



Arts Engagement
and Education

VINCE

"I was gonna run last night."

from *Buried Child*

by Sam Shepard: <http://www.sam-shepard.com/>

Gender: Male/Masculine Presenting

Style: Contemporary Dramatic

Age Range: 20's

Link to buy Script: www.amazon.com

Play Synopsis

Buried Child takes place in an old farmhouse, somewhere in Illinois where Vince, a rustic, edgy cowboy in search of meaning and purpose in his life comes home, after six years of absence. He brings his girlfriend, Shelly, home to meet his family, and she is at first charmed by the "normal" looking farmhouse which she compares to a "Norman Rockwell cover or something"-- that's before she actually meets his ranting, alcoholic grandparents and their two sons: Tilden, (Vince's Dad) a hulking man of dubious intelligence, and Bradley, who has lost one leg to a chain saw. Strangely, no one seems to remember Vince at first, and they treat him as an intruder. Eventually, however, they seem to accept him as a part of their violently dysfunctional family. As old secrets from the past rise to the surface, we see newcomer Shelly try to fit the pieces together. As the family tries desperately to keep the past in the past and stay afloat, the darkest of secrets begin to come to light.

Before this moment:

Dodge asks Vince to leave and get him a bottle of alcohol and Vince stays gone overnight, leaving a terrified Shelly to deal with the craziness in the house. Tilden reveals to Shelly that he had a son that Dodge drowned. Shelly is horrified. The next day, she tells Dodge that she spent the night in Halie's room and saw family photos featuring a mysterious baby. Shelly interrogates Dodge about the matter, and he deflects from her questions.

Shelly tells the family that she was excited to meet them, but they are nothing like the idyllic family Vince described, and she scolds them all for keeping their gruesome secret. Despite declarations from the other family members, Dodge finally admits that Halie had a child, apparently with Tilden (her son) and that he drowned it and buried it in the back yard.

Suddenly, Vince crashes through the screen porch in a drunken stupor. Dodge and Halie finally recognize their grandson. Vince explains to Shelly that he was compelled to come back to the farmhouse after having a vision of his relatives.

Monologue(Act III, Scene 1):

I was gonna run last night. I was gonna run and keep right on running. Clear to the Iowa border. I drove all night with the windows open. The old man's two bucks flapping right on the seat beside me. It never stopped raining the whole time. Never stopped once. I could see myself in the windshield. My face. My eyes. I studied my face. Studied everything about it as though I was looking at another man. As though I could see his whole race behind him. Like a mummy's face. I saw him dead and alive at the same time. In the same breath. In the windshield I watched him breathe as though he was frozen in time and every breath marked him. Marked him forever without him knowing. And then his face changed. His face became his father's face. Same bones. Same eyes. Same nose. Same breath. And his father's face changed to his grandfather's face. And it went on like that. Changing. Clear on back to faces I'd never seen before but still recognized. Still recognized the bones underneath. Same eyes. Same mouth. Same breath. I followed my family clear into Iowa. Every last one. Straight into the corn belt and further. Straight back as far as they'd take me. Then it all dissolved. Everything dissolved. Just like that. And that two bucks kept right on flapping on the seat beside me.

Helpful Links:

<https://www.dailyactor.com/monologues/buried-child-vince-sam-shepard/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N3j5Hky-q1c>