

THE SECRET OF THE SOAP & SPIN

by

Jonathan Graham

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The Secret of the Soap & Spin was first produced by Pollyanna Theatre Company in Austin TX at the Long Center for the Performing Arts' Rollins Studio Theatre in May 2018. The cast and crew were as follows:

<u>VIC:</u>	Chase Brewer
<u>SHEILA:</u>	Bethany Harbaugh
<u>LINT:</u>	William Swift
<u>DUSTY, PUPPET PARENT:</u>	Holly Palmer
<u>THE MOP:</u>	Benjamin Bazán
<u>THE BROOM, et al:</u>	Emily Smith
<u>DIRECTOR:</u>	Judy Matetzschk-Campbell
<u>STAGE MANAGER:</u>	Andrew Perry
<u>SCENIC DESIGNER:</u>	Zac Crofford
<u>COSTUME DESIGNER:</u>	Colleen McCool
<u>LIGHTING DESIGNER:</u>	Natalie George
<u>SOUND DESIGNER:</u>	Andrew Perry
<u>MOVEMENT:</u>	Kelly Hasandras

Cast of Characters

VIC: a somewhat reluctant protagonist because he mainly would like a normal life and stable family, but is thrust into something different all together.

SHEILA: VIC's mom, an addict who would like not to be. Has previously overdosed and been revived, so she's definitely on the edge and could go either way. Loves VIC and wants to fight her way back to normalcy.

LINT: represents the ever-present availability of altered states, a bridge between the world of the laundromat and the world and between sobriety and addiction. LINT is everywhere all the time and seems to be able to function in the laundromat, though is definitely more at home down below. LINT is a metaphor for a pusher and enabler who is not focused on consequences.

DUSTY and the DUST CREATURES: a mobile embodying the darkness of the underworld and the havoc of addiction. DUSTY gets in your face and under your skin.

THE MOP: an addict who is extremely unlikely to change, the embodiment of what SHEILA could become. Has a good heart, but has pretty much given up on itself and stopped believing that it has positive purpose.

BROOM and the CLEANING PRODUCTS: a mobile-type puppet represents a band of cleaning products that keep fighting the good fight against long odds, tends toward grand gestures of limited effectiveness.

PUPPET PARENT: a co-dependent fellow user and enabler for SHEILA.

VOICES OF THE LAUNDROMAT: includes a washer, a dryer, an off-balance washer, voiced by actors who play other roles.

Author's Guide to Stuff

The laundromat is located in the "real world," but it is an edgy, marginal space. It is not a place where middle class, secure folks typically go. It is unmonitored by comforting authority, and a wait station, since people really wander off and leave their clothes. Yet it is familiar enough, and for VIC and SHEILA, part of the everyday and a regular part of their community life.

The Big Blue Dryer and the tunnel it leads to represent the portal between worlds and the access point of danger and adventure.

The underworld, with its various names (way down under, the heap, land of lost socks, etc.) seems at first like a place of escape and adventure, but the trouble is it is much harder to get out than get in. It represents altered states— though not necessarily addiction.

Yarn is the most visible, enacted representation of addictive drugs. Rolled into a ball or skein it can appear fun to play with, soft and comforting, and also contained. But it can come undone and wind up a mess and a trap.

Scene

A laundromat and the underground island below it.

Time

The present.

SETTING:

A run-down Laundromat, but then, is there any other kind? A few washers and dryers are suggested. These need not be realistic, though they should be practical enough to hold some clothes that will later be folded. There is also a door leading to the world outside. One of the dryers is big and blue and has an enormous out of order sign above it. This dryer is unreasonably large, the sort of contraption that looks like it has been out of order for a very long time. Its scale, large enough for actors to climb in, suggests it is a relic of an earlier epoch, as if made for washing clothes in the age of dinosaurs. The Laundromat is on a platform and seems to float above the rest of the playing area. It is surrounded by an island of darkness, suggesting a world we can't quite see.

AT RISE:

In the Laundromat, VIC, a fourth grader, bigger than most, maybe got held back, is playing with one of those rolling baskets, racing back and forth with it. SHEILA, VIC's mom, is folding laundry and wishing she could leave.

VIC

VRRRRRROOOOOOMMMMMM!

SHEILA

Please be careful.

VIC

But I want to go faster!

SHEILA

Any faster, and you'll crash into that lady's stuff again.

VIC

Knock over her clean underwear again!

SHEILA

Exactly.

VIC

That was funny.

SHEILA

Not for her.

VIC

You laughed too. I saw you, mom. That look on her face when she tried catch her panties?

SHEILA

Come help me fold the laundry.

VIC

Awww, but I want to play.

SHEILA

Do you want to play, "Let's go to school without clean underwear?"

VIC

No.

SHEILA

Then get over here.

