

TAINTED LOVE

by WALTER WYKES

CHARACTERS

MAN

BOY

GIRL

SETTING

A bare stage

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TAINTED LOVE

[A MAN. A chair. Laughter. Silence. More laughter.]

MAN

File. Open. Innocence.

[Lights shift. A BOY and GIRL appear. Laughter.]

GIRL

You're so funny!

BOY

Looking, you mean!

GIRL

Yes! Funnyface!

[She touches him. They freeze. Uncertainty. She lets her hand drop. Laughter.]

BOY

Why are you laughing?

GIRL

Why do you think?

BOY

It's not funny.

GIRL

What isn't?

BOY

That.

[He touches her. Silence.]

GIRL

You didn't like it?

BOY

No, I did.

GIRL
Me too.

[Pause. Laughter.]

BOY
You're laughing again.

GIRL
I can't help it.

BOY
Are you pulling my leg or something?

GIRL
No.

BOY
You are.

GIRL
I'm not.
[She kisses him.]
See. Not pulling.
[Silence.]

BOY
Good.

MAN
File. Stop. Replay.
[Lights flicker.]

BOY
You're laughing again.

GIRL
I can't help it.

BOY
Are you pulling my leg or something?

GIRL
No.

BOY
You are.

GIRL
I'm not.

[She kisses him.]
See. Not pulling.
[Silence.]

BOY
Good.

MAN
File. Close.

[Lights shift. He revels in the memory.]
Hah! Those days! Those glorious days! Such hope! Anything was possible!
Anything!

[He laughs.]
File. Open. Happiness.
[Lights shift. BOY and GIRL.]

GIRL
It's perfect.

BOY
You like?

GIRL
It's ... amazing.

BOY
Yup.

GIRL
Our own house.

BOY
Uh-huh.

GIRL
Our home. We'll have children here. In this place.

BOY

Children. Yeah. Maybe. Lots of sex. For sure.

GIRL

You're bad.

BOY

You make me bad.

[He kisses her. Pause.]

GIRL

Are you sure this is what you want?

BOY

Pretty sure. Yeah. I'll put down a deposit.

GIRL

No. I mean this. Us. Marriage.

[Pause.]

This is what you want?

BOY

Yes.

GIRL

Good.

BOY

I want you.

GIRL

Want?

BOY

Need. I need you. I do.

[They kiss.]

GIRL

I need you too.

MAN

File. Stop. Replay.

[Lights flicker.]

GIRL
Want?

BOY
Need. I need you. I do.

MAN
Love! Love! The word is love!
[The BOY and GIRL kiss.]

GIRL
I need you too.

MAN
File close.
[Lights shift. He dances wildly around the room.]
One little hiccup! Otherwise brilliant! Brilliant! Those days! Not everyone has such days! It's something special! Some people never experience!
[He dances. Laughs. Sings. Stops. Silence.]
File. Open. Disillusionment.
[Lights shift. BOY and GIRL.]

BOY
I punched him in the face! That's what!

GIRL
You hit him?

BOY
Yes! Right in the nose! Blood everywhere! All over his shirt!

GIRL
Oh my god. Are you okay?

BOY
Yeah. I'm fine. He went to the hospital!

GIRL
The hospital?

BOY
Yup! He'll think twice before he opens his mouth like that again!

Yup. GIRL

All of it? BOY

Everything. GIRL
[Pause.]

Oh. BOY
[Pause.]

I ... I thought ...
[Pause.]

I mean ...
[Silence.]

You must think I'm really stupid.

Yes! Stupid! Näive! MAN

I don't think that. GIRL

She did! She knew! MAN

Why him? BOY

Stupid boy! MAN

I don't know. I was a teenager. It just happened. GIRL

You didn't pick him out of the crowd? BOY

No. He picked me. GIRL
[Pause.]

BOY

Did he rape you?

GIRL

What?! No! Why would you think that?!

BOY

I don't know.

GIRL

You'd ... you'd be happier if that were true! Wouldn't you?! You'd rather have something awful happen than accept the fact that I used to like another guy!

BOY

You really believe that? That I could wish that? It isn't true. I didn't. I don't.

GIRL

It's none of your business what I did with him.

BOY

What did you do? What exactly?

GIRL

I'm not going to give you a play by play. It's none of your business.

BOY

I think it is. It is my business.

GIRL

I knew this would happen. That's why I didn't tell you.

BOY

You've been intentionally hiding this? Keeping it from me?

GIRL

You're being really childish.

BOY

What else have you been hiding?

GIRL

Oh, c'mon.

BOY

I'm serious. What else?

GIRL

I didn't always know you. Okay?

