

BREAKDOWN IN WAKEFIELD

By Patrick Gabridge

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****Though this duet is intended for school contests, the characters should be played as older. JOE is in his late teens, but TRIXIE would be in her middle to late twenties.****

CAST: JOE and TRIXIE

AT RISE: JOE is bent over studiously, as if HE'S looking under the hood of a car.

JOE: Stupid car. What's the matter with you? What am I going to do?

TRIXIE: **(TRIXIE enters. SHE is several years older than JOE)** Are you all right?

JOE: What?

TRIXIE: Are you all right?

JOE: Um, yeah, I'm fine.

TRIXIE: Little car trouble?

JOE: Yeah. Know if there's a mechanic on duty?

TRIXIE: Nine o'clock Sunday night? Even the grocery store is closed. They just pushed me out.

JOE: Great.

TRIXIE: What's the matter with it?

JOE: I have no idea. All I know about cars is that you put in gas, turn the key, and press the pedals. Then, mostly when you can't afford it, the stupid thing breaks down and you take it to some guy who barely finished high school, but who now becomes your weekly companion. He knows the patient is finished, but doesn't have the heart to tell you. You keep bringing it in until you've sunk enough money to buy a whole new car.

TRIXIE: Rough day, huh?

JOE: Yeah. An unbelievably stupid, wretched, stinking day. **(pause)** Sorry.

TRIXIE: Don't be.

JOE: Know anything about cars?

TRIXIE: Not much. Everything seems where it ought to be. You a long way from home?

JOE: Four hundred miles. Peoria.

TRIXIE: Wow. Where you headin'?

JOE: Pittsburgh.

TRIXIE: Quite a ways.

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JOE: Another two hundred.

TRIXIE: Guess you're not gonna get there tonight, huh?

JOE: Not likely.

TRIXIE: **(extending her hand)** I'm Trixie.

JOE: Joe.

TRIXIE: So what's next, Joe?

JOE: I don't know. Haven't eaten since yesterday. Guess I'll walk around and try to find someplace open.

TRIXIE: You won't have any luck. Bob's is the last place to close, and they close at six.

JOE: **(peering in the window)** You don't suppose Bob stuck around to clean up, do you?

TRIXIE: Horace.

JOE: What?

TRIXIE: His name is Horace. Horace Ollup. Bob just looks better on a sign. He figured no one would come to a place called Horace's Grill. Doesn't have that certain something.

JOE: You don't suppose Horace would be around?

TRIXIE: Doubtful.

JOE: **(shouting)** Hey! Hey, Horace, open up!

TRIXIE: He's already home watchin' dirty movies. Has himself one of those satellite dishes.

JOE: How do you know what he's doing?

TRIXIE: Well, he used to rent the real steamy ones from the video store where I work. He came in every Sunday night at six-thirty. We use the system where you bring us the tape jacket, with the title and picture on it, so people can see what you're getting. It always made him real nervous. He'd lay 'em face down so you couldn't see the title, and he'd always wait until everybody left or was making their selections. Then he'd scurry over and slide it to me real nice and quiet. He'd never look me in the eye 'til after I gave him the tape and put away the cover. Then he'd look at me, as polite as could be, and say, "Thank you, Trixie." When I'd drive by on my way home, his curtains would be shut tighter than staves on a barrel. Ever since he got his satellite dish, he doesn't come by anymore, but he still keeps his curtains shut tight, right at six-thirty.

JOE: Sounds like you've got him figured out.

TRIXIE: I know my way around here. Maybe too well. You got family in Pittsburgh?

JOE: Yeah. Family gathering.

TRIXIE: That's nice.

JOE: A funeral.

TRIXIE: I'm sorry to hear that. Was it a close relation?

JOE: My brother.

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TRIXIE: Oh. I'm sorry I brought it up.

JOE: That's all right.

TRIXIE: Can't stop thinking about him, huh?

JOE: Yeah, kinda like that.

TRIXIE: How did he die?

JOE: Car accident. Head on collision. Everybody died. I heard it was a real mess.

TRIXIE: That's terrible.

JOE: Happened three days ago. I would have been on my way sooner, you see, but I just got this new job. I couldn't get the time off. Couldn't even ask 'em. It wouldn't have been right. I called and told my parents I'd be back for the funeral. I would have been back already, but I just couldn't. You see what I mean?

TRIXIE: It's not your fault.

JOE: That's what I keep trying to tell them. They treat me like I'm some sort of cold-hearted degenerate. Mom crying over the phone, Dad saying they can really use me. I'm doing the best I can, you know.

TRIXIE: Sure you are.

JOE: He goes in the ground tomorrow morning, ten o'clock. They're all going to be saying, "Where's Joe? What's the matter with that boy?" But you can't hold up a funeral. I mean, it's all scheduled, it has to happen, with or without me. "Where's Joe? Where's Joe? What's the matter with him?"

TRIXIE: Your car broke down. They can't blame you for that.

JOE: They will.

TRIXIE: They're just upset. They'll get over it.

JOE: I'm supposed to be there. And now this stupid car... **(HE kicks the car)**

TRIXIE: I've got a car at home. I could give you a ride.

JOE: I couldn't ask that.

TRIXIE: You didn't. I volunteered.

JOE: It's too much out of your way. We're talkin' a four hour drive here.

TRIXIE: I know. We can get you there just after midnight.

JOE: I can't leave my car behind.

TRIXIE: No one's gonna take it. It doesn't work.

JOE: **(pointing off stage)** See that sign? "Customers Only. Violators will be Towed." I can't afford it.

TRIXIE: Horace is just trying to intimidate you.

JOE: Well, consider me intimidated.

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TRIXIE: Look, when we get to my place, I'll call him up. He won't answer, since he'll be "occupied." But he's probably got an answering machine, being the respectable businessman. So I'll say, "Horace, you just keep your hands in your lap, honey, but a friend of mine needs to leave his car in your lot for a while. Okay?" He won't tow your car.

JOE: That'll just make him mad.

TRIXIE: No, no. See, if he tows your car, he knows I'll tell the Ladies Social Club, the one that eats lunch here every Tuesday afternoon. I'll inform them that their host's favorite movies are Naughty Nannies and Sorority Jugs Four. Now I don't think old Horace wants to lose a guaranteed fifteen lunches a week, do you?

JOE: It wouldn't be right for you to tell on him. Don't you have a professional and moral obligation to keep his privacy?

TRIXIE: I'm not a doctor. I rent videotapes. Video clerks don't have a special version of the Hippocratic Oath. If I want to tattle on him, I will.

JOE: It's a four hour drive, in the middle of the night. It's too big an imposition.

TRIXIE: Do I look like a child to you?

JOE: No.

TRIXIE: I know when it's nighttime. I know how long it takes to drive to Pittsburgh. If I add it all up in my head and still want to take you, who are you to say I can't offer?

JOE: No one.

TRIXIE: Come on then. Let's go.

JOE: (*pacing*) I can't.

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