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BOXED IN

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YOU ARE WHAT YOU

Synopsis: Competitive eater Francie is desperate to find a way to help her younger sister Trisha eat. When celebrity chef Electra Sinclair arrives on their doorstep, she thinks she may have found just the thing to set Trisha on the road to recovery. Yet Trisha's illness worsens as she begins seeing visions of a talking Pot Roast, and Francie becomes distracted by an ex hell-bent on exploiting her in a cogent work of non-fiction. The sisters struggle to take care of each other and nourish themselves in this comedy about learning from the things we crave.

Cast Size: 5 Females

BOXED IN

By Mora V. Harris

SAMPLE ONLY

Boxed In was first produced by Portland Actors Conservatory in April of 2022. It was directed by Andrea White.

The cast was as follows:

Jerry: Will Futterman

Tyler: Brave Zamagogo

Characters

Jerry- he/him/his, 24. Rough around the edges, practical, at one time a charmer.

Tyler- he/him/his, 17. Jerry's younger brother. An awkward dreamer and painfully shy loner. Uncomfortable in his own skin, he is definitely not cool.

Setting

The kitchen of a modest family home. It hasn't been decorated or treated with particular care in several years. The only cooking that goes on in it is for basic survival. There are lacy curtains on the window, but no one hangs anything on the fridge anymore. There might be a stray sweatshirt over a chair or an abandoned homework assignment on the counter. The table has crumbs and rings on it. The fridge is full of beer and soda.

Note: /'s are used to indicate places where a line gets overlapped. //s indicate the line that does the overlapping.

BOXED IN

FIRST WALL

(Monday afternoon. Kitchen. JERRY and TYLER enter, TYLER wearing a backpack, which he dumps on the floor.)

JERRY: Pick that up and sit down.

(TYLER puts his backpack away. JERRY takes a beer out of the fridge and opens it. TYLER sits down at the table.)

JERRY: All right, let's hear it.

TYLER: Hear what?

JERRY: Let's hear the reason I get a call to come pick you up from the principal's office, on account of you've had some kind of attack in English class, and then I get there and you're completely fine. Looking a little better than normal even.

TYLER: Isn't it good that I'm completely fine?

JERRY: No, Tyler, it's not, because we can't afford for me to take off work for your stupid nonsense all the time.

TYLER: I'm sorry, Jerry. It's not like you were in surgery.

JERRY: It's surgery to me, Tyler. Fixing engines is surgery to me.

TYLER: I know, I just meant—

JERRY: There's something fundamental you just don't seem to understand about "Fix the cars get the money", "fix the cars get the money", "fix the cars—"

TYLER: —Get the money. I get it. I'm sorry.

JERRY: ...I'm not your dad, Tyler.

TYLER: I know that.

JERRY: I'm too young to be your dad. I'm your brother and I'm going to keep a roof over your head and food in your belly, that's all I can do.

TYLER: ...

JERRY: So, what happened in English class?

TYLER: I had to give a report today.

JERRY: Here we go. What on?

TYLER: Andrew Jackson?

JERRY: Andrew Jackson in English class?

TYLER: Yeah.

JERRY: That's a crap school, go on.

TYLER: I was standing in the front of the class.

(He stands up.)

JERRY: Here we go.

TYLER: And I was just looking at all of them judging me. And I was wearing these stupid khaki pants.

JERRY: Those are good pants, I got 'em on discount—

TYLER: –Will you let me tell the story? This girl, Miranda Zimbardi,

JERRY: Zimbardi? I think I might've dated her sister once. Or it could've been her mother I guess.

TYLER: ANYWAY, she had her gum half in her mouth half on her finger and stretched out to here and I'm just watching the middle part like, is it gonna touch her desk?

JERRY: //What's Miranda Zimbardi's gum got to do with any/thing?

