

TBD - TO BE DETERMINED

By
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SYNOPSIS:

Dottie and Ruth Hamilton have always kept their lives in order, living each day in isolated contentment. All of that changes when the Sheriff drops a battered teenage girl on their doorstep and asks them to keep her safe. Neither is prepared for the role of savior and they are even less inclined when they find out the girl is really a boy and the one who has almost killed her is her father, one of the most respected members of their small community.

TBD refers to both the gender of the young woman and to whether there women will step out of their well defined world to save this young adult they don't even understand.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS (4F, 2M, 1 M/F)

RUTHIE ROSE HAMILTON: A no-nonsense, rigid, sixty-five year old, country woman, raised to be gentler than this life has allowed her to be. She rules her world and her sister with love, but in black and white terms.

DOTTIE LORRAINE HAMILTON: Ruthie's slightly older sister. A small, seemingly genteel sixty-eight year old woman, stronger in many ways than her fragile frame implies.

ROBERT (ROBBIE) PARKER Thirty five years old and a good guy, as well as the local Sheriff.

AMBER: An battered and abused nineteen year old girl with lots of anger-issues and a big secret.

SHEILA RAY

The town gossip and hair dresser. A woman who's been thirty years old for at least the last fifteen years. She sports bright fuscia hair.

DOC MARSHALL:

Mid-Fifties, the most influential and most beloved man in town.

JANIE MARSHALL:

Doc's wife, a woman who hides her secrets with prescription drugs.

SCENE AND TIME

The entire play takes place in the living room and on the porch of the Hamilton's old, weathered, farmhouse in the rural south. The time is the present, but in some of these isolated communities people tend to live as though time stopped in the sixties. And for many of them, it did.

DOTTIE'S VOICE

Oh, give it a rest, Ruthie. Whether he's staying or not, he needs to sit down to meals. Now either you get him a chair or I will.

Ruth reluctantly pulls another chair to the table, then to make her point, she takes a newspaper and covers the chair.

RUTH

Only today. Not tomorrow. And I can't believe you let him stay in Charlie's old room. He's probably rolling in his grave right now.

Dottie re-enters with napkins which she folds for the table. Seeing the newspaper on the chair, she picks it up and carries it out.

DOTTIE

Sister, that room has been empty and used as a dumping ground for over thirty years and I don't think brother is going to mind somebody finally putting some life back in it.

RUTH

This is not a bed and breakfast.

DOTTIE

"She" has to eat.

RUTH

She? Now's she's she. Which is it? She or he?

DOTTIE

Right now, I don't give a cow's poop.

RUTH

Well, I do and 'he' can eat someplace else. And why's 'he' sleeping so long?

DOTTIE

Because he had a hard night, I mean, "She" had a hard night. The aspirin didn't hold and we were up four or five times...

RUTH

(pushing the chair up to the table)

I don't know why you're so damned accepting? There's right and there's wrong and pretending doesn't change that.

(crossing into the kitchen)

Calling him a she isn't going to make it true.

DOTTIE

Oh come on. What does it hurt? If he wants to be a she, what does it hurt?

RUTH'S VOICE

It's wrong. If God had wanted him to be girl, he would have made him a girl.

DOTTIE

Well, maybe he did.

RUTH

So now you're sayin' God made that thing upstairs.

DOTTIE

Of course he did. God made everything, even ornery sisters like you.

RUTH

If God had wanted him to be a her, he'd have done it right off the bat.

(coming back in with a
steaming cup of coffee)

And I mean before he was born, not just because he likes to wear dresses.

DOTTIE

I didn't say I understand it.

RUTH

Because there is nothing to understand. That kid up there is a freak and you know it.

DOTTIE

Oh, stop being mean. It's not like you.
(calling again up the stairs)
Breakfast is on.

RUTH

It **is** like me.
(shouting up)
You. Weird-O. Get your ass out of that bed.

DOTTIE

What is wrong with you? Acting like there isn't a caring bone in your body?

RUTH

There isn't.

DOTTIE'S VOICE

(crossing back into the
kitchen)

He needs a place to stay.

RUTH

Fine. Just not here.

