

THE EMBRACE
by
Josh Hornbeck

Sample Script
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Originally produced by Life Center Ministries in Tacoma, WA.

THE EMBRACE was first commissioned by Life Center Ministries. It was first performed on January 7, 2012. The piece was directed by Josh Hornbeck. The cast was as follows:

JESS.....Sarah J. Eagen

CAST OF CHARACTERS

JESS, a single mother in the early to mid-twenties.

PLACE

The play takes place in the living room of JESS's apartment.

TIME

The present.

SCENE 1

We find ourselves in the home of JESS EVANS. There is a couch and maybe a chair onstage, along with a little coffee table and maybe a few items scattered across the living room.

As the play begins, we see JESS enter. She is a young woman in her twenties, wearing casual, every-day clothes. She's in the middle of talking with someone off-stage.

JESS

(Calling off-stage-)

I'm tired of your excuses! So... Just leave. Okay? Just leave!

(She turns to the audience.)

Did you see that? I can't believe I finally broke things off with that good-for-nothing, lying and cheating... Well, it's over now and I am never letting him back into my life again.

(A beat.)

Do you know what he did? He told me he was staying late at work, but my sister saw him at the Lamplight with Trudy Jennings of all people. Can you believe it? I'm staying at home - by myself - raising our daughter and he has the nerve to go running around with Trudy Jennings behind my back.

(A beat.)

So that's it. We're done. I've been trying to find the strength to kick Eric out once and for all, and I finally did it. I'm finally on my own.

(A beat.)

I'm on my own. What am I going to do? I'm on my own. How am I gonna pay bills? How am I gonna be able to make ends meet? How am I going to take care of myself and... and my sweet little Victoria?

(A beat.)

Victoria... She's my baby. She's the one good thing to come out of my relationship with Eric. She is my pride, she is the best thing in my life.

(A beat.)

You know what? I can do this. I'm gonna do this. Now that her deadbeat dad isn't around, I can't wait to give Victoria the life I always wanted to give her.

(A beat.)

Eric doesn't think I can do this without him. He doesn't think I'll be able to raise Victoria on my own. I know I'm responsible, I know I can get my life together... Sure, I made a big mistake with Eric, but now, I have the chance to show him that I can do this. I am going to make the most of this chance for a brand-new life.

She exits.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE 2

We're still in JESS's home. Maybe things look a little more disheveled - a few more clothes all over the place, etc.

JESS enters, dressed up to go out for a night on the town. She's talking on the phone.

JESS

(In phone-)

Becky, what do you mean? You said you would love to watch Victoria while I went out with friends.

(A beat.)

Yeah. I get it. Things change. But-

(A beat.)

Becky... I made plans. You can't just...

(A beat.)

Fine. No, it's fine. Whatever. Bye.

(She hangs up the phone.)

I can't believe my sister totally bailed on me. "Joel's taking me out to dinner," she says. "He just surprised me," she says. "How could I say no," she says.

(A beat.)

Easy. You just say no.

(A beat.)

She promised to watch Victoria tonight. I mean, I haven't had a moment to myself in over a year. I wake up at four in the morning so I can drop Victoria off with my mom so I can go to work. Then I rush back to my mom's place and pick Victoria up before my mom has to go to work and then it's just the two of us for the rest of the day.

(A beat.)

I was really looking forward to going out and having some fun tonight. I'm so tired of the same endless routine. I only get five hours a day where I actually get to talk to other adults. It's just... This was going to be the perfect opportunity to get back out there and... and be me again.

(A beat.)

It gets so lonely sometimes. You know? I know I'm better off without Eric, but sometimes I wish we were still together. I keep hoping some Prince Charming is going to come along and sweep me off my feet. But how am I gonna meet him if I'm stuck inside with a child all day?

(A beat.)

(MORE)

JESS (cont'd)

I mean, I know I probably won't meet Prince Charming in a bar - but at least I've got a better chance there than sitting at home all by myself. I've tried the whole on-line dating thing, but it's not really my thing. It's just too weird. I mean, the guys are never the way they describe themselves in their profiles - and almost every one of them uses a picture from like, five years ago. And then it just gets so awkward when you're sitting down at a restaurant waiting to meet a complete and total stranger who you don't even know if you'll have anything in common with. Like I said - it's just too weird.

(A beat.)

But I don't know what else to do... I'm just so tired of being alone.

She exits.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE 3

We're back in JESS's home. It looks a little better. Maybe a few of the items scattered across the stage have finally been tidied.

JESS rushes onstage in her work clothes - a black polo shirt and khaki pants.

JESS

I did it! I did it! I got the supervisor position! I can't believe it! I didn't think my manager would promote me - but she did!

(A beat.)

This is just... This is going to be so amazing. I mean, yeah, there's a lot more responsibility and I'll have to do a lot more work... but I'm totally up for that. And guess what? I'm gonna make more money than I've ever made in my life. Can you believe it? This is going to be so incredible. I'll be able to put Victoria in day care so my mom doesn't have to watch her all the time. And that means I can work the extra hours I have to work as a supervisor. Bills aren't going to be such a struggle anymore. I'll be able to make my car payments on time and take care of rent and electricity and get the new iPhone...

