

ENEMIES: FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC

By Patricia Milton

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2-25-15

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CHARACTERS:

BRIDGET O'Malley, 20's-30's, youngest, "good" daughter, peacemaker and pushover, often defensive. Meek, but can lash out unexpectedly. Dressed like a conservative young mother.

SIARA Hashi, 20's - 40's, a caregiver, mostly dry and matter-of-fact. She has been in the US for a little more than four years, has taken ESL classes provided by her employer, and speaks with a Somali accent. Dressed modestly, in tunic and long skirt, with hijab, and house slippers. Deep connection to her family. Proud.

MARGARET MARY (MEG) Mahoney, 30's-50's, middle, rebellious daughter. Angry, suspicious, sarcastic. Xenophobic. Thinks she holds the truth and that others can be strong-armed to accept it. Dressed casually and carelessly.

KATHLEEN Mahoney-Finch, 40's-50's, firstborn daughter. Take-charge. Dressed in a businesslike, vaguely military pantsuit. Is used to pulling strings.

TIME: The present. Early autumn.

SETTING: The sparsely furnished living room of Mary Mahoney's house in a city in the northeastern US. Two doors: a front door, and a door that leads to the rest of the house, which includes a kitchen and two 2nd floor bedrooms.

PLEASE NOTE:

When there is a **slash /** in the dialogue, the next character begins talking.

When there is **dual dialogue**, the characters speak together.

Translated phrases appear in brackets like this [English translation].

Dialogue at the end of an interrupted line [*appears like this, and is unsaid..*]

Lights up on BRIDGET and SIARA.
BRIDGET's blouse is buttoned wrong. SIARA
displays several dresses.

BRIDGET

Not really a clotheshorse.

SIARA

A "clothes-horse?"

BRIDGET

Not a real horse. It's how we say, "she has lots of clothes." Is this really all of them?

SIARA

Yes. Small numbers of clothing. Alike to my mother.

BRIDGET

Oh, you have a mother?

SIARA

Yes. And you will care for the comfort of your mother.

BRIDGET

Um . . .

SIARA

You will not care for the comfort of your mother?

BRIDGET

It's not my first thought, to be honest.

SIARA

My mother . . . She must wear a sweater. Over her abaya. Some times, she wears two sweaters.

BRIDGET

What's an *abaya*?

SIARA

This is to keep away the cold. She
becomes sick, always. From the time she
is living in the camps.

*

The doorbell rings.

SIARA (CONT'D)

One moment.

SIARA opens the door. MEG enters, puts down her backpack.

SIARA (CONT'D)

May I help you?

MEG

I don't think so. (to BRIDGET) What the hell. Bridge?

BRIDGET

Margaret Mary!

BRIDGET and MEG hug, bodies not touching, patting backs: a Mahoney hug.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)

I- I didn't expect you!

MEG

I didn't expect you, either!

BRIDGET

Sorry. I just- the kids, and . . . We had to quickly- Who called? (to SIARA) Did you call her?

SIARA

I did not call.

MEG

(to BRIDGET) Look at your hair. Why does everyone put their hair up now? It's like The Attack of the Wispy Bunheads.

BRIDGET

It's easy care. And versatile. Not everyone can pull off a topknot.

MEG

What's with your buttons?

BRIDGET

(corrects her misbuttoning) I was in such a hurry-

MEG

(to SIARA) Who are you?

SIARA

My name is Siara.

BRIDGET

This is my sister, Margaret Mary.

MEG

And you are?

BRIDGET

Mom's caretaker.

MEG

(to SIARA) She does that: Answers for you, when you're perfectly capable of answering for yourself.

SIARA

I am the housekeeper of Missus Mahoney.

MEG

I could really use an aspirin. Do you have anything? Ibuprofen? I'll bet Mom's got some amazing pain meds.

SIARA

You must choose the dress. I will give you an aspirin, but the dress-

MEG

And you're picking a dress for-? (beat) And Mom is-?

BRIDGET

I'm just so shocked, to see you here-

SIARA

What is your question?

MEG

(louder) My mother. Missus Mahoney. She's . . . going out?

MEG (CONT'D)

BRIDGET

Well, she's not going to give a shit if I take Margaret Mary-
just one little, itty-bitty pain pill, I hope
to God. (silence) What? What is it?

BRIDGET

Meg . . . No one called you.

SIARA

(to MEG) Please pardon me. You are "Meg." You have called. You have called last night.

MEG

Right. We had a long chat, Mom and me.

SIARA

You left a message for Missus Mahoney.

MEG

Because she wouldn't pick up. And why would she? To have another shouting match with her bitch of a daughter? Why would she give a shit about my resentments? Still. I'm glad I did it. That call will pay off.

BRIDGET

/ Margaret Mary-

MEG

I love that word: "Resentment." It means "to feel it again," did you know that? To re-sense, emotionally. Which is not all it's cracked up to be. (silence) Okay, I get that I'm the goddamn black sheep around here. (To SIARA) Oh, shit. No offense.

SIARA

(To BRIDGET) You will pardon me, please. I will put on coffee.

SIARA exits into the kitchen.

MEG

I can't believe Mom hired a . . . What is she?

BRIDGET

I don't know.

MEG

I'm getting a definite Muslim vibe. I mean, that outfit-

BRIDGET

Will you please be quiet?!

MEG

All I know is: she would look right at home, slaughtering a goat on the front lawn.

BRIDGET

Will you just shut up for a second!! She died, okay? She's dead! Mom . . . died. (Silence)
I'm sorry nobody called you.

MEG

Oh.

BRIDGET

Mom died.

MEG

Wow.

BRIDGET

Last night. So you can stop being such a smart-aleck!

MEG

I thought nothing would kill that woman but a stake through the heart. (beat) What time did it happen?

BRIDGET

Is that important?

MEG

I wonder if she got my message, is all.

BRIDGET

At two a.m. I drove half the night.

MEG

What happened?

BRIDGET

I, well. I took a nap around five; I pulled over into this rest stop / on-

MEG

I mean with Mom.

BRIDGET

She had colon cancer, Margaret Mary.

MEG

I know she had cancer, Jesus. But there's signs. Did Sahara or whoever tell you that her breathing was shallow? Or she was having trouble eating? Anything?

BRIDGET

No. Just the one call, last night. I'm not a nurse, and I live in the next state over. It's not as if I could be popping in and out of here.

MEG

I get that-

BRIDGET

Besides which, I have kids, and they're in school, so I couldn't be dragging an entire household over to visit Mom all the time.

MEG

Don't be so defensive.

BRIDGET

I'm not being defensive; I don't know why you would say I'm defensive!

MEG

I never visited, either.

