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Dramatic Publishing





NOCTURNAL

BY RAMON ESQUIVEL

NOCTURNAL

Drama. By Ramon Esquivel. Cast: 3m., 1w. Even good kids can do bad things. Three high-school sophomores—Cisco, Ryker and Rolly—sneak out in the middle of the night to sabotage the senior prank and frame the freshman class for it. But Amelia, Cisco's best friend from childhood, has other plans for the trio. The foiled prank exposes the group's underlying tension and tests their loyalty to one another. With pride and reputation at stake, the four teenagers escalate a game of dare to dangerous levels, risking their friendships and their lives. The story of *Nocturnal* raises three questions: How do friends affect our perception of ourselves? How do friends work through conflict? What do we do when the limits of our friendships are put to the test? *Nocturnal* is a highly physical drama about status, relational aggression and gender identity among teenage boys. It is a companion play to *Nasty*, which explores the same issues among girls. *Nasty* and *Nocturnal* are designed to be presented together or on their own. Unit set. Approximate running time: 50 minutes. Code: N87.

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(NOCTURNAL)

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Nocturnal was first presented as a rehearsed reading in April 2008 at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts as part of New Visions/New Voices 2008. The play received its premiere production at Bloomington Playwrights Project, Bloomington, Ind., in January 2009. The production was directed by Breshaun Joyner.

CAST:

Cisco	Elijah Willis
Amelia	Nikeeta Brown
Ryker	McCarry Reynolds
Rolly	Ian McCabe

Nocturnal

CHARACTERS

CISCO: a smart boy, 15.

RYKER: a small boy, 15.

ROLLY: a big boy, 16.

AMELIA: a tomboy, 16.

SETTING: Night. The present. A suburb.

PRODUCTION NOTES: The script calls for four settings: High School, Playground, Exterior of Amelia's House and a Train Trestle. In the Bloomington Playwrights Project production, this was achieved through manipulation of a flexible set piece resembling a playground jungle gym.

The playground, a few blocks away. A big playground structure dominates the space.

RYKER enters first, clearly shaken. He does not notice when CISCO enters.)

CISCO. Hey.

(RYKER startles.)

RYKER. Someone screwed us.

CISCO. We don't know that. The security guard just did his job.

RYKER. We did two nights of recon. The security guard checks the school grounds at midnight, 2 o'clock, and 4 o'clock. It's 2:27 now.

CISCO. Yeah, but he could have changed his—

RYKER. Two nights! We watched him go back in at 2:13. His next round wasn't due for another hour and a half.

CISCO. A neighbor probably saw us. Or heard us. We're not ninjas.

RYKER. Someone screwed us.

(CISCO sees ROLLY approaching offstage.)

CISCO. Here comes Train Wreck.

RYKER. Limping like an old man.

(ROLLY enters.)

ROLLY. You guys are dicks.

CISCO. You really nailed that garbage can.

ROLLY. It was dark. And thanks for ditching me.

RYKER. Sucks to be ditched by your friends, yeah?

ROLLY. Banged up my knee. It better not mess up my judo.

CISCO. I wouldn't worry about that.

RYKER. Someone screwed us.

ROLLY. Yeah?

CISCO. Maybe.

RYKER. Definitely. Only we three knew about this.

ROLLY. I didn't say anything.

RYKER. No one at school?

ROLLY. Who would I tell? You're my only friends.

RYKER. Good point. *(To CISCO.)* Did you?

CISCO. Me? What about you?

RYKER. Why would I blow my own plan?

CISCO. To blackmail us.

ROLLY. Blackmail!

RYKER. What? No. If I was gonna blackmail you guys, I would ...

(A pea whistle from nearby.)

ROLLY. He followed us!

CISCO. Run!

(All three scatter.)

AMELIA enters carrying a can of spray paint and wearing a whistle around her neck. She calls after the guys.)

AMELIA. You left some evidence behind!

CISCO *(offstage)*. Amelia!

(AMELIA blows the whistle again, sets down the paint, and exits. The boys enter and examine the can.)

RYKER. Damn it, Cisco!

ROLLY. She blew the whistle?

CISCO. Who dropped a can?

RYKER. Stupid Roland.

ROLLY. Don't call me that.

RYKER (*calling off*). You're gonna pay for this, Amelia!

(*CISCO starts laughing.*)

ROLLY. What's so funny?

