

Dream of the Burning Boy

by David West Lead

RACHEL. You can't admit anything. You're nothing but an attention whore. Stress on the whole!  
LARRY. Rachel, you can't do this.  
RACHEL. I can do whatever I want. And I'm not doing your stupid assignment, by the way.  
LARRY. That's fine.

RACHEL. Who do you think you are? I didn't even read a eulogy at the funeral.  
LARRY. I said it's fine if you don't want to.  
RACHEL. I know it's fine. I mean, I may be a little unbalanced, but I'm not delusional. I know you don't give a shit what I do.  
LARRY. That's not true —  
RACHEL. It's fine! I don't care. I'm not Dane. You always liked Dane.

LARRY. I like all my students. I like you.  
RACHEL. Not enough to have little after-school chats with me, the way you did with Dane.  
LARRY. You never come to see me.  
RACHEL. Dane always came to see you, to complain about his grades.

LARRY. That's not why —  
RACHEL. He got way better grades than me in every other class, but for some reason, you were harder on him. And I think you did it on purpose.  
LARRY. Why would I do that?  
RACHEL. I think you knew he'd come see you if you gave him lower grades.

LARRY. My door is open to everyone, Rachel. I grade everyone equally.  
RACHEL. That's funny.  
LARRY. Why is that funny?  
RACHEL. Because we switched papers on the last assignment. Dane and I switched papers, just to test you. He swore you were grading him harder, and I didn't want to believe him because this was the one time I'd been better than him at anything. But he was right. I put my name on his paper, and you gave me the best grade I've ever got. And you gave him a 'C.' But you weren't really giving him the 'C,' Mr. Morrow, because the only thing he wrote was the pun on the title page. "Losing my Virgil-ity." The rest was mine.

LARRY. Well, I ... appreciate your honesty. (Larry turns his back to Rachel and wipes down the blackboard.)  
RACHEL. I'm not trying to embarrass you.  
LARRY. I'm not embarrassed.  
RACHEL. You're my favorite teacher. (No response.) But you liked Dane more.

LARRY. I didn't like him more, and I don't know why you'd think that. If I were in any way favoring Dane, I would've given him higher grades, not ~~know~~ know how hard this must be for you —  
RACHEL. It's hard for you, too.  
LARRY. Of course it is! It's hard for everyone! But if you're implying that I was somehow biased or that I played favorites ...

RACHEL. I'm not saying you played favorites. ~~you had one~~ you had one favorite. And all I want to know is why you liked him more than me?  
LARRY. I didn't —  
RACHEL. Yes you did!  
LARRY. I didn't, no I — didn't intend to make you feel —  
RACHEL. Was it because he was smarter?  
LARRY. I don't know.

RACHEL. (Stung but persisting.)  
And you wanted to challenge him? You gave him low grades because you wanted to challenge him? Or because you wanted to talk to him?  
LARRY. Yes.  
RACHEL. Which is it?  
LARRY. I can't explain. He was ...  
RACHEL. What?  
LARRY. He was my favorite.

RACHEL. I know he was your favorite, I know that you ... care. I just don't know why. I don't even know if I want to know, but —  
LARRY. Rachel, it's not what you think —  
RACHEL. Then tell me what it is! Were you in love with him or something?  
LARRY. No —  
RACHEL. Were you like ... ?  
LARRY. No.

RACHEL. Don't lie to me! Everyone's talking about Dane right now, everyone's asking me questions and talking about you, and I could totally say something. I could say something to the principal, or the police ...

LARRY. You have no idea what you're talking about — !

RACHEL. What were you doing with him?

LARRY. I can't tell you.

RACHEL. Then who can?

LARRY. You need to go home.

RACHEL. Don't tell me what to do! I could get you fired!

LARRY. You need to go home right now —

RACHEL. All I have to do is say something, and you could go to jail and get locked up with all the other sick ~~people~~ & perverts —

LARRY. He was my son.

RACHEL. (Beat.) What?

LARRY. Dane was my son. Your mother and I —

RACHEL. ~~What?~~ You think this is funny?

LARRY. No.

*Shrewd*

RACHEL. How ~~do you think I am?~~ up do you think I am?

LARRY. I'm telling you the truth.

RACHEL. You were Dane's dad! I don't believe you for a second!

LARRY. I never said I was Dane's dad.

RACHEL. Oh my god, you just did — !

LARRY. I said he was my son. I never was his dad. (Rachel just stares at Larry. For once, she is speechless. Blackout.)