

Dream of the Burning Boy

by David West Read

Scene 3

Steve's guidance office. Same time.

Chelsea Brooks sits on a bean bag chair. 17 and pretty, she's completely lost without a cell phone or iPod. She watches Kyle, a good-looking, straight-forward kid, as he rummages around on Steve's desk, which is cluttered with knick-knacks — stuffed toys, stress balls, glow sticks and novelty coffee mugs.

KYLE. There's no such thing as a good fake ID. These guys are such tools if they think they can walk up to the bouncer with some cheap-ass like ... photo ID from Alaska or something. If I go to Castaways on Friday I'll just be like, "You know what? No bullshit, here's my real ID. I'm seventeen, I can drive, I have money, and I would like to have one beer at your fine establishment."

CHELSEA. And they'll be like, "Great, go away."

KYLE. Maybe. Or maybe they'll be like, "You know what? You're not twenty-one, but you're honest. I like that. Come inside."

CHELSEA. I don't think that's gonna happen.

KYLE. Rummy's brother did it last weekend.

CHELSEA. Kyle, you don't have to be here, you know.

KYLE. I know. *(Beat.)* Do you want me here?

CHELSEA. I don't know. Do whatever you want. I don't know if it's a good idea for me to be alone, but ...

KYLE. Okay. *(Beat.)* I'm probably gonna stay. Until Steve comes.

CHELSEA. Okay, whatever. *(Kyle looks through the items on Steve's bookcase. He picks up a stuffed cow.)*

KYLE. Hey, check it out ...

CHELSEA. Kyle, I'm not in the mood ... *(Kyle presses a button and the cow springs to life, vibrating and singing "I like to moo it, moo it" to the tune of "I like to move it." Kyle smiles like this is the greatest thing in the world. Chelsea suppresses a smile.)*

CHELSEA. That's ... stupid.

KYLE. It's okay to smile, you know.

CHELSEA. I know. And don't tell me what's okay.

KYLE. Sorry —

CHELSEA. You have no idea what I'm going through. You have no idea what kind of pressure I'm under. I have to do everything ...

KYLE. I know —

CHELSEA. I have to do all this stupid shit. I have to like make a memorial page for Yearbook, and a Fondly Remembered page for the newspaper, and I'm already running the Facebook page, and everyone's posting on it and I have to read all those comments every time I open up Facebook. And you haven't even accepted my invitation, by the way ...

KYLE. I haven't checked my e-mail.

CHELSEA. Why haven't you checked your e-mail?

KYLE. No one e-mails me.

CHELSEA. Whatever. It's just a lot of pressure to like ... be that girl. Everyone's watching me, all the time, so yeah, it makes it kind of hard to move on.

KYLE. Yeah. Hard to moo-ve on? *(Kyle shakes the cow in Chelsea's face.)*

CHELSEA. That's not funny.

KYLE. Sorry. *(The door clicks open and Rachel Bentley enters. She's the same age as Chelsea and Kyle, and she wears thick glasses and pajama bottoms, always.)*

RACHEL. Hey.

CHELSEA. Hey.

KYLE. Hey, Rachel.

RACHEL. Party in the guidance office, what what.

KYLE. Oh yeah, it's the place to be.

CHELSEA. ... Totally.

RACHEL. So what'd you guys think of that assembly?

CHELSEA. I thought it was nice.

RACHEL. Yeah, it like combined all of the things that Dane really loved, like candles ... people that he didn't know talking about him ... more candles ...

CHELSEA. Yeah, they made me hold one —

RACHEL. I was like, oh my god, I cannot think of a better tribute to my brother. The only thing that would make this better would be if the senior choir started singing "In the Arms of an Angel" and then oh my god they did that.

CHELSEA. Yeah, that was stupid.

KYLE. I kinda like that song.

RACHEL. (Beat.) So. What are you doing here?
CHELSEA. Nothing. I'm just ... waiting for Steve.
RACHEL. Oh. (Rachel looks at Kyle, expectantly.)
KYLE. Yeah, I was just looking for my student card. I lost it, so ...
RACHEL. You lost it in here?
KYLE. Yeah, I don't know. I've looked pretty much everywhere else, but ... I can't find it.
RACHEL. I'm sorry, that must be hard.
KYLE. Yeah. Well, maybe I'll check my locker again.
RACHEL. Okay. Bye.
CHELSEA. Bye.
KYLE. See ya. (Kyle exits, leaving Chelsea and Rachel alone.)
CHELSEA. Why are you still —
RACHEL. So what time's your —
CHELSEA. Sorry, go ahead.
RACHEL. What time's your appointment?
CHELSEA. Oh, like now. Just waiting for Steve, so —
RACHEL. So what are you doing? Going through his shit? (Rachel starts going through Steve's things. She picks up the stuffed cow.)
CHELSEA. I wouldn't touch that ... (But it's too late. Rachel has pushed the button. The cow starts vibrating and singing "I like to moo it, moo it.")
RACHEL. Oh. He sings.
CHELSEA. Yeah. He's pretty cute, right?
RACHEL. Who, Kyle?
CHELSEA. No, I meant —
RACHEL. It's nice to see you're doing better.
CHELSEA. What do you mean?
RACHEL. I mean the last few times I've seen you, in the halls or at the funeral or whatever ... you were obviously really upset, so ... it's nice to see you've stopped crying.
CHELSEA. I haven't really stopped ...
RACHEL. You going to English tomorrow?
CHELSEA. I don't know. Are you?
RACHEL. Yeah, I'm going. At least Mr. Morrow is still, like ... normal. All the other teachers are too busy pussyfooting around to actually teach us anything.
CHELSEA. You're still going to your other classes?
RACHEL. Yeah. Why?
CHELSEA. No, I was just ... that's cool.

