

THE LANES
An Original One Act Play
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Characters

Damien Lane.....a man in his early twenties

Tonya Lane.....a woman in her early thirties

Lila Lane.....a one year-old, Damien's and Tonya's daughter

Setting: The home of Tonya's parents, where the Lanes reside. An open floor plan stages a living room, kitchen, and dining table with a high chair. There are two doorways to hallways leading to bedrooms, and a doorway at the front door. The home is outdated and lived in to a degree of dinginess. There is nothing indicating a life of luxury or of ease. It is early morning.

(Damien enters stage left, walks to the doorway and exits at upstage center. A door shuts off stage. He returns carrying a large packed duffel bag. He walks stage right, throws the duffel bag on the couch and peeks out the window above. He takes his phone out of his pocket to check the time. Looks alertly in every direction assuring no one in the house is awake. Damien walks to the dining table and lays his phone down. He pulls an envelope of money out of his jacket, sits at the table and begins counting the bills. Tonya enters stage left facing Damien.)

TONYA

Damien?

DAMIEN

Tonya. You're up early.

TONYA

I thought you were going for your run. I was going to make...what...

DAMIEN

(Putting the money in the envelope.)
This is rent.

TONYA

Why didn't you go running?

DAMIEN

This and next month's.
(Stands and hands her the envelope.)
Had a good couple weeks at the restaurant. What are you doing up?

TONYA

(Pause.)
I remember what today is. I was going to make...why are you giving me this?

(Pause.)

Is there something you need to tell me. Why is your bag on the couch? Damien...?

DAMIEN

Yeah. I didn't see the point in confronting you.

TONYA

You didn't see the point in...I got up to make you blueberry waffles. What the fuck do you need to tell me.

DAMIEN

Tonya. I...

TONYA

(Loud.)
What.

DAMIEN

Shh, please don't wake everyone. I...I can't pass up this opportunity, T. I can't.

TONYA

Are you fucking telling me--

DAMIEN

Please. Shhh.
(Gesturing toward her parent's bedroom.)
Your dad's got graveyard this week.

TONYA

Fuck you, dad's fine.

DAMIEN

My mistake.

TONYA

You were just gonna...are just gonna leave?
(Pause.)
Damien.

DAMIEN

What would it have accomplished telling you. Huh?

TONYA

What the fuck, Damien.

DAMIEN

What would it have accomplished?

TONYA

How could you...

DAMIEN

You're set in your stance. And I'm very set in mine.
What...what else is there...?

TONYA

What else is there? My stance...? What?

DAMIEN

Tonya. I...I don't know what to say. I have a ride coming.
(Grabs his phone, walks to his duffel bag.)

TONYA

What to say?
(Follows Damien to the couch.)
You got someone to drive you to North Carolina?

DAMIEN

(Turns to face her.)
Yeah.

TONYA

Where are you going when you get there?

DAMIEN

Campus...

TONYA

No, I mean staying.

DAMIEN

Living in the dorms. Since...it's just me.

TONYA

Since it's just you. Yeah...it's easier not having a wife
and a kid isn't it.

DAMIEN

You know this isn't how I want it.

TONYA

Really. But your plan was to sneak out?

DAMIEN

I asked you to come with me.

TONYA

This is unbelievable.

DAMIEN

You made it clear you weren't gonna support me on this.

TONYA

It's not about supporting you...we've been through this. I've shown you the numbers.

DAMIEN

The money again. Yeah, you see why confronting you would have been pointless. T, I can't stay here in this--

TONYA

(Simultaneously with "here.")

No. Fuck you.

DAMIEN

I can't stay here in this life knowing I had--have--this opportunity.

TONYA

Fuck you. If you can get a fancy scholarship to school eight hours away, then why can't you get a fancy paying job? Right here?

DAMIEN

A full ride, Tonya. A full ride to Pfeiffer University.

TONYA

And I'm so proud of you for getting that. We all were...and celebrated. Big time...remember? Remember our celebration...

(She grins and reaches for his hand.)

DAMIEN

Of course I do.

TONYA

(Steps closer to Damien.)

You already got your associates.

(Pulls his hand to her chest.)

Just stay and go for your bachelors another year.

(Damien turns his face from Tonya.)

Take Kevin's offer and start tending bar on weekends.

You'll walk away with more money and have way more fun.

DAMIEN

(Shakes his head and steps back.)
I can't just go another year.

