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POLICE TAPE

A Ten-Minute Play

by

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Tom: A man in his 40s.

Sarah: A woman in her 30s.

A bar. After closing time. Police tape. Sarah and Tom sit. Tom is playing a game on his phone. Sarah is staring at a book—not reading. We hear a text message arrive on Tom’s phone. His ringer volume is unnecessarily loud. Sarah starts violently and yelps.

TOM

Sorry.

SARAH

Oh, I’m fine. I just wasn’t . . .

TOM

No—sorry. It’s loud. I wouldn’t normally—but it’s usually so loud in here, so . . .

SARAH

No. It’s fine. I think I’m still just a little shaken—I mean from before.

TOM

No, no, of course.

Silence.

Tom checks the message.

TOM (continued)

I was hoping I’d get ahold of someone who could—I don’t know—come down here, close up.

SARAH

Who’d you call?

TOM

Found a schedule behind the bar—I don’t know, I guess no one picks up from a number they don’t know.

SARAH

You left messages?

TOM

Yeah.

(pause)

That was my wife. Wondering when I’d be home.

It's late. SARAH

Yeah. TOM

Did you tell her what happened? SARAH

No. TOM

You should tell her. SARAH

(Pause.)

It's late. Do you want me to call you a cab or something? TOM

Shit. Sorry. Sorry. No. I mean thanks, but uh, no, my car's right outside. SARAH
(beat)

And it's not like we've been drinking for awhile.
(beat)

I must look crazy or something staying here. I mean at least you're trying to do something—calling people. I'm just sitting here staring at a book.
(pause)

I don't even like bars. I just came here cause . . . I don't know. I moved here two weeks ago. I know I should give it time. But . . .
(pause)

I'm sorry. You don't want to hear this. You should, you should go home. We should both go home.

(Pause.)

Where'd you move from? TOM

The city. SARAH

You still work there? TOM

SARAH

Yeah—well, I mean sort of. I convinced them to let me telecommute. Which is ironic. I mean, I had to fight so hard to get it. I had it all planned out.

(SHE shakes her head)

But how about you—you work in the city?

TOM

No. I'm one of the few that works here.

SARAH

Yeah?

TOM

You know—Tom's Antique Shed? I'm, uh—Tom.

SARAH

Cool. That's cool. Oh. I'm Sarah.

(THEY shake hands.)

TOM

Hi.

SARAH

Hi.

(SHE keeps hold of his hand too long. Finally releases it. SHE tears up. Starts to cry—starts to sob.)

SARAH (continued)

I'm sorry—I'm sorry.

(HE is unsure what to do. Gives her an awkward hug. SHE sobs harder. HE looks around, not knowing what to do. Finds some napkins behind the bar and offers them to her.)

TOM

Here.

SARAH

(accepting the napkins)

Thanks. I'm sorry. You're just—you're the first person I've . . . Ahh . . . I had it all planned out—I could live here for half the cost in an apartment twice the size—and it's quieter—and closer to nature—I wouldn't have to commute so that would save me, like two hours a day, and I would finally have the time . . . But I move here and everybody already has their own lives and it's not like I can

meet people at a new job or . . . I don't even talk to people at my work. I just get, you know, IMs saying the font size need to be adjusted on the layout and I sit on conference calls and it's like I'm not even on the phone. They literally forget I'm on the phone. Last week they all left the meeting without hanging up the phone, because they had forgotten I was there. So I come here tonight thinking I'll talk to someone—anyone, but everyone comes in in groups and in pairs and they're already talking and no one even notices I'm here. I get shy and—start reading my book and then—well—then the fight breaks out, and he comes from behind the counter to try to break it up and—I'm so pathetic. I see him laying there bleeding, and the ambulance comes, and I'm thinking, well, maybe this will give me something to start a conversation with—and I'm jealous of him because people are crying and going to the hospital to wait and . . . I don't have anyone who would do that for me.

(Pause. HIS phone RINGS. HE looks at it but doesn't pick up.)

SARAH (continued)

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have . . .

TOM

No, what are you talking about? No. Please. It's okay.

(Pause. SHE puts her book in her bag. SHE stands. Is SHE leaving?)

SARAH

I should . . .

TOM

I noticed you. You said no one noticed you tonight. But I noticed you.

(Pause.)

I grew up here. My mom and dad still live here—aunts, uncles, cousins. Married my high school sweetheart. We've got twins that are four and a two-year-old. And I love them all. More than words can say.

SARAH

Yeah.

(Pause.)

TOM

My wife—a lot of days are hard for her, and she's with the kids all day and when I get home she wants to vent and—I understand my parents are getting older and they need my help—I don't blame them, but—

(beat)

when Larry—one of the twins, fell on the bleachers after t-ball practice and cut his head—he had to get stitches and—he'd had something to eat right before the

game so they couldn't give him anesthesia, and we take him to the hospital, my wife's crying—and she's got the other two kids in the waiting room, so I go in with him and they wrap him up—like in a sheet—to immobilize him, so he won't move during the stitches and I have to help hold him down while they stitch him. He's screaming and he's calling to me, "Daddy, Daddy, make them stop hurting me." And I thought I was going to scream. I can't do it. I can't . . . be the one who always fixes things. I just . . . I'm so tired. So I came here. And then—the fight—and he's laying there, bleeding—and I'm seeing my son—calling for me, wanting me to make everything better.

SARAH

Shit. I'm sorry I . . .

(HIS phone RINGS.)

TOM

(to SARAH)

Sorry, I need . . .

(on the phone)

Hello?

Yes, this is he.

No, I'm still here—

I don't know, they took him to the hospital.

I don't know.

I just didn't want to leave the place open.

Yeah, yeah.

Where would I find it?

(While on the phone, HE gets up and goes behind the counter.)

Yes—okay, yes. I've got it.

(HE finds and picks up a padlock.)

Thank you for calling back.

No. No problem.

Not at all.

Okay.

Bye.

(HE hangs up. To SARAH:)

That was one of the workers. Says we should just pull down the gate and padlock it.

SARAH

We—that's simple enough.

(SHE gets up to go.)

Look—I'm—sorry I put all that on you.

TOM

No. No. I—

(HIS phone RINGS. HE looks at it.)
 I'm sorry, I . . .
 (HE exhales, closes his eyes for a moment, then, answers the phone.)
 Hi, honey.
 I'm fine. No, no. I'm fine.
 It's okay. Everything's okay.
 Just, just—honey, just breathe.
 I'll be home in ten minutes, and I will explain everything.
 Don't cry.
 I'll be there. I'll be right there.
 Everything's okay.
 I'll be home soon.
 Everything's okay.
 I love you.
 See you soon.
 (HE hangs up.)

SARAH
 Are you okay?

(Silence.)

TOM
 Listen, if you want to come over for dinner sometime—my wife is a great cook.

SARAH
 You don't have to . . .

(Beat.)

SARAH (continued)
 That would be nice.

TOM
 Okay. Stop by the store sometime, okay?

SARAH
 Yeah. Okay.
 (beat)
 Well, we should probably get this place locked up.

TOM
 Yeah.
 (HE sits back down, padlock in hand. Pause.)

TOM (continued)

You go ahead.
I'll go in a minute.

(SHE looks at him as LIGHTS fade to black.)