

THE REST OF THE NIGHT

BY ROBERT LEWIS VAUGHAN



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THE REST OF THE NIGHT premiered at
Curious Theatre Company, Denver, Colorado,
Chip Walton, Producing Artistic Director.

In memory of my mother — Wanda Lee Hunter-Vaughan.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The version of *The Rest of the Night* printed in this acting edition has been slightly revised since it was first produced by Curious Theatre Company. The role of Eric was played by two actors as you will note in the original production credits. This revised version was prepared for a possible New York production to be directed by Austin Pendleton, and we decided it would be better for the play and the production if Eric was aged up somewhat and was played by one actor who could pull off the younger and older parts. This production, sadly, didn't happen due to scheduling conflicts with the chosen cast and Austin's always busy schedule. Some day. Needless to say, the play will still work with two actors — younger and older playing Eric with older taking over for the last scene — be my guest to do it either way.

—*Robert Lewis Vaughan*

THE REST OF THE NIGHT was produced by Curious Theatre Company (Chip Walton, Artistic Director) in Denver, Colorado, opening on April 5, 2003. It was directed by Chip Walton; the assistant director was Charlotte Guyette; the set design was by Dan Guyette; the costume design was by Janice Benning Lacek; the lighting design was by William Temple Davis; the original music was by Kevin Trainor; the sound design was by Matthew Morgan; the property design was by Candice Brown; and the stage manager was Lisa Boehm. The cast was as follows:

MALIA HUNTER Ellen Orloff Gauthier
MILLER LEE HUNTER David Russell
KEITH MCCANN Chris Reid
YOUNG ERIC HUNTER Evan Reed Barber
“MATURE” ERIC HUNTER Todd Webster

CHARACTERS

MALIA — thirties to forties

MILLER — thirties to forties

KEITH — thirties to forties

ERIC — thirteen to twenty-one

PLACE

The play takes place in the backyard of the Hunter home in the Texas Panhandle, sixty or so miles from Amarillo. The yard is framed by the back of the house and the back of the garage. There is very little grass, it's mostly dirt. The back porch is covered, but not enclosed. Opposite the house, down from the garage, is a swing set and a large doghouse, replaced later in the play by a picnic table and benches. There should be trees up from the house and off from the garage.

We see plenty of sky. There must always be sky.

TIME

The distant past. The play spans ten or so years.

THE REST OF THE NIGHT

ACT ONE

It's dark. The wind is blowing. A few stars begin to dot the sky.

Night becomes day.

Miller is sitting on the porch in coveralls. He's greasy and dirty. He drinks the last sip from a bottle of Coke. A moment and Eric walks into the yard with two grocery bags.

MILLER. Where the hell you been, boy?

ERIC. Went to the store with Mama. We stopped by to see if Mrs. Crocket's okay. She hurt her hip —

MILLER. You finish your chores here?

ERIC. Yes, sir.

MILLER. Take those on in the kitchen and get me another Coke. *(Eric walks into the house. Miller pulls a pint of whiskey from his back pocket and takes a swig. A moment and Eric steps back out onto the porch and hands his father a cold Coke.)* Go on in to your room and take a nap or somethin'.

ERIC. I don't take naps anymore.

MILLER. Well, then go do something ... just get on outta here. *(Eric goes inside. Miller sips the Coke, then dumps some into the dirt beside the steps. He pulls out the pint and fills the bottle up. He puts the pint away and drinks. A moment. Malia enters with one more bag of groceries.)*

MALIA. I thought you'd still be out at Petey's workin' on the truck —

MILLER. How's my mama? *(Malia walks past Miller, taking the*

groceries into the kitchen.)

MALIA. Can we talk about that later?

MILLER. Nope. *(She is gone. Miller takes a big sip and quickly refills the bottle with more whiskey. Malia comes back outside.)*

MALIA. Did she call you?

MILLER. What do you think?

MALIA. I asked her not to tell you because —

MILLER. You really don't think she called me and told me what you done, do you?

MALIA. And I asked her not to tell your daddy about —

MILLER. Mama still asks daddy if she can put a penny in the poor box at church on Sundays. You think she'd let you borrow —

MALIA. She swore to me that she'd —

MILLER. What'd you want the money for?

MALIA. Are you drinkin', Miller Lee?

