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*Dramatic Publishing*

# **BOYS' PLAY**

**A Play in One Act**

**by**

**JACK HEIFNER**

This excerpt contains strong language.



**Dramatic Publishing**  
**Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia**

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JACK HEIFNER

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## AUTHOR'S NOTES

The idea to write *Boys' Play* began when a friend called from my hometown in Texas to tell me (in all seriousness) that flying saucers had landed. This led me to remembering times when, as a teenager, I would go on camping trips with my best friend. A major part of these wilderness adventures centered around scaring each other senseless with ghost stories. Therefore, the two characters and the setting for *Boys' Play* came from remembering my own youth. I think growing up may have been the hardest thing I ever had to do.

In the last four years, I have been volunteering at a walk-in counseling center in New York City. The teenage clients are struggling to decide what their beliefs happen to be. They are at that crossroads when they will either take what their parents have taught them and follow those beliefs without question; or rebel against them and go some other road, harder to travel, but of one's own choosing. The experience of dealing with these teenagers and youth-at-risk problems (child abuse, alcoholism, drugs and more) entered into the creation of this play. Growing up isn't easy for anyone.

*Boys' Play* is about friendship, testing faith and looking for answers. Although some people may find some of the dialogue shocking, I wanted to show these two boys as they would behave and talk away from the adult world. Part of this involves what teenage boys observe as "male behavior" and their attempt to emulate it.

On a personal level, *Boys' Play* was a necessary journey. I do believe that sometimes, out of nowhere, something can happen that changes the course of your life forever. For the two boys in this play, nothing will ever be the same after this night. This is "the crossroads" and there will be no going back.

The World Premiere of *BOYS' PLAY* took place at the Arkansas Repertory Theatre on April 4, 1990.

Director . . . . . CLIFF FANNIN BAKER  
Scenic Design . . . . . MIKE NICHOLS  
Costume Design . . . . . DON BOLLINGER  
Lighting Design . . . . . CRICKETTE BRENDEL  
Sound Design . . . . . DAVID POLANTZ  
Stage Manager . . . . . LISA L. ABBOTT

### CAST

Tom . . . . . TODD WILLIAM FRAMPTON  
Joe . . . . . NATHANIEL BUCK

*BOYS' PLAY* was developed in New York City at New Dramatists and The West Bank Theatre. In those readings and productions, the boys were played by Andy McCutcheon and Christopher Shaw. The director was Diane Kamp.

The Los Angeles production opened at The Hudson Theatre on June 19, 1992. The play was directed by Don Amendolia, with Tuc Watkins and Tyler Hansen as the boys.

# **BOYS' PLAY**

**A Play in One Act  
For 2 Boys**

## **CHARACTERS**

**JOE** ..... 15

**TOM** . . . 16, a little larger, better-looking and more muscular

### **TIME:**

A moonlit night.

### **PLACE:**

A clearing in the woods by a lake,  
outside of a small town in Middle America.

**For Milton Justice**



## BOYS' PLAY

**AT RISE:** *The sound of crickets, frogs and night creatures. Light comes up on a clearing. A large tree is silhouetted against the night sky. Two BOYS enter. TOM, dressed in jeans, a T-shirt and a football letter jacket, runs in and looks out at the audience—as if there were a lake in front of him. JOE, dressed in jeans, a sweater and a light jacket, runs in and looks out also. JOE is carrying a backpack and he is holding the front of his pants.*

TOM. This is it.

JOE. I gotta pee so badly my nuts are about to pop.

TOM. Then throw that shit down and pee.

JOE. It's all that beer. Quick! I gotta find a tree.

TOM. This place is nothing but trees, idiot. Why not just pee in the lake?

JOE. I gotta pee against something.

TOM. You mean you can't just stand out in the open and let it fly?

JOE. No. Shit! I gotta go! *(He throws his pack down and runs off.)*

TOM *(laughing)*. You dickhead. I can pee anyplace. What do you mean you gotta pee against a tree? That's like some damn dog would do. Lift his back leg and squirt.

JOE *(offstage)*. I can't help it. I have to aim at something.

