

hand, and one outta a thousand others can do it the way she wants it t'be done. And frankly, we don't often trust weird speakin' folks from...Veroner?

FRIAR JOHN. Dear sir, how thou dost tease me with thy cruel words. It is as if thou didst unleash thy very blade 'pon my heart, and struck me thus—an old man Friar—'pon my dignity. Surely, you would allow me to prove that I am capable of such a task as you yourself perform forthwith!

TOM SAWYER. Mm. It'll cost ye...

FRIAR JOHN. This robe? I'd gladly—

TOM SAWYER. Nah. Nah.

FRIAR JOHN. My shoes, here, here—

TOM SAWYER. Nah! No shoes.

FRIAR JOHN. *(Sighs.)* My hair then, aye. 'Twill be but a moment. *(Takes out a knife and puts it against hair.)*

TOM SAWYER. Nah! Nah. I just want th'letter.

FRIAR JOHN. Oh, sir, I cannot—

TOM SAWYER. Then no deal.

FRIAR JOHN. How unfairly the fates do rule this land! Come, sir. Another offer?

TOM SAWYER. Letter, or you ain't got a deal.

FRIAR JOHN. Alack, alack, I am undone! Here, sire. Take it. Take it. Take it!

(FRIAR JOHN hands TOM the letter, TOM hands FRIAR JOHN the paintbrush.)

TOM SAWYER. Top o' the morn t'ye then. *(Exits.)*

(FRIAR JOHN kneels next to fence, begins painting. A moment passes—to audience:)

FRIAR JOHN. This isn't so fun. *(Pauses, in thought.)* Methinks a piece of particularly horrid tomfoolery hath befallen me. I've been made a tomfool!

(Sighs, and continues working.)

Woe is me.

DOWN CAME THE RAIN

by Burgess Clark

Characters

MICHAEL, 18. Softly rugged. Medium build. A young man of simple good looks, he is very tolerant—yet can be rather cruel at times. Despite all the turmoil he loves Brucie deeply.

BRUCIE, 14. Michael's brother. Small; frail. Considered mentally "slow" since birth. He depends on Michael for everything, holding simple love and admiration for him.

Scene

Michael and Brucie are in the midst of a brotherly camping trip. Brucie's endless series of questions, especially regarding their dead mother, is beginning to tip Michael's patience to the breaking point.

(A remote campsite in fall. It is early evening. A tent dominates the upper portion of the stage. A small circle of stones representing a fire ring is in the lower section. Otherwise, requirements are few. Several camping articles are scattered around the site, such as a cooler, a spread-out sleeping bag, and so on. Small pieces of trash give a general feeling of carelessness about the space.)

(The stage is empty as the lights slowly rise. A bird calls in the far-off distance. Crickets and other general nature noises prevail.)

(The two sit for a moment.)

BRUCIE. What did Mama look like?

MICHAEL. I told you. I don't remember.

BRUCIE. You don't remember anything about her?

MICHAEL. I didn't say that.

BRUCIE. You do remember something about her?

(MICHAEL shrugs.)

Tell me, Mickey. What do you remember?

MICHAEL. *(Rising:)* Naw...

BRUCIE. Please?

MICHAEL. It's not very much, anyway. *(Pause.)* Well, I remember when she told me that she was going to have a baby.

BRUCIE. What baby was she going to have?

MICHAEL. You.

BRUCIE. Me?

MICHAEL. Yeah. I remember when she told me she was going to have you. I was lying in my bed, but I wasn't asleep. It was very dark in my room, but I could see the light in the hallway shining underneath my door. Suddenly, she came in and I remember seeing her silhouette in the door frame. She said very softly, "Are you asleep, Michael?" *(Pause.)* I said that I wasn't, so she came into my room and sat on the edge of my bed. She felt my forehead for fever, asked me if I felt all right. I said I was wondering what all the relatives were so excited about. She laughed and said that she had a big surprise for me. She said, "You're going to have a baby brother or sister to play with in a few months..." She said I could help her take care of it. She said she would really need my help. Then she bent down and kissed me and told me to go to sleep. I was so happy. She was so happy. Everybody was so happy...

BRUCIE. Is that what you remember, brother Michael? What did she look like?

MICHAEL. I told you. I don't know.

BRUCIE. But—

MICHAEL. It was dark. All I can remember is what she said. Her voice was so soft, Brucie—so soft. She was so beautiful...

(He removes the photo from his pocket.)

BRUCIE. Can I see?

MICHAEL. What?

BRUCIE. Can I see what you have?

