

Scrub Nuts

A play by Anthony L. Mariani

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Cast of Characters

**BAILEY** 17, African American, she is very much a tomboy but shy about her athletic prowess.

**COACH MARSH** 35, successful high school football coach.

TIME

The end of the school lunch period.

PLACE

The athletic coach's offices of an elite private high school.

Shortlisted the British Theatre Challenge, Sky Blue Theatre, London, 2018.



ACT 1

Scene 1

Coach Marsh is dressed in a button-down shirt and tie with the school colors and crest on it. His sleeves are rolled up to his elbows, and he is pacing around his office, head down, talking to an assistant coach on his cell phone. Bailey, a female athlete dressed in khaki pants and a school uniform shirt, stands at the door and eaves drops on the coach's conversation.

COACH MARSH

That's just it, Jim; we can't even fucking joke about it anymore. I'm serious! No more! That's it! And I mean it. Jim, if word gets back to Dingley about this happening again, we're both fucked.

He looks up, and for the first time, he notices Bailey.

So, no more. Understand! I got to go. See you at practice.

The school bell rings.

BAILEY

Coach. (Pause) What was that all about?

COACH MARSH

Shouldn't you be getting to sixth period?

BAILEY

Coach, I need to talk to you about something.

COACH MARSH

Look, is this about scrub nuts?

BAILEY

Scrub nuts?

COACH MARSH

One of the freshmen mothers heard us calling the players scrub nuts on the practice field. So, all the mothers had their little cocktail luncheon yesterday, and now my damn phone has been blowing up all morning. So, if this is about me using the term "SCRUB NUTS" then don't worry. I got the message.

Bailey explodes into laughter.

What's so funny?

BAILEY

Coach, you can call me scrub nuts anytime.

COACH MARSH

Bailey, why are you here?

BAILEY

Did you not read my email?

COACH MARSH

Like I said, it's been a busy morning. Now, what's going on?

The landline phone on the coach's desk rings a few times. He then answers it.

(On the desk phone)

Coach Marsh. No, I have not seen her. (He glares at Bailey.) I have not checked my emails since lunch. Yes, sir, I will.

He hangs up the phone.

That was Dingley. It seems a lot of people are interested in this email you wrote. Just what does it say? Sit down.

Bailey sits in a chair near the coach's desk.

BAILEY

What did he say?

COACH MARSH

It seems he has the whole school on the lookout for you. What did you do?

Bailey picks up a coach's whistle off of Marsh's desk and then starts to nervously fiddle with it.

BAILEY

I just sent an email, Coach, that's all.

COACH MARSH

What's in it, Bailey?

Bailey looks down and hangs the whistle between her legs making a triangle; she starts to slide the whistle back and forth like a swinging pendulum as she tells her story.

BAILEY

Coach, I was watching my interview again last night. I kept rewinding to the part when that lady reporter stuck that microphone in my face. She asked me, "What's it feel like to be the first female to lead the conference in receiving yards?" My face just froze. I froze.

COACH MARSH

Well, that's just the media. You will get used to it, in time.

BAILEY

No. That's not it, Coach. I froze because I was living a lie. You can see it on my face. It's there. I rewound, and I watched it all night. It was a lie plain on my face.

COACH MARSH

I checked the stats, Bailey. It's no lie, you lead the conference.

Bailey stops spinning the whistle and sets it down on the desk.

BAILEY

Coach. (Pause) Coach, I've been beating the boys my whole life. Every sport I play in. I'm as good if not better than most boys my age. I used to think it was because I was an exceptional athlete. But Coach, now I know why. It's because I'm one of the boys, too. What I wrote in that email is that I'm no longer Bailey the girl, but Bailey the boy, and I want everyone to accept me for who I am. I'm Bailey, a boy and the best wide receiver in the conference, and that's it, period.

COACH MARSH

Just who all did you send this email to?

BAILEY

The whole upper school and faculty, Dingley included.

COACH MARSH

Bailey.

The desk phone starts ringing again. He picks it up.

Coach Marsh. No, I still have not seen her. No, I have not read it yet. Really. Yes. I can see where that might be a problem. Yes sir, I understand.

He hangs up the phone.

Is there something you forgot to tell me?

BAILEY

Like what?

COACH MARSH

Like your parents?

BAILEY

Coach, I was going to get to that.

COACH MARSH

Yeah, well Dingley told me. Your parents are on the way to his office now. Bailey, why did you do it like that? Why did you not talk to me first?

BAILEY

Coach, I had to do it that way. No turning back, balls to the wall! Like you taught me, Coach.

COACH MARSH

That's football, Bailey, not life. Sometimes in life, you need to slow down and think about your actions.

BAILEY

I thought about it. I thought about it all night, Coach. The only way I could do it was to email everyone at once and get it over with. That was the only way. So, I stayed up till dawn drafting my email, and then I waited. Then I sent it out at the end of lunch, Coach. That was the only way.

COACH MARSH

Then come hide in here? Was that your plan?

