Acting Edition

A Burial Place

by Owen Panettieri

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SAMUEL FRENCH

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www.concordtheatricals.com
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A BURIAL PLACE was first produced by New Light Theater Project in association with 5000 Broadway Productions, premiering at the Dorothy Strelsin Theatre, New York City, on November 3, 2016. The producers were Luis A. Miranda Jr. and Sarah Norris. The production was directed by Joey Brenneman, with scenic design by Ashleigh Poteat, sound design by Andy Evan Cohen, lighting design by Ali Hall, and prop design by Charlotte Harrison. Technical direction was provided by Jen Medina-Gray and press representation was provided by Charlie Guadano. The production stage manager was Allyson Namishia and the assistant stage manager was Connor Scully. The cast was as follows:

EMMETT. . . . . Evan Maltby
COLBY. . . . . Max King
MARCUS. . . . . Deshawn Wyatte

CHARACTERS

EMMETT – Sensitive, fantasy-loving college kid, 19, Male

COLBY – Emmett's jaded high school ex-boyfriend, 19, Male

MARCUS – Childhood best friend of Emmett and Colby. A bright spirit. Black, 19, Male

NOTE: Emmett and Colby can be portrayed by non-Black actors of any race/ethnicity.

SETTING

Childhood clubhouse on Emmett's family's property.

TIME

June 2015, in the evening.

NOTE

A / indicates that the next line of dialogue should begin while the current line continues to its completion.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

In writing *A Burial Place,* I was taken by the idea of how young people might process loss even when they lack the definitive answers needed to help them make sense of things. When the fate of someone we love remains unresolved, it feels impossible to move on, but time still moves us forward.

When the world won't provide you with closure, is it possible to create closure for yourself? Can magic exist in a world of harsh reality? Are the stories we tell ourselves to help us get through the day actually hurting us? How do we make peace with our mistakes? Emmett, Colby, and Marcus must find answers to these questions for themselves, but hopefully they can support each other on their respective journeys. To that end, the play is not about uncovering what happened to Marcus in the past. It's about finding a way forward. In terms of what is going on with Marcus, it's my hope that future directors and casts will examine the text and make the choices that feel right for them.

The play takes place in 2015. If you are not familiar with the pop culture references the characters talk about, look them up! These characters, movies, games, and shows mean a lot to them and provide additional insights into who they are and what matters to them.

I want to say thank you to the tremendous cast and crew of the original production of *A Burial Place.* Thank you to Sarah Norris at New Light Theater Project and Luis A. Miranda Jr. at 5000 Broadway Productions for their keen judgement and support while producing the initial run of the show. Thank you to Kim Sharp and Bara Swain for their early support of my work and to Bryson Bruce for his perspective on the play in its early development. I am forever in debt to Joey Brenneman for her amazing original direction. And finally, a big thank you to Josh Blye for being my incredible sounding board, my champion, and my partner in experiencing life's wonders. They say we are birds of a feather.

For Phil and Steph, and for the Circle of Friends

Scene One

(The interior of a suburban detached garage. In former lives it was a small barn, a shed, a children's clubhouse and a converted home office. It is currently used for storage. This structure is set back from the main house on the property. The year is 2015, early summer. **EMMETT**, *19, organizes the clutter in the room, setting up for a sleepover. He has a good heart and a practiced smile. His outfit appears casual, but he's spent a lot of time considering his clothes, his underwear, his hair, and especially how he smells in anticipation of his two guests. Two sleeping bags, snacks and games are stacked on a folding table. He hangs a few wire dry-cleaning hangers on a nail in the wall and checks his phone for the time. He considers a large plastic container in the room and moves a large box in front of it. He picks up an assortment of sports balls that's more than he can easily handle. While* **EMMETT***'s back is to the door,* **COLBY**, *also 19, enters the garage.* **COLBY** *looks like he doesn't care how he looks, content to get by on his undeniably charming smile. The sound of the door startles* **EMMETT**, *who drops what he's holding, balls bouncing away from him. He tries to recover them. He's flailing and looks ridiculous.)*

EMMETT. Oh, hey!

