

The Black Eye

**a short play
by
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The Black Eye

a short play

Characters

Narrator Large, powerful man in his mid forties to late fifties.

Young Man Dangerous-looking man in his early twenties.

Setting

Place Suburb of Boston.

Time Tonight. 2:20 a.m.

Scenic Elements

Stage is bare with the exception of three chairs that suggest the driver's seat, passenger seat, and rear seat of a car. The driving wheel, car door, etc. should be mimed by the actors.

(Lights up.)

NARRATOR

(Addressing audience:) For the most part, I'm going to *tell* you the story. I'm going to tell you exactly what happened, exactly how I felt, and exactly what you should think. It's easier that way and you won't have to work so hard. Neither will I. I guess I'm lazy. Just like you.

(He crosses to group of three chairs. [Car] He sits on downstage left chair. [Driver's seat])

I'm driving my car. You choose the make, model, and color. 2:30 in the morning. I've just wasted three-and-a-half hours in a leather bar. Three-and-a-half hours of standing half-naked in a smoky room wearing leather bands around both my arms and an orange hanky hanging out of my back pocket . . . little signs that say I've done it all before and would do it all again . . . with the right guy.

But there was no right guy at the bar that night. So I'm driving home alone.

I'm tired. And I've got a sour taste in my mouth. Stale nicotine from second hand smoke. My ears are still ringing from the beat of the goddamn deep-house disco shit they play loud enough to drown out any awkward small talk. I'm paying enough attention to the road, but there's only so much you can do when some drunk stumbles off a curb right in front of you. I break. In time. The guy sprawls out over my hood.

(Young Man enters. Crosses to space in front of chairs. Speaks to "Friend" sprawled across "car hood".)

YOUNG MAN

Hey, you miserable drunken fuck. Get off the car, man. Get off the fucking hood.

NARRATOR

You'll have to imagine the drunk guy. He's just an innocent bystander. The story is about something else.

YOUNG MAN

Drunken fuck. What'd I tell you, huh? What'd I tell you? Can't even stand up.

NARRATOR

He isn't hurt. But when his buddy helps him up, I don't drive off. Hit and run is just what I need on my record. (To Young Man:) He okay?

YOUNG MAN

Not feeling a thing. (Re-considering:) Hey! You know what time the last city bus leaves for German Town? We've been standing here an hour.

NARRATOR

They stop at twelve.

YOUNG MAN

Shit! The fuck's so drunk he can't fucking walk! We'll fucking be here all fucking night!

NARRATOR

He's in his early twenties. Dark. Lean. Has a hot ass, big blow-job lips, and blue bad-boy eyes. (To Young Man:) Need a lift?

YOUNG MAN

You going that way?

NARRATOR

I can.

YOUNG MAN

Sure. Hey, asshole. Get in the front.

(Young Man mimes placing "Friend" on front passenger seat [chair stage right] and sits in the bag seat [chair behind others.]

NARRATOR

Fat drunk gets in. Says "hey" and bad boy gets in back. I drive.

Looks like you two had fun tonight.

YOUNG MAN

Shit.

NARRATOR

Where you go?

YOUNG MAN

Flanagans. Been there?

NARRATOR

Not my kind of place.

YOUNG MAN

Yeah?

NARRATOR

Yeah.

YOUNG MAN

They got that Karaoke thing there on Saturday night.

NARRATOR

The drunk starts singing "Born in the USA."

YOUNG MAN

Hey, shut up, man! Dude doesn't want to listen to that shit.

NARRATOR

I look into the rearview mirror. Bad boy's staring at me with those big blue bad boy eyes.

YOUNG MAN

Where you been tonight?

NARRATOR

Ramrod.

YOUNG MAN

In Boston?

NARRATOR

Heard of it?

YOUNG MAN

No.

NARRATOR

(To audience:) That was a lie.

YOUNG MAN

Boston. Long way to go on a cold winter night.

NARRATOR

Sometimes it has what I'm looking for.

YOUNG MAN

Yeah?

NARRATOR

Yeah.

YOUNG MAN

Like what?

