

MINIMUM RAGE

A comedy in one act  
by  
Bradley Hayward

**PREVIEW ONLY!**

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### SYNOPSIS

Chester and Newton get a job cleaning swimming pools as a way to see each other after their parents stopped talking because of politics. While working in the heat, the boys realize they don't have to be angry like the adults and would rather just be best friends again.

### CHARACTERS

(2M)

CHESTER.....Smart & sensitive, male, 13.

NEWTON.....Tough & sporty, male, 13.

### SETTING

A backyard swimming pool.

### RUNNING TIME

10 minutes.

(AT RISE: A backyard swimming pool. CHESTER and NEWTON stand at the edge of the stage, facing the audience. Each holds a long pool skimming net. The "pool" is the audience. They dip their nets out into the air over the crowd, dragging them slowly through the imaginary water.)

NEWTON

I'm so mad!

CHESTER

About the leaves or just in general?

NEWTON

In general! And the leaves. Look at that one floating over there by the drain. It's mocking me, Chester. It thinks it's better than me.

CHESTER

It's a maple leaf, Newt. It doesn't have a brain.

NEWTON

That's exactly what it wants you to think. Mom says you gotta watch out for the things that don't look like they're doing anything. Like trees. And libraries.

CHESTER

Libraries?

NEWTON

They just sit there, being quiet. It's suspicious.

CHESTER

(Sighs)

You used to like libraries. Remember when we built that fort out of the big picture books in the kids' section? We called it the "Fortress of Awesome."

NEWTON

(A flash of happiness)

Yeah! And we used the dictionaries as bricks because they were heavy.

CHESTER

Then you tried to eat a page because you thought it said "sandwich," but it actually said "sanctuary."

NEWTON

They both start with S.

(His smile fades. He jabs his net into the pool.)

Like "stupid."

CHESTER

Is something wrong?

NEWTON

Everything is just stupid. Everyone is always yelling at the TV in my house. So now I gotta be mad too. I don't even know why. I'm just full of rage, man.

CHESTER

Mom says your house has a lot of tension. She said a job like this would cool you down.

NEWTON

It's true. Physical work makes your brain turn off. Mom says it builds character.

CHESTER

I'm mostly doing it because algebra stopped being hard and my arms look like boiled spaghetti. See?

(He flexes a completely flat bicep. NEWTON inspects it gravely.)

NEWTON

Wow. You look like a pool noodle that gave up on life.

CHESTER

Exactly. I need resistance.

NEWTON

Well, you came to the right place. This water is heavy. And there's a frog down there.

CHESTER

Where?

NEWTON

Right there. He's doing the breaststroke. He thinks he owns the place. I'm gonna destroy him.

(He lunges forward with his net, nearly toppling into the pool. CHESTER grabs the back of NEWTON'S shirt and yanks him back.)

CHESTER

Whoa! Chill! Don't drown. We don't get paid if you drown.

NEWTON

How much are we making again?

CHESTER

Seven-fifty an hour. Each.

NEWTON

Wow. That's like a hundred dollars a day.

CHESTER

It's thirty dollars a day. Before taxes.

NEWTON

What are taxes?

CHESTER

Money the government takes so they can fix roads and stuff.

NEWTON

(Mad again)

They're stealing our pool money?! For roads?! I don't even drive! I ride a scooter!

CHESTER

Just skim. If we clean four pools today, we get a bonus. Five bucks.

NEWTON

(Calms down, impressed)

Five whole bucks. Man. The guy who owns this house must be a king. Look at this pool. It's huge. And it's got those blue lights at the bottom so you can swim at night like a shark.

CHESTER

Mom says the guy who lives here works two jobs. He's a manager at the grocery store and drives a truck at night.

NEWTON

(Confused)

Wait. If he works all the time, when does he swim?

CHESTER

He doesn't. Mom says she's never seen him use it.

NEWTON

Then why did he buy a hole in the ground full of water?

CHESTER

I don't know. To look at?

NEWTON

That's dumb. You work two jobs so you can buy a pool, but you can't swim in the pool because you're always working the two jobs?

CHESTER

Yeah.

NEWTON

Adults are so stupid. They make rules that don't even make sense. Like, "Don't eat the Play-Doh, it's bad for your tummy." But it smells like salty heaven. Who are they trying to protect?

CHESTER

Probably your stomach.

NEWTON

Well, my stomach is fine. It's my brain that hurts.

CHESTER

Mine, too.

(NEWTON stops. He looks at CHESTER, really seeing him for the first time today.)

NEWTON

Hey. Are you okay?

CHESTER

Yeah. Why?

NEWTON

I don't know. Your mom didn't hug me when I got to your house. She just gave me a high-five. Like I was delivering a pizza.

CHESTER

It was the first time she saw you since you moved back. Two years is a long time. She's just stressed.

NEWTON

Because of my mom?

CHESTER

Yeah.

NEWTON

Are they still mad about the thing?

CHESTER

The thing with the election? Yeah.

