

MOTHER'S DAY

A short drama 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 hairbrushes. 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? Lotsa 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. I mean, stuff that's happened to you. *(Pause.)* So, have you heard from Josh since – since you went to the doctor?

(Silence.)

I hate celery. Why did we buy it?

JULIANNE: Zero calories. That's why the Moms' 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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