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*Dramatic Publishing*

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# The K of D

Dark comedy by Laura Schellhardt



# The K of D

**Dark comedy.** By Laura Schellhardt. Cast: 1w. (playing 17 roles). *The K of D* follows the story of Charlotte McGraw, a 12-year-old girl struggling to come to terms with the death of her twin brother, Jamie. It also follows the growing “legend” of Charlotte McGraw, as narrated by a pack of teenagers who live near Charlotte on a man-made lake in southwest Ohio. As with all great legends, truth and fiction become inextricably linked in this play. The truth is that Charlotte’s brother was hit by a car and died in her arms. The truth is that moments before he died, he kissed her, gently, on the lips. The legend is that everything Charlotte kissed from that moment forward also died. *The K of D* begins upon the discovery of her new “skill” and tracks the events that transpire when the man who killed her brother returns to town and Charlotte’s family attempts to use her skill to get rid of him. *The K of D* is designed as a one-woman show. One actress portrays 17 characters including Charlotte, her mother, her father, her new-found neighbor, and the pack of rag-tag kids who speculate on much of Charlotte’s story. The story purposely blurs the line between fact and fiction. Moreover, it suggests that drawing that line might be an act of futility as, if we’re lucky, we all become legends in the end. *Flexible staging. Approximate running time: 1 hour, 30 minutes. Code: K38.*

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# The K of D

an urban legend

by

laura schellhardt



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(THE K OF D)

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\* \* \* \*

*The K of D* received its world premiere at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Washington, D.C., January 2008, where it was directed by John Vreeke, assistant director Jennifer Mendenhall, dramaturg Elissa Goetschius, stage manager Kristi Matero, set and costumer designer Marie-Noelle Daigneault, props designer Jennifer Sheetz, lighting designer Andrew Griffin, sound designer Matt Otto and artistic director Howard Shalwitz. The cast was Kimberly Gilbert.

# The K of D

## characters

**the who:** one woman who plays the following roles:

the girl . . . . . who does most of the talking  
charlotte mcgraw . . . who no longer speaks  
quisp drucker. . . . . who has the biggest mouth  
becky ray voss. . . . . who smokes bubblegum cigarettes  
steffi post . . . . . who romanticizes violence  
brett hoffman. . . . . who keeps track of the facts  
trent hoffman. . . . . who keeps track of the people  
mrs. mcgraw . . . . . who expected more  
mr. mcgraw . . . . . who provided less  
jack whistler . . . . . who tends to the flowers  
johnny whistler . . . . who is the subject of much debate  
johnny's girlfriends . who change often, and rarely wash  
their hair

**the where:** saint marys, ohio. which is a real town.  
but which could be any small town you might pass on  
your way to someplace else.

**the when:** over the course of a summer.  
about three months. to be exact.

## **a few thoughts on production and the like...**

the characters' physical habits are doorways into their personalities.

steffi's shiver,  
brett's notebook,  
becky ray's cigarettes,  
mr. mcgraw's sniff,  
mrs. mcgraw's bracelets,

these quirks punctuate the action and hopefully provide a launchpad of sorts

sound is another character in this play. it might be jamie helping the story progress. it might be recorded or performed live. whatever the case, the eventual absence of sound should be an event in itself.

punctuation is intentional but should not be restrictive. it is an attempt to capture the rhythm of the piece and of its individual players.

this play was originally created as a one actor play. it might be performed with more than one actor. i look forward to seeing what that looks like. however, it was created as a one actor play.



*“i’m going away to leave you love  
i’m going away for awhile  
i’m going away but i’m coming back  
if i go ten thousand miles.  
storms out on the ocean  
for heavens may cease to breathe  
this world may lose its motion  
if i prove false to thee”*

*— appalachian folk song*

## part one

*(from the darkness, the sound of a young girl's voice.)*

GIRL'S VOICE. i got one. i got one. i GOT—

*(suddenly there's a light, and in that light there's a girl, sitting on a skateboard. she seems startled by the light. she seems startled that we're here.)*

GIRL. one...oh...oh...hey there...

i got a little story for you...it's a story from my childhood. it don't make much sense, but it's true. guess that's something i'm learning. it's the things that don't make much sense that're usually true.