NEWTON

I don't get it. It's like they're pulling on opposite sides of a rope, but nobody is winning. They're just sliding into a giant pit of hot lava. Like, guys, you're both gonna fall in the lava. Just drop the rope and go get a Slushie.

CHESTER

(Nods)

That's surprisingly accurate.

NEWTON

And stupid.

CHESTER

(Quietly)

Do you miss when we used to just play with Legos?

NEWTON

Yeah. Legos didn't yell. Except when you stepped on them. Then *I* yelled.

CHESTER

(Smiles)

You yelled a lot.

NEWTON

(Proudly)

I have loud lungs. The doctor says my lungs are bigger than my brain.

CHESTER

I think your doctor is right.

NEWTON

Hey!

(He splashes his net toward CHESTER, sending imaginary pool water at him.)

CHESTER

Hey! Watch the shoes! These are my good sneakers!

NEWTON

You don't wear good sneakers to clean a pool, dummy! That's rule number one of the streets!

CHESTER

We're in the suburbs. There are no streets here, only lawns.

NEWTON

Then it's rule number one of the lawns!

CHESTER

Great. Now they're soggy. And squishy. I don't know how to fix squishy shoes, Newt. They don't teach you that in honours geometry.

NEWTON

You put rice in 'em, man. Rice sucks up all the wetness. Mom does it when she drops her phone in the toilet. Which happens a lot cause she gets mad while doom scrolling and drops things.

CHESTER

See? You know stuff like that. I don't know anything real. When our moms stopped talking and you moved away, it was like all the fun left my house. Mom just started buying me books. So many books.

NEWTON

Books are heavy. Good for building muscle.

CHESTER

No, I read them. I know everything about Greek mythology, but I tried to throw a football at school and it hit me in my own face.

NEWTON

(Laughs)

How do you hit your own face with a ball?!

CHESTER

I don't know! My hand did a weird twist thing. The gym teacher laughed in my face, too. I had to go sit on the bench and read my biology textbook. Everyone called me "Professor." But not in a cool way. Like in a "let's give him a wedgie" way.



NEWTON

(Suddenly serious)

Did they give you a wedgie? Because I can fight them. I know how to punch now. You gotta tuck your thumb outside your fist or it snaps off like a carrot.

CHESTER

No, they didn't give me a wedgie. I gave them my thermos so they'd leave me alone. It was full of SpaghettiOs. But they didn't even want the SpaghettiOs. They dumped it on my head.

NEWTON

Idiots. SpaghettiOs are the bomb.

CHESTER

I've missed you, Newt. When our parents had that huge fight at Thanksgiving and your mom slammed the door? I thought it was just a grown-up time out. I didn't know it meant I wouldn't see my best friend until we were basically old men.

NEWTON

We're thirteen. We don't even have facial hair.

CHESTER

But we missed the whole middle part! You learned how to punch while I read about Ares, God of War, and never learned how to fight. We don't even know the same jokes anymore. I wanted a job like this so I could feel like a regular guy. A cool guy. But my hands are already getting blisters from a plastic stick.

(He shows NEWTON his palms. NEWTON drops his net and grabs CHESTER'S hands to inspect them.)

NEWTON

Man, those aren't blisters. Those are baby bubbles. You got soft hands, Chester.

CHESTER

I know. It's embarrassing.

NEWTON

Don't worry. I'm back and I'm gonna fix you this semester. We're gonna get you tough. By October, you're gonna throw a football so hard it's gonna hit *someone else* in the face.

CHESTER

(Smiles)

That's the dream.

NEWTON

Yeah. And I'm gonna teach you how to look mean so people don't take your SpaghettiOs. You gotta do the eyebrows. Like this.

(He makes an exaggerated angry face, scowling with all his might. CHESTER tries to copy him, but just looks like he's smelling something bad.)

No, no, no. You look like you're pooping. Less nose, more eyebrows. Like you're mad at the water for being too wet.

(CHESTER tries again, holding the angry face.)

CHESTER

Like this?

NEWTON

Yes! Exactly. Look at you. You look like a prize fighter. A very nerdy prize fighter.

CHESTER

(Relaxes his face)

My jaw hurts. How do you do that all day?

NEWTON

You just gotta find the thing that makes you want to punch a wall. For me, it's when the Wi-Fi goes down or when mom says I can't have Corn Flakes for breakfast because it's "not patriotic." What makes you mad, Professor?

CHESTER

I don't know. Everything? I'm tired of being the smart kid who has everything figured out. I'm tired of our moms not talking because of stuff they saw on the internet. And mostly, I'm mad that we're standing in the heat, getting eaten by mosquitoes, for seven-fifty an hour!

NEWTON

(Nods wisely)

Ah. The rage of the wage.

CHESTER

The minimum rage.

NEWTON

Exactly. They pay us the littlest amount of money possible, so we're allowed to be the littlest bit angry. It's a trade off.

**END OF PREVIEW**

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