(Reluctantly, VIC goes over and helps SHEILA fold. In their silence, we hear the VOICES OF THE LAUNDROMAT. In the fronts of the washers and dryers, perhaps we catch a glimpse of the faces of these machines?)

VOICE OF WASHER

Ch-chh, Ch-chh, Ch-chh, Ch-chh, Ch-chh-

VOICE OF DRYER

Ka-thunk, Ka-thunk, Ka-thunk, Ka-thunk, Ka-thunk-

VOICE OF OFF-BALANCE DRYER

Wa-Wamm, Wa-Wamm, Wa-Wamm-

(The VOICES continue under
the following.)

VIC

This is boring.

SHEILA

Yep.

VIC

I want to go somewhere exciting.

SHEILA

After this, you can go to Grandma's and play.

VIC

That's not exciting.

SHEILA

Maybe play some X-Box?

VIC

I guess so.

SHEILA

And if you're good, maybe we'll get ice cream later.

VIC

When?

SHEILA

When I'm done.

VIC

Done with what?

SHEILA

I've got some stuff to do.

VIC

Did you get a job?

SHEILA

Not yet.

VIC
Then what do you have to do?

SHEILA
Just some stuff.

VIC
Can I come with you?

SHEILA
No.

(VIC is disappointed. A quiet falls. LINT floats in. VIC notices, but SHEILA doesn't. VIC abandons the folding and starts to chase after LINT. VIC chases LINT all over the laundromat. Finally, LINT disappears into the Big Blue Dryer. VIC is halfway in, about to follow LINT, when DUSTY, a vengeful dust bunny, appears.)

DUSTY
Rawwwwrrrr!

VIC
(jumping back)
Yikes!

(DUSTY disappears. SHEILA glares at VIC.)

SHEILA
What are you doing?

VIC
I was just... just chasing something and then this thing jumped out of that dryer and-

SHEILA
Well, I need your help folding.

VIC

But-

SHEILA

And you better stay out of that dryer.

VIC

Why?

SHEILA

Or you might disappear! Like a lost sock.

(holding up one sock)

See my purple sock?

VIC

You wear those all the time.

SHEILA

So, where's the other one?

VIC

I dunno.

SHEILA

Last time I saw it, it was in the dryer. But it just disappeared!

(VIC thinks, and then makes
a decision.)

VIC

Like you disappeared?

SHEILA

When did I disappear?

VIC

Two weeks ago.

SHEILA

I didn't "disappear."

VIC

You were gone. Grandma called the cops.

SHEILA

Grandma overreacts sometimes.

VIC

I came back from Jamie's birthday party, and the cops were in the kitchen.

SHEILA

But I came back, right?

VIC

While the cops were looking for you.

SHEILA

That's right. Because I didn't "disappear." I was just out.

VIC

Why can't I ever come with you when you go out?

SHEILA

I took you to Taco Bell on Tuesday.

VIC

Not like that.

SHEILA

Not fancy enough for you?

VIC

Sometimes you go out and you're gone a long time. And I'm at Grandma's all night.

SHEILA

I thought you loved going to Grandma's.

VIC

I like it better when I'm with you.

SHEILA

I have to go places that are not for kids.

VIC

Like where?

SHEILA

Like places that are none of your business. Help me stack everything in the basket.

(VIC does.)

VIC

Mom, can you tell me a story?

SHEILA

What kind of story?

VIC

A story about someplace you go.

SHEILA

Once there was a mom who went to the laundromat.

VIC

Mom! Not like that. Something exciting.

SHEILA

And in that laundromat, she discovered something very exciting.

VIC

Yeah, right.

SHEILA

She discovered the secret of the Soap and Spin.

VIC

What's that?

SHEILA

At first glance, this laundromat was very normal. Washers, baskets, naughty children pushing baskets too fast past the washers.

VIC

Mom!

SHEILA

But the Mom discovered that one of the dryers... an oversized, broken down, odd looking dryer was actually a portal to another world.

VIC

Like how?

SHEILA

It had all the stuff you'd recognize from here, but somehow, it was different.

VIC

But how was it different?

SHEILA

Well, if you met a broom or a mop or a basket, it could definitely talk.

VIC

Wow.

SHEILA

And lint could dance really well, but that doesn't mean it's nice.

VIC

(running and looking in the
dryer)

There's lint in there? I saw it!

SHEILA

And if you're looking for any lost socks, that's where you'll find them.

VIC

All of them?

SHEILA

Yeah.

VIC

That's a lot of socks.

SHEILA

Oh, and I forgot to tell you about the dust bunnies.

VIC

What's with them?

SHEILA

They're everywhere.

VIC

Eeuw.

SHEILA

And mean.

VIC

Hmm.

SHEILA

And people say they bite!

VIC

The mom who went down there, did she come back?

SHEILA

Oh, yeah. She made it back.

VIC

Did the cops have to find her?

SHEILA

No! She came back on her own. Just like me.

