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SF PERUSALS

House of Several Stories

a tragedy in two acts of nonsense

by A. John Boulanger

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH
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HOUSE OF SEVERAL STORIES was originally produced at The Kennedy Center as part of the American College Theatre Festival in May 2009. It was presented by The Search Party in conjunction with Texas State University. It was directed by Jeremy O. Torres. The costume design was by Abbey Moore Graf; the set design was by Vanessa Velasquez; the lighting design was by Chris McKnight; and the sound design was by Daniel Schaetz and Adam Smith. The production stage manager was Lara Willars. The cast was as follows:

MOTHER. . . . . Melissa Grogan
BASTIAN . . . . . Travis Hackett
RISSA. . . . . .Ashley Rhodes
ABIGAIL . . . . . .Ragan Rhodes
THOM . . . . . .Kenneth Hill

HOUSE OF SEVERAL STORIES on August 6, 2009 at Austin Playhouse (Imagine That Productions). It was directed by A. John Boulanger. The costume design was by Jillan Hanel; the set design was by Griffon Ramsey; the lighting design was by Jason Amato; and the sound design was by Craig Brock. The production stage manager was Jennifer Anderson.The cast was as follows:

MOTHER. . . . . Lauren Lane
BASTIAN . . . . . Martin Burke
RISSA. . . . . .Meredith McCall
ABIGAIL . . . . . Kelli Schultz
THOM . . . . . .Adam Pearson

Winner! 2008 Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival National Student Playwriting Award

CHARACTERS

MOTHER - 50s, Sue, warm but absent, never without a cocktail

BASTIAN - 30s, adopted brother, optimistically suicidal

RISSA - 30s, sister, skittish, stuck

THOM - 30s, military, a rugged angel, charming with an edge

YOUNG WOMAN/ABIGAIL - 16, mysterious and mature

SETTING

Easton. Home sweet home.

TIME

Thanksgiving, we think.

For Mom.

ACT I: ALL MY CHILDREN

(black out)

(faint sound of a distant wind)

(Whispering voices emerge and envelop the stage. The whispering shifts to chatter; rises in volume; reaches a crescendo; and ends in a single female's laughter. The laughter trails off with the wind. Our play begins.)

(Lights slowly come up on the simple, but elegant, living area of a home. A free-standing window and a door unit separate the playing area from the outside world. Walls are unnecessary. There are no curtains on the window.)

*(***MOTHER** *enters, wearing a slip, high heels and pearls. She holds a cocktail glass, which seems a natural extension of her hand. She looks about the room for something to do, but everything seems to be in order. She moves to the sofa, as her gaze falls to a carpeted area. She reluctantly goes to it, kneels, and places her ear to the floor. Nothing is heard, or perhaps something is. She stands, smiles, and heads back to the sofa.*

*(***MOTHER** *half-heartedly fluffs a pillow or two before quickly and smoothly reaching into the sofa cushions. She pulls out a flask, refreshes her drink, and places it back into the sofa.)*

*(***MOTHER***'s attention shifts to a bureau, where an open box lay atop it. She warily approaches the box, and without looking at its contents, closes it. She reverently walks it to the sofa, and hides it underneath. Her focus shifts to the window, as* **BASTIAN** *appears just outside it. They smile.)*

*(***MOTHER** *goes to the window, and begins to clean the pane.* **BASTIAN** *waves to gain her attention, but she continues to clean it, as if trying to remove his image from the glass.)*

(Her focus slowly returns to her carpet. She walks to the spot she placed her ear to before, and empties the contents of her glass onto the floor. **BASTIAN** *witnesses this, and then heads for the front door.)*

*(***MOTHER** *smiles and retreats upstairs.)*

*(***BASTIAN** *enters, wearing many layers, ending in a pea coat, and carrying an overnight bag.)*

(He drops his bag at the door and reminiscently circles the room. He reaches into the sofa, removing **MOTHER***'s flask. He smiles, returns it, but in a different spot from where it was before.)*

*(***BASTIAN** *rubs his hand through his hair, as if in thought, and then intently walks to the window. He places his oiled hand on the freshly-cleaned pane, leaving his print behind. He looks to the carpet, walks to an area, and kneels. With a thoughtful smile, he addresses the audience:)*

BASTIAN. My father used to weed eat our carpet.

MOTHER. *(entering)* Oh, Thom...

BASTIAN. Oh, Mother.

MOTHER. You aren't Thom.

BASTIAN. That's a relief.

MOTHER. Isn't it?

BASTIAN. I'm Bastian.

MOTHER. My son.

BASTIAN. That's the one.

MOTHER. Then I must be your–

BASTIAN. Mother!

MOTHER. Bastian!

(She rushes to greet him, without ever really touching him.)

BASTIAN. No, you're my mother "Sue." I'm Bastian. Who's Thom?

MOTHER. Who cares? You're Bastian–

BASTIAN. *(echoing)* Who cares I'm Bastian?

MOTHER. My favorite son is home.

BASTIAN. The competition is pretty slim.

*(***MOTHER** *wisps through the room and poses on the sofa.)*

MOTHER. I wasn't expecting you until tomorrow.

BASTIAN. It is tomorrow.

MOTHER. So soon?

BASTIAN. Yes. But Mother.

MOTHER. Yes, dear?

BASTIAN. What happened?

MOTHER. To whom?

BASTIAN. The window.

MOTHER. What happened to the wind–? Oh, dear.

(The sight of Bastian's handprint has drawn **MOTHER** *to the window.)*

BASTIAN. Did you fall down or something?

MOTHER. Not that I recall.

BASTIAN. And what the hell is this?

*(***BASTIAN** *reaches into the sofa and pulls out a large bottle of scotch.)*

MOTHER. Scotch I think, and mind your language.

BASTIAN. You think?

MOTHER. Perhaps it's bourbon?

BASTIAN. It says scotch on the label.

MOTHER. That's right; we're all out of bourbon. Mystery solved: it's scotch. Now, give me the bottle.

BASTIAN. But you don't drink, Mother.

*(***MOTHER** *drinks from the bottle.)*

BASTIAN. You never used to drink.

MOTHER. You never used to cry as a baby.

BASTIAN. I–

MOTHER. Do you remember?

BASTIAN. I remember the stories you used to tell–

MOTHER. Not once.

BASTIAN. About me not crying.

MOTHER. You were the quietest baby anyone had ever seen.

BASTIAN. Or heard.

MOTHER. I always thought–

BASTIAN. Or not heard.

