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Dramatic Publishing

The Firecracker Incident

Comedy / Drama
by
Don Zolidis

The Firecracker Incident

Comedy/Drama. By Don Zolidis. Cast: 4 to 10m., 5 to 10w., up to 10 either gender. Fourteen-year-old Joe's parents are pretty tough. First, they moved his bedroom into his little sister's closet. Then they took away his door. And then, after he just "happened" to tie one of her Barbie dolls to black cat firecrackers and exploded them in the backyard, they grounded him for the entire summer. But when his only friend breaks him out in the middle of the night, he embarks on the adventure of a lifetime, which may mean the difference between life and death. *Area staging. Approximate running time: 40 minutes. Code: FE9.*

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The Firecracker Incident

A comedic drama in one act by

DON ZOLIDIS



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DON ZOLIDIS

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(THE FIRECRACKER INCIDENT)

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Dedicated to the No-Vibe Tribe, especially Jon Wallace,
who learned the dangers of Black Cats.

The Firecracker Incident

CHARACTERS

JOE: 14, awkward.

JOE'S FAMILY

JOE'S DAD: stern.

JOE'S MOM: not quite as stern, but still somewhat crazy.

GINA: 12, Joe's little sister, more than a little crazy.

JOE'S FRIEND

BLAKE: 14, also awkward, but carries a staff.

OTHER PEOPLE

TASHA: 16, she has a car.

SAM: 17, Blake's older brother, a brute.

RACHEL: 17, friend to Julie.

JULIE: 17, ex-girlfriend to Sam.

CHORUS

CHORUS MEMBER 1 – 3

WORLD OF WARCRAFT CHARACTERS 1 – 4

WORKOUT BARBIE

BARBIES 1 – 3

VOICES 1 – 4

PARTYGOERS 1 – 4

DRIVERS

CHARACTER NOTES

Directors may use the Chorus in any way they wish. The Chorus may be onstage throughout the entire play, or directors can add discretionary entrances and exits.

The Chorus portrays various other elements, including the scenery. The Chorus should include at least four people, but can be any size.

Double-casting is possible.

An alternate way to cast this would be to have all of the characters except for Joe and Blake come from the Chorus.

SETTING

Small-town America. Present day.

The Firecracker Incident

AT RISE: *A bedroom. JOE is playing a video game and turns to the audience.*

JOE (*to the audience*). Before what was known in our family as the Firecracker Incident, I lived a pretty normal life. This mostly involved *World of Warcraft*.

(The CHORUS becomes WORLD OF WARCRAFT CHARACTERS.)

WOW CHARACTER 1. Come with me, Rothgar and we shall storm the castle of the evil sorcerer Enidu!

WOW CHARACTER 2. You have my axe at your side!

WOW CHARACTER 3. And my blades!

WOW CHARACTER 4 (*not into it*). Hey can we wrap this up? I gotta take out the garbage.

WOW CHARACTER 1. Noble Vashmar, your duties can wait—the fate of the world—

WOW CHARACTER 4. Sorry noobs. Peace out. (*Goes into a catatonic state.*)

WOW CHARACTER 2. Vashmar.

(He waves his hand in front of WOW CHARACTER 4's face. Nothing.)

WOW CHARACTER 2 (*cont'd*). Dang it.

WOW CHARACTER 1. Can you please keep in character, Rothgar?

WOW CHARACTER 2. Oh and you're still in character, Blakemar.

WOW CHARACTER 3. Clearly Vashmar has been felled by the evil wizard's spell. Companions! Our trials may be difficult, the road long, but we shall—

WOW CHARACTER 4 (*to an unseen mother who is yelling at him*). Yes I took out the garbage! No I didn't get the downstairs bathroom! It's not full! I'm trying to play my game, Mom! Just leave me alone!

WOW CHARACTER 3. Vashmar is clearly bewitched.

WOW CHARACTER 4. Fine! (*Goes back to catatonic.*)

WOW CHARACTER 1. Let's go!

(WOW CHARACTERS 1, 2 and 3 exit.)

WOW CHARACTER 4. I'm back. What's going on? Dang it.

(He slinks off.)

JOE (*to the audience*). It was pretty great. My back hurt a lot, and most of my muscles atrophied, but still ... life was good. As for the firecrackers, I should've known better. With parents like mine, you really need to be careful. I don't really remember how exactly I had come into possession of the black cats. If you're not familiar with the weakest of all possible firecrackers, imagine a tiny black tube of gunpowder. That's all they are. I think this kid at school had blown up a bunch of them and had some left over. So here I am, with 10 of the wimpiest firecrackers known to man. I don't even think they're made in China. They're that pathetic. So what do I do?

(GINA enters. She looks very nerdy, with glasses.)

