

Two (2) (2) BoyS on the Beach

By Matthew Weaver

WHY I LIKE IT: *Drama Editor JANET EHRLICH COLSON writes...*

Matthew Weaver's Two Boys on the Beach gives us an innocent scene of two boys, Jack and Lucky, feigning swordplay and then swerves dangerously onto the precipice of adulthood. The play stands out as a vehicle that will transport you to the age of 12 or 13 when something happened that made you realize the ground was shifting underneath you – that maybe you didn't realize until much later, when you smelled salty water or suntan lotion – or you found yourself reading this intense little play - and it all came flooding back. What's remarkable about this play isn't just how universally it captures a liminal experience, but that it dares to do so with young actors. You could probably get away with older teens in these roles, but even so, it's going to make you squirm a little and even give you tingles. Don't worry, it's just a play, and there are intimacy coaches and all that. Still, I am tripping on how live theatre can push the limits of make believe into reality more than any other art form and how in a gobnobbingly good play like this one, the actors could be as impacted by the journey of their characters as if they had lived it themselves, right? It's a whole meta- physical thing and it's primal, and it's fascinating (and I swear I'm not high), and - let's get back to the play. We were there. Next to the ocean. Playing pirates. We were going to walk the plank. And there was a hot babysitter...

JACK: You scoundrel! You ruffian! You bastard!

LUCKY: You scalawag! You rascalion! You ... bastard!

Both grin at each other. "Bastard" feels forbidden, taboo and very grown up.

(Spacing and format is playwright's own.)

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The stage should suggest an empty beach.

We continually hear the roar of the ocean, gulls, waves crashing.

Two boys, JACK and LUCKY, both 12-13, stand on the beach.

They hold long pieces of driftwood that they found and have naturally turned into swords. Perhaps they are brothers, best friends, cousins. It's not entirely clear. But they've known each other all their lives.

Their driftwood swords clash.

JACK: En garde!

LUCKY: Take that!

They play-fight. They're boys, not yet concerned about growing up.

JACK is the better fighter, more handsome. He's probably taken fencing or swordfighting for some reason.

JACK: Have at you!

LUCKY can play-fight with swords, but has no real experience. He's just playing.

LUCKY: Argh!

They fight some more.

JACK: You scoundrel! You ruffian! You bastard!

LUCKY: You scalawag! You rascal! You ... bastard!

Both grin at each other. "Bastard" feels forbidden, taboo and very grown up.

JACK: Now ...

JACK spins and comes up behind LUCKY, sword at his throat.

JACK: Now I've got you!

LUCKY: You villain! You wicked, murdering villain!

JACK: Now ... Stab me.

LUCKY: What?

JACK: Stab me.

LUCKY immediately turns and mock-plunges his sword into JACK's chest.

JACK: Ah! Now who is the murdering villain? Now who is wicked? You were my ... best friend!

He dies.

LUCKY laughs and claps.

JACK does not stir.

LUCKY is not worried at all.

He didn't stab JACK that hard.

OK, maybe he's just a little bit worried.

LUCKY: Jack?

JACK laughs, joyful at being alive and here.

LUCKY: Now murder me.

WRIGLEY (O.S.): No one's murdering anyone.

Enter WRIGLEY, 18-19. Every boy's first crush. She wears a baggy T-shirt and baggy shorts. She's in charge. She carries a towel and sandwiches.

LUCKY: You're supposed to be watching us.

WRIGLEY: I was watching you. He spun around and got the drop on you and then you stabbed him through the heart. Come have sandwiches.

She hands them both sandwiches.

WRIGLEY: No peanuts, right?

JACK: Right.

The boys eat while WRIGLEY sets down her towel, then takes measure of the sun.

WRIGLEY: Perfect. You boys need sunscreen.

LUCKY: Awww.

WRIGLEY: Here.

She whips out a tube. She squirts it into their hands, watches as they administer the lotion, makes suggestions for places to be sure they get.

WRIGLEY: Here.

She helps get their faces, spots they can't see.

WRIGLEY: How's it gonna look if you show up all red? Your moms won't let me watch you again.