MILLER. I just put some in here right before you got home. You let my daddy lecture you on the phone the way he just done me for forty-five minutes and see what you —

MALIA. Speaking of the phone, we have to pay that bill before next Thursday or they're —

MILLER. Don't you go changin' the subject like that on me. What'd you want that money for?

MALIA. I'd been savin' for a while so we could get you a new suit. I was short and Wolfington's just put 'em on sale so I — *(A moment.)* You said you were sick and tired of bein' on the road and that you were thinkin' about seein' if there wasn't something you could do at the new Sears they're gonna open in Dalhart ...

MILLER. Do what?

MALIA. I didn't want you wearing that old thing you've had since we were ... I wanted you to look nice. You look so nice when you —

MILLER. I don't need a new suit to go — You're plumb off your rocker if you think I'm —

MALIA. I've been savin' for ... they open that store next week, Miller and ...

MILLER. — I had to listen to him sayin' — Goddammit, he was — I was just thinkin' out loud when I brought up Sears, Malia. Sears? It ain't my fault work's been dryin' up, but I don't think — what'd mama say about this?

MALIA. You mean your daddy didn't tell you?

MILLER. You didn't already buy that goddamn suit did you?

MALIA. No. *(He sneaks a swig from the bottle of whiskey. She enters as he puts it away.)*

MILLER. Jimmy McCarthy says I can get a good six months outta him if I want it, so I changed my mind about Sears —

MALIA. Well thanks for tellin' me ... I don't want you drinkin' anymore tonight.

MILLER. What'd you do with the money?

MALIA. Nothin'. I'll give it back to your mama in the mornin'.

MILLER. I'll take it back to 'em.

MALIA. I'll do it. Please don't fight with them anymore. That's all y'all ever do lately.

MILLER. You think I don't take care of y'all?

MALIA. No. It's not about that ...

MILLER. Well, if Daddy had doubts, he don't no more. Thanks to you and Mama. *(Miller heads off to the garage.)* I'm gonna see if I can fix this goddamn truck or not ... *(He's gone. Malia sits on the porch. She grabs a stalk of celery from one of the bags and bites into it. Eric comes to the screen door.)*

ERIC. Daddy practically jumps outta his skin if it takes longer than five minutes to buy shorts and socks at Sears. I don't think he'd've liked workin' there.

MALIA. Young man...? You take these sacks of groceries into the kitchen and hush up. *(Eric sits on the porch next to his mother.)*

ERIC. I heard him yellin' at granddaddy on the phone.

MALIA. I don't want to discuss this with you right now. Didn't I ask you to do something?

ERIC. Yes, ma'am. *(He steps inside. Malia waits a second then goes inside the house. Suddenly it's dusk, then night. When the lights come back up, it's a week or so later. Day. Keith walks into the yard. He stops next to a burlap sack into which someone has been putting empty cans. He bends down and starts putting the remaining cans into the sack. When he's done, he lifts the sack to take it to the porch, but the bottom has been cut open and the cans spill to the ground. He puts the cans back in the sack, cleaning the spill, but leaves the sack where it is, hoping no one will notice what he did. We hear Eric laugh. Keith hears it too, and responds by turning to the large doghouse. He goes to investigate.)*

KEITH. What're you doin' in there?

ERIC. Fixin' the floor.

KEITH. Big doghouse. What kinda dog y'all have? Didn't see one ...

ERIC. Some kinda sheepdog. I think he ran away ...

KEITH. They do that sometimes. What's your name, son?

ERIC. Eric.

KEITH. Is your mama home, Eric?

ERIC. She ran away too.

KEITH. Oh, she did ... and left you here all by yourself?

ERIC. I'm just kiddin' with you.

KEITH. Well. Do you think I could see her a minute?

ERIC. She's in the house.

KEITH. Thanks ... *(Keith turns away and walks toward the porch, then stops and looks back at the doghouse. Malia walks out onto the porch with a laundry basket. She sees him but walks right past him on her way to the clothesline and starts pinning up her laundry.)*

MALIA. I don't know why you're here, but Eric's been here all day so I know he hasn't been down there pullin' up Mrs. Crocket's flower beds again.

KEITH. No, ma'am, I —

MALIA. Half the time I think she does it herself just so she can get attention.

KEITH. Mrs. Crocket? I don't think I've had the pleasure of meetin' her yet.

MALIA. I told him to stay away from those Moore girls, so I know he hasn't been over there gettin' into any trouble.

KEITH. No. I —

MALIA. Miller's already in the doghouse, and I haven't seen him since last night, so ... What'd he do now?