(MICHAEL pauses uncertainly.)

Please?

MICHAEL. All right. *(Handing it to BRUCIE:)* Here. Be careful.

BRUCIE. Is that her?

MICHAEL. Yes, that's her.

BRUCIE. She was pretty.

MICHAEL. Yes. She was.

(MICHAEL goes to the cooler for another beer.)

BRUCIE. I don't remember anything at all. I guess that's because I was so small when she died, huh?

(As MICHAEL's back is turned, BRUCIE shuffles the photograph in among his baseball cards.)

Do you remember our mother's funeral?

MICHAEL. No. I didn't go. I stayed with Aunt Trudy.

BRUCIE. Did I go?

MICHAEL. You were still in the hospital.

BRUCIE. Did our mother die in the hospital?

MICHAEL. Yes, she died the morning after you were born.

BRUCIE. But I didn't kill her.

MICHAEL. No.

BRUCIE. And she was sick.

MICHAEL. Yes. Very sick. Very, very sick...

(MICHAEL turns and sees BRUCIE's treatment of the photo.)

BRUCIE!

BRUCIE. What...?

MICHAEL. *(Snatching the cards from him:)* You never learn...

BRUCIE. Hey! Those are my cards!

(MICHAEL retrieves the photo. He scatters the cards across the ground, moving away.)

Mickey?

(There is silence. BRUCIE begins to gather up the cards.)

You know what else I think about while you're at school, brother Michael? Do you know what else I think?

MICHAEL. No. What else do you think, Brucie.

BRUCIE. I think about what's gonna happen.

MICHAEL. You do. What's going to happen.

BRUCIE. This is after—what I think about. It's after.

MICHAEL. It's after what?

BRUCIE. It's after we leave Daddy.

MICHAEL. What do you mean, "after we leave Daddy?"

BRUCIE. When we go away. You know—when we go away on our own.

MICHAEL. Go where?

BRUCIE. I don't know. But it's just gonna be you and me, Mickey—just you and me. And we're gonna be in a cave.

MICHAEL. A cave?!

BRUCIE. *(Beaming:)* Uh huh. A cave. Just like Batman and Robin. And we'll have this neat car with guns and a 'jector seat and stuff—and...and... you won't have to go to school anymore, because you'll be so smart, you won't have anything else to learn. And you'll take care of me—forever and ever.

MICHAEL. What about Dad?

BRUCIE. Oh. Well he can still visit. But most of the time it's gonna be just you and me—all alone in the cave. And you'll take care of me—

MICHAEL. —And I'll take care of you—

BRUCIE. —forever and ever. And we'll be happy. Forever and ever.

MICHAEL. Sure, Brucie.

BRUCIE. I can't wait. It'll be Christmas day for everyday, too. We'll just give each other presents. *(Pause.)* Will you sing me the song, now?

MICHAEL. Maybe later.

BRUCIE. And you're going to sing me the song whenever I want.

MICHAEL. That's a real nice story, Brucie.

BRUCIE. And it's gonna happen, too.

MICHAEL. How do you know?

BRUCIE. I just know, that's all. We'll always be together.

(BRUCIE resumes playing about the campsite. MICHAEL remains stationary, lost in his thoughts.)

Brother Michael, I—

MICHAEL. *(Snaps:)* Don't call me that anymore, okay?!

BRUCIE. What.

MICHAEL. Don't call me *that* anymore. "Brother."

BRUCIE. But, that's what you are—

MICHAEL. I know. Just don't say it anymore, okay? *(Pause.)* That's kid stuff, Brucie. That's what you've called me ever since you could talk. My name is Michael. *Just* Michael. Call me Michael.

BRUCIE. *(Slowly:)* I do, sometimes.

MICHAEL. I know that you do. Call me that all the time from now on.

BRUCIE. Can I still call you Mickey?

MICHAEL. Sure.

BRUCIE. *(Quietly:)* I love you, Mickey.

MICHAEL. Thanks, Brucie.

(There is another break in the conversation. BRUCIE watches MICHAEL carefully.)

BRUCIE. *(Suddenly:)* Do you remember when I was homed?

MICHAEL. *(Sighs:)* Yes.

BRUCIE. Tell me about that please.

MICHAEL. What do you mean?

BRUCIE. What did I look like?

MICHAEL. *(Smiles:)* God—you were ugly.

BRUCIE. I was not!

MICHAEL. You were too! *All* babies are ugly when they're first born, no matter what anybody says. I was so disappointed.

BRUCIE. You were?

