

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

Water Damage

Written by

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2021

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

RICH: 30s. Any ethnicity. Male. In unfamiliar territory.

VIOLET: 30s. Any ethnicity. Female. In familiar territory.

SETTING:

Rich's apartment in the East Village.

TIME:

Afternoon.

CONTENT WARNING:

Domestic violence/abuse (auditory).

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY:

This play was developed during Playdate Theatre's 2021 New Work Development Conference.

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Water Damage, Daniel Prillaman, 1.

*The interior of RICH'S
apartment in the East Village.*

*It is nicely furnished and
mostly clean, although perhaps
a few open cardboard boxes are
about or off to the sides.*

*Two closed doors stand
opposite one another, flanking
a cased opening to a bedroom.
One of them leads to a
bathroom, the other to the
hallway of the building.*

RICH sits on a couch.

He is not relaxed.

*He seems anxious, waiting for
something unknown to us.*

Silence.

*One long enough for his
anxiety to spread to us.*

Why is he just sitting there?

*Something is wrong. What is
it?*

*A knock at the apartment door
startles him.*

*He collects himself and
crosses to open it, revealing
VIOLET, wearing a coat and
pair of leather gloves.*

Richard?

VIOLET

Yes. Uh, Rich is fine.

RICH

I'm Violet.

VIOLET

Yes.

RICH

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RICH (cont'd)

Thank you for coming. Chelsea said you really helped her when she was--dealing with...

VIOLET

You seem hesitant.

RICH

It's not a skepticism. I don't think. I'm just...

I didn't think any of this stuff was real. You know? Just a movie thing.

VIOLET

Mmm. Believe me, sometimes I wish it wasn't.

Beat.

RICH

Uh, come in. Please. I'm sorry.

VIOLET

You're fine. Thank you.

VIOLET enters the apartment.

She looks around, but she does not touch anything.

RICH watches her.

VIOLET

(Off seeing the boxes)

When did you move in?

RICH

About a month ago.

VIOLET

And when did you first experience activity?

RICH

Uh, the third night.

VIOLET

Mmm.

RICH

Is that significant?

VIOLET

Not necessarily.

What happened?

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RICH

Um.

I was in the bathroom. Getting ready for bed. Brushing my teeth. Everything felt...normal.

And when I spit into the sink, I feel a drop of water. On the back of my neck. So I look up and I see this stain on the ceiling. It's water damage. It's not big, but it's not tiny either. It's like the size of a pancake. And it's dripping. And my first thought is, "Shit, I just moved in, you're telling me there's water damage?" I go to find a bucket or anything to put under it. I find my phone to call or leave a message for the landlord. And when I get back to the bathroom...

It's gone.

No trace. Just disappeared.

VIOLET

Have you seen it since?

RICH

It feels like every other night.

It's gotten bigger. Darker. Black, like...

VIOLET

Blood?

RICH

I don't like going in there. I feel like I'm not alone. Like there's other people there with me. Not even watching me, just...there. Which somehow feels worse.

VIOLET

Would you say most of your occurrences have been localized in that room?

RICH

Yes.

VIOLET

Any sounds? Knocking or rappings?

RICH

Sometimes? It's banging, usually. On the door. Other times just a thump. Like someone's dropped something. But it's soft.

VIOLET

What else?

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RICH

I swear I'm starting to see people. Out of the corner of my eye. In the mirror.

I'm having trouble keeping myself together. I'm not sleeping well, I--

I can't move again, I can't--afford it.

VIOLET

What exactly did Chelsea tell you I do?

RICH

Honestly, she said you were magic.

VIOLET laughs at that.

RICH

But, uh, she said you help people. In situations like mine.

VIOLET

I do what I can.

What I can do to help depends entirely on what it is you're dealing with.

RICH

And you can figure that out?

VIOLET

I can try.

RICH

What if it's something you can't help with?

VIOLET

Well, let's only worry about that if we need to, yes?

(Starting to remove a
glove)

It's not magic. At least in the conventional sense.

There are some people in the world who have been...gifted, let's say...with an extra sense of perception. It manifests differently for different people. For me, when I touch something, I see more of its history. Its meaning. Its intent. Whether I want to or not.

RICH

That sounds exhausting.

VIOLET

Yes. It made for a unique childhood at the least.

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RICH

So you're going to go into my bathroom and figure out its intent?

VIOLET

I'm going to listen to whatever it tells me.

RICH

Right.