COLBY. You okay there?

EMMETT. Yeah, I'm fine!

COLBY. I didn't mean to scare you.

EMMETT. You didn't!

COLBY. No?

EMMETT. No! It's just – you're early.

*(***COLBY** *checks his phone.* **EMMETT** *goes back to organizing things, avoiding eye contact.)*

COLBY. It's seven.

EMMETT. No, it's a quarter to seven.

COLBY. Okay…well, that's basically seven.

EMMETT. I figured I had at least a half hour before you'd show up.

COLBY. Oh yeah?

EMMETT. Yeah. When are you ever on time for anything? Forget about early.

COLBY. Emmett, can you stop for a minute?

EMMETT. What?

*(***EMMETT** *looks at* **COLBY**, *who extends his arms for a hug.)*

COLBY. Hi.

EMMETT. Hi, Colby.

(They hug. It's a little longer than **EMMETT** *would like and he pulls away first.)*

COLBY. Hey, you smell good!

EMMETT. I do?

COLBY. Yeah, what do you got on?

EMMETT. Uh, deodorant?

COLBY. Okay. I thought maybe it was, like, fancy.

EMMETT. Yeah, because all this is very fancy.

*(***EMMETT** *turns away to stack boxes.* **COLBY** *takes the opportunity to check out* **EMMETT***'s ass. He's in better shape than* **COLBY** *anticipated.)*

COLBY. Obviously. So how was the end of semester for you?

EMMETT. It was fine. You?

COLBY. Fine. How'd that play go?

EMMETT. Oh, it was fine. No big deal.

COLBY. I'm sorry I missed your stage debut.

EMMETT. No. I didn't have a big part.

COLBY. Are you still writing?

EMMETT. Yeah. Of course.

COLBY. I just didn't know if maybe you were leaning more toward acting now.

EMMETT. No, this was just something I did. It counted as class credit, so…

COLBY. Good. I like your writing.

EMMETT. Well, don't worry. I'm doing it.

*(***EMMETT** *goes back to cleaning. The sexual energy between them intensifies.)*

COLBY. Good. When'd you get back?

EMMETT. Last week.

COLBY. Lucky. You guys get out so early.

EMMETT. It's like three days difference from you.

COLBY. I guess. Your hair looks good like that.

EMMETT. Oh.

(He fixes it self-consciously.)

COLBY. What? It does. Did you just get it cut?

EMMETT. No. Why?

COLBY. I haven't seen any pictures of it like that online, is all.

EMMETT. You Facebook stalking me, now?

COLBY. Instagram, mostly.

EMMETT. Ha.

COLBY. Don't be a dick, Emmett. Okay?

EMMETT. I'm not being –

COLBY. Just breathe.

EMMETT. I am breathing.

COLBY. You're not breathing.

EMMETT. Then how am I talking?

COLBY. One of life's many mysteries.

(A pause.)

We're good, right?

EMMETT. Yeah! I'm good! Totally. We're totally good.

(He smiles and goes back to cleaning. They are not good.)

COLBY. I can't believe it's been six months. That's gotta be a record, huh?

EMMETT. I'd say so. Are you hanging around for the summer, or are you going up to camp again?

COLBY. Camp in a couple weeks. Senior staff now.

EMMETT. That's scary.

COLBY. Tell me about it. What are you doing? You working at Harlan's again?

EMMETT. I don't know. I might pick up shifts there for a couple weeks. We're supposed to go on a trip to Spain in late July – family trip –

COLBY. Oh? That's awesome.

EMMETT. Yeah! But now we don't know, with the news and all. You know…

COLBY. Why should that stop you guys from going away?

EMMETT. In case there's a hearing, or we need to testify… I don't know. It's still not settled when we're leaving.

COLBY. Well, I'm sure you don't have to cancel your plans –

EMMETT. We're just not sure yet, is all.

COLBY. So *that's* what's got you freaking out. The news.

EMMETT. No. I just want things to be settled for Marcus when he shows up.

*(***COLBY** *looks over the supplies.)*

COLBY. You got a lot of stuff here, Emm. You didn't have to do that.