BOY

So you just took whatever came along?

GIRL

Yeah. I made do.

BOY

And you don't think I have a right to know the details?

GIRL

It's none of your business what I did before I met you!

[Pause.]

BOY

No. It's not. Not anymore.

GIRL

What's that supposed to mean?

BOY

I don't know. I have no idea. I'm just talking. Saying words.

GIRL

Are you breaking up with me?

BOY

Maybe. Why not?

GIRL

Over him?

BOY

I can't believe you slept with someone else!

GIRL

Before I met you!

BOY

Someone else!

GIRL

Before I even knew you existed!

[The BOY cries. Pause.]

Hey. Hey. Come here. It's okay.

[She holds him.]

It's no big deal. Just the past. There's no going back. It's over.

[Pause.]

BOY

I thought I was the only one.

GIRL

You are. The only one I ever loved.

BOY

Why couldn't you have just waited?

GIRL

Because. I didn't know you were coming.

[Silence.]

MAN

File. Stop. Replay.

[Lights flicker.]

BOY

I thought I was the only one.

GIRL

You are. The only one I ever loved.

BOY

Why couldn't you have just waited?

GIRL

Because. I didn't know you were coming.

[Silence.]

MAN

Close file.

[Lights shift. He broods. Silence.]

One little thing!

[He thrashes about wildly. Kicks at his chair.]

One blemish! One impurity!

[He picks up the chair and smashes it into the ground.]

It's still a diamond!

[Smash.]

Not a rock to be thrown away!

[Smash.]

A clod of dirt! To be stepped on!

[He hesitates. Stares at the mangled chair in his hands.]

So stupid. A waste.

[Pause.]

I wasn't innocent myself.

[He drops the chair.]

Not completely.

[Silence. He stands motionless.]

File. Open. Regret.

[Lights shift. BOY and GIRL.]

BOY

We're about to get married!

GIRL

So?

BOY

I have a right to know!

GIRL

I thought we were past this.

BOY

Well, we're not!

GIRL

Then why did you propose?

BOY

Because! I love you!

GIRL

If you really loved me, you'd forget about all this. You'd accept me for who I am. You'd love me for it.

BOY

That's not who you are.

GIRL

Who I used to be. My past. It's just baggage. I slept with a few boys.

BOY

A few?

GIRL

Yes. A few. So what?

BOY

How many?

GIRL

It doesn't matter.

BOY

Not just him?

GIRL

No. Not just him.

[Silence.]

BOY

How am I supposed to walk around town? How am I supposed to look people in the eyes? In the grocery store. At the gas station. Every guy I see, I'll wonder if he's seen you. Been with you. I'll picture you in bed with every stranger. Touching them. Pleasing them. Letting them defile you.

GIRL

Why would you do that? Think something like that?

BOY

I can't help it.

GIRL

What's wrong with you?

BOY
How many?

GIRL
Stop.

BOY
How many have you fucked?

GIRL
Don't say that word.

BOY
Fucked!

GIRL
It isn't like you.

BOY
You don't know me! Okay?! You obviously don't know me! I mean, this whole thing is just an illusion! There's nothing real here! It's melting away!

GIRL
This is so stupid.

MAN
Stupid! Yes!

GIRL
I can't believe you thought I was a virgin.

BOY
Well, I did.

MAN
Idiot!

GIRL
I never said that.

MAN
Never! Not once! She didn't say!

BOY

No. I just thought.

GIRL

You were wrong.

BOY

Yeah. I was wrong.

[She touches him.]

Don't touch me.

[Pause.]

GIRL

So ... I'm not good enough for you now?

[Pause.]

I'm tainted or something? Is that it?

[Pause.]

I'm not a good girl anymore?

[Silence.]

MAN

File. Close.

[Lights shift. He broods.]

File. Open. Replay.

[Lights shift. BOY and GIRL.]

BOY

I was wrong.

[She touches him.]

Don't touch me.

[Pause.]

GIRL

So ... I'm not good enough for you now?

[Pause.]

I'm tainted or something? Is that it?

[Pause.]

I'm not a good girl anymore?

[Silence.]

MAN

[To the BOY.]

Say something! Say something!

[Silence. The MAN broods.]

File. Stop.

[The BOY and GIRL freeze. The MAN approaches. He strokes the GIRL's face.]

I was tainted. Not her.

[Pause.]

It was me.

[Silence. He turns away.]

File. Close.

[Lights flicker.]

No. Wait.

[The BOY and GIRL remain frozen.]

File.

[Pause.]

File. Delete.

[Lights fade on the BOY and GIRL. Then the MAN.]

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