TONYA

I loved bartending in my twenties.

DAMIEN

I might never get this opportunity again.
(Drops her hand.)
I've been so alone in this, T. I've told you...it's an education.

TONYA

So you're just leaving. Just like that?

DAMIEN

It's an experience to make myself better. It could make us better.

TONYA

Us? Bullshit, Damien. How am I gonna be better here?
Without my husband?

DAMIEN

We've had this conversation before. I'm tired of talking.
I'm sorry, Tonya. I don't know what the future holds for us, but I have to try for something else. I can't just stay here. I was going to leave a note with rent...

TONYA

Damien.

DAMIEN

(Moves toward the front door.)
I filled up the car yesterday. And picked up more diapers. They're in the closet.

TONYA

Damien...

DAMIEN

I'm gonna get in touch with you when I'm settled...
(Damien puts his hand on the door knob.)

TONYA

Damien, shut up.

DAMIEN

How can I pass on this, T?
(Opens the door.)

TONYA

I'm pregnant.
(Pause.)

DAMIEN

What.

TONYA

I am.
(Damien closes the door.)

DAMIEN

For real.

TONYA

Saw a doctor to make sure. I planned to tell you this morning....with the waffles.
(Damien drops his bag.)

DAMIEN

Jesus Christ. Pregnant?
(He leans his back against the door. Pause.)
When? When are you due?

TONYA

January.
(Damien stands and paces to the couch with his hands over his head.)

DAMIEN

Pregnant. Why?
(Sits on the couch.)
Pregnant.

TONYA

I've established that.
(Pause.)
Tell me what you're thinking.
(Pause.)

DAMIEN

Lila's gonna be a big sister.

(Smiles.)

Oh my god.

TONYA

Damien. If we move to North Carolina and take on all those living expenses, we'll run through our money and never get out on our own.

DAMIEN

Is this why?

TONYA

Here, we'll have the down payment for our own place in a year...maybe less if you're bartending.

DAMIEN

This why you refused to listen to any of my plans for school? About ways we could do this together?

TONYA

Those were ideas, Dames. Not plans.

DAMIEN

You knew a second baby would make it impossible. How long have you known?

TONYA

I listened and support you and--

DAMIEN

Bullshit. If you supported me then you would've looked for jobs near the town. We could've looked for a place to live...together. Found childcare...together. We could make it our home...together.

TONYA

We can do all that right here...and actually own a home...together. I'm trying here.

DAMIEN

When did you know?

TONYA

I thought I might be when I tried talking to you about our savings...

DAMIEN

That? That's what that was about? God...that was two months ago. What the fuck, Tonya.

TONYA

It's not easy news. I wanted to be sure, and I wanted tell you the right way.

DAMIEN

You mean shit on my dream? Tell me the reasons it's stupid if I go to college but then inform me we're going to have another baby we didn't plan for? On the morning my life was actually going somewhere? Oh, but you're making my favorite waffles, so it's all okay.

TONYA

Oh shut up. So fucking dramatic.

DAMIEN

My life was supposed to change lanes today, T.

TONYA

Are you serious? You think I chose this? Don't be a child.

DAMIEN

I...no, I know. Just...

(Damien shakes his head in defeat.)

Don't you ever think there's a better way to get by?

TONYA

A better way? Do I think...? Of course there's a better way. Look around. Nobody's going to come around here and think we've found the best way. It's my parents' house. We barely have any privacy. We pull out pots and pans when it rains. Our daughter's clothes are hand-me-downs. Our jobs give us money that we just turn around and give to other people so we can keep doing the same shit over and over again. Of course there's a better fucking way.

DAMIEN

My point is that we didn't...

(He stands and rubs his hands over the back of his head.)

Doesn't it bother you we didn't choose this? We've known each other two years. We didn't plan or build any of this.

(Pause.)

DAMIEN (CONT'D)

It just...happened.

TONYA

I know that. You think I don't know that? But how did all this happen, Damien? How'd it happen? Us. Because of us.

(Pause.)

You not gonna acknowledge that?

DAMIEN

I'm taking responsibility aren't I? Is there better acknowledgment than that?

TONYA

Yet you were ready to walk out that door five minutes ago.

DAMIEN

Hey. I've taken great care of us. Working at the restaurant and taking classes.