EMMETT. What do you mean? It's the standard fare.

COLBY. Two sleeping bags?

EMMETT. This one's mine and this is for Marcus. Did you leave your stuff in the car?

COLBY. Emmett…

EMMETT. What?

COLBY. C'mon, man…

EMMETT. You didn't bring anything?

COLBY. I did not.

EMMETT. You want me to go get blankets from the house?

COLBY. No, I figured –

EMMETT. You figured what?

COLBY. We're not really doing this tonight, are we?

EMMETT. ...What?

COLBY. Emmett. We're not doing this.

EMMETT. Are you serious? How can – *this* is why you're here early? You're not staying at all?

COLBY. I'm here because I want us to talk. Face to face –

EMMETT. Oh, fucking great.

COLBY. Will you not roll your eyes at me? I'm serious. Let's talk about this.

EMMETT. Fine. Go ahead, Colby. I'm listening.

COLBY. Look. I know why you're doing this.

EMMETT. Yeah, I'd hope so.

COLBY. We're getting a little old for this, don't you think? Maybe it's time we let go of the group sleepover.

EMMETT. You're a shit. You know that?

COLBY. I'm not! I'm not trying to be.

EMMETT. What are we supposed to tell Marcus when he shows up?

COLBY. You think he's gonna show?

EMMETT. Yes, Colby. Of course he will. This isn't just some random get together. You're really gonna stand there and act like –

COLBY. I know what day it is. I just meant...with *recent developments* and all...

EMMETT. Even more reason why we should be here for him tonight! We're his best friends. He needs us to be supportive.

*(**EMMETT** starts shoving things around the room more aggressively.)*

COLBY. Emm, come on.

EMMETT. I cannot believe you.

*(**COLBY** moves to reach out to him.)*

Please don't attempt to touch me right now.

*(**COLBY** retreats. They stand in silence for a moment.)*

COLBY. What's your dad using this place for now, anyway?

EMMETT. Mostly storage, right now.

COLBY. What about all his photography stuff? He still does that, right?

EMMETT. Yeah, he moved it into the house for a while. He had to repair part of the roof out here last fall after the hurricane.

COLBY. Does it leak?

EMMETT. No, it's fine now. He just hasn't moved back in yet.

COLBY. Alright.

EMMETT. It's not going to rain. Besides I thought you weren't staying.

COLBY. *(He smiles at* **EMMETT**.*)* Can I have some snacks?

EMMETT. You're unbelievable.

COLBY. I didn't have dinner!

EMMETT. Oh, were you planning on getting something after your little drive by appearance? You have a hot date?

COLBY. God, Emmett. I didn't eat because I was nervous. Okay? I was nervous about coming here. I always am.

EMMETT. Take what you want from the table.

*(**COLBY** goes over and takes a closer look at the goodies.)*

COLBY. Ugh, you always do this. You bring out the ingredients for s'mores but there's no fire in here for us to make s'mores. Unless…

(He notices a metal garbage can in the corner, moves toward it. **EMMETT** *cuts off his path.)*

EMMETT. My dad is not gonna let us start a fire in here.

COLBY. Then why bring this stuff?

EMMETT. Because I like the ingredients! Where are your brownies?

*(**COLBY** shrugs and backs off, embarrassed.)*

You didn't even bring those? That's really great.

COLBY. I asked my mom to make them, but she was busy… What are your folks doing tonight?

EMMETT. Nothing. They're inside.

COLBY. They don't think it's weird that I'm coming over here?

EMMETT. I didn't really talk to them about it. They know it's tradition.

COLBY. Should I go in and say hi?

EMMETT. Do you want to?

COLBY. I don't know. I just don't want to be rude. I should've said hi, right?

EMMETT. They won't care.

COLBY. I just thought maybe they… I dunno, ask about me?

EMMETT. They don't. They give me space. Look, we don't have to rehash everything okay? Can we put that aside for this evening and just be here for Marcus?

COLBY. Yeah, we can…but –

EMMETT. But you don't think he's gonna show. You thought that last year too.

COLBY. His parents were back on the news yesterday. You see that?