BRIDGET

Forgive me for saying this, but you're a low bar.

MEG

You're supposed to call the fucking family before they die. It's practically in the Hippocratic oath.

BRIDGET

Maybe Siara doesn't know that. I don't think she has any medical training.

MEG

Are you fucking kidding me?

SIARA enters.

SIARA

Coffee will be ready soon. Which dress have you selected?

BRIDGET

Darn. We haven't picked the dress. (to MEG) She didn't leave any instructions.

MEG

No instructions: first time that's ever happened.

SIARA laughs. She stops.

SIARA

Pardon me. You have made a joke, about your Missus Mahoney. You are making a joke about the way she was *sideey u caraysnayd* [meaning: angry].

BRIDGET

(to MEG) I don't want to be responsible for dressing the- the . . . I don't know the rules.

MEG

For Mom? Flame retardant. What about this? Cover up the ol' legs. Who wants to go through eternity wearing panty hose?

BRIDGET

I'm not sure about the top. It's kind of open.

MEG

She can show some skin: she won't mind. Hell, she won't even know.

SIARA

(indicates her collarbone) Or perhaps, you can place something, for modesty: a scarf.

MEG

Absolutely no scarf!

BRIDGET

But a scarf- Scarves are very versatile . . . and . . . warm.

SIARA

You will want a dress from a joyful time, a time with family, with love and happiness woven into the threads. Perhaps the dress with the many buttons.

MEG

It's not your decision! (confrontational) Where's the body?

BRIDGET

At the funeral home.

MEG

You're doing it again, the answering thing.

SIARA

They took her to Saheed's. They have come in the morning.

MEG

Not Mulligan's?

SIARA

Mulligan's: It is closed. It is Saheed's that have come.

MEG

Right. You didn't bother to call me, but / you-

BRIDGET

(to SIARA) My sister is a nurse.

MEG

(to BRIDGET) Do you mind? (to SIARA) And so she's over at Saheed's: what, naked?

SIARA

No. She is wearing a bathrobe. (beat) Pardon me. I will see if the coffee is ready.

SIARA exits.

BRIDGET

You're behaving horribly, Margaret Mary.

MEG

"Saheed's." Who is this woman? Mom would never hire someone like that. Mom is- she was, racist as hell.

BRIDGET

Kathleen hired her. She seems very nice.

MEG

She's lovely, I'm sure. In her time off from running the sleeper cell. You mark my words: that one's got herself a prayer rug stashed somewhere. A Koran. And who knows what else. I see it all the time on my home visits: these Muslim women like to spend most of their time in the kitchen . . . snuggled up to the knife drawer.

BRIDGET

Why are you going on like this? Mom got sick and you- you were nowhere to be found. You don't have a say!

MEG

Oh, but Kathleen does? She just pushes everyone aside and takes over-

BRIDGET

Someone had to!

MEG

Yes, and now our mother is dead! “We will arrange a scarf.” Mom is not rising on Judgement Day to meet her maker, wearing a fucking burka! Just- pick the dress, will you?

BRIDGET

(shows the long dress.) You like this one, really? I don’t know. (beat) Are you going to ask Siara? About Mom’s death, about what happened? You’re the nurse.

MEG

What did she say when she called you?

BRIDGET

Um. “Your mother is dead.” I didn’t know Mom was that sick. Kathleen said that the chemo was working, and she was getting better. Her PET scan was clear, supposedly. (silence) There’s probably a death certificate.

MEG

No, a death certificate comes later. Her doctor, or a paramedic - somebody should have filled out a “pronouncement of death form.” You didn’t see one?

BRIDGET

I don’t know if a doctor or anybody even came.

MEG

That is fucked up!

BRIDGET

What do you think happened?

MEG

(considers, decides to lay off) Look, my head is throbbing like a dick: Just ignore me.

BRIDGET

These things happen. It was probably just . . . her time.

Short silence.

MEG

Where are you staying?

BRIDGET

Joe's getting us a motel room, out on the highway. Maybe with a pool.

MEG

You're still with Joe.

BRIDGET

Back. Back with Joe.

MEG

My condolences.

BRIDGET

That's not a very nice thing to say. Are you still with-

MEG

Yeah, no.

BRIDGET

I'm sorry. (beat) The kids are so big, now, Meg. Brendan is eleven.

MEG

Eleven is such a great age. They can fix your computer.

BRIDGET

Silky is six.

MEG

Wow. That's . . . hard to hear.

BRIDGET

Three years, Margaret Mary.

MEG

I'm sorry, Bridge. I- I guess I haven't really had the time off. And, I was . . .Shit.

BRIDGET

Ashamed of yourself.

MEG

There's no excuse for it. But, Jesus. This family.

BRIDGET

(hurt) You mean, me?

MEG begins looking around the room.

MEG

Sorry, I'm sorry, but every time I visit . . . When I walk in the door. Does it happen to you? Doesn't everything just come flooding back?

BRIDGET

Um. No.

MEG

Her house: I mean, look around. it's exactly the same, isn't it? Every single . . . Oh, right. Not exactly. (picks up a book) Koran. See this? (gives it to BRIDGET) A Koran. So she's Muslim. Didn't I just say she's a Muslim? (beat, looks around) Hold on a minute.

BRIDGET

What? (beat) What, Margaret Mary?

MEG

I knew something was off. Where the hell is that statue?

BRIDGET

What statue?

MEG

Do you think that Siara put it somewhere? Those people hate statues.

BRIDGET

There's practically a life-size statue of St. Francis- *[in the yard]*

MEG

But, “Our Lady, Protector of the Innocent.” That one’s missing. It’s kind of this big, blue. . . ceramic, with the hands-

MEG looks around the room.

BRIDGET

You’re acting very strangely, you know that? (beat. almost to herself) You were right, though. To be so surprised that I was here. I never visited her. No, I take that back; I did visit. Once. But the kids are- were afraid of her. I didn’t want them to have these memories of her, with the treatments, the chemo, I mean, . she was bald! Is that so wrong? I would say, “Here we go, off to Grandma’s!” Silky would just scream, and I- I gave in.

MEG

(still looking) Hey. She was terrifying.

BRIDGET

But I hardly even called. I never thought this could happen. It’s been a month since I picked up the phone. I didn’t think- All the news was so hopeful. And now it’s too late. To visit her. I mean, now I’ll never . . .

BRIDGET begins to cry. MEG stops searching and comes over and puts her hand on BRIDGET’s shoulder.

MEG

Oh, shit.

BRIDGET

I knit a cap, for her head, because of the-. And then I- I . . . I mailed it. I never even saw her put it on.

MEG

We should talk about something else. (silence as BRIDGET cries.) It’s okay, Bridge. Christ.