NARRATOR

He's a little shit. I'm on to him. If I felt like it, I could freak him out. Tell him that I go there because I get a kick out of the fisting videos they play, or because picking up there takes the guesswork out of cruising, like going to a grocery store with all the fruit tagged and labeled – arm band right side, bottom. Left, top. Blue hanky, blow job. Red, fucking. Black, bondage. Yellow, piss. Orange, anything you can think of. I could explain that I go to that bar because I can get a quick hand job just standing there in the middle of the floor and no one would say a word. I could tell him I need that place because I'm a kinky perv. That because an average of two tricks a week for twenty years adds up to about two thousand men and once you've had a good five hundred the novelty of holding hands starts to wear out and it gets a little harder to get your nut in any old fashioned kind of way, unless of course you have a taste for vanilla, which I don't. I could tell him that everything gets old fast . . . fades with time . . . French, Greek, TT, bondage, discipline . . . that every few hundred tricks you have to trade up to the next thrill. That you need to because every perv pales over time. Everything except for that basic ache of desire . . . that untamable flame that still burns as hot as it did when I was fourteen. I could tell him that's why I was in that bar that night. Because that flame . . . that demon flame was burning white hot in my soul. (To Young Man:) Sometimes that bar has just what I'm looking for.

YOUNG MAN

Like what?

NARRATOR

Whatever I want.

YOUNG MAN

Doesn't look like you got it tonight.

NARRATOR

Where are we heading?

YOUNG MAN

Keep going. I'll tell you when.

NARRATOR

I'm driving on a peninsula that juts out into the harbor. German Town. One thin artery connects it to the mainland. Mostly projects filled with Irish rednecks and Vietnamese immigrants. The projects were a mistake in the fifties when they were built. Most of them are boarded up now. The streets are empty. I look over at the friend curled up in the corner of the passenger seat.

Looks like he made quite a night of it.

YOUNG MAN

Asshole. He's my cousin. It's his twenty-first birthday. I showed him how to get drunk legit. Left next corner.

(Narrator mimes turning left.)

NARRATOR

He's still working the rearview mirror. I look up right into his eyes. Little shit. But something's going on here. Yeah. Ok. Ok, buddy. How long can I stare before we veer off the road. We play chicken with the rearview mirror until he looks away. I win. We drive another block and fat boy starts having the heaves.

YOUNG MAN

Shit!

NARRATOR

I pull over.

(Narrator gets out of "car," crosses around to "passenger seat," and mimes opening the door.)

I open the door in time to grab his head and aim the first stream of puke into the gutter.

YOUNG MAN

Geez, man!

NARRATOR

Fat boy's so gone he can't even hold his head up.

(To "Friend:") You done?

I use my orange hanky to wipe the puke from his mouth. He moans as I get him back into the car.

(Narrator closes "car door" and gets back into the "car.")

YOUNG MAN

Sorry about that.

NARRATOR

It's okay.

YOUNG MAN

Stupid fuck. Can't even hold a six pack.

NARRATOR

You grow up out here?

YOUNG MAN

Yeah, but I escaped. I'm just back for a few weeks.

NARRATOR

Between jobs?

(Young Man doesn't answer.)

He's working the rearview again. Those beautiful blue eyes. This is where it happens . . . every time. This is how you *know*. This is how it's done. It only works with a man. To another man. It's a dare. It's a come-on. It's a warning. He's calling me out. He's doing it instinctually. Like it was handed down from dinosaurs or something. It's part of his DNA. It's a threat. It's a glimpse into the

lair of the hidden demon. It's a cry out for love on a cold lonely winter night. It's what I live for.

YOUNG MAN

(Sarcastically:) Nice leather pants.

NARRATOR

(Returning sarcasm:) You like those, huh?

YOUNG MAN

Oh, yeah.

NARRATOR

Yeah. I thought so.

YOUNG MAN

You're a tough guy, aren't you.

NARRATOR

Oh, yeah.

YOUNG MAN

Pull over.

NARRATOR

I pull over in front of one of the more inhabitable projects.

(Young Man gets out of "car," opens "passenger door.")

YOUNG MAN

Come on fuck-for-brains. This is your stop.

NARRATOR

He can't get Fat Boy out of the car.