EMMETT. I saw it. His mom came over the day before I got home to give my folks a heads-up.

COLBY. So what do you think?

EMMETT. What they have is inconclusive. There's no evidence linking him –

COLBY. They think the timeline checks out.

EMMETT. Well, they want to believe it does.

COLBY. No, not just his mom. I mean the *cops* think the timeline fits.

EMMETT. It's not that cut and dry. And suddenly you're a fan of the cops?

COLBY. I'm just saying, you think they're all wrong?

EMMETT. I think it's very early. They've been through a lot and I just don't want them to be let down again for a false lead.

COLBY. Okay, so what are we gonna do about it tonight, assuming he shows?

EMMETT. We'll ask him what he thinks.

COLBY. And if he doesn't want to talk about it, like Marcus never wants to talk about it?

EMMETT. Then we talk about normal shit. Whatever he wants. That's the deal. Right?

COLBY. Right… Is the TV still hooked up out here?

EMMETT. No, it broke.

COLBY. Ugh, you're kidding!

EMMETT. That thing was older than we are.

COLBY. We had it hooked up to the GameCube. It wasn't that old.

EMMETT. Well, it broke. My dad junked it.

COLBY. Do you still have the GameCube?

EMMETT. Yeah, it's in one of those boxes.

COLBY. The games too?

*(***COLBY** *goes to look, alarming* **EMMETT**.*)*

EMMETT. Yeah. No, come on, Colby. I just cleared that space out. You're gonna make a mess. / We can't play it without the TV anyway.

COLBY. I'm not gonna make a mess. *Babe*, I just wanted to look at the old games!

EMMETT. There are games in that box, okay? And no, "Babe."

COLBY. Would've been fun to play *Mario Kart* tonight to pass the time.

EMMETT. Because you're so good at *Mario Kart*?

COLBY. I am! That and *Smash Bros*. That's where I dominated.

EMMETT. Yeah, okay. Can you push those boxes up against the wall for me?

*(***COLBY** *does so. He starts humming a theme song.*[*]*)*

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What's that?

COLBY. It's the theme to *Smash Bros*.

EMMETT. That's not how it goes. It's:

*(***EMMETT** *hums a different tune.*[*]*)*

COLBY. I was humming the main theme, not the battle theme.

EMMETT. I'm humming the main theme!

(He hums it again. **COLBY** *hums his version over* **EMMETT***'s version. They are beginning to annoy the fuck out of each other the way only loved ones can do.* **COLBY** *picks up a soft toy from one of the boxes and throws it at* **EMMETT**.*)*

COLBY. Ahh, enough! Stick to plays instead of musicals at school. You can't hold a simple melody.

*(***EMMETT** *throws him back the toy.)*

EMMETT. I was singing it exactly right. Put this back in the box, please?

COLBY. Your dad is wasting this space. He should give it back to you.

EMMETT. What do I need it for?

COLBY. I don't know. It just looked awesome as our clubhouse and now it has no definition.

EMMETT. It looks cool when his photography is hanging up in here.

COLBY. Our setup was better. Were you able to get beer?

EMMETT. Yeah, it's in those shopping bags under there.

COLBY. Nice!

(He gets one. Opens it. Takes a sip.)

COLBY. So…do we have access to the Dungeon?

EMMETT. The *crawl space* remains inaccessible.

COLBY. *Crawl space?* Very proper of you, Emm.

EMMETT. You know my mom's always hated us calling it the Dungeon.

COLBY. Hey, the Dungeon was awesome.

EMMETT. Okay.

COLBY. The time capsule's still under there.

EMMETT. I *know*. And that's where it's gonna stay.

COLBY. Such bullshit. Come on. Let's go get it.

*(***COLBY** *picks up a shovel leaning against the wall.)*

EMMETT. We can't get down there! My dad put mesh down there to keep the raccoons out.

*(***COLBY** *retreats, considering the shovel. He suddenly looks sad. He drinks his beer.)*

What's wrong?

COLBY. Nothing. What's your plan for entertainment if there's no TV?

EMMETT. I've got games.

COLBY. What do you have?

