EXTRACT

Darkness on the edge of town

a collection of six short plays
by
Alex Broun

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The plays

3.
Jade

13.
Lonesome cruiser

25.
Blood Reversal

40.
Mozart and the end of time

48.
The Gift of the Gun

63.
The First Fireworks

Cast size
3 male, 2 female

Playwright's note:
Plays may be performed in any order, either included or omitted at the director or producer's discretion. Settings and place names may also be altered where desired to localise productions.

Jade

a short play

by

Alex Broun

Characters

CRAIG – a High School English teacher

BRYAN – the Principal

Time

Afternoon.

Setting

Craig's office.

Jade

Craig's office. Cluttered, untidy.

CRAIG, sits behind his desk, marking some papers.

After sometime **BRYAN**, enters, without knocking.

BRYAN: … You're here?

CRAIG: Yes.

BRYAN: What are you doing?

CRAIG: Marking.

BRYAN: I thought you'd be at home.

CRAIG: No. I'm here.

BEAT.

BRYAN: They're on their way.

CRAIG: Thanks for letting me know. (BEAT) Can I help you?

BRYAN: I just thought I'd come and …

CRAIG: Tidy up?

BRYAN: It's been awhile since I've been in here. I was unsure what I'd find.

CRAIG: Some kiddie-porn on the walls.

BRYAN: How can you be so blasé?

GRAIG: How else would you like me to be?

BEAT.

BRYAN: I think I came in here looking for …

CRAIG: What?

BRYAN: Craig – we are friends.

CRAIG: Thanks for acknowledging that.

BRYAN: And I'm trying to understand how my friend – my good friend – could …

CRAIG: Do what he's done.

BRYAN: Alleged to have done. (BEAT) Are you sure you wouldn't rather be at home?

CRAIG: And be arrested in front of my wife and child? Much rather they arrest me here.

BRYAN: Poor Katherine. How will she …

CRAIG: I'm not sure.

BEAT. **CRAIG** CONTINUES MARKING.

BRYAN: I wish you would stop that.

CRAIG: They need to be marked. Some of them are quite good actually. The romantic period of Keats.

BRYAN: I supposed that's going to be your excuse. Romance, love.

CRIAG: Love – no. (LAUGHS) Not love.

BRYAN: You're laughing?

CRAIG: It's funny so I'm laughing. Then I guess when you find yourself in the position I find myself in – you don't know why you do anything any more.

BRYAN: Or did?

CRAIG: No. I know exactly why I did what I did.

BRYAN: So you don't deny it?

CRAIG: Is there any point?

BRYAN: You committed this act on school grounds. They have security cameras. How could you be so …

CRAIG: You were going to say 'stupid' but that doesn't quite cover it does it? (BEAT) Is she …

BRYAN: The student in question has been taken home by her parents. She'll have to go undergo a full barrage of tests. If she hasn't been through enough already.

CRAIG: I'm sorry to hear that.

BRYAN: Not as sorry as you will be.

CRAIG: Or am.

BRYAN: Craig – she's …

CRAIG: Age can be deceptive.

BRYAN: Try to rationalise it all you like – but I can not understand why a teacher in my school, a friend, could do something so hideous.(SUDDENLY) Please tell me this is the first time. I desperately hope this is the first time.

CRAIG: The first and only.

BRYAN: You can't say that though, can you? People like you. You can't help yourself.

CRAIG: Bryan – I'm not a paedophile.

BRYAN: Jade Robinson is twelve years old!

CRAIG: So you keep saying.

BEAT. **CRAIG** PICKS UP A PIECE OF PAPER ON HIS DESK.

CRAIG: (READING) Sweat on your forehead
Glistening in the creases of your skin
Your eyes wary
Look at me
Why won't you look at me?
I hunger for you.
For your gaze
Your scent
Your touch
You can not escape me."
It's beautiful, don't you think?

BRYAN: Did you write that about her? Sick. I suggest you destroy it. Quickly.

CRAIG: I didn't write it.

BRYAN: Don't you - is that your defence? A mixed up little twelve year old gets a crush and writes you a tawdry little poem so you …

CRAIG: Take advantage of her?