MEG hands BRIDGET a tissue to wipe her eyes and nose.

MEG (CONT'D)

(Wanting her to stop) Go on, let it out. Aaaaaaaah. Where's that aspirin?

BRIDGET

(recovers a little) I wish we'd done hospice. I wish Kathleen would get here. I wish I had been, you know, more . . . more . . .

MEG

Me, too. Sincerely, Bridge, I wish all of that, too.

Brief silence.

MEG (CONT'D)

(encouraging) So. . .

BRIDGET

So. (Hands MEG the dress. Valiant effort at conversation.) How've you been?

MEG puts the dress with the others.

MEG

Perfect. Never better. Can you please stop telling everyone I'm a nurse?

BRIDGET

What do you mean? You're not at the / hospital?

MEG

I quit. I didn't see eye to eye with the management. Fucking nuns.

BRIDGET

(Small laugh) You "quit." I don't think so. Did you smart-mouth a doctor? Margaret Mary: always the problems with authority.

MEG

It was a good, clean break, as we liked to say about people's legs.

BRIDGET

I always thought the ER was a good place for you: High stress. People screaming. All the drunks.

MEG

Except those bitches moved me out of the ER. To a ward: a regular sick ward.

BRIDGET

And what did you do? I know: You punched a nun.

SIARA enters with coffee paraphernalia. She sets it down. MEG looks.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)

Thank you, Siara.

MEG

No aspirin?

SIARA

Oh dear.

MEG

(As she exits) Un-be-fucking-lievable.

MEG exits into the kitchen.

SIARA

She is alike to your mother.

BRIDGET

I'm sorry. (beat) I wanted to tell you: Your scarf is very pretty. I like everything: your whole outfit.

SIARA

Thank you. (beat) I am not a "clotheshorse."

BRIDGET

Oh! "Clotheshorse": from before. That's very good.

SIARA

I am learning your phrases. From your mother, I have learned, "Butt out!" I also know "a piece of cake." This means an easy task. "To wash your hands of it." This means to stop caring for a thing.

BRIDGET

English has lots of weird sayings. (funny voice she uses with her kids) "I'm in a pickle."
(2nd voice answers) "I'm in a jam!"

SIARA stares at BRIDGET.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)

(regular voice) We noticed . . . your book, is it a Koran? The cover, with the gold letters? I had a "Lives of the Saints" with a cover like that.

SIARA

What do you think of this, that I have a Quran?

BRIDGET

It's fine.

SIARA

The book belonged to my husband, Bashiir. Before he died.

BRIDGET

You lost your husband. I'm so sorry-

SIARA

I did not "lose" him. He was shot in the head. On his way to the vegetable market. May God bless him.

BRIDGET

Shot: That's terrible! How terrible.

SIARA

Thank you. It is as you say: terrible. We have a civil war in my country. It is urgent to relocate to the refugee camps, and then, to America. "To be safe," they said. (awkward beat) Your sister, this "Meg," is very angry.

BRIDGET

Actually- So, please don't say anything to her about this, but she's kind of always like that. That's just her personality . . . Margaret Mary is kind of an odd duck. Not a real duck.

SIARA

I see. The "odd duck" is not a duck, as the "clothes horse" is not a horse.

BRIDGET

Yes, right. That's very good.

SIARA

Thank you. I speak three languages.

BRIDGET

Three languages? That's amazing. That's two more than me.

SIARA

"Two more than I." (beat) So Meg is also a "black sheep?" She have said this. This is not a real sheep.

BRIDGET

Um-no. It's, like, a child that goes away. (Imitating) "Bad daughter! Baaaad!"

SIARA

I see. I think that she is an "odd duck," a phrase with the meaning "a woman who is filled with anger."

BRIDGET

It doesn't / exactly- [*mean that.*]

SIARA

I have been with your mother for many months. This work I do for her- it is hard. To be patient and kind every day.

BRIDGET

It is hard.

SIARA

Because I am here with her, an odd duck.

BRIDGET

I know the feeling. I, personally, appreciate that you helped our mom.

SIARA

Missus O'Malley, I-

BRIDGET

Bridget.

SIARA

Bridget. I have something to ask. I can trust you?

BRIDGET

Of course. About what?

SIARA

I am afraid . . . something bad will happen. I am afraid-

MEG enters with an empty aspirin bottle.

MEG

In the drawer under the TV. Empty.

BRIDGET

We were having a conversation.

MEG

Gimme your keys. You're a mom, you have aspirin in your car, am I right?

BRIDGET

St. Joseph chewable. It's orange flavored. For kids.

MEG

Whatever. I'll take sixteen of them.

MEG takes keys from BRIDGET and exits.
SIARA locks the door.

SIARA

I am afraid, because your sister does not like that I am Muslim. That I am from Somalia.

BRIDGET

Oh. I can't really speak for her. I don't feel that way at all.

SIARA

I have told you we have a civil war in my country.

BRIDGET

In Somalia. Yes. I've heard of that.

SIARA

And the refugee women who are fleeing the war, we have had many bad problems: We have had killing, rape, torture, forcing marriage, kidnapping-

BRIDGET

Um, Siara? Do you know the word, "inappropriate?"

SIARA

I know your word. But I must tell you this, so that you may understand. Some of the women must walk with their family long distances. Some die with hunger and thirst.

BRIDGET

We call it "oversharing." In America, we try not to overshare.

SIARA

Please listen to me. It seems to me that you do not listen!

BRIDGET

Okay.

SIARA

I am saying that I am living here, in the USA. I will join my family in Somalia some day, when there is peace. For now, even when there is killing and shooting in the USA, my home is here. (beat) But your sister is angry with me, and if she is thinking- if she is thinking I have brought harm, it is not true!

BRIDGET

I never thought that.

SIARA

I have not brought harm to your family, or to your mother!

BRIDGET

I believe you. Of course, you love America, and you like living here. And of course you did everything you could for our mom.

SIARA

I will become a U.S. citizen very soon. There must be no trouble for me. (beat) I am afraid your sister will be thinking it is my fault.

BRIDGET

(beat) Your fault for what?

SIARA

That it is my fault . . . how your mother died.

BRIDGET

(thinks) What do you mean. "How she died." (beat) How did she die?

SIARA

When she have fallen. From the stepladder.

BRIDGET

But. You never said anything about . . . What was she doing on a stepladder?

SIARA

Missus Mahoney have climbed up. She stands on the very top, what is the word, the "square"? This is a very dangerous activity for an old woman.

BRIDGET

This is not at all / what I-

SIARA

And when I come, I see that her neck have been broken by the fall. Her head is pointing away, in another direction.