EMMETT. There's Life, obviously.

COLBY. Life takes like three hours to play.

EMMETT. One of its big selling points when there's no TV. You know Marcus is gonna make us play it.

COLBY. What else? Didn't you get, Settlers of Catan for Christmas?

EMMETT. Yeah, because *that's* a quick game.

COLBY. So what? Let's play that instead!

EMMETT. I'm not sure Marcus will like that one.

COLBY. He will. He picks things up quick.

(He checks his phone.)

EMMETT. I don't know if we can really play it with three players. Who are you texting?

COLBY. God, nobody! Like I'd get any reception out here. I was just checking the time. He's late.

EMMETT. No, he seems late to you because you're never here early.

*(***EMMETT** *continues to organize games on the table.)*

COLBY. Did you bring out your Pokémon cards?

EMMETT. Why? You hate Pokémon.

COLBY. Well, watching you two play is the easiest way to fall asleep out here.

EMMETT. So now you're staying over?

COLBY. If he shows and he's staying, I'll stay.

EMMETT. And you're not gonna launch right into him, right? You'll go with the flow?

COLBY. Fine. As long as I'm not forced to play Pokémon.

EMMETT. Well, I left the cards up in my room anyway.

COLBY. What's that box?

EMMETT. Chess and checkers set.

COLBY. Ooh, strip checkers!

EMMETT. We are not playing strip checkers.

COLBY. My greatest invention! Not even once for old time's sake? While we wait?

EMMETT. Go sit your ass over on that side of the room, please, and calm yourself down.

COLBY. You're saying no 'cause you know I'd win.

EMMETT. There's no skill involved in Strip Checkers!

COLBY. No skill? That's not a very generous recollection, Emmett.

EMMETT. Stop it, Colby.

COLBY. You don't want to "King me"?

EMMETT. I mean it. You are being very inappropriate right now.

COLBY. I'm just kidding around. / We can't kid?

EMMETT. Well, I really don't appreciate kidding like that. Don't smile at me like that.

*(***COLBY** *leans in mischievously.* **EMMETT** *crosses his arms in front of his chest.)*

Don't try to pinch me, Colby!

COLBY. I'm not!

EMMETT. Back up. Back up back up back up!

(The side door swings open. **MARCUS***, 19, enters wearing a Penn State T-shirt and jeans and a light jacket.* He has a sleeping bag slung over his shoulder. He's got a great smile and a peaceful vibe.* **EMMETT** *and* **COLBY** *stop, stare at him.)*

MARCUS. Somebody call for backup?

COLBY. Marcus! Hey…

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EMMETT. Marcus!

*(**EMMETT** rushes over to **MARCUS** and they share a big hug.)*

MARCUS. S'up, Nerd Academy?

*(They separate and **COLBY** gives **MARCUS** a handshake one-arm-bro-hug.)*

S'up, State School? You look way too surprised to see me.

COLBY. Well, you're late, so I thought maybe you weren't showing.

MARCUS. It's like five minutes past. Calm yourself. I'm on time.

EMMETT. Told you.

MARCUS. Why are you torturing this kid?

COLBY. I'm not!

*(**MARCUS** pinches **COLBY**'s nipple and twists.)*

Ow!

MARCUS. Keep your hands to yourself.

COLBY. Alright! I wasn't doing anything.

MARCUS. Everything good?

EMMETT. Yeah. You brought your own bag!

MARCUS. Oh, yeah! Pretty sweet, huh?

COLBY. Where'd you get it?

MARCUS. There's this amazing new place called, "The store." They've got all this amazing stuff there. You should check it out.

COLBY. Oh, yeah? Sounds awesome.

EMMETT. You just never bring your own stuff.

MARCUS. Well, I don't need to mooch this year. My mom got it for me. Study abroad in the fall. Backpacking beforehand. Wanted me to travel in style. Figured I'd break it in tonight though.

COLBY. How's your mom doing?

MARCUS. A nag as always, but she's fine. And Murray is Murray. They're doing good. How's your sister doing in DC?

EMMETT. Jamie's good! She's got a job at NBC News now.

