

BROKE OR BANKROLLED

A Short Play

by

Danton Spina

Runtime: 15 minutes

Synopsis: Painful financial woes take a family's
relationship to an unbelievable place.

CHARACTERS

LIONEL	Hasty?
CHLOE	Naïve?
DALLAS	Culpable?
DAVE	Secondary?

SETTING

Earth.

TIME

Day.

SCENE 1

(CHLOE is on stage waiting. LIONEL
Enters.)

LIONEL

Is that car outside yours?

CHLOE

No, Lionel it's—

LIONEL

No. It's not.

(Short pause.)

Is it his?

CHLOE

Yes—

LIONEL

Really?

CHLOE

Not really.

LIONEL

So it's mine then?

CHLOE

Yes.

LIONEL

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You know, when a car's red the insurance is higher.

CHLOE

I didn't know that.

LIONEL

Would it have made a difference?

CHLOE

Probably not.

LIONEL

What were you thinking?

CHLOE

I don't—

LIONEL

You meet some douchebag and suddenly you're a criminal.

CHLOE

That's not fair—

LIONEL

Not fair? Are you insane?

(Pause.)

LIONEL (Continued.)

That computer mine too?

(Chloe nods.)

And the T.V?

CHLOE

Yes.

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(Pause.)

I'm sorry.

LIONEL

Sorry's a start. But it ain't gonna fix anything.

CHLOE

It's not that bad, Lionel.

LIONEL

I'm gonna have to file bankruptcy—

CHLOE

No—

LIONEL

And I'm only 22 years old!

CHLOE

No. You won't have to do that.

LIONEL

Really?

CHLOE

Really.

LIONEL

What the hell am I supposed to do then?

CHLOE

I'm a doctor, I fix problems.

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LIONEL

Ha! You're a fuckin'—

CHLOE

Watch it!

LIONEL

—nurse's assistant! And this isn't the same kinda problem.

CHLOE

I'll figure it out.

LIONEL

Oh Yea?

CHLOE

I'm your mother. I'm supposed—

LIONEL

My mother. Exactly! You're supposed to help me.

CHLOE

I am. I just made a mistake.

LIONEL

More like a hundred mistakes. \$50,000 in mistakes.

CHLOE

I'm sorry.

LIONEL

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How the fuck did you do this?

CHLOE

Watch your mouth, Lionel! Please.

LIONEL

Are you serious?

CHLOE

Yes, I'm still your mother.

LIONEL

You keep saying that, but you're acting real fucking un-motherly lately.

CHLOE

You have ten years to pay back those loans!

LIONEL

Right.

(Stops to take a deep breath.)

Let's pretend that you're sane for sec and look at this—

CHLOE

I'm sane.

LIONEL

Let's look at the situation.

CHLOE

Fine.

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LIONEL

The loans, we can pay back. Sure. But what about the scholarships?

CHLOE

That's on me. I'll get it back to—

LIONEL

No shit! It's on you. But where's it gonna come from?

CHLOE

I can work—

LIONEL

What *real* place is it gonna come from, mom?

CHLOE

I can work overtime and I can go back to cleaning houses.

LIONEL

And even if that could cover the cost, I still have two years left, with no money.

CHLOE

We can get more loans!

LIONEL

Do you watch the news?

CHLOE

Sometimes—

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LIONEL

They're not giving loans to people who deserve 'em. Let alone someone with this kinda credit.

CHLOE

I'll help you.

LIONEL

No. I'm not taking any of your help. I'm getting my shit out of this house. I'm gone.

CHLOE

You don't have to do that.

LIONEL

I don't know where I'll go—

CHLOE

You can't leave.

LIONEL

—But anywhere is better than here.

CHLOE

Please stay.

LIONEL

No. I don't trust you.

(Pause.)

CHLOE

Well, I'm sorry you feel that way.

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LIONEL

Me too. Do you think I want to be like this to my mom?

CHLOE

Then why are you?

LIONEL

'Cause you put me in a hole so deep, I can't climb out.

CHLOE

I'll pay you back. It's my debt, not yours.

LIONEL

Maybe true. But it's all in my name, *not yours*.

CHLOE

I said I'll pay you back. I'll pay you—

LIONEL

I have a lawyer.

CHLOE

You're going to sue me?

LIONEL

What other option do I have?

CHLOE

You don't have a lawyer.

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LIONEL

(Hesitates.)

We'll, I'm sure I can get one.

CHLOE

Not without losing more money in fees.

LIONEL

If I - When I win, it'll be worth it.

CHLOE

It doesn't matter. What's worse is you not going back to school because of this.

LIONEL

You care?

CHLOE

Of course.

LIONEL

THEN WHY DID YOU DO THIS TO ME IN THE FIRST PLACE?

CHLOE

I wasn't aiming at you! I was trying to pick myself up- Get my life together.

LIONEL

And I get shafted in the process?

CHLOE

I'm so-

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LIONEL

SO Sorry. I know, I know, I know! But you screwed up my whole life.

CHLOE

I've tried to do the right thing.

LIONEL

Well you just flushed 20 years of raising me down the toilet.

CHLOE

I never wanted to do this. I just got caught up.

LIONEL

Unlike your other problems, you can't just fix this with drugs.

(Pause. Lionel starts to pack up his things. Then Chloe suddenly has an idea.)

