

One Good Thing

By Don Zolidis

Act One

(Rosedale. A small town on the verge of fading entirely out of view. On stage are the shadows of buildings and trees, looming, broken, sinister. Wreckage strewn about. The scenes of the play take place scattered around the stage, carved out in pools of light. Various doorways, recessed into the edges of the city provide entrances and exits. At rise, the forestage is bare except a twin bed. ERYNNE, 17, lies on the bed stage left, writing in a journal. She wears dark, ragged clothing, many sizes too large. She wears heavy makeup and is drawn out to look as frightening as possible. Stage right, TRAVIS, 17, a skinny, unpretentious kid, holds a basketball and dribbles clumsily.)

ERYNNE *(to the audience)*

I live in a one-story ranch house in Rosedale—our neighborhood, when I was real small, used to be pretty good, but that was before people stopped mowing their lawns and started parking their cars on their yards. And that was before the creepy sex offender moved in two doors down who keeps his door open all day long—So he can keep an eye on the neighborhood and make things safe for his own brand of insanity. Anyway, we used to have a downtown, with a movie theatre and everything, and you could even get something to eat there, but eventually all the stores closed except for the Big Lots, which kind of gobbled up the other stores around it like some kind of cancerous octopus—and you know, I love the three-liter bottles of generic soda as much as the next guy, but do we really need the gigantic rolls of toilet paper? So the Big Lots sits there like the Tower of Sauron, this malevolent, oozing pimple on the face of the town, and I guess the rot just radiated from there, and so what we have left—what we have left... what we have left is a Wal-Mart, a Target, a whole selection of fast food restaurants, and a high school. If it were me, I'd just burn the whole place down and start over.

ERYNNE'S FATHER *(off-stage)*

Who are you talking to in there?!

ERYNNE *(shouting off)*

I'm on the phone!

ERYNNE'S FATHER (*off-stage*)

Get off the phone!

ERYNNE

Get off the couch!

(TRAVIS speaks to the audience, dribbling the basketball. He makes to take a shot.)

TRAVIS

I like it here. I mean some people have their problems with Rosedale, but really it's all right. I mean I guess it's the same as everywhere else. There isn't all that much to do. But um... anyway, it's home, you know? And that makes it cool. Not so much cool as safe. I was on the basketball team in eighth grade, which is where I learned to dribble. I played a grand total of fourteen minutes in our season. I took twenty-three shots in those fourteen minutes. I made two. Every time I touched the ball I would just... hurl it towards the basket, you know? And then I would run into people trying to get the rebound. I fouled out of three games. When we had our end of the year banquet, I got the award for most improved. But I hadn't really gotten any better, you know? I pretty much sucked in the beginning, I sucked in the middle, and I sucked hard-core at the end. So the coach gave me an award because I didn't end up quitting like they all wanted me to. My point in this is that I'm not really good at anything. My brother, on the other hand—

(NICK, 20, comes out from behind and steals the ball from TRAVIS. He dribbles around him. NICK is wearing desert fatigues.)

NICK

Oh!

(he acts like he's going to give him the ball back, then tosses it backwards off-stage. Pause. He stares at TRAVIS.)

You look like a retard.

TRAVIS

Shut up.

NICK

How do you stand to go outside like that?

TRAVIS

I manage.

NICK

Stand up straight.

TRAVIS

No.

NICK

Stand up straight. Do it. Do it or I'm gonna punch you in the face.

TRAVIS

Do it then.

(NICK goes to punch him. TRAVIS flinches.)

NICK

Two for flinching.

(NICK hits TRAVIS hard in the shoulder twice.)

TRAVIS

Ow.

NICK

Wuss.

TRAVIS

Shut up.

NICK

When are you gonna grow up?

TRAVIS

When are you gonna grow up?

NICK

I am grown up. Check this out.

(He flexes.)

Feel it. Go ahead feel it.

TRAVIS

I don't want to.

NICK

You're scared. Feel it. You know what this is? This is a muscle. Rock hard. This is what three months at Camp Pendleton does to you.

TRAVIS

I thought it made you an asshole <jerk>.

(NICK goes to punch him again. TRAVIS doesn't flinch.)

NICK

Oh! I was an asshole <jerk> before I went. They just helped me bring it out. You gonna sign up after you graduate?

No. TRAVIS

Why not? NICK

Cause— TRAVIS

Cause you're a wuss. NICK

No. TRAVIS

Cause you're a wuss. NICK

Cause I'm going to college. TRAVIS

NICK
Marines'll help you pay for college. You're not a marine though. You'll never be a marine—you'll probably be like... expert toilet cleaner or something, you know? When there's a clog on the battlefield they'll call you in.

You scared? TRAVIS

No. Quit asking me that. NICK

I'd be scared. TRAVIS

NICK
That's why Uncle Sam pays me to defend the country and he pays you nothing. Because he wouldn't take you—because you're a wuss.

*(If you would like to read the entire play, please e-mail me at don@donzolidis.com.
Please include your school or theatre name.)*