

Only Drinks and Children

Tell the Truth



Drew Hayden Taylor

Introduction by Lee Daniels

### Cast of Characters

JANICE (GRACE) WIRTH, thirty-six, sister taken for adoption, now living in Toronto

BARB WABUNG, twenty-four, sister living on the reserve

RODNEY, twenty-five, Barb's boyfriend

TONTO, thirty-two, Rodney's brother

### Time

May 1992, approximately five months after the events that take place in *Someday*.

### Location

The first act takes place in Janice Wirth's downtown condominium in Toronto. The second act moves to Barb Wabung's house in Otter Lake, a reserve somewhere in central Ontario.

## Scene One

*Lights up on an upscale condo. Movie and theatrical posters adorn the walls, with the odd sprinkling of Native art. The place is empty. The quiet is broken by four loud and sharp knocks on the door. There is silence, then more knocks are heard. Again, no response. A doorbell rings repeatedly. Silence. Agitated whispering is heard on the other side of the door, a low decibel argument. Then clicking of metal on metal and jiggling of the doorknob. The door opens to reveal TONTO on his knees in front of the lock. He has picked it.*

TONTO:

When in Toronto, do as the Torontonians do. Told you it wouldn't be hard.

*He enters, followed by BARB and RODNEY.*

BARB:

This is a bad idea, Tonto, this is breaking and entering.

TONTO:

She's your sister, right? (*BARB nods.*) It's not technically a B & E if it's your sister's place. It's a law, I think. Here's your jackknife back.

RODNEY:

Cool. Look at this city. I told you it was a killer view. You can almost see the reserve from here.

TONTO:

That's Lake Ontario. We're that direction.

RODNEY:

I didn't say *our* reserve. I meant *any* reserve. Six Nations must be ...

TONTO:

That direction. Syracuse over there. You can almost see where Tyendinaga would be.

RODNEY:

Wow, Mohawks as far as the eye can see.

BARB:

Where do you think she is?

RODNEY:

Not at the Goodwill, that's for sure. Look at this apartment! Barb, when I grow up, can I be an entertainment lawyer, too?

BARB:

No wonder she didn't want to stay at our place. After seeing this apartment, I don't wanna stay at our place.

RODNEY:

Some of these movie posters are signed. Look, an autographed picture of Al Waxman. Is he still alive?

BARB:

Don't touch anything.

*Without thinking, she picks up a piece of abstract sculpture.*

BARB:

What is this?

RODNEY:

I think they call it art.

BARB:

How can you tell?

RODNEY:

It's in the middle of the table and it's not a bowl.

TONTO:

The woman's not as white as you thought. There's some damn good art up here. A Maxine Noel, an Odjig, a Roy Thomas.

RODNEY:

(*à la* Star Trek) Dammit, Jim, I'm an Indian, not an art critic. *RODNEY disappears into the bathroom.*

BARB:

Think they're originals?

TONTO:

Well, they're definitely not prints. So either they're originals or great forgeries. And as much as I like Maxine's work, I don't think there's that great a market for fake Noels. Someday, maybe.

*RODNEY comes out of the bathroom.*

RODNEY:

Barb, go look at her bathroom.

BARB:

I don't want to look at her bathroom.

RODNEY:

Trust me, go look at her bathroom.

*Puzzled, BARB peeks into the bathroom.*

BARB:

Wow!

RODNEY:

Didn't I tell you?

BARB:

I've never seen a bathroom like this. Tonto?

TONTO investigates.

TONTO:

What the hell is that?

BARB:

I don't want to know. It's like an amusement park in there.

RODNEY:

Hey, Barb. Take a look at this.

BARB:

What now?

*RODNEY is standing in front of a photograph on a desk.*

RODNEY:

See. She didn't forget.

BARB:

She still has it.

TONTO:

Still has what?

BARB:

The picture Mom gave her last Christmas. Of Dad holding her.

TONTO:

I'd forgotten how big your father was. How old was Grace there?

BARB:

About three months. The Children's Aid Society took her a couple months later.

RODNEY:

See, Barb. It may not be a wasted trip.

BARB:

I miss that picture. Why didn't she return our calls? Couldn't she tell it was important?

TONTO:

I don't think she's been here for a while. This plant soil is very dry.

RODNEY:

You know, sometimes you're just too Indian.

TONTO:

*Chi-meegwetch.* And check her answering machine. Eleven calls. How many times did we call?

RODNEY:

Including the two this morning, ten all together.

BARB:

So she's not here. A three-hour drive for nothing.

RODNEY:

So, what do you want to do? Hang out here and wait for her to get back, or do you want to head home?

BARB:

I'm tired, Rodney. I want to go home.

RODNEY:

You got it. Let's go.

*They start moving toward the door.*

TONTO:

Provided this godforsaken city hasn't towed my truck.

*Suddenly, the rattle and click of keys in a lock is heard. The trio freezes, panic-stricken like deer in headlights.*

BARB:

Shit!

RODNEY:

Everybody hide!

*They all scramble to find places to hide in the apartment.*

*The door opens and JANICE/GRACE enters with her*

*luggage. She looks tired and worn. Barely glancing at her apartment, she drops her bags and takes her coat off. She opens the closet to find TONTO.*

TONTO:

Uh, hi ...