TYLER: //And Ms.Kerr's like “Any time, Tyler...” And I'm standing there and I can't remember a single thing about Andrew Jackson, not a single thing. So, then I look at the paper in my hand and the letters start swirling around so it looks like some kind of *Lord of the Rings* writing. And I'm looking from the paper to the Ms. Kerr to Miranda Zimbardi's gum to my khaki pants and then I just started to feel like the space needed to be smaller. Like the space was just way too big. And then I thought... Wall...

(He reaches out and lightly touches an imaginary wall.)

He continues to indicate the following. He's not fully miming, but just seeing the box and indicating where it is with small gestures.)

TYLER: Wall... wall... ceiling. And I look in front of me and I see that there's this doorway, and through it I can see everyone else in the room staring at me.

JERRY: So you go through the imaginary doorway...

TYLER: No, no, that's the thing, I reach out, and I close the door.

(He fully mimes closing the door, locking it, and swallowing the key.)

And then I'm just standing there in this box, where no one can touch me, and for the first time since Mom and Dad died, I'm like, "I'm home."

JERRY: So when they told me you refused to sit down after your presentation...

TYLER: I mean, I kind of knew Ms. Kerr was saying something to me, probably like "Tyler, why don't we come back to you?" because she's nice. But I'm like, "Hello? I'm in a box. You just saw me swallow the key."

JERRY: It's a wonder you don't get beat up every day. How long did you stay up there?

TYLER: A while. I saw a couple reports. I don't know how people do that, they just get up there

and talk. And then Jamario gets up and starts doing his report. It's on the greenhouse effect. He made a cake. But he keeps looking over at me like "...". And I'm like "Just go, man, just go." But he keeps looking at me, and eventually he stops and puts down his cake and just pinches me like *really* hard and my box just shatters into a million pieces. And I realized it was all over and I was back in the world and so I pushed him. And then Ms. Kerr buzzed the main office and well... you know the rest.

JERRY: Tyler, you've pulled some stupid crap in your day, but that is by far the dumbest story you have ever told me. Why can't you just be regular? You've always got to be like big-eyed and silent or "Look at me! Look at me!"

TYLER: I have social anxiety.

JERRY: There isn't a name for what you've got. This is like that time you climbed on the roof to get out of running the mile in P.E. Just don't and say you did like everybody else!

TYLER: I was making a statement.

JERRY: When are you going to learn to make a statement with your goddamn mouth?

TYLER: Jerry, listen, I know you're mad, but it was beautiful. And, you know how you're always telling me to figure out what I'm going to do with my life? Well, I figured it out today.

...

JERRY: So, let's hear it.

(TYLER takes a deep breath.)

TYLER: I want to go to mime college.

JERRY: You want to go to... to mime college.

TYLER: Yeah.

JERRY: To be a mime...

TYLER: Yeah.

JERRY: ...With the white paint and the hat and the "Oh, I'm going down the stairs"...

(JERRY (poorly) mimes stairs.)

TYLER: That's not how you...

(JERRY mimes climbing a rope.)

JERRY: "I'm climbing up a rope." Guess what genius, your feet are still on the ground!

TYLER: They're not climbing the rope, they're pulling on it.

JERRY: I've seen it where they're climbing it, and their feet are on the ground and it makes no goddamned sense.

TYLER: Well, what, you want them to levitate?

JERRY: Yes, I would like them to levitate. I would like them to levitate because that would be an actually useful skill.

TYLER: Jerry, I-I need this. I can't explain why I do, but I need it.

JERRY: I have been busting my ass to have enough money to maybe send you to Greenburg Tech, and you're sitting here telling me you want to go to mime college. To be a mime. A goddamned fancy clown.

TYLER: Look Jerry—

JERRY: —Just be quiet a minute! Is this some kind of joke? “Oh I'll just tell Jerry I want to run around with white paint on my face and creep people out on his dime— because he'll just have a hilarious reaction to that.” You got cameras somewhere? Tell me you got cameras somewhere because otherwise, otherwise I'd have to tell you to get the hell out of my face.

