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Dramatic Publishing

RUMBLE FISH

By S.E. HINTON

Adapted for the stage

by

MARCUS ROMER

This excerpt contains strong language.

Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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S.E. HINTON

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ISBN: 1-58342-154-8

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All producers of RUMBLE FISH *must* give credit to S.E. Hinton, author of the book on which the play is based, and to Marcus Romer, author of the play, in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The names of the authors *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author(s), if included in this book, may be used on all programs.

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*“First performed by Pilot Theatre Company, UK,
on September 21, 2000.”*

Pilot Theatre premiered RUMBLE FISH at the York Theatre Royal, September 2000, with the following cast:

Rusty-James ARI BLAKE
Steve Hays DAVID O'CONNOR
Motorcycle Boy RYAN MCCLUSKEY
Patty, Girl SASHA PICK
Cassandra, Mom, Anita, Woman KIRSTN HAWSON
Smokey Bennet, Mugger 2 MARK THEODORE
BJ Jackson, Biff Wilcox, Mugger 1 NATHAN NOLAN
Dad, Benny, Coach, Mr. Harrigan, Patterson
STEPHEN MACKENNA

RUMBLE RISH

A Play in Two Acts
For 15m., 6w. (6m., 2w. with doubling)*

CHARACTERS

RUSTY-JAMES
STEVE HAYS
MOTOCYCLE BOY
PATTY
GIRL
CASSANDRA
MOM
ANITA
WOMAN
SMOKEY BENNET
PATTERSON (1)
MUGGER 2
BJ JACKSON
BIFF WILCOX
MUGGER 1
DAD
BENNY
COACH
MR. HARRIGAN

*See premiere performance cast list for doubling suggestions.

ACT ONE

(As the audience enters, there is a soundtrack of police and paramedic voices—a board with crime details asking for witnesses is in view and remnants of the scene of a recent event. There is a chalked body shape visible and police line with “do not cross” tape demarcating the area. Flashes from cameras occur and there is a distant sound of activity, logging reports, hospital details and sirens. The space is shrouded in a mist, which is part fog and part damped-down fire-smoke... This continues to the start of the show when we cut through this...

The title sequence... We see the whole cast in this section... Sirens and movement. There is a chase. Gunshots crack, and screams, shapes and shadows fly. Lights and smoke and a searing track of wails and shouts mixed with accelerated heart race and thumping chase sequence. Metal being hit and angle grinding sparks fly. A sound of a window being smashed. Someone is thrown through it. A baby’s cry is heard... Helicopter searchlights and distorted vocal through loud hailer. “Stop or we shoot... Come out with your hands up...” Water noises... a weir, a waterfall. Splashing and panting sounds cut in...all stops dead...there is a a heartbeat and breathing...a holding point...someone is wading

through water...a ripple... Lights pick out two Siamese fighting fish in water...they are beautiful...they are swimming...there is a still moment...we hold on this until...there is a loud bang...a fall...a sickening thud... blood drips into the water...the heartbeat slows and stops...flatline...echoes of police voices creep in...sirens pick up people talking...business-like...activity fades and we hear a train rattle overhead. We open to reveal...

A MAN with a beaten leather jacket on is washing his hands. He feeds some fish in the water. He has a torch. He stands and heads towards a tunnel entrance. It is overgrown, full of cans, debris and discards. Water drips from broken spouts and runs into a steaming manhole cover. Echoes are heard up the track and down the line in the distance. Somewhere people are having a better time. They are away from here... The MAN is in his early twenties, smoking a cigarette... He is alone... He sits down on the tracks.)

SCENE 1

RUSTY-JAMES. It hurts...like an ache...it won't go away...kinda nagging all the time...it's like there's someone there, you know?...but there isn't...there's no-one...it's just me choking and hurting... (*Laughs.*) I hear breathing...but it's mine, no-one else's... In the corner...real high up there's a shaft of light, just one...sharp as a razor cutting through the broken window...onto the bars... 'cos there are bars all around...you know like here and here and...here...and I'm like just waiting...waiting for it all to stop... See no-one knows...not

the truth...the whole truth and everything... 'cept me...
'cos no-one came...no-one ever came not for one second...

(Flash from police camera... Train SFX. Loud. Jump cut to: STEVE appears.)

STEVE. Hey! ... Rusty-James?

(RUSTY-JAMES swings round.)