TONYA

That's right...such great care I haven't had to worry about a thing, all my needs have been met and life is fucking grand.

DAMIEN

Don't you dare try and make me look like the asshole. I put in seventy-hour weeks the last two summers taking on that second yard-working job. I've done everything I needed to. And more.

TONYA

So now you can do whatever you want? Whatever's best for you?

DAMIEN

Are you kidding me? This is best for all of us. Our...children, T, our children will have a daddy with a college degree.

TONYA

Damien...

DAMIEN

I could actually become a programmer or software engineer, not just talk about it.

TONYA

Damien...

DAMIEN

I mean, I'mma motherfucking former tenant of the Pulaski County Detention Center.

(Laughs.)

TONYA

If you go...

DAMIEN

...and I earned a full ride to college. How fucking boss is that? How boss?

TONYA

I'm going to the clinic.

DAMIEN

(Pause.)

What did you say.

TONYA

If you go, I'm getting an abortion.

DAMIEN

What...? Tonya...

TONYA

I'm not doing this alone.

DAMIEN

No...

TONYA

Be realistic.

DAMIEN

You're putting this choice on me?

TONYA

You're putting this choice on me.

DAMIEN

(Pause.)

Tonya, you know I'm against that. Our baby deserves a chance. You know it killed me as a kid...

TONYA

I refuse to do this alone.

DAMIEN

...growing up without those siblings. Don't do that to Lila. You know how it hurt me being all alone in my mama's mess.

TONYA

I refuse...

DAMIEN

I'm not okay with that. My mama sat in the clinic waiting to have me out, too. What if she had gone through with it? Our baby deserves the chance I was given.

TONYA

Says the guy who was just gonna leave and let his baby girl grow up without a daddy. You're an asshole.

DAMIEN

I would never leave Lila without a daddy. I'm always gonna be there for her. And for the next one.

TONYA

Oh Jesus. What every other broke, dumb dude says that knocked up a girl.

DAMIEN

Fuck you. You know I'm not anything like those guys.

TONYA

You're leaving aren't you?

(She approaches Damien.)

And the only reason we're talking about this...

(She puts her face within inches of his.)

...is because you got caught.

(Turns and walks away into the kitchen.)

DAMIEN

I am not those guys. You know that. Don't you dare tell our baby girl I am those guys.

(Walks to other side of the kitchen island to face Tonya.)

And it's like this because you leave me no choice.

TONYA

(Pause.)
There's a lotta choice to be made here.

DAMIEN

(Turns away from Tonya. Paces the room and pulls his phone from his pocket.)
Fuck...my ride.

TONYA

(Pulls a large bowl from a cabinet.)
I hear college is the time of your life. Have fun.

DAMIEN

I'm not the asshole, T. Don't make me feel guilty for wanting to make myself better.

TONYA

Feeling guilty? That's all on you.
(Walks to another cabinet.)

DAMIEN

Talk to me about this abortion. Don't just do...TONYA.

TONYA

Excuse me? What the fuck does that mean?

DAMIEN

I've been walking through your shit for a long while. I'm sick of dancing around the trouble you cause.

TONYA

Same question. What the fuck does that mean?

DAMIEN

It means...it means you don't appreciate what I do or what I am...or what I can be. You go your way and expect me to keep up, not thinking what I really want.

TONYA

Are you delusional? Damien, I don't remember passing any exit ramps that offered what we wanted...and if we do go by one, I'll be damn sure to stop.

(Pulls out waffle mix.)
It's real simple.

DAMIEN

You say that because you don't have any trust in me to do this right...to be smart enough for computer science...to make something of myself. You only care about the money. You don't view my education as an investment.

TONYA

That's not true.

DAMIEN

It absolutely is. That's the core of your stance.

TONYA

My fucking stance again...

(Pulls a stirring utensil from a drawer.)

DAMIEN

If you really thought I could finish and get a fucking corporate nine to five making upper five-figures you would have no reason to think my plan's stupid. No reason.

TONYA

Stop it. That's not true.

(She looks through another drawer.)

DAMIEN

It is. When I get my corporate job with health insurance and holiday bonuses and occasional raises and paid vacation days...when I get that job and I'm handed sixty...eighty grand to dress for church and sit at a computer...you're gonna see you should have had more faith in me right now. I'm gonna graduate and get that job and I'm gonna start a college fund for Lila, for our kids, and I'm gonna make a nice life for myself...then you'll see what I can be, because I'm not full of shit.