MOTHER. I always thought it was something I was doing wrong–

BASTIAN. What?

MOTHER. You not crying.

BASTIAN. Wasn't it?

MOTHER. I used to cry myself to sleep at night–

BASTIAN. Because I never would.

MOTHER. Because you never would.

MOTHER. Yes. You do remember.

BASTIAN. Stories.

MOTHER. Do you cry now, Bastian?

BASTIAN. Everyone cries.

MOTHER. At what do you cry?

BASTIAN. Nothing comes to mind.

MOTHER. I wish it would. It really isn't healthy not to cry.

BASTIAN. I'm sure that I cry.

MOTHER. You promise?

BASTIAN. I swear.

MOTHER. I'm glad. Now promise not to swear.

BASTIAN. I swear.

MOTHER. Cheeky bastard. I'm sorry.

BASTIAN. For what?

MOTHER. I should mind my language.

BASTIAN. I should mind my mother.

MOTHER. My son.

BASTIAN. But Mother?

MOTHER. Yes, dear?

BASTIAN. Why're you wearing our curtains as if they were a dress?

*(***MOTHER** *realizes she is wearing curtains. She stands, twirls, and poses.)*

MOTHER. They just came back from the cleaners.

BASTIAN. That doesn't make it OK.

MOTHER. I had not a thing to wear.

BASTIAN. Now, neither does the window.

MOTHER. Are you saying I look fat?

BASTIAN. That's all I'm saying.

MOTHER. I'll just go change then. *(beat)* I'll just go change. *(exits)*

*(***BASTIAN** *smiles and readdresses the audience.)*

BASTIAN. My father used to weed eat our carpet. Right here in this room as a matter of fact. Not that he would remember of course. But once a week, every week, for years, he swore that the carpet had actually grown–sometimes as much as a whole inch or two. And since the riding lawn mower wouldn't fit through the front door, weed eating was the only logical solution. It was his way of working things out, I guess. My mother was always afraid someone would see him through *this* window, so she made sure curtains were always hung and drawn–which would eventually lead to the carpet's death. According to my father. *(beat)* I was always afraid he would eventually run out of carpet. *(beat)* My sister Rissa–

*(***RISSA** *appears outside the window, peering in through cupped hands.)*

BASTIAN. –was always afraid. Of everything.

*(***BASTIAN***, unseen, locks the window and goes to the sofa.)*

*(***RISSA** *struggles to open the window. After several attempts, she finally gives up. She breathes on the glass, draws a heart shape, and then heads for the front door.)*

(She enters carrying a smart-looking hatbox and a Christmas present; dressed incognito: in a trench coat, oversized sunglasses, and a scarf fashioned around her neck and head. **BASTIAN** *reclines on the sofa to "hide.")*

*(***RISSA** *makes her way to the window, and drops her things below it.)*

RISSA. *(to her belongings)* Shhh!

(She stops to look about the room suspiciously, as if being watched. Seeing no one, she unlocks the window and sneaks back out the front door.)

*(***BASTIAN** *shifts to hide beside the sofa.* **RISSA** *reappears outside the window, peering in through cupped hands.)*

(She raises the window successfully and crawls through. Feeling victorious, she dramatically unveils herself from her glasses, scarf, and trench coat.)

*(***RISSA** *dances her hat box to the sofa.* **BASTIAN** *is now hiding behind it. She removes peculiar items from her box, such as a naked, headless Ken doll and a Blow Pop. She unwraps the candy, places it in the neck hole of the doll, and then devours it.)*

*(***RISSA** *feels a presence, as* **BASTIAN** *glides up and then down just behind her.)*

RISSA. *(as Ken doll)* Bastian, what the hell are you doing here?

(A naked Barbie doll pops up from behind the sofa.)

BASTIAN. *(as doll)* What the hell are you doing here???

RISSA. It's Christmas time, and mind your language.

BASTIAN. *(as doll)* It's Thanksgiving.

RISSA. So soon? Why're you up so late?

BASTIAN. *(emerging, himself)* It's 4:30 in the afternoon.

RISSA. Are Mom and Dad asleep?

BASTIAN. Mom is taking off the curtains. And Dad is dead.

RISSA. If you rat on me, I'll tell Dad you found his dirty magazine stash. *(gasp)* Why did Mom take off the curtains?

BASTIAN. They made her look fat.

RISSA. Did you tell her that?

BASTIAN. Somebody had to.

(They high-five each other.)

Why are you sneaking in through the window?

RISSA. You aren't going to tell on me, are you?

BASTIAN. Tell on you for what?

RISSA. If they catch me sneaking in again, I'll be grounded for life.

BASTIAN. You're thirty-five years old.

RISSA. How embarrassing would that be?

BASTIAN. And you don't live here anymore.

RISSA. It's so good to be home! I can't believe I just said that.

BASTIAN. Neither can I.

RISSA. Don't you say a word about Max.

BASTIAN. What is the "word" about Max?

RISSA. Promise you won't tell?

(They join pinkies.)

I was out with him all night.

BASTIAN. Oh.

RISSA. I knew you wouldn't approve.

BASTIAN. He's your husband.

RISSA. Don't you say a word to Mom or Dad. *(pause)* Dad's dead.

BASTIAN. Almost a year.

RISSA. How was the funeral?

BASTIAN. I didn't make it.

RISSA. You little bastard.

(They high-five each other.)

Are you going to tell on me?

*(***BASTIAN** *smiles, shaking his head "no.")*

Liar! I can always tell when you lie.

BASTIAN. How?

RISSA. I get a slight pang in my right ear and a twitch in my big toe. *(Her big toe moves.) (gasp)* Why do you want to destroy me?

BASTIAN. It's fun.

RISSA. *(huge gasp)* I'll give you my red patent leather pumps.

BASTIAN. Oh, yeah?

RISSA. The ones you've always adored.

BASTIAN. Have I?

RISSA. You'd like that wouldn't you–?

BASTIAN. Would I?

RISSA. My red patent leather pumps?

BASTIAN. The ones I found on the football field?

RISSA. The ones you would sneak into my room to try on–

BASTIAN. That wasn't me.

RISSA. Every time I snuck out to meet Max.

BASTIAN. That wasn't me.

RISSA. He only hit me once. Max. Despite what anyone else might say, he's gotten better about his temper. And I've learned to duck. What size do you wear?

BASTIAN. Nine.

RISSA. Great! The pumps are seven; they're yours if you keep your mouth shut.

BASTIAN. I don't want your shoes.

