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Dramatic Publishing

THE EMERALD CIRCLE

by
MAX BUSH



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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For Scot Copeland and Harvey Jackins

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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THE EMERALD CIRCLE was commissioned by the Nashville Academy Theatre and opened there on February 3, 1992, with the following cast and crew:

CAST

Dave Kemper McDowell
Sandy..... Melody McNair
Maggie..... Rona Carter
Chip..... Sean Sweeney
Man..... Raymond Speakman

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director Scot Copeland
Technical Director/Designer..... Scott Boyd
Production Manager Daniel C. Brewer
Fight Choreographer..... Raymond Speakman
Costumer..... Ida Bostian
Technical Assistants Richard Neville
Ray Ingram
Raymond Speakman
Master Electrician..... Richard Neville
Music Score Dobehe Lacaden

THE EMERALD CIRCLE

A Full-length Play
For 2 Women and 3 Men

CHARACTERS

SANDY.....	14
DAVE.....	14
MAGGIE.....	Dave's mother, 35
CHIP.....	Dave's friend, 14
MAN.....	25-30

TIME:

The present. Late Saturday afternoon in May.

SETTING:

Single set. The action flows without break between a cemetery and the basketball court in the driveway of Dave's house.

Running Time: Approximately one hour.

THE EMERALD CIRCLE

SETTING: *The stage is divided roughly in half. Right is the basketball court in DAVE's driveway with the hoop on the front of the garage. Far right is a picnic table on the lawn. Left is the graveyard. The cemetery is old; encircled with large, draping spruce trees. The gravestones range from simple and small to large, ornately carved markers. Few remain in their original positions. Most lean, some are broken in half, others are chipped, discolored with age. On one gravemarker are the words: "Timothy: Not Dead, He Sleepeth."*

AT RISE: *Spot up on SANDY in graveyard, half-sitting, half-lying in an awkward position. Spot up on DAVE, standing in driveway. This is part of a dream he's remembering.*

SANDY. Dave? Dave? Where are you? Dave?

DAVE. I'm here.

SANDY (*turns, sees him*). I've been looking all over for you.

DAVE. I know.

SANDY. Where are you?

DAVE. Are you alone?

SANDY. I don't know. Help me.

DAVE. I can't. I can't move.

SANDY. You may kiss me if you want.

DAVE. I want to. I can't move.

SANDY. Are you thinking about me?

DAVE. I'm always thinking about you.

SANDY. Then come here. Help me.

DAVE. I don't know where I am. I think I'm underground.

I can't lift it off me.

SANDY. Come here.

DAVE. I can't move.

SANDY. Help me!

DAVE. I can't move! *(As spot fades on SANDY. Not part of dream:)* Sandy... *(Spots fade out. SANDY remains on stage.)*

(Lights up on basketball court in DAVE's driveway where DAVE stands, lost in thought. MAGGIE enters carrying a tray with pop, a sandwich, a muffin and chips on it for DAVID, juice and a sandwich for herself.)

MAGGIE. Hey, kid.

DAVE *(fairly cheery, getting ball)*. Hi, Ma.

MAGGIE. Did you win?

DAVE. Yeah, but the competition was weak.

MAGGIE. Hungry?

DAVE. Not yet. *(He spins ball on his finger.)*

MAGGIE. Well, I could starve waiting for you. *(Sits at picnic table.)* Come on, try this tuna salad. I made it without onions.

DAVE. I will.

MAGGIE. What a beautiful day...I asked your dad to pick up your Mr. Muscle Protein Powder on his way home from work, Mr. Muscle.

DAVE. Is he going to do it?

MAGGIE. Well, sure. Why wouldn't he?

DAVE. Because it's for me. And because someday, I'm going to be stronger than him.

MAGGIE. He's getting it because it is for you. (*DAVE reaches for the muffin. Slapping his hand.*) Muffin after sandwich, thank you.

DAVE. I'm not that hungry.

MAGGIE. I miss the onions... How'd you sleep?

(Spot up on SANDY in the cemetery, in same position as in the opening dream sequence.)

DAVE (*glancing at SANDY*). Fine.

MAGGIE. I thought I heard you in the middle of the night.

SANDY (*appearing and speaking exactly as before, in the dream*). Dave?

DAVE. Nature calls, you know.

SANDY. Where are you? Why don't you come?

MAGGIE. Any nightmares?

SANDY. Come here. Help me!

DAVE. Not that I remember. (*Slow dim-out in cemetery.*)

SANDY exits. DAVE begins to shoot around.

MAGGIE. What do you say—you want to go back to school on Monday?

DAVE. Monday?

MAGGIE. Do you think you're ready?

DAVE. Monday? Yeah. Sure.

MAGGIE. All right.

DAVE. Great. See? I'm back! (*Tossing MAGGIE ball.*)

Hey! Off the injured reserve. The franchise returns! The go-to man. And they go to him!

MAGGIE. No-look. (*She tosses a no-look pass to him, he shoots a long airball, missing everything. He runs down the ball, occasionally shoots during the following.*) The

police called me at my office, yesterday. When I told them how much better you were doing they wondered if you had anything more to tell them.

