

Save Yourself for You

By

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Cast of Characters

MOMMY: Late 30's or early 40's. A wife and mother.

DADDY: Late 30's or early 40's. A husband and father.

JUDITH: Their daughter. In her late teens or early 20's.

Scene

A heavily used suburban backyard. A fence, a barbecue, a kiddie pool, etc.

Time

The present-ish.

In black we hear **DADDY**'s voice.

DADDY

Everybody! Excuse me! The Lee Family barbecue is canceled.

(Groans.)

Lee children, in your rooms! Jonah, Jeffrey, Joshua, Jada, Jillian, Jeremiah, Judah, Janis, James, Jaresiah, Jaguar, Jenga, Jericho... inside. NOW. I need to talk to your sister. Everybody else, I'll see you next year.

Groans.

Lights up on a perfect suburban lawn where **MOMMY**, who wears a full-length denim skirt and wears her long hair in a French braid, is pacing back and forth. She has a wedding dress in her hands.

DADDY enters pulling his daughter **JUDITH** by the jump rope she's tied up with. She cannot move her arms. **JUDITH** is dressed identically to her mother and her hair is also in a French braid.

DADDY (cont'd)

Judith. Come on out here, now.

DADDY

You ought to be ashamed of yourself, young lady.

JUDITH

But, daddy...

DADDY

Don't "daddy" me. Your mother is beside herself.

MOMMY

I'm beside myself!

DADDY

Look at her. Pacing. Wringing her hands. On the verge of tears. You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

MOMMY

Look at me, I'm pacing. I'm beside myself!

DADDY

Shame, shame, shame.

MOMMY

(Holding up the wedding dress and shaking it.)

Eighty dollars wasted!

DADDY

Eighty dollars, Judith.

MOMMY throws the dress onto the barbecue and begins to squirt lighter fluid onto it.

JUDITH

Mommy, don't!

MOMMY

Do you want to know the worst part? You ought to know better. With all the Sanctity of Marriage rallies we've attended.

DADDY

The Daddy/Daughter Purity Ball I took you to.

MOMMY

The outreach we've done to teach Africans about abstinence. And what happens?

DADDY

We catch you with your hand down Jed Morgan's slacks!

MOMMY

It's a disgrace.

DADDY

An unforgivable sin.

MOMMY

What do you have to say for yourself?

JUDITH

I'm sorry.

MOMMY

Oh, you're sorry?

DADDY

She's sorry! Well, *I'm* sorry too, Judith, but the good book is quite clear on this.

MOMMY

Crystal clear.

DADDY
Mommy, go and fetch the family Bible.

MOMMY
Yes, Daddy.

MOMMY exits.

JUDITH
Daddy, please.

DADDY
Quiet, Jezebel!

JUDITH
Daddy, I love Jed. I can't help it. I think I love him.

DADDY
Don't be silly. You're meant to marry Ezekial Davies.

JUDITH
Ezekial Davies is a mouth breather.

DADDY
We all have our shortcomings, Judith. I have high cholesterol and so your mother has had to switch to egg whites. See? Part of marriage is accepting the shortcomings in your spouse.

JUDITH
But I don't love Ezekial Davies.

DADDY
That is one of your shortcomings.
(MOMMY enters with The Bible.)
Now, Mommy, what does The Bible have to say about the situation we find ourselves in?

MOMMY
Hmm. Let's see.

She is flipping through the pages.

DADDY
Look at Deuteronomy 22. See what it says.

MOMMY
Here. It says, "If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto a husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her: Then *something something* and ye shall stone them with stones that they die" etcetera. Stoning.

DADDY
See? Crystal clear.

JUDITH
Mom!

MOMMY
I'm afraid we're going to have to stone you, sweetie. We have no choice.

JUDITH
That's not fair!

DADDY
Fair? I'll tell you what's not fair--

MOMMY
-Tell her, Daddy.