RISSA. But they're red.

BASTIAN. I know.

RISSA. *(spite)* You're adopted.

BASTIAN. I know that, too. *(beat)* I won't tell.

RISSA. You're my favorite brother.

BASTIAN. I'm your only brother.

RISSA. The competition is pretty slim. But since you're adopted that was a very nice thing of me to say.

MOTHER. *(offstage)* Bastian!

RISSA. *(frantic)* Shit!

BASTIAN. *(fake frantic)* Better sneak upstairs.

RISSA. Before she finds out about Max.

(The two begin to scurry about the room.)

Cause a commotion in the kitchen or something.

*(***BASTIAN** *hurls a throw pillow toward the kitchen.)*

Wait–! You should hide, too.

BASTIAN. Good thinking.

RISSA. Don't say a word.

*(***RISSA** *is upstage hiding her face with her hat box.* **BASTIAN** *knocks on it.)*

RISSA & BASTIAN. Pinkies!

*(***BASTIAN** *casually leans against a chair under the window.)*

*(***MOTHER** *enters, now fully dressed, but masked by the curtains she holds before her.)*

MOTHER. What was that noise?

BASTIAN. A gust of wind knocked over the chair.

*(***BASTIAN** *kicks the chair.)*

MOTHER. The window's closed.

BASTIAN. It was a large gust of wind.

MOTHER. Must be a southerly.

BASTIAN. I'll put another log on the fire.

*(***MOTHER** *finds a spot in the room, moves to it, twirls, and poses, revealing a stunning dress. After waiting for a response, that does not come,* **MOTHER** *whistles at herself.)*

MOTHER. What, this old thing?

BASTIAN. And you said you had nothing to wear.

MOTHER. I found it in *your* old room. I hope you don't mind. I had to let it out a bit. *(to herself)* Does that mean *I'm* fat?

RISSA. *(hidden)* Yes.

BASTIAN. Yes.

MOTHER. Are you hungry?

BASTIAN. No.

MOTHER. Are you sure?

BASTIAN. Yes.

MOTHER. I can make you some pancakes.

BASTIAN. No.

MOTHER. Blueberries are in season.

BASTIAN. I'm not hungry.

MOTHER. It'd be nice if we had some. But we don't.

BASTIAN. Hopes dashed.

MOTHER. What's that smell?

BASTIAN. Rissa.

MOTHER. Rissa! Get down here!

RISSA. You swore on our pinkies!

MOTHER. I really wish you wouldn't swear.

RISSA. I knew I could never trust you.

*(***MOTHER** *and* **RISSA** *greet each other formally but awkwardly.)*

MOTHER. Rissa, help me hang these curtains.

RISSA. He's lying, Mother. I was with Abigail all night! Not Max!

*(***RISSA** *begins hanging the curtains.)*

MOTHER. Abigail. That name sounds so familiar.

RISSA. Call Abigail's mother if you don't believe me.

MOTHER. Abigail...

RISSA. Yes! Not Max.

MOTHER. Abigail. Wasn't that the name of your imaginary friend, Bastian? When you were five?

RISSA. She was my imaginary friend first. I'm three years older.

MOTHER. I haven't seen Abigail in years.

BASTIAN. You've never seen Abigail, Mother.

RISSA. You never took an interest in our friends.

MOTHER. It's never too late to try. *(to* **BASTIAN***)* How is she?

RISSA/BASTIAN. Who?

MOTHER. Abigail.

BASTIAN. Imaginary.

RISSA. Stop calling her that!

MOTHER. Abigail, Abigail, Abigail.

RISSA. She goes by Constance now.

BASTIAN/MOTHER. Constance?

MOTHER. Sounds like a loose girl. Really, Rissa. I wish you'd be more discriminating about the imaginary friends with whom you associate yourself.

RISSA. You've never liked my friends.

BASTIAN. You've never had any.

RISSA. *(spite)* Adopted.

BASTIAN. Except for Jacques.

*(***RISSA** *gasps.)*

MOTHER. I've a good mind to talk to her imaginary parents, this "Constance".

RISSA. Don't embarrass me, Mother. And she isn't imaginary. I was with her all night.

MOTHER. Imaginary or not, Constance sounds like a loose girl.

RISSA. I didn't imagine it. And I wasn't with Max.

MOTHER. Max?

RISSA. And I'm not lying. He is.

*(***MOTHER** *retrieves her flask from the cushions.)*

MOTHER. Bastian, I wish you wouldn't lie. It really is a great embarrassment to this family when you do so.

*(***MOTHER** *takes a swig from her flask.)*

RISSA. No more embarrassing than that time he was caught having sex on the school bus by Coach Rice during the senior trip.

BASTIAN. That was you.

RISSA. Oh, shit.

BASTIAN. And it was *with* Coach Rice.

RISSA. You promised you would never tell! He's lying, Mother.

MOTHER. Bastian, promise me that was your last lie.

BASTIAN. I swear.

RISSA. Lie.

MOTHER. Why is there a footprint on the window sill?

RISSA. What size is it? Looks like a nine. Bastian, you're grounded.

MOTHER. These curtains just came back from the cleaners.

ALL THREE. This will never do!

MOTHER. Rissa. Remove them.

RISSA. Wha–! Bu–! Huh–! Why doesn't Bastian have to help? It's clearly his print. *(pointing)* Nine-seven-seven-nine.

*(***RISSA** *removes the curtains.)*

MOTHER. I really am happy that all my children have come home for the holidays. It makes me feel all warm and fuzzy inside. Remember that time I made your father's favorite? Rabbit stew. And I forgot to skin the rabbit first? Your father didn't even notice. He simply slurped up every last drop and said, "Mmm. This stew makes me feel all warm and fuzzy inside."

BASTIAN. It did, too.

*(***RISSA** *is petrified.)*

MOTHER. *(to* **BASTIAN***)* I really am happy that *all* my children have come home for the holidays. *(pause)* I have to pee.

*(***MOTHER** *exits upstairs.)*

BASTIAN. What does she mean "all of her children" have come home for the holidays?

RISSA. *(numb)* I cried for a week when I found out she cooked Jacques Brel.

BASTIAN. He was your best friend.

RISSA. And oh-so soft.

BASTIAN. She said it was an accident.

RISSA. You think Jacques hopped into that pot of boiling water all by himself? He had bad knees! I'm sticking with foul play.

BASTIAN. She was just trying to hide from us the fact that we were so poor.

RISSA. We weren't so poor!

