

# PHANTOM

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A short drama by  
Leviticus Jelks III

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

MARIA, 16, Latinx, female.

WILL, 16, Black, male.

## SETTING

Will's living room. Saturday morning.

## CASTING NOTES

Both roles in this play are gender flexible. Character names can be substituted: Maria (change to Marcos) and Will (Willow). The pronouns associated with these characters should be changed as necessary.

Both roles are to be cast only with actors of color, though productions may deviate from the specific ethnicities listed above as needed.

*(MARIA, a high schooler, sits uncomfortably on someone else's living room couch. In her hands, she clutches a folded pamphlet, which she opens to read quietly several times. She opens it and reads. She closes it. She opens it and reads. She closes it.)*

*(Maria hears footsteps on the floor above.)*

*(She eventually gets up from the couch and begins to pace back and forth, a movement that looks almost trance-like and involuntary.)*

*(She opens the pamphlet one more time and reads. She takes a deep breath.)*

**MARIA:** *(Exhaling:)* OK...OK. You can do this. You can—you can do this. You have nothing to be..."scared" is not the right word. I mean, he's your friend. I think—No. He is. Don't be...don't be nervous. Yeah. Don't be nervous, Maria. He's still Will *(Chuckles:)* "Still Will," "Still Will"...stupid. OK, focus! ... You got this, Maria. You—

*(WILL, another high schooler, walks into the living room.)*

*(Maria, surprised by someone she was expecting, turns around to see him. She tucks the pamphlet in her back pocket.)*

**WILL:** Hey.

**MARIA:** ...Hey.

**WILL:** What're you reading?

**MARIA:** Huh? What do you mean?

**WILL:** You just tucked something in your back pocket. Looked intense from the way you were staring it down.

**MARIA:** ...Oh. That was just something stupid my mom wanted me to read that she got from church.

**WILL:** Church?

**MARIA:** Yeah, one of those "How to Save Your Daughter From Going to Hell By Teaching Her Not To Have Sex Before Marriage" things, you know.

**WILL:** You go to church?

**MARIA:** You know I got a Holy Roller Catholic mom. You do too. We used to sneak out together and run to the arcade. Got our asses beat every time...don't you remember?

**WILL:** Oh...oh, yeah. Ummm, you thirsty—?

**MARIA:** No, I wasn't planning on staying too—

**WILL:** I can get us some sodas or something—

**MARIA:** No, no, no. Really, I'm fine.

**WILL:** OK.

**MARIA:** Cool.

*(Will gestures to the sofa for Maria to sit.)*

*(She slowly makes her way to the sofa, as does Will, both making sure not to make eye contact.)*

*(They both sit together. Stiff. Still. Silent.)*

**WILL:** Thanks for coming over.

**MARIA:** Yeah, sure. I mean, my mom thought it would be a good idea—I mean, I did too. It's just...since she knew we were so close.

**WILL:** Were?

**MARIA:** Are?

**WILL:** Well, don't consider it an act of charity or anything. You didn't have to come over. I know that I'm not exactly your "normal" friend anymore.

**MARIA:** Well Jesus, what did you expect? None of us are exactly normal anymore after...what happened to you.

(Beat.)

**WILL:** Sorry.

**MARIA:** No, it's cool.

**WILL:** No, it's not. The first person to actually come and see me, and I chew her head off 'cause she didn't come fast enough.

**MARIA:** To be real, I'm a little relieved.

**WILL:** Yeah?

**MARIA:** I mean, people say all kinds of stuff these days. You read stuff online saying that regenerates don't have feelings. Don't get angry. Are just empty meat sacks. It's kind of a relief to get chewed out by you.

(They both laugh.)

**WILL:** It's just that people don't exactly come around here anymore. My folks won't let me go out. Not without trailing behind me, anyway. I don't blame them. You should've seen the way people looked at me when I first came out.

**MARIA:** I know. I heard. (*Framing her hands like a newspaper headline:*) "Modern Science Brings High School Teen Back to Life. End of Days or Beginning of the Future?"... Can't say we're all not a little messed up by it.

**WILL:** And you? How messed up were you?

**MARIA:** Pretty messed up. I mean, the last thing I heard about you was that they were only able to recover your arm...after the crash. That was all that was left of my friend.