BRIDGET

I thought Mom died in her sleep, of cancer! You didn't come right out and say so, but, you didn't exactly explain / that-

SIARA

You did not ask me.

BRIDGET

It's kind of an important detail!

SIARA

I have nothing to do with this! But this Meg is so angry-

BRIDGET

Okay. Okay. But, let me just ask you. This - um, happened . . . at two in the morning?

SIARA
Yes.

BRIDGET
Did you call an ambulance?

SIARA
I have called Miz Mahoney-Finch.

MEG (O.S.)
(Knocking.) Hey. It's locked.

BRIDGET
Did Kathleen- ? Did Miz Mahoney-Finch call an ambulance?

SIARA
I am unsure what to do. Your sister is very angry at me.

MEG (O.S.)
Bridge? (Doorbell rings.)

BRIDGET
Okay. (to MEG) Coming! We have to wait and ask Kathleen. She'll know what to do.

MEG (O.S.)
(Knocks) Let me in.

BRIDGET
(quiet and urgent) Siara, if you tell Meg that our mother "fell" . . . off a stepladder . . . at two a.m.-

SIARA
Yes?

BRIDGET
Just don't, okay?

BRIDGET lets in MEG and locks the door.
MEG gives her the keys.

MEG
Your car is really sticky.

SIARA

(to BRIDGET) You will pardon me, please.

SIARA exits, taking her Koran. MEG watches.

MEG

What did she say to you?

BRIDGET

Oh. We were, you know. Just, idle chit-chat. (beat) I found out, though, Margaret Mary: It's not her Koran, it's her husband's. Bashiir. He was shot in the head and killed during the civil war. (beat) The civil war in Somalia.

MEG

Somalia. That figures. It helps to know what you're dealing with.

BRIDGET

It's not like she's a pirate or something.

MEG

I worked with this Somali woman, at the hospital. She'd tell me these war stories. When who should show up on her shift, but the FBI. Turns out, in her spare time, she was raising money for Somali terrorists!

BRIDGET

They're just trying . . . What do you mean, terrorists.

MEG

Something "Kebab" . . . no. "Al Shabaab." It's a- a subsidiary, or whatever, of al-Qaeda. And they've got these women in the U.S. raising money for them. Pretending it's for orphans. (beat) Look, when she comes back . . . Ask her what happened to Mom.

BRIDGET

Mom died of cancer.

MEG

Five minutes ago, you said her PET scan was clear. I think it's worth asking the question, and you two were having a "conversation." Come on, you always ask things nicely.

SIARA enters with coffee stuff, sets it down.

SIARA

And now you are both looking at me.

BRIDGET

Um. Coffee, please? A little milk.

SIARA

I will pour.

MEG

Actually, no, nothing for me.

MEG downs her aspirin. SIARA prepares BRIDGET's coffee over the next few lines. MEG gestures "go on" to BRIDGET.

BRIDGET

So, Siara . . . Did our mother- that is, did Missus Mahoney, give you any signs . . . that she was nearing death? I'm just curious.

BRIDGET secretly gestures to SIARA that she should say nothing.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)

Did she- Over the last few weeks, did she seem sicker? More than before? I think you told me, in our conversation, that she wasn't eating?

SIARA

She was ill. (to BRIDGET) When the mother is ill, the daughter has many concerns. My mother has a fever. Chills: she has these too.

BRIDGET

Your mother lives here, also? In . . . United States?

SIARA nods.

MEG

Excuse me, but we don't give a crap about your mother. (continuous)

BRIDGET

/I do!

MEG

We care about our mother, who up and died in the middle of the night, okay? And I want to know: did it seem like she was going to die, right away?

BRIDGET

Meg! (to SIARA) I'm very sorry about your mother.

SIARA

(to MEG) This is how death comes. It comes swiftly.

MEG

Yeah, not always.

SIARA

I am not a medical . . . "profession--ist?" What is your word?

BRIDGET

"Professional."

SIARA

Yes. I have told your other sister. I have told her that I am a housekeeper. I can cook. I also clean. I cannot be . . . a medical professional. Your sister, Miz Kathleen Mahoney-Finch, have given your mother to my care.

BRIDGET

Yes. Because we were, um, very busy, with our . . . (beat) Let's see. So, last night-

MEG

Did you call 9-1-1? Her doctor? An ambulance?

BRIDGET

She called Kathleen.

MEG

What are you, her spokeswoman?

BRIDGET

She told me she called Kathleen. There's no need to snip (sic) at everyone!

MEG

And when they came from “Saheed’s,” did they bring a doctor?

SIARA

I am not sure. I stayed here, downstairs. I am minding my business.

MEG

And they gave you a pronouncement of death form?

SIARA

(pause) No.

MEG

“No”?

BRIDGET

It’s probably at the funeral home.

SIARA (CONT’D)

In my country, there is no “pronouncement of death.” No “form.”

MEG

Yeah, well, this is America.

BRIDGET

There could have been some confusion.

SIARA

There was no confusion: she was strictly dead. It was not necessary to make a pronouncement.

BRIDGET

It sounds like a perfectly normal mix-up.

SIARA

At her hour of death: She did not suffer. I believe this. I watched her face as I am waiting for the men to arrive from Saheed’s.

BRIDGET

Oh, no. I don’t want to hear this.

SIARA

I watched by her body, and held her hand. It is cold and stiff in mine. In life, her face is hard and her forehead is pinched. But in death, Missus Mahoney's face is smooth like still water. I can believe her death comes very swiftly. The Qoran tells us 'Every soul shall taste death.' She has a small smile. So, you can take comfort in this.

Brief silence.

MEG

Look here, Siara. It would be best if you just butt out and let me and Bridge make the arrangements.

SIARA

You do not like that she has a smile.

MEG

I don't give a rat's ass that she has a smile! We're going to quit fucking around now. That's the dress. (to BRIDGET) What about her shoes?

BRIDGET

Oh, my gosh, her shoes. I completely forgot- What about . . . pumps?

MEG

Kitten heels, go-go boots, goddamn galoshes. Whatever: something to put on her feet.

SIARA

I must take these things to Saheed's.

MEG

No! We'll go; we want to speak to the management. (beat) Bridge, go pick out Mom's shoes.

BRIDGET

You mean, go upstairs? To where she died? I'd rather not do that.

MEG

She's not up there, okay-

BRIDGET

You go. I don't want to go / up there!

MEG

I'm sure as hell not going. Get your ass upstairs, and pick out a pair of goddamn shoes!

SIARA

War naga aamusa! Wax khatar ah majirtee! [meaning Be quiet! It's not dangerous!] I will fetch the shoes. (quiet, as she leaves, re: MEG) Coward.