CHLOE

Look, can't we just sell a lot of it back?

LIONEL

For less than what you paid.

CHLOE

But it's a start.

LIONEL

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But the travel expenses, massages, insanely expensive dinners. How are you gonna get that back?

CHLOE

I...I-

LIONEL

You can't.

CHLOE

But-

LIONEL

Let me pack.

CHLOE

What if we work together on this?

LIONEL

I'd be risking you screwing me over again. I just need to do this on my own.

CHLOE

Please. I'm begging you to work with me on this.

LIONEL

Mom. You're family. You're always gonna be family.

(Chloe smiles as Lionel pauses.)

But this isn't gonna work.

CHLOE

Honey.

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LIONEL

Mom. I'm going back up to school and I'll sort it out there.
On my own.

CHLOE

...

LIONEL

And I'm not gonna throw a lawsuit at you. And I'll -

CHLOE

Thank you. I-

LIONEL

Please. Let me finish.

(Pause.)

I'm still gonna see you. Like I said, we're family.

(Long pause and a deep breath.)

But you're never gonna get my trust back.

(Chloe drops her head. Pause. Lionel quickly finished packing his bag and he awkwardly hugs Chloe. He turns to leave as DALLAS enters cool and collected with a calming voice.)

LIONEL

Are you Dallas?

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DALLAS

Yes, I am. It's very nice to—

LIONEL

Really? Let's skip the BS intros. Ever since you and my mom got together, I've been drowning in debt. What have you done to her?

CHLOE

That's not a nice way to start a conversation.

LIONEL

This has never been a conversation. This is trial.

DALLAS

I am so sorry you feel this anger inside but I assure you, there is a lot more to this than you realize.

LIONEL

So what line of crap are you going to tell me that my mom hasn't already said?

DALLAS

(Dallas smirks and sighs.)

This has always been about you.

LIONEL

Of Course it has, it's my mon—

DALLAS

That's not what I mean. This is going to sound crazy but your mother has pulled off something outrageously amazing!

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LIONEL

Why are we still talking about this? I'm done

(Lionel attempts to leave, Chloe gently
grabs his arm.)

CHLOE

I know we don't deserve it but give him a chance to explain.
I promise you, it will be worth it.

LIONEL

Fine. What. What do you have to say?

DALLAS

You just WON a million dollars on "BROKE OR BANKROLLED!"

(Chloe smiles like a huge weight has
finally been lifted off her shoulders.
Dallas is grinning ear to ear. Lionel is
cautiously confounded.)

LIONEL

What!? No. This is bull-

DALLAS

I'm Van Reid, the host of BROKE OR BANKROLLED, and you and
your mother are our very first winners! In the short history
of the show, no one has made it past the final round until
now! Congratulations!

LIONEL

(Looks around suspiciously.)

There is no one here. And where are the cameras?

DALLAS

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There are two in the ceiling, one pen camera in my glasses,
and our cameraman is just outside here.

(Touches his finger to his ear.)

DALLAS (Continued.)

Dave, would you come in here?

(DAVE enters, camera in hand, filming.
CHLOE starts clapping and leans over to
hug and kiss her son.)

CHLOE

I'm so sorry. I couldn't tell you. I knew if I got through
it, we would be okay. I love you.

LIONEL

Is this guy legit?

DAVE

I am, Lionel. I am. You see my van outside there.

LIONEL

Yeah?

DAVE

It has all the video and surveillance equipment we've been
using. I can show once you wrap your brain around this whole
thing.

DALLAS

It's a lot to handle.

LIONEL

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(Finally lightens up)

This is real? Is this happening?

CHLOE

It is, sweetie. It really is.

(She gets choked up.)

We're gonna be okay, baby.

LIONEL

(Genuinely relieved.)

Oh. Thank god.

DALLAS

Thank you for playing. You were wonderful contestants and we couldn't be happier for you.

LIONEL

This is unbelievable.

CHLOE

(Still choked up)

It's been so hard, and I can't—

LIONEL

It's okay. And I'm sorry about before.

CHLOE

It's okay, hun. I love you.

LIONEL

I love you too mom.

(Beat.)

DALLAS

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I hate to be a stickler but we will have to fill out all the forms and releases. Hopefully you'll be okay with starting that?

LIONEL

Sure thing. Yeah. Let's get the ball rolling.

DAVE

(Pulls forms out of his bag.)

Do you have a pen?

LIONEL

Uh, no. I don't know think so.

DALLAS

(Whips out his pen)

Here you go.

(Lionel starts to fill out the form)

LIONEL

I don't know how you pulled that off.

CHLOE

It was one of the hardest things I've done.

LIONEL

I'm impressed. I was really mad at you. I couldn't imagine anything making things better after that.

DALLAS

Everything works out in the end, huh?

LIONEL

I guess it does.

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(Dallas glances at the paperwork. Lionel leans back.)

I think this is all set.

DALLAS

Wonderful.

(Dallas swings a beer bottle over Lionel's head as CHLOE screams.)

CHLOE

Lionel! I—

DALLAS

Dave, grab the car. We got what we need.

(Dave nods.)

Let's go!

(Chloe stands in shock, crying as she turns away from Lionel's limp body.)

CHLOE

I'm so sorry.

(Blackout.)