DAVE. I told them everything.

MAGGIE. That's what I told them you'd say.

DAVE. I told them everything.

MAGGIE. Dave... *Dave*.

DAVE (*stops moving*). What? I told you, I'm not hungry right now.

MAGGIE. I'd like you to tell me what happened.

DAVE. When?

MAGGIE. That day.

DAVE. What? Why? What do they want me to say?

MAGGIE. I'm not asking for the police.

DAVE. What do you want to know?

MAGGIE. I just want to hear the whole story again. Start with the note.

DAVE. The note doesn't have anything to do with anything.

MAGGIE. Start with the note, then you can skip to the night, and then I'll leave you alone. But I want to hear the whole story again.

DAVE (*shoots*). I'll tell you later. I want to shoot.

MAGGIE. We're going to the Wieland's for a party and—Happy Day—they're showing slides of their vacation to Cleveland.

DAVE. I don't know why you want to hear it all again. It's over.

MAGGIE (*smiles*). Over?

DAVE. It's over.

MAGGIE. It will help me. And I think it will help you.

DAVE (*after a moment*). Can I make a deal?

MAGGIE. What?

DAVE. Can I have some money to go to the movies tonight? Chip wants to go to the movies.

MAGGIE. I think that can be arranged.

(CHIP enters carrying notebook and book, stands near DAVE. DAVE doesn't acknowledge him.)

MAGGIE. But you may go to the movie anyway, if you want.

DAVE. I can go anyway? *(MAGGIE indicates "yes.")* Then I don't have to tell you the stupid story? *(MAGGIE simply looks at him.)* The note...I got to first-hour government class and...*(He reluctantly tosses ball to her, turns to CHIP.)* I got to first-hour government class and Chip was waiting for me.

CHIP. I am Fat City on this government test. *(Opening notebook, handing it open to DAVE.)* Up all night draining the books. Ask me. Ask me.

DAVE *(reading from notebook)*. "Who answers directly to the city manager?" *(CHIP screams. DAVE panics.)* We have a test?

CHIP. You didn't know?

DAVE. I did but I didn't believe Old Underarm would really go through with it.

CHIP. Who does answer directly to the city manager?

DAVE. Your dad.

CHIP. He does?

DAVE. Isn't he the assistant city manager?

CHIP. Oh, yeah. If I can't get that question right I'll never remember who founded the city.

DAVE. Someone founded the city?

CHIP. Yeah, it was...

DAVE. It was...I know this...it was...

CHIP. Amerigo Vespucci.

DAVE. Yeah.

DAVE & CHIP. Heeeelllppp!

DAVE (*suddenly calm*). Hey, I'm cool.

CHIP (*ditto*). I'm cool.

DAVE. You are.

CHIP. Very cool.

DAVE. Give me a sign. How cool are you? (*CHIP shows how cool he is.*) Very cool.

CHIP. And you? (*DAVE does his own Gesture of Extreme Coolness.*) Wow. You are the Prince of Cool.

DAVE. Rock and roll.

CHIP. What have I got?

DAVE. What have you got?

CHIP. What's in my pocket?

DAVE. What's in your pocket?

CHIP (*takes out a note on folded notebook paper. Sings*).
"A love note."

DAVE (*singing along*). "A love note."

CHIP. "It's a love note."

DAVE. "Love note. Who's it fr-om?"

CHIP (*singing*). "To Da-ve from Sandy." (*DAVE is suddenly grim.*) "I read it. It made me swe-at." (*DAVE lunges for the note, CHIP pulls it away, opens it, pretends to read.*) "Hi, doll. How's my sweet lips? (*He kisses the air loudly.*) Did you study for that government test?" NO. (*DAVE takes note, reads it to himself. CHIP continues.*) "I wish you could have come over last night. Were you thinking about me? I thought about you. The time you ate half my mother's birthday cake and I lied saying it was Ralph our Dog. I thought of your seventh-grade haircut that looked like someone with buck teeth chewed it off."

DAVE (*putting note away*). You're jealous.

CHIP. I am.

DAVE. You are.

CHIP. I am jealous.

DAVE. You are.

CHIP. I am this jealous. (*He shows how jealous. The school bell rings.*) Who answers directly to the city manager?

DAVE. Amerigo Vespucci.

CHIP. Right. I am Fat City on this government test. (*As he exits, he takes out his pen, writes answer on the inside of his hand.*) Amerigo Vespucci...

DAVE. The note said she wanted to meet me—

MAGGIE (*back in scene, taking out folded notebook paper*). Here ... read it.

DAVE. I know what it says. I read it a thousand times. It says—

MAGGIE. Will you read it to me?

DAVE (*opens note*). What part?

MAGGIE. All of it.

DAVE (*reads*). "My Dear—" All of it? This first stuff isn't about anything. And she wrote it to me. It's none of your business.

MAGGIE. All of it.

