

GOTTA GET PUMPED!

By Jeffrey Smart

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Davey is a small high school freshman who lives with his divorced mother and his sister. He's got a crush on his sister's friend, Jennifer, and with his idol a professional wrestler, Davey starts on a quest to get pumped up. But his behavior becomes obsessive. Davey has "bigorexia."

"Bigorexia" is a disorder that afflicts boys and men nationwide. It is a lesser-known complement to women's anorexia – both men and women are convinced their appearance doesn't measure up to societal standards. Men and boys become obsessed with developing their bodies through controlled diet, body building and, in extreme cases, drugs. Davey starts to take androstenedione (andro), an over-the-counter adrenal hormone anecdotally connected to uncontrollable rage.

The only one who believes Davey has a problem is his sister, Holly, herself a former anorexic. Can Holly convince her mother that something is wrong or will something have to happen to prove that Davey is out of control?

NOTES

Even the most massive bodybuilder can get bigorexia. In fact, he's more likely to get it. No matter his size, he is still convinced – even after checking himself constantly in the mirror – that he is too small. The seeds of bigorexia often are planted in adolescence when the body changes and boys become aware of society's often unrealistic expectations. The pursuit of six-pack abdominal muscles, pumped-up pectorals and a huge physique can lead to a negative change in behaviors. Bigorexics will leave romantic partners, quit their jobs and even work out while they are in pain to achieve their goals. Though our culture can be blamed, the sufferers themselves may be experiencing clinical depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder or anxiety. Cures can be cognitive behavior therapy or drugs to counter the brain's chemical imbalance that triggers the condition.

Because Davey is young and is hearing information second-hand, he does not get all of his facts right about androstenedione (the hormone actually converts to a steroid once ingested) or proper nutrition (he should be looking for calories from protein, not fats and carbohydrates).

I recommend any group performing this play do some research on the condition and the drug and present it during or after performance – in a display in the lobby, in a handout for classes or verbally during post-play discussion sessions.

This play is about individuals and not to be taken as a medical or behavioral guide. It does, however, touch upon situations that may be familiar to many people and may spark discussion in addition to being entertaining.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 m, 3 w)

DAVEY: A small freshman.

HOLLY: His older sister, a senior, very slender.

MOTHER

JENNIFER: A friend of Holly.

"MAD DOG" KELLY: A voice-over.

TIME: The present.

PLACE: A suburban apartment.

NOTE: Scene numbering is for rehearsal convenience. In performance, action should be as continuous as possible.

Running Time: 25 minutes.

COSTUMES

DAVEY has two identical tank tops, one loose and one better fitting. He mostly wears bulky sweatshirts or sweaters over jeans or sweatpants. HOLLY and JENNIFER wear typical school clothes; HOLLY'S are probably more conservative in cut than JENNIFER'S, whose physical attractiveness should be visible. HOLLY has some quick changes she might accomplish with sweaters or little jackets. MOTHER wears office clothes and the uniform of a retail store.

PROPS

Two sets of fast food bags, purse, checkbook, watch, \$20 bill (Mother), social studies book, dinner plates, silverware, arm cast (Holly), book bag/backpack with social studies book (Jennifer), a red magic marker, a plastic bottle of capsules and a glass of water (Davey).

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SOUND EFFECTS

Explosions, propulsive rock music, doorbell or buzzer, the muffled snap of a breaking bone.

SETTING

The stage is split in two: Davey's bedroom and the dining room. Davey's room is decorated with posters of professional wrestling – perhaps even cardboard cutouts and those wrestling dolls. Some of the beefy G.I. Joes, Max Speed or figures of pumped-up superheroes may also be in evidence. There is a mirror over the bureau and a calendar hangs on the wall. There are dumbbells, a weight set and a bench press in the room. The dining room is used constantly in this tiny apartment. Next to the table and chairs is a chest or bureau loaded with the debris not used at this moment: place mats, napkins, reference books, homework books, a file clearly marked "Bills," and a phone. There are two or three entrances to the dining room: one is the hall that goes past Davey's room to the rest of the apartment. A second entrance leads to the living room, the entrance to the entire apartment, offstage, and the kitchen. If there is a third entrance, it, rather than the second entrance, should lead to the kitchen. None of the living room entrances has a door; Davey's bedroom most definitely does.

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Scene 1

(In the darkness, we hear the EXPLOSIONS and propulsive rock MUSIC of professional wrestling. A VOICE, deep, rough, and screaming, is heard.)

MAD DOG KELLY: Rex the Ripper wants a piece of me? He wants a piece of me? Let me tell you something about that no-good piece of scum. No! Let me tell him! *(Closer to the mike.)* Ripper! You want a piece of me? You're not big enough! You're not big enough!

(AT RISE: LIGHTS up on Davey's room. There is a calendar with a date circled in red. DAVEY is wearing a tank top too big for him that only emphasizes his puniness. He is doing bodybuilding poses in the mirror while he overlaps and echoes Mad Dog's last words.)

DAVEY: You're not big enough! You're not big enough!

(HOLLY bangs the door open and stands in the room.)

HOLLY: What are you doing?

(DAVEY immediately dives for a sweatshirt to cover himself up.)

DAVEY: Aah! Holly! You're supposed to knock! I'm 14 now!

HOLLY: Oh, yeah, Mr. Big Guy! "You're not big enough! You're not big enough!"

DAVEY: Get out of my room! *(HE charges HER.)*

HOLLY: I'm going! *(Imitating HER brother's scream.)*
"Aah!"

(SHE exits. HE slams the door.)

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DAVEY: And knock next time! *(Back to the mirror.)* All right, Mad Dog – me and you! Me and you!

(HE either points to the mirror or makes a quick pose, then starts lifting weights – either curls or bench presses. LIGHTS fade to half on his room as he continues to exercise while LIGHTS rise on the dining room. MOTHER enters, carrying bags of take-out food which she deposits on the table.)

MOTHER: All right, kids, hurry up. I had to stay late at the office and I've gotta be at the store at seven.

(SHE deposits her purse on the side chest, going through the mail, putting the bills in the folder marked bills.)

MOTHER: Come on! Now!

(HOLLY runs in.)

HOLLY: Sorry, Mom. I was on the phone to Jennifer.

(SHE ducks into the kitchen to grab plates. MOTHER grabs the place mats and napkins off the side table and puts them on the table.)

MOTHER: I don't want you on the phone, you're supposed to be doing your homework. *(Calling.)* Davey, now!

(MOTHER meets HOLLY in the kitchen doorway. Holly is re-entering with plates and silverware.)

MOTHER: Is water all right with dinner? I forgot to stop at the market to get your milk.

HOLLY: *(Setting the table.)* Yeah.

MOTHER: 'Cause I could run out and get you milk.

HOLLY: Mom, it's one glass of milk.

MOTHER: You're right!

End of Freeview

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