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# ***House on the Left***

*by*

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Cast of Characters

BRUCE : 50's

SHARON : 40's

MAX : 16

Place  
Suburban home

Time  
Day

Setting: The play takes place inside the large living room home of Bruce and Sharon. It's décor has been run down yet frozen in time circa 1990's suburban styled living. There's a cream couch stage center. A kitchen rests stage right with a back porch door connecting further upstage. Opposite, stage left is the front entrance to the house. Beside the front entrance is a painted dark brown wooden staircase.

At Rise: The play opens with Bruce drinking a beer while sitting center of his couch. Sharon sits opposite on a rocking chair knitting.

*Enter Max from the back porch.*

BRUCE: What the hell are you doing all day in that arm pit of a shed?

MAX: Thinking.

BRUCE: (*laughs*) Boy you ain't had a thought in all your life.

MAX: Yeah, I have.

BRUCE: What gives you that crazy idea?

MAX: Cause I have a brain.

BRUCE: You DO have a brain, just not switched on.

MAX: Why you always up my ass?

SHARON: Let's not have another row. Too much of that going on around here lately.

MAX: Tell Dad to leave me the hell alone.

BRUCE: You are walking around on MY property.

MAX: So?

BRUCE: That gives me permission to question your whereabouts.

MAX: No, it doesn't.

BRUCE: You bet your ass it does.

MAX: So if I walked across the street on old Moses' property, you can't question me?

BRUCE: I don't care what you do over at Moses', but HE sure will. Probably blow your head clear off with one of them rifles he's always itching to use.

MAX: Whatever.

*Max heads upstairs.*

BRUCE: You still didn't answer my question boy.

MAX: What question?

BRUCE: Why you keep going into the shed?

MAX: I like to be alone.

BRUCE: Alone? (*looks Max over*) Boy get yourself a job and a place to live and you can be alone all you want.

*Max goes upstairs.*

*Bruce chuckles to himself.*

*Over the following Sharon reacts to Bruce with head nods, eye rolls and shoulder shrugs.*

Alone. These kids today boy, got-it-made. Boy, my father would have busted my ass if I walked around as aimlessly as Max. Thinks I pester him. Shit. Better than getting one right upside the head or a boot in your ass. He's got no idea how easy he has it compared to when I was his age. I was working soon as I could walk and talk. There weren't no time to think. You hear him? (*imitating*) 'I want to be alone.' What in the hell kind a crazy ass talk is that? I mean, where's he get this stuff from? I don't have the imagination for that sort of junk. Walking around like a zombie, vaping all day..duh, duh, duh...(shouting to Max) Should go back outside and rake them leaves, what you should do you lazy crook! (out-loud again) Robbing from me. Don't think I don't know what he's up to. Keep getting short changed on my cash flow. Few dollars here, few dollars there. Thinks I don't know. (shouting to Max) I know! (sips his beer) (to himself) Kind of world is this? (to Sharon) I mean, what kind of a world is this all turning into? Remember how it used to be? (pause.) Oh, I don't want to go on a rant, don't have the energy. I worry. Don't want that boy growing up to be a mush. Some kind of no can do fella. He mopes around and it fires me up. There's no application, to anything he does, no interests, no nothing...just beats around the bush smoking that Goddamn vape bullshit all day long. (sips his beer) Hey Max! Max!! Boy is hard of hearing. I wanna try his vape. Wanna see what all the hoopla is about. Max get your ass down here boy! I'm stealing your vape. (chuckles) Bet he won't know what to do if that damn thing is outta his hands for more than a few seconds. Ha! (coughs) Max! MAX!!!

SHARON: Stop shouting, you're making the whole house shake and if it comes tumbling down that's on you.

BRUCE: Why you think it'll come down?

SHARON: It needs fixing.

BRUCE: We all need fixing.