BASTIAN. We ate your pet rabbit.

RISSA. *(gathering her things)* Poor us.

BASTIAN. Poor Jacques Brel.

RISSA. I cried for a week! *(starts to exit the window)*

BASTIAN. Max hit you?

RISSA. Only once. *(beat)* I've learned to duck. And if you tell her I was with him last night, I'll kill *your* best friend (like she killed mine).

BASTIAN. I don't have a best friend. And he's your husband; isn't he?

RISSA. Isn't he? Sorry you couldn't make the wedding.

BASTIAN. The invitation was–

RISSA. It was standing room only and I know how crowds hate you.

BASTIAN. How *I* hate *crowds.*

RISSA. Whatever.

BASTIAN. What did she mean by "*all* her children"?

RISSA. We're both home for Christmas?

BASTIAN. Thanksgiving.

RISSA. Do you smell bourbon?

BASTIAN. I think it's scotch.

RISSA. I wish it were bourbon.

BASTIAN. Mother said we're all out.

RISSA. How tragic.

(a thud from upstairs)

BASTIAN. What the hell was that–?

*(***BASTIAN** *rushes to the foot of the stairs and freezes.* **RISSA** *smiles and addresses the audience.)*

RISSA. One night, when I was sixteen, I snuck out the window to meet Max out on the 50-yard line of the football field. I wore my *red* patent leather pumps and my hair in a French braid–which Bastian had fashioned after I woke him for advice on my outfit. He was better at those kinds of things and, imaginary or not, Abigail was nowhere to be found. I wasn't exactly sure what was going to happen that night, but I remember not wearing panties or a bra. It was cold out, but the breeze was invigorating as I barreled down toward the school, smiling from ear to ear–through clenched teeth to prevent the fluttering butterflies from escaping my stomach. When I got to the field, the gate was chained and padlocked. Without a second's thought, I began to scale the looming fence. Perhaps I was eager. But the hem of my skirt, which was already frayed, because apparently we were poor *(shrugs)*, caught on a link and tore as I made my way down. Being a gymnast, I dismounted fine. But the link must have scratched my leg, because the next morning Mother found a spot of blood on my dress. *(beat)* That night I experienced my first kiss. It tasted like bourbon. The butterflies must've become drunk because the fluttering stopped. Everything stopped. That night I had my first kiss. It tasted like bourbon. That night I also lost my–

BASTIAN. *(shifts)* Red patent leather pumps.

RISSA. Red patent leather pumps. *(beat)* I ran home from the football field, hoping the speed coupled with the wind would wash away the smell of the–bourbon. And

I prayed to God the whole way that Mother was still asleep, or if she wasn't, she wouldn't be able to smell me or the bourbon. And I remember praying for the safe return of my red patent leather pumps. It was that night I was convinced God did exist. When I got to this window, I noticed Daddy in his recliner. I knew it was safe to enter because his favorite show was on and he was resting his eyeballs. But when I stepped into the bush just below the window, I landed on the tail of a skunk! Which must have pissed him off, because he sprayed me with his stink! I had asked God to wash away the smell of the bourbon. And He did. And my red pumps showed up outside my door the following morning. *(beat)* I smelled like a skunk's ass, but I knew there was a God.

(the same thud from upstairs as before)

BASTIAN. *(unfreezes)* What the hell was that noise?

MOTHER. *(entering)* A large gust of wind knocked over a chair.

BASTIAN. Must be a southerly.

RISSA. I'll put another log on the fire.

MOTHER. What's that smell?

BASTIAN. Rissa.

MOTHER. Rissa?

RISSA. It's bourbon.

BASTIAN. It's scotch.

RISSA. I wish it were bourbon.

MOTHER. Me, too; I'm almost out of scotch. How about a mojito? I can make us all a nice pitcher of mojitos.

RISSA. You don't drink, Sue.

MOTHER. You should've told me that before I opened the last bottle of scotch.

RISSA. You never used to drink.

MOTHER. You never used to cry as a baby.

BASTIAN. Um. That was me.

MOTHER. Oh. Yes. Rissa used to cry enough for everybody. Do you remember?

RISSA. I remember the stories.

MOTHER. She never stopped as a matter of fact. I thought it was something I was doing wrong.

RISSA. Probably was.

MOTHER. I used to cry myself to sleep at night, because she never stopped. Finally, I got used to it. In fact–

RISSA/MOTHER. It was the only way I could fall asleep there for a while.

MOTHER. *(beat)* Yes. You do remember.

RISSA. Stories.

MOTHER. Do you still cry, Rissa?

RISSA. Yes.

MOTHER. At what do you cry?

RISSA. Everything.

MOTHER. I'm so glad. Will you help me hang the curtains now?

*(***RISSA** *begins hanging the curtains.)*

BASTIAN. The window looks better without them, Mother. It actually brings more light into the room.

RISSA. It'll be dark soon.

MOTHER. What if someone should see in?

RISSA. Yeah, Bastian. What then?

BASTIAN. Who?

MOTHER. You never know.

RISSA. You just never know.

BASTIAN. Nobody is out there. Nobody is looking in.

RISSA. Somebody is always out there.

MOTHER. Somebody is always looking in.

RISSA. Quick, Mother, before someone sees!

BASTIAN. Sees what??

MOTHER. You never know!!

RISSA. You just never know!!

(The phone rings, giving them all a start. **MOTHER** *faints to the sofa;* **RISSA** *hides behind the curtains;* **BASTIAN** *watches the two of them for several rings.)*

BASTIAN. I'll get it.

RISSA. *I'll* get it! It could be Max.

MOTHER. Who's Max?

RISSA. Bastian, you promised not to tell! He's lying, Mother.

MOTHER. Bastian, you promised not to lie.

RISSA. Grounded.

*(***RISSA** *leans down to the phone, speaking to it, without lifting the receiver. The phone continues to ring.)*

Hello, Max?

BASTIAN. *(to* **MOTHER***)* You've never met Max?

MOTHER. Who?

RISSA. *(shaking the phone)* Are you there? Talk to me, Max. Just talk to me. I know you're sorry for what you did, and I–I'm ready to forgive you. *(to* **MOTHER***)* Isn't that rather adult of me?

MOTHER. *(to* **BASTIAN***)* What did he do?

RISSA. Shh!

*(***RISSA** *has shaken the receiver from the phone, releasing the sound of a baby crying.)*

Are you crying?

MOTHER. I don't think I'm crying. Bastian, am I crying?

RISSA. He's crying like a baby.

