

NOCTURNAL

by Ramón Esquivel

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Nocturnal was developed at the 2008 New Visions / New Voices residency at John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, District of Columbia.

The play premiered at Bloomington Playwrights Project in Bloomington, Indiana in January 2009.

CHARACTERS

CISCO - a smart boy, 15

RYKER - a small boy, 15

ROLLY - a big boy, 16

AMELIA - a tom boy, 16

SETTING

Night. The present. A suburb.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Running time: 40-50 minutes.

When produced with its companion piece *Nasty*, *Nocturnal* should play second.

The script calls for four settings: High School, Playground, Exterior of Amelia's House, and a Train Trestle. In the BPP production, these were achieved through a flexible set piece resembling a playground jungle gym.

(Darkness. Silence. Then a flashlight)

RYKER

(offstage, through walkie-talkie)

Sector 1 clear. Sector 2?

(A second flashlight)

CISCO

(offstage, through a walkie-talkie)

Sector 2 clear. Sector 3?

(silence)

Sector 3!

(A third flashlight)

ROLLY

(offstage, not through a walkie-talkie)

Sector 3 clear!

RYKER

All units, go.

(CISCO and RYKER enter dressed as would-be saboteurs. Down a man, RYKER calls out)

All units, go!

(ROLLY enters with a combat roll, similarly dressed and carrying a bag)

CISCO

Those judo lessons are paying off, man.

ROLLY

Next time I get a walkie-talkie.

RYKER

Next time. Definitely.

ROLLY

I brought 'em.

CISCO

We promise.

RYKER

Keep an eye out.

(The boys stand outside the HIGH SCHOOL.
They shine lights on a window with "SENIORS!"
painted on it in fat bubble letters)

CISCO

This it?

RYKER

Apparently.

ROLLY

This is the Senior Prank?

RYKER

Lame, uh? School-sanctioned vandalism. Vice Principal
even supervised it.

CISCO

This paint comes right off.

ROLLY

Bubble letters. Their prank sucks.

RYKER

Let's improve it.

(CISCO and RYKER position flashlights to
illuminate work area. ROLLY pulls cans of
spray-paint from bag and distributes them)

ROLLY

Wait, how do you spell "sophomores" again?

S-O-P-H-O-M-O-R-E-S. CISCO

Two o's? ROLLY

Three. CISCO

Can't count either? RYKER

I meant three. ROLLY

Rolly, you do the S-O-P. RYKER

'Kay. ROLLY

Cisco does H-O-M-O. RYKER

Saw that coming. CISCO

I got R-E-S and the exclamation point. RYKER

(ALL paint and converse)

This paint washable? CISCO

Nope. Janitor will be scraping it off for days. ROLLY

Poor guy. CISCO

He has to clean up Senior Prank crap anyway. RYKER

CISCO

Humiliating. There's no justice at this school.

ROLLY

Just figure that out?

RYKER

If you feel bad, clean it up.

CISCO

I'd earn service points for Honor Society.

ROLLY

Glad I'm not in Honor Society.

CISCO

Keep reaching for those stars, man.

RYKER

Cleaning it would be a good cover. But they'll make the sophomores do it.

CISCO

I used to think it was "soft-mores."

ROLLY

See? That's why I asked.

CISCO

Turns out it's derived from the Greek *sophisma*. To acquire wisdom or skill.

RYKER

Ah. *Sophisma*. Related to *sophist*? Purveyor of shallow knowledge?

CISCO

According to Plato.

ROLLY

You do this on purpose.

RYKER

Sophisma, not to be confused with Sappho, Classic poetess of the Island of Lesbos.

CISCO

The Island of Lesbos must have been so hot.

RYKER

I doubt Sappho was hot.

CISCO

She was Classic hot. Big ol' boobies.

ROLLY

Awesome.

CISCO

Big ol' booty.

ROLLY

Me likey!

CISCO

I gotta get myself a big poster of Sappho.

ROLLY

Was there really an island of lesbians?

RYKER

Welcome to the world of Classics.

ROLLY

Man, I should've taken Latin with you guys, instead of Spanish.

CISCO

Pero Espanol es una lengua muy interesante tambien.

ROLLY

Is that Spanish?

CISCO

Just worry about English.

RYKER

Let's have a look.

(They pick up flashlights and step back to admire their work. Their crude "SOPHOMORES")

covers the bubbly "SENIORS" beneath it)

CISCO

Beauty, eh?

(Improvised compliments on each other's artwork. They are quite impressed)

RYKER

Sweet revenge.

ROLLY

Yeah, Ryker. This ought to teach those seniors not to shove your head down a toilet.