CISCO. Come on, she burned us good.

RYKER. What if we got caught?

CISCO. We didn't.

RYKER. But what if we did? Security guard could have heard her whistle and nabbed us.

CISCO. But he didn't.

RYKER. "Zero Tolerance," remember? Getting expelled doesn't look so hot on a transcript. No Notre Dame for you, Cisco.

CISCO. Relax. We're safe.

ROLLY. We told you specifically: "Don't say anything to Amelia."

CISCO. I know. But you know how things kind of slip out sometimes?

RYKER. Never. I always say exactly what I mean to say.

CISCO. You don't ever talk to girls. You don't know how it is.

RYKER. Why did she screw up my plan?

CISCO. She hates the people in her class. When I told her about *our* plan, she wanted to go. I said no.

ROLLY. Ryker would have shat his pants if Amelia showed up.

CISCO. I know, right? She was still pissed.

RYKER. I told you to never trust that little—

CISCO. *Don't.*

(Beat.)

ROLLY. Whoa. Defending her honor.

RYKER. Oh, he's always chivalrous when it comes to Amelia.

I have no idea what you see in her.

CISCO. Dude, you asked her out last year.

ROLLY. Yeah. Eighth grade boat dance.

RYKER. I was desperate.

CISCO. Especially after she turned you down.

RYKER. Whatever. That was middle school. This is high school. We deal with real women now.

ROLLY. Real women who walk right by us.

CISCO. Never stopping.

RYKER. My point is: Those women are hot and Amelia's not.

ROLLY. Yeah, Amelia's like ... she's like a guy.

CISCO. You guys are just pissed because she burned us. Give her some credit for that.

RYKER. She can do no wrong. All because she gave you a little—

CISCO. Don't say it.

ROLLY. Wait, what?

(RYKER laughs.)

CISCO. I swear to God, Ryker—

ROLLY. Come on! What?

RYKER. Tell him. It's Rolly.

ROLLY. You hooked up with her?

CISCO. No!

RYKER. Not quite.

CISCO. We just kind of kissed and stuff.

RYKER. “And stuff.” What’s this “and stuff?”

ROLLY. When? When?!

CISCO. This summer.

RYKER. His lifelong dream. Didn’t quite work out, though, did it?

CISCO. Drop it.

ROLLY. Details.

CISCO. I’m not giving you details.

ROLLY. Like hell you’re not. I want details. I *need* details.

RYKER. Throw him some scraps.

CISCO. I told her I wouldn’t say anything.

ROLLY. You told Ryker!

CISCO. He used witchcraft on me.

RYKER. Oh, my wicked, wicked ways. But the details are boring. It was—how should I say it?—an aborted attempt by Cisco.

ROLLY. You got her pregnant?

CISCO. No! God!

RYKER. Wow, Rolly.

CISCO. See why I didn’t tell you? You’re so stupid about sex.

ROLLY. Don’t say I’m stupid.

RYKER. Just tell him.

CISCO. I shouldn’t have even told you.

RYKER. Don’t wanna break her trust? She broke yours.

CISCO. She burned us. Get over it.

RYKER. She crossed me. That calls for revenge.

ROLLY. Yes. Revenge! (*To CISCO.*) You’re gonna give me details later.

CISCO. You going after her?

RYKER. Yup.

CISCO. Now?

RYKER. Massive retaliation.

ROLLY. "Revenge is a dish that is best served cold."

RYKER. Well said, *Wrath of Khan*.

CISCO. Look, if we wake up her family, they'll kill us.

ROLLY. They'll kill you. They know you.

RYKER. She burned us. If she's really as "cool, not hot" as you say, she can take some heat in return.

ROLLY. What did you have in mind?

(RYKER pulls out his can of spray paint.)

RYKER. One word, four letters, written on her window.

ROLLY. What?

RYKER. S-L-U-T.

CISCO. No way.

ROLLY. "Slut."

RYKER. Very good.

CISCO. She'll know you did it.

RYKER. Of course she will. And when she comes after me, I'll tell her what you told me.

CISCO. No, you won't.

RYKER. Watch me.

ROLLY. I hear she really got around last year.

(CISCO punches ROLLY in the arm.)

CISCO. She didn't.

ROLLY. I just hear rumors, you know?

CISCO. Those rumors piss her off.