MOTHER. How nice. Bastian never cried like a baby or anything else.

*(***RISSA** *cradles the phone.)*

RISSA. Do you hear him? He's wailing like a babe. Just like me; right, Mother?

MOTHER. I don't know; bring me the phone.

RISSA. He's so sad. I need my red patent leather pumps!

*(***RISSA** *drops the phone and runs upstairs.)*

MOTHER. That'll cheer him up. Surely.

(A **YOUNG WOMAN (ABIGAIL)** *appears, holding a phone receiver and a bundled-up baby.)*

BASTIAN. *(into phone)* Hello? Max? It's Rissa's brother. Bastian.

MOTHER. Did I ever make that pitcher of mojitos?

YOUNG WOMAN. Hello?

BASTIAN. *(to phone)* Yes.

MOTHER. Did we drink it already?

YOUNG WOMAN. Can you hear me?

BASTIAN. *(to phone)* Yes.

MOTHER. I'll just go make another pitcher then.

BASTIAN. *(to phone)* Can I help you?

MOTHER. I'll be fine. *(exits to kitchen)*

YOUNG WOMAN. Is this the Fuller residence?

BASTIAN. The fullest.

YOUNG WOMAN. 13-0-9 Sunflower Lane?

BASTIAN. As long as I can remember.

(Baby continues to cry.)

YOUNG WOMAN. Stop it!

BASTIAN. You stop it.

YOUNG WOMAN. I'm trying. *(to baby)* Shh. There, there now. There, there.

BASTIAN. Can I help you?

YOUNG WOMAN. I don't know. You can help me find– *(She drops the baby.) (beat)* Oh, shit.

RISSA. *(entering)* You can help me find my red patent leather pumps; all I could find were my old tap shoes.

*(***RISSA** *begins to put on the shoes. The baby cries softly throughout.)*

Is he still crying like a baby?

BASTIAN. I think it *is* a baby.

RISSA. Don't you call Max a baby. He's bigger than you and will kick your ass if I want him to.

BASTIAN. There's a real baby on the phone.

RISSA. Real babies don't use phones. Their fingers are too small and they rarely have anything to say.

BASTIAN. It's somebody *with* a baby.

RISSA. What's Max doing with a baby?

BASTIAN. It isn't Max.

RISSA. What did the baby do with Max???

BASTIAN. It's a lady on the phone.

RISSA. What is Max doing with a lady on the phone?

BASTIAN. It's a lady with a baby on the phone–not Max!

MOTHER. *(entering with mojitos)* How *is* Max?

RISSA. Max who?

MOTHER. I was wondering that myself.

BASTIAN. It's not Max!

MOTHER. Not that I would know who that was either way.

RISSA. Are you sure?

BASTIAN. Shh!

RISSA. Then why the hell am I wearing my tap shoes?

MOTHER. You aren't. Those are Bastian's tap shoes.

RISSA. They were mine first. I'm three years older.

BASTIAN. *(to phone)* Hello?

MOTHER. *(to* **BASTIAN***)* Hi, there. *(to* **RISSA***)* Since you have them on, you might as well do a number.

BASTIAN. *(to phone)* Are you there?

RISSA. What am I? Some sort of show pony?

YOUNG WOMAN. *(into phone)* Yes!

RISSA. Anyway, I'm glad I didn't find my red patent leather pumps. I ran all the way upstairs for some stupid lady with some stupid baby.

MOTHER. What lady with what baby?

YOUNG WOMAN. *(to baby)* Stupid baby.

RISSA. Why are you asking me? Ask Bastian.

BASTIAN. *(to phone)* Are you there?

MOTHER. He's on the phone.

ABIGAIL/RISSA. Yes!

RISSA. With some lady with a baby.

MOTHER. How nice. Babies are so nice to have around for the holidays. That isn't a collect call is it?

BASTIAN. Who are you looking for?

YOUNG WOMAN. Thom? Is that you?

BASTIAN. Thom, who?

MOTHER. You should invite her over, Bass–or at least the baby. Is the baby still crying?

YOUNG WOMAN. Why won't you stop?

BASTIAN. *(to* **MOTHER***)* Yes.

MOTHER. Maybe she could drop him off for a while.

YOUNG WOMAN. I can't do this anymore.

BASTIAN. He apparently won't stop.

MOTHER. How nice is that?

RISSA. Oh, Mother, for God's sake! I can cry, too. Look. *(***RISSA** *starts to cry. And then she starts to tap.)* I can also tap. I bet that stupid baby can't tap.

MOTHER. Rissa, stop calling the baby stupid! We haven't even met him yet.

RISSA. Babies *are* stupid. Have you ever tried having a conversation with one? They're idiots!

MOTHER. But they're so nice to have around for the holidays.

RISSA. Or at a barbecue.

MOTHER. Mojito?

RISSA. Fine. But I'm not doing another tap routine.

MOTHER. That isn't a collect call, is it?

RISSA. I can't hear you, Mother; I'm taking off my tap shoes.

*(***RISSA** *runs upstairs. We hear a thud offstage.)*

RISSA. *(offstage)* I'm all right.

BASTIAN. *(to phone)* I think you might have the wrong residence.

YOUNG WOMAN. 13-0-9 Sunflower Lane?

BASTIAN. *(to phone)* There isn't a Thom who lives here.

YOUNG WOMAN. Of course, there isn't–

MOTHER. Of course, there isn't–

MOTHER. Now, Hang up.

YOUNG WOMAN. I'll be right there.

BASTIAN. What?

MOTHER. Hang up, Bass.

YOUNG WOMAN. I'll be right over.

BASTIAN. *(into phone)* What? Why?

YOUNG WOMAN. I've no where else to go. *(gone)*

MOTHER. Because I don't want a large phone bill from some stupid lady with some stupid baby; now, do I?

BASTIAN. *(into phone)* Hello?

MOTHER. Hi, there.

BASTIAN. She hung up.

MOTHER. First she calls collect, and then she hangs up on you. It's probably best that you didn't invite her over. You didn't invite her over; did you?

BASTIAN. No.

MOTHER. It's probably best.

BASTIAN. But she's on her way.

MOTHER. And she wasn't even invited; how rude. Is she bringing that baby that wouldn't stop crying?

BASTIAN. I assume so.

MOTHER. All is forgiven. What's that smell? Rissa, get down here!

*(***RISSA** *enters, wearing bunny slippers.)*

RISSA. What did I do now?

MOTHER. Help me tidy up a bit for our guest.