(Tonya stops moving in the kitchen.)

I know you think I'm naïve and the world hasn't hit me yet. You act like you know some secret about the world because you've lived longer. But I think that's bullshit. I refuse to let the idea of the world fucking me over stop me from trying. What the fuck is that? What the fuck's that? Staying in the same small shitty town...living in the same five mile radius your entire life...never looking beyond what was put in front of you. How can you ask me not to try? Not to look beyond what was just dumped in front of me? How can you ask me not explore more...

DAMIEN (CONT'D)

...not to become the best version of myself? How fucking dare you ask me not to do that?

TONYA

(She throws a plastic measuring cup at Damien.)
Fuck you. Fuck you, I'm loyal to my roots. Go on and leave, but don't you expect to ever be let back in.

DAMIEN

Of course. Just like every other stubborn bitch, you have to draw your line in the sand. Free to walk out, but never again in. Right?

(Damien checks his phone.)

TONYA

Fuck you.
(Throws another cup.)

DAMIEN

Shit. My ride is waiting.

TONYA

Bye.

DAMIEN

Seriously?

TONYA

(Opens another cabinet.)
Yeah.

DAMIEN

I need you to talk to me.

TONYA

I don't need to talk to you.

DAMIEN

We're having a baby and I'm not—

TONYA

No we're not.

DAMIEN

Don't.

TONYA

Your ride's gonna leave.

DAMIEN

Don't go to the clinic, Tonya.

TONYA

Don't move eight hours away, Damien.

DAMIEN

FUCK. I cannot handle this stubborn-bitch logic.

TONYA

Get the fuck out.

DAMIEN

T...

TONYA

It's obvious you've already made up your mind. Just go and get out.

DAMIEN

T, I'm sorry. Look...please, look...

TONYA

Just say it, Damien. Say it.

DAMIEN

What.

TONYA

This is your chance to escape.

(Pause.)

This is your chance to escape me.

DAMIEN

Tonya...

TONYA

You love what your life could be...more than you love me.

(Pause.)

Say it.

DAMIEN

Tonya...

TONYA

It's easier to walk away without having to say anything
real isn't it?

DAMIEN

Tonya...

TONYA

Say it.

DAMIEN

(Pause.)

I love what my life could be...more than what it is...

TONYA

...what it is with me.

(Pause.)

You weak bitch. More than you love me. Right? Say it.

DAMIEN

(Looks squarely at Tonya.)

Yeah. More than I love you.

TONYA

(Nods her head.)

Would you really rather Lila and I just never happened to
you...as you say?

DAMIEN

Of course not.

TONYA

You know things happen all the time everyday and people
just keep going. You deal with the things that happen, you
stay in your lane and you just keep going.

DAMIEN

I'm trying, here.

(Checks his phone.)

TONYA

Right.

(Tonya pours waffle mix into the bowl.)

DAMIEN

Fuck.

(Answers call.)

Hey, man. I'm sorry, just...give me a couple more minutes...please.

TONYA

There is nothing you need to stay to say.

DAMIEN

(Slides his phone in his pocket.)

Tonya, I'm not leaving our kids.

TONYA

But you're leaving me and you are leaving...aren't you?

DAMIEN

Leaving to make a better life for our kids.

TONYA

Kid.

DAMIEN

Don't...

TONYA

Why the fuck not? What am I missing, here?

(Goes to the refrigerator.)

DAMIEN

I want my child to have a chance. If not for me, keep it for Lila.

TONYA

With what MONEY? You've always been a dreamer, but I can't get on board with this. Fucking stupid.

(Brings eggs and milk over.)

We pay my parents a fraction of most people's rent. My mom already helps out with Lila for free all the time. And buys most the groceries. What's the plan, Damien? How we gonna, no excuse me, how am I gonna raise two kids?

(Pause.)

Don't make me feel guilty for this. The baby won't be missing anything getting a pass on this life.

DAMIEN

(Shakes his head.)

T...

TONYA

I don't have time to dream. I've got a daughter to raise.

DAMIEN

Hey. I've got a daughter to raise, too.

TONYA

No you don't. How you planning to raise her eight hours away? How often you gonna be able to make that drive? Without a car?

DAMIEN

School won't last forever. Don't you get that? This is just an interruption, to make things better. I will be there for Lila.