DADDY
What's not fair is to raise a daughter whom you love more than anything on God's green earth, to feed and clothe her, to teach her the way of God, only to have her step on your heart with her Satan hooves.

MOMMY
Amen.

DADDY
Now let's find some stones!

MOMMY and DADDY search the ground for stones.

MOMMY
Oh my stars. All these hot dogs and hamburgers are going to be wasted. Just wasted.

DADDY
Try not to think about it, Mommy.

JUDITH
Mom? Dad?

DADDY
Hush. You're in enough trouble, young lady.

JUDITH
Listen. I'm not like you. I'm sorry, but I'm not.

MOMMY
What are you like? Tell us, what are you like, Judith?

JUDITH

I'm just... me. I don't know. This isn't how I want to worship God. It's all surface. It's stupid, but I want to wear my hair different ways. Like if I feel wiley I'd like to try and tease it up. Or if I'm feeling bookish I can put it in a bun. This skirt? I don't like it. Why do we all have to wear it?

DADDY

I suppose you want to wear denim pants, like one of those whorish Lutheran girls we see at the Safeway?

JUDITH

Jeans. They're called *jeans*, Daddy.

DADDY

Well, they are sin magnets. You might as well ask God for a bastard child now and save yourself some time and money.

JUDITH

I want to see the world and, I don't know, find my place in it. Look, I'm super into the lord. I have his posters everywhere. But I don't think he cares if I expose my forearms. I want to be like *them*.

DADDY

Them who?

JUDITH

Them them. Out there. I want to shop in a mall. I want to read my horoscope in the newspaper and wear a bathing suit at the beach instead of a skirt suit. I want to say things like, "you know... they say Britney Spears is about to have a comeback but I'm not sure." I want to say things like "TGIF" and have too many wine coolers from time to time and say things to my girlfriends that I regret later. I want to take vacations to Tampa, Florida. I want to put on weight and have a few kids. Just a few.

DADDY

You will have as many children as the Lord sees fit to give you.

JUDITH

My private parts are not a clown car, daddy! I want to work outside of the home. I want to wear white sneakers to work and then change into heels. I want to work in an office where everything is blue and gray. I WANT TO MARRY JED AND LIVE IN A CONDO.

DADDY

Judas!

Ah. Found one!

MOMMY

She finds a stone and holds it above her head.

Throw it, mommy. Christ our lord demands it. Hit her in her sinful face!

DADDY

She throws it at JUDITH but misses by a mile.

Let me. You throw like a girl.

DADDY (cont'd)

He goes and picks up the stone.

Daddy, go and see if you can find some more stones. We'll have the children join us.

MOMMY

That's a great idea. I'll find the best stones ever!
(Shouting to people offstage.)
Boys! Girls! Hurry up! We're having a stoning!

DADDY

He exits, excitedly.

It is quiet for a while. MOMMY takes in JUDITH.

My sweet angel, Judy.

MOMMY

Mommy...

JUDITH

I know, sweetie.

MOMMY

Please let me go. Jed is parked at the Circle K on Ponderosa Street. He's waiting for me.

JUDITH

He is? Heavens.

MOMMY

We want to get married.

JUDITH

MOMMY

I really wish your daddy hadn't caught you with your hand down Jed's slacks. What were you thinking?

JUDITH

It feels good, mom. Making love. It's not wrong.

MOMMY

I can remember the night your Daddy and I were married. Our wedding was so boring. So, so boring, Judy. And serious. I can't recall a single smile the whole day. The food was bland and it rained the whole time. My father performed the ceremony. I remember watching his mouth move but not listening to the words that came out of it. I was thinking, *what a boring wedding. My stars, I'm bored. I hope things will get interesting soon.* And you know what? They never did.

(Pause.)

Don't get married.

JUDITH

What?

MOMMY

Promise me you'll never marry.

JUDITH

Mother...

MOMMY

Promise me you won't get married and I'll let you go.

JUDITH

But I'm in love with Jed.