RISSA. Bastian's not a guest.

MOTHER. Just help me tidy up.

RISSA. I can't. I have a blister from doing my tap routine.

MOTHER. I'm not asking you to tidy up with your toes. Just take this into the kitchen. *("this" is anything or everything)*

RISSA. Which way is the kitchen?

MOTHER. Take a right at the window and then a sharp left. You can't miss it.

RISSA. What if I get lost on my way back?

BASTIAN. Follow the sounds of our voices.

RISSA. Say something so I know what to listen for.

MOTHER. "Cry Baby Bunting. Daddy's gone a-hunting– gone to fetch a *rabbit skin*, to put the Baby Bunting in."

RISSA. Oh, Jacques.

(She exits to kitchen.)

BASTIAN. What was *that?*

MOTHER. Must be the scotch.

BASTIAN. Lay off the scotch.

MOTHER. I have, dear. This is a *mojito.*

BASTIAN. *(smiles)* Mother–

MOTHER. I'm so excited about our little visitor; aren't you excited about our little visitor?

BASTIAN. Ecstatic. But Mother–

MOTHER. It's been years since we've had a baby in the house.

BASTIAN. That's true. But Mother, I need to–

MOTHER. This is going to be the best Thanksgiving ever.

BASTIAN. Talk. To. You.

MOTHER. All my children are home and some aren't even mine.

BASTIAN. Mother!!!

MOTHER. *(silence)* Yes, Bastian?

BASTIAN. Before they arrive, there's something I'd like to discuss.

MOTHER. With whom, dear?

BASTIAN. You.

MOTHER. *(beat)* Is it about the carpet?

BASTIAN. What?

MOTHER. I've watered it and watered it; it just doesn't seem to *want* to grow. Is it not getting enough sunlight? Should I remove the curtains, like you said?

BASTIAN. It's not the carpet.

MOTHER. This seems pretty serious. I wish your father was here.

BASTIAN. I miss him, too.

MOTHER. No. He was just better at this "serious-discussion" thing.

BASTIAN. Was he?

MOTHER. Wasn't he?

BASTIAN. I don't remember.

MOTHER. Comparatively?

BASTIAN. I guess he was.

MOTHER. Of course, he was. *(beat)* You look so serious. You look as if someone has just died.

MOTHER/BASTIAN. *(to themselves)* Well...

MOTHER. Are you?

BASTIAN. What?

MOTHER. Dying?

BASTIAN. No.

MOTHER. Am I?

BASTIAN. I don't think so.

MOTHER. You aren't certain?

BASTIAN. I'm certain that's not what I was going to tell you.

MOTHER. I'm so relieved. Well, you're not dying, and I'm not dying. Your father's–

BASTIAN. Already dead.

MOTHER. I guess that leaves Rissa. *(smiles)*

BASTIAN. Nobody is dying.

MOTHER. I wish that were true.

BASTIAN. None of the three of us are dying.

MOTHER. No? No. We're stuck here a while longer, I guess; aren't we? *(***MOTHER** *downs her drink.)* Perhaps I should sit down.

BASTIAN. You *are* sitting down.

MOTHER. Then I must be ready.

BASTIAN. *(beat)* I'm a little nervous.

MOTHER. I don't know what you have to be nervous about, dear. You already know what you're going to say, so just say it.

BASTIAN. I've decided. That I'm. G–god, this is hard.

MOTHER. You'll feel better once you get it out.

BASTIAN. I've decided. That I'm going to kill myself.

*(***MOTHER** *looks to* **BASTIAN**. **BASTIAN** *slowly turns away from her. The lights blink once, almost undetected. Actors are one second before.)*

MOTHER. *(repeat)* You'll feel better once you get it out.

BASTIAN. I've decided. That I'm going to join the service.

MOTHER. Oh. *(beat)* What service would that be, dear?

BASTIAN. The armed one. The military. The United States military?

MOTHER. Oh. *(beat)* How nice; I've been thinking about joining a gym.

BASTIAN. Is that so?

MOTHER. It's never too late to take pride in one's own appearance.

BASTIAN. A gym?

MOTHER. I know, it's silly. It sounds silly. It's silly. The idea: silly. It's a silly idea. Me? A gym. Isn't that silly?

BASTIAN. A gym.

MOTHER. What do you think?

BASTIAN. I think it's a fabulous idea.

MOTHER. Because I'm fat. I think so, too.

BASTIAN. Fabulous idea.

MOTHER. I think so, too. I'm so glad we had this talk. I'm better at them than I thought. We didn't need Martin after all.

BASTIAN. We never did; did we?

RISSA. *(offstage)* If you guys expect me to follow the sounds of your voices, you're going to have to talk a lot louder!

MOTHER. *(whisper)* I have to pee.

*(***MOTHER** *tiptoes to the stairs, grabbing the bottle of scotch on her way.)*

BASTIAN. Mother.

MOTHER. *(whisper)* Yes, dear?

BASTIAN. *(beat)* Happy Thanksgiving.

RISSA. *(entering)* Mother!

MOTHER. Yes, Rissa?

RISSA. Where are you going?

MOTHER. To make myself more presentable.

RISSA. For whom?

MOTHER. Some lady with a baby, I suppose. *(exits upstairs)* Perhaps you should do the same.

RISSA. What? Ugh. No fun at all.

*(***BASTIAN** *is deep in thought on the sofa.* **RISSA** *is in her own world; we hear her thoughts.)*

A lady with a baby is just a stupid lady with a baby. Stupid babies. "Babies are nice to have around for the holidays." Yeah? Babies are nice to have with beans and potato salad at a barbecue.

*(***RISSA** *laughs maniacally. She quickly snaps out of it. She laughs manically again.)*

Or in a stew. How about that, Mother? We can have baby stew for Thanksgiving dinner. *(gasp)* I miss Jacques Brel. *(beat)* Babies. *(beat)* Baby. *(beat)* A baby could be nice. Babies are just what you need when you are home for the holidays. Babies are just what you need...

*(***RISSA** *leans back, pushing out her stomach, as if pregnant.)*

Bastian, I have something to tell you.

BASTIAN. I have something to tell you.

RISSA. Of course you do. Everything's a competition with you. News flash: I'm three years older; I've something to tell you *first.* But it's very important, so it'll have to wait for Mother.

BASTIAN. What took you so long in the kitchen?

RISSA. I was making the turkey.

BASTIAN. Making the turkey?

RISSA. It's Thanksgiving and we're fresh out of rabbits.