(A beat.)

Oh... And can you imagine...? I'll be able to eat out again. I miss going out to eat so much... I haven't been in a real, sit-down restaurant in so long...

(A beat.)

This is it. This is the step up I needed to really be able to take care of Victoria on my own. We're gonna make it.

She exits.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE 4

We're still in JESS's home. The house looks a little disheveled again. It's the middle of the night.

JESS enters in pajamas and a bathroom. She looks exhausted.

JESS

She's finally asleep. How does she have that much energy at one o'clock in the morning? And how is something that small able to produce so many tears? Shouldn't she just run out or something?

(She looks at her phone.)

Ugh. I have to be up again in two hours. So much for getting a good night's sleep.

(A beat.)

Some days I just really wish I was with Eric again. I wish he would step up and share all this responsibility - take turns getting the baby to sleep so I didn't have to be the one to do it every night. It would be so nice to have someone else in the house. Someone to be around. Someone to help support me so I didn't have to do everything on my own. Someone to help pay the bills and buy groceries.

(A beat.)

Someone to cuddle with again.

(A beat.)

More than anything, I miss cuddling with Eric. And on nights like this, I just want to forget everything he put me through and call him up and ask him to come back.

(A beat.)

But then I remember everything he put me through and I come back to my senses.

(A beat.)

Why couldn't he have been the man I thought he was when we started dating? Why couldn't he have stepped up and been the father that Victoria deserves?

(A beat.)

But now I know he's never going to change. Never.

(A beat.)

But even if he isn't gonna change, when are things gonna change for me? When are things going to get better? When am I going to stop being exhausted all the time?

(A beat.)

I'm just so tired. I need something to change.

She exits.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE 5

We're still in JESS's home. The place looks a little more tidy and clean.

JESS enters in a nice dress, almost as if she's floating on air.

JESS

I just had the best night of my life. Hands down. He was so sweet and so charming. He's my Prince Charming.

(A beat.)

His name's Brad. He's a customer from work. He comes in, like, every morning. And, sure, I've always thought he was cute and everything, but I never for one moment thought that he'd be interested in me. But there I was, making his cappuccino, when he leans over the counter and asks if I want to go out sometime.

(A beat.)

You see, I always knew Prince Charming would come and sweep me off my feet. It was just so magical. I mean, it's so amazing to have someone interested in me again. I haven't had a guy look at me like that since Victoria was born.

(A beat.)

I left Victoria with my mom and Brad took me to one of those really fancy restaurants where they don't put prices on the menu 'cause, you know, if you have to ask, you shouldn't be eating there. I was so nervous. I haven't been out with anyone but Eric in like, three years. And, you know, I felt a little out of place. But Brad is such a nice, genuine, honest guy. We just talked for hours.

(A beat.)

I can really see myself falling for him. I mean, he is everything I've been looking for. He's smart and funny. He seems like he's got his head on straight. He's got a really good job and would be able to support a family. I'd be able to quit work and raise our kids. It would be so amazing.

(A beat.)

Don't worry. I told him about Victoria. And he didn't even bat an eye. He said, "I can't wait to meet her." How awesome is that?

(A beat.)

It's just so refreshing to meet a genuinely nice guy - someone who's actually interested in me.

She exits.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE 6

We're still in JESS's home. Things are a little messier. It's night.

JESS is dressed down in sweats and a T-shirt. She pulls out her cell phone and dials a number.

After a beat-

JESS

(In phone-)

Hey Brad. It's me. Jess.

(A beat.)

I haven't heard from you in a couple weeks - I haven't even seen you at the store - so I was wondering what was going on.

(A beat.)

I really had a great time with you. I'd love to see you again.

(A beat.)

Well. Give me a call back or something when you're able.

(A beat.)

Bye.

(She hangs up the phone and turns to address the audience.)

I guess that's that. It's midnight, my carriage has turned into a pumpkin, and Prince Charming's just a fairy tale. Looks like Victoria and me are still on our own.

(A beat.)

Remember that song - "9 to 5?" Someone ought to change the lyrics to "24/7." That's what it is. Exhausting, draining work twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. I just don't know if I have it in me. I just... I wish everything in my life was different.

(A beat.)

I know, I know... That kinda attitude isn't gonna get me anywhere, is it? Whining about my life isn't going to change anything.

(Pause.)

This is my life, isn't it? No use complaining. I made my choices and this is my life now. I have to make the most of it. I have to stop hoping that things are going to change, waiting to live my life until I have everything figured out, everything put together. I have to take this life I'm living and embrace the day, embrace where I am right here and right now and live this life to the fullest. And I am going to make this work. It doesn't matter if Eric steps up or not. It doesn't matter if I find my Prince Charming. It doesn't even matter if I have to keep living paycheck to paycheck. I'm going to make this work.

(MORE)

JESS (cont'd)

Through the long days and sleepless nights, through the triumphs and the loneliness... It's a new day and I am going to embrace my life.

She exits.

END OF PLAY.