

Dropping Things Off Rooftops of Short Buildings

A Ten Minute Play

By: S. A. Ellis

<u>CHARACTER.</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>AGE/GENDER</u>
RIAN	Good at pretending to have life figured out. Sibling to Michael and James	27/Nonbinary
MICHAEL	Too tired to pretend Brother to Rian and James	25/Male

Time:

Mid afternoon, it is still the workday, but it is definitely not morning. Modern day.

Setting:

The rooftop of a 3-story apartment building.

A CONFRONTATION

On the rooftop of a not particularly tall building, RIAN sits with their feet dangling off the ledge. They drop a peanut down below and watch as it falls to the ground before dropping another. MICHAEL enters, rushed, disheveled, with his bag still over his shoulder. He sees RIAN, and stops in his tracks.

MICHAEL

What are you doing here?

RIAN

Counting.

MICHAEL

Counting?

RIAN

It doesn't take very long for these to hit the ground.

MICHAEL

What?

RIAN

These peanuts. You want one? We have a bunch.

MICHAEL

What? No.

Why are you here?

RIAN

Mr. Kenny called me.

MICHAEL

Fucking Christ. I told him not to say anything.

RIAN

He said that.

MICHAEL

I'm fine.

RIAN

Clearly. That's why you ran all the way up here.

Peanut?

MICHAEL

No, thanks.

I just came up for the view.

RIAN

We live in a 3 story building. The view is some guy changing in the window across the street.

MICHAEL

What are you doing up here Ri? Really.

RIAN

Other than drawing in a small army of birds on the ground floor, and perching on the naked neighbor?

MICHAEL

You're not as funny as you think you are.

A pause

RIAN

Do you think I'm enjoying this?

MICHAEL

I always took you for some kind of sadist.

RIAN

You're not as funny as you think you are.

MICHAEL

Says you.

RIAN

You know. Today, I had a huge presentation at work, the first one since I got back from leave. I was pitching a whole new line for the company. Something that I worked very hard on, day and night. For weeks. And I was going to be leading something. Finally leading something, like I always wanted.

But then I get my weekly call from Mr. Kenny, and I have to do my usual spiel. "I'm sorry guys, I have to leave... Yeah, my brother ran out on his job again.... I have to go make sure he doesn't try to throw himself off our building."

Do you think you could have a schedule ready for me? Of when this is going to happen, so that I can be prepared, I can ask for the day off.

MICHAEL

That's not what I was doing.

RIAN

I don't believe you.

MICHAEL

I just got overwhelmed at work, I needed some peace and quiet.

RIAN

You can't just leave for some "peace and quiet," Mr. Kenny is not going to keep doing us favors. We already can't afford this apartment without...

Anyway, you're on thin ice. And it's gettin' real hot, Mike. I can't pay for everything.

MICHAEL

It's not going to. I'll talk to him. I'll explain all of it.

RIAN

Fine.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry, Ri.

RIAN

I know

MICHAEL

I'm sorry.

RIAN

I know.

MICHAEL

You don't forgive me.

RIAN

What do you want me to say Michael?

MICHAEL

I want you to forgive me. I want to lay on the couch with you and watch shitty reality tv. Like we used to. I want to clean the dishes after he makes dinner. And I want to clean them again after you make dessert.

It's just, I see him everywhere. I feel like I'm going crazy, like actually crazy. Like, mental-patient-straight-jacket-hospital-stay crazy. I could have sworn he came into work, I just kept staring at some poor guy at the bar. I really freaked him out. I had to leave, I had to get out of there.

RIAN

It's not the same.

MICHAEL

Do you really blame me that much?

RIAN

I don't want to.

MICHAEL

What changed?

RIAN

I just don't understand. Why would you be doing this if it wasn't your fault? You feel guilty. Why shouldn't I blame you. You already blame yourself.

MICHAEL

Of course I feel guilty. He called me. Five times. And I didn't answer. I'm the reason he is gone. How else am I meant to feel? Completely normal? Good? If I had just answered the fucking phone we would be normal. We would all be at our respective jobs, and everything would be fine.