SIARA exits through the hallway door.

MEG

Wow. Talk about a chip on your shoulder. Did you hear that? I keep getting this vibe from her, Bridge. And it's not like I have anything against immigrants.

BRIDGET

Our great-great-grandfather was an immigrant.

MEG

Exactly. Built this country.

BRIDGET

(puzzled) He was a mailman.

MEG

All I'm saying, is if you choose to come over. For God's sake, learn to speak the language. Don't go relapsing back into Swahili or whatever at the bat of an eyelash. Christ.

BRIDGET

She speaks three languages. She made us coffee.

MEG

She called you a "coward!"

BRIDGET

I thought she called you a coward. (beat) Besides, her client died, and she had to stay with the body. And her Mom is sick. She lost her husband. She must be under a lot of stress. It's hard to be sweet and polite and respectful to people when you're just so stressed out, you know?

MEG

Do we even know, for sure, that “Saheed’s” is a funeral home?

BRIDGET’s cell phone rings.

BRIDGET

(to MEG) What else could it be? (answering) Joe! Just a second.

MEG

A mosque! Maybe they name mosques after guy’s names, like we do churches. “St. Patrick’s” or whatever. “Abdul’s Mosque.” “Malachy’s Mosque.”

BRIDGET

Yes, I’m right here, honey. (to MEG) I don’t think “Saheed’s” is a mosque, that’s crazy. (on phone) Yes, Joe, I can hear it’s a problem. Maybe you could retrace your steps and find her Bah-Bah. (to Meg) Silky has this sheep, a plush- She carries it everywhere . . . And now her brother threw it out the car window; he gets so jealous. (on phone) Hello? There’s no need to shout at me- I can’t drop everything-

MEG

He’s shouting at you?

BRIDGET

‘(to Meg) He sometimes loses his. . . They say anger is healthy. (on phone) Honey, Dr. Powell said . . . I’m a little busy right now, Joe. You’re breaking up. Just find a Wal-Mart and buy her another one! Hello? (hangs up. to MEG) Joe gets so overwhelmed when he has to shop at a big box store by himself. But he’s worked a lot of it out in counseling. Now he just locks the kids in the car.

MEG

Joe goes to counseling?

BRIDGET

Marriage counselor. Yeah, me and him together.

MEG

I always thought he was a head case.

BRIDGET

Oh, no, he's- he's much better. We both are. Our church bookstore --- we go to Immaculate Conception now --- it has an entire wall dedicated to different books for wives. This one book has been such a help to me: "Catholic Remedies for Codependence."

SIARA enters, holding a pair of flats.

SIARA

See? Pretty shoes, and comfortable.

BRIDGET

(to SIARA) Those will be fine. Thank you. And we'll take them over to, um, Saheed's.

SIARA

(hands a card to MEG) I have a business card.

MEG

"Malcolm X Boulevard." Does Kathleen know about this place?

SIARA

Oh, yes, she is the one who have made the arrangements. I am quite anxious to see her. She should be arriving at any moment.

The doorbell rings.

KATHLEEN (OS)

Siara?

BRIDGET gives SIARA a look of amazement, and opens the door. KATHLEEN enters.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

Bridget, hello! (Mahoney hug) Siara, good morning. It's a very sad and difficult day. But now that I'm here --together, the three of us can get through this. (turns back, crosses to sofa) Margaret Mary, I didn't expect to see you here. After your last outburst, and self-enforced exile, I'm surprised you'd show your face again.

MEG

You would have liked that, wouldn't you? For me to stay away. Kathleen, look - there's something funny -

KATHLEEN

Funny? Our mother is dead. What could possibly be funny.

MEG

For one thing, there's no pronouncement of death.

KATHLEEN

And you think that's funny?

SIARA

I never saw one; but it may be-

BRIDGET

She died a very quiet, peaceful death.

MEG

And they took her body to "*Saheed's*."

KATHLEEN

Yes! I've just come from there, and I'm delighted to report that I have very good news! They are busy making wonderful funeral arrangements for our mother. Beautiful arrangements. Her dress is perfection.

MEG

Her dress? What dress?

SIARA

You picked a dress?

BRIDGET

But we picked out a dress! (She shows it.)

KATHLEEN

Oh, no. Horrible. On a corpse? Tasteless.

MEG

You are a goddamn piece of work.

KATHLEEN

I remembered I had the perfect dress! She is- was practically my size, and I'd only worn it a handful of times. They just safety-pinned it where . . . Why are you looking at me like that?

BRIDGET

Mom is wearing your hand-me-down dress?

KATHLEEN

She looks- It's nearly brand new, and she's lovely, they did a fantastic job. No, really, they did. (Dubious silence.) It's been fixed. It was nothing. All right, I did have to ask them to make two adjustments. (Brief pause.) I got there, and they said, "Look!" very proudly, and I just about fell over! They gave her these . . . (indicates) enormous bosoms!

BRIDGET

Really?

KATHLEEN

I nearly fainted! (to SIARA) Giant bosoms must be some kind of cultural preference, is that right?

SIARA

Large bosoms? I do not know / why-

KATHLEEN

I'm talking humongous. Forty-four- what, Double D's. . . G's! That's no exaggeration.

KATHLEEN and SIARA begin to laugh.

SIARA

Oh, no. No, no, no.

BRIDGET

They must have thought the cancer shrunk her boobs. (Starting to giggle) They couldn't have known she never had any to begin with. (to SIARA) Our mother was as flat as an ironing board.

SIARA

I know this-

KATHLEEN

Not after Mister Saheed got through with her!

SIARA

I have given them a photograph. A photograph of her face, only.

KATHLEEN

Jesus, Mary and Joseph! You should have seen the rack on her!

BRIDGET, SIARA and KATHLEEN laugh.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

Can you imagine: stacked through all eternity!

SIARA

I cannot imagine / it!

BRIDGET

Dad would have been so happy!

KATHLEEN

Dad would have been in heaven!

MEG

“Our mother is dead. What could possibly be funny.”

Everyone stops laughing.

KATHLEEN

In any case . . . I took care of it: they reduced the, uh, foam padding . . . Anyway. Now, everything is wonderful. And I've selected the casket.

BRIDGET

Oh, what color?

KATHLEEN

It's called “Religious Mocha.” Stainless steel exterior with a bronze Tiffany finish . . . Gold-plated Mystic Rose hardware with angels at the corners. And it's got a soft, light blue crepe lining, in honor of Mom's veneration of the Virgin Mary.

MEG

Which, by the way, her statue, Protector of the Innocent, isn't where it's / supposed to-

KATHLEEN

I've made arrangements for the wake. There will be Mass cards, a visitors book, vigil candles, donation box, and a crucifix -- large, perhaps commanding . . . but not ostentatious. Lilies and roses to drape the casket. Closed, of course.

