

THIS IS AN ONLINE SAMPLE
OF THE FIRST TEN PAGES OF

DIRTY HEART
By Callie Kimball

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PRODUCTION HISTORY

“Dirty Heart” was written while in residence at The MacDowell Colony in 2006.
It is currently unproduced.

SETTING

Thanksgiving weekend, 2006.
The fictional town of St. James, Virginia
(halfway between the real towns of Lebanon and St. Paul).

CHARACTERS

PAUL

20, any race. A sophomore at George Mason University.
Plays quarterback but is not your typical jock,
perhaps because he comes from an academic family.
At the start of the play, he has just been dumped via voice mail
and text message by his girlfriend.
He was going to propose over Thanksgiving weekend.

DANNY

20, white. Also a sophomore at GMU.
Born and raised in southwest Virginia.
Came out to his family as a teen and they are all on board with his homosexuality.
The first in his family to go to college.

GRANNY BECK

66, white. Mother to Amos and Clyde, grandmother to Danny.
Your average, chain-smoking, PBR-drinking, blogging grandma.

AMOS

40, white. Danny’s dad and Debbie’s husband.
Large, lazy, loving couch potato. The king of practical jokes in the family.
His goold-ole-boy act is a little forced and obnoxious but he thinks he’s a really great guy.

CLYDE

38, white. The butt of the harshest of Amos’ jokes.
Is always trying to help around the house because he’s sweet on Debbie.
Has slight boundary issues from his deep insecurity and need to be liked.

MERIT

16, white. Amos’ and Debbie’s daughter.
Very creative, plays piano, acts in school plays, probably wears a lot of black eyeliner.
Is sort of magical like a changeling. Yes, she was named after a cigarette.

DEBBIE

40, white. Amos’ wife. A receptionist at the local emergency room.
Is often at odds with her live-in mother-in-law. She is very active in her church.

DIRTY HEART

ACT ONE

Scene 1

Sounds of rain on pavement. The play begins with PAUL and DANNY getting back in the car with bags of junk food. DANNY is driving.

PAUL

–because I think maybe she’s really just trying to you know give me permission.

DANNY

Permission. (*DANNY is busy shaking off the cold wet.*)

PAUL

Yeah permission to explore and all. Like she’s afraid of stifling me.

DANNY

Uh-huh.

PAUL

‘S just like her to be all worried about me. Doesn’t wanna crowd me. Think I just need to reassure her I mean it when I say I don’t wanna date anyone else.

DANNY

Uh-huh.

PAUL

You think that’s a bad idea.

DANNY

I dunno man, that’s why I stopped dating women. Head games man. (*Pause.*) ‘Course men play games too but at least they’re not gonna withhold sex.

PAUL

Oh Carla's got the biggest sex drive. Bigger'n me sometimes. I mean, don't get me wrong, I've got a big sex drive and all but man she *always* wants it. Perfect girlfriend. Sweet, pretty, loves to screw. This one time—

DANNY

Perfect 'cept she don' wanna see you no more. Can you turn the heat up.

PAUL

Dude. What's with your grammar? Ever since Blacksburg you've gone all hillbilly.

DANNY

Practicin'. Don't like talkin' too fancy 'round the folx.

PAUL

So they're cool with you screwin' guys and all but you can't sound too educated.

DANNY

Right. First one to go to college. Don' wanna rub it in.

PAUL

(Pause.) I dunno. You *really* think she doesn't wanna see me any more?

DANNY

Read me the text message again.

PAUL

(Pulls out his cell and reads.) "Thanks for understanding. I just can't do this. I'll always love you. Good luck."

DANNY

Paul. Dude. Listen a me. She don' wanna see you no more. I know you don' wanna hear that but—

PAUL

Nah see I think she's just confused. Big city's turned her head and all.

DANNY

Paul. That's some cold shit man. Give you The Friends Speech on voice mail then blows up your cell with a text message like that.

PAUL

She was crying on the voice mail (*starts dialing his voice mail number*) you wanna hear it?

DANNY

No.

PAUL

No service.

DANNY

Crying 'cause she's ashamed. (*Pause.*) How long'd you go out?

