

# **THE POSTER**

Short Stage Play by JORDAN HENSHAW

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**CHARACTERS**

(in order of appearance)

CHRIS	M	16	High school student
MEL	F	17	Chris's sister

1 INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

CHRIS is sitting in a DINING ROOM at the KITCHEN TABLE and MEL is standing at the opposite side of the table looking down at a POSTER and PENCIL on the table with Chris.

CHRIS

I need to make a poster that's good enough to make you want to spend money. If you see a poster on the wall and it's boring, so's the play. But if you see an amazing poster on the wall, the play must be amazing. So you go see the play. Or you don't go see the play.

MEL

Or you just go to see your friends.

CHRIS

Right. And there's the problem. People who go see these high school plays are just there for their friends. They're just loyal.

MEL

First, you don't know that. Second, why is that not good enough for you?

CHRIS

It's not good enough for me because I want to make people who wouldn't otherwise go see the play go see the play. I want people to see the poster and think, "Wow, I want to go hear that story". I want to make people FEEL something.

MEL

Reverence?

CHRIS

I want to- what? I want to create a poster that I'm proud of. I read this bizarre script and I have no idea how to freaking do my job.

Mel sits down at the table across from Chris.

MEL

OK, tell me what is the play about?

CHRIS

It's something about the intricacies of timing in conver- or timing in... relationships or time travel or something.

MEL

That's kinda weird.

CHRIS

It starts out with a guy who has an ice pick stuck in his head and the entire story is about why is there an ice pick in his head.

MEL

Why would anyone-

CHRIS

Do you have any idea how much I care about the stupid ice pick?

MEL

I think you may be missing the point.

CHRIS

I don't care about the ice pick because the story isn't even trying to make an emotional connection. It's not even trying to make you feel anything. The whole point of theatre is to make you feel something!

MEL

Why can't you just be happy to watch an idiot walk around with an ice pick?

CHRIS

I'm not being... callous.

MEL

No, it's not about callous- it's about just being content with what you get. Not everything has to be a big Hollywood blockbuster. These are my friends. These are just average, everyday people. You can't expect them to be Brad Pitt or Christopher Nolan. Is that what this is about? You want to be Christopher Nolan?

CHRIS

I want to be the guy who gets new people to the play.

MEL

So just make a poster and ask them to come.

CHRIS

It costs money.

MEL

Then tell them how much.

CHRIS

Anything over zero is too much.

MEL

That's not very nice.

CHRIS

(confused)

What?

MEL

You're saying the play that... the theatre teacher and all these people are putting on is completely, what? Meaningless?

CHRIS

I'm saying I don't know if I would pay money to go if I don't care about the people making it.

MEL

So...?

CHRIS

*(confused)*

What?

MEL

Why are you even doing this if you don't care about the play?

CHRIS

I care about the play. It's other people who don't care about the play.

MEL

But...

*(shakes her head no)*

But what if other people would care about the play if they saw you caring about the play?

CHRIS

How would I show I care about the play?

MEL

*(amused)*

By MAKing the POster.

CHRIS

I give up.

MEL

Okay. When does this need to be done by?

Mel pulls the blank poster and pencil over to her side of the table.

CHRIS

Tomorrow morning. What are you doing?

MEL

I care about the play. Tomorrow morning?!

CHRIS

So you're going to what? Draw, "I care about this play, so you should too"?

MEL

I'm gonna draw a clock. What is it called? "All in the Timing"?

CHRIS

You're not... that's not...

MEL

I care about the play.

CHRIS

What are you doing right now.

MEL

If you want to do it yourself, just do it yourself. Here. Take the pencil.

Mel gives the pencil to Chris and he takes it reluctantly.

CHRIS

I can't.

MEL

You can't what? Draw a clock?



CHRIS

This is supposed to be a puzzle.  
There's supposed to be a...  
cathartic moment.

MEL

THIS is your cathartic MOment.  
You're gonna draw your clock and  
then I can go to work.

CHRIS

But that's not good enough.

MEL

This is ridiculous!

CHRIS

Why?

MEL

It's like you're... it's like you're  
so insecure that everything you do  
has to be an amazing work of art.

CHRIS

Why am I insecure?

MEL

Because you're wrapping up your  
entire identity into this stupid  
poster. You're saying that if this  
poster isn't good enough, I'm not  
good enough.

CHRIS

I want people to come see the  
play.

MEL

So draw a clock.

CHRIS

I can't.

MEL

Why? Why, Chris?

CHRIS

I don't know.

MEL

It's probably because you're afraid that if you just draw a clock, people will think that's all you know how to do.

CHRIS

That's better.

MEL

That's probably more fair. But Chris. The people who matter - the people who actually know you - me, your sister - we all know your work. We already know that you're more than that. You don't need to prove anything to us. We all know who you are.

CHRIS

*(mockingly)*

You're right. I *am* worthy.

MEL

Shut up.

CHRIS

But I can't just not try.

MEL

Well the people putting on the play are trying. Right now, you're the only one not trying.

She pushes the poster back to his side.