**WILL:** But it was enough, I guess.

**MARIA:** Did they ever tell you how long it was?

**WILL:** ...Six months.

**MARIA:** Six months. Six months and I had my best friend back. My dead best friend. So yeah, it messed me up, Will.

**WILL:** Were you happy? When I came back?

**MARIA:** ...I don't know. I spent six months trying to get past you—I mean, get past what happened to you... Sorry, I know that was a little messed up to say.

**WILL:** No, that's real. That's what I want. My folks don't show me or tell me anything real.

**MARIA:** Guess that's their way of protecting you... Parents are stupid.

**WILL:** Really stupid.

*(They both laugh.)*

*(A beat.)*

So...go ahead. Get it over with.

**MARIA:** What?

**WILL:** You know. Come on. Let's do this.

**MARIA:** ...Did you...go to Heaven?

**WILL:** No.

**MARIA:** Hell?

**WILL:** No.

**MARIA:** ...Anywhere?

**WILL:** I don't know. I don't remember.

**MARIA:** Well then, what do you remember?

**WILL:** I remember when you told me you lost your virginity to Kenny Thomas right on your mom's couch, and how you blamed that stain on your dog and got him taken to the pound. You never talked to Kenny after that. You cried for a week.



**MARIA:** That was such a bum move by my mom. She never wanted me to have Wilder anyway.

**WILL:** Or she knew what *really* happened on that couch and wanted to punish you in the harshest way possible.

**MARIA:** But we got her back, didn't we?

**WILL:** We sure as hell did. As far as I know she still doesn't know what happened to the velvet Jesus painting.

**MARIA:** My dad camped out on the couch for a week after that.

*(They both laugh. They're getting a little more comfortable.)*

*(Maria reaches over and her hands hovers over Will's right arm.)*

**WILL:** It's OK.

*(Maria touches his arm.)*

**MARIA:** It's so weird. I mean, it's not "weird," it's just —

**WILL:** I know...

**MARIA:** Makes me think of Phantom Limb syndrome. When someone loses a limb, sometimes they can still feel it—even when it's not there. But I guess this is the reverse.

**WILL:** Yeah, I'm the phantom, I guess.

**MARIA:** No, but you're here, too. At least a version of the "you" that you used to be. Or...*are*. I don't know how it works. It's all just —

**MARIA & WILL:** So weird.

*(Will pulls his arm away. He turns it and flexes it, stretching his hand.)*

**WILL:** At the start, before we get released, all regenerates have to go through this kind of...therapy. Where we sit in front of this..."psychiatric professional." Basically, somebody we don't

know, telling us that we're still the real thing. We're still the people who we were.

**MARIA:** Does that help you?

**WILL:** Sometimes. But other times I look at this arm. Flex it. Feel it, and I can't help thinking...this is the real Will. This arm. I'm just something that they grew out of it.

*(Will puts his arm down.)*

*(Maria takes out her pamphlet and opens it.)*

**MARIA:** I've been reading this. Picked it up a few weeks ago, after I heard about how you... Says some cool things...

*(A beat. Maria clears her throat.)*

"Regenerations is dedicated to rebuilding lives and returning what has been lost to families and loved ones"... "A completely safe and painless procedure," yada, yada, yada... "Certified clinicians will conduct a custom re-design of the physical body that is both state of the art and completely organic"—they say "completely" a hell of a lot.

*(Will remains silent and still.)*

"The new regenerative may not be exactly who they were before, but they will go on to lead a happy and full—"

**WILL:** Thanks again for coming. I think I need to chill right now. Be by myself. Cool?

**MARIA:** Cool.

*(Maria gets up and begins to walk to the door. She reaches for the knob but hesitates. She begins to shake a little.)*

**WILL:** What is it? You cool?

*(Maria takes the pamphlet out of her pocket. She holds it tightly.)*

**MARIA:** You say you remember a lot of things, right? Things that the other Wi—that you knew before...right?

**WILL:** Yeah, some things. A lot of things, I guess. But they're not really all that clear sometimes.

**MARIA:** ...What do you remember about that night? The crash?

**WILL:** I don't wanna do that. I was told not to think about it—my "transition." That's what they call it.

**MARIA:** I wanna know!

**WILL:** Well, I don't wanna tell you!

**MARIA:** ...You remember who was driving?

**WILL:** (*Getting up from the couch:*) Maria, I don't need to do this right now. Thanks for comin' over.

**MARIA:** Do you remember who was driving, Will?

**WILL:** I think I do.

**MARIA:** Who was it?

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