

MOTHER'S DAY

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a short play  
by Kate McGrath

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## Cast of Characters

Julianne, 16, suburban teen, the leader of the two

Sarah, 15, her best friend, very thin, the follower of the two

Music fades. Lights up on the modern kitchen of Julianne's home. Appliances may be implied through action, or simply suggested, if visible. Sarah and Julianne are chopping vegetables at a counter facing the audience and arranging them on a platter. They each have a cutting board and some knives. There are doors for exits: one in particular leads to an offstage bathroom or powder room. The girls are in mid-conversation:

SARAH

In the basement.

JULIANNE

No. In the basement?

SARAH

Don't you read the paper? *The Inquirer*?

JULIANNE

I hate getting newsprint all over my hands. You ever finish talking to someone and then you see yourself in the mirror a little later and you have these smudges where your hands touched your face after you read the newspaper? Ich.

SARAH

You must have sweaty hands.

JULIANNE

Funny.

SARAH

Or you could read it on-line. That's what my brother does.

JULIANNE

Pass me the carrots. I need some color over here.

SARAH

So the mother--this has got to be psycho mom, I'm telling you--she picks on one of the kids a lot more than the others. Sends her to the basement as punishment.

JULIANNE

What did she do? The little girl?

SARAH

Do?

JULIANNE

To deserve--

SARAH

I don't think it said in the paper. She "misbehaved" it said, or something like that. Anyway--

JULIANNE

I think that would be important to know.

SARAH

Julianne, you don't even know what the whole--

JULIANNE

My mom used to make me clean her bathroom if I did something wrong. And I mean SUPER clean it. And bleach the towels. She stopped making me do that, though.

SARAH

Why? (pause) Is she nicer to you since--

JULIANNE

God no. (pause, looks at her) *Nicer?*

SARAH

(Disturbed by this, looks down) Pass me a radish.

JULIANNE

Uh, now we've got a housecleaner. Juanita. You gotta have something for a housecleaner to clean, so... but I think Juanita is really just supposed to--keep an eye on me. You know?

SARAH

(Changing subject) I hate radishes. Is there anyone who actually eats these? Why did we buy them?

JULIANNE

Mom wanted some color.

SARAH

Cherry tomatoes would have been easier. You can make them into roses, too. If you have the right knife.

JULIANNE

Sarah, just use the knives we have, all right?

SARAH

All right. So the point is not what the little girl did. The point is the mother shut her down there and starved her to death.

JULIANNE

That's actually what she died of?

SARAH

That's what the article said. Duh.

JULIANNE

Duh. They don't starve, technically, I'm sure. I'll bet it was malnutrition. Pneumonia. (pause) Exposure.

SARAH

(Pause, they consider this) Nope. Starvation. And the mother was charged with it. And she beat the other kids with belt buckles and hair brushes. There were a bunch of other kids, too, but they didn't get starved to death.

JULIANNE

Were there a zillion other kids? (Sarah nods, absently.) Figures. Welfare mother?

SARAH

Well... crack mother. I don't know about anything else.

JULIANNE

So she was high when she did it. When she locked the kid down there.

SARAH

Yeah. But it was for a long time. I don't think drugs were the whole point--

JULIANNE

But I bet it was like a contributing factor. We had this drug assembly last month at school and it was all about how addiction makes you lose your sense of self and your self control. This knife sucks.

She slams it down. They jump.

SARAH

(Pause) For a Quaker school you guys have some pretty racy assembly programs.

They both laugh a little bit.

JULIANNE

Yeah. Like there are kids doing crack in the bathrooms at Friends Meeting... I mean please.

Pause.

SARAH

I mean, please.

JULIANNE

I mean--

SARAH

Please.

JULIANNE

(Suddenly energetic) Yeah, right. Kids saying (city black imitation) "Yo-yo, bro, gotta light for my crack pipe?" (Drops this bit.) How 'bout in the bathrooms at your school? Lottsa girls...

She mimes putting her finger down her throat.

SARAH

Hardly. (pause) Actually--there's one girl the other day--well she's definitely anorexic. She passed out in communications class the other day. Did I tell you?

JULIANNE

What, who was it?

SARAH

Courtney Walker. I don't think you--

JULIANNE

--Nah, I don't think I know her. Wait, she didn't go to France with us, did she?

SARAH

No, but wait her sister did. Cause her sister was a junior last year. Alexis Walker. Alexa? I think.

JULIANNE

That really skinny one with the strawberry blonde hair looks kind of like Taylor Swift but with maybe not as pretty hair?

SARAH

She's not skinnier than you. But yeah that's her. So anyway this was her sister, Courtney. At school. She just passed out.

JULIANNE

We don't get a lot of that kind of thing at Friends'. Probably I think because we're co-ed.

SARAH

What's that got to do with it?

JULIANNE

Oh, a lot, from what they say.

SARAH

You're full of it. You're so full of it. Besides, you've got a lot of other stuff... happening.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I mean, stuff that's happened to you. (pause) So, have you heard from Josh since--since you went to the doctor?

Silence.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I hate celery. Why did we buy it?

JULIANNE

Zero calories. That's why the Mom's club drinks white wine.

SARAH

Your mom doesn't need to. She's so gorgeous. And thin. She could probably stuff herself silly on lasagna all day and never gain an ounce.

JULIANNE

(Avoiding subject) That's why I love my school. Less competition between girls because we're not a single sex school.

SARAH

Don't be stupid, it's the same amount.

JULIANNE

Wanna bet?

SARAH

Well it's not like there's a study about it. Not like it's in the paper or anything. Not like you would know if it was... So like I was saying about the little girl in the basement...

JULIANNE

(Sharply) That is such a GROSS topic.

SARAH

What I wanted to say was can you imagine a mother doing that to her own child? And all of them. The family, sitting around the table while she was down there? Without food?

JULIANNE

Bunch of welfare kids in this huge family--I doubt if they sit around the table for their meals. I mean, WE don't sit down to a table for OUR meals...

SARAH

Seriously! But I mean can you imagine if you had a child--

JULIANNE

(She's tense again) Okay, Sarah! Shut UP!

SARAH

(Scared) What.

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