BASTIAN. *You* were making the turkey?

RISSA. I didn't touch the stove.

(They sit in silence. The silence grows into an uncomfortable paranoia.)

What the hell are we doing?

BASTIAN. Waiting for Mother?

RISSA. That's right; I have news.

BASTIAN. So do I.

RISSA. I'm older.

BASTIAN. We don't need Mother for my news.

RISSA. Mine must be more important.

BASTIAN. She already knows what I have to say.

RISSA. No, she doesn't.

BASTIAN. Yes, she does.

RISSA. No, she doesn't.

BASTIAN. Yes, she does.

RISSA. No. She doesn't.

BASTIAN. Yes. She does.

RISSA. No, she doesn't!

BASTIAN. Yes, she does!

*(***RISSA** *grabs* **BASTIAN***'s face.)*

RISSA. No! She! Doesn't!

BASTIAN. I already told her my news.

*(***BASTIAN** *frees himself.* **RISSA** *takes her aggression out on the sofa.)*

RISSA. You told her your news before you told me your news?

BASTIAN. You were in the kitchen.

RISSA. Making the turkey!

BASTIAN. Without a stove!

RISSA. I don't think you're my favorite brother anymore.

BASTIAN. I don't think you have a choice.

*(***RISSA** *stands up slowly, unpleased.)*

RISSA. Mommy!!! *(to herself)* Where is that wretched woman?

BASTIAN. Getting ready for our guest.

(Phone rings. The **YOUNG WOMAN** *with the baby appears.)*

RISSA. Uncle Clifton?

BASTIAN. Who?

*(***BASTIAN** *lifts the receiver;* **RISSA** *hangs it up. Lights out on* **YOUNG WOMAN**.*)*

RISSA. What guest?

BASTIAN. The lady from the phone is on her way over.

RISSA. Where?

BASTIAN. Here.

RISSA. Why?

BASTIAN. I don't know.

RISSA. Should we hide?

BASTIAN. I don't see why not.

RISSA. She could be dangerous.

BASTIAN. She could be drunk.

RISSA. What was her name?

BASTIAN. I didn't get it.

MOTHER. *(entering)* Maybe the *baby's* drunk. Did you get the baby's name?

BASTIAN. Did she say it was "Thom"?

MOTHER. *(to herself)* Cheeky bastard.

RISSA. Who is this mysterious lady?

BASTIAN/MOTHER. I've no idea.

RISSA. And you invited her over?

BASTIAN. I didn't invite her anywhere.

MOTHER. I invited the baby; I don't care much for the lady.

RISSA. She's coming.

MOTHER. Well, someone has to pay for the baby's cab.

RISSA. No one ever pays for my cabs.

BASTIAN. I'm not sure we even have cabs in Easton.

MOTHER. The baby can't drive himself.

RISSA. That'd be a big baby.

MOTHER. And if he walks, he'll be too tired when he gets here. And a sleeping baby is no fun at all.

RISSA. Maybe that wasn't a lady on the phone.

MOTHER. Maybe it *was* Max.

RISSA. Max who?

MOTHER. I've no clue.

BASTIAN. It was a lady. She had a baby. And she's on her way over.

RISSA. And you're not afraid?

BASTIAN. I've no reason to be.

RISSA. Perhaps. *(beat)* Perhaps it was just Aunt Ruth, playing a trick on us.

MOTHER. What is your Aunt Ruth doing with a baby?

BASTIAN. We don't have an Aunt Ruth.

MOTHER. Oh.

RISSA. Then who am I thinking of?

MOTHER. Your Aunt Barbara.

RISSA. Oh.

BASTIAN. We don't have an Aunt Barbara.

MOTHER. Then who am *I* thinking of?

BASTIAN. I've no idea. We don't have any aunts as far as I know.

RISSA. I think he's right.

MOTHER. It's probably best. Neither your Aunt Barbara nor your Aunt Ruth ever sends cards or gifts around the holidays.

RISSA. Maybe they're poor, too.

MOTHER. You were always better at remembering those kinds of things, Bastian.

RISSA. What was I better at, Mother?

MOTHER. Origami.

RISSA. What the hell is Origami?

*(***MOTHER** *makes her way to the carpet.)*

MOTHER. Do you remember how your father and I used to–

*(***RISSA** *and* **BASTIAN** *begin a slow-processed fit, a toddler tantrum.)*

RISSA/BASTIAN. I remember. I remember. I remember! I remember! I remember!!!

*(***MOTHER** *is lost in a memory.* **RISSA** *and* **BASTIAN** *peak and then freeze.)*

MOTHER. I remember. *(to audience)* When I was fifteen, Martin Fuller walked up to me during homeroom and told me that we were going to the Spring Dance together. And instead of waiting for a response, he simply walked away. I'm sure I would have said, "Yes," but since it wasn't a question, there really wasn't a reason for me to come up with an answer. Which is probably best, because I'm incapable of making decisions on my own. Even when I do, it's invariably the wrong one.

RISSA/BASTIAN. *(shift; softly)* Yes.

MOTHER. I'm certain I would have said, "Yes." Had there been an actual invitation. *(beat)* Two and a half years later, Martin walked me home after the Homecoming Dance, and when we reached the front porch, he let me know that we had been dating for two years and that I was going to marry him after graduation. I

remember him trying his best to get the ring around my finger, when he said he must've bought it a size too small. I said, "No. I must've been born a size too large." He finally gave up, and just handed me the ring. And then he started in on how he was going to provide for me, and take care of me and some other business about love. I think. But I couldn't stop thinking about that lime green taffeta dress Priscilla Jackson wore to the dance, and how she glowed when the crown went atop her head. And wishing I had worn a lime green taffeta dress, and wishing that Glenda Barnes had won Homecoming Queen, because at least she was still a virgin. And then I started to cry. Which must have made Martin feel uncomfortable, because he quickly left. After he was gone, I walked home. I didn't have the heart to tell him that he pseudo-proposed to me on the neighbor's front porch. He already seemed so nervous. Perhaps he was drunk. (beat) But as I lay in bed that night, I remember thinking, "Aren't I fortunate?" To have someone like Martin in my life to help me make big decisions about dances and marriage? Since I'm incapable of making decisions on my own. Even when I do, it's invariably the wrong one.

RISSA/BASTIAN. *(shift; softly)* Yes.

MOTHER. I'm certain my answer would've been, "Yes." Had there been an actual proposal.

