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Dramatic Publishing

BLITZEN!

A Play

by

JULIAN WILES



Dramatic Publishing

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(BLITZEN!)

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BLITZEN!

A Full Length Play in One Act
For 1 man, 2 women, 3 boys (one is a teenager)
and 7 extras (men or women)

CHARACTERS

STEPHEN, the narrator and older son

DAD

ANDY, the younger son

MOM

ALEX, the boy next door

MS. BLITZEN, a plumber (or is she?)

Also...

MR. COMET (a carpenter) and various other tradespeople.

SETTING:

The bedroom of two young boys,
Charleston, South Carolina,
in the aftermath of Hurricane Hugo.

TIME:

Late September (in flashback) to Christmas morning, 1989.

PRODUCTION NOTES

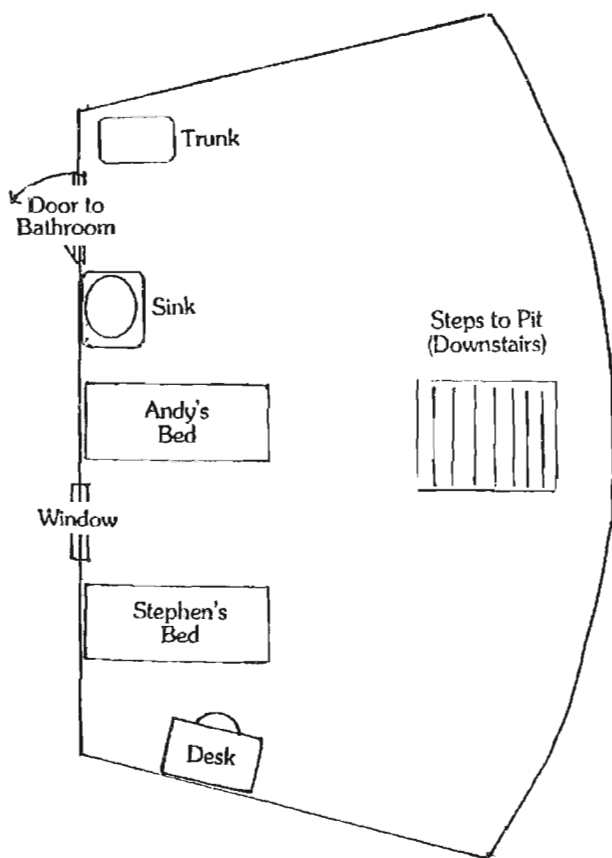
SETTING: The boys' bedroom, the morning after Hurricane Hugo, the largest hurricane ever to hit the east coast. At the end of the play, the room, within seconds, must be transformed and miraculously repaired. We accomplished this in a very simple way:

The room was created like a normal boys' room and then the walls were draped with plastic secured with duct tape to give the appearance that the walls had been temporarily patched with plastic. (This is how most homes in Charleston looked shortly after the hurricane.) When the room is transformed the plastic is simply removed. If a fly system is available plastic could fly out. The only element of the set that changed was the window UC. At the beginning of the play the window was pierced by a sailboat...that's right, a sailboat. This was a small Sunfish rigged on a platform so it could be rolled into the window. It is removed during one of the nightmare sequences and when it is, a "repaired window" is put in its place. To complete the hurricane desolation effect, the play began with toys, books and debris scattered throughout the room. As the play progressed these were picked up so that at the end of the play the room is pretty much in good shape except for the plastic tarp. We also found it helpful to backlight the plastic. This was especially effective in the nightmare sequences when lightning was needed.

One thing that is important, however, is that scenically you must somehow make it clear that the boys' bedroom is upstairs. In our theatre we have an orchestra pit so this was simple. We had a set of stairs descend into the pit. If you don't have a pit, perhaps steps into the auditorium could be used or the main set could be built on platforms.

Blitzen!

STAGE CHART



A Note From The Playwright

This play is not about a natural disaster, although a hurricane does play a major role in it. Rather, it is a story about beliefs and believing and how if you really want to believe in magic, sometimes you have to make the magic yourself.

This is a very special play to me because my family and I weathered Hurricane Hugo in 1989. When we returned to our home twelve trees had fallen in our yard, seven of them on our house, smashing through the roof. The Christmas after Hurricane Hugo for us was a house filled with scaffolding, plaster, bare walls and chaos. And yet, it was one of the most special times our family ever had together. Like the play, the last room in our house to be finished was my daughter's bedroom but unlike Stephen she was a very good sport about it. All of us were weary of the endless recovery efforts, however, and that set me to wondering what it would have been like if she had really, really wanted her room finished by Christmas. This of course led to the whole dilemma the boys face in *Blitzen*.

