

EVERYDAY MONSTERS

by

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A One-Act Play

10 pages, 25-30 Minutes

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## EVERYDAY MONSTERS

### SYNOPSIS

A man confronts his abuser 27 years after the fact. Issues of sexual trauma and white power emerge as the two men hurl conflicting memories at each other, and the tension builds to a shattering conclusion.

### CHARACTERS (2M)

DOUGLAS RYAN NELSON

White male, age 67

A successful writer of romance novels, Douglas has a history of abusing adolescent boys. Cynical and narcissistic, he is more than willing to use his power and privilege as a wealthy White man to ensnare his victims, one of whom, decades earlier, was a Black 13-year-old boy named Timothy. Now Douglas finds Timothy on his doorstep, armed with a gun.

TIMOTHY PARKER

Black or mixed race male, age 40

Now a 40-year-old college professor, at age 13 he was a victim of Douglas's sexual abuse. After a life of self-loathing, internalized homophobia, and failed relationships, he appears at Douglas's door seeking answers to why he was chosen. He is carrying a gun; what does he intend to do with it?

### SETTING

A simple set representing the den of the home of a best-selling author. Two comfortable chairs facing each other, each with a small end table on its downstage side. Small bar upstage with a few bottles with expensive labels, including The Macallen scotch, two glasses, and a carafe of water. Other furnishings as desired. A doorway exits to a hall that connects to the unseen front door of the house.

### TIME

The present.

### PUNCTUATION

Commas are inserted or omitted to indicate spoken rhythm and may not conform to the standard rules of grammar.

[ ] Words in square brackets are there for context, not to be spoken.

/ Slashes indicate where one character's speech breaks into another's.

ALL CAPS indicate words might receive some emphasis.

### CONTENT WARNINGS

This play references rape and childhood sexual abuse although neither is depicted on stage. A gun is seen on stage and there is the sound of a gunshot in darkness.

The script has adult language and content, including one instance each of the "N-word" for African-Americans and the "F-word" for gay men. With the permission of the author, less volatile words may be substituted.

### NOTE

Finger quotes are indicated one time. Otherwise avoid them.

Night. Lights come up on a comfortable, cultured man's retreat. Easy chairs, side tables, small bar with a few bottles of expensive liquor including The Macallen scotch, two glasses, and a carafe of water. DOUGLAS, a 67-year-old White novelist, sits holding his phone. He is muttering to himself as he scans a dark website for meeting very young men.

DOUGLAS

No. (*Swipes left.*) No. (*Swipes left.*) Hmm. He's cute. Except for the braces. (*Swipes left.*) Huh. It's been a long time since I've had a Latino. I wonder if he's really under sixteen. Some of them look a lot younger than they really are. (*Swipes right.*)

Knocking is heard. Then a doorbell.

DOUGLAS

At this hour?

More insistent knocking and ringing.

DOUGLAS (cont'd)

Hold your horses, I'm coming!

Douglas places his phone on the side table next to his chair and exits. Sound of a door opening.

DOUGLAS (off)

Who the hell are you? Do you have any idea what/ [time it is]?

TIMOTHY (off)

/Get back in the house, old man. Move!

Sound of the door forcefully closing. Douglas enters with his hands up. TIMOTHY follows holding a gun. He is a 40-year-old Black man dressed as the college professor he is, including a sports jacket perhaps right down to the elbow patches.

DOUGLAS

What do you want? If it's money you're looking for you're going to be sadly disappointed. I don't keep cash in the house.

TIMOTHY

(*Like a 13-year-old.*)

Excuse me, sir. I was just wondering if you needed your grass cut.

Douglas, surprised, turns and lowers his hands. He looks his captor up and down.

DOUGLAS

... Well, I'll be damned.

TIMOTHY  
(*As an adult, firmly.*)

Oh, I think you can count on that.

DOUGLAS

What are YOU doing here?

TIMOTHY

I have questions I need answered.