*(***RISSA** *and* **BASTIAN** *come to life.)*

Do you remember how your father and I used to make up relatives who lived in far-off, exotic places?

BASTIAN/RISSA. To give us a better sense of familial connection.

MOTHER. You do remember.

RISSA. My favorite was always Uncle Clifton.

BASTIAN. I almost forgot about Uncle Clifton.

MOTHER. How could you forget your Uncle Clifton?

RISSA. He lived in Malaysia!

BASTIAN. With his eight children and their *au pair.*

RISSA. Jesus H. Macy! Eight children...

BASTIAN. Can you think of anything more tragic?

MOTHER. Two.

BASTIAN. I remember their eight names.

RISSA. I remember their eight names first; I'm three years older.

MOTHER. How could you forget? They're your cousins.

RISSA. In order: Merle, Michelle, Guy, Timothy, Ferrel, Jonathan, Benji, and Melissa.

BASTIAN. I thought Benji was the youngest.

RISSA. That was in order by height. Melissa was dwarfish; wasn't she, Mother?

MOTHER. I thought the *au pair* was a dwarf.

RISSA. Sybil couldn't be a dwarf and look after eight children all by herself.

MOTHER. Of course not. That's why they were all eaten up by tigers, while visiting the National Zoo in Kuala Lumpur.

BASTIAN. Dad said they died of consumption.

MOTHER. Your father had little flair for fiction.

RISSA. What did he have a flair for?

MOTHER. Landscaping.

RISSA. That's right; look at the carpet.

(They all do.)

*(***MOTHER** *pours a bit of her drink onto it.)*

What did I have a flair for, Mommy?

MOTHER. Origami is all I recall.

RISSA. *(to* **BASTIAN***)* What the hell is that?

BASTIAN. Mother. Rissa has news!

MOTHER. What is it?

RISSA. Why are you asking him? It's my news, and I think you should sit down.

MOTHER. Oh. I thought I was. *(sits)* If this is about Bastian joining the service, I've already heard, and I think–

RISSA. Not everything is about Bastian, Mother. *(quickly to* **BASTIAN***)* What service are you joining?

MOTHER. Was that a secret?

RISSA. The Secret Service?

BASTIAN. The military. The United States military. The navy to be exact.

*(***MOTHER** *and* **RISSA** *smile, then chuckle, and then laugh uproariously.)*

MOTHER. *(recovering)* Bastian, I've been thinking; this group you want to join?

BASTIAN. The navy.

MOTHER. Are you sure they take people like you?

BASTIAN. What does that mean, "people like me"?

RISSA. *(stops laughing)* Adopted.

MOTHER. Your *age.*

RISSA. Oh.

BASTIAN. "Don't ask, don't tell."

MOTHER. Surely they have ways of figuring it out. They'll probably ask for a birth certificate, and if they have a calculator, they can simply do the math.

BASTIAN. I'm thirty-two.

RISSA. When did you get so old? *(to* **MOTHER***)* How old does that make you??

BASTIAN. The cut off age is thirty-four.

RISSA. How old am I again?

*(***MOTHER** *looks to* **BASTIAN***.)*

BASTIAN. Thirty-five.

MOTHER. Thirty-five, dear.

*(***RISSA** *faux faints to the floor.)*

BASTIAN. I can still enlist, but I'm running out of time.

RISSA. Wait! Does that mean I can't join the service?

MOTHER. Did you want to?

RISSA. I'd at least like the option. If Bastian gets to join, why can't I? I'm three years older.

MOTHER. I think we've established that as the reason.

RISSA. I don't like that one bit. I think I'll file a complaint.

MOTHER. I think I'll file my nails. Has anyone seen my emery board?

*(***RISSA** *gets a pad and pen from the bureau, handing* **MOTHER** *an emery board.)*

RISSA. To whom should I address the letter?

MOTHER. Clark Gable.

RISSA. Who the hell is Clark Gable?

MOTHER. Very well, address it to me. I always enjoy receiving your letters. There's a stamp in the bureau.

RISSA. I've never written you a letter.

MOTHER. That's right you haven't.

RISSA. In fact, I've never written a letter at all.

MOTHER. Don't you think it's about time you did?

RISSA. I'm too busy, Mother. I'm trying to change the world.

*(***RISSA** *goes to the phone.)*

MOTHER. Oh, Rissa–

RISSA. Oh, Sue. Who's in charge of the United States military?

MOTHER. Activism is so unlady-like.

BASTIAN. The President.

MOTHER. What will the neighbors think?

RISSA. The curtains are hung. *(at phone, without lifting receiver)* Hello, Rosie, I'd like the President of the military, please.

BASTIAN. The United States.

RISSA. He's also the President of the United States. *(confused)* Business or residence?

MOTHER. *(to phone)* He lives in a white house on a hill.

RISSA. Residence.

BASTIAN. You can't just call the White House!

MOTHER. It's so unlady-like.

BASTIAN. *(lifting receiver)* You're not even on the phone!!!

RISSA. *(to* **BASTIAN***)* You just don't want me to kill more people than you when I'm in the military. *(to phone)* Yes, that's what I said. *(to* **BASTIAN***)* Everything's a competition with you. *(to phone)* No, this isn't a joke. Doesn't he have a secretary or someone with whom I can leave a message?

MOTHER. I hate seeing my little peanuts get their hopes dashed.

RISSA. *(to phone)* Don't you dare tell me to have a nice day!

MOTHER. *(smiles)* I really do.

RISSA. She hung up on me.

MOTHER. Are you going to cry?

BASTIAN. I think the military–!

MOTHER. It might make you feel better.

BASTIAN. Is exactly what I need to–!

MOTHER. Come on, Riss.

RISSA. I so wanted to join. Max would've really liked that.

*(***BASTIAN** *begins to have a physical fit (in anger) from being ignored, which continues for some time, and then goes completely unnoticed.)*

Why couldn't you have adopted Bastian before giving birth to me? That way I'd be younger and be able to join the service and make Max happy.

MOTHER. Whoever the *hell* that is.

BASTIAN. *(to* **MOTHER***)* Language! *(to* **RISSA***)* How would that make Max happy?

RISSA. Max was in the military himself. Are you trying to steal him from me?

MOTHER. First Abigail; now Max.

BASTIAN. Max wasn't in the military.

RISSA. Why would I lie?

MOTHER. If anyone else lies today, they're grounded!

RISSA. His heroism was part of his appeal. He fought in the Vietnam War, the Korean War, and that war in the gulf. The Cold War was excruciating on his rheumatism.

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