RYKER. Well, she pisses me off. Hand over your walkie-talkie. *(CISCO gives his walkie-talkie to ROLLY.)* Get your paint, Rolly.

(CISCO picks up the spray paint can on the ground.)

CISCO. Don't do this, guys.

ROLLY. Give me the can.

CISCO. Our moms are friends. She tells her mom everything, who tells my mom everything ...

RYKER. Don't be such a gay boy.

CISCO. Sex and a Catholic mom? She'll cry first, and then smack me when she learns my friends wrote "SLUT" on Amelia's window.

ROLLY. Your mom wouldn't hit you.

CISCO. She would if you wrote "slut." Then Dad will take a turn.

ROLLY. Yeah, your dad would hit you.

RYKER *(to CISCO)*. You done?

CISCO. Next, they'll carry my body over to Amelia's, where her mom will cry, smack me, and then let her dad and brothers pound me some more.

ROLLY. Amelia would beat you down too.

CISCO. You know she would. *(Beat.)* And ... yeah. And Amelia will hate me. Guess that won't matter because I'll be dead, though. Thanks to you guys.

(Beat.)

RYKER. Look. I am not evil. I will compromise. Instead of painting "SLUT" on her window, we'll write "HARLOT."

CISCO. Jeez, Ryker.

RYKER. Nobody knows what "harlot" means anymore.

ROLLY. What does it mean?

CISCO. "Slut."

RYKER. It's the best offer you're gonna get. A girl burned me. I must restore balance to the universe. Give Rolly your paint.

(ROLLY extends his hand to take it. CISCO sprays his hand.)

ROLLY. Ow!

CISCO. "Ow," he says. It's paint. And it's going ...

(CISCO points the can at the ground and continually sprays it.)

RYKER. Just take it!

(CISCO easily evades ROLLY, all the while spraying the paint and wasting it.)

CISCO. It's going ...

RYKER. Never mind, we don't need it. *(CISCO makes a move before RYKER can react.)* I got mine. Let's go ...

(CISCO tackles RYKER and takes his can. RYKER gets a few punches in before CISCO is up and running again holding both cans and wasting their paint.)

ROLLY joins in the pursuit but CISCO uses the playground equipment to his advantage. The boys improvise insults and taunts as they lay chase.

When CISCO's cans run out, he calmly places them on the ground.)

CISCO. All gone. Oops.

ROLLY *(winded)*. Thank God.

RYKER. Where did this spine come from?

CISCO. Spine? It's strategy.

RYKER. Strategy?

CISCO. Look at yourselves. *(RYKER and ROLLY do.)* Red paint all over. The same red paint used to ruin the Senior Prank. Uh-oh.

RYKER. Oh, man.

ROLLY. We're dead.

CISCO. Better get it off before it sets. Remember, it's not washable.

RYKER. You screwed us more than Amelia did. But she still has to pay. Rolly, we need more paint.

ROLLY. We don't have any more.

RYKER. Your dad paints houses for a living. You got paint. And we're back to writing "slut."

CISCO. I won't let you.

RYKER. How are you gonna stop us?

CISCO. I'll think of something.

RYKER. We met in sixth grade Chess Club. In all the matches we've played, how many times have you beaten me? Zero.

CISCO. This isn't chess.

RYKER. Everything is chess. And your queen is a goner. Let's go, Roland.

(RYKER exits.)

ROLLY. Don't call me that! *(To CISCO.)* Come on, we'll talk him out of it.

CISCO. He's gone, so now you're on my side?

ROLLY. This will be fun. And Amelia deserves some payback.

CISCO. Just come over to my house. We'll play The Box or something.

ROLLY. I've beaten all your games already.

CISCO. Show me how to beat the Necromancer in *Elder World III*.

ROLLY. You can't beat the Necromancer? He's doesn't even use death runes. Do you know where the elven bolo is?

CISCO. The cave?

ROLLY. The grotto! How can you not ... ?

RYKER *(offstage)*. Rolly!

ROLLY. Come over tomorrow and help me beat *Joyride Miami*. I got the code for unlimited armor-piercing bullets.

(ROLLY starts to leave.)

CISCO. I'm gonna stop you guys.

ROLLY. Don't worry. I won't let it get out of hand.

(ROLLY exits after RYKER. CISCO dutifully drops empty cans in garbage. He exits.)