MOMMY

I know you say that now, but he will eat your heart away. Marriage is the worst, Judy. I hate saying it, but it's true.

JUDITH

But you love daddy.

MOMMY

That puffy old coot? No, I jumped ship years ago. My life may be boring, my marriage might be unsatisfactory, but I've got secrets, Judy. I'm... resisting.

JUDITH

I'm not sure what that means.

MOMMY

It means I stash *Cathy* comics in a shoe box under my bed and look at them when I'm down.

(Impersonating Cathy.)

"Ack! Bathing suit season!"

(She laughs.)

I just love that comic strip. I haven't been going to my sewing circle either. I've been going to the multiplex and watching that *Sex and the City* movie.

DADDY pokes head on stage.

DADDY

Do you think it's all right to use the boys' baseballs?

MOMMY

The good book says "stones", Daddy. Do we take the good book literally or as a set of suggestions to be interpreted to our liking?

DADDY

Good point. I'll keep looking.

He exits.

MOMMY

There's so much I haven't seen, Judy. Daddy won't even let me keep a dream journal like Oprah says to! He says it's witchcraft. I don't want that for my girls.

JUDITH

What about daddy?

MOMMY

Eventually I'll work up the courage to bash him over the head with something heavy. Until then, I'm effing up the system from the inside.

JUDITH

I don't understand.

MOMMY

I've purposely taught you and Jillian and Janis and Jaguar and Jada to be bad cooks and housekeepers so that nobody would ever ask you to do it. I've been slipping *Womans' Day* Magazine into your bookshelves.

JUDITH

I thought those were Jaguar's!

MOMMY

No. Look, I don't care what becomes of Jonah, Joshua, Jeffrey, Jeremiah, Judah, James, Jaresiah, or Jericho. I

(MORE)

MOMMY (cont'd)

mean, I'm sure they'll all find lifeless little women to pump out their seed. Well, I'm holding out hope that James is a homosexual, but we'll see. Anyway, you girls... you and Janis and Jillian and Jaguar and Jenga... you're my heart. I don't want this life for you. So promise me... you won't get married.

JUDITH

I promise.

MOMMY unties her.

MOMMY

Go. Quickly.

JUDITH

Thank you!

MOMMY

You'll need money. Here.

(She digs in her purse.)

Here's two hundred dollars. I don't know. Buy yourself a pair of True Religions.

JUDITH

What about you?

MOMMY

Right. You're going to have to lay me out.

JUDITH

I can't do that.

MOMMY

You have no choice. Daddy can't know I let you go.

(JUDITH picks up the stone and holds it high above her head.)

Go find a woman named Alice at Joanne's Fabrics. She'll put you in touch with someone who can drive you over the county line.

JUDITH

There's an underground railroad?

MOMMY

We've been building it for years. Now, once you go you can't come back. You know that.

JUDITH

I know.

I love you, Judy.

MOMMY

I love you too.

JUDITH

MOMMY flexes her bicep as a gesture of strength.

MOMMY

We can do it.

JUDITH

Ready?

MOMMY

Ready.

JUDITH brings the stone down on MOMMY's head as hard as she can.

MOMMY's eyes widen. She stumbles forward a few steps.

MOMMY (cont'd)

Oh balls.

She falls down unconscious. JUDITH throws the stone to the ground.

JUDITH crosses to the barbecue and considers the wedding dress.

DADDY (FROM OFFSTAGE)

Jonah, Jeffrey, Joshua... come on now! Jeremiah, Judah, James... hurry up! Jerasiah, Jericho... stop dilly dallying! We've got a witch to stone!

DADDY begins to sing "Onward Christian Soldier".

JUDITH crosses to her mother's purse and locates a book of matches.

JUDITH looks to the sound of her father's voice and flexes her bicep.

JUDITH
(Quietly but defiantly.)

We can do it.

JUDITH strikes a match and throws it onto the barbecue and DADDY and the children continue to sing.

She runs off stage as the wedding dress burns.

END OF PLAY.