

Hod

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A short play

by Tyler Smith

Hod

Characters:

Hod: Ex-boxer, late 30s, early 40s

Hill: Ex-boxer, the same age

Chloe: Hod's daughter, mid to late teens

Maurie: Barkeeper, mid to late 40s

Birdie: Bar patron, mid to late 40s

Setting: The present, late on a Saturday evening/very early Sunday morning. A nondescript bar in any American city.

At rise: Four chairs are arranged in a square the shape of a boxing ring. Hill, Maurie and Birdie are seated. They move within the "ring," but never outside of it. Chloe is free to come inside the "ring," but wanders, for the most part, outside of it. Hod lies face down on the barroom floor, in the middle of the "ring."

BIRDIE: Get up! Get up, Hod!

MAURIE: Man ain't getting' up.

HILL: I made sure of that!

CHLOE: He doesn't have to get up.

BIRDIE: Ain't this a bitch? Why don't you help me?

HILL: Let sleepin' dogs lie.

BIRDIE: Dog?

CHLOE: He bought me a dog when I was a little girl. It reminded me of him. Its eyes were sad. But it made my father happy to give me the dog.

BIRDIE: You sayin' he was a dog?

MAURIE: He's just sayin': ever' dog has his day.

HILL: I'll tell him what I'm sayin': Man has had a lot of practice lyin' down...

CHLOE: He could make the dog lie down...

BIRDIE: Come on, Hod!

HILL: ...especially after *I* get through with him!

BIRDIE: He has got to stand up.

MAURIE: Yeah, shit, stand up, man. What the fuck difference does it make now?

CHLOE: ...he could make the dog stand up...

BIRDIE: Makes all the difference in the world if a man stands up.

MAURIE: You say so. Come on, get your legs under you, man.

CHLOE: ...on its hind legs! That was a good trick.

HILL: He was trickin' you all.

BIRDIE: I thought he could stand in.

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MAURIE: He needed a stand-in.

HILL: After I got through with him!

BIRDIE: Shut up!

MAURIE: So OK. He's a stand-up guy. You say. Don't get angry. Have a drink.

CHLOE: My father filled the bowl for my dog. But then he stood at the sink. "And a splash in my glass for me." He knelt by the sink.

HILL: Sure. Have a drink. Drown your sorrows.

BIRDIE: Would you tell him to shut up!

MAURIE: No fights in here.

HILL: No fight in *him!*

CHLOE: "Daddy, your glass dropped. Splash some water on your face, Daddy."

HILL: Don't give him (*gesturing*) no water. 'less you gonna throw it on him.

MAURIE: Shouldn'ta tried to trade with Hill.

BIRDIE: Tradin' shots. Just like the last time.

CHLOE: "There are little spots of water on your face. Let me wipe them off."

HILL: Nobody gonna trade shots with me!

MAURIE: He was matching you.

BIRDIE: I said don't do it, Hod.

HILL: Wanna stand toe to toe? Look at ole Hod's toes curl up!

CHLOE: "Just kneel by the sink, Daddy. Feel better?"

MAURIE: Kept goin' to the well. Pretty soon, reach down, nothing there.

BIRDIE: Just like that night. Before I knew it, he was down on his knees.

HILL: That night? Ha! You never forget your lines, do you? Play this bit over and over again.

CHLOE: His eyes were closed. There were little lines all around them. Crissing and crossing, like a road map. I didn't want to touch them because I thought they'd come apart.

MAURIE: He come up empty, Birdie. Forget about it.

HILL: Tell you what. Maybe if he'd done his running.

MAURIE: Hey, pick up that glass. I don't want no rings on the wood.

BIRDIE: Runnin' around the ring. That's what he shoulda done.

CHLOE: Then my father got up and ran. "Daddy! Come back!"

HILL: Runnin'? How you gonna take me on if you're runnin'?

MAURIE: Little bobbin' and weavin'. Maybe that would have helped.

CHLOE: He was weaving across the yard, like the braids in my hair.

HILL: Ha! Bobbin' and weavin'? Ole Hod?

BIRDIE: Sure. In and out. In and out.

CHLOE: In and out. In and out.

HILL: Piece a this old oak move faster. He'd be ziggin' when he should been zaggin'.

