask you if...uhm...if you'd want to...maybe...go on a date...or something?*

*CAROLINE. (Filled with joy) Yes.*

*QUINCY. Yes?*

*CAROLINE. Yeah. I'd love to!*

*QUINCY. That's great. I can't believe—*

*(POLICEMAN enters R).*

*POLICEMAN. I'm looking for Quincy Birch?*

*QUINCY. That's me.*

*POLICEMAN. Would you please step out with me?*

*QUINCY. Yeah. I'll be right there. (to CAROLINE) Alright I've gotta go.*

*CAROLINE. Okay.*

*(QUINCY and CAROLINE hug).*

*QUINCY. Bye.*

*CAROLINE. Bye...*

*(QUINCY and POLICEMAN exit R.)*

*(CAROLINE sits back on the couch. After a few moments, she stands up, and walks off R).*

*(The lights fade out).*

*(Scene.)*