*JANICE screams.*

TONTO:

It's okay! It's okay!

*She goes into a martial arts position (Wen-Do) and punches him solidly. TONTO goes down in the closet, with a flood of coats covering him.*

JANICE:

*(screaming) 9-1-1! 9-1-1!*

*TONTO crawls out of the closet in pain and half-conscious, only to have JANICE start kicking him.*

TONTO:

*(in pain) Barb ...!*

*BARB and RODNEY emerge from their hiding positions.*

BARB:

Grace! Take it easy. It's us!

JANICE:

Barb? Rodney?

BARB:

Hi, Grace.

JANICE:

What are you doing here? In my apartment?

BARB:

We had to see you.

JANICE:

How'd you get in here?

RODNEY:

We, uh, snuck past the security guard and, well, Tonto picked your lock.

JANICE:

Who picked my lock?

RODNEY:

My brother, Tonto.

*RODNEY gestures to TONTO who is only now getting up off the ground.*

TONTO:

*(still in pain) Hi. I spent a year working for a locksmith in Peterborough. It's quite easy once you know how they work.*

JANICE:

What are you all doing here? In my apartment?

BARB:

Well, when you didn't return our messages ...

JANICE:

What messages? Will someone tell me what's going on here?

BARB:

Grace, Mom passed away four days ago.

JANICE:

Anne ... Oh, Barb, I'm sorry. What happened?

BARB:

She went in her sleep.

JANICE:

Four days ago?

BARB:

The funeral was yesterday. I wanted you to be there.

JANICE:

Oh, Barb, I'm so sorry. I've been away and ...

BARB:

I think you should come back, and say goodbye, you know, to her.

JANICE:

Go back. (*realizing*) Go back? Barb, I can't.

BARB:

What do you mean you can't? You owe it to her.

JANICE:

I'm sorry about Anne, I really am. And I'll do what I can if you need any help. But going back ... I can't.

BARB:

You have to go back. She's your mother. Our mother. I don't care if you just drive up, put some flowers down, say goodbye, hop back in, and drive away afterwards.

RODNEY:

You really should, Grace.

TONTO:

It's the proper thing to do.

JANICE:

Sorry, but I'll determine what's proper for me to do. Anne was a lovely lady ...

BARB:

Your biological mother.

JANICE:

I knew her for one hour, that was all.

*Beat.*

BARB:

I don't believe you.

TONTO:

What have you got against Otter Lake? That's where you come from; that's your people.

JANICE:

My people live in London.

TONTO:

No, your caretakers live in London; your family lives in Otter Lake.

JANICE:

I love my parents.

TONTO:

I'm sure you do. Look, I worked for a year as a counsellor at the youth centre. I met kids all the time, and adults, too, who were trapped between one culture and another. It can do weird things to some people. But I found it can help if you have a sound understanding of where you come from; then you'll have a better understanding of where you're going. Got me?

JANICE:

That's really wonderful. (*to BARB*) I realize you're going through a rough time right now, Barb, but I really don't think it would be in anyone's best interest for me to go back to Otter Lake. The last time I left there, I was a mess. I'm still trying to get a hold of myself. I do not want to go through that again.

BARB:

Okay, you don't want to come home and say goodbye to the woman who gave birth to you. I'm not surprised, but I am disappointed. I hoped you'd been born with some of Mom's compassion.

JANICE:

Don't take this personally. It's me, not you. Now, if there's anything else I can do to help ...

RODNEY:

Um, yeah, as a matter of fact there is, Grace.

JANICE:

Please, my name is Janice.

RODNEY:

Okay, Janice. Um, we need a place to crash. Got any room?

BARB:

What? I don't want to stay here.

RODNEY:

Sweetheart, essence of my existence, we need some place to stay for the night. It'll be dark in an hour, and Tonto can't drive because of his night blindness ...

BARB:

You have night blindness?

TONTO:

It's a personal thing.

RODNEY:

I don't have my licence since that little altercation with the OPP, for which I still think that Breathalyzer was rigged. You don't like to drive on the highways. Kind of limits our alternatives.

BARB:

I don't want to stay here!

JANICE:

All of you? Here?

RODNEY:

We're housebroken.

BARB:

Listen to me, I don't want to stay here.

JANICE:

But Barb doesn't want to stay here.

RODNEY:

Listen, honey, do you want to walk home? Sleep in the truck, or better yet, sleep on the streets? It's early spring so the chance of getting frostbite is practically non-existent.

BARB:

(to TONTO) How bad is your night blindness?

RODNEY:

Trust me, it's very bad. We don't have a choice.

BARB:

Well ...

RODNEY:

It's decided. Can we?

JANICE:

Well, I guess. You're all welcome to stay if you want. It's the least I can do.

BARB:

Can't get much more least than that.

RODNEY:

I think that's a yes. (to TONTO) Shall we go get our stuff?

JANICE:

I'm supposed to be on vacation.

TONTO:

Why bother, you've got a natural tan.

*RODNEY and TONTO walk to the door.*

TONTO:  
(to RODNEY) How long have I had night blindness? Is it  
fatal?

RODNEY:  
Shh!  
*They exit as the lights go down.*

JA

B.

JA

JA

JA

B.

JA