RYKER

What did I tell you about that?

(CISCO and ROLLY laugh. RYKER punches ROLLY)

ROLLY

"Don't bring up the swirly."

RYKER

I meant it.

CISCO

We're sorry, man.

RYKER

I still haven't forgiven you guys for ditching me that day.

CISCO

We're here now, aren't we?

ROLLY

Risking our lives ...

CISCO

--And academic reputations ...

ROLLY

--Uh, yeah. But why are we giving sophomores the credit?

RYKER

Really? Three explanations weren't enough?

ROLLY

I mean, I get it, but ...

CISCO

---You want us to paint "FRESHMEN?"

ROLLY

We are freshmen. We deserve the glory.

RYKER

No capacity for strategic thinking.

CISCO

Seniors know that juniors aren't stupid enough to do this. And they know freshmen aren't brave enough.

RYKER

Even if we are.

ROLLY

And sophomores?

RYKER

Sophomores are stupid enough and brave enough.

CISCO

And will therefore feel the senior wrath.

ROLLY

That's really smart.

RYKER

This is the stuff we learn in Latin class.

(A sharp pea whistle from off-stage)

ROLLY

Run!

RYKER

Lights!

(Flashlights off)

CISCO

Rendezvous!

(In darkness, CISCO, RYKER and ROLLY flee.
ROLLY runs into a garbage can)

ROLLY

Man down!

RYKER (off-stage)

Damn it, Rolly!

ROLLY

Don't say my name, Ryker!

(Another pea whistle, closer.

Silence. Darkness.

A flashlight scans the crime scene.
A garbage can is over-turned. A window
has been vandalized. Twice. A figure
enters and picks up can of spray paint.
The figure exits)

(THE PLAYGROUND, a few blocks away. A big playground structure dominates the space.

RYKER enters first, clearly shaken. He does not notice when CISCO enters)

CISCO

Hey.

(RYKER startles)

RYKER

Someone screwed us.

CISCO

We don't know that. Security guard just did his job.

RYKER

We did two nights of recon! The security guard checks outside the school at midnight, two o'clock and four o'clock. It's 2:27 now.

CISCO

Yeah, but he could've changed his ...

RYKER

---Two nights! We watched him go back in at 2:13. His next round isn't due for another hour and a half.

CISCO

A neighbor probably saw us. Or heard us. We're not ninjas.

RYKER

Someone screwed us.

(CISCO sees ROLLY approaching off-stage)

CISCO

Here comes Train Wreck.

RYKER

Limping like an old man.

ROLLY

You guys are dicks.

CISCO

You really nailed that garbage can.

ROLLY

It was dark. And thanks for ditching me.

RYKER

Sucks to be ditched by your friends, yeah?

ROLLY

Banged up my knee. It better not mess up my judo.

CISCO

I wouldn't worry about that.

RYKER

Someone screwed us.

ROLLY

Yeah?

RYKER

Definitely.

CISCO

Maybe.

RYKER

Only we three knew about this.

ROLLY

I didn't say anything.

CISCO

Me neither.

RYKER

No one at school?

ROLLY

Who would I tell?

RYKER

True, we are your only friends. Did you?

CISCO

Me? What about you?

RYKER

Why would I blow my own plan?

CISCO

Blackmail.

ROLLY

Blackmail!

RYKER

What? If I was gonna blackmail you, I would ...

(A pea whistle from nearby)

ROLLY

--He followed us!

CISCO

Run!

(All three scatter.)

AMELIA enters carrying a can of spray paint and wearing a whistle around her neck. She calls after the guys)

AMELIA

You left some evidence behind!

CISCO (offstage)

Amelia!

(AMELIA blows the whistle again, sets down the paint, and exits. The boys enter and examine the can)

RYKER

Damn it, Cisco!

ROLLY
She blew the whistle?

CISCO
Who dropped a can?

RYKER
Stupid Roland.

ROLLY
Don't call me that.

RYKER (calling off)
You're gonna pay for this, Amelia!

(CISCO starts laughing)

ROLLY
What's so funny?

CISCO
Come on, she burned us good.

RYKER
What if we got caught?

CISCO
We didn't.

RYKER
But what if we did? Security guard could have heard her
whistle and nabbed us.

CISCO
But he didn't.

RYKER
"Zero Tolerance," remember? Getting expelled doesn't look
so hot on a transcript. No Notre Dame for you, Cisco.

CISCO
Relax. We're safe.

ROLLY

We told you specifically: "Don't say anything to Amelia."

CISCO

I know. But you know how things kind of slip out sometimes?

RYKER

Never. I always say exactly what I mean to say.