DOTTIE

(suddenly popping back out
of the kitchen, defiantly.)

And why not?

*Ruth is taken back by Dottie's
intensity and the question.
She looks up the stairwell to
make sure nobody is listening
and then says to Dottie*

RUTH

You know perfectly well, why not?

DOTTIE

Ruthie, that was more'n twenty years ago. Done and buried.

*Suddenly Amber appears at the
head of the stairs and slowly,
painfully, makes her way down.
She is wearing a nightgown.
Her eyeliner from the previous
night is still smeared and she
looks like she'd got black eyes.*

AMBER

You were right last night Miss Dottie. I do feel like a train
ran over me.

DOTTIE

(hurrying to her, to help)

I'm sorry, dear. Ruth can run in for something stronger after
breakfast.

RUTH

What? Run where? Me?

DOTTIE

Food'll help. Do you want scrambled, or over?

AMBER

I'm not really hungry.

DOTTIE

Well, you've got to eat something. Won't get better without food.

AMBER

Whichever's easiest.

DOTTIE

Scrambled then. And there's coffee or iced tea.

(MORE)

DOTTIE (CONT'D)

(as she eases Amber into
her chair)

And biscuits under the napkin there.

AMBER

Thanks.

(turning to look at Ruth)

I'm sorry about last night. I'm not usually like that.

RUTH

You mean, pretending to be a girl or that big mouth of yours?

DOTTIE

(crossing out to the kitchen)

Let me get on those eggs. Fresh this morning.

(turning back to Ruth)

And sister, you behave.

*There is a long uncomfortable
silence as the two adversaries
avoid looking at each other.
Dottie can be heard in the
kitchen.*

RUTH

Chickens aren't layin' like they should. Too hot.

(another beat)

Dottie says it's because I name 'em after people I don't like.

(another pause)

What'd you say your name was?

*Amber gives Ruth a look, then
just shakes her head and it
hurts.*

AMBER

Ohhhh!

*After another long period of
silence*

RUTH

Okay, I want to know something?

(on Amber's look)

Is this the first time?

AMBER

First time what? I don't understand.

RUTH

{That}He beat you up?

(a beat) AMBER
 No.
 RUTH
 For being a freak?
 AMBER
 I'm not a freak.
 RUTH
 Okay, for you being you.
 AMBER
 No.
 RUTH
 No what?
 DOTTIE
 (entering with eggs)
 What?
 RUTH
 I asked him if this was the first time Doc had beaten him up.
 AMBER
 For being a freak.
 DOTTIE
 Ruth Rose, if you don't pull your horns in, I'm going to get a
 skillet and smack you up the side of your head.
 (to Amber)
 She didn't mean it.
 RUTH
 Yes I did.
 DOTTIE
 You stop calling him a freak.
 AMBER
 Her.
 DOTTIE
 Sorry, her.
 RUTH
 See, even you can't get it straight.
 (to Amber)
 Why don't you just say you're a sissy boy and leave it at that?
 AMBER
 Because I'm not a boy.

RUTH

If you're gay, you're a sissy boy to me.

DOTTIE

Ruth, this is not a topic for breakfast...

AMBER

I'm not gay.

RUTH

What?

AMBER

I said, "I'm not gay."

RUTH

What?

DOTTIE

She said she's not ...

RUTH

I heard what **he** said, but **he** came in here last night dressed like a cheap street walker,...and got beat up for pretending to be a girl, and...

AMBER

I never dress like a street walker and I'm not gay.

RUTH

So you date girls?

AMBER

No, that would be gay, 'cause I'm a girl. And for your information, I don't date anyone. Male or female. I'm not ready yet. I'm not all me yet. But I am a girl, a woman, and when I do trust someone enough to date, it will be a man.

DOTTIE

Now, I'm a little confused.

RUTH

A little?

(to Amber)

Is any thing about you real.

AMBER

I'm real.

(then with more passion)

I am real.

RUTH

Those tits?

Ruthie Rose?
DOTTIE
RUTH
Well, I want to know. He says he's a she. Well, is he?

AMBER
Yes.

RUTH
Yes, what?

AMBER
Yes, They are real.