(Narrator exits "car," crosses around to "passenger door.")

(To "Friend:") Okay, buddy. This is what you're going to do. When you get inside, go to the john, kneel in front of the bowl, and shove your finger down your throat until you puke. Puke until your gut is empty. Then you're going to go to bed and lay on your side . . . not on your back but on your side. Got that?

Don't give me that shit. You know why you're going to do that? Because I had a buddy once who got fucked up just like you. He went home alone, passed out, puked, and choked on it. I carried his coffin into the church three days later. You don't want to make *your* buddy do that, do you?

Good boy.

(Narrator mimes pulling "Friend" out of "car.")

I pull him out of the car. Bad boy props him up.

(Young Man mimes helping "Friend" off the stage.)

YOUNG MAN

(To Narrator:) Can you . . . Wait up . . . for a second?

NARRATOR

Fat boy's walking now. He staggers up the steps.

(Young Man exits.)

YOUNG MAN

(Voice from offstage:) See you tomorrow. . . . Because I'm crashing with a friend. . . . I know my stuff's here, asshole. . . . I know. . . . Just fucking get in there, you fucking drunk. What're you, my mother?

(Young Man re-enters.)

NARRATOR

He struts back. But I see through that shit. He can't meet my eye and I can tell his heart is racing faster than a thoroughbred in the home stretch. He knows he shouldn't, but something . . . not his mind . . . is telling him to get back into my car. Something way down deep inside some part of him he's tried like hell to hide all his life.

(To Young Man:) So . . . where?

YOUNG MAN

A friend's.

NARRATOR

Where?

YOUNG MAN

Down the road.

NARRATOR

Yeah?

YOUNG MAN

Yeah.

NARRATOR

Get in.

(Young Man sits in “passenger seat.” Narrator crosses around to “driver seat.” He sits.)

We drive.

(Silence.)

It was easier for him in the backseat. He could do anything he wanted behind my back. Now he’s within reach and he doesn’t like it. He knows he has to say something.

YOUNG MAN

He’s not such a bad guy. For a stupid fat fuck.

NARRATOR

He doesn’t know what to do with his hands. But I do.

YOUNG MAN

Is that true . . . about your friend?

NARRATOR

Yeah.

YOUNG MAN

That sucks.

NARRATOR

Yeah.

YOUNG MAN

Right.

(Narrator mimes turning right.

Silence.)

NARRATOR

I let the silence ride. Sweat starts to bead on his eyebrows. And his breathing is shallow and quick.

YOUNG MAN

You got a girlfriend?

NARRATOR

Why would I have a girlfriend?

He won't look me in the eye now. That thing inside him is starting to emerge.

YOUNG MAN

You're queer. Right?

NARRATOR

Yeah.

YOUNG MAN

Not my scene. But it's cool. It's cool. It's cool.

NARRATOR

Yeah.

YOUNG MAN

Right.

(Narrator mimes turning right.)

NARRATOR

He's never done this before. Maybe another guy when he was twelve or thirteen . . . but that was just kid stuff and it doesn't count. This is different. He's a man now. He's supposed to be in control of this kind of shit. Why did he get back into the car? / know why. And he knows I'm on to him. But he's lost . . . in his own back yard. And he's scared shitless. He has every reason to be.

YOUNG MAN

Things weren't working out for me where I was. That's why I came back.

NARRATOR

Sorry to hear that.

YOUNG MAN

I needed a change. But look at this place. Fuck.

NARRATOR

If I jump on this . . . it'll be over. This one's a dead end. I know how to handle trade. I know how to lay a hot straight boy. You got to wait things out. Wait for that demon to emerge on its own. It wants to come out. Get close . . . warm up to the fire, but it doesn't want to singe its fur.

YOUNG MAN

I need . . . a change. You ever need a change? Just throw everything away. Start again? You ever do that?

NARRATOR

Read his mind. It's saying "What the fuck am I doing? Where the hell am I going?" His mind is turning in circles. He needs it. He wants it. From a man. But it disgusts him. It's hideous. Repulsive. Terrifying. Beautiful. Sublime. Around in circles.

YOUNG MAN

Right.

(Narrator mimes turning right.)