BAILEY

Coach, I did not come here to hide. I came here because I need someone to have my back.

COACH MARSH

Bailey. Look, there are laws that we all have to abide by. You can make any choice you want in life. However, you're not eighteen yet. If your parents don't agree with your choices and wish you to remain a girl, then in the eyes of this school and its administration you're a girl, not a boy. No matter how many emails you send out.

BAILEY

Coach?

COACH MARSH

I'm just telling you the truth.

BAILEY

I won't change back for them! It's my choice. They will have to accept me. The school is going to have to accept me!

COACH MARSH

Bailey, this is a private school. They can do what they want. I mean, Jesus, my phone has been blowing up all morning over scrub nuts, what do you think is going to happen when all these kids go home and show their parents your email?

BAILEY

Then they will lose their star wide receiver. I won't play anymore.

COACH MARSH

Bailey, I'm going to be blunt. You're a black athlete who has been brought into a majority white, privileged private school to do one thing. Help them win championships. Without the black athletes, this school would not have one banner on its walls. You know that and so do I. If you don't play, then you won't be back here next year. They will make sure of that, I promise you.

BAILEY

Then Coach, what do I do? I thought if I just came out as a boy, people would accept me. They know me, they know what I'm like. They all think I'm a tomboy. What's wrong with getting rid of the tom and me just being a boy, Coach? What's wrong with that?

The desk phone starts ringing.

COACH MARSH

Coach Marsh. No, I still have not seen Bailey. Yes, yes sir, I will. I'll send them all a text now.

He hangs up the phone.

Dingley wants me to call a meeting with the coaches before practice today.

BAILEY

For what?

COACH MARSH

Bailey, this brings up all sorts of problems for this school. What bathrooms do you use? Do you change in the boy's locker room now? When we travel, where do you get changed? I've been here ten years, and I've seen things like this happen before. You rock the boat around here and try to change policies, and you're gone. No matter how good an athlete, student, or teacher. They have their own little set of rules meant to keep the kids in this school bubble wrapped. That makes their parents happy. They pay good money to keep them guarded against the real world. You start trying to pop those bubbles and bring in reality, and they are going to get rid of you fast. Like I said, I've seen it happen before. (Beat) You know this is going to hit the local news, don't you?

BAILEY

I don't care?

COACH MARSH

What about the playoffs? Some of these schools are going to have fun at your expense. I've seen that, too.

BAILEY

Coach, I don't care what they think. (Beat) But I do care what you think. I have to know that you have my back. You always said that we are one team, one family. Well, I've had one family turn their back on me today. I need to know if I can still count on my other family.

COACH MARSH

I think there is no way in hell I could call you a scrub nut. What you did today took big balls.

BAILEY'S face light ups with a giant smile.

Bailey, I don't put my ass on the line for many people. Every time I have, I've been burned. That's fine because I chose to take the heat, and I've always been able to bounce back. Why? Because I can still look at myself in the mirror in the morning, that gives me strength. I have your back, Bailey, not because you're part of the team, but because I believe in you, and I believe you're right. That's what real men do. When they see a wrong, they don't turn a blind eye; they make a stand for what's right. (Beat) So for now, we need to see about sneaking you back to your sixth period class. Once you're in the classroom, there is no way they will make a scene and pull you out of class in front of the other students. They don't want that to get back to the dinner tables. That way you will be safe for a while. What class do you have now?

BAILEY

Biology.

COACH MARSH

Figures. Well, grab your bag and let's get you to class.

Bailey picks up his school bag with confidence. Then he extends his hand to Coach Marsh.

BAILEY

Thanks, Coach!

Coach Marsh grabs Bailey's hand and shakes it and then pulls him in for a hug.

COACH MARSH

I'm proud of you, Bailey.

The two men embrace. Then the lights change. BAILEY sets down his backpack and stands very tall, very proud, in a golden pool of light. While Coach Marsh lies still on the desk in a separate golden pool of light.

BAILEY

That was twenty years ago. I will never forget that day. For not only was that the day that I became a man, it was also the day that started me on my path to being the coach I am today. Coach Marsh touched all our lives, each in his own way. That's why we are all here today, because he was man enough to teach us to do the right things. So, rest in peace, my friend. God's Speed, Coach Marsh.

There is a thunderclap, and the pool of light hitting Coach Marsh changes from golden to holy blue as angels sing down from above. Coach Marsh slowly rises off the desk, still bathed in a reverent blue follow spot as he slowly moves across the stage. Then from above another thunderclap followed by the defining sound of a whistle from the sky's above. A Hugh rope Layard drops from the clouds attached to a giant golden glittered disco globe style of a whistle, which dangles above Coach Marsh. Then you hear the echoing voice of GOD from above.

GOD  
(OS)

GET A MOVE ON! WHAT DO YOU THINK I HAVE ALL DAY!

Coach Marsh scurries offstage in a blue follow spot.

SCRUB NUTS!

fade to black leaving only the glowing golden whistle. Then BLACKOUT.

END OF PLAY