RUSTY-JAMES. Who's there?...

STEVE. It's me... Steve... Steve Hays... what are you doing down here?

RUSTY-JAMES. I live here... I didn't recognise you... my memory's still blown... what are you doing here?

STEVE. I just got off the train—I saw the jacket and... I'm...I'm going to college here.

RUSTY-JAMES. Whadd'ya want to do a thing like that for?

STEVE. Well...I'm going to be a teacher...

RUSTY-JAMES. Teacher, huh? You know your face has changed since...

STEVE. D'you reckon?... well d'ya know who you look like?

RUSTY-JAMES. Who?

STEVE. Him...

RUSTY-JAMES. Big deal... What's it to you. I can look after myself...

STEVE. Yeah... sure...

RUSTY-JAMES. ...they put me in solitary...you can still see the scar...look, it doesn't tan. *(Shows scar on his side.)*

STEVE. I'm sorry ...how? ...you know I don't remember...

RUSTY-JAMES. A fight...a knife fight...

STEVE. A long time ago?

RUSTY-JAMES. Maybe...the steel...it was cold...you remember?

STEVE. Now look...

RUSTY-JAMES. What's your problem?

STEVE. Nothing...it's just...you look just like him, it makes me feel...

RUSTY-JAMES. Guilty?... I didn't ask you to come...but now you're here you listen, and listen good.

STEVE. But...

RUSTY-JAMES. I look like him because I want to...OK? And if you don't like it then that's your problem.

STEVE. I didn't know he had a gun I swear.

RUSTY-JAMES. What about the knives, eh?...what about the steel?

STEVE. Look...it wasn't like that.

RUSTY-JAMES. Yes it was, and you know as well as I do what happened that night... I trusted you...but I've learnt don't trust nobody and you won't be disappointed...that right, Steve?

STEVE. Hey now ...look, I'd better be off.

RUSTY-JAMES. Taking the easy option, Steve?

STEVE. Hey don't start that again.

RUSTY-JAMES. If you'd been with me.

STEVE. It wasn't my fault... It wasn't.

RUSTY-JAMES. If you hadn't let me down.

STEVE. I didn't.

RUSTY-JAMES. Yes you did—you could've come with me. You should've followed... (*Grabs him.*)

STEVE. Don't, Rusty-James ... please ...

RUSTY-JAMES. His eyes had become sharper. But I didn't want to remember that. He'd come here for a reason... It was weird, I don't know...it had all happened in such a short space of time, a week or two, maybe, I couldn't be sure. I was getting better at blocking it out... hey c'mon now look, who's breaking?

(Music cut to BENNY's playing pool...image and SFX pool balls shattering across the table.)

SCENE 2

RUSTY-JAMES. Come on I said who's breaking?

STEVE. Smokey!

(BJ, SMOKEY and STEVE are all there round the pool table. CASSANDRA and PATTY are there too. BENNY is behind the bar.)

SMOKEY. It's my turn, Rusty-James.

RUSTY-JAMES. Steve was there... I was beating Smokey who was pretty pissed off—he already owed me money. So who's going to kill me?

STEVE. Biff Wilcox... I swear it, Rusty-James, you're in big trouble.

(RUSTY-JAMES misses his shot.)

RUSTY-JAMES. Ahh shit! I missed my shot...you made me miss my shot.

SMOKEY. That's two to me then.

BJ. Hey leave it, Smokey ...

SMOKEY. Hey, BJ man.

BJ. What?

SMOKEY. Fuck you!

RUSTY-JAMES. Fuck him!

BJ. Assholes.

RUSTY-JAMES. So Biff Wilcox, eh? Well I'm not hiding,
he knows where I am.

SMOKEY. He knows where you live!

STEVE. He says he's really going to kill you.

RUSTY-JAMES. Saying is one thing ... doing is another.

SMOKEY. What you done, Rusty-James?

RUSTY-JAMES. Nothin' 'cept get up the bastard's nose.
(*Goes to the bar.*) Hey, Benny, what you looking at...
one more here, man.

STEVE (*to SMOKEY*). It was something he said to Anita,
at school.

BENNY. Just keep it down. OK?

BJ. Hey leave it, Steve ...

RUSTY-JAMES. Sure, Benny ... C'mon, I never said noth-
ing that wasn't true ... and she knows it.

SMOKEY. Hey, are we still playing or what?

