

BECAUSE OF BETH

A full-length play

by

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Characters

(in order of appearance)

- CARA: Female, 23 years old. Angry, self-involved, irresponsible, soft spot for her sister that she rarely shows, emotionally volatile.
- PENNY: Female, 15 years old. Cara's younger sister. Ambitious, loves music, lost, confused by recent events, craves a better relationship with her sister, wants to be independent.
- STANLEY: Male. 40's/50's. Beth's fiancé and the would be step-father of Cara and Penny. Caring, distraught, deeply sorrowful which clouds his usual clear and grounded judgment.
- ROBERT: Male. 40's/50's. Long-lost father of Penny and Cara. Emotionally volatile, manipulative, selfish, unable to heal old wounds.
- WAITRESS: Written as female, this can also be played by a male, any age.

Setting:

An apartment in Chestertown, Maryland

Time:

Present Day

Act I

Scene I

SETTING:

It is a bedroom. Strewn about on the floor and on the bed, are old papers, stacks of things, and a box. There is a suitcase in one corner, open. The room is bright with daylight from a window.

AT RISE:

There is sudden loud shouting from off-stage and the slam of a door in the midst of it. CARA bolts upright at the screaming and then falls back into the pillow in frustration. CARA is asleep in bed.

PENNY (OS)

Cara! Cara!

STANLEY (OS)

Penny...

PENNY (OS)

Leave me alone! Cara, where are you?!

(CARA quickly starts shoving all of the papers and stacks of things into the box. She pushes the box under the bed and gets back in bed)

STANLEY

Penny, we're all going through a lot! Just...

PENNY (OS)

Get away from me! You don't understand! She left me ALONE!
Cara! Cara!

(PENNY enters, crying)

You LEFT me ALONE!

CARA

Haven't you ever heard of knocking?

PENNY

And you're still in bed! I can't believe you!

CARA

Oh, for God's sake, Penny. Did you have another bad dream? Look, if you want to get in bed, here.

PENNY

A bad dream? You're my bad dream, Cara!

CARA

What the hell is wrong with you?

PENNY

Mom's funeral! You left me ALONE at Mom's funeral!

CARA

I didn't leave you anywhere! The funeral hasn't happened yet!

PENNY

Cara, do you know what time it is? It's one o'clock, Cara.

CARA

One o'clock? How can it be one o'clock? Oh, my God! I must have overslept! I was up with the boxes!

PENNY

What boxes?

CARA

The boxes...Mom's boxes...I was up until five thirty looking for...Stanley asked me to...Stanley! Stanley! I asked him to wake me up! Stanley!!!

PENNY

Wait, what do you mean? You mean, you wanted to go?

CARA

What are you, dense? Of course I wanted to go! It was Mom!

PENNY

So, you didn't mean to leave me alone?

CARA

Oh, my God! Oh, my God! I can't believe I missed it! I can't believe he let me miss it! Oh, my God!

(enter STANLEY. He looks
exhausted and run down)

Are you fucking kidding me? Why the fuck wouldn't you wake me up for Mom's funeral?

STANLEY

Didn't you hear the phone this morning? It didn't stop ringing.

PENNY

Yeah, we tried calling you from the funeral home, too.

CARA

Do you see a phone in this room? Obviously I didn't hear the phone! God, I told you last night, Stanley! I told you that the alarm on that clock isn't working and that I needed you to wake me up! Epecially because I was going to be up finding all that shit for you for the funeral and the lawyers and shit in those boxes. Goddammit, Stanley! I specifically asked you to wake me up!

STANLEY

Hey, don't try pinning this on me! You're twenty three years old! You should be able to wake yourself up by now! I was so busy this morning that Penny had to go with Georgia and her mother! Okay? So, don't try pinning this on me!

CARA

Wake me up for my mother's funeral, you fuck! How hard is that? My mother! It's not enough that I couldn't be here with the hospital and when she died?

PENNY

Stop fighting.

STANLEY

Couldn't be here, Cara? Couldn't? You could have shown up more, you could have been here.

CARA

Fuck you! I was here every single time I could be!

STANLEY

I am tired of doing everything around here! The hospital, the paperwork...

CARA

(overlapping)

The pity card? You're playing the pity card and NOW? You've got to be kidding me!

STANLEY

(overlapping)

...the funeral arrangements, the hospital bills, contacting people, taking care of the two of you...I don't know how Beth did everything...she...I'm so tired of doing everything for you. You're an adult, too, you know. You're supposed to be acting more responsibly than this!

CARA

Don't you fucking start! I am so SICK of this lecture. What IS it with you? Every fucking time I see you!

(mimics him)

Responsibility. Responsibility. Why can't you be more responsible?

STANLEY

Well, let's think about the times I see you.

(counts on fingers)

When you show up to ask for money, when you've lost a job, when I'm helping you pack to get out of your boyfriend's apartment because he's stealing from you...

CARA

I didn't ask you to do that!

STANLEY

That's right. You didn't. But your mom did. Because she was so worried about you. Maybe you'll stop hearing the lecture when you start acting more responsibly. Maybe then you'll be treated like an adult.

PENNY

Stop fighting!

CARA

I'm responsible enough to take care of Penny now that Mom's gone. And now you're even trying to take Penny away from me.

PENNY

What do you mean?

STANLEY

Cara, can't you keep your mouth shut?

CARA

I'm just being responsible.

PENNY

But Cara's supposed to have custody.

STANLEY

I was going to talk to you about it when we were all calmer. When it wasn't the day of the funeral.

PENNY

Mom said I should live with Cara.

STANLEY

Cara, I really wish you hadn't brought this up.

CARA

Oh, I'm sorry. Is my timing bad? I'll really try work on that personality flaw of mine.

STANLEY

Yes, Cara, your timing is bad. Everyone is on their way over here from the funeral.

CARA

People are coming here right now?

STANLEY

Yes.

(CARA starts grabbing clothes. She exits into the bathroom to get dressed but continues to participate in the conversation)

PENNY

If something's going on with my custody, I want to know about it. Why would you think that you would get custody?

STANLEY

This is not a good discussion to have now. There are people coming and...