MICHAEL. *(Laughing:)* Yeah. I was picturing this little boy that I could play with. You were just this scrawny, puny, bawling brat.

BRUCIE. But I grew up, huh?

MICHAEL. Yeah. You grew up.

BRUCIE. I cried a lot when I was a baby.

MICHAEL. All the time. I was the one who started to sing to you to get you to sleep.

BRUCIE. The song?! Was it the song?!

MICHAEL. Yes, it was that goddamned song. It was the only way to get you to shut up. Mrs. Schmidt caught me one day trying to stuff a washcloth into your mouth just to stop your goddamned screaming.

(They both laugh.)

BRUCIE. Really?

MICHAEL. And you wore diapers until you were almost six...

(BRUCIE stops laughing.)

BRUCIE. *(Indignantly:)* I did not!

MICHAEL. Sorry little brother, but I'm afraid you did.

BRUCIE. That's a lie!

MICHAEL. *(Playing it up:)* Believe me, I wouldn't lie about a thing like that.

BRUCIE. It's...it's...it's a *goddamned* lie!

MICHAEL. Ask Dad if you don't believe me.

BRUCIE. I will!

MICHAEL. Fine! See what he says. That's what Mrs. Schmidt was there for—to change your dirty diapers.

BRUCIE. No! It didn't happen!

MICHAEL. *(Baiting:)* I used to yell, "Mrs. Schmidt! Mrs. Schmidt! Brucie crapped his pants again!"

BRUCIE. *(Enraged:)* YOU'RE A GODDAMNED LIAR!

(BRUCIE pounces on MICHAEL, beating on him. For the first few swings, MICHAEL simply laughs. The blows get harder: MICHAEL holds BRUCIE away.)

MICHAEL. Stop it! Brucie! Goddamn it! Stop it!

BRUCIE. It's a goddamned lie!

MICHAEL. Stop it, do you hear me?!

(Suddenly BRUCIE launches one well placed blow to the head. They stop. BRUCIE backs away. MICHAEL moves towards him.)

BRUCIE. Michael—I'm sorry—

(MICHAEL slaps BRUCIE. BRUCIE screams in pain and begins to cry.)

MICHAEL. Shut up, now! Shut the hell up! You deserved that, you little retarded shit!

(BRUCIE continues to wail—louder. MICHAEL grabs him by the shoulders, shaking him.)

Shut up, Brucie! BRUCIE, STOP IT! SHUT UP!

(He strikes BRUCIE again. A frenzy begins, where MICHAEL loses control. He knocks BRUCIE to the ground.)

STOP IT! STOP SCREAMING, BRUCIE! STOP SCREAMING...!

(MICHAEL kicks BRUCIE violently in the stomach. Suddenly MICHAEL stops. He retreats to the far side of the area, desperately trying to calm himself. He runs back to BRUCIE, who continues to cry.)

Brucie...?

(He touches the boy. BRUCIE pulls away, lashing out.)

I'm sorry, Brucie. I'm so sorry. Please don't hate me. I'm so sorry.

(He picks the boy up, cradling him in his arms.)

I'm not what you think I am, Brucie. I'm not what you think. I'm not at all smart like you say. You're a helluva lot smarter than me, Brucie—a helluva lot smarter. See, I'm a bad boy too. I think terrible things about you. It's just that you do things that bother me, you know? Some things that you say and do really get on my nerves. I'm sorry. I am so sorry. It's all my fault.

(BRUCIE continues to sob.)

I'm gonna try Brucie. You'll see, it's gonna be better. Please forgive me.

(MICHAEL looks down.)

Brucie? Do you hate me? I love you, Brucie. I never say it, but I love you so much. Brucie? Please say that you still love me. Talk to me, baby. Talk to Mickey. Talk to me...

(MICHAEL begins to break, holding the boy closer.)

(Almost inaudibly:) It's just gonna be you and me, Brucie—just like you said. Just you and me.

(MICHAEL rocks them back and forth.)

You just go ahead and sleep, baby. Daddy will be back tomorrow. Then we'll go home, okay? You know, I bet that big black bird you saw on our walk today was a crow. That's what it was—a crow.

(Pause.)

How 'bout if I sing to you, Brucie. Would you like that? I'll sing you the song, just like you wanted...

(Softly, he sings:)

The itsy bitsy spider went up the water spout—
Down came the rain, and washed the spider out.
Out came the sun and dried up all the rain,
and the itsy bitsy spider went up the spout again...

(The lights dim slowly.)

The itsy bitsy spider went up the water spout—
Down came the rain, and washed the spider out...

(Blackout.)