(Damien's ride honks outside.)

You know you'll hear from me.

TONYA

Whatever, Damien.

(Starts stirring the batter. Damien's ride honks impatiently several times.)

DAMIEN

Shit. Tonya...?

(Damien's ride honks again and Lila cries off stage.)

TONYA

(Tonya slams the spoon in the bowl.)

Dammit.

(She leaves the kitchen and exits stage left toward Lila's room. Damien picks up the measuring cups. Calls his ride. Enters the kitchen.)

DAMIEN

(On phone.)

God, just hold on. Woke up my daughter. Please...just give me time. Please, man. Okay.

(Shoves the phone in his pocket. Measures the appropriate amount of milk and oil. He begins stirring the batter. Tonya enters.)

TONYA

Get outta my kitchen.

DAMIEN

I'm just helping...

TONYA

Get out. Don't need your help.

DAMIEN

What the fuck, T. It doesn't have to be like this.

TONYA

I got my money for the abortion.

(Flashes the envelope.)

I'm good. Thank you.

DAMIEN

You bitch. I saved that money for months. That is not-

TONYA

Months?

DAMIEN

That is not for an abortion.

TONYA

Is that how long you've been planning your escape?

DAMIEN

That is rent. For you and our daughter.

TONYA

How are you gonna know what I use it for.

(Damien reaches for the envelope of money, Tonya dodges his advance. He tries again, more aggressively. She dodges. Damien has a grip on the envelope.)

TONYA

What? You going to take the money back?

(Pause. Tonya laughs at Damien's hesitation.)

Yeah. That's what I thought.

DAMIEN

Fuck you. I'm not living under your thumb anymore.

(Jerks the envelope from Tonya. She falls to the floor along with the bowl of waffle batter.)

DAMIEN (CONT'D)

That is my fucking money.
(Pause.)

TONYA

Get out.

DAMIEN

T...

TONYA

Out.

DAMIEN

Tonya, I'm sorry...

TONYA

I have to get ready for work.
(Starts to stand.)
And feed our daughter.

DAMIEN

Are you okay...

TONYA

(Almost standing.)
And change her.
(Fully standing.)
And take her to the sitter. Probably call the clinic on
break.
(Looking at Damien.)
You go on and read a lotta books. I'll be here...taking
care of the real responsibilities, your responsibilities.
You're right...you did everything you needed to for two
years. I'll cover you for the next twenty. Go ahead and
leave.

DAMIEN

That's not what I'm doing. Don't tell Lila I'm doing that.
(Lila cries off stage.)

TONYA

I want you gone.

DAMIEN

Use the money to come with me.

TONYA

What?

(Lila cries.)

DAMIEN

You wanna throw it away going to the clinic...don't, and use it to help cover costs and come with me.

TONYA

(Holds up the envelope.)

This isn't even... Dames.

(Shakes her head.)

I'm gonna be the GM...at the truck stop. It's unofficially official, I'll be the new manager. No more minimum wage. An actual salary. With insurance and benefits. I'm not turning it down to take this risk. That's what this school thing is...a risk.

(Lila cries.)

DAMIEN

You're not willing to take the risk...on me.

TONYA

You hope it works in your favor, but there's no guarantee.

(Leaves the kitchen.)

DAMIEN

Just like everything else, T. Just like everything else in this world. It hurts so bad you're not with me on this.

TONYA

Just like it hurts you're leaving me behind. You don't even see that do you?

(Lila cries.)

You've found your better way...and you don't care if it includes me or not.

DAMIEN

Tonya...

TONYA

Bye, Damien.

(She exits stage left.)

DAMIEN

Tonya.

(Damien stands alone in the room. Picks up the bowl and spoon from the spilled mess of waffle batter. Grabs his bag off the couch, then opens the front door stage right.)

DAMIEN

I just wish...you could dream a little more.

(The car honks outside. Tonya enters stage left just in time to watch as Damien shuts the door behind him. She looks up. Walks to the door, then moves to kneel on the couch and watches Damien through the window. Lila cries again. Tonya sinks into the couch.)

TONYA

I won't tell her you're one of those guys.

(She brings a pillow to her face and curls over. Lila cries again. Tonya sits up. Dries her tears. Runs a hand through her hair. Wipes her face and smooths her pants. She stands and traverses the length of the stage toward Lila, exits stage left.)

END OF PLAY.