CHRIS

The person I am is someone-

MEL

It doesn't matter who you are right now. That's what you don't understand. This isn't about you. This is about the community experience of putting on a play with other people.

CHRIS

But what's the point of doing art if you don't put meaning into it?

MEL

I don't know, Chris.

CHRIS

What is the difference between a party at a bar where people get together and a play at a theater where people get together? Art. Art comes from who we are as people. It's an expression of our pains, our sorrows, our joys and our victories. If we make art into a thing that doesn't have meaning, we devalue who we are as a society.

MEL

I think you should just draw a clock.

CHRIS

I want to do something that matters.

MEL

Then let me draw the clock.

Mel moves the poster to her side of the table and takes the pencil back from Chris.

CHRIS

I don't think I have any business working on this play.

MEL

I think you're right. Your heart  
isn't in it.

CHRIS

I should just walk away.

MEL

You should do it. I got this. I'm  
gonna draw an amazing clock.

CHRIS

I wish I could let you do that.

MEL

Just give me the pencil back. Go  
take a walk and cool off.

CHRIS

I wish I could let you do that.

MEL

Just get up, and just forget about  
it. She'll let you do the next  
one. The next script will be  
better.

CHRIS

You're not listening I can't DO  
that!

MEL

Why the hell not? Why the frick  
can't you do that? Chris! Why  
can't you do that?

CHRIS

Because! I don't- I just can't- oh  
my god. You just don't get it.

MEL

What the hell is happening right  
now...

CHRIS

I just- stop. False start. Go back.

MEL

I'm confused. Just LET me DO the POSTer.

CHRIS

I can't LET you DO the POSTer. Because I have to do a good job. I have to... I have to MAKE my MARK.

MEL

Chris. You've already been making your mark.

CHRIS

That's not the point!

MEL

Then please! Tell me! What is the point!?

CHRIS

The point is, running the tv studio isn't good enough. Drawing a stupid clock isn't good enough-

MEL

-WHHHHHHHHHYYYYYYYYYY-

CHRIS

-Giving you the poster is not GOOD ENOUGH.

MEL

What the frick is going on right now.

CHRIS

Oh my god.

MEL

I can't help you.

CHRIS

OH MY GOD!

MEL

I have to go to work. Goodbye-

CHRIS

I HAVE TO IMPRESS HER!!!!!! Ok? I  
said it. I have to impress her.

Beat.

MEL

(crescendo)

Jesus freaking christ is THAT what  
this is ABOUT!?!?!?!? OH my GOD.  
The THEATRE TEACHER?

CHRIS

Oh my god.

MEL

Is it because you-

CHRIS

Shut up. OK? This is what  
happened: I took her Theatre  
Design class-

MEL

-Is she like your-

CHRIS

*(dreamy)*

-and it's like this whole new  
world opened up it's like all of a  
sudden I'm not the only one in my  
universe who does, you know, who  
does storytelling. Like who else  
have I ever met and got to learn  
from who is actually a director?  
Yeah I want to be Christopher  
Nolan. Is that so bad? Yes: the  
theatre teacher is like my biggest  
and only real-life role model.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

There's nothing WRONG with that.  
You can't TELL me there's  
something WRONG with that.

MEL

*(adoringly)*

That's so cute.

CHRIS

*(happily)*

SHUT UP. It's just that- it's like  
- this is my chance, right? I did  
everything I could to stand apart  
in the class but it's like what is  
that gonna do? I need to do  
something big in an actual theatre  
production. If I can do that, I  
can learn more about theatre and  
storytelling. I can like grow my  
skills.

MEL

Is that all you want to do?

CHRIS

*(becoming sad)*

She taught me so much stuff. About  
theatre. About storytelling. About  
lighting. About sets. Like most of  
this stuff I had no idea about.

MEL

I'm sure it means a lot.

CHRIS

*(sadly)*

She's like the CLOsest thing I  
have to a MENTor. I want to be a  
diRECTor. SHE's a director. I  
can't just draw a clock. I can't  
just like give you the assignment.  
What kind of director DOES that?

MEL

You're not a director.

CHRIS

Jesus CHRIST that's not the POINT!

MEL

So what the HELL are you gonna  
DO?

CHRIS

I don't FREAKing KNOW.

MEL

Why don't you just tell her what's  
going on? Like just write her an  
email or something.

CHRIS

And SAY what? Hey, by the way, I'm  
gonna just not do my job?! You  
know why because the script sucks..

MEL

I mean maybe polish it up a little  
bit but yeah. You should be  
honest.

CHRIS

I'm not gonna be honest with her.  
I'm not gonna tell her that. I  
cannot tell her that.

MEL

Why not?

CHRIS

I don't know. I'll just talk to  
her tomorrow morning.

Mel gets up from her chair.

MEL

I'll come with you tomorrow then.  
She's your hero.

She leans down to get closer to Chris.



MEL

I'll help smooth it over. It's  
gonna be ok.

CHRIS

(nodding no)

I'm sorry.

MEL

She's your hero.

Mel hugs Chris around the shoulders. Mel exits with her hands covering her mouth and nose and Chris puts his arms and head on the table as if to cry.

Lights down.