DOUGLAS

At midnight? After, what, twenty-five years?

TIMOTHY

Twenty-seven.

DOUGLAS

How time flies. After twenty-SEVEN years, your questions couldn't have waited one more day, at a more reasonable hour?

TIMOTHY

No. They couldn't. I planned to be here earlier, but there was something I needed to finish first. ... So. Churning out popular romance novels buys you this the kind of elegance.

DOUGLAS

It's cozy.

TIMOTHY

Different from what you lived in back in the day ... and different from what I can afford on an English professor's salary, that's for sure.

DOUGLAS

English professor? You've certainly come up in the world. Put that gun away why don't you. You don't really plan to use it. Not my Timmy.

TIMOTHY

Your TIMMY? I aged out of that role a long time ago. Besides, there was never supposed to be a "Timmy." I told you that. My mama named me after Paul's friend Timothy in the Bible and she said Paul never called him "Timmy" so nobody should call ME that.

DOUGLAS

Your mama and her rules! I kept telling you to call me Doug, but oh no. It was always "Mr. Nelson." Even when we were in bed together.

TIMOTHY

She taught me never to call an adult by his first name. Especially a White man. And in your case it was the only way for me to maintain some kind of distance. But don't worry about the gun. I just brought this in case you needed some incentive to listen to what I have to say. It isn't even loaded. See?

Timothy points the gun at the bar and pulls the trigger. Douglas flinches but the only sound is a click.

DOUGLAS

Good thing it wasn't. That bottle of The Macallen scotch you were aiming at is expensive.

TIMOTHY

Obviously you can afford it.

DOUGLAS

After the shock of that little charade at the door I could use a glass. Can I get you one?

TIMOTHY

Not lemonade?

DOUGLAS

I think you've aged out of that too.

TIMOTHY

The scotch then.

DOUGLAS

Go ahead and make yourself comfortable.

Douglas indicates the chair opposite his. Timothy sits. He puts the gun on his end table where it remains in view of the audience.

TIMOTHY

Comfortable? Around you? Not possible.

The dialogue continues during the following action. Douglas moves to the bar, pours two drinks, adds a little water, and returns to the sitting area. He hands Timothy one of the drinks and seats himself.

DOUGLAS

Just curious. If the gun's not loaded, what's stopping me from calling 9-1-1? Law enforcement in this area takes a very dim view of Black men invading White men's houses in the middle of the night.

TIMOTHY

Go ahead. I'm sure the local cops would be fascinated to hear about how you repeatedly molested me back when you were forty and I was only thirteen.

DOUGLAS

Molestation is such an ugly word for making love, isn't it? ... So what kept you? Twenty-seven years is a long time.

TIMOTHY

I was a little busy, finishing middle school for one thing. And then high school and college and grad school. Series of jobs climbing the academic ladder. Marriage, kids, divorce. Times two. You know. What some people call life.

DOUGLAS

But now here you are. With a gun. Loaded or not.

TIMOTHY

I need to know.

DOUGLAS

What?

TIMOTHY

Do you have any remorse for what you did to me? Any regret at all?

DOUGLAS

If you're expecting me to apologize for loving you, no, that's never going to happen.

TIMOTHY

Why me, Mr. Nelson? ... Why ME? Was it my fault somehow? Was I sending out some kind of signal that made you think I WANTED you to touch me? Or was it just that I happened to be within reach?

DOUGLAS

That first day when you came to the door of that little bungalow on Primavera Street, asking whether I needed my grass cut. You looked so tired and discouraged.

TIMOTHY

Mama was working two jobs and still could hardly keep food on the table. I was trying to help out but I was too young to get a real job. Lawn mowing was all I knew how to do. But the folks in my neighborhood couldn't afford to pay to have it done. And the White folks in YOUR neighborhood were too suspicious of Black kids to let me on their property. I was about ready to give up.

DOUGLAS

I opened my door and there you were. You were so beautiful. Right at that heavenly moment before the adolescent hormones begin to roughen up a young man's features.