Do I come with you? Or should I--?

VIOLET

If you'd stay out here.

RICH

Right.

VIOLET

I'll just be a few minutes.
(Pointing to the
bathroom door)

It's this?

RICH

Yes.

VIOLET crosses to the bathroom door and collects herself.

RICH watches.

Anxious.

VIOLET looks at him.

VIOLET

Just breathe.

VIOLET puts her hand on the doorknob, and after a moment, she opens the door and walks into the bathroom.

RICH waits.

He doesn't really know what to do.

So he elects to return to the couch.

He waits.

He waits.

*Perhaps he fiddles with his
phone or adjusts something.*

*Suddenly, the bathroom door
SLAMS shut.*

*The doorknob jiggles
ferociously and we hear
banging from the other side,
like someone's desperately
trying to get out.*

*But RICH has not heard this
this.*

Nor does he hear it.

*He continues to wait for
VIOLET.*

*We begin to hear more sounds
from inside the bathroom now:
the wails of a woman in tears,
mixed with the rage and
screams of a man's abuse.*

RICH does not hear this.

He continues to wait.

The woman pleads.

The man does not let up.

*The impacts, now, of fists or
feet against a body.*

RICH does not hear this.

He continues to wait.

The sounds come to a climax.

The woman pleads.

The woman goes silent.

*The soft thump of a body
falling to the floor.*

RICH does not hear this.

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He continues to wait.

Silence.

The bathroom door opens and VIOLET enters, traumatized by what she's seen and heard.

RICH has heard her enter.

He looks at her.

RICH

Are you okay?

Violet?

VIOLET collects herself.

As much as she can.

VIOLET

Could you get me a glass of water, please?

RICH

Yes. Of course.

RICH gets a glass of water for VIOLET while she continues to collect herself.

As much as she can.

RICH hands her the water.

VIOLET

Thank you.

She drinks.

RICH waits.

RICH

Did you hear anything? Or--

Beat.

VIOLET

Well. I will first say that I do not believe you are in any danger.

RICH

Well, that's...that's good.

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VIOLET

Having said that. There is residual energy here.

RICH

Residual?

VIOLET

Something bad happened here, Rich.

RICH

You mean like...somebody died?

VIOLET

Yes. And they suffered.

RICH takes this in.

VIOLET

Sometimes, when something bad...

(No, those aren't the
right words)

Sometimes certain places remember things. Events happen in them, and they are large enough or happen often enough that they imprint themselves. On the place. Like a stain. Like water damage. The shade of it remains in the place long after the people involved. And every once in a while, it still drips. And those drips are that energy. Seeping through. The banging. The people you see out the corner of your eye.

It's important to understand that it is just a stain. It may shock you or scare you, but it doesn't have any awareness. And it doesn't mean you harm. You're just living in a wound that hasn't quite scarred over yet.

RICH

That's--...

VIOLET

...

RICH

What do I do?

VIOLET

I wish I could say more than "you learn to live with it." As much as you can.

It may fade over time. Often renovations or a change in the architecture can rustle these things loose. Sometimes they were there to begin with, long before we came into the picture. And they'll stay long after.

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RICH

I don't know what to say.

VIOLET

That's okay.

I don't, sometimes, either.

Silence.

VIOLET goes to say something else, but decides against it and procures a business card.

She offers it to RICH.

VIOLET

If you ever have more questions or need to talk. If you even just need someone else with you in the space...please call.

RICH

(Taking the card)

Thank you.

Beat.

VIOLET

I know this isn't an easy answer. But you aren't alone.

Everywhere is wounded. We just don't usually think about it unless the one we're in is louder than the others.

I am sorry I couldn't be more helpful.

RICH

No. You have been.

Really.

RICH offers his hand.

Then hesitates, remembering that hand-to-hand contact might not be her preferred method of affirmation.

RICH

Oh, uh...

VIOLET smiles.

Decides.

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And extends her ungloved hand.

RICH takes it.

A moment.

VIOLET

Thank you for having me.

RICH

Thank you for coming.

They break.

Beat.

VIOLET exits.

RICH is alone.

He doesn't really know what to do.

He elects to return to the couch.

He sits.

He takes in the place.

Silence.

From inside the bathroom, the soft thump of a body falling to the floor.

RICH hears this and looks towards the room.

Beat.

He does not get up.

He turns his head away.

He breathes.

And he collects himself.

As much as he can.

END OF PLAY.