I am happy to report that our house and our community is now fully recovered and in fact our house looks better than ever. We have new trees growing and soon we may even have shade again. Until, however, you live through something like a hurricane where you are totally awed and humbled by the forces of nature, it is hard to appreciate your place in the universe. I would not want to relive that experience but I know I am a better person for it. Hopefully, through *Blitzen*, we can share some of the lessons of that experience with others.

BLITZEN!

SCENE ONE: "I had always liked the wind."

Late September. The house lights go out. The sound of a gentle wind is heard. The wind grows in intensity. STEPHEN is in a tight pinspot DC. It should be so tight that we see none of the set.

STEPHEN. The wind...I had always liked the wind...In the spring it flew our kites...In the summer it filled our sails... This fall...It turned on us...

(Lights rise and for the first time we see the whole room, the boys' attic room. It is literally a disaster area—the result of a massive Atlantic hurricane. The window has been smashed by a small Sunfish sailboat which has pierced it. Toys, clothes and debris are all about. DAD, ANDY and MOM are present. The pinspot and wind fades.)

DAD. The den is probably in the best shape, why don't we all sleep down there tonight.

STEPHEN *(has turned U, picking up his baseball and a mitt from the floor)*. I want to stay up here in my own room.

ANDY. Me too.

DAD. You can't stay up here, boys.

STEPHEN. Dad.

DAD. There's a boat in the window.

STEPHEN. We'll put something over it.

DAD. We'll see.

STEPHEN. "We'll see"—that's what you always say when you mean "no." (*Violently, too violently, he throws the mitt and glove on his bed. Everyone looks at him. A moment of silence and then DAD tries to defuse the situation.*)

DAD. I didn't say no. I just don't know if it's such a good idea. See what your mother thinks.

ANDY. Mom, can we?

MOM. What?

STEPHEN. Can we stay up here tonight?

MOM. I don't know, what does your father say?

STEPHEN. Great...(*He sits despondently on his bed. (ALEX is heard from downstairs.)*)

ALEX (*off*). Hey, anybody home?

STEPHEN (*eyes rolling*). Alex.

(*ALEX enters.*)

ALEX. ...Whoa...there's a boat in your window. Do you realize there's a boat in your window?

STEPHEN. Yes, we noticed it.

ALEX. Did the water wash it in?

ANDY. No, the water didn't get this high, the wind must have blown it in.

ALEX. Awesome. (*Looking around.*) Big-time mess, huh? Everybody's saying your house is the biggest disaster on the block...wow, this really is trashed...everybody has been dying to see what it looks like inside. They won't believe me when I tell them there's a boat in your room. You know you ought to charge admission...before you bulldoze it.

MOM. Bulldoze it?

ALEX. That's what everyone says you ought to do.

ANDY (*almost in tears*). We're not going to bulldoze it are we, Dad?

DAD. No, of course not.

ALEX. What are you going to do, then, torch it?

DAD. No we're not going to torch it, we're going to fix it up—

ALEX. "Better than before," that's what everyone's saying...

"Lucky to be alive..." everyone's saying that too. (*Looking around at the mess again.*) Yeah, I'd bulldoze it.

STEPHEN. Wind didn't blow you away, Alex?

ALEX. Nope. We went to the coliseum in Columbia.

ANDY. No kidding.

DAD. How's your house, Alex?

ALEX (*disappointedly*). Ahhhh, it's fine. A limb dented the mailbox, a few shingles blew off but that's about all. Nothing like this...you know the whole neighborhood's been talking about your house.

ANDY. Maybe we'll get "yard of the month."

STEPHEN. Somehow, I don't think so, Andy.

DAD. Before it gets too dark perhaps we should try to fix some supper. Have you had supper, Alex?

ALEX. Yeah, but I'll eat again.

DAD (*to MOM who is still in a daze*). Donna, let's fix some supper.

MOM. Supper...(*Rises.*)...oh, all right. (*She and DAD start to exit, with STEPHEN following.*)

STEPHEN. I'm going to get something to put over the window.

DAD. I could whip up a stir-fry on the camp stove. (*They're gone.*)

ALEX. Storm was really something, wasn't it? I can't believe ya'll stayed.

