

Dream of the Burning Boy  
by David West Read

Scene 7

*Larry's classroom.*

*Larry sits at his desk, grading papers, dressed as he was in Scene One. Dane knocks on the open door, and Larry looks up.*

LARRY. Dane. Hi.

DANE. Hey. Do you have a minute?

LARRY. Of course. Come in, close the door.

DANE. 'Kay. *(Dane enters, closing the door behind him. He takes a seat opposite Larry, sliding off his backpack.)*

LARRY. You're here late.

DANE. Yeah. I was playing Ultimate. Frisbee. Steve's doing like an informal thing on the back field, so —

LARRY. Ultimate frisbee? What is that?

DANE. Uh, it's kind of like football? Except instead of football it's a frisbee, and you can't hit anyone, and there's no refs, and you don't have to be at all athletic, so ...

LARRY. Ultimate frisbee.

DANE. Yeah.

LARRY. The most extreme form of frisbee imaginable.

DANE. *(Smiles.)* Yeah.

LARRY. Or maybe it's the last frisbee in a series of frisbees? The *final* frisbee. That'd be a good name for a book.

DANE. Yeah. I would read that.

LARRY. *(Coolly.)* Did you have something you wanted to talk about?

DANE. Uh ... yeah?

LARRY. Because I think we should cut to the chase. Don't you?

DANE. Okay. *(Beat.)* Did I do something wrong?

LARRY. No, but I think we both know why you're here, so why don't we get this over with? Did you bring your paper with you? *(Dane opens his backpack.)*

DANE. I have my paper, but —

LARRY. Why don't I just give you an 'A' and you can go?

DANE. Uh ...

LARRY. Come on, give me your paper, I'll put a big 'A' on it, and we can both save some time.

DANE. Mr. Morrow, I'm ... kind of confused.

LARRY. Well, I'm confused, too, Dane. I'm confused as to why you'd hand in a paper that's clearly not your best work. Because I thought you were really getting something out of coming to talk to me, and I'd like to continue having these chats, but if I raised your grade before, it's because you showed me a capacity for critical thinking beyond what I was seeing in your papers. It's not an excuse for you to slack off because you assume I'll bail you out.

DANE. I'm not slacking off. I wanted to tell you, I've kind of had a hard time focusing.

LARRY. Why's that?

DANE. Well, you know, not to get too personal, but me and Chelsea, we were like—

LARRY. Dane, I can't ...

DANE. What?

LARRY. I can't talk to you about that.

DANE. Oh, okay. I was just trying to explain—

LARRY. I know, but what happens outside my class is not my concern. What concerns me is—

DANE. Chelsea's in your class. I can't talk about Chelsea?

LARRY. No.

DANE. Why not?

LARRY. Because it's inappropriate. If you want to talk about your paper—

DANE. Fine. So I didn't do a great job on my paper, but come on, do I really deserve a 'C'?

LARRY. What do you think you deserve?

DANE. I think I deserve ... better.

LARRY. Okay, should I just write that on your paper, then? "Better?"

DANE. No, I—

LARRY. I can't give you "better," Dane. I can give you seventy, or eighty, or ninety. Or maybe I should give you perfect? Would that be better? If I just gave you perfect?

DANE. I'm not asking you to give me perfect. I just want to talk.

LARRY. Well, good. Let's talk. The subject of your paper was the role of Virgil in *Dante's Inferno*, correct?

DANE. Yes.

LARRY. And the title you chose was ... (*Picking up Dane's paper.*) "Losing my Virgil-ity: My First Date with Dante."

DANE. (*Smiles.*) Yeah.

LARRY. Which immediately suggests to me that you're not taking this paper, or this class, very seriously.

DANE. No, I am ...

LARRY. Well, you're not ...

DANE. No, I am. I really am, I just ... I've had a lot on my mind lately.

LARRY. I understand that, Dane, but do you have any idea how much I have on *my* mind?

DANE. A lot?

LARRY. A lot. But I still find time to do my work. I still find time to grade your papers. And I can't start grading everyone differently based on how much they may or may not have on their mind. Do you understand? I can't give you special treatment.

DANE. I don't want special treatment.

LARRY. (*Beat.*) I'll look at it again, if you want. You can come back tomorrow—

DANE. No, I can't.

LARRY. Why not?

DANE. You know why. (*He smiles, and pretends to die.*)

LARRY. That's not funny.

DANE. No, but you know what's really funny? I came here to like open up to you—

LARRY. Well what was I supposed to do?

DANE. You could've told me. I would've kept it between us.

LARRY. No! You wouldn't. Your mom would've found out, or your *dad*, and then what would've happened?

DANE. I don't know. Do you? (*Beat.*) Whatever, I have to go.

LARRY. Why?

DANE. Because my head's about to explode!

LARRY. Stay here. We can talk now.

DANE. No, I die in the hallway.

LARRY. I wasn't finished.

DANE. It's too late. You never would've said anything. (*He turns to go.*)

LARRY. Dane.

DANE. Yeah? (*He stops and looks at Larry. Pause.*)

LARRY. See you tomorrow.

DANE. Yeah, see you then. *(He exits into the hallway, and then —*  
*BANG. The lights quickly close in on Larry. Black.)*

**Scene 8**

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