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Dramatic Publishing



Playtime

by
Kent R. Brown

From...

35 in 10

Thirty-Five Ten-Minute Plays

Compiled and Edited

KENT R. BROWN



Dramatic Publishing

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PLAYTIME

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Playtime premiered at the Boston Marathon in 2004. It was sponsored by SpeakEasy Stage Company, directed by Elaine Theodore, and featured Roxy Wongus and Cheryl Singleton. It was also a winner of the 2004 “Short & NEAT Play Festival,” sponsored by the New England Academy of Theatre.

CHARACTERS

MAUREEN: Late 30s. Has lead a hard life. Compassionate. Bitter. Needy. Dressed in clothes purchased at Goodwill and church thrift shops.

NICOLE: Early teens. Maureen’s daughter. A runaway. A survivor. Also dressed by Goodwill and hand-me-downs. Carries a knapsack.

SETTING: Playground park: Teeter-totter, swings, benches, merry-go-round, trash can...whatever can be comfortably provided.

TIME: The present, summer. Midnight. Bright moonlight. Warm breeze.

PLAYTIME

AT THE CURTAIN: *MAUREEN is seated on a bench, a picnic basket by her side. On the ground is a large garbage bag stuffed with assorted items and pieces of clothing for NICOLE. For several moments, MAUREEN sits patiently on the bench. Then...*

MAUREEN. Nicole, I'm not gonna sit here all night. Midnight is late in the day for me. I'm gonna pick my butt up off this bench, take this lovely picnic lunch I made you...and go. *(Beat.)* I've got good things in the bag, honey. *(Beat.)* Nicole...you there? Don't make me feel stupid.

(After another moment, MAUREEN gathers up the garbage bag and the picnic basket. As she begins to leave, NICOLE enters. She is as far from MAUREEN as she can be.)

NICOLE. What did you make? Did you bring me any books?

MAUREEN. You do this every time. You make me beg. You shouldn't do that, Nicole. I'm your mother. I don't have to be out here. I don't have to come.

NICOLE. Yes, you do.

MAUREEN. No, I don't!

NICOLE. Yes, you do!

(Beat. MAUREEN returns to the bench, puts down the garbage bag and picnic lunch basket and sits. NICOLE doesn't move.)

NICOLE *(cont'd)*. Where'd you get the picnic basket? It's cool.

MAUREEN. First Baptist.

NICOLE. They're nice at First Baptist.

MAUREEN. The folks at First Baptist, they don't ask a lot of questions. They just give you stuff. You say a coupla prayers, makes 'em feel good. The ones at the Congregational Church, they talk to you so they can get to know you better. Hell, I don't want nobody to know me any better.

NICOLE. How are you feeling, Mama? You getting your beauty sleep?

MAUREEN. Do you want me to give all this stuff back? I could maybe sell it myself maybe and—

NICOLE. I cut my arm. Yesterday. I fell down some stairs, the ones up behind Pitkin Drugs? Out back? I fell down. See?

(NICOLE extends her arm to MAUREEN, who glances over.)

MAUREEN. What were you doing on those stairs? Are you staying in those apartments there, Nicole? Those are terrible places, you know that?

NICOLE. I might not live, I might get blood poisoning. Randy Black did.

MAUREEN. I know Randy Black. He's a viper. A despicable human being. Nothing can kill him. And his mother's no better.

NICOLE. She's a real good cook. Randy got a chocolate pie from her three days ago. I had a piece for breakfast. Uuummm good!

(The tension between mother and daughter is palpable. This is a ritual they play out. To see who is the weakest, who wants the other the most. MAUREEN indicates the basket and the garbage bag.)

MAUREEN. What do you want me to do with all this?

NICOLE. Just leave it on the bench. Step back. Over there.

(NICOLE points to a spot some distance from the bench. MAUREEN complies. NOTE: if the setting and props permit, the continuing action/blocking should integrate the playground equipment, positioning NICOLE on the bars, perhaps; or both could be seated on either end of a teeter-totter. It is important that NICOLE puts an obstacle between herself and MAUREEN. This is done out of habit. She behaves this way with anyone. She lives defensively.)

NICOLE *(cont'd)*. Don't move now. You move and I'm gone! I'm fast. I've got everything I need. Don't need you! You don't move! You don't touch me!

MAUREEN. I know the rules. I'm not movin'. 'Sides, you're too fast for me.

(NICOLE crosses to the bench and begins to look through the items: sweaters, sweatshirts featuring a major university such as Michigan or Alabama, a few pair of sweat pants, two pair of sandals. The clothes are old, well used.)

MAUREEN *(cont'd)*. I thought you could cut the sweats if you wanted. For shorts. For the rest of the summer... maybe keep one for the fall? The sweatshirts should fit. Got those for seventy-five cents each.