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Dramatic Publishing

DEVON'S HURT

A Play
by
LAURIE BROOKS



Dramatic Publishing
Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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LAURIE BROOKS

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(DEVON'S HURT)

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For the real Stephanie,
the inspiration for this play and so much more ...

and

for Flo Rosof,
who knows about the Hurt.

* * * *

The playwright would like to acknowledge and thank the following for their nurturing and support of this play: John Shorter, Karl Hueglin and the Manhasset High School Theatre Department, Ric Averill and the Seem-to-Be Players, Victoria Brown, Moses Goldberg, J. Daniel Herring and Stage One: The Louisville Children's Theatre, Patricia Zimmer and Eastern Michigan University's Theatre for the Young, Scot Copeland and Nashville Children's Theatre, the New England Theatre Conference, my daughters Joanna and Liz, Devon Knight and my daughter Stephanie (the real Devon and Stephanie) and my dear friend, Flo Rosof.

* * * *

Devon's Hurt received the first Aurand Harris Memorial Playwriting Award from the New England Theatre Conference in 1998.

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Foreword

This is a simple little play about two kids and a dog practicing for the dog show. Devon and his best friend have a fight and both get their feelings hurt. Devon's hurt makes him very angry and he smacks his dog.

Amanda makes her son bring home a date for sister. Medea uses her kids to get at her ex. Willie fails. The truth, as they say, is in the telling.

Grownups look at the problems of children as trivial. Parents know that they are not. Where are the contemporary plays for the younger set—and I am talking four to seven years of age here—that dramatize the conflicts of contemporary childhood for contemporary children?

You are holding it in your hands.

This play is entertaining, but it is not merely an entertainment. This play utilizes fantasy, yet it is slice-of-life. This play is funny, but it is not merely a comedy. It is a play, in every sense of the word, and it is a great one. Its plot is complex, its characters are substantive, its conflict is compelling, its moment of crisis has all the dramatic power of a plunge in ice water. Four-year-olds who walk out of *Devon's Hurt* have something to say about it, my friends, because they know Devon, they know Stephanie, they want to know Sam, and boy, do they know the Hurt. They get hurt, they get mad, they yell, "I hate you!" at people they love, they break the toy, they knock a hole in the wall, they smack the dog...and then they feel so very miserable with themselves. They judge Devon as harshly as they do themselves and eagerly welcome his redemption as if it were their own.

This is a simple little play about two kids and a dog practicing for the dog show...but the truth, as they say, is in the telling.

Scot Copeland
Nashville Children's Theatre

DEVON'S HURT was featured at the October 1997 Critics' Circle Reading at Stage One: The Louisville Children's Theatre and included the following artists:

CAST

Devon JACK WALLEN
Stephanie MICHELLE LUDWIG
Sam NATALIE LONG
Hurt GABRIEL MORROW

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director J. DANIEL HERRING
Stage Manager AMBER D. MARTIN
Lighting Designer KATHLEEN KRONAUER

DEVON'S HURT premiered at Nashville Children's Theatre, April 24, 2000. The production featured the following artists:

CAST

Devon BRIAN NIECE
Stephanie MISTY LEWIS
Sam DENICE HICKS
Hurt BUDDY RAPER

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director SCOT COPELAND
Stage Manager DANIEL C. BREWER
Technical Director RICHARD NEVILLE
Technical Assistant WARREN STILES
Costume Construction IDA

Playwright's Notes:

This play is intended to be performed by adults for children and their families. It may, however, be performed by older children or teenagers.

Stephanie cannot see Hurt. Since he is Devon's Hurt, he is visible only to Devon.

The Hurt is a manifestation of Devon's feelings. He is not a clown and does not wear a mask. He is not Devon's alter ego.

Sam reacts to the action on stage with various dog-like responses, including but not limited to, yawning, scratching, cocking his head, bounding, pouncing and napping.

The oversized coat worn by Hurt can be seen hanging in the closet at the beginning and the end of the play.

DEVON'S HURT

A Play in One Act

CHARACTERS

DEVON: Eight years old. Bright, high-energy kid. Long shock of hair that falls in his eyes.

STEPHANIE: Eight years old, half a head taller than Devon, with a winning smile and matching energy.

SAM: Devon's dog, played by a nimble male or female actor. Black curly hair. Floppy, frolicsome, puppylike. For simplicity, Sam will be referred to as he or him.

HURT: Nonrealistic creature, the manifestation of Devon's feelings. Dressed in muted tones of gray and brown, he wears a huge overcoat, several sizes too large, and perhaps a squashed hat. Extremely expressive face and exaggerated movements. Completely innocent and disarming.