MAURIE: Pop! Pop! Pop! Hod's eyes goin' in and out.

BIRDIE: Man was out on his feet. Couldn't tell when the last shot hit him.

CHLOE: Then I saw him fall. As if something had taken ahold of him. Ashes, ashes. All fall down.

HILL: I just swung these arms and down he come. Laid him low.

CHLOE: At first, I thought he was playing games. He lay on the ground like a crumpled flower.

BIRDIE: On your feet, Hod!

MAURIE: He met his maker.

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HILL: Every man has to face it some night.

CHLOE: My father put his face down into the leaves, and hugged the earth, as if he was trying to burrow into it to hide.

MAURIE: Truth starin' you in the face.

BIRDIE: Nobody could look him in the face. That face had never been marked.

CHLOE: "Roll over, Daddy. The grass is wet on your face."

HILL: Made my mark that night.

MAURIE: Found out he had a glass chin.

CHLOE: He rolled on his back. He had glass eyes. They were round and flat.

BIRDIE: He just come all apart.

HILL: Might as well fall.

CHLOE: I saw my father, but he was gone. Empty.

BIRDIE: Nothin' left. Goddamn it, get up, Hod!

MAURIE: So he stayed down. So what?

CHLOE: "Hill," he said, "Hill. Hill."

HILL: (*Taps bottle*) Dead soldier.

MAURIE: Tapped out.

BIRDIE: Ten little taps of a clock. I never saw him the same again.

CHLOE: "There's no hill, Daddy. It's midnight. It's time to come to bed. Reach up for me."

MAURIE: Last call.

HILL: Twelve bells. He ain't getting' up. Beat him again. Gimme one on the house.

BIRDIE: Bet the house on that guy. Nothin'.

CHLOE: His face was like ice. I was afraid my father was dead.

BIRDIE: Stiffed me.

MAURIE: Take off the goddamn broken record, Birdie.

CHLOE: He was cold.

BIRDIE: Goddamn room so cold. Quiet.

HILL: Won it cold. You got to be cold in that ring. And I was.

MAURIE: You're three sheets to the wind, big man.

CHLOE: He was white as a sheet. A sheet, I thought, over his face.

HILL: You see something move, you hit it.

CHLOE: Move, Daddy!

HILL: Gonna be my night or his night. Wasn't his night. Never would be.

BIRDIE: Wasn't his night? What about my night?

MAURIE: That's all you stinkin' guys care about. Fuckin' twenty you lost.

HILL: Best thing? That arena all dark. Fight's over, suckers.

CHLOE: I wanted to get my father out of the dark. I wanted to help him walk toward the light.

MAURIE: Lights out. Bar's closed.

BIRDIE: Lights went out. One loss.

HILL: Nowhere to hide in that ring. You find something, or something finds you.

CHLOE: "Game's over, Daddy! I found you."

BIRDIE: We all went home.

CHLOE: Now we can go home.

MAURIE: Go home, gents.

HILL: Yeah. Wherever that is.

MAURIE: What are we gonna do with this guy?

HILL: What did you do with him last time?

BIRDIE: Maybe we should cover him.

CHLOE: I took him in the house. I turned on all the lights. I wanted to cover him with the light.

HILL: Throw some dirt on him.

MAURIE: You liked to killed him twice now.

BIRDIE: You got him covered?

MAURIE: I ain't coverin'. Cost me too much last time. I ain't takin' the fall.

CHLOE: I wanted to warm the cold, to warm the fall. "It's fall. The leaves are falling." The leaves are falling, my father is falling. Catch him, Chloe! Break his fall!

HILL: Somebody got to cover.

BIRDIE: Shit. Not me again. Cost me too much last time.

CHLOE: The light wasn't enough. My father shivered. His voice shook. He said words in circles like he was trying to make me laugh. "Ring, round, run. Hill! Goddamn Hill! Lost! Lost! Lost!"

HILL: Time to pay again, big man. Goddamn. Just leave him.

CHLOE: I wanted to make those voices stop so he would talk to me.

BIRDIE: Get up! Get up, Hod!

MAURIE: Man ain't getting' up.

HILL: I made sure of that!

CHLOE: He doesn't have to get up. *(Covers him with her body.)*

Lights out.

END OF PLAY.