JOE (*cont'd*). This is my little sister, Gina. We are engaged in war.

GINA. What are you doing?

JOE. Nothing.

GINA. Do you have firecrackers?

JOE. No. *(To the audience.)* I hadn't always been at war with Gina. But recently it had gotten ugly. Probably the main reason—

(JOE'S DAD enters.)

JOE'S DAD. Gina's going to be taking your room.

JOE. What?

JOE'S DAD. We're turning her room into the computer room.

JOE. We don't need a computer room.

JOE'S DAD. I don't appreciate the backtalk.

JOE. Sorry, sir.

JOE'S DAD. So she's going to be taking your room. And you will be in there.

(He points. The CHORUS forms the outer walls of JOE's tiny room.)

JOE *(to the audience)*. In "there" was actually my former closet. It was pretty nice—for a closet. So now—at 14 years old, I was being moved into my little sister's closet. There was of course, only one way out—through her room—I did have the benefit of a window, which was a bonus. All in all, it was about 4 feet wide, by 7 feet long.

GINA. I don't want you walking through my room.

JOE. Well, unless we've got a ladder that's the only way out.

GINA. You're weird you're not coming through my room.

JOE. You're weird and yes I am.

GINA. Dad! Joe's being mean!

(JOE'S DAD enters.)

JOE'S DAD. Resolve your issues or face the consequences.

(He leaves.)

GINA. Fine, but you have to yell that you're coming into my room first so I can leave. And you can't touch anything.

JOE. I don't want to touch anything in your room. I'd probably catch leprosy.

GINA. I'm going to put tape on the floor—that's your walking path. *(Marks out a walking path with tape.)*

JOE. Fine. *(To the audience.)* Problem number 400 in this arrangement. Since there wasn't a lot of square footage in my closet, my dad decided that the best way to rectify the situation was to remove the door. So, we had a big blanket hung from the curtain rod separating the rooms.

(The CHORUS MEMBERS stretch a blanket to show the "door.")

JOE'S DAD *(entering)*. If this is a complaint, I don't want to hear it.

JOE. Dad—

JOE'S DAD. What did I just say?

JOE. This is a little crazy.

JOE'S DAD. What?

JOE. This is a little crazy, sir.

JOE'S DAD. Joe, I wish we had a really big house where you could have your own room, but we don't have the money for that, and until you can make a contribution to the mortgage, you're going to do what I say. Understand?

JOE. Fine. *(Back to the audience.)* So anyway—that was the situation on June 13th. The day ... of the incident. *(Sits in his room.)* I'm coming out of my room now!

GINA (*reading a book opposite*). Wait!

JOE. I have to go to the bathroom!

GINA. You should've thought of that earlier!

JOE. What are you doing in there?

GINA. None of your business! Wait five minutes!

JOE. Five minutes?!

GINA. I'm at a good part!

JOE. I am coming out of my room in 10 seconds! Ten nine eight ... (*Continues counting.*)

GINA. You're a horrible person and you snore at night!

(GINA gets her book and leaves. JOE emerges from his room.)

JOE (*to the audience*) That's when I saw it. (*Sees something.*)
Workout Barbie. In her little pink and purple leotard. Her hair perfectly groomed, eyes vacant. Feet too tiny to support her long, plastic legs. There she was, leaning against the wall. (*Stretches out his hand for it.*)

GINA (*offstage*). What are you doing in my room?

JOE (*to the audience*). The black cats were in my top drawer. Ten of them.

(He heads out of the room as GINA comes in.)

GINA. You smell bad.

JOE. You smell worse.

GINA. I'm telling Mom.

JOE. If you tell Mom I'm going to sneak into your room at night and breathe on you.

GINA. I'm going to ask Mom if I can get pepper spray.

JOE. If you get pepper spray, I get pepper spray. You can't stay awake forever.

WORKOUT BARBIE. Ow.

JOE. The sides of Barbie's face were blackened, but impressively, she was actually more powerful than the firecrackers and—

(JOE'S DAD enters.)

JOE'S DAD. Just what do you think you are doing?

(Lights change. The CHORUS retreats. JOE'S MOM, JOE'S DAD and GINA are sitting together on one side of the room. JOE is on the other side.)

GINA. He's like Voldemort.

JOE'S MOM. That's enough, Gina.

GINA. He is, Mom. He's chanting evil spells at night. I hear him.

JOE. What?

JOE'S MOM. Gina. Your part of this conversation is finished.

GINA. Fine. Also, can I have pepper spray?

JOE'S DAD. No.

GINA. I don't get anything!

(She leaves.)

JOE'S DAD. Well?

JOE. I'll buy her a new Barbie.

JOE'S DAD. You're darn right you will.