CISCO

You don't ever talk to girls. You don't know how it is.

RYKER

Why did she screw up my plan?

CISCO

She hates the people in her class. When I told her about our plan, she wanted to go. I said no.

ROLLY

Ryker would have shat his pants if Amelia showed up.

CISCO

I know, right? She was still pissed.

RYKER

I told you to never trust that little ...

CISCO

--Don't.

(beat)

ROLLY

Whoa. Defending her honor.

RYKER

Oh, he's always chivalrous when it comes to Amelia. I have no idea what you see in her.

CISCO

Dude, you asked her out last year.

ROLLY

Eighth grade boat dance.

RYKER

I was desperate.

CISCO

Especially when she turned you down.

RYKER

Whatever. That was middle school. We're in high school now. We got real women now.

ROLLY

Passing on the left, on the right ...

CISCO

---Never stopping ...

RYKER

---My point is: Those women are hot and Amelia's not.

ROLLY

Yeah, Amelia's like ... she's like a guy.

CISCO

You guys are just pissed because she burned us. Give her some credit for that.

RYKER

She can do no wrong. All because she gave you a little ...

CISCO

---Don't say it.

ROLLY

Wait, what?

(RYKER laughs)

CISCO

I swear to God, Ryker ...

ROLLY

--Come on! What?

RYKER
Tell him. It's good ol' Rolly.

ROLLY
You hooked up with her!

CISCO
No!

RYKER
Not quite.

CISCO
We just kind of kissed and stuff.

RYKER
"And stuff." What's this "and stuff?"

ROLLY
You ... ?! When?!

CISCO
This summer.

RYKER
His lifelong dream. Didn't quite work out, though, did it?

CISCO
Drop it.

ROLLY
Details.

CISCO
I'm not giving details.

ROLLY
Like hell you're not. I want details. I need details.

RYKER
Throw him some scraps.

CISCO
I told her I wouldn't say anything.

ROLLY

You told Ryker!

CISCO

He used witchcraft on me.

RYKER

Oh, my wicked, wicked ways. But the details are boring. It was -- how should I say it? -- an aborted attempt by Cisco.

ROLLY

You got her pregnant?

CISCO

No! God!

RYKER

Nice one.

CISCO

See why I didn't tell you? You're so stupid about sex.

ROLLY

Don't say I'm stupid.

RYKER

Just tell him.

CISCO

I shouldn't have even told you.

RYKER

Don't wanna break her trust? She broke yours.

CISCO

She burned us. Get over it.

RYKER

She crossed me. That calls for revenge.

ROLLY

Yes. Revenge!

(to CISCO)
You're gonna give me details later.

CISCO
You going after her?

RYKER
Yup.

CISCO
Now?

RYKER
Massive retaliation.

ROLLY
"Revenge is a dish that is best served cold."

RYKER
Well said, *Wrath of Khan*.

CISCO
Look, if we wake up her family, they'll kill us.

ROLLY
They'll kill you.

RYKER
Like you said, she burned us. If she's really as "cool,
not hot" as you say, she'll take some heat in return.

ROLLY
What did you have in mind?

(RYKER pulls out his can of spray-paint)

RYKER
One word, four letters, written on her window.

ROLLY
What?

RYKER
S-L-U-T.

CISCO
No way.

ROLLY
"Slut."

RYKER
Very good.

CISCO
She'll know you did it.

RYKER
Of course she will. And when she comes after me, I'll
tell her what you told me.

CISCO
No, you won't.

RYKER
Watch me.

ROLLY
I hear she really got around last year.

(CISCO punches ROLLY in the arm)

CISCO
She didn't.

ROLLY
I just hear rumors, you know?

CISCO
Those rumors piss her off ...

RYKER
---Well, she pisses me off. Hand over your walkie-talkie.
(CISCO gives his walkie-talkie to ROLLY)
Get your can, Rolly.

(CISCO picks up the can on the ground)

CISCO
Don't do this, guys.

ROLLY

Give me the cans.

CISCO

Our moms are friends. She tells her mom everything, who tells my mom everything ...

RYKER

---Don't be such a gay boy.

CISCO

Come on! Sex and a Catholic mom? She'll cry first, and then she'll slap the hell out of me w
--Rolly!

ROLLY

Come over tomorrow and help me beat Joyride Miami. I got the code for unlimited armor-piercing bullets.

(ROLLY starts to leave)

CISCO

I'm gonna stop you guys.

ROLLY

Don't worry. I won't let it get out of hand.

(ROLLY exits after RYKER. CISCO dutifully drops empty cans in garbage. He exits)

END OF EXCERPT