

From This Side of Heaven

By Don Zolidis

CHASE, 17, paralyzed from the waist down.
FEVER, using a walker – her leg is permanently damaged.

In the physical rehab center.

(CHASE keeps trying to put on his shoes.)

CHASE
You got your brace off.

FEVER
Yeah.

CHASE
That walker is sexy.

FEVER
Yeah I feel like I got my groove back. You need some help?

CHASE
The entire point here is that I can learn to do it myself.

FEVER
Right.

CHASE
So you doing it for me/ kind of defeats the purpose –

FEVER
Okay, sorry.

CHASE
You should paint flames on the side of the walker. That would be awesome.

FEVER
It's a rental.

CHASE
So what are they gonna do? You're a cripple.
(short pause)
Did I hurt your feelings?

FEVER

Nope. So guess who didn't get asked to Prom?

CHASE

Me?

FEVER

Me too.

CHASE

Who cares?

(short pause)

Oh come on who cares? Go by yourself.

FEVER

I thought about it, but what am I going to do there? Go around with a walker? It'll be like, who let Grandma in?

CHASE

Who cares what they think?

FEVER

I don't care what they think, I care what I can do. What point is there in going to a dance if you can't dance?

CHASE

I don't know, I never went to a dance even when I could dance. Although, to be honest, I couldn't dance even when I had legs. That worked.

FEVER

You know what I mean?

CHASE

I'm just saying that you're worried about being awkward at a dance and I'm trying to figure out how to dress myself.

(He's not having any luck with his shoe.)

Dang it. Come on.

(He shoves his leg roughly away from him and tosses down his shoe.)

FEVER

You all right?

CHASE

No I'm in a wheelchair if you haven't noticed.

FEVER

All right. Sorry I asked.

(CHASE looks at his shoe on the floor.)

CHASE

I don't really understand the point of me putting shoes on anyway. Like – are these going to be useful or something? It's not like I'm going to be putting my feet on the ground.

FEVER

It's to keep them from getting scraped up, right?

CHASE

Oh thanks. Thank you're an expert I guess.

(CHASE starts getting out of his chair to go after his shoe.)

You know what sucks? Not as in – I didn't get asked to the prom sucks – but I mean, actual, truthful sucking. I've seen a couple of guys in here who've come from Afghanistan – and they'd had – you know they've been hit with IEDs or whatever – they get all torn up and they get amputated – they're like heroes, you know? They come home – there's a parade down the street, somebody puts them in a commercial... for the rest of their lives they got people standing up and saying thanks for your service. Whatever.

(He gets a hold of his shoe but stays there.)

It's so stupid to say it. I'm jealous... I'm jealous of guys who got a cooler story of how they got in a wheelchair – cause I've got – I've got no reason except dumb luck. Except bad luck – I mean I guess the luck I had was that I didn't die – and now I've got... you know I've got half of me that's never going to work again, I'm going to be lugging these useless things around for the rest of my life – if I had gotten blown up, if I had gotten amputated, then I'd get the artificial legs, I'd walk again – give me those Oscar Pistorious blades and I'd be like something out of the future and – instead I got this. Like I'm trailing dead snakes wherever I go.

You know I pretty much wet the bed every night?

FEVER

Chase.

CHASE

I'm learning to put on my clothes and I wet the damn bed every night. And I can't feel it, you know – I can't even feel it – I'm lying there in this mess and I don't even know – like I'm some kind of infant that can't – people don't look at me anymore, you know? They don't look at me. They look past me, or they crouch down next to me like I'm some kind of toddler or they look at my legs or the chair or –

FEVER

It's gonna be okay.

(She approaches and helps him with his shoe. He lets her.)

CHASE

Did you just say that? It's gonna be okay? No it's not –

FEVER

All right –

CHASE

This is me for the next sixty years. I've got sixty years of this.

FEVER

Okay.

CHASE

Okay? That's what you say? Okay?

FEVER

What do you want me to say?

CHASE

There's nothing you can say.

FEVER

Then don't ask me!

CHASE

I didn't ask you to say anything, all right?

FEVER

You just want me to stand here and feel sorry/ for you?

CHASE

I don't want you to feel sorry for me! I don't want anyone to feel sorry for me!

FEVER

Then stop acting like it! You think you're the only one who's life has been damaged?

CHASE

Damaged? My life has been *damaged*?

FEVER

I had a soccer scholarship –

CHASE

Oh my God no way.

FEVER

Screw you.

CHASE

No please tell me how you're going to have difficulty playing soccer now. Please I really want to hear that. Please go on and on about how it's going to be so *difficult* for you to meet the man of your dreams at the Prom, and how almost impossible it's going to be for you to dance at your wedding, and how you're going to be so inconvenienced by all this!

FEVER

I can't pay for college now, my parents are divorced –

CHASE

Oh no that must be so hard! You know how a catheter works?

FEVER

I hate it when you do this! You play this stupid pity card –

CHASE

I'm not playing a pity card!

FEVER

Yes you are! You're using what happened to you as an excuse to have no empathy for anyone else at all! Oh I'm sorry you're blind but you know what – at least you can control your bladder! It's unfair! It's mean and it's dumb and it makes you a terrible person.

CHASE

You're not blind!

FEVER

I know I'm not blind!

CHASE

You're only minorly inconvenienced, you were barely hurt!

FEVER

I am permanently hurt!

CHASE

I am permanently fucked!*

**ruined could be substituted.*

FEVER

So what! So what! So what! Is that what you want? Everyone to feel bad around you –

CHASE

I don't make people feel bad!

FEVER

Yes you do! You try to make people feel bad! And it's working! I feel bad when I'm around you! I don't want to feel bad, you used to make me laugh, you used to cheer me up, you used to be someone I looked forward to seeing and now you're just this stump –

CHASE

Fuck* you!

**Screw you could be substituted.*

FEVER

Snap out of it! This is your life! Deal with it! You're in a wheelchair! So what? That didn't affect your brain! It didn't affect anything else about you! You can still – people will love you – you can do all those things, you can see, you can hear, you can feel – go live – live life! You didn't die in the car! Stop wishing you did.

To read the rest of this play, contact me at donzolidis@gmail.com