RIAN

I will never understand.

MICHAEL

What?

RIAN

Why he called you. Why didn't he call me? I would have ran. I would have.... I don't know, commandeered someone's car? I would have stopped time. I would have been there when he needed me. I know when people decide to... you can't change their minds. But if he had just fucking called me. Instead of you. If you had just answered. Why couldn't you answer?

MICHAEL

Does it matter? I can't change it.

RIAN

Why couldn't you just answer your phone?

MICHAEL

Stop it.

RIAN

Tell me. Not knowing makes me sick. I'm nauseous all the time. I can't sleep in our apartment, I'm running out of friends to stay with/

MICHAEL

/I called the movers yesterday. They said they can get everything packed and out by next Thursday, if we need. And they can move it into the new place by Friday.

RIAN

Just tell me.

MICHAEL

You won't have to keep couch hopping.

RIAN

God, I'm leaving.

RIAN presses the bag of peanuts into
MICHAEL's chest.

MICHAEL

I don't want these.

RIAN

Take them. We have pounds of them. Give them to some squirrels or something, I don't care.

MICHAEL

I didn't ask you to come here.

RIAN

I was trying to make sure you didn't fling yourself into the street.
But I'm over trying to save you. So if you are so determined to see James, tell him I'm sorry. And I miss him.

MICHAEL

You know, you're a bitch Rian.

RIAN

Excuse you?

MICHAEL

You think you're the only one that is allowed to be upset? You're the only one that can miss him? I lost my brother too. And I have to live with knowing that I could have done something about it. I could have talked to him, I know that. I don't need my sibling reminding me every waking second that I could have stopped this. Because I *know*. And I have to live the rest of my life *knowing* that I could have just answered one of the 5 calls. And I didn't, because I was already guilty. I was late on rent. Again. I was begging Mr. Kenny for an advance on my check. Again. I was embarrassed. I was guilty. I didn't want him to chew me out for being irresponsible. Again.
So I didn't answer.

RIAN

God that's a shitty reason to kill our brother.

MICHAEL

You're the one throwing his shit off the roof.

RIAN

You wanted to keep the 10 pound bag of peanuts that's going stale in our pantry? Of all his things. You won't even touch them. You refuse to even acknowledge it. Take one. It's not going to hurt you.

RIAN holds out a handful of peanuts to
MICHAEL. He doesn't take one.

Yeah. That's what I thought.

MICHAEL

I wanted to keep everything.

RIAN

Except the home we lived in? You're ready to just pack it up and leave. And ignore the past 5 years of our lives. What do you plan on doing with his things then?

MICHAEL

We can't *afford* it. You said so yourself.

RIAN

What are you going to do. Get a storage unit, let all of his things sit and collect dust in some musty, damp closet? Give it away to the neighbors? Throw it into the street like me? I can go run downstairs really quick and we can have some target practice with his DVD collection.

MICHAEL

You didn't used to be this cruel.

RIAN

Well I have one less person to keep me in check these days.

MICHAEL

It's not like I want to move.

But you won't even sleep here. I can't sleep at all. I see him in my dreams. I see him on the street. He's everywhere. I feel like I'm seeing ghosts. Maybe I am. I don't know. I don't feel real anymore, Rian.

I know you blame me, and I just have to be okay with that. But I'm going crazy. I feel so alone.

RIAN sits back down next to MICHAEL and rest their head on his shoulder.

RIAN

I don't want to blame you.

I just want to blame something.

RIAN picks up the bag of peanuts and eats a couple

These taste like nothing. I'll never get his whole thing with them.

They hold the bag out to MICHAEL

Peanut?

He takes a handful

MICHAEL

He always did have bad taste.

RIAN

I could make some Pad Thai tonight. You can do the dishes.

MICHAEL

Here?

RIAN

I guess I should spend some time in this place before we leave it.
I can try to sleep in a real bed, instead of someone else's couch.

MICHAEL

Try?

RIAN

Try.

BLACKOUT
END OF PLAY