DAVE (*reads*). "My Dearest Davie, Hi, doll! How are you this wonderful day? Did you get your algebra notebook done? Did you study for that government test?" (*To MAGGIE.*) YES. And I'm not reading this next part to you.

MAGGIE. Don't skip over anything.

DAVE (*reading*). "I wish you could have come over last night. I sure missed you! Laurie Weingarden invited me to a party next Saturday. It's going to be a beach party—

I'm not sure if boys are coming or not but if they are do you want to go with me? Cheryl's going to ask Mark. Isn't it beautiful outside? Have you been thinking about me? I've been thinking about you. Try to get a conference with me if you can in sixth hour. I have a feeling this is going to be a *Great Day!* If what I think is going to happen will happen."

MAGGIE. What did she want to happen?

DAVE. I told you before. I'm not telling you again. (*He immediately resumes reading. She lets this go.*) Tonight can you stay at Chip's? I'm staying over with Cheryl. I'll meet you at Timothy's house in the Emerald Circle at 11:30, if you want."

MAGGIE. And Timothy's house is ...

DAVE (*an attempt to be patient. By rote*). The gravestone in the cemetery that says "Timothy: Not Dead, He Sleepeth." She calls the cemetery the Emerald Circle because of the big pine trees there.

MAGGIE. Go on.

DAVE. The rest is just... (*He goes on.*) "Well, I guess I'd better go now. The bell's going to ring. Sandy. P.S. I.S.L.Y.E.I.Y.D.C.V.M."

MAGGIE. And that means?

DAVE. I told you and you wrote it down.

MAGGIE. What's it mean?

DAVE. "I still love you even if you don't care very much."

MAGGIE. Why did she think you didn't?

DAVE. How should I know? She's a girl. She says things I don't understand all the time.

MAGGIE. So you told her in sixth hour you were staying with Chip and you could meet her at 11:30 in the Emerald Circle.

(Moonlight up on the cemetery.)

DAVE. Yeah. Do I have to hear about it again? Dad's given me enough torture—"11:30! Damn it, Dave, you're better than that! You were just asking for trouble." Right, Dad, it's my fault. So what are you going to do, hit me?

MAGGIE. He didn't hit you.

DAVE. Not that time.

MAGGIE. Not for a long time. *(Softer.)* Why the graveyard, honey?

DAVE *(flatly)*. It's just down the block from Chip's and Cheryl's. It's like a park. And nobody goes there...we thought.

MAGGIE. Go on.

DAVE. All of it? Or just the last part?

MAGGIE. I'd like to hear it all.

DAVE. But what happened at the beginning doesn't...*(He picks up his jam-box.)* I got there first and was waiting—

MAGGIE. Was she late or were you early?

DAVE. I was early. *(He starts toward cemetery.)*

MAGGIE. And you didn't tell anyone where you were meeting her?

DAVE. No, I didn't. Do you want me to tell you what happened or not? *(He stops.)*

MAGGIE *(sits on picnic table, watches from there)*. Go ahead. I won't interrupt again.

(DAVE continues on, stops at the edge of the graveyard, looks at it. He turns back to his mother, then back to the cemetery. He takes a deep breath, pushes it out and enters the Emerald Circle. His demeanor lightens.)

DAVE. Sandy? Hello? *(He sets jam-box next to Timothy's gravestone. He tries to read the stone in the moonlight.)* "Timothy: Not Dead, He Sleepeth." Timothy, wake up. And make sure none of these guys steals this, will you? *(He looks for SANDY.)* Sandy? *(It's quiet. He spies a log, picks it up, wields it like a baseball bat, swings.)* Touch 'em all. *(He waits, hums. He then sings, strumming the log like a guitar.)* "Hey, baby, won't you call my name. This waitin's drivin' me insane." *(He hits 'play' on his jam-box. A hard-rock introduction plays—something like "Twice as Hard" by the Black Crowes. Addressing the crowd of graves, speaking into log as if it were a microphone.)* Welcome. Welcome, everyone, to the Friday Night Concert in the Park. Timothy, glad you could make it. Ester, Ellen, what a couple of babes. Smokin' threads from 1878. I am The Prince, The Prince of Cool, taking you home to the Emerald Circle. And this is not your Tuesday afternoon soft favorites. This is Friday Night Monster Rock. Get on. Get up. Rock and Roll! *(He starts rocking, not dancing, but more playfully moving to the music. He jumps up as if he were the singer, slides down, sings a phrase into log, directly to Timothy. He stops, suddenly self-conscious, thinking he's seen someone.)* Sandy? Hello! Who's there? ... Sandy? ... *(He drops log, goes to a large monument. He picks up a stone ball that is the top part of the monument, shoots it like a heavy basketball.)* FUMBLE. *(He dives and grabs the stone ball.)* Recovered by Bates. It's a live ball! *(He leaps up, holds the stone ball like a football and runs, weaving in and out of the gravestones.)* 50. 40. 30. *(He bangs into monuments, stumbles, almost falls, pauses a moment to pose as the Heisman trophy and continues on.)* 25. 20. 15. He's to the 10. One man left to beat.