*(from somewhere else, crickets begin to crick. the girl seems pleased by the sound.)*

GIRL. it's an ohio story. it takes place there i mean. not like ohio's a character. i just mean the story takes place in a town in west ohio. near indiana. think dairy queen. think drive-thru movie theatres that closed on accounta nobody'd drive thru 'em. think drive-thru liquor marts that don't have that problem. think of a main street

where the stores got display cases full of flies. that's the kinda town i mean. indiana's the ONLY thing it's near.

*(from somewhere else, the sound of a man's voice calling "charlotte? charlotte!" the girl ignores the voice.)*

GIRL. and while you're thinking 'bout this town in west ohio, you gotta think about a lake. that's real important. about ten miles outta town, there's a long road on your left that leads to this man-made lake and a few houses that sometimes even the mailman forgets. think green water. *(the sound of green water)* think boats knocking against docks. *(the sound of boats on docks)* think mosquitoes about this size.

*(she holds up her pinkie finger. from somewhere else, the buzz of mosquitoes.)*

GIRL. i spent a lot of summers on that lake when i was a kid, and this story happened during one of those summers. *(not certain)* it ain't a story about me. *(certain)* it AIN'T a story about me. it's a story about...um...well it's a story about charlotte. skinny charlotte mcgraw.

*(from somewhere else, crickets begin to crick. charlotte surfaces, a gangly girl too tall for her 12 years.*

*her hair is stuck into two haphazard braids.*

*her face is a little dirty.*

*she's biting her lower lip in concentration.*

*something rabbits near her feet.*

*it hops, she hops.*

*it hops, she hops.*

*it stops hopping. so does she.*

*she reaches out her hands, cupping them in the air just over the frog before...*

*she's got it, clutched in her hands.*

*she holds it to her ear. listening.*

*it ribbits. so does she.*

*she closes her eyes and kisses it, quickly. as if on a dare.*

*then she looks at the frog...*

*and discovers that something's not right.*

*the girl resurfaces.)*

GIRL. the first thing you gotta know about charlotte is that she was a twin. she had a twin brother named jamie. he was skinny like charlotte but with freckles on his nose and a black front tooth which he said he got when their screen door smacked him in the face. which is kinda funny 'cause they ain't got a screen door. they got a glass door. and it slides.

*(from somewhere else, the sound of a sliding door slamming into its lock.)*

GIRL. anyway charlotte and jamie were like their own little planet of one. they spoke this language together that sounded like clicks and whistles and sometimes a grunt. kinda like— *(the girl tries to make the sound and fails)* kinda like— *(the girl tries to make the sound and fails)* kinda like—

*(from somewhere else, the clear sound of clicks and whistles followed by a grunt. the girl seems pleased by this sound.)*

GIRL. kinda like that. quisp drucker called it pigmy talk on accounta he'd seen a tv special about some tribes in australia who wear towels on their butts and talk in just that same way. i thought it was cool, but it made quisp shiver. which made quisp mad.

*(quisp drucker surfaces. from somewhere else, the clear sound of clicks and whistles.)*

QUISP. listen, jamie, you got somethin' to say, you say it like a MAN now and like a NATURAL-speakin' man—

*(from somewhere else, the clear sound of clicks and whistles.)*

QUISP. come on, dude, seriously...WHAT THE HELL DOES THAT MEAN?

*(from somewhere else, the sound of a young boy's laughter.)*

GIRL. but jamie just laughed and charlotte bit her lower lip and they never did tell. *(the girl produces a small piece of paper. she proceeds to fold it over the following...)* charlotte and jamie also had a bunch of games that only they knew the reason or the rules for. like for instance, they used to sit on the rocks stretching into the lake and make little boats out of paper. they'd write messages on

the boats and set them off into the water clicking and calling after them things like “be brave. (*from the girl: click*) float fast.”