BRIDGET

Not a closed casket!

MEG

Closed?

SIARA

This is a quite excellent choice. Miz Mahoney-Finch, if I may have a word with you-

KATHLEEN

In a moment.

BRIDGET

Not closed. Why would it be closed?

KATHLEEN

Because an open casket is barbaric and uncivilized. (to BRIDGET) I've already signed the contract. It's settled.

BRIDGET

Why do you care about her bosoms, if it's a closed casket.

KATHLEEN

Because we wouldn't have been able to close the lid.

BRIDGET

But, a closed casket . . . It sends a message.

KATHLEEN

I don't know what you're talking about.

BRIDGET

If it's a closed casket, people will think she was- I don't know. Blown up. Something terrible. Something people can't be allowed to see. I went to services last month for Tommy and Billy Flanagan, and they-

MEG

The Flanagan twins are dead?

BRIDGET

And they both had- It was the most heartbreaking sight: side by side, these two closed caskets. Because they were. . . you know.

SIARA

Dead?

BRIDGET

They were exploded.

SIARA

Exploded?

MEG

The Flanagan twins exploded. Wow. In Afghanistan?

BRIDGET

In Middlefield. It was in the paper, locally. Gee, it was kind of like Tina. Remember? When we were little? Kathleen, you must remember.

SIARA

Tina?

KATHLEEN

Those Flanagans were a couple of known criminals. They had it coming, if you ask me. (to MEG) And that Tina was on her last legs. Someone had to step in. The intervention wasn't / successful, but-

MEG

Now you're going to try to justify yourself?

SIARA

Tina is dead, also? Who is Tina.

KATHLEEN

She was a pet. Our hamster. Who was shivering and shivering because she had an incurable type of hamster illness. (to MEG) In "Little Women," Amy put their pet canary in the oven.

MEG

A regular oven.

KATHLEEN

I'll have you know: that book is a classic.

BRIDGET

But Mom said it was spontaneous combustion! Mom said hamsters explode all the time, and not to look in the garbage can. Mom said that it's very, very common: Hamster explosions.

KATHLEEN

Perhaps they are. Or perhaps our mother wanted an excuse to avoid buying us another hamster. (to MEG) My conscience is clear.

MEG

Tina was my personal fucking hamster, incidentally, and you had zero right to blow her up! You know what? Just forget the whole thing. Just fuck it. What about the pronouncement of death?

KATHLEEN

Siara was confused, perhaps-

BRIDGET

I said she was confused.

SIARA

I agree. I was strictly confused. (to KATHLEEN) It is most urgent that we speak, in private.

KATHLEEN

Yes, let's do that. In the kitchen.

BRIDGET

I'll come, too.

MEG

No one is going to go off somewhere and speak "in private," in the kitchen!

KATHLEEN

I am in charge of this operation!

MEG is taken aback.

BRIDGET

Kathleen is in charge, Margaret Mary.

KATHLEEN

I am in charge of . . . the arrangements. For our mother.

SIARA

(to KATHLEEN) There is something you must know about the current situation.

KATHLEEN gives a warning look to SIARA.

MEG

And what, exactly, is “the current situation?”

BRIDGET

Just that- . . . Mom died.

SIARA

Yes. She died.

KATHLEEN

I'll call the coroner. We'll just get the form.

BRIDGET

Dad used to get death pronouncements all the time.

MEG

Dad was a police captain!

BRIDGET

Of course he was.

KATHLEEN

What's your point?

MEG (CONT'D)

My point is, you can't just call up, after the fact . . . (exasperated) Isn't she pumped full of formaldehyde? With her organs removed? How will anyone ever be able to determine the cause of death?

KATHLEEN

She had cancer. It's a perfectly legitimate cause of death.

SIARA

Death came swiftly. I am sure of this.

KATHLEEN

All right. Let's get it written up.

KATHLEEN gets on her cell phone.

BRIDGET

I always feel better when Kathleen's around.

SIARA

Kathleen is very good with the arrangements.

MEG

(to SIARA) I want to know more about this so-called "current situation."

BRIDGET

It's probably nothing.

MEG

Will you not answer for her, please? She's right here.

SIARA

It is nothing.

KATHLEEN

(on phone) Coroner's Office. Hello? Asad Shimbir, please.

MEG

(to SIARA) I will get to the bottom of this.

BRIDGET

Margaret Mary, you're just making a bad situation worse, with your fussing and fuming and your constant insinuos. (*sic*)

KATHLEEN

Ah. Asad, this is Kathleen Mahoney-Finch, with AAC. That's correct. We need a pronouncement of death. Dated last night. (to SIARA) When?

SIARA

Two o'clock.

KATHLEEN

(on phone) Scratch that. Today's date, two a.m.

MEG

What is that? "AAC."

KATHLEEN

Yes, signed by a licensed, local physician, and delivered to Saheed's, over on-

MEG

"Anxious, Alcoholic-?"

KATHLEEN

. . . Hold on, I just came from there- That's correct.

MEG

(to herself) "Angry . . . Abused Catholics?"

KATHLEEN

(on phone) No, just leave 'er blank, Asad. And you might as well send over a death certificate, too. (beat) The same, yes. Roger that, good buddy. (She hangs up.)

BRIDGET

You get so much better cell reception than me. Darn AT&T.

KATHLEEN

One, two three. Wrapped up like a Christmas present.

SIARA

As easy as "a piece of cake."

BRIDGET

Only . . . It doesn't really take care of the closed casket.

MEG

So you'll just have *Ach-med* over at *Saheed's* fill in the "cause of death" with "who the fuck knows?"

SIARA

"*Ach-med*?" Have you made an insult to me with this "*Ach-med*?"

MEG

(to SIARA) If I decide to insult you, you're gonna know it. (to KATHLEEN) Bridget told me her chemo was successful.

SIARA

I do not appreciate this remark.

KATHLEEN

(to SIARA) Pay no attention to her.

BRIDGET

(quiet, to KATHLEEN) It sends a message.

KATHLEEN

(to BRIDGET) It's fine! (to MEG) This whole thing's on me. Listen, I am admitting that when she called, I should have given Siara instructions to call the doctor. But our mother had passed away, already. And now, it's fixed.

MEG

So you just order up a blank death certificate?

BRIDGET

I know: if we have to have a closed casket, then we can post a sign, that says "Not Disfigured."

KATHLEEN

(To BRIDGET) You mean on the altar?

BRIDGET

And we could take a photo of her, before they close it up. Showing that she's fine. In a frame. And I'll put the photo on Facebook! I was planning to make a page.