TOM. Aim at the ground, you asshole.

JOE. I have to aim at something dick-level, like a urinal.

TOM. You dumb fart, found anything yet?

JOE. Yeah. It's great! Relief is on its way.

TOM. I don't hear nothin'.

JOE. Like what?

TOM. You can always tell a real man by the force of his pee. Some guys just dribble it out, but a real man shoots it out strong. I like it when I'm peeing in a toilet bowl. That's when all that force makes lots of tiny bubbles. Wow! That's fun! (*A short pause.*) I still don't hear nothin'.

(*JOE re-enters, zipping up his pants.*)

JOE. That's 'cause I'm through.

TOM. You are such a wimp. I'll bet you can't even pee when you're in a restroom.

JOE. Hell yes, I can.

TOM. You probably just stand there, trying to get it out, like some pee-shy little boy.

JOE. Fuck you! I can pee anytime I want to, as long as I got something to aim against.

TOM. Otherwise what? It runs down your leg like a girl?

JOE. Eat shit.

TOM. The whole time we've been buddies, I ain't ever seen your little dick.

JOE. It's not little. Besides we haven't been buddies for long.

TOM. Why are you so afraid to show it?

JOE. Maybe I'm afraid you won't be able to resist it.

TOM. Fuck you!

JOE. I don't want to tempt you.

TOM. Dickhead!

JOE. I don't want your slobber all over it! Oh, no—don't!

*(TOM makes a dive for JOE, grabs him, they wrestle ...*

*TOM gets JOE in a painful head hold.)*

TOM. You asshole, say you're sorry!

JOE. I'm sorry!

TOM. You're a teenie weenie! Say it!

JOE. I'm a weenie!

TOM. Let me go, please sir! Say it!

JOE. Let me go, please sir! I said it!

TOM. Okay, I guess I will. But from now on I hope you're gonna to be honest about your little dick's problems. *(He quickly lets JOE go. JOE hops up and moves away.)*

JOE. Shit, for a moment I was scared you were gonna rip my pants down and blow me!

TOM. You asshole! *(He grabs JOE again and gets him in another hold.)*

JOE. Oh, no!

TOM. You're a girl! Say it!

JOE. You're a girl!

TOM. No, idiot! You're a girl! Not me!

JOE. I'm a girl! Not you!

TOM. You're the ugliest girl in the world!

JOE. I'm horrible! Shit, let me loose!

TOM. You eat pimples and turds for breakfast! Don't you?

JOE. Yes! I love 'em with milk and bananas! Quit, you're hurting me!

TOM. Guess you've had enough! Right?

JOE. Yes! Please, let me go! I'm sorry. *(TOM lets JOE go. JOE falls to the ground in pain, he gets into a sort of fetal position and is breathing heavily. TOM gives him a mean kick, then walks away.)*

TOM. You really kill me. You talk like such a big shot and you couldn't get your dick up if your life depended on it. You could probably get it up for some guy, but not for a girl.

JOE (*still on the ground, in pain*). Knock it off ... please.

TOM. I don't know how I can even be friends with you. Everybody in the whole school thinks you're a weirdo. Every time I'm seen with you, it wrecks my reputation.

JOE. There's nothing to wreck. So shut up.

TOM. I ought to just finish you off and leave you out here for the squirrels to eat.

JOE. Squirrels don't eat meat. You are so stupid.

TOM. Bears, then...let the bears and wolves and vultures eat you. (*A pause.*) Asshole. (*A longer pause.*) Little girl. (*A pause.*) Are you all right? You're not really hurt, are you?

JOE (*getting up*). Hell, no...you couldn't hurt me. Not a fartface like you.

TOM. How about a beer?

JOE. Sure, why not?

TOM. Where'd you put them?

JOE. In that plastic bag.

TOM. There's no plastic bag here. (*BOTH look around.*)

JOE. Where'd you put it?

TOM. I never had no damn bag.

JOE. Shit! I must have left it in the truck!

TOM. That's fucking miles from here. You're a total waste! I can't figure out why I even speak to you.