*(from somewhere else: click click. the girl has produced a paper boat. she sets it on the skateboard and rolls them both into the darkness.)*

GIRL. i found one of those boats once, stuck in the reeds. the message inside it read “someone get us out of this godforsaken place.” i used to think they wrote that to be funny. but anymore i’m not so sure...so if you can imagine two kids with torn jeans and dirty faces who talk like pygmies and leave long skinny shadows on the ground then you can imagine jamie and charlotte. and the only thing else you need to know is that jamie died. he was hit by a car on his way to the school bus.

*(from somewhere else, the sound of screeching tires. the skateboard returns to the girl. without the boat. brett hoffman surfaces, with a small notebook in his hands.)*

BRETT (*consulting his notebook*). he was on his skateboard, is the thing. he was showing off. zigging and zagging in front of the bus. i kept yelling “get outta the street, jamie,” but he just yelled back—what’d he yell, trent?

TRENT. um. something about the center line.

BRETT. “i’m gonna jump it” is what he yelled. “i’m gonna jump that center line.” so then he went to jump it, and that’s when...well, that’s when...

GIRL. that's when the rusty blue dodge tore around the bend and crashed right into jamie. that's when the rusty blue dodge sent jamie...

QUISP. FLYING, i'm telling ya. i mean it happened real slow and real fast, like in a movie, but he flew that day, he did. the little guy he just...flew

*(from somewhere else, the sound of wind.)*

GIRL. i have this image of jamie flapping his arms and taking the sky like some skinny shadowless bird. but he didn't of course. he hit the ground—a few yards away.

*(the sound of wind subsides.)*

GIRL. trent hoffman thought it was god coming to get jamie, on accounta he landed right by the billboard that says “god's watching. are you?” and i don't know much about god, but i'm pretty sure that when he wants you he don't send a dodge.

and also, the driver of that dodge was a local man named johnny whistler, and we were familiar enough with johnny's reputation to know one thing for certain. it wasn't god coming to get jamie, 'cause he'd have sent someone else.

*(steffi post surfaces. running her fingers down several strands of her hair again and again and again.)*

STEFFI. oh my god, that man is a total monster. i mean he's the kinda person you read about in the papers. (*a*

*shiver of pleasure*) he's the kinda person who picks up girls when they're, like, on a jog. *(a shiver of pleasure)* i mean, you meet someone like him in a dark alley and like, like, like... *(a shiver of pleasure)* ...oh my god.

*(becky ray surfaces, holding a bubblegum cigarette between her fingers.)*

BECKY RAY. well what's up with jamie's parents is what i want to know. when the cops told 'em the news, mrs. mcgraw just blinked at 'em. not like she was crying, more like she had something in her eye. and mr. mcgraw just mumbled something about it getting late, and they drove off into town without another word about it.

STEFFI. ooohhh, see like that's interesting, why'd they do that, do you think? like in this sKenario especially, why would you just pick up and go into town if—

BECKY RAY. probably, steffi. to do whatever it is you do when your child dies.

*(becky ray exhales a long puff of fake smoke.)*

GIRL. whatever the reason, the mcgraws left charlotte on the front porch staring out at the lake. she wouldn't come out and she wouldn't let anyone in. she just stood there, clutching jamie's skateboard, blowing circles of hot air onto the glass.

*(charlotte surfaces, clutching the skateboard. in the air before her, she traces a bird and then wipes it away. with the wiping comes the sound of screeching tires.)*



GIRL. she stopped speaking after that.

that's not my story, that's just something you should know. and this. you should know this too. charlotte was there when jamie died. people tend to forget that, i mean, she never talked about it, but she was just a few steps behind the others, and she saw her twin brother...

*(from somewhere else, the sound of wind...)*

GIRL. she saw her twin brother...

*(the sound of wind...)*

GIRL. well she was running toward that billboard before he hit the ground. and when she got there, she took his head in her hands. and he whispered something to her. and she put her face close to his. and he kissed her. real gently. right on the lips. and then he closed his eyes and went wherever it is you go at the end of things.

*(the girl sends the skateboard back out into the darkness. the sound of wind subsides.)*

GIRL. most people didn't give that kiss much thought. it was just a sweet, strange goodbye, that was all. but there were a few of us, just a few of us, who thought there might be more to it than that.