RUSTY-JAMES. No ... I can't concentrate when people want
to kill me for some stupid little reason. Something big
and I don't mind so much. Hey BJ, fetch me my drink.

BJ. Show me the money!

RUSTY-JAMES (*laughs*). So what's he doing about it...
killing me I mean.

STEVE. He wants you to meet him, tonight at eleven.

SMOKEY. Back of the market.

BJ. Behind the pet shop.

SMOKEY. Near the car park.

RUSTY-JAMES. I know! I don't need an A to fuckin' Zee.

BJ. Hey stay cool.

RUSTY-JAMES. I am! ... I guess he's coming alone... huh?

SMOKEY. I wouldn't count on it.

RUSTY-JAMES. If he's bringing friends then I'm bringing friends... Hey, anyone got a problem with that?

BJ. No...but you know how it'll turn out.

SMOKEY. How?

STEVE. Everybody'll end up getting into it...you bring people, he brings people.

RUSTY-JAMES. Look... If you think I'm going to that empty fuckin' place alone, you can forget it!

SMOKEY. But...

RUSTY-JAMES. Don't worry, me and Biff'll settle this ourselves... I just like a bit of an audience...so what's the big problem? Nothing... Good.

STEVE. You know I'm going to be there, but...my mom and dad are...

RUSTY-JAMES. You don't have to be there, you ain't got no rep to protect...like these guys.

BJ. We ain't had no trouble like that for a long time now.

STEVE. And you know what the Motorcycle Boy said about gang—

RUSTY-JAMES. He ain't fuckin' here! He ain't been around for a long time...so don't go telling me about no Motorcycle Boy.

BJ. But when he was around we never fought Biff's gang. We was allies.

SMOKEY. Yeah, remember when Fat Boy Wilson got jumped over the Crip's patch.

BJ. Yeah the ground is still scarred.

STEVE. Still red. Not even dogs go near it.

BJ. They used chains. Fenced off now.

SMOKEY. When the Motorcycle Boy gets back—

RUSTY-JAMES. He ain't back... I don't know when he's coming back, if he's coming back or what... So if you want to wait around the rest of your life to see what he says...then OK. But I'm going to kick shit out of Biff Wilcox tonight and I think I oughta have some friends there... OK?

SMOKEY. We'll be there...but let's try and keep it between you two, OK?

RUSTY-JAMES. Fine... Smokey was smart. That was for real—I should've seen the signs back then... staring with his weird colourless eyes... Yeah, I'm out of here.

(Music cut. RUSTY storms out, STEVE follows him. Cut back to BENNY.)

SCENE 2a

BENNY. They come they go. That's how it works, how it's always worked. Some have money, some take what's not theirs, others just happy to fuck each other over... I seen it all. It's not gonna change. Them in the trench coats, mafia whatever they call themselves, shooting up them kids... What's that all about? It's a crazy world—blow each other apart, be the best, wear the right stuff—it's always been the same. Some folks gonna beat some other folks. Punks, losers, all wanna be somebody—only they don't get it, they waste their time, so what do they do huh? They take things into their own hands—move to the top of the heap—take action to make it hap-

pen...don't make it right...like I say it's the way things always been. Sad thing is they think they invented it... think they made it their idea...time they find out the truth...it's too late...

SCENE 3

(Music cut pick up STEVE and RUSTY-JAMES outside.)

STEVE. What's the matter with you?

RUSTY-JAMES. Give me a cigarette.

STEVE. You know I don't smoke.

RUSTY-JAMES. Yeah, I forgot. *(RUSTY-JAMES finds one in his jacket and lights it.)*

STEVE. What's wrong?

RUSTY-JAMES. Nothing.

STEVE. Is it the Motorcycle Boy being gone?

RUSTY-JAMES. Don't start in on me...or you'll get what's coming.

STEVE. I'm not...it's just that you've been like this since he left...

RUSTY-JAMES. He's been gone before.

STEVE. Not for this long...maybe he's gone for good.

RUSTY-JAMES. Shut up will you!... I'm tired... *(Throws cigarette into the river.)*

STEVE. ...This is a crap neighbourhood, the river is full of crap, the...

RUSTY-JAMES. ...It's not the slums...there's worse places.

STEVE. I didn't say it was the slums...just crap.

RUSTY-JAMES. If you don't like it—move.