BRYAN: This isn't a joke. And if I were you I'd stop treating it as one. The court looks very coldly on unrepentant souls.

CRAIG: I imagine they aren't going to look too warmly on me already.

BRYAN: Then don't make it any worse. Admit what you've done and accept your punishment.

CRAIG: I'm happy to do that.

BRYAN: So you acknowledge what you've done is wrong?

CRAIG: Completely. I was the adult, I had the duty of care – Jade was vulnerable, 'mixed up', she came to me and I should've turned her away.

BRYAN: Referred her to a female teacher. Followed school protocol.

CRAIG: You know what it was about? You'll find this funny.

BRYAN: Nothing about this is funny.

CRAIG: Aaron Turner. Greasy little shit.

BRYAN: What does Aaron Turner have to do with this?

CRAIG: He knocked her back. Can you believe it? He said no to Jade.

BRYAN: She tried to seduce him.

CRAIG: God no. She wouldn't know how to. She liked him and in a foolish moment of honesty she told him. You know what he said: "Blow me", "Blow me you dirty chicken-head" and then he told the rest of the class. Jade was devastated.

BRYAN: That's unfortunate.

CRAIG: So she came to my office.

BRYAN: When was this?

CRAIG: Three weeks ago. Lunchtime. She was crying. She didn't have a hankie so I put up my hand to wipe away a tear from her cheek –

BRYAN: Male staff may not make physical contact with female students – under any circumstance.

CRAIG: I saw the memo. But she was crying – so vulnerable, so delicate.

BRYAN: Please Craig. This is inappropriate.

CRAIG: I'm just trying to make you understand.

BRYAN: I'm not sure I want to understand.

CRAIG: Or are you scared that maybe you will?

BEAT.

BRYAN: Very well. Go on. If you feel you must.

CRAIG: She was sitting there. Right beside the window – and she was crying – and I put out my hand to wipe away a tear and my fingers brushed her lips. Just brushed them. The slightest touch. Those moist, soft lips. And this shock went straight through my body – this red hot surge of energy, adrenaline, something – and when I looked back it wasn't Jade sitting there anymore. Not this timid little girl. It was this beautiful, young woman – sitting before me, looking deep into my eyes, my very being.

BRYAN: A stunning transformation. What did you do?

CRAIG: I asked her to leave.

BRYAN: As you should – and then you should've come and reported it straight to me.

CRAIG: I was embarrassed. Ashamed. I couldn't tell you or Katherine or anybody. I just tried to forget it but the image of her sitting there – her lips, her eyes – I just

CRAIG: (CONT) couldn't get it out of my head. I thought about asking you to remove her from my class but that wouldn't be fair to Jade. She had done nothing wrong. So I took a week off.

BRYAN: Katherine said it was flu.

CRAIG: I thought if I stayed away for a week I'd come to my senses. I'd forget that stupid moment in my office. Forget all about Jade.

BRYAN: Have things between you and Katherine been –

CRAIG: No no. Same as always.

BRYAN: Then why did you develop this attraction?

CRAIG: I don't know. I ask myself that again and again. But I've never felt anything like that before. Ever. With Katherine, with any woman. I wish I could make you understand. This awesome wonder.

BRYAN: Is this some kind of sick justification?

CRAIG: No. Not a justification. Nothing can ever justify what I've done. What I have done is wrong – wrong! I deserve to be punished. I must be punished. (BEAT) I came back to school the next week – desperately hoping, praying that I had returned to normal.

BRYAN: I'm sorry. I don't think I can listen to anymore of this.

CRAIG: Please Bryan. Let me finish.

BRYAN: Elena – your daughter - is eleven years old. One year younger than Jade.

CRAIG: You don't think I thought of that. Used that. Kept reminding myself – trying to make myself realise how deeply wrong what I was experiencing was – but the minute I walked back into that class and saw Jade sitting beside the window – I was back in this office a week earlier. She looked at me and smiled, just a little. Her lips parted. It was like a drug, some kind of incredible overpowering drug coursing through my whole body. I knew I couldn't continue. I somehow got through the class. Then I came back to my office and