PAUL

Homecoming court junior year.

DANNY

Dude. Fuckin' fairy tale.

PAUL

'Lmost three years.

DANNY

Dude. Three years and she calls the time of death on voice mail. Look I'm sorry man but I've been listening to you go on for the last four hours 'bout how great Carla is. Now I dunno maybe she *is* The One but I'm thinking it's more likely she's First in a Series.

PAUL

Dude. I know. Fuck.

DANNY

Dude. I mean I'm sorry maybe you don't wanna hear this, but you're not gonna be able to figure this out so that the answer's she still loves you and you're gonna ride off into the sunset together.

DIRTY HEART

PAUL

(Long pause.) See if I'd'a gotten into NYU last year this so never woulda happened.

DANNY

What so you coulda watched her hook up with other guys?

PAUL

(Sound of a truck speeding past.) Jesus!

DANNY

Fuckin' truckers.

PAUL

He must be doin' ninety. In the rain. *(Pause.)*

DANNY

Look mope around on the inside all you want, all I'm sayin' is if you bring my family down for Thanksgiving with this sorry bullshit I'm gonna kick your ass from here to breakfast.

PAUL

OK so tell me their names again. How much farther?

DANNY

'Bout an hour-and-a-half from Blacksburg so you gots 'bout got forty-five minutes to get this pity party outta your system. Hand me the Funyons. *(PAUL rummages while DANNY continues.)* There's Granny Beck—

PAUL

Granny Beck.

DANNY

Short for Rebecca. *(PAUL hands him Funyons.)* Can you open 'em.

PAUL

(PAUL opens the Funyons, then goes back to rummaging.) What should I call her?

DANNY

Won't matter. Deaf as a doornail. 'Those years at the shooting range. You'll have to talk real loud to her. Real loud. There's my mom and dad—

PAUL

Mister and missus Kilcher. (*PAUL holds up a carton of Marlboros.*) You don't smoke.

DANNY

Won't let you call 'em that. Amos and Debbie. Short for Deborah. Those are for Granny Beck. (*Pause.*) Jesus what is that, a garlic fart?

PAUL

Sorry.

DANNY

Dude. Roll down the window for chrissakes. You got 'bout forty-five minutes to get *that* outta your system. Dude. (*Pause. Resumes.*) My Uncle Clyde basically lives with us. Can't cook.

PAUL

Clyde.

DANNY

Word of advice? Don't let him corner you. Dad says now that he's goin' to the community college can't stop talkin' 'bout books. My sister Merit.

PAUL

Right. Merit. Older younger.

DANNY

High school. Don't even think about it.

PAUL

Dude. Please. Okay. Granny Beck Amos Debbie Uncle Clyde Merit.

DANNY

Can't see in this damn fog.

DIRTY HEART

Mountains.
PAUL

Yeah.
DANNY

(*Looking at his cell.*) Still no bars.
PAUL

Welcome to southwest Virginy. Trust me you don't wanna call her anyways.
DANNY

Right. I know.
PAUL

Don't call her. Let her wonder. Feel bad. (*Pause.*) Paul she's doin' you a favor cuttin' you loose. You watch. You'll get over this and see it's a whole big world out there fulla girls stand in line take a number to blow you, fuckin' quarterback and all. And you don't even gotta be in a relationship.
DANNY

Second string and I like being in a relationship. Y'sure you're gay?
PAUL

You sure you're straight? (*Pause.*) Oh and there's Zeke.
DANNY

Zeke?
PAUL

Dog. (*Pause.*) Short for Ezekiel.
DANNY

Lights down.

Scene 2

(The Kilchers' living room. Waist-high piles of newspapers are near the door. Plastic sheeting is curtained in the doorway leading to the basement, from where clumsy, dramatic classical piano music is coming. Twelveteen empty blue bottles stand in a line on the window ledge near the door. GRANNY BECK is at a desk, typing on a computer, smoking a cigarette, and drinking a Pabst Blue Ribbon. AMOS comes home from work, takes off his boots, etc. during the following.)

AMOS

Hey Ma.