ANDY. I can't either. Did you really spend the night in the coliseum?

ALEX. Yeah, on the basketball court.

ANDY. Cool.

ALEX. Yes, if you like sleeping with a coupla thousand other people...half of them screaming babies.

ANDY. Did you get to play basketball?

ALEX. No, they wouldn't let us.

ANDY. When did you get back?

ALEX. This afternoon. We drove in through the chainsaw massacre.

ANDY. The what?

ALEX. When we drove back into the neighborhood it looked like every guy on the block who could get his hands on a chainsaw had decided he was Paul Bunyan.

ANDY. Have you seen any of the other guys in the neighborhood?

ALEX. I saw Sammy. He and his dad were packing up. His mom couldn't stop crying so they left.

ANDY. Where have they gone?

ALEX. I don't know. Mom said they may not come back.

ANDY. Is their house worse than this?

ALEX. Their house isn't even there.

ANDY. Isn't there?

ALEX. Come on, I'll show you. *(They exit.)*

(After a few beats, MOM enters carrying sheets. She begins to make up the beds, working at a frenzied pace. She is furious with DAD for having made them all stay during the storm but she is trying to contain herself.)

DAD *(from downstairs)*. Donna...

MOM. I'm up here.

(DAD comes up the stairs.)

DAD. What are you doing?

MOM. I'm putting clean sheets on their beds.

DAD. Why?

MOM. I always do that on Fridays.

DAD. I thought we were going to fix supper.

MOM. Oh...I was waiting on you to find the wok, did you find it?

DAD *(has it in his hands and holds it up)*. Yeah.

MOM. Okay. Okay. *(She races to finish ANDY's bed.)*

DAD. Donna, you don't have to do this now.

MOM. I know...I know...*(She looks at DAD. Pause.)* It was terrible last night, Carl.

DAD. I know...I'm sorry. We shouldn't have stayed.

MOM. No, we shouldn't have.

DAD. I'm sorry...I thought it would be an adventure for the boys.

MOM. It was an adventure all right.

DAD. I mean, I weathered Gracie in '58 and we had that hurricane party for David in '79, you remember that, don't you?

MOM. I remember...you dressed up as Thor, God of Thunder...

DAD. You see, I thought this storm would be like the other ones, and it would be fun...but...they were nothing like this. I should have known that, I should have listened to the warnings...to put the boys through that...

MOM. They seem to be handling it all right.

DAD. Andy was terrified when we finally got up here.

MOM. I think he'll be all right. I don't know about Stephen.

DAD. I never know about Stephen. Where are they now?

MOM. They went over to see what's left of Sammy's house.

(Lights fade to STEPHEN in a pinspot.)

STEPHEN. There wasn't anything left of Sammy's house. It wasn't there. There wasn't a trace of it. Not even a brick from the foundation. Me and Andy had played pool there just the day before yesterday...they found the pool table in a marsh about a mile away. That's all they ever found. It could have been our house and we could have been in it. I felt sorry for Sammy and his family but at least they hadn't stayed in their house during the storm. They had the good sense to evacuate. I wondered if the wind knew that. I wondered a lot about the wind. It seemed to know what it was doing. The hundreds of treetops that had been snapped off with a vengeance now lay quietly on the ground, all in neat rows, lined up in the same direction. Andy said it looked like God had sneezed or something.

SCENE TWO: "Fix it, Papa."

That night. Lights rise on ANDY standing beside STEPHEN. STEPHEN has plastic that he is about to put on the shattered window. ALEX is watching.

ANDY. You want another piece of tape?

STEPHEN. Yeah, thanks.

ALEX. What are you going to do about the boat?

ANDY. We'll try to move it tomorrow, I guess.

STEPHEN. It'll have to be lowered out of the window. It won't fit down the stairs.

ALEX. I still can't believe the wind could do this.

ANDY. If you had been here you'd believe it.

STEPHEN (*finishing the window*). That ought to provide some protection.

ALEX. From what?

STEPHEN. From the wind, so it won't mess our room up any more than this.

ALEX. How could anything mess your room up any more?

(*DAD re-enters.*)

DAD. Getting dark in here?

STEPHEN. Yeah, it does that once a day, Pop.

DAD. Here are some candles.

STEPHEN. Yes, sir...

DAD. But be careful with them, blow them out when you leave the room.

STEPHEN. All right, all right.

ALEX. We've got a generator at our house, Mr. Harrison.