*(a time shift. now we're in another space. a private space. where six kids are speculating on death as if it's a thing to be solved.)*

QUISP. i'm telling you, i was THERE, y'all.

BRETT. we were all of us there, quisp.

QUISP. but i was CLOSE, hoffman, and i'll tell you what.  
there was something not right about that kiss.

STEFFI. oh my god, like what if they swapped souls right  
then and there?

QUISP. right. or what if he was trying to take her with  
him, but he didn't have enough time to seal the deal.

BRETT. or what if the two of you had something less re-  
tarded to do with your time than making up stories like  
little kids.

QUISP. say what you wanna, hoffman, but it was weird.  
that kiss mighta scarred me for LIFE.

GIRL. before we keep going, i should...well i've skipped  
some introductions. see it used to be that the kids in  
saint marys, ohio, ran in packs. like wolves. and like  
wolves, everyone had two r's: a rank and a role. quisp  
drucker—

QUISP. honestly man—seriously y'all—scarred me for  
LIFE—

GIRL. is this pack's front man. meaning he's oldest, in  
years anyway, and he's got the biggest mouth. the real  
leader, however, is becky ray voss.

BECKY RAY. anybody here wanna tell me, what's the  
goddamn point?

GIRL. becky ray was an "early bloomer." when she was  
ten she looked fifteen. when she was fifteen she looked  
twenty. and when she turns twenty she'll stop aging all  
together 'til she turns forty-five and it all crashes in on  
her like the wrath of god. but at this point she's only fif-  
teen and the wrath's all her own.

BECKY RAY. i mean, talking about this is just a dead-end street. and if i wanted another one of those in my life, quispo, i'd just spend a few seconds staring into your eyes.

*(becky ray takes a big drag off a fake cigarette.)*

GIRL. she's got a thing for bubblegum cigarettes. pretty soon those'll become pall malls will become marlboro pack-a-days with an occasional hit of meth will become two failed marriages, three almost-kids and a standing reservation at several motel rooms on the rowdy side of town. but at this point they're just bubblegum cigarettes which is authority enough for us.

*(becky ray blows a puff of cigarette smoke confidently into the air.)*

GIRL. next in command are brett and trent hoffman.

BRETT *(with a notepad)*. listen up, people. trent and i interrogated everyone who witnessed the accident, and we already got the facts. ain't that right, trent?

TRENT. um. yep.

BRETT. see here? lipstick lisa says it made her cry. *(he flips a page)* frankenstein flinney says it made him puke. *(he flips a page)* and cripple jenny couldn't comment 'cause even though she was moving her short leg as fast as her long one, she still missed—what'd she say, trent?

TRENT. um. everything.

BRETT. yeah, she missed everything. but nobody told us anything we didn't already know. and frankly, quispo, in

order for something to “scar you for life”? you kinda gotta have a life first.

*(trent finds this comment amusing.)*

GIRL. their father’s the town sheriff. he’s got a collection of guns he keeps in his wife’s piano bench, since neither brett nor trent showed any musical ability whatsoever and anyway if someone breaks into your house do you want boys who can aim a shotgun or boys who can play a goddamn minuet? so their roles in the pack are simple: brett’s the brains. trent’s the brawn. and finally...there’s steffi post.

STEFFI. oh my god, like whatever happened when he kissed her? it was not good. ’cause ever since then, this town has felt really really...ominence. *(a shiver of pleasure)*

GIRL. she’s the wallet. her dad owns chrysler.

STEFFI. i’m beginning to pick up on stuff like that, you know? i’m, like, developing that...sick sense... *(a shiver of pleasure)*

GIRL. steffi’s got a thing about violence. it thrills her. which seems to me a sign of someone who’s not experienced any. not for real anyway. not like charlotte...in any case, there’s the pack: quisp drucker, becky ray voss, brett and trent hoffman, steffi post and...well, and me. i was the quiet one. i took it all in. but we’ll get to that...

QUISP. whatever, you guys, i’m just saying. the kiss of death ain’t the same as any other. so the question of the hour is, what’s up with charlotte’s lips? or should i say. what’s ON ’em.