KEITH. Well. That's why I'm here, Mrs. Hunter. We tried calling you last night, but your phone's down —

MALIA. Miller went to pay 'em yesterday, so I guess he went drinkin' with the money instead.

KEITH. That's why I'm here, ma'am.

MALIA. He in jail?

KEITH. Yes, ma'am, he is and —

MALIA. I don't know you.

KEITH. Oh, I'm sorry. I'm Deputy Sheriff McCann, Keith —

MALIA. Is crime on the rise, or is Bill Jackson getting too lazy to take care of things? We never needed a deputy before.

KEITH. Ma'am, I need to talk to you about —

MALIA. Deputy Sheriff McCann, if Miller Lee had done anything really bad, y'all'd been out here last night, so I'm not about to worry.

KEITH. Well, ma'am, we just want you to come get him.

MALIA. Do you want some iced tea? (*She leaves the line and goes inside.*)

KEITH. Well, ma'am, I —

MALIA. (*Offstage.*) You probably think I'm not bein' very cooperative with you, don't you? I'm sorry. Where'd you say you were from?

KEITH. Amarillo. I went to school in — Ma'am. Can you listen to me a minute? We need for you to go to town and get your husband out of jail. Bill — Sheriff Jackson's just about ready to hold a public execution.

MALIA. (*Entering with two glasses of tea.*) He drivin' y'all crazy? (*Handing him a glass.*)

KEITH. Thank you. I ... yeah. I think he's — well, I wasn't there. They radioed and told me that I should stop by and ask you to go get him. I think they thought that since you hadn't heard anything from him all night that you might go on down out of concern lookin' for him.

MALIA. Did you go to Amarillo High?

KEITH. Yeah.

MALIA. My cousin Trish went to Amarillo High too. Did you know her? Trish Patton?

KEITH. No, I don't think so.

MALIA. You seem young to be a deputy. I'm not used to seein' people around our age bein' ... I guess that means I'm gettin' older and didn't realize it. That's a scary thought. How old are you?

KEITH. I'm about thirty-three.

MALIA. No. I guess you wouldn't have known Trish then.

KEITH. Ma'am ... Mrs. Hunter, can you go to town and pick up your husband?

MALIA. Well, no, I think he needs to stay down there a little longer. At least until his hangover's gone.

KEITH. Ma'am ...

MALIA. Miller and I moved to Amarillo because we thought it'd be good to get away from here, and ... well ... we thought it'd be good for him to get away from his daddy. That didn't last too long and we ...

KEITH. Mrs. Hunter ...

MALIA. You can call me Malia, or Leah.

KEITH. Ma'am. Mrs. Hunter, I really need you to cooperate with me and —

THE REST OF THE NIGHT

by Robert Lewis Vaughan

3M, 1W, 1 boy

Miller and Malia Hunter have a troubled marriage, but they get by just fine until Miller slips into a pattern of destructive drinking. Life is hard enough in the Texas Panhandle, but Miller's downward spiral begins to unravel the Hunter family and seriously threaten son Eric's upbringing. After a bout with the bottle and the local sheriff, Miller is hauled into jail and the new deputy, Keith, is dispatched to inform Malia that she must come into town and collect her husband. Malia and Keith see sparks the moment they lay eyes on one another. Keith's entrance into the Hunters' lives only complicates things further as young Eric strikes up a friendship with the new deputy. Malia is soon torn apart and must choose between the two men. Will she fight to keep her family together and repair a marriage falling apart at the seams, or will she accept Keith's offer to take care of her and Eric as they should be taken care of?

"Your name is Miller Lee, and you're feelin' down because your parents just had you thrown in jail. Your wife, Malia, is in no hurry to pick you up, and when she finally does and you do get back to your rural Texas home, your son won't make eye contact with you, and it seems the new sheriff in town has a crush on your wife. It's no country song, but the distinctively Texas vibe reverberates true ... Vaughan writes tough love in a way that makes your heart ache. He seems to write with a knowing, sympathetic pain. His characters who hand themselves over to love are so intense they almost outshine the others on stage, those who love less and feel unloved, and the bitter battle quickly becomes the unexpected focal point of the play ... impressively lyrical ... risky ... brings new life to the stage."

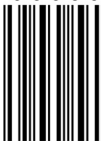
—The Denver Post

Also by Robert Lewis Vaughan
PRAYING FOR RAIN

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