*Both older women are suddenly
starring.*

AMBER (CONT'D)
(after a beat, uncomfortably)
Well, you don't have to stare.

DOTTIE
(embarrassed, jumps up)
I think we need more coffee.

RUTH
We don't need more coffee. Sit down, Dottie. Are you telling me those are not just socks?

AMBER
No, I mean yes.

RUTH
Don't babble me, kid. They're either real or not.

AMBER
Then yes, they're real.

RUTH
Liar.

AMBER
(angry)
What? You want me to flip them out to prove it?

RUTH AND DOTTIE
No!

DOTTIE
This breakfast's getting cold. Eat! My, don't these eggs look good?

Everyone makes an uncomfortable attempt at eating but Ruth just can't keep from stealing a look at Amber's chest. Amber catches her and Ruth looks away, but can't help looking back. Amber finally gives in.

AMBER

And they're not fake either. I didn't have anything done. They're mine.

RUTH

They can't be. Boy's don't have breasts.

AMBER

Duh!!! But girls do.

RUTH

But you're not...

AMBER

You don't believe me, touch 'em.

RUTH AND DOTTIE

No!

AMBER

Then don't tell me they're not mine.

RUTH

(accepting the dare)

Okay. Okay. Okay. I'll touch them.

DOTTIE

Ruthie Rose, you will not start fondling this child.

RUTH

I'm not going to fondle. I just want to know.

She tentatively reaches out and touches Amber's chest... and her hand freezes. Then she begins squeezing it like a rubber horn.

AMBER

Ow...

RUTH

O...mi...god. It's real. Dottie, feel this?

DOTTIE

I will not.

RUTH

No, it's real. This feels like a real breast.

AMBER

It is a real breast. I told you so. Now, do you mind giving it back to me?

Ruth jerks her hand back and all three focus only on their plates. Nobody looks up during the next exchange.

AMBER (CONT'D)

Satisfied?

DOTTIE

I can't believe such a thing as this is happening at my breakfast table.

RUTH

I may never eat again. Jesus H. Christ, A boy with real tits. Is the hair real, too?

AMBER

Most of it. Some of its extensions. Mine's not as thick.

RUTH

And down there.

DOTTIE

Stop that!

(suddenly adamant)

Ruthie Rose, We are not discussing private parts over breakfast!

RUTH

Then clear this mess away. I want to know.

DOTTIE

It is none of our business. I don't go in when you're on the pot. And this is the same thing. Some things are private. And nice ladies don't talk about private things. Now eat!

All three resume staring at their plates and trying to eat.

DOTTIE (CONT'D)

So how was college?

RUTH

Dottie Lorraine, he's sitting over there with tits and you're asking about college? I want to know how he got them.

AMBER

How do you think I got them. I grew them.

He grew them. DOTTIE

She. AMBER

Sorry, **She** grew them. DOTTIE
 (trying to refocus on
 breakfast)

My, don't these tomatoes look good. Fresh-picked this morning.

Girls have breasts. Some big, some small, mine just happen to be
 this size. AMBER

And I'm sure they're very nice. DOTTIE

But you're a boy. RUTH

No, I'm not. I mean, everyone would like me to be, but I'm not.
 Never was. AMBER

*(There is another pregnant pause.
 Ruth starts to make a comment,
 then doesn't. Finally..._*

More coffee? DOTTIE

No. I'm fine. AMBER

You've hardly eaten a thing. I could fix pancakes. DOTTIE

No. I'm...just not so hungry. More sore than anything. AMBER

Dottie gives Ruth a look.

I didn't squeeze that hard. RUTH

No, they're bruised, but not from you. I'll heal. I always do.
 (then to Ruth)
 It's not the first time. AMBER

Doc? DOTTE

AMBER

And it wasn't just because I was...me. Dad never needed an excuse. It's just who he is. Maybe not to anybody else, but to Mom and Me.

DOTTIE

I'm sorry, that just doesn't sound like the Doc we all know and love. He's always been so nice.

AMBER

I guess he's like me.

RUTH

Omigod, does the doc have breasts?

AMBER

No. It's just that what you see on the outside, isn't what's really there.

