UNTURNED STONE

A play in one act

By Daniel Munson

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THE STORY OF THE PLAY

When Chris, a high school student, isn't able to attend the funeral of his best friend, James, he decides to hold a farewell party at the gravesite. Attending the party with Chris are six of James' closest friends: Katherine, an intelligent but "ditzy" girl; Sarah, the new kid at school; Betty and Larry, soon to be married; Lisa, James' ex-girlfriend; and Tillman, the class brain. The group quickly discovers that they don't know each other very well - James was the common bond between them. As the play progresses, each person reveals what he meant to them. To some it was small - the shared love of bad music - to some it was important - the only friend in an abusive world - but he changed the life of each of them.

With unforced dialogue and a smooth flow of encounters, the play has a simple, natural feel. This one-act has already taken several high school performers to competition. A real ensemble cast play with a simple setting.

UNTURNED STONE was first present on January 21, 1999 at the Wabasha-Kellogg (MN) High School. The cast was as follows:
CHRIS: Adam Johnson
SARAH: Cassandra Kosidowski
KATHERINE: Allison Stamschror
LARRY: Scott Graupner
BETTY: Julie McDonough
TILLMAN: Bob Pfeilsticker
LISA: Angela Stamschror
Directed by: Daryl Lanz
Designed by: Kurt Graner
Lighting by: Pete Graner
Make-Up by: Angie Mueller
Student Director: Tom Evers
Production Assistant: Andrew Struthers

Dedicated to the memory of my mother, Dolores I. Munson.

The author wishes to acknowledge the help, in one way or another, from the following people: Daryl Lanz; Theresa; Rebecca; Jeremiah; Aaron; Brian C. Petti; and my father, Howard Munson (who was NOT the model for any of the fathers mentioned herein).

SETTING

A portion of a cemetery in a small town. Many, various tombstones, including a couple of long, flat ones that can be used as sitting areas for actors. Upstage, to the side, a gated mausoleum. One prominent tombstone reads "JAMES BRIAN WILSON 1982-1999." (Adjust dates as needed.)

TIME

The present. Just about dusk.

CAST

All seven characters are "friends" from high school and are, therefore, of high school age.

CHRIS: Good looking. A bit of a rebel. Has a black eye and/or a welt on his cheek.
SARAH: An outcast, trying to fit in.
KATHERINE: Intelligent, but appears somewhat of an "airhead."
LARRY: Not particularly bright. Is devoted to his girlfriend, Betty.
BETTY: Domineering. She dictates how her relationship with Larry progresses.
TILLMAN: The class "brain."
LISA: Former girlfriend of the deceased, James.

PROPS

SET: Small bits of trash, flowers on graves, weeds to pick
SARAH: Backpack filled with soda cans
KATHERINE: Bags with bags of chips
LARRY: Boom box with "bad music" tape or CD
BETTY: Backpack with CDs, engagement ring

COSTUMES

There are no specific costume requirements. Costumes should be current clothing that high school kids would wear, taking into account temperament and status. Also, consider the fact that it's dusk heading toward night.

SOUND

The only required sound effects are two songs played on the boom box (which may or may not be practical). The first song is "party music" from several decades ago - i.e., "Saturday Night" by Bay City Rollers, or "Devil Went Down to Georgia." The second song is contemporary, "cool" music, preferably suitable for a slow dance.

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(AT RISE: CHRIS enters. He is eighteen. Good looking, and somewhat of a rebel. He was best friends with James - the two were nearly inseparable. Chris has a black eye and/or a large welt on the side of his face.)

CHRIS: Hey, J.B., it's me. Chris. I … uh … Wow. This is kind of strange. Talking to you and knowing you're… down there. *(A beat.)* You know, J.B., I guess I always just figured that you knew how to swim. Not that I spent a lot of time thinking about it or anything. It was just that… well… you're J.B. You always seemed to be able to do everything. But if you didn't know how to swim, why weren't you wearing a life jacket? Or your uncle – it was his boat. Why didn't he make you put the jacket on? I mean, come on, J.B., I wouldn't have to be… You could…. Okay, look. I didn't come here to be mad at you. I came to say I'm sorry I didn't make it to your funeral. I just … I had things to do. You know? Yeah, of course you know. Anyway, I'm trying to make up for it. I'm throwing a party tonight, and you're the guest of honor. And since it didn't seem like a good idea to dig you up and bring you over to my house, I thought we'd have the party here at your place. Your new place. Don't worry, I'll clean it up a bit before everyone gets here. *(During the next section, CHRIS cleans up around the tombstone, gathering up small garbage, picking weeds, etc.)* Betty and Larry are coming, and so is Katherine and … ah … what's her name. The new girl. I keep wanting to say Susie, but I know that's not right. Anyway, I also told Tillman about it, but he didn't seem to like the idea of being in a cemetery. He's such a nerd! *(A beat.)* And listen … J.B. … I invited Lisa. I know you broke up with her last week, but I also know that you still really cared about her. What I don't know is why you broke up with her. She's the best. *(HE looks around the gravesite.)* Well, you're all tidied up. All you need now is …

CHRIS: *(Continued. HE looks around, then goes and takes the flowers off of another grave and places them on James'.)* There. Looking good, J.B.
SARAH: *(Offstage.)* It's over this way.
KATHERINE: *(Offstage.)* Are you sure, Sarah?
SARAH: *(Offstage.)* Yes!
CHRIS: Sarah, that's it. Sounds like Katherine and Sarah are here. They're bringing the chips and sodas. Betty and Larry are bringing the music. You know I really hate Larry's taste in music, even if you did like it, but he's the only one with a good boom box.
KATHERINE: *(Offstage.)* I don't think this is the right way.
SARAH: *(Offstage.)* It is!
CHRIS: I'll be back in a minute, J.B. I think you'll appreciate this.

(CHRIS hides behind another tombstone.)

SARAH: *(Offstage.)* I was here for the funeral and I remember that it was right over …

(SARAH enters, carrying a very full backpack.)

SARAH: *(Continued.)* …here. Here it is.

(KATHERINE enters with bags.)

KATHERINE: Well, it's about time.
SARAH: Look, we're the first ones here.
KATHERINE: I don't know how. We've just spent two hours touring the entire cemetery.
SARAH: Fifteen minutes, and I only made one wrong turn.
KATHERINE: Yeah, left instead of right at the front gate.
SARAH: It made a big loop like I said it would, and we still made it here first.

(Both GIRLS set down their bags, stand and stare quietly for a moment at the headstone. Finally:)

End of Freeview

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