KATHLEEN

(to BRIDGET) Absolutely not. "No" to every one of those ridiculous ideas.

MEG

You shouldn't talk to her like that: so dismissively.

KATHLEEN

(To MEG) What on earth is the matter with you?! You think you count? We haven't seen you for years! You couldn't be bothered to speak to your sisters, you effectively disavow your family, without so much as an explanation, or an apology-

MEG

Because I can't stand how I feel every time I get around you two! Because I can't stand how you take over everything! And how she (indicates BRIDGET) is such a helpless weakling!

BRIDGET

(hurt) "Blessed are the peacekeepers."

MEG

It's peacemakers, okay? Even I know that it's peacemakers, because "peacekeepers" are those giant fucking nuclear missiles! Christ.

KATHLEEN

I've had about enough of your foul mouth. You never bothered to show up when she was sick. Why didn't you just- keep your distance?

MEG

Sure. So you can go around pretending everything is fine, like this is some kind of "normal" family.

BRIDGET

I don't know what that means. (beat) Mom is . . . she was a good mother.

MEG

A "good mother." Are you fucking kidding me? After at all those years she put me to bed, wearing a goddamn strait jacket!?

KATHLEEN

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Is this about your strait jacket again?

MEG

Yes! Yes, it / is.

KATHLEEN

Can we please not revisit the strait jacket?

BRIDGET

Still pointing fingers about your strait jacket.

MEG

No one seems to want to remember, or acknowledge, that our mother forced me to go to bed every night wearing a strait jacket! Which is child abuse, by the way, if you go by the standards set by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

KATHLEEN

You make anybody's perfectly reasonable actions your personal claim to martyrdom.

MEG

From the ages of five through eight, every single night-

KATHLEEN

Honestly, how old are you now? Move on.

SIARA

(to BRIDGET) I do not know this, this "straight jacket?"

BRIDGET demonstrates a strait jacket.

MEG

(to her sisters) How could anyone do that to a little girl!

KATHLEEN

A little girl: who had eczema, and got itchy every night. Don't be stupid. It kept you from scratching yourself bloody.

MEG

There's some ace problem-solving for you. Kid's got eczema? Strap her into a strait jacket!

BRIDGET

But. . . She made it for you herself. And it had those pretty pink straps.

MEG

Nobody else has the guts to say what it was really like in our house. Even you, Bridge: After Mom wouldn't believe you about Father Callahan? Or even listen / to you-?

BRIDGET

I don't know why / you have to bring up-

KATHLEEN

This is neither the time nor the place to rehash Bridget's alleged molestation.

BRIDGET

Don't say "alleged."

MEG

Your own mother lets that goddamn priest get / away-

KATHLEEN

She's dead. Let's concentrate on our happy memories.

MEG gets small notebooks from her backpack,
gives these to BRIDGET and KATHLEEN.

MEG

You know something, Kathleen? I kept diaries.

KATHLEEN

/ Diaries.

MEG

That's right. I wrote down what happened to us; I kept daily records, okay, and I hung onto them. (beat. To BRIDGET) Go on. Read any entry.

BRIDGET reads silently. Turns a page.

MEG (CONT'D)

Out loud.

BRIDGET

"Star Date, Oh Seven Eighteen. (beat) Mom got mad, after dinner, and she took a scissors, and she cut up Bridget's Raggedy Ann doll into little pieces. And then, when Kathleen cried so hard, Mom took her into the laundry room, and . . ." (doesn't read this part out loud) "But Bridget stayed really quiet. When I came to bed, in the dark, I heard Bridget telling a story to, just . . . Raggedy Ann's arm."

BRIDGET closes the diary. The sisters make an identical Mahoney gesture. Silence.

KATHLEEN

(closes the diary) What happened to us is . . . nothing special. It happens to children in families every where.

BRIDGET

I don't know if that's true.

MEG

Nothing's changed. I'm still getting gas-lighted. You two, going on and on about her dress, her casket, her tits. You're too busy keeping up appearances to stop / and-

SIARA

What is "gas-lighted?"

MEG

It means: denying that a giant fucking elephant is fucking standing right here, in the fucking living room!

SIARA

(to BRIDGET, quiet, confirming) This is not a real elephant.

KATHLEEN

(to MEG) Your profanity is unwelcome in a house of mourning.

MEG

Oh, shove it up your ass, Kathleen! If somebody besides me would accept the truth around here! Our house was a fucking war zone, okay. You never knew when she was gonna blow up, when it would be, all: "INCOMING!" And we would try to hide from her -- remember, Bridge? But there was no place to hide, not anywhere. Goddamn it, I don't give a shit that she's dead!

For a moment it looks like MEG will cry.

KATHLEEN

It's conceivable . . . that she wasn't the ideal mother.

BRIDGET

She did the best she could with what she had.

SIARA

It was her personality: to be an “odd duck.”

Strained beat. MEG glares at SIARA.

BRIDGET

That was my fault.

KATHLEEN

(to MEG) Well. You’ve certainly helped me confirm my intention to ban you from the services. When Father Chang gets here, I’m giving strict instructions.

MEG

Father Chang. What happened to Father Flynn?

KATHLEEN

Father Flynn is . . . being deposed by a grand jury. Father Chang will be helping me plan the services. And when he gets here, I will tell him that you are forbidden to attend. You will have no part of the wake, or the funeral, or her burial. Nothing!

MEG

Hold on a minute. We’re all emotionally wrung out, okay? Can we just- Can I please- Well, isn’t anyone wondering what I’m doing here?

BRIDGET

I kind of am.

KATHLEEN

I really didn’t think about it.

MEG (CONT’D)

I know what you think of me. I’ve stayed away, and I . . . harbor a few . . . grudges. But yesterday, I called her. I reached out to Mom. I left her a phone message. I can play it for you, if you want. (To SIARA) Where’s her message machine?

SIARA

It is- I am afraid, the message . . . It has been erased.

MEG

My message?

SIARA

Your mother was dead. No one else will receive this message from you. Pardon me, I am sorry to erase it, I did not think that / you-

MEG

Did she listen to it?

SIARA

Missus Mahoney have heard your message, yes.

MEG

Look. I get that you don't give a crap, Kathleen. But why I called . . . I wanted to make peace. I told Mom I was driving here, and that I was going to tell her what is true: my truth. And everything I still have, in my diaries, to this day, that she did to us.

BRIDGET

To her face?

KATHLEEN

You were planning to confront her.

MEG

No! Okay, yes, but. . . after that. After she acknowledged what she had done, then we would resolve our differences.

KATHLEEN

On your terms. Oh, please.