NARRATOR

We're driving in circles.

YOUNG MAN

I need . . . a change.

NARRATOR

Look at him. His eyes flash between confusion, anger, lust, and terror. He's feeling it all and it is all real. So real. Because that's what it's like. What it's like to strip yourself to the core and rip the terror out of your soul and offer it up to the demon. And that's why it's so terrifying. Because it is so REAL. It's him. He's

seeing himself for the first time. Look at him. Nothing on this earth is more beautiful.

YOUNG MAN

Right.

(Narrator mimes turning right.)

NARRATOR

I stop. We're at the end of the road. A culdesac at the end of the peninsula. The lights of Boston are burning bright across the bay.

YOUNG MAN

Do you think . . . do you find me . . . do you think I'm . . . would you . . . ?

NARRATOR

Yeah, buddy. You're a hot fuck. You're the kind of a man . . . a real stud . . . that any queer would drool over. You're the real thing. Is that what you want me to say?

YOUNG MAN

If you saw me . . . walking down the street . . . if you talked to me. Would you think I was queer?

NARRATOR

I know what I'm supposed to say. I should scoff and look at him like his football coach in Junior High and say, "No way, man. You're a guy . . . a regular guy . . . just like all the rest. You're not a fag. Don't worry about it." You say that to trade and it puts them at ease. You see, if you don't call them a fag, they'll let you suck their dicks. If you work a little harder, they'll suck *you* off. Rim them and if you're lucky they'll beg you to fuck the shit out of them. That's how you play it. Those are the rules. So I turn to him and I say . . .

Yeah. I'd know. In a second. You can't fool me, buddy. You're a fucking queer.

(Young Man's face goes blank.)

Why did I do it? I want him to be different. I want him to know that those feelings . . . that what he is . . . what goes to the very core of his existence is undeniably real. I want him to look at that demon in the face.

YOUNG MAN

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

NARRATOR

He gets out of the car.

(Young Man starts pacing furiously.)

YOUNG MAN

Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!

NARRATOR

Come on. You can do it, buddy. Stare it back. It's there. In your face. Go on. Take it. Take it. It's who you are!

YOUNG MAN

Fuck! Fuck!!!!

(Young Man charges "car." Mimes opening driver side door. Punches Narrator in the face. Narrator stands. Grabs the front of Young Man's jacket. Lifts him off ground. Pulls him close. Young Man struggles, but can not escape.)

Fucking faggot!

NARRATOR

Stupid little shit. Do the world a favor, buddy, and figure it out.

(Narrator pushes Young Man to the ground.)

He fell to the curb.

YOUNG MAN

Fuck.

(Young man sits on stage with head in hands. Narrator gets back in "car.")

NARRATOR

I peeled out. I could see him in my rearview mirror. Sitting on the pavement. His head in his hands. The last thing I saw as I drove off. Into the night. Alone.

(Young man exits. Narrator stands from chair. Crosses to front of stage.)

A black eye greeted me in the bathroom mirror the next morning. The black eye that he gave me with that one, powerful punch to the face. A beautiful black eye.

It's been a week. Since that night. A week of driving through German Town in the wee hours of the night. Circling those roads we circled that night. Looking for him.

But he's not there. I park the car. Where I last saw him. And I stare across the harbor at the glittering lights of Boston. And I wait. For him. For my beautiful bad boy with those beautiful blue bad-boy eyes.

Why?

Because a part of me thinks I was wrong. What I said to him . . . about doing the world a favor. A part of me doesn't want him to figure it out. Not without me. I want to be there. Because the thrill doesn't last long.

Because you become too familiar with that demon too quickly. And what was once vital and real . . . what once actually meant something . . . real contact . . . that terrifying act of surrendering to another man . . . the joy to consume and be consumed by another human. It doesn't last long. Then it's over. And the only way you can get it back is the rare chance to feed off it from a young lost street punk afraid of his own shadow. Pathetic. Isn't it?

He's out there somewhere. I just don't know where to find him.

All I have left is a black eye. A bruise around my eye that he gave me. And soon that will fade too. Just disappear. And I'll have nothing. Again.

(Lights out.

End of play.)