JOE. Where's my pack?

TOM. Over there, craphead. Are we out here with nothin' to drink? That's no fun!

JOE (*getting into his pack*). Wait ... I got something.

TOM. I need a beer!

JOE. Lookie here... *(He takes a bottle out of the pack.)*  
...it's called Jack Daniels.

TOM. Vomit! I hate that shit!

JOE. You can walk back and get the beer if you want. I like Jack Daniels. It's what real drinkers drink.

TOM. It's what fuckwads drink!

JOE. If you don't want it, then I'll have this whole bottle myself.

TOM. Buttbrain, hand it here. *(He undoes the bottle and takes a swig.)* Oh, God! That tastes like gasoline! *(He takes another swig.)*

JOE *(screaming with laughter)*. It is! I tricked you! You're gonna die! You stupid moron! *(TOM spits the mouthful of booze in JOE's face. JOE laughs.)* You'll believe anything! You've never even tasted real liquor before. *(JOE takes a swig.)*

TOM. Yes, I have. I've had rum.

JOE. Rum's for girls.

TOM. Beer is for men. Jack Daniels is for creeps.

JOE. You don't have to drink it then.

TOM. I don't have any choice, do I? Where'd you get this garbage?

JOE. It was under the sink in the kitchen. The people my dad works for always give him bottles of booze for Christmas.

TOM. Won't he miss it?

JOE. Naw, he never drinks. Nobody in my house does... except me, and I just started. You see, all these bottles sort of sit under the sink for years, until Mom pours them out to make room for more bottles of shit nobody will ever touch. I once asked her why she kept such a

collection, and she said, "It's for company, honey." Except she wouldn't have the nerve to offer anybody a cocktail. We're Baptists, you know, and the only place Baptists keep their booze is under the sink. (*A moment of silence as they pass the bottle back and forth.*)

TOM. What time is it?

JOE. What difference does it make?

TOM. Just wondering.

JOE. It must be about eleven, but who cares? It's not like we have to get home or nothing ... is it?

TOM. I'll bet you told your parents you were staying at my place tonight, didn't you?

JOE. I was sort of vague, as usual. And I don't know what the hell I'm gonna do if they call over there looking for me ... wondering if I remembered to brush my teeth or something. Did you tell your mom you were staying at my house?

TOM. I told my mom we were camping out, which we are doing. Why'd you tell your parents a lie?

JOE. Because they wouldn't have let me camp out. Plus they'll have my butt if I'm not in Sunday school tomorrow morning. So we gotta get back to town in time or else I'll be up shit creek.

TOM. You talk like you're scared of them.

JOE. Of course, I'm scared of them. It's not like I could feed myself if they got fed up with my behavior and threw me out into the street.

TOM. They hate me, don't they?

JOE. They don't hate you. They just don't like you much.

TOM. I can tell they don't. Every time I walk into your house, they treat me like I just farted.

JOE. That's because usually you just did! (*He breaks up with laughter, TOM doesn't.*)

TOM. Pretty funny. They think I'm a bad influence on their son. Right?

JOE. I guess they just think you're sort of wild, which you are.

TOM. Would they rather you not be friends with me?

JOE. They never said that, in so many words. I just think they're worried I might soon change into something they won't know what to do with. I've always been kind of quiet and stayed to myself...so me, suddenly having a friend like you, sort of confuses them. They probably think you've turned me into a sex fiend. Little did they know, I already was one.

TOM. Being horny and drinking beer does not make you a sex fiend.

JOE. What am I then?

TOM. You're a normal teenage boy, idiot.

JOE. Really?

TOM. Having a hard-on all the time is natural for guys our age.

JOE. I don't think my parents will ever understand that.

TOM. Did they really say I was turning you into a sex fiend?

JOE. No...not in words. My parents are experts at giving disturbed looks and at wringing their hands. (*Mocking them.*) "Oh, me...oh my...what are we going to do with him?" They act sort of worried 'cause I'm going out so much these days and hanging out with someone who's so popular. I understand what they're feeling, since I don't understand what I'm doing either.

