

NOTES

Dustin is a one-act play about bad things happening to good people. The title character, Dustin, is a 19-year-old, mentally-challenged young man, who, for lack of companionship, finds comfort and acceptance while playing with pre-teen boys from his neighborhood. Unfortunately, tragedy soon becomes inevitable, and Dustin finds himself being interrogated by a detective at the police station. The questioning centers on the death of his friend, Tommy. The character, Detective Helms, may be portrayed by either a male or female adept at portraying maturity; however, the character, Dustin, *must* be portrayed by a male. This selection may be entered in either Duo Interpretation or Duet Acting. By completely eliminating Detective Helms from the scene, however, this play could easily be adapted into a monologue and be entered in Dramatic Interpretation. This is an incredibly strong, realistic scene for two mature performers. Please, remember that an interrogation involves carefully executed questions. Do not underestimate the power that lies within a few carefully placed pauses for dramatic effect. Also, avoid the stereotype of over-playing Dustin's mental challenges. Instead, play him honestly. His mindset is that of a young boy; however, his body is very much that of a grown man. There is humor within this play. Always remember: Nothing draws an audience into a character's journey more effectively than playing a few lighter moments along the way. Think about it. An audience is always more likely to be truly moved, touched, and ultimately, *root* for you, if you first make them *like* the character; so play that innocence and likeability. Make the audience giggle a few times at Dustin's innocent nature and purity of heart. With two mature, talented performers, and some true soul-searching, *Dustin* is a sure-fire winner!

Detective Helms: (*To audience*) The hardest part about being a detective—is learning the truth sometimes. I've been in this business a while now, and many of the stories I've heard would rival anything you've ever seen in the movies or on television. Take tonight, for instance. We get a call from one of the officers doing a routine drive through in one of the neighborhoods over on the west side of town. There was a young boy, eleven-years-old—*dead*—found lying in an empty lot. I got the call and immediately drove over. The boy's parents arrived just after paramedics were putting the boy's body into the ambulance. They immediately identi-

fied their son. His name was Tommy. They tell me that they've been looking for their son after he didn't come home for dinner. The mother then gives me a few names, addresses—boys he might have played with earlier. I talked with one family, who said the last person seen with Tommy was his friend—Dustin.

The following scene takes place in an interrogation room at a police station.

Detective Helms: Hello, Dustin, I'm Detective Helms. I just met with your parents, and I told them you and I would have our little chat in here. It's a little cramped, but it will give us a little more privacy. So, let's get started, shall we? (*Turns on a tape recorder*) Could you start by telling me your name?

Dustin: (*Innocently*) You already know my name. You said hello to me, when you walked in the room.

Detective Helms: I know your name, Dustin. I just need to hear *you* say your name. (*Pointing to the tape recorder*) For the record. So, state your name for me, please.

Dustin: My name is Dustin.

Detective Helms: What's your *last* name?

Dustin: Farmington. I'm Dustin Farmington.

Detective Helms: How old are you, Dustin?

Dustin: I'm nineteen-years-old.

Detective Helms: Where do you live?

Dustin: I live with my parents. We've lived in the same house since before I was born. Only then, it was just my mom and my dad. I wasn't born yet.

Detective Helms: For the record, can you tell me what your address is?

Dustin: 1612 Maple. I've got my own room and everything. It's decorated with posters of the *Avengers*, but I've also got some old *Star Wars* stuff that used to be my dad's. He gave it to me, when I was little.

Detective Helms: (*Laughs*) I have to admit. I'm a huge *Star Wars* fan myself.

Dustin: I *really* like Dad's old comic books. I like all the bright colors they use.

Detective Helms: Do you— Do you have any *friends* in your neighborhood?

Dustin: I've got lots of friends. They like comic books, too. There's Tommy. And there's Jarod. Sometimes Vin gets to play with us, too, but he's Chinese. His mother makes him stay home a lot, so sometimes he can't play with us.

Detective Helms: How old are your friends, Dustin?

Dustin: I'm not sure how old they are. I know that Tommy just turned eleven, because he just had a birthday last week. I got to go to his party.

His parents had a big party for him in their backyard. We all went over to Tommy's house, when Tommy's dad got off work. His dad made hamburgers on their grill. He made hot dogs, too, but nobody really ate any of the hot dogs. Everybody wanted a hamburger. His dad is nice. He always messes with my hair, when I come over to Tommy's house. He's a teacher. He teaches at the high school. He's always trying to teach me something, when I go over there.

Detective Helms: Were all of the neighborhood boys at Tommy's house for his birthday party?

Dustin: Everyone was there, except for Vin. Vin's mom wouldn't let him come. She said he had to help her clean the house or something. Vin's mom likes a clean house. That's why we never get to play over there.

Detective Helms: Did Tommy get lots of presents at his birthday party?

Dustin: Sure. He got lots of stuff. Tommy's parents bought him a new shirt and some shoes.

Detective Helms: What kind of shoes were they?

Dustin: They were sneakers. They had a picture of Thor on them. Thor's my favorite *Avenger*. Tommy really liked them.

Detective Helms: Thor's very popular. My son likes Thor, too. So, what did you think of Tommy's new shoes? Did you like them, too?

Dustin: I thought they were the coolest pair of sneakers I've ever seen.

Detective Helms: Did *you* bring Tommy a present?

Dustin: My mom forgot to get me a present to take, so I looked around my room for something to give Tommy. He's my best friend, and I didn't want to go to his party and not have a present for him. I gave him one of my action figures. It was The Hulk. The Hulk was missing one of his hands, but Tommy said it was cool anyway. He said he would just pretend The Hulk was born that way.

Detective Helms: Sounds like you boys had a great party for your friend. I'll bet all of you boys have a lot of fun together. Don't you? What do you boys play—when you get together?

Dustin: We're always playing something. Sometimes, we play with our action figures. We're pretty rough sometimes. We'll throw them way up in the air and pretend they're flying. That's how The Hulk that I gave Tommy for his birthday lost his hand. I threw him way up high in the air, and when he landed on the street—his hand broke off. When it happened, Tommy said we should pretend he was flying and some airplane propeller chopped it off. Tommy's funny. He's got a good imagination.

Detective Helms: Action figures can be a lot of fun. What else do you guys do when you get together? Do you play any other games?

Dustin: Sometimes, we'll pretend we're cops and robbers. And sometimes, we'll play Superheroes. I don't like that game as much though. I always want to be a Superhero, too, but Tommy and Jarod and Vin say I'm too big to be a Superhero. So I have to be the monster from outer space.