SHARON: You know how in some beautiful neighborhoods, there are so many nice houses, and well treated gardens and tree lined blocks and everything and then suddenly you run into one of those horrific looking homes and you can't help but be shocked by how the owners would ever allow their house to ruin the neighborhood?

BRUCE: SO?

SHARON: WE are THAT HORRIFIC HOME Bruce. We are the house on the left.

BRUCE: We are?

SHARON: As if you hadn't noticed.

BRUCE: Why you always worrying about what other people think?

SHARON: It's what I think, Bruce.

BRUCE: You think we have a horrific home?

SHARON: I do.

*Sharon gets up from couch.*

BRUCE: It's still a home. More than what most people have! We OWN it.

SHARON: (*sighs*) Big whoop. Means nothing to own a home if you can't care for it.

BRUCE: So, care for it.

SHARON: I've tried and tried again but it's always the same. No money for renovations. In the twenty somewhat years we've been living here I don't think we've spent a single nickel on making anything nice.

BRUCE: Why should we bother?

SHARON: Because it's NICE to live NICE.

BRUCE: If we had the money...

SHARON: Ain't that the same. 'If we had the money'. Get some! Why can't we get some?

BRUCE: You know I can't work right now, anyway.

SHARON: Get a new back!

BRUCE: Can't get a new -

SHARON: If you would have had that surgery years ago with the money your father left you, you'd a been able to work properly for all them years after.

BRUCE: Don't go bringing my father into this.

SHARON: We had the money.

BRUCE: Wasn't enough for my surgery.

SHARON: Yes, it was!

BRUCE: For once I thought it'd be nice to have money in the bank.

SHARON: What for?

BRUCE: To live without stressing all the time.

SHARON: And how'd that work out for us? We ended up lending it all to your idiot brother. And I told you not to. It's gone! Meanwhile, you walk around in constant agony and nobody else seems to care. Your back could have been fixed or we could have used the money to fix up this piece of shit house we live in.

BRUCE: Sharon, I don't have the energy for this today, really I don't.

SHARON: We have nothing worth having.

BRUCE: How 'bout them goldfish? Are they worth having? You and Max begged me for 'em. You feeding them?

*Sharon ignores Bruce and knits.*

*Bruce gets up and walks over to the giant fish tank. He takes fish food and pinches some into the tank to feed the fish.*

*Max comes bulldozing down the staircase.*

BRUCE: What the hell is wrong with you comin' down the stairs like that?

MAX: *(shrugs)*

BRUCE: HEY LISTEN, I want your vape thing?

MAX: What? Why?

BRUCE: I wanna try it out.

MAX: You?

BRUCE: YEAH, ME!

MAX: Why?

BRUCE: I said, where's that vape thing?

MAX: Are you serious right now?

BRUCE: Give it here.

MAX: No.

BRUCE: Boy, I said give it here...

*Bruce and Max exchange stares.*

MAX: (*relenting*)...Let me show you how to do it, cause you'll break it.

BRUCE: I've smoked cigars bigger than you.

MAX: You push this button first, then inhale, then release the button. Simple.

BRUCE: Fair enough. Gimme.

*Max hands Bruce the vape.*

MAX: Don't break it.

BRUCE: This button here?

MAX: Gently press it...good...now, inhale...release the button.

*Bruce blows out long and hard and catches a coughing fit.*

*Max laughs.*

*Bruce takes a grab you swing at Max for laughing. Max keeps laughing.*

*Bruce recovers his breathing. Max take the vape.*

MAX: Thought you said you smoked cigars bigger than me.

BRUCE: Whew! Got me lightheaded. Lemme try again.

MAX: I'm almost out.

BRUCE: Out of what?

MAX: I have to buy another cartridge.

BRUCE: Cartridge. What the hell is a -

MAX: It's the stuff you just inhaled. Only have maybe one last puff left.

BRUCE: Give it here. (*beat*)



BRUCE (*cont'd*): I'll pay you for it. I'll give you some money for that cartridge thingy. Just let me puff it again.

