

PICASSO PICKUP

Scenes for Teen Actors

by Daniel S. Kehde

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A Few Words From the Playwright

We'd just finished doing the AIDS play, *Gone Tomorrow*, when a bunch of our teenage cast members came up on the porch and asked me if I'd be willing to teach an acting class that didn't involve them playing freeze tag. I've nothing against freeze tag, but I knew what they meant. They were already pretty good actors, but the AIDS play was their first serious role, and I couldn't help asking myself right then, "How far can you take them?" Isn't it safer just to go back to the book of games, let them have fun and write it all off as a few more minutes of stage experience? After all, they're all going to learn it all over again in college anyway. But for most of these kids, college was another four years off, and nobody can stay interested in theater after four years of freeze tag.

The problem was, at that time, that there wasn't a lot of material out there that would turn kids on, especially in the area of monologues and scene work. So I started writing scenes, at first to fit my kids, and then to stretch them. Many of the characters here are based on my students, their triumphs and tragedies, and the constant stream of upheaval that seemed to define their lives. I've used every one of these pieces, taught from them: Blocking, inflection, the advantage of deep background and personal motivation; and about a thousand other things that appeared during their readings. Sometimes the kids would recognize themselves, but, mostly, they just found the parts of themselves that they needed to complete the character.

Of course, kids grow up, and other kids with other experiences take their places. But each week, I'd manage to come up with another scene or two. A lot of years and a few computers later, today my den is stacked high with two and three pages of hard copy moments on the stage.

I suppose, if I knew what was in any of those stacks, I probably could stop writing these things altogether. But it's far easier to write a new scene than it is to find an old scene that fits the class at hand, and much more fun.

So here are some scenes off the top of the stacks. Enjoy.

Dan Kehde

SECTION I NOW

SHORT DIALOGUE 1

GAIL: Hello

ANDREW: Oh, uh, hello.

GAIL: Oh, okay. (*ANDREW remains silent.*) Do you want me to leave? (*ANDREW shrugs.*) I can. (*Pauses, then begins to leave.*)

ANDREW: Wait.

GAIL: Why?

ANDREW: Just wait. (*Pause.*) You don't understand.

GAIL: I'm not that stupid.

ANDREW: No. It isn't ... it isn't what it seems.

GAIL: (*Pause.*)

ANDREW: No, God. That's not it.

GAIL: (*Pause.*)

ANDREW: Don't do that. You're better than that.

GAIL: You're right. Why'd you ask me out in the first place?

ANDREW: (*Silence.*)

GAIL: You too? Damn you.

ANDREW: (*Silence.*)

GAIL: You couldn't be different, could you? Here in this stupid music store? God, you sell vinyl. Look. Sinatra on vinyl. "Come Dance With Me." Why couldn't you have as much class as the stuff you sell?

ANDREW: (*Silence.*)

GAIL: You were so nice. What, didn't I live up to your expectations? Not trashy enough? I don't need this. (*Goes to leave again.*)

ANDREW: You were ... you are beautiful.

(*GAIL turns and then turns away.*)

GAIL: I don't need this.

ANDREW: At the door, last night. With the light behind you, it lit up your hair like an angel.

GAIL: Yeah, some angel, huh. Look, you don't have to. I understand, okay? I do.

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ANDREW: No ... I don't think you do. I ... everyone wants to go out with Gail McClanahan.

GAIL: *(Pause.)*

ANDREW: So did I. I'm sorry.

GAIL: So am I.

ANDREW: But you were so beautiful. I didn't think ... I didn't think you'd try to look so pretty.

GAIL: *(Pause.)*

ANDREW: Why? If all you do is ...

GAIL: I won't bother next time.

ANDREW: You really are a nice girl.

GAIL: The old joke, right? Good girl – nice girl?

ANDREW: No. *(Pause.)*

GAIL: But if ... *(Pause.)* then why didn't you try ... *(Pause.)* I'm easy, right? *(Pause.)* I thought, maybe you hadn't heard, you know? Maybe that's why you didn't.

ANDREW: *(Pause.)*

GAIL: God. Remind me to slut it up a little more next time. Just to make certain that none of my dates are accidentally attracted to me. Sorry to have ruined your night.

ANDREW: Don't go.

GAIL: I'd better. I think I'm the one who doesn't belong here.

(SHE exits, ANDREW watches her go.)

End of Scene

SHORT DIALOGUE 2

ALAN: Do you think so?
BETH: No.
ALAN: I do.
BETH: You couldn't.
ALAN: I do.
BETH: You're dumber than you look.
ALAN: I still do.
BETH: No way to convince you?
ALAN: And if you do, what then? So we agree, so what?
BETH: I win.
ALAN: And that matters.
BETH: It would matter if you won.
ALAN: You don't know that.
BETH: Sure I do. Everyone wants to win.
ALAN: I don't.
BETH: That's a lie.
ALAN: The whole world has to think just like you, right?
BETH: The whole world does think just like me.
ALAN: I can't believe you think that.
BETH: You wouldn't feel triumphant if I agreed with you?
Come on.
ALAN: Does everything in this world have to include the word win?
BETH: Yes, it's our destiny. We must prevail.
ALAN: Who? Wait. You're not serious.
BETH: Actually I am. We fight for survival.
ALAN: No we don't. We're served survival. We surpass survival. When was the last time you fought for food?
BETH: Economic survival. Scholarships, grades. It's all based on who wins.
ALAN: Only because we let it. And I don't, or haven't you noticed.
BETH: Sure you do.
ALAN: When? You beat me at everything. Do you hear me complaining?
BETH: That's because I'm better than you are.
ALAN: Forget it.

End of Freeview

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