TOM. You're just having a good time. Aren't you?

JOE. Sure. Well, maybe not at this exact minute, but in general.

TOM. Why not right now?

JOE. Well, here we are, supposedly camping out; but we didn't bring a tent or sleeping bag or nothing. It is sorta cold.

TOM. This'll toughen you up. Make a man out of you.

JOE. You think you're such hot shit! We'll see who's sick and misses all of school next week. Bet it's not me.

TOM. I'm not going to school next week.

JOE. Where are you going?

TOM. Someplace else.

JOE. Oh, really? Where? Europe? The Virgin Islands? Reform school?

TOM. Your sense of humor sucks.

JOE. You gotta go to school, silly. Unless you really do get sick from this lousy weather.

TOM. What do I care about school? Football season's already over.

JOE. That's not why you go to school, retard. School is supposed to be a place where you can learn something you don't already know. Football is what you do when you want to get your brains splattered about. Which probably explains how you've ended up in your present, idiotic condition. Besides, you didn't play football most of this last year anyway.

TOM. I couldn't help it if the coach threw me off the team.

JOE. You could have helped it. You broke the rules.

TOM. Those were his stupid rules, not mine. Adults just make up dumb rules so they can feel superior.

JOE. But you were drunk out on the field during a game! Running around trying to force your head up under some



majorette's skirt, as hundreds watched! God, sometimes I wonder what time of day you start popping the beers? Before breakfast?

TOM. I don't like other people's rules.

JOE. Who does? But we're not old enough to make our own yet. And even if I could make my own rules, which would feature lots of nasty things, I'm sure, I still wouldn't say it's okay to "eat muffin" on a football field.

TOM. I just do things my way, that's all.

JOE. Oh, wow! (*Suddenly pointing at the sky.*) Hey, look! Do you see that funny light? Or am I looped?

TOM. Where?

JOE. Way over there. See it? It sort of came up from across the water and look...it's just about to disappear. Look!

TOM. What do you think it is?

JOE. It's like a floating bubble of light. Like a headlight in the sky. It sort of reminds me of that lamp my mom has sitting on the TV—her Lava Lamp. It has that funny liquid shit in it. And when it gets warm, the shit sort of rises up in the lamp making gross sort of turd globs as you watch it. Wow! Look! Now it's done floated off. Disappeared into the air!

TOM. All kinds of funny things happen around here, you know.

JOE. I wouldn't know, since I've never been here before.  
(*A pause. BOTH are facing front...looking at the sky. Every now and then they pass the bottle back and forth.*)

TOM. So...what do you think?

JOE. About what? That light?

TOM. About this place. Do you like it?

JOE. Sure. It's nice, thank you.

TOM (*mocking him*). "It's nice, thank you." You sound like you're in somebody's goddamned living room. "It's nice, thank you."

JOE. I mean it. It's great. When'd you find it?

TOM. When I was a kid.

JOE. That long ago?

TOM. Yeah. I'd come out here with my dad, and shitty Dad would be over in the pasture, checking out the cows and shit; and I'd always sort of wander off in the woods. Mainly 'cause I couldn't stomach his bullshit any longer. Then one day I found this clearing and this lake. And every time we'd come out here, I'd visit it. This was my favorite place back then. It still is.

JOE (*now mocking him*). Your "favorite place"? That's funny. I think my favorite place is the medical books' section at the library, where I spend lots of time. It's too quiet out here.

TOM. And the library isn't? Besides, I happen to like quiet.

JOE. Since when? You always blast the radio in your truck.

TOM. I've always liked to get away from it all and come out here. Of course, I could never let on to Dad that this place was sorta special to me. He wouldn't have understood.

JOE. I sure don't, but maybe he would have.

TOM. No. He would have thought it was dumb.

JOE. So what's so special? I mean, it's dark and I can't see much; but it just looks like an ordinary clearing to me. And I can sorta tell there's a lake out there.

TOM. It's just special, that's all. In the last year I'll bet I've been out here at least one or two nights a week. Now that I can drive. Used to be, I'd slip out of the house and ride my bike out here as often as I could.