COLBY. Get out! That's awesome. What's she doing with them?

EMMETT. She's in research. Fact checking type stuff. She likes it a lot.

MARCUS. Are your folks home? I knocked to say hi to them before I came back, but nobody answered.

EMMETT. They're probably just upstairs with the TV on.

COLBY. So Marcus, how was school? Dean's List again this year?

MARCUS. Obviously. Killed it again. Spring was really good. I've got some amazing stories for you.

*(***MARCUS** *looks at* **EMMETT** *as if his eyes are refocusing on him.)*

(It's quick, but the **BOYS** *notice it.)*

Hey! How was your big stage debut?

EMMETT. Oh, it was fine.

MARCUS. I totally would've been there if it weren't for finals. I wanted to take the bus up so bad. I'm sure you killed it.

(To **COLBY**.*)* Did you read the review? They raved about him.

COLBY. There was a review? What review?

EMMETT. School paper. It wasn't anything –

COLBY. You told me it was just a little part.

MARCUS. Dude, he was Konstantin in *The Seagull*.

COLBY. Okay, I don't know what that means. Is that the lead?

MARCUS. It's a big part.

EMMETT. He's blowing it out of proportion.

COLBY. Why wouldn't you just tell me that?

EMMETT. Because you didn't need to be there, so I didn't make a big deal about it.

MARCUS. They're putting up one of his own plays in the fall too.

COLBY. A play you wrote?

EMMETT. It's just a student production. A buddy of mine –

COLBY. So?

EMMETT. So Marcus made it sound like it was a department show or something, and it's not.

MARCUS. It's still really cool, man. That's what you went there to do and you're doing it.

COLBY. Is it one I've read?

EMMETT. No, it's new.

COLBY. What's it about?

EMMETT. It's hard to describe. It's kinda… It's magical realism.

COLBY. What's that? Like the Mizaki movies you like?

MARCUS. Miyazaki.

COLBY. *Thanks*. So is that it?

EMMETT. Kinda. Not really.

COLBY. Will you send it to me?

EMMETT. We'll see. I have to do another rewrite on it over the summer.

COLBY. I don't understand why I have to find this stuff out through *Marcus*.

MARCUS. Hey, did they record *Seagull*? Do you have a copy?

EMMETT. Yeah…

MARCUS. Then let's watch it!

EMMETT. Ha! No.

MARCUS. Why not?

EMMETT. There's no TV out here anymore.

MARCUS. We don't have the TV?

COLBY. Then let's go inside and watch it.

*(***EMMETT** *shoots* **COLBY** *a warning look.)*

EMMETT. I don't think that's a good idea.

COLBY. Why not? If your folks are upstairs we won't be bothering them.

EMMETT. I don't want to watch it, Colby. I don't like watching myself. *Can we drop it?*

MARCUS. Sorry, Emm… I like your haircut!

EMMETT. Thanks.

*(***COLBY** *gives* **MARCUS***' look more consideration.)*

COLBY. What's happening with yours? It's cute. You're growing it out?

MARCUS. Nah. I was seeing this girl and she liked how it was growing in, so I kept it. But I'll probably cut it soon.

COLBY. How come? You got dumped?

MARCUS. No, it's not that dramatic. We were just hanging out and I'm going away in the fall, so it's over. Just a little fun, you know? You seeing anybody?

*(**EMMETT** looks panicked. **COLBY** looks at **MARCUS**, annoyed.)*

COLBY. Uh…no?

MARCUS. What, too soon?

COLBY. Yeah.

EMMETT. No! It's fine. We're fine.

*(**MARCUS** studies **EMMETT**, who won't meet his gaze.)*

MARCUS. Okay, then.

COLBY. So when did you get home?

MARCUS. Just yesterday.

COLBY. Have you been following the news?

MARCUS. About what?

EMMETT. Colby, help me move this. It's heavy.

COLBY. About what they found behind Forrester Road.

MARCUS. No, what?

EMMETT. Colby.

COLBY. A whole bunch of bodies!

MARCUS. Like, in a pile?

COLBY. No, they were buried in different places all around the woods back there.

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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