TIME: The present.

PLACE: Devon's bedroom.

DEVON'S HURT

SETTING: *Devon's room. There is a bunk bed with a ladder. Attached to the bed is a makeshift slide to be used for SAM's "ramp finale." Upstage there is a closet with a door that locks. On it hangs a large board complete with dry erase markers and an eraser. There is also a door leading to the hallway outside the room. There is a large toy box on rollers that is used as a car, a hiding place and a seat. The colors of the room are primary, as might be seen in the room of a child. There is also a bag of dog treats and a chewed-up slipper in the room. Various toys, clothes and colorful pillows are strewn about the room and are in the toy box.*

AT RISE: *Music. Lights up. SAM runs on stage, tail wagging, barking wildly. He barks and sniffs around as though he is looking for someone or something. Enter STEPHANIE. She wears jeans, a T-shirt, a flannel overshirt, sneakers and a baseball cap.*

STEPHANIE. *Where's Devon, Sam? Come on. Find Devon. (SAM runs about, sniffing to pick up DEVON's scent.) Come on, Sam, find Devon. (SAM goes to the closet and barks. Giggling can be heard from inside the closet.) He found you. He found you.*

(DEVON comes out of the closet. He is dressed like STEPHANIE, in jeans, T-shirt, flannel overshirt, sneakers and a baseball cap. SAM barks and wags his tail.)

DEVON. Good dog, Sam. Good puppy. *(SAM madly wags his tail, moves in excited circles and tries to sit on DEVON's lap, all at the same time.)* Who's the best dog in the whole world! *(SAM barks and wags his tail.)* That's right. You are. Did you miss me today? *(SAM nuzzles DEVON.)* Were you lonely without me?

(SAM whines a doggie whine.)

STEPHANIE. Hey, what about me?

DEVON. Did you miss Stephanie, too?

(SAM barks.)

STEPHANIE. I wish he could come to school.

DEVON. He's as smart as those kids in our class. You can do everything they can, can't you, Sam? *(SAM barks again.)* Except write. *(SAM looks questioningly at his paws.)* Well, almost everything.

STEPHANIE. He can't talk.

(SAM yawns, making a quizzical, yowling noise in the process.)

DEVON. See? He can talk. And he understands, too, don't you, boy? Ask him a question.

STEPHANIE. Hey, Sammy. Chewed up anything good today? *(SAM barks and retrieves a hat from a corner of the room. It is so chewed up it is almost unidentifiable. He carries it to STEPHANIE and drops it at her feet. She picks it up gingerly with two fingers.)* Thank you, I guess.

(SAM grabs the hat.)

DEVON. Sam, leave it. Leave it.

(SAM drops the hat. STEPHANIE reaches for it but SAM grabs it again.)

STEPHANIE. It's a game.

(STEPHANIE and SAM play tug-of-war with the hat, SAM growling playfully.)

DEVON. Leave it, Sam!

(Reluctantly, SAM drops the hat and STEPHANIE picks it up.)

STEPHANIE. Eeeeeooooo. I don't know what it was, but I sure don't want it now.

DEVON. It was my old baseball cap.

STEPHANIE. Oh, yeah, I recognize it now, sort of.

DEVON. Here, Sammy, you can have it. I've got a new one anyway.

(STEPHANIE gives the hat to SAM who returns it to the corner.)

STEPHANIE. Let's practice for the dog show.

(SAM barks eagerly.)

DEVON. I'll be the trainer.

STEPHANIE. I'll give the treats. *(She gets the bag of treats.)*

DEVON. Ready?

STEPHANIE. Ready.

(SAM barks.)

DEVON. Sam. Sit. Sit, puppy.

(SAM sits, smartly. STEPHANIE pulls a treat from her pocket and gives it to SAM.)

STEPHANIE. Good dog, Sammy. He does that perfectly.

DEVON. Down. Down, Sam.

(SAM lies down and puts his head between his paws.)

STEPHANIE. Awwww. Good doggerel. Here's your treat.
(She gives SAM a treat.)

DEVON. I know. Let's teach him a new trick. How about shake hands?

STEPHANIE *(offers her hand to SAM)*. Shake, Sammy. Shake.

(SAM shakes his whole body as if he's been out in the rain.)

DEVON *(laughing)*. No. No, Sam. Shake hands. Like this.
(DEVON offers his hand to STEPHANIE and they shake hands enthusiastically.)

STEPHANIE *(with an English accent)*. How do you do?

DEVON *(playing along)*. Very well, thank you. And how do you do?