MAX: You promise?

BRUCE: I said it, didn't I?

*Max hands Bruce the vape.*

*Bruce inhales bigger this time.*

*Bruce coughs his lungs out again but seems to like it.*

BRUCE: Goddamn. (*coughing*) Whew! That's some good shit.

MAX: You like it?

BRUCE: I do.

MAX: Money.

BRUCE: Huh?

MAX: I need twenty bucks.

BRUCE: TWENTY?

MAX: Uh-huh.

BRUCE: You said nothing about twenty dollars.

MAX: You didn't ask.

BRUCE: Twenty dollars?

MAX: Yep.

BRUCE: I'm not paying twenty dollars.

MAX: A deal is a deal.

BRUCE: Some deals are made to be broken.

*Bruce sits back on couch, drinks his beer.*

MAX: Give me my money.

BRUCE: Get a job!

MAX: You said you would give me the money!

BRUCE: Is that what I said?

MAX: Yeah!

BRUCE: Go get a job and you can have all the money in the world.

MAX: You're a real asshole.

BRUCE: *(laughs)*

MAX: It was my last puff!

BRUCE: Awww, baby gonna cry?

SHARON: Give him the twenty dollars you promised him Bruce.

BRUCE: I didn't promise shit.

SHARON: You promised.

BRUCE: Not for twenty.

SHARON: You said MONEY and a twenty equals MONEY.

BRUCE: You don't have to translate my own words back to me Sharon.

SHARON: Cheap!

BRUCE: Tired of you callin' me cheap! Here, Goddamn it!

*Bruce digs into the front pocket of his jeans.  
He throws twenty dollars on the coffee table  
in front of him.*

BRUCE: Take it!

*Max quickly takes the money and leaves the  
house slamming door.*

*A large piece of ceiling paint falls  
to the carpet. It goes unnoticed.*

BRUCE: *(burps) (drinks his beer)* Little bastard. Such a little runt. I'd like to kick the shit out of him. I can. I'm his father. I could give him a good lickin' still...*(finishes his beer)* *(to Sharon)* Get me another beer, would ya?

SHARON: What am I your slave? Get your own damn beer.

*Bruce gets up from couch. Enters kitchen.  
Takes a beer from the refrigerator. Cracks  
it open and takes a large swig. He walks  
back into the living room and sits on couch.*

BRUCE: Fuck this house. I hope this house does come down. Fall RIGHT ON TOP OF ME! You hear me, HOUSE? I'm right here, come crashin' down on me.

SHARON: You turn my stomach.

BRUCE: Do I?

SHARON: You damn well do.

BRUCE: That's life, darlin'.

SHARON: Why you always giving our son a hard time?

BRUCE: Cause I can.

SHARON: But WHY?

BRUCE: It's fun.

SHARON: Fun?

BRUCE: Uh-huh.

SHARON: You're sick.

BRUCE: Maybe I am.

SHARON: You are.

BRUCE: Even so, it's better than babying him all the time.

SHARON: I never baby him.

BRUCE: It's why he's a lazy bum. You wipe his ass...(drinks) have done since the first day he was born.

SHARON: I am his mother.

BRUCE: A man needs to have hair on his balls.

SHARON: What the hell are you saying Bruce?

BRUCE: I'm sayin' that I have to go MEAN cause you go CLEAN. Trying to give that boy some balance.

SHARON: Is that what your head tells you?

BRUCE: Why you keep havin' a go at me all day?

SHARON: Because we're all insane. Aren't you tired of being insane?

BRUCE: Suits me just fine.

SHARON: I'm going away.

BRUCE: What?!

SHARON: Tabitha is taking me on holiday.

BRUCE: Tabitha? What in God's name?

SHARON: Tabby and Sean won forty-five thousand dollars in Vegas on the slots and she's taking me on holiday with her share.