GRANNY BECK

Hey. Turn the heat back up while you're over there?

AMOS

(As he does so.) Yeah, it's freezin' in here. Where's Debbie?

GRANNY BECK

Kitchen.

AMOS

Perfect. *(He comes over, sits on sofa, and places a dead squirrel on the coffee table. GRANNY BECK turns, looks at the squirrel, shakes her head, then goes back to instant messaging.)*

DEBBIE

(From off.) Amos? 'Zat you?

AMOS

Yeah honey can you bring me a beer? *(Piano music stops.)*

GRANNY BECK

'Djya read the article I saved to the desktop?

AMOS

Not yet. *(DEBBIE, wearing jeans and a really thick-strapped bra, walks in, kisses AMOS, hands him an open beer, looks at the squirrel, looks at AMOS, shakes her head, and leaves.)* Nothin. Didn't even flinch. *(Takes a swig of the beer.)* Gotta be more creative—*(spits out beer)* What the! Debbie what is this?

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DEBBIE

(From off.) Gatorade and milk. Now you wanna take that squirrel outside honey?

AMOS

Nah 'm gonna put it in Merit's backpack.

DEBBIE

Clean it first.

AMOS

Okay. Maybe I'll just scare her with it. 'Djya know she was gonna do that? Milk an' Gatorade? *(GRANNY BECK just shrugs and keeps typing.)*

GRANNY BECK

Getting' you back for that bacon prank you pulled last week.

AMOS

Still? Aw.

DEBBIE

Ma you might wanna get offline in case Danny calls in.

GRANNY BECK

I'm not online Debbie.

AMOS

Gonna go get me a real beer. Want one?

GRANNY BECK

Thanks yeah. *(AMOS picks up squirrel and heads to kitchen. Piano music starts up again. CLYDE enters, carries a divining rod, takes off boots, etc.)*

CLYDE

Hey Ma.

GRANNY BECK

Clyde.

DIRTY HEART

CLYDE

Merit practicing?

GRANNY BECK

What's it sound like? (*Shakes her head in barely disguised contempt and keeps typing crazy fast.*)

CLYDE

Debbie 'round?

GRANNY BECK

Kitchen.

CLYDE

Amos?

GRANNY BECK

Kitchen.

CLYDE

I'll wait here then. Danny here yet? (*Phone rings.*)

GRANNY BECK

Any second. Bringing a friend home.

DEBBIE

(*From off.*) 'Llo?

CLYDE

Really? Well good for him. That's a first isn't it. (*Pause.*) Aren' cha gonna ask me how school was?

GRANNY BECK

How was school Clyde.

CLYDE

Good. Real good. Thanks for askin'. You ever hear of this *Thoreau* guy? Went to the woods lived in a cabin watched ants and wrote about it?

DIRTY HEART

GRANNY BECK

No. Why don't you tell me all 'bout it Clyde.

CLYDE

Yeah he lived in this one room and grew beans and anyways we're readin' it in English class. It's kinda slow but there's something 'bout looking at the small stuff makes you wanna think about the big stuff. See teacher told us there's two kinds of folks Ma those who see everything see the possibility of everything and those who only see what's right in front of 'em. Then there's those't see both like this *Thoreau* guy. (*AMOS comes in with two beers, flings squirrel at CLYDE.*)

AMOS

Catch asshole! (*CLYDE drops the divining rod and screams like a girl. AMOS and GRANNY BECK find this hilarious and are still laughing when PAUL and DANNY enter.*) Son! (*Goes and hugs DANNY. Piano music stops.*) How's the driving?

DEBBIE

Keep it down in there I'm on the phone people!

DANNY

Good good.

AMOS

Those tires holdin' up?

DANNY

Yeah real good Dad thanks. This here's my friend Paul. (*PAUL sticks out his hand and AMOS hugs him.*)

AMOS

Welcome to the family Paul. We're real glad Danny's brought you home to meet us. Where'd that squirrel get to.

PAUL

Pleased to meet you.

DANNY

(*MERIT comes running into the room and jumps on DANNY.*) Hey baby girl!

DIRTY HEART