TYLER: Jerry—

JERRY: WHERE ARE THE CAMERAS,
TYLER?

(TYLER exits.)

SECOND WALL

(TYLER does homework at the kitchen table. He wears a black and white striped shirt.

JERRY enters and gets a beer from the fridge.)

JERRY: How's the homework coming?

TYLER: It's fine.

JERRY: What is that, algebra?

TYLER: It's for English.

JERRY: I just saw letters.

TYLER: I have to write an essay about where I see myself in ten years.

JERRY: And you're actually writing it down? You're not just gonna *act it out*?

TYLER: ...

JERRY: I talked to Ms. Kerr today. She said you could make up your report on Monday.

TYLER: You didn't need to do that.

JERRY: Hey, I just thought I'd give her a call and smooth things over. Trust me, I know Gina Kerr from back in the day...

TYLER: I really don't need to hear another one of your stories about how you're such a Casanova and how when you were in high school

everyone wanted to rip your pants off the second they got in a car with you. That's really not something I need to hear right now.

JERRY: Okay, sorry, jeez. I didn't even date her. I'm just saying I *knew* her.

TYLER: And I don't need to know stuff like that about my teachers.

JERRY: Okay fine... You havin' girl trouble?

TYLER: No, Jerry, I'm not having girl trouble. I'm never going to have girl trouble.

JERRY: Don't sell yourself short. Lots of girls dig that...gentle thing you've got going on.

TYLER: No they don't!

JERRY: I mean, not unilaterally... but some girls.

TYLER: What about you, Jerry, are you having girl trouble? I haven't seen you bring anyone home in... a long time Jerry.

JERRY: I've been a little busy for all that.

TYLER: Maybe you should stop trying to sniff around the girls you went to high school with.

JERRY: Yeah, mind your business.

TYLER : Mind yours!

(JERRY gestures to TYLER's paper.)

JERRY: Why don't you just shut up and figure out where you're gonna be in ten years?

TYLER: ...I like boys, Jerry.

JERRY: You like boys.

TYLER: In ten years, I want to have a boyfriend. And I want to have had several before that, that I had messy screaming break-ups with who still call me sometimes begging me to take them back because the sex was so good and no one else ever made them feel that way. My boyfriend will be an architect who makes a lot of money but not an obnoxious amount and we'll go to poetry readings together wearing subtly coordinated outfits and feed each other with chopsticks from cardboard take-out containers on our wrought-iron balcony.

JERRY: You wrote all that stuff in your essay?

(TYLER shoves the paper at him. JERRY looks at it.)

JERRY: ...Yeah, well you're gonna have to learn to talk to strangers for that to work.

TYLER: That's all you have to say?

JERRY: I had my suspicions.

TYLER: So, you're not surprised.

JERRY: *(A lie.)* Nah, I'm not surprised.

TYLER: Well, what a relief. So glad I didn't surprise you to death.

JERRY: Well what do you want me to say, Tyler?
You don't need my permission. Put your...
whatever wherever you want.

TYLER: Thanks!

JERRY: You're welcome!

TYLER: ...

JERRY: You got an interview at Greenburg Tech
this weekend.

TYLER: I'm not going.

JERRY: Like hell you aren't.

TYLER: I've decided to go to France after I
graduate.

JERRY: You're gonna go to France?

TYLER: There's a mime school in Paris. The best
in the world.

JERRY: You wouldn't last a second in France.

TYLER: I wanna learn to be somewhere that's not
here. I wanna eat croissants alone in my
apartment on the Seine and not fucking need
you for everything.

JERRY: They don't speak English there, you
know.

TYLER: I take French.

JERRY: You hate French.

TYLER: I like it okay.

JERRY: You failed it last year.

TYLER: Well I would like it in France!

JERRY: Tyler, look at me. I do not have the money. I do not have the money. *I do not have the money.*

TYLER: I don't need your money.

