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Dramatic Publishing



Dumpster Dan

by
Christopher Wall

From...

35 in 10

Thirty-Five Ten-Minute Plays

Compiled and Edited

KENT R. BROWN



Dramatic Publishing

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By
Christopher Wall

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Dumpster Dan premiered at the First Look Theatre Company's Festival of New Works in 2003, sponsored by New York University. It was directed by Nancy Robillard, and featured Craig Lenti and James Brill. It also won the SlamBoston! Ten-Minute Play Competition, sponsored by Another Country Productions.

CHARACTERS

DAN: High-school freshman.

DAN'S FATHER: 40s.

SETTING: Two mats represent Dumpsters on opposite sides of an alley. A milk crate is used as a chair throughout. Dan's Dumpster is empty. His father's Dumpster contains a baseball cap, clipboard, glasses, books, beat-up suit jackets, tie (already knotted), towel and a toy ray gun.

TIME: The present.

DUMPSTER DAN

AT THE CURTAIN: *DAN sulks in his Dumpster. FATHER sits in another Dumpster across the alley. He tries to get DAN's attention.*

FATHER. Hungry? *(No response.)* Not hungry? *(No response.)* Alive? *(DAN turns farther away and sulks. His FATHER gives up. To the AUDIENCE.)* I was at the kitchen table. Looking at all the stuff we'd accumulated over the years. Mounds of—! Piles of—! I could hardly find the darned sink and get a drink of water. *(Pause.)* At some point you have to make a decision and take control of your life. So that's what I did. I decided to get rid of it all, everything I owned, and live off the land.

DAN. Which was hard to do, 'cause we live in a *city*.

FATHER. Good point. That started me thinking. *(Scratches his chin.)* I love thinking. *(Scratches some more.)* I came up with an inspired solution: urban resource reclamation.

(DAN can't resist. He gets out of his Dumpster. Leading question.)

DAN. What's that, in layman's terms?

FATHER. You subsist on stuff people throw away.

DAN. Which means?

FATHER. You climb into metal containers and wade around 'til you—'til you— Fine. Have it your way. *(Together.)*

DAN. Dumpster diving.

FATHER. Dumpster diving.

DAN (*to the AUDIENCE*). Dad didn't stop there. He got rid of our furniture and quit his job, but we still had our apartment. 'Til one day he came home and said—

FATHER (*as if waking from a nap*). I fell asleep behind the A&P on an egg crate. Best sleep I've had in years. Hmm. (*Scratches his chin.*)

DAN. Please. No more thinking!

FATHER. I passed my old partner on his way to the office. He was hunched over, weighed down by all the *things* he had to maintain. I got a better night's sleep than he did. What other proof do we need? (*Pats DAN playfully.*) I'll give the keys to the first person I see. Ha ha! Can't wait to see the expression on their face! (*FATHER starts off.*)

DAN. Wait! What about my books and clothes and—and *stuff*?

FATHER. You'll find better stuff out there.

DAN. Mom would never let you get away with this!

FATHER. Dan! (*A flash of anger. He calms himself.*) It's you and me now, all right? Trust me. (*He pats DAN on the arm.*) You'll feel better once we're out of here. (*DAN huffs as his FATHER goes to his Dumpster and reads.*)

DAN (*to the AUDIENCE*). After a few weeks, Dad began to change. He stopped drinking. His hygiene improved.

FATHER. That makes one of us.

DAN. He read five books a week. We had the best conversations. There was even talk of him entering the Boston Marathon. (*DAN climbs on the milk crate outside his dad's Dumpster.*) As for me, it took a while to get the hang of it.