DAD. Really...

ANDY. Maybe we could get one.

DAD. And miss all the fun of camping out?

STEPHEN. This isn't exactly the Great Smoky Mountains, Pop.

DAD. Pretend, Stephen, pretend...you used to be pretty good at it. (*Exits.*)

STEPHEN. Why are dads so...

ALEX. I don't know...the storm has made them worse, I think.

STEPHEN. Yeah, it's turned Pop into a scout master...

ALEX. My dad thinks he's Thomas Edison...he shorted out the refrigerator before he got the new generator hooked up right.

ANDY. So now you have electricity.

ALEX. Just a few lights—there's not enough power for the stove or the microwave.

STEPHEN. So you can't cook.

ALEX. We never cooked much at my house before the storm. We don't know what to do now that all the fast food places are closed.

STEPHEN. What have ya'll been eating? (*Phone ring is heard offstage.*)

ALEX. Mostly cereal and Pop Tarts.

ANDY. Is your TV working?

ALEX. Yeah, but only one station is back on the air and it's only showing news.

STEPHEN. All bad, I bet.

ALEX. Mostly, but there is some good news.

STEPHEN. What?

ALEX. All the schools are closed...they say they may not reopen for two or three weeks.

ANDY (*lying down on his bed*). All right!

(*DAD enters the room.*)

DAD. Alex, that was your dad, he wants you home before the curfew.

ALEX. All right...I can't believe everything's knocked out and the stupid phone system still works.

STEPHEN. See you tomorrow.

ALEX. See ya, Mr. Harrison...(Exiting.) Oh, I enjoyed your supper, Mr. Harrison, whatever it was. (*He's gone.*)

DAD. Looks like you boys did a pretty good job on the window.

STEPHEN. We tried.

DAD. Well, we've all had a big day. I think you boys should get on to sleep.

ANDY (*yawning*). ...I'm bushed...I didn't sleep a wink last night.

STEPHEN. What are you talking about? You slept through most of it.

ANDY. Well I don't remember sleeping. (*Sleepily.*) Pop, how long do you think it will take to get the house back to normal?

DAD. I bet it'll be done by Christmas.

ANDY. Is that a promise?

DAD. That's a promise. (*He gives ANDY a kiss then sits on the edge of STEPHEN's bed.*) Stephen, I want you to know I made a mistake. I know we shouldn't have stayed. It was stupid and I shouldn't have put you and Andy through what you went through last night.

STEPHEN. We lived to tell about it.

DAD. But we might not have. I'm sorry. I know it scared you.

STEPHEN. Didn't scare me.

DAD. Well, I'm sorry. (*DAD crosses to the bathroom sink to blow out the candle. He hesitates a moment when he sees a box of Band-aids. He takes a one out, crosses and places it on the window. STEPHEN stirs.*)

STEPHEN. What are you doing?

DAD. Putting a Band-aid on the window.

STEPHEN. What's that for?

DAD. You don't remember?

STEPHEN. Remember what?

DAD. One night when you were three or four, before Andy came along, you woke up crying. I came in to check on you and found you standing at this window. "Broken," you said. I thought it was the window that was broken but then I realized that you were staring out at the moon. You thought the moon was broken because it wasn't full...it

was just a little wispy crescent. "Fix it, Papa," you said, "fix it..." I tried to explain about the moon and its phases but you kept screaming, "Fix it, fix it, fix it, fix it..."

STEPHEN. And you went in the bathroom and found a Band-Aid and pasted it on the window right over the broken moon.

DAD. You do remember?

STEPHEN. Yeah, and I remember that by the end of the month the moon was all well again. I thought you could fix anything. *(He turns over to go to sleep.)*

DAD *(alone, to himself)*. I thought I could too. *(Exits. The sound of a gentle wind is heard. Lights fade.)*

SCENE THREE: "Just the wind."

A few nights later. Lights rise. A flashback...this is the middle of the storm. The wind is furious.

ANDY. Stephen, when will Mom and Dad be back?

STEPHEN. In a minute, Andy...*(He crosses to the steps.)*
Dad...Dad...

(DAD runs up the stairs. MOM follows.)

DAD. Stephen...take these...

STEPHEN. What are they?

DAD. Life jackets...

ANDY. Why do we need life jackets?

MOM. There's water coming in downstairs. *(Lights fade, wind gets more intense. Voices continue in darkness then MOM, ANDY, and DAD exit.)*