TIMOTHY

I couldn't believe you were willing to pay me fifty dollars every other Saturday to do such a piddling amount of grass.

DOUGLAS

I had a feeling you were going to be well worth it. And how right I was. My neighbors kept asking if I was sure I wanted a boy like you working around my house. Oh, yes I did. I wanted you INSIDE my house, too, but no. You refused to come in and "take a break in the air conditioning." And whenever I offered you some lemonade I had to bring it out to you.

TIMOTHY

Mama kept telling me, "When it comes to Black boys workin' for White folks, you can do whatever they need doin' out in their yards. But don't you never go in the house. Any little thing goes missin', guess who they're gonna blame. It'd be your word against theirs, and who's gonna believe a young Black kid over a White man?" I figured she was right because it seemed like you didn't really trust me. You were always standing in your window watching me work.

DOUGLAS

Just enjoying the scenery.

TIMOTHY

At first it made me a little uneasy but I got used to it. Just like I got used to you lying naked on the lounge chair on your back patio, sunning yourself. And occasionally touching yourself. But then one day you were touching *me*. And then more than touching. (*Pause.*) After it happened the first time, I got on my bike and rode home as fast as I could and I got in the shower and I scrubbed and I scrubbed trying to scrub away the memory of what you'd done to me. Twenty-seven years of scrubbing and I still remember every detail. When I finally turned off the water and looked in the mirror, I saw a different boy looking back at me. I didn't see Timothy anymore. I saw Timmy. And I hated him.

DOUGLAS

But there you were again the next scheduled Saturday, punctual as always.

TIMOTHY

If I quit I'd have to tell Mama why. What if she thought it was my fault? How could she love me? And she was so thrilled to have that much more money coming in. We really needed it. So yeah, I came back. I mowed your lawn even though I knew that wasn't really what I was getting paid for. And afterwards I went in the house and let you lead me to the bedroom and the biggest bed I ever saw. I remember there was art all over the place, all of it featuring attractive young men or boys.

DOUGLAS

What better subject for the artist than the youthful male form? The smooth skin, the natural muscle tone, the innocent glow.

TIMOTHY

The penis. And of course on a pedestal in a place of honor, under a spotlight no less, Michaelangelo's "David."

DOUGLAS

Until you walked into my life I thought he was the ideal representation of young manhood. Vulnerable in his nakedness but serenely self-assured in his ability to shoot a stone smack into the middle of Goliath's forehead

TIMOTHY

I would gladly have shot a stone into *your* forehead when you made me stand next to it posing just like him.

DOUGLAS

The two of you side by side. Ebony and ivory. Flesh and marble. It was beautiful.

TIMOTHY

It was humiliating. Standing there naked with a White man looking me up and down. I felt like one of my ancestors up there on the auction block.

DOUGLAS

It wasn't like that.

TIMOTHY

It was exactly like that. Cash on the barrelhead and you thought you could take whatever you wanted from me.

DOUGLAS

Take? No. I was GIVING. Giving you my adoration. "With my body I did thee worship."

TIMOTHY

You were stealing my soul. The only way I could protect myself was to totally shut down. Send my mind someplace else until you were finished "worshipping" me and I could finally go home.

DOUGLAS

I tried that once, too.

TIMOTHY

What?

DOUGLAS

My Uncle Billy. Whenever he came to visit he'd get me alone. At first I tried to pretend it wasn't happening. But you know what? Pretty soon I started to enjoy it.

TIMOTHY

Is that what you hoped would happen with me? That I'd start to want you like you wanted me?

DOUGLAS

There was always hope. You stopped saying "no."

TIMOTHY

You were a grown-ass White man, bigger and heavier and stronger than I was. What good did "no" ever do me?

As the dialogue continues, Douglas raises his empty glass with an inquiring look. Timothy shakes his head "no." Douglas gets up, goes to the bar, and makes himself another scotch.