LUCKY: Good sandwich.

WRIGLEY: Cold ham on wheat with stone-ground mustard. Shocker. You're probably starving. You boys have been down here a while.

JACK: He murdered me and now I'm going to murder him.

WRIGLEY: Sounds like the best possible day. Can I watch?

LUCKY: Sure!

JACK: Sure.

WRIGLEY: OK, then ...

She removes her shirt and pants to reveal a SWIM SUIT, perfect for tanning. She does this without shame or fuss. Matter-of-fact.

The boys are boys - twinges of excitement and uncomfortable all in the same breath.

WRIGLEY lies on her towel.

WRIGLEY: Can one of you get my back?

JACK: I will.

WRIGLEY turns, looks at them both carefully.

WRIGLEY: Lucky.

JACK: Awww.

LUCKY nervously approaches.

LUCKY: Where.

WRIGLEY: The back. My shoulders. Don't worry about my legs. Just where I can't reach. We're shooting for golden brown, not lobster red.

LUCKY applies sunscreen nervously.

JACK: I like lobster.

WRIGLEY: Because it is delicious.

LUCKY: I've never had it.

WRIGLEY: A travesty. We must rectify post-haste. Unless you're allergic? Can you have crab? Shrimp?

LUCKY: We have shrimp a lot.

WRIGLEY: Probably not allergic, then. I'll check to be sure. Done?

LUCKY: I think so.

WRIGLEY: Did he do a good job, Jack?

JACK gives a quick once-over. Just checking the lotion.

JACK: I think so.

WRIGLEY: Excellent! Commence murderment! I release you. Stay close. Don't go in the water for half an hour.

LUCKY: Is that really a thing?

WRIGLEY: Ten out of ten medical experts agree. Remember the rule ...

JACK AND LUCKY: If we find dead things, leave them alone.

WRIGLEY: Good.

She lies out on the towel, on her stomach.

JACK and LUCKY look to one another, shrug.

JACK: You! You're the- the - bastard that murdered my identical twin brother!

WRIGLEY does not respond to the swear, they both relax.

LUCKY: It wasn't me! I swear! It was my identical twin brother!

JACK: What are the odds?

LUCKY: Not very good. It was me.

JACK: I knew it! Now you shall pay! In blood!

WRIGLEY does not look at them.

WRIGLEY: No blood.

JACK: In guts!

WRIGLEY: No guts.

JACK: In ... gummi worms?

WRIGLEY: Proceed.

LUCKY: En garde!

They resume their swordfighting. Parries and thrusts and clashing of blades. JACK shows LUCKY little improvements in his form, which LUCKY graciously adopts.

As they fight, WRIGLEY turns and watches them.

JACK: Ready?

LUCKY: Yes.

JACK: This is for you, brother!

He mock-stabs LUCKY.

LUCKY: You ... you .. Son of a seabiscuit.

The line catches both JACK and WRIGLEY, surprises them, charms them. Like they didn't know LUCKY was capable of it.

LUCKY: I was your brother, too!

He gasps and dies.

JACK: Noooo!

WRIGLEY: Lucky.

LUCKY: What?

WRIGLEY: Please run our garbage back to the beach house.

LUCKY: But I'm dead.

WRIGLEY: Lucky ...

LUCKY: I didn't swear.

WRIGLEY: I know. When you get back, you'll be able to go in the water.

LUCKY: OK!

Exit LUCKY.

They watch him go, then JACK plops down on the towel next to WRIGLEY.

WRIGLEY: You two looked like you were having fun.

She turns over, to sun her front.

WRIGLEY: Where did you learn to fight?

JACK: I was in a play last summer. Romeo and Juliet in Kindergarten.

WRIGLEY: Sounds off-off-Broadway.

JACK: Very. We had a swordfight.

WRIGLEY: You were Romeo.

JACK: Better! Mercutio. A chicken pox on both your houses!

WRIGLEY: Well, you looked ...

She trails off.

Just the roar of the beach.

JACK and WRIGLEY are comfortable in the moment. She basks in the feel of the sun.

She looks up and down the beach.

WRIGLEY: Jack.