BRUCE: No she ain't.

SHARON: The trip has been booked and I'm going.

BRUCE: (*Shocked.*) Does Sean know about this?

SHARON: Sean suggested it.

BRUCE: He did WHAT?

SHARON: It was Sean's idea.

BRUCE: Why would Sean suggest you two lunatics leave the island?

SHARON: There's a lot you don't know.

BRUCE: Such as?

SHARON: Such as I'm on the verge of divorcing you. I've been crying to Tabitha for months on end. I'm leaving to save our marriage.

BRUCE: You're fuckin' with me?

SHARON: Tickets are booked for June twelfth and I won't be coming back for a whole month.

*Bruce stands up and circles the center of the living room.*

BRUCE: You best be lyin'.

*Sharon stands up, facing Bruce.*

SHARON: I'm not.

*Bruce throws his beer into the wall.  
Bruce walks nose to nose to Sharon.  
Sharon does not backdown.*

BRUCE: You aren't goin' anywhere.

SHARON: I'm leaving and you can't stop me.

BRUCE: Oh, no?

SHARON: Try me.

*Bruce explodes and lifts up the couch, flipping it over but just as he does, he screams out in pain.*

BRUCE: Ahh! Ahh! My back! My back locked up! Ahhh...

*Bruce falls to the floor and squirms in pain. He flips over from his back side to his stomach.*

*Sharon places her knee on his back and pulls both his arms back. A technique they have done together many times before.*

*Bruce screams and then...*

BRUCE: ...Okay, okay, okay, that's enough, that's enough, you got it, you moved it...

*Sharon stands up. Bruce turns over on his back breathing heavy and recovering.*

*Sharon goes back to knitting.*

SHARON: June twelfth is the day. I have to go into town at some point and pick up new clothes for this trip. Tabitha has it all planned, you should see the kinda places she's mapped out for us, these little pilgrimages with those cobbled streets and old coffee houses, the kind of places we'd daydream about. I took out a chunk from my savings account, packed my luggage this morning and made the decision once and for all I'm going or leaving you, it's one or the other. It'll be good for us Bruce. We've been together for, for, well, LONG ENOUGH!...you're here day in and day out and with you being home so much I'm at the end of my tether. If I leave the house, you're already asking me when I'll be back, how much of my time do you need? I don't want to have to answer to you Bruce, as to where the hell I'm going or where on Earth I'm going to be! I've told you this a million times, of how sick it makes me! How'd you like it if I did that to you? If I clocked you in and clocked you out?! Don't you see, I'm just about ready to throw myself off a cliff! I can't think of anything other than just being away from you at this point...I know it can't just be me, it's not all in my mind, I know you feel down about us too. I'll, I'll come back different, I know I will, I just need some time. Besides, you will have all the time you need to spend with Max, that boy needs you. Be there for him, try to bond with him, be a father to him. It's an entire month, not long..but long enough.

BRUCE: Where?

SHARON: Hmm?

BRUCE: Where the fuck are you traveling to?

SHARON: Venice.

BRUCE: You shittin' me?

SHARON: Always wanted to go.

*Bruce sits partially up on his elbows.*

BRUCE: Venice.

SHARON: Yep.

*Bruce slowly crawls and climbs to the couch and lays on it.*

BRUCE: I'm gonna speak to Sean.

SHARON: Why?

BRUCE: Gonna knock his teeth out his mouth.

SHARON: Sean can crush you.

BRUCE: I don't care.

SHARON: You hungry?

BRUCE: What?

SHARON: Have you eaten?

BRUCE: Am I dreaming?

SHARON: I'll make us some sandwiches and we can discuss my trip to Venice. I am so excited! It's going to save my life for sure! And yours. You will see Bruce, you'll thank me sooner or later...

*Sharon goes into the kitchen.*

I've always wanted to go to Venice!

*Bruce moans in pain.*

**END OF PLAY**