STEPHANIE. Fine, thank you.

DEVON. Like that, Sam. Want to try? Shake, puppy.

(SAM lifts his right paw to DEVON, who shakes it.)

STEPHANIE. Good puppy. He sure is a smart dog. *(She gives SAM another treat.)*

DEVON. Now. Dead dog, Sam. *(SAM looks at DEVON curiously, his head cocked at an angle.)* Play dead, Sam. Come on.

(SAM whines and hangs his head.)

STEPHANIE. He doesn't want to be dead.

DEVON. It's a trick, Sam. You know that. I don't want you really to be dead.

STEPHANIE. It's pretend, Sammy.

(STEPHANIE shows SAM how to play dead. SAM lifts his head and pants happily.)

DEVON. Dead dog, Sam. Come on.

(SAM plays dead, paws in the air.)

STEPHANIE. Good puppy, Sam. You're the best. *(She gives him a treat and they both pet SAM.)* And now, ladies and gentlemen, the ramp finale! The best trick ever performed by a dog!

(SAM prances around, head proudly high.)

DEVON. Up, Sam, up! *(SAM laboriously climbs up the ladder, onto the bed, and stands on his hind legs, his paws waving in the air. DEVON and STEPHANIE applaud and cheer.)* Now, ramp, Sammy, ramp! *(SAM slides head first down the ramp into STEPHANIE's waiting arms. They both fall into a tangle on the floor. DEVON and STEPHANIE clap and cheer.)* Who's the best dog in the whole world?

(SAM barks in response.)

STEPHANIE. That's right. You are. *(She gives SAM a treat then puts down the bag.)*

DEVON. It'll be like a real dog show with ribbons and everything. Let's see... Duke, Lady, Marmalade, Fluffy... Sam can do more tricks than any of those dogs.

STEPHANIE. Duke can't even sit up. He's too old.

DEVON. He'd fall down. *(Amid much laughing, STEPHANIE and DEVON do an imitation of Duke trying to sit up and falling down.)* Thanks for sticking up for me today, Steph. You didn't have to, but you did.

STEPHANIE. Adam's mean. He makes me mad.

DEVON. I wish you could have seen your face.

(DEVON imitates STEPHANIE's face and she makes an angry face in response. They laugh.)

STEPHANIE. You are my best friend. I don't care what Adam says.

DEVON. Adam wants you to be his best friend.

STEPHANIE. He's too mean to have a best friend.

DEVON. Adam hates me.

STEPHANIE. Is that why he calls you "Shaggy"?

(DEVON self-consciously pushes his hair out of his eyes. He gets his new baseball cap and puts it on.)

DEVON. I don't know.

STEPHANIE. You can't help it if your hair falls down.

DEVON. I wish Adam would fall down. In quicksand. *(He imitates, doing appropriate sound effects.)*

STEPHANIE. I wish he'd get eaten alive by mountain lions. *(She imitates the experience. SAM responds to her cat sounds.)*

DEVON. I wish he'd get trampled to death by wild buffalo.

(DEVON and STEPHANIE imitate the trampling.)

STEPHANIE. I wish he'd get boiled in an erupting volcano and blown up so far he'd never come down.

(DEVON and STEPHANIE make explosion sounds. They laugh. SAM absentmindedly begins to chew on DEVON's sleeve. DEVON instinctively pets SAM.)

DEVON. Adam used to be my friend.

STEPHANIE. He's funny sometimes. But I don't like it when he's mean. *(Pause.)* That dog sure loves you.

DEVON *(removing his sleeve from SAM's mouth)*. Sam. No bite.

STEPHANIE. He thinks you're a cheeseburger. *(They laugh.)* Sam knows sit, down, shake, play dead and the ramp finale. If we could just teach him not to chew, chew, chew.

DEVON. He's a puppy. His teeth hurt.

STEPHANIE. He ate my stuffed kitty. He chewed both the eyes off. Now she can't see where she's going.

DEVON. You're sorry, aren't you, Sam?

(SAM makes an apologetic sound at STEPHANIE.)

STEPHANIE *(to SAM)*. Don't try to sweet-talk me, you're just a walking mouth.

(SAM makes a huge yawn/whine at STEPHANIE as if to prove her point.)

DEVON. Don't pay any attention. She doesn't mean it.

(SAM nuzzles STEPHANIE and lies down to take a nap.)

STEPHANIE. I do, too.

DEVON. I've got a present for you.

STEPHANIE. A present? For me? What is it?

(DEVON reaches into his pocket and pulls out two chains with identical charms.)