RACHEL. Why is that cool?
CHELSEA. Um ... I guess it's not cool. It's just really soon.
RACHEL. It's not really soon. Soon is like the future. You mean it's really quick to go back to class, or it's really early to go back, or it's too early —
CHELSEA. I'm not saying it's too early ...
RACHEL. When should I go back? All the teachers are totally freaked out right now, it's so awesome.
I was in Art today, and we were supposed to paint a perspective landscape or something, but I drew a picture of like a bloody heart and flames and like angry letters that spelled out "brother," and Miss Craig thought I was like really unstable, so I got an A.
CHELSEA. Yeah, I missed that ...
RACHEL. Yeah, and in Drama we're doing this like improv role-playing thing, which is supposed to be really funny, but I was in this one scene, and I was like a farmer's wife or something, and Gary Luk was trying to sell our robot goat, and we were arguing about it and people were laughing, and then I just got really into it, and I was like, "No! We need this robot goat! The whole fucking robot farm depends on it!" And I started crying, like ... not real tears, but I kind of collapsed and hid my face so it looked like I was crying, so everyone got really quiet. I was all curled up in a ball, and I was just thinking, like ... how long can I stay like this before someone actually makes me get up?
CHELSEA. Yeah?
RACHEL. Two and a half minutes. Dead silence. Totally awkward. Finally, Mr. Salvatti comes over and starts like ... rubbing my back, and I look up and he's got tears in his eyes. Real tears. So yeah, all of a sudden I'm like a straight-A student. (Laughs, then.) You're not laughing.
CHELSEA. No, I am —
RACHEL. No you're not. You're not laughing ...
CHELSEA. No, it's just ... you're really brave.
RACHEL. You probably think I should just stay home like everyone else. I mean, everyone else is so traumatized, everyone else is so affected by the loss, and they're not even his sister. Or his girlfriend. Right?
CHELSEA. Yeah, it's true ... (Rachel stares at Chelsea for a moment, then picks up a stress ball and squeezes it.)
RACHEL. Are you getting trauma leave?
CHELSEA. I don't think so.

RACHEL. It's funny, you know ... I haven't talked to anyone yet. I mean, lots of people have talked to *me* about it. My aunt called last night and she was just like, you know, it's probably going to be hardest on you, Rachel, because losing a brother so close to your own age is like losing a twin, and when you lose a twin it's like losing half your soul, and it could be genetic, so you could get an aneurysm, too, so you should probably be really careful from now on. I was just like ... cool. Thanks, Aunt Barb.

CHELSEA. You're younger than Dane, right?

RACHEL. I was older.

CHELSEA. But you were in the same grade ...

RACHEL. He skipped a grade.

CHELSEA. Oh, right. I knew that. He was really smart.

RACHEL. Yeah. So what happened to me, right?

CHELSEA. What?

RACHEL. Maybe I'm a bastard child. 'Cause I'm not at all like my brother, right?

CHELSEA. That's not what I'm saying ...

RACHEL. Anyway, good for you, if you want to talk to a lot of people. You seem to have a lot of friends, so that must be nice, that everyone's there for you. *(Pause.)*

CHELSEA. How're your parents doing? How's your mom?

RACHEL. That's kind of a stupid question.

CHELSEA. Oh. Sorry. I just meant on a scale of like ... bad to like ... really bad. How is she —?

RACHEL. On a *scale* how bad does she feel? I don't know. Maybe like a five or six? What's a five or six on *your* scale, Chels? Breaking a heel? Getting a really bad zit?

CHELSEA. I don't get why you're so *mad* at me ...

RACHEL. I'm not. I just didn't think you were that close to my mom.

CHELSEA. I love your mom. We were like ... she got me that sweater for Christmas.

RACHEL. You love her because she bought you a sweater?

CHELSEA. No, don't twist my words around.

RACHEL. If you love her so much you could've called. Or come over.

CHELSEA. I was going to.

RACHEL. It's funny, actually. I can't even remember the last time you came over.

CHELSEA. Why is that funny?

RACHEL. I don't know. Maybe it's *not* funny.

CHELSEA. Dane always came to *my* house. That's why I didn't come over. My parents are never home, so if he came to my house we could actually *do* stuff.

RACHEL. I don't want to hear that.

CHELSEA. Sorry.

RACHEL. Is that weird? That I don't want to hear about your having sex with my dead brother?

CHELSEA. No, I just ... I'm *sorry* but I was trying to explain why I stopped coming over.

RACHEL. Thanks, Chelse. That puts my mind at ease.

CHELSEA. Yeah, well it's amazing I didn't come over more often, the way you treat me.

RACHEL. Yeah, but you were still going out with Dane, right?

CHELSEA. What?

RACHEL. You were still going out with Dane?

CHELSEA. Yes.

RACHEL. I mean when he died.

CHELSEA. Yes. *(Rachel stares at Chelsea. Chelsea doesn't flinch.)*

RACHEL. Because I'd really hate to think you'd lie about something like that.

CHELSEA. Why would I lie about that?

RACHEL. To get attention?

CHELSEA. I don't want to get attention for being the girl whose boyfriend died.

RACHEL. So why do you want attention?

CHELSEA. I don't.

RACHEL. Everyone wants attention. You should think about that.

CHELSEA. Okay. I'll give it some serious thought.

RACHEL. Good. And I'll see you in English tomorrow?

CHELSEA. Yeah.

RACHEL. You're not gonna stay home like everyone else ...

CHELSEA. I'll be there.

RACHEL. Good. See you then. *(Rachel exits. Blackout.)*