JACK: What.

WRIGLEY: Can I ask you a question?

JACK: Sure.

WRIGLEY: ...

JACK: ...

WRIGLEY: Kissed a girl yet, Jack?

JACK: ... No.

WRIGLEY: Well, don't worry about it. It'll happen.

She rolls back over onto her stomach.

Without looking at him:

WRIGLEY: Would you like to?

She turns and looks at him.

Jack slowly, shyly, nods.

WRIGLEY: Hurry up, then. Before - before Lucky gets back.

Quickly, JACK bends down and brushes his lips against hers. Very fast. A step above a peck.

WRIGLEY: That was nice, Jack.

JACK: ...

Sound of the ocean.

WRIGLEY: Some people use their tongues.

Maybe JACK has heard of this. Maybe he's wondered how that works.

WRIGLEY: Jack ...

She reaches up, pulls his face down into hers.

They kiss.

The kiss continues. Both have their eyes shut.

LUCKY comes running back, about to jump out and make a loud entrance, but he stops and sees.

He might even grin for a moment, thinking they're teasing him.

But then he stops and really sees what he sees.

They don't notice him.

His heart breaks.

They don't notice anything.

LUCKY pauses, then slowly backs away, wanders off.

A moment, then he returns.

This time, he makes a lot of noise, trying to keep his voice as normal as possible.

LUCKY: Pirates off the north shore, captain!

JACK and WRIGLEY pull apart. Resume some semblance of normalcy.

JACK: Avast! They're after our gold!

LUCKY: We'll have to fight them all! Can we go into the water?

WRIGLEY: I said you could, didn't I?

LUCKY: Will you come with us?

WRIGLEY: I'll watch.

LUCKY: But ... There will be pirates.

JACK: Pirates.

WRIGLEY: OK. But you've got to promise me. Every last one of them walks the plank.

JACK: Deal.

WRIGLEY: Lucky?

Long pause.

LUCKY: Deal.

WRIGLEY: OK, then.

She leaps to her feet, ready to race.

WRIGLEY: Last one in the water carries all the stuff back. On three. Ready?

JACK and LUCKY prepare to race.

WRIGLEY takes off.

WRIGLEY: Onetwothree!

LUCKY: Hey!

JACK: No fair!

All race offstage, down to the water.

End of Play

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS:

In his New Play Exchange recommendation for the alternate version of TWO BOYS ON THE BEACH - entitled THREE BOYS ON THE BEACH, using an all-male cast - friend and fellow playwright Scott Sickles (PLAYING ON THE PERIPHERY: MONOLOGUES AND SCENES FOR AND ABOUT QUEER KIDS; THE SECOND WORLD TRILOGY; TARTARUS) writes "As the boys' parents, I'd be furious. But in this iteration ... I kind of wish I had been one of these boys and am resigned that I'm the other." Which I think strikes at the heart of what I'm going for with Jack, Wrigley and Lucky. TWO BOYS ON THE BEACH is a coming of age story. It's about loss of innocence, in more ways than one. It's about how appealing that loss can be sometimes, and what you do next when you're the one who isn't chosen.

AUTHOR'S BIO:

Matthew Weaver is a Spokane, WA playwright. His plays have been produced in 25 states, Canada, Ireland, Japan and England. Full-length plays include BED RIDE, GLUTTONY AND LUST ARE FRIENDS, ACES ARE FEVERISH, TIMMY'S BIG KISS, JESUS AT 10, THE BLUSHING GROOM, AWKWARD ROBOT'S INSTRUCTION MANUAL FOR DATING OTHER AWKWARD ROBOTS and SHAMROCK SHAKE JONES IN THE CASE OF THE BONUS FLOUR BABY. Shorter plays include A NEW PLAY BY MATTHEW WEAVER, ANOTHER PLAY BY MATTHEW WEAVER, 19 EXCELLENT REASONS TO DATE MATTHEW WEAVER and HELP! I'M TRAPPED IN A MONOLOGUE WRITTEN BY MATTHEW WEAVER!

<https://newplayexchange.org/users/9069/matthew-weaver>