DOUGLAS

It wasn't long before Uncle Billy moved on to my younger brother Freddie. I was so jealous. But I soon discovered other older men who found me attractive. Until in the course of time I became the older man, seeking out beautiful boys to initiate into the ways of love. And then one day the perfect specimen was standing right there on my doorstep like a gift from the gods. Ripe, and ready, and obviously so very special.

TIMOTHY

Bullshit. Bull! SHIT! All I was, was THERE. And I was still there as lawn mowing gave way to leaf raking and then to snow shoveling. I thought ... I was AFRAID it was going to go on forever. I could hardly believe it when you said you were moving to New York.

DOUGLAS

As much as I loved you, when my books started to sell I thought I needed to be where the publishing action was.

TIMOTHY

I figured you were leaving because the acne kicked in and I wasn't as pretty anymore.

DOUGLAS

*(Almost seductive.)*

But, oh, Timmy, until then you were perfection. Gorgeous black skin against my white sheets. Curious. Compliant. ... Willing. ... Eager. I don't think I ever had a more avid student.

TIMOTHY

It wasn't that way and you know it. You MADE me do things ... things I never wanted to do.

DOUGLAS

When did I ever force you to do anything? When did I ever threaten you? Or hit you or bruise you or do anything to mar that flawless body? When did I ever touch you except with gentleness and /love?

TIMOTHY

/NO! I never wanted any of it!

DOUGLAS

Are you sure about that? ... Are you?

As Timothy fearfully revisits the uncertainties of his memory, Douglas sets his drink down and moves to stand behind Timothy's chair

DOUGLAS (cont'd)

Come on, Timmy. Why don't you tell me why you really came knocking at my door in the middle of the night. Hmm?

He places his hands on Timothy's shoulders, bends down and kisses the top of Timothy's head.

TIMOTHY

GET. YOUR FUCKING HANDS. OFF ME.

Timothy stands and moves to confront Douglas.

DOUGLAS

Well. Where did that come from?

TIMOTHY

Twenty-seven years of pain. Do you have any idea how much you damaged me? Stupid question. Of course you don't. It was never about me. Only you. Well, let me tell you. After you went off to New York and fame and fortune ... and other boys, I assume. . .

DOUGLAS

Several. Of course none of them have been as perfect as you were.

TIMOTHY

*(27 years of pent-up anger and pain.)*

You never give up, do you? Well, just try to listen to me for a change. You left. But Timmy stayed. I've spent my whole life trying like hell to prove that lousy little faggot you made up, wasn't me. I was determined to obliterate any possible trace of that miserable kid. When I got to high school and the girls started to pay attention, I'd go as far as they'd let me. And then I bragged about it so the other guys could see what a "real man" I was.

And I needed to show the world I wasn't some weakling who couldn't stand up for himself. I got into a lot of fights, anytime I thought a guy was looking at me funny. I wore my cuts and bruises like trophies.

Of course I went out for every available sport. That's what manly boys do, right? Except wrestling. I knew I wouldn't be able to stand having another guy on top of me pinning me down. And I had to be the best in all of them. Trying to prove I was worth something other than just being a White man's plaything.

My crappy self-esteem required endless praise from my teachers so I studied like my life depended on it. In a lot of ways it did. I didn't have much time left over for self-destructive behaviors like drugs and alcohol. Other guys with histories like mine weren't so fortunate.

All of that effort did earn me the scholarship that enabled me to go to college. But there wasn't any emotion involved in any of it. I didn't letter in basketball or write A-plus essays on *David Copperfield* because I enjoyed it. I didn't love any of the girls I forced myself on or hate any of the guys I beat up. It was all mechanical.

Still is. Two marriages. Two divorces. Both my wives complained I was so emotionally distant they couldn't tell if I really loved them or not. Same with my kids. I was so afraid to touch them. I never hugged them. Never played with them. (*Beat.*) Never roughhoused with my son.