JERRY: Oh? How're you gonna get there? How're you gonna pay for it? How're you gonna pay for those croissants? You don't even have a job. I keep telling you Mick'll train you up at the shop—

TYLER: I'll use my inheritance.

JERRY: Your what?

TYLER: My half of the inheritance, from Mom and Dad. I'm not an idiot. I know they left us something.

JERRY: Tyler, that's spent.

TYLER: What?

JERRY: Remember when we had to replace the roof a few years ago?

TYLER: No.

JERRY: Well, most of it went on that.

TYLER: You spent my inheritance?

JERRY: To keep a roof over your head!

TYLER: That was my money!

JERRY: I spent it on you! I had to spend it on tuna fish and cable and pants, and the house, so we could stay together, Tyler! I spent my half too!

TYLER: Yeah well that was your half to spend. You didn't even ask me!

JERRY: There wasn't a moment.

TYLER: What do you mean there wasn't a moment?

JERRY: ...

(TYLER stands and mimes a wall.)

JERRY: Listen, the bills were piling up, and all that money was just—Will you listen to me?

(Another wall.)

JERRY: It was just sitting in that account, all mixed in with mine, and will you listen to me for a minute?

(A third wall.)

JERRY: You kept needing things, Tyler. You had field trips and dental work and—

(TYLER mimes the ceiling.)

JERRY: Tyler, don't do what you're doing.

(TYLER reaches for the invisible door.)

JERRY: Don't you close that door.

(JERRY grabs the invisible handle so that TYLER can't close it. They struggle over the door during the following.)

TYLER: Now, I'll never go to France. I'll go to Greenburg Tech and end up the manager at the Shoe Carnival and never have gone to France.

JERRY: Hey, did you ever think *I* might want to go to France? You think *I* wanted to become your dad at 18 / and waste my whole life fixing cars and juggling credit cards? Because wake up, that's not what I had in mind!

TYLER: //You're not my dad...I thought you liked fixing cars.

JERRY: Yeah, I like it like how you suddenly like French.

(JERRY lets go of the mimed door and TYLER pulls it shut. He locks it and swallows the key.)

JERRY: *(Calmly.)* I know I should have asked you before spending the money.

(TYLER makes an "I can't hear you" gesture.)

JERRY: DAMN IT TYLER YOU CAN HEAR ME IN THERE! I'M TRYING TO HAVE A TALK WITH YOU!

(TYLER shrugs.)

JERRY: Yeah, real cute. Get out of there.

(JERRY grabs TYLER by the arm and yanks him out of his box. TYLER shoves him. JERRY shoves him harder.)

JERRY: Don't shove me!

TYLER: ...

(JERRY offers TYLER a hand up.)

JERRY: All right, come on, walk it off...

TYLER: Don't touch me, you asshole!

JERRY: We used to wrestle all the time, you and me.

TYLER: I never liked it.

JERRY: Well, I never knew you didn't like it!

(TYLER gets up on his own.)

TYLER: That was my money. And you shouldn't have spent it.

(TYLER takes his books and exits.)

THIRD WALL

(Wednesday morning. TYLER enters the empty kitchen, looking for Jerry.)

TYLER: Hey Jerry, can you...?

(He is surprised to find the kitchen empty. Jerry must have gone to work already.

He calls into the rest of the house to be sure.)

TYLER: Jerry, you home?

...

(No response. Now is his moment.

He begins to mime. Struggling to start a car. Opening the hood. Checking the oil. The process is exploratory, not a performance but a rehearsal. The more he mimes the more he takes on the persona of Jerry. Slowly we see him take on his brother's confidence, his relaxed precision, his masculine charm. TYLER closes the hood. He wipes grease from his hands.

TYLER notices Jerry's beer left on the table from last night. He picks it up and feels the weight of it. He feels the weight of Jerry's life. He sets the can down.

He mimes:

Drinking a beer.

Drinking a beer.

Drinking a beer.)