RUNNING UPSTREAM

By Bryan McCampbell

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DEDICATION

Running Upstream is dedicated to my wife, Stacey, for teaching me that we all have our own surface to break and how to run for myself.

Running Upstream was first produced as *An Angel's Song* by the Lazarus Players as one of the winning entries of The Smoky Mountain Winterfest One-Act PlayFest.

The cast included:

DAVID OSGOOD: Paul Hester
DANNY OSGOOD: Mark Gagliardi
TERRI RATHER: Erin Partin
BETH MILLER: Amy Butterworth
HANK TISDALE: Will Sanders
MOM: Stacey McCampbell

STORY OF THE PLAY

"He moves a little slower, talks a little different. But that's all. All you have to do is look in his eyes and you can see the wheels turning a million miles a minute. Problem is, not too many people take the time to look for his eyes, past his arms and legs. Sometimes, even me."

These are Danny Osgood's thoughts concerning his brother, David, a young man entering mainstream high school despite his worries over his physical handicaps. When Danny is mistakenly given the credit for David's poetry, friends and family are forced to realize that they, too, need to take the time to look past his arms, legs, and slurred speech to see the person behind the written words.

Running Upstream tells the story of a young man coming to terms with his handicap and how those around him are affected as well.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

DANNY OSGOOD: A high school senior, very popular.
DAVID OSGOOD: Danny's younger brother, a junior, and a poet. Has physical disabilities since birth.
TERRI RATHER: Another senior and member of the varsity track team. Danny's girlfriend and possibly David's best friend.
BETH MILLER: Another senior, one of the more popular students. Chief editor of the school's literary magazine.
HANK TISDALE: Another senior and one of the editors of the magazine. He is Beth's ex-boyfriend.
STUDENT 1: An extra.

NOTE: The character of David speaks with a slight slur and has difficulty using his hands and walking as a result of complications at birth. His arms are usually pulled into his chest at the elbows, his left hand turned inward with the knuckles placed against the chest. He walks with a slightly bouncing limp from one leg and somewhat drags the other foot.

SETTING

Most of the play occurs in a high school commons area with tables, chairs and benches. There are a few scenes that occur in the living room of the brothers' house which can be simply furnished and decorated.

PROPS

DAVID - notebook, pen, backpack, canes.
BETH - box for books.
DANNY - notebook.
Also, a stack of submission notebooks and three signs:
Submit to *The Music of the Spheres*
Spheres Will Roll in Two Days! Submit Now!
Music of the Spheres Deadline Today!

SOUND EFFECTS

School bell.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: DANNY is DSR in SPOTLIGHT. As he speaks, a second SPOTLIGHT comes up on DAVID writing at a desk DSL in the living room.)

DANNY: It's called "mainstreaming," what my brother's gonna do. Oh, yeah, that's my brother, Davey or David as Mom calls him. I'm a year older, but still called Danny, not Daniel. But...Davey is David to her. *(Looks at DAVID)* I guess it's only right. Davey may be a year younger than me, but his soul is much older. He's told me that there are times when he feels a thousand years old. Well, anyway, mainstreaming. You see, Davey's handicapped or physically challenged, whichever word makes you feel less uncomfortable. I don't know the medical terms or definitions or any of that really. Basically, something went wrong while Mom was having Davey and there was some nerve damage. He moves a little slower, talks a little different. But that's all. All you have to do is look in his eyes and you can see the wheels turning a million miles a minute. Problem is, not too many people take the time to look for his eyes past his arms and legs. Sometimes even me.

(DANNY turns into the scene and crosses to DAVID.)

DANNY: Hey, Davey, didn't see you at the meet this afternoon. Terri's feelings were hurt.
DAVID: I was there.
DANNY: Where? I didn't see you.
DAVID: How could you miss me...?
DANNY: Now, Davey, don't start that—
DAVID: ...I was the one cheering the loudest.
DANNY: Oh, well. No, we didn't see you. Everyone was yelling pretty loud.
DAVID: Terri looked great. *(Gives DANNY a thumbs up)* I love to watch her run. But she looked so mad today.

DANNY: She's just concentrating on the race. Winning is very important to her. What are you working on?
DAVID: Poems.
DANNY: Poems?
DAVID: Yeah, what's wrong with poems?
DANNY: Nothing. They just don't really do anything for me.
DAVID: Well, I'm not writing them for you.
DANNY: Oh...well now, Davey's got himself a girlfriend to write for.
DAVID: No, I don't!
DANNY: Let's see...who could she be?
DAVID: I ain't got no—
DANNY: Do I know her? Or are you afraid to let her meet me. I mean, you know how I turn the women on.
DAVID: Danny, you shut up—
DANNY: Is it Paula? Meagan?
DAVID: Shut up or I'll kick your butt!
DANNY: You'll have to catch me first*! (Circles around the table taunting)* Is it Tammy? It better not be Terri! —Is it Beth?
DAVID: *(Whole mood changes. Stands up.)* Danny! Danny! You shut up! You shut up!
DANNY: Whoa, Davey, calm down. I was just kidding. You know I meant nothing by it. Jeez, I'm sorry. I was just messing with you.

(DAVID sits down at the desk and tries to regain his composure. DANNY watches him carefully.)

DAVID: I'm all right, Danny, honest. Just lost my temper.
DANNY: Yeah, I noticed. *(Pauses in thought)* I don't know, Dave, you went off pretty quick.
DAVID: I just lost my temper.
DANNY: That's not good, Davey.
DAVID: I just got mad. You know I don't like you making fun of Beth.
DANNY: I wasn't being mean and you know it.
DAVID: Don't talk to me like I'm retarded.

End of Freeview

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