VIC

Even that time you went to the hospital, you came back.

SHEILA

(turning away from VIC,
uncomfortably)

Yeah.

VIC

Can we go home?

SHEILA

We have to wait for the jeans and blankets in the dryer.

VIC

How long?

(SHEILA is a little antsy
now.)

SHEILA

I don't know how long, OK?

(Pause. VIC senses
something is off. SHEILA
keeps looking around as if
expecting somebody.)

VIC

Maybe we should go to Grandma's?

SHEILA

No!

(Quiet. SHEILA impatiently checks the dryers, and then goes and looks outside the door.)

VIC

You want to tell me more about the secret world?

SHEILA

It sucks you in.

VIC

You mean like a vacuum cleaner?

SHEILA

Like something always tugging at you.

VIC

Like a tug-of-war?

SHEILA

Like something that grabs you and won't let you go.

VIC

Maybe we should ask Grandma to come help us fold.

SHEILA

No! We are not asking Grandma for anything!

(calming herself down,
shifting focus)

Let's play a game.

VIC

What game?

SHEILA

Hide and seek.

VIC

I don't want to play that. How about... Red Light, Green Light?

SHEILA

No. Hide and Seek. You cover your eyes, and I'll hide.

VIC

Will you come back?

SHEILA

Like you said, I always come back.

VIC

And you won't be acting weird?

SHEILA

Count to fifteen, sweetheart.

VIC

But I need to know that you're not going to -

SHEILA

I SAID COUNT TO FIFTEEN!

VIC

OK.

(eyes covered)

One, two, three, four, five-

(SHEILA checks her pockets
and comes up with some
cash. Making sure VIC
doesn't see, SHEILA heads
for the door.)

Six, seven, eight, nine, ten-

(SHEILA's gone)

Eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen...

(uncovers eyes)

Ready or not, here I come.

(VIC searches the space,
finding no one. The VOICES
OF THE LAUNDROMAT are
louder now.)

VOICE OF WASHER

Ch-chh, Ch-chh, Ch-chh, Ch-chh, Ch-chh-

VOICE OF DRYER

Ka-thunk, Ka-thunk, Ka-thunk, Ka-thunk, Ka-thunk-

VOICE OF OFF-BALANCE DRYER

Wa-Wamm, Wa-Wamm, Wa-Wamm —

VIC

Mom?

(looks around again, still finding nothing)

Mom!

(Checking out the door, VIC is a little worried, to tell the truth. Still nothing. Now VIC checks various washers and dryers. Nothing. Finally, VIC climbs into the Big Blue Dryer.)

Mom? Mom! Mom?

(beat)

I give up.

(pause)

Olly-olly-oxen

(Now VIC slips somehow and falls down the slide.)

Freeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!

(VIC appears at the bottom of the slide. Lights shift to reveal VIC, down below at the bottom of the tunnel, on the underground island. The place is scattered with the discarded detritus of a laundromat. A cloud of floating, single socks. A hanger or seven. Maybe things forgotten in the pockets of jeans like a worn-out dollar bill or a receipt from the grocery store. Also empty Downy jugs and a giant box of detergent, and the refuse of snacks past, like Kit-Kat wrappers and a greasy potato chip bag. Bubbles float by and pop.)

VIC (Cont.)

Where am I?

(Suddenly, several DUST BUNNIES appear, but much larger than the ones you're used to. These are portrayed by puppets, and they seem a larger and more aggressive than you'd expect. A pack of them circle VIC, and mixed in there may be a DUST HAMSTER, or possibly a DUST WEINER DOG. Seeking relative safety, VIC climbs up on the detergent box. The DUST BUNNIES fade off into the shadows, but then LINT comes roaring in.)

LINT

RAAAAAAWR!

VIC

Please leave me alone!

VOICE OF THE DRAIN

Glug-glug-glug-glug-

LINT

I don't know.
Maybe so.
I guess I could.
And probably should...
But change is hard
I'd rather say RAAAAAWR!

VIC

Who are you?

LINT

Lint. That's my name and that's what I am.

VIC

The dusty stuff that comes out of the dryer?

LINT

Precisely. Now as for you...

VIC

I know about you. My mom told me. She told me everything.

LINT

Ah, did she tell you about this?

(LINT produces some yarn
and makes a cat's cradle.)

VIC

I know this game.

(VIC puts a hand in the
cat's cradle. LINT traps
it.)

LINT

Got you.

(LINT starts to tie the
yarn around VIC's hand.)

VIC

No, but now you let me go.

LINT

Why would I do a thing like that?
Because you're the mouse and I'm the cat.

VIC

But it's part of the game to let me go at the end.

LINT

That's not the way I like to play.
Maybe some time, but not today.

(VIC struggles to get free
of the yarn.)

VIC

Well, I don't like to play that way.
I didn't come down here to stay.