(*Pause for a cleansing sigh. Then quietly:*)

Today was Zander's birthday.

DOUGLAS

Who?

TIMOTHY

Zander. My son. He's thirteen today. Thirteen. And when I looked at him it all came flooding back. The fear. The helplessness. The guilt and the shame afterwards. Every last bit of it. Why? Why did you think you had any right to use my body like that? And goddammit, why did you think you had a right to turn me into your little nigger whore!?!

A pause as they look at each other. Then Douglas performs a sarcastic slow clap.

DOUGLAS

Bravo! A brilliant presentation. What did you do? Cobble it together from stuff you copied out of some book of case studies you found in the university library?

As the dialogue continues, Douglas retrieves his drink. He makes a second one and gives it to Timothy, who needs it. They resume their seats.

TIMOTHY

No, damn you. It's all true. It all happened.

DOUGLAS

That bit about your son's birthday party was particularly affecting. You named him Zander? Really? Short for Alexander? As in Alexander the Great, the gayest world conqueror in history? My God, Freud would have a field day with that.

TIMOTHY

You can think whatever you want. Build your walls of self-justification as high and as wide as you please. But as I watched Zander blow out the candles on his cake, I realized history was repeating itself. Here was another forty-year-old man admiring another thirteen-year-old boy. More than admiring, even if he is my own son. I finally had to face the fact that I am not just the boy you abused, Mr. Nelson. God help me, I am also the man ... the man you created in your own image.

DOUGLAS

So. Your son. Have you finally touched him? Maybe a little friendly (*finger quotes*) "roughhousing"?

TIMOTHY

No.

DOUGLAS

Don't you mean "not yet"?

TIMOTHY

That's why I'm here. This cycle of abuse you and I are trapped in. It ends tonight.

DOUGLAS

You said you weren't going to kill me.

TIMOTHY

It doesn't seem fair, does it? I've been mired in self-loathing and fear since the day you first laid hands on me. But you? Probably the worst problem you've ever had was figuring out where your next boy was coming from. So I decided it was time YOU had a taste of hell on earth for a change. I sat down and wrote my story. OUR story. Every sordid detail. That's why I was so late. It took me hours to get it just right. In a day or so it'll land on desks at *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic Magazine*, CBS, and CNN. Can't you just see the headline: "Famous novelist accused of child molestation." And I imagine other accusers will find their voices. They always do when a case like this goes public. They'll drag your reputation through the mud, news cycle after news cycle, as long as the media can keep it going.

DOUGLAS

What about your own reputation? A whole lot of people will refuse to believe a Black man over a White man. I thought you learned that lesson at your mama's knee. No matter how much you deny it, some folks will assume you led me on. Or that you could have stopped it if you'd wanted to. And as much as I love you/

TIMOTHY

(Exasperated.)

/God!/  
/

DOUGLAS

/I'll have to sue you for defamation. Just what kind of lawyer can you afford on that English professor's salary? I can hire the best. You'd be ruining both of us.

TIMOTHY

Don't you get it? That's the point. Monsters have to be destroyed. Not just fairytale monsters or Japanese movie monsters, but ordinary everyday monsters like you. Predators who commit rape, but call it love. (*Beat.*) And men like me ... men who are terrified of what we may be capable of.

Timothy picks up the gun, takes a bullet out of his pocket, shows it to Douglas.

TIMOTHY (cont'd)

Just one bullet. That's all it'll take.

Timothy loads the gun.

DOUGLAS

(Fearfully.)

For what?

TIMOTHY

For me to leave you with one last memory. Of "Timothy" or "Timmy." It doesn't really matter anymore. ... Good-bye Mr. Nelson. MY nightmares are over now. But YOUR nightmares? Your nightmares are just beginning.

As Timothy lifts the gun toward his temple, Douglas lunges for it.

BLACKOUT

DOUGLAS (from the darkness)

No!

Sound of a gunshot.

END OF PLAY