

THE WEIGHT

A full-length play

by Richard Ehrlich

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SYNOPSIS

Hook

What happens when doing the right thing costs you everything that matters?

Running Time

80 minutes, no intermission

SYNOPSIS

David is the youngest of three siblings, but he's the one his family turns to when their parents need care. Not because he volunteers—because he's capable. He's emotionally steady, professionally flexible, and fundamentally present.

At a facility meeting, David becomes the primary contact without discussion. Mark, the oldest, handles finances from a distance. Lisa visits occasionally but can't handle the weight of watching their parents decline. David can. So David does.

The calls come constantly—medications, appointments, crises. David reschedules patients at his dental practice, misses his daughter Sarah's birthday, and slowly erodes his marriage to Anna. He maintains everything—work, family, caregiving—but the cost is entirely internal.

Mark and Lisa are grateful. They tell David they don't know how he does it. Their relief becomes his burden. They believe the division is fair: Mark pays the bills, David shows up. What they don't see is that David's capacity has become their permission to stay away. His strength enables their distance.

Sarah, at thirteen, sees what the adults miss: "Because you're strong enough to handle it,

you have to handle it. And they don't." Anna sees it too and names it explicitly: "You can. So you do. And they don't have to." But David can't stop. Not because he's trapped—because he's proud. Proud to be the one strong enough to do what his siblings cannot.

When their father dies, Mark asks David to wait over an hour with the body so Mark can say goodbye—despite not having visited in months. David agrees without resentment. He understands Mark needs this. What Mark doesn't understand is what David has already given.

The play asks: What happens when your greatest strength becomes the reason you must carry everything alone? David's emotional stability and capacity aren't his weakness—they're his poison. He would make the same choices again, because not doing so would mean he wasn't strong enough. And he cannot live with that.

At the end, David arrives home on time for Wednesday family dinner—Anna's one boundary. His phone lights up with a call from the facility. He sees it. And for the first time, he doesn't answer. Not because he's broken, but because he's finally choosing to protect what remains.

THE WEIGHT is about the price of being the capable one. It's about families who love each other but still leave one person to carry more than anyone should. And it's about a man whose pride in his own strength won't let him admit that being able to do something doesn't mean he should.

THEMES

- The isolation of capability
- How strength can become a trap
- Family love that still harms
- The cost of caregiving on the caregiver
- Pride as both virtue and curse
- The difference between fair and equal