MEG

No! We would! I told her. And mom would- We were going to ask Our Lady, Protector of the Innocent. We would pray, with the statue.

KATHLEEN

"Pray?" The last time you set foot in a church, you were disorderly, and humiliated your entire family.

BRIDGET

Jesus was disorderly. Jesus flipped over some tables, in the temple.

KATHLEEN

Jesus did not require three ushers to remove Him.

MEG

Mom and me- this wasn't going to be in church. I don't expect you to understand. I just wanted to get some goddamn peace. (beat) But then, that woman - the one you hired, erased my message!

SIARA

Your mother have received your message.

KATHLEEN

So. You decided to force your way into our mother's home and compel her to make peace with you. (beat) She heard your request. I don't know what more you could possibly want.

MEG

I was going to show her what I did, every night, when I was little. Pray, with the statue. (beat) Fine.

SIARA

(to KATHLEEN) I have tried to tell to you, on the phone. . .

A warning look passes from KATHLEEN to SIARA. MEG notices.

KATHLEEN

(to SIARA) Go into the kitchen.

MEG

(to SIARA) What, tell her what.

BRIDGET's phone rings.

BRIDGET

Shoot, it's Joe again.

KATHLEEN

(to MEG) It's not important. (to BRIDGET) Tell him we're busy.

MEG

What is not important?

BRIDGET

(on phone) Silky! How is Mommy's little angel?

SIARA

It is nothing of importance.

KATHLEEN

Siara, I said - I need some coffee, please. I haven't had any sleep.

SIARA

I can . . . go into the kitchen. I will heat the coffee.

SIARA exits, leaving the coffee pot.

MEG

What in the fuck was that!

BRIDGET

(on phone) Put Daddy on the line.

KATHLEEN

You seem determined to manufacture a problem, where there is none.

MEG

Something is very wrong, here. You owe me an explanation. When the woman who murdered my hamster looks all of us in the face, and fabricates our mother's pronouncement of death-

KATHLEEN

We're back to Tina, now, are we?

MEG

Yes! Because this is just like you, with your "kill first, sort the wreckage out later" attitude.

BRIDGET

Hello?

KATHLEEN

"Kill first, sort the wreckage out later," is a very efficient methodology.

BRIDGET

(on phone) Stop screaming, honey, and put your Daddy on the line.

MEG

You are not above the law. And I'm saying: something is fucked up around here.

BRIDGET

(on phone) Joe! That's not a very nice thing to say. I know you hate Wal-Mart, but . . . I apologize for the phone company -

KATHLEEN and MEG begin listening to
BRIDGET's phone call.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)

I'm not ignoring you, there's no cell phone range. Plus my battery is low! Don't shout at me.

MEG

Is he yelling at you, again?

BRIDGET

I ran out of the house without my charger. It was an emergency . . . I am not a- If that was the c-word, you know what Dr. Powell said about that. Oh! (She loses him. Blinks back tears.) Well. That's that.

KATHLEEN

What was that about?

BRIDGET

Joe. He's . . . in his cycle.

KATHLEEN

That Joe is an animal.

MEG

He called you the c-word?

BRIDGET

He doesn't mean anything. Sometimes he gets . . . careless with his words.

MEG

But you're seeing somebody? A counselor, you said.

BRIDGET

We- well, we started off seeing somebody last year. Dr. Kamiya. She told Joe that he was part of a rigid, patriarchal . . . something.

MEG

(to BRIDGET) What did you think?

KATHLEEN

That man is a menace.

BRIDGET

I liked her! But Joe said she was probably a lesbian. So he got us a different counselor.

KATHLEEN

You need to get yourself a gun.

BRIDGET

You can just keep your suggestions to yourself!

KATHLEEN

Give me that phone.

BRIDGET

No. I said, “no!” Keep away from me: you have problems with boundaries, Kathleen!

BRIDGET puts the phone in her purse.

KATHLEEN

Get an annulment. Ann McGowan got one.

MEG

Ann has six kids! Look, can we just- deal with Joe when he gets here? (beat) Bridge, you talked to Siara. Didn't you get the feeling something is wrong?

KATHLEEN

Nothing is “wrong.”

MEG

The whole situation smells to high heaven. (Checking off) First, Mom gets cancer. Then, Kathleen brings in this Muslim -- this Islamic fucking extremist . . .

As MEG is talking, SIARA reenters. Awkward pause. SIARA crosses by MEG, takes the coffeepot.

BRIDGET

Really, really delicious coffee.

KATHLEEN

Thank you, Siara.

SIARA crosses back to the door. A moment.

SIARA

(to MEG) I have heard what you say about me.

BRIDGET

That was very rude, Margaret Mary.

SIARA

(To MEG) You are wrong. I will tell you this-

KATHLEEN

(to SIARA) Don't say anything to her.

SIARA

I have rights, as you do.

MEG

No, really, I want to hear what she has to say.

SIARA

People live through violence, and killing. Their families are suffering. If sometimes, if somebody does a suicide bomb, then when / they do it-

SIARA (CONT'D)

-people say "Muslims did this, Muslims did this!" They have no understanding. I say to myself, I mean, when people do a suicide bomb, I feel for them-

MEG

Perfect. She's talking suicide bombs now.

MEG

Did you hear that?

KATHLEEN

(to MEG) Calm down. (to SIARA) Go and wait for me, in the kitchen.

SIARA

I understand the anger, when the family is killed. When they have been murdered, or their village is destroyed. But it is wrong to do a suicide bomb.

BRIDGET

This is not a good conversation.

SIARA

When a bomb happens to innocent people, it is not justice in the eyes of God.

KATHLEEN

Exactly. It's terror. Now, if you will / go-

SIARA

Yes. But I can tell you: if you don't have anything, if there is so much violence, and you are afraid, and you don't have your family any more, when you are- what is the word. . .

MEG

When you're a fucking Muslim extremist?

SIARA

When you are "bereft." When all your family have been killed, when you are just by yourself in this world-

BRIDGET

(to MEG) She's saying she has compassion for people-

SIARA

(to BRIDGET) I can speak! Do not speak for me.

MEG

She's saying terrorism is okay!

SIARA

What I have to say is that when your family's blood is soaking the earth, sometimes. Sometimes the only thing you can think to do is to kill the people who have killed them. This I understand. The heart can be poisoned.

MEG

Okay, why is she bringing up “poison?”

BRIDGET

A poisoned heart, Meg-

SIARA

I do not have poison in my heart. But when you have seen your home destroyed and blown into dust. When you have hope for your country’s future, but the bombs keep falling. Many have anger ... even more than this one, here. (to MEG) I have not harmed your mother. You, Meg. You must know this.

KATHLEEN

Siara.

SIARA

You must believe