JOE'S MOM. Joe—we're worried about you. You're acting out.

JOE. Just a little bit.

JOE'S MOM. You tried to commit an act of terrorism.

JOE. That wasn't terrorism! I was just trying to blow up her Barbie!

JOE'S DAD. With explosives.

JOE. Black cats. They were black cats.

JOE'S DAD. Here is your punishment. You will work around the house to pay off her Barbie. I will pay you 20 cents per hour.

JOE. —What?

JOE'S DAD. If you interrupt me again, your wages will be docked. You are grounded until the end of the summer. There will be no internet, no video games, no Facebook, no anything else online—if you want to talk to your friends, you will use the phone in the kitchen. If you want to learn something, we have an encyclopedia. That is all.

JOE'S MOM. We're doing this because we love you.

(They leave.)

JOE *(to the audience)*. Did I mention that my parents were hardcore? They were hardcore.

(Enter BLAKE, on the phone.)

BLAKE. That's insane!

JOE. I know.

BLAKE. You're grounded for two months?

JOE. Yup.

BLAKE. This is like what the Amish do.

JOE. Pretty much.

BLAKE. Were you beaten? Did he beat you? Are you being forced to build a barn?

JOE. No, this is what he does instead of beating me. Spiritual deprivation.

BLAKE. Man. I never say this: But I'm so glad I have my parents. They're really weak-willed.

JOE. Those are the best kind to have.

BLAKE. Don't worry, man. We're going to break you out.

(BLAKE exits. JOE continues to speak to the audience.)

JOE. Do you know what you can do with no video games, no Internet, and when you're not allowed to leave the house without parental guard? Pretty close to nothing. I read everything in the house. I read all my books again. I started reading the magazines my mom got.

(The CHORUS becomes the VOICES from the magazine.)

VOICE 1. Great weight loss tips! How to slim your thighs and firm your tush!

VOICE 2. Inside Kim Kardashian's newest pregnancy!

VOICE 3. Who's hot and who's not! Our newest celebrity exclusive!

VOICE 4. Guess whose cellulite this is?

JOE. It was like the spirit of Workout Barbie had risen from the grave and was now throttling my brain between her tiny, plastic fingers. I began to hallucinate.

(WORKOUT BARBIE reappears, zombie-like.)

WORKOUT BARBIE. You have angered me. In life, I was beautiful, but now, in death ... I shall haunt your mind—

(More BARBIE ZOMBIES appear.)

BARBIE 1. We shall have our revenge.

BARBIE 2. Death to the oppressor!

WORKOUT BARBIE. To arms! To arms!

(The BARBIES acquire weapons and surround JOE.)

JOE. I shall destroy you all! Taste my steel, Barbie scum!

(JOE attacks the BARBIES.)

WORKOUT BARBIE. Ahhh! My face! My beautiful face!

(JOE takes swings at them.)

GINA *(from the other room)*. Would you cut it out you're being a freak again!

(The BARBIES vanish.)

JOE. Shut up!

GINA. Mommmmm! Joe just told me to shut up! And he's talking to himself in my room!

JOE. This is my room!

GINA. His voice is traveling into my room!

(JOE'S MOM enters.)

JOE'S MOM. Joe?

JOE. What?

JOE'S MOM. Don't take that tone with me. What is going on?

JOE. I was imagining slaughtering an army of Barbies.

JOE'S MOM. I don't want you using your imagination so much, do you understand? That's how people become deviants.

JOE. I'm not a deviant.

JOE'S MOM. Should I schedule a meeting with a counselor?

JOE *(simultaneous)*. No.

GINA *(simultaneous)*. Yes.

GINA. Can you find one with electroshock therapy?

JOE'S MOM. Gina. That's a last resort.

JOE. Fine. I won't bother her.

JOE'S MOM. Good.

(GINA and JOE'S MOM exit.)

JOE. Two weeks passed. Three weeks. A month. Five weeks.
I started to think of myself as the Phantom of the Opera.

(The CHORUS starts humming The Phantom of the Opera music very quietly.)

JOE *(cont'd)*. And then ... one Friday night about 10 o'clock.

(A banging noise.

JOE looks around.

Another banging noise.

BLAKE and TASHA enter outside the "window" holding a ladder.)

BLAKE. Psst!

(He pantomimes throwing something.

Banging noise.

JOE goes to his window.)

JOE *(hissing)*. That's the wrong window!

BLAKE. Oh!

(BLAKE and TASHA move the ladder closer.)

BLAKE *(cont'd)*. Come on. We're rescuing you.

JOE *(calling down)*. I'm not going!

BLAKE *(calling up)*. Come on dude! You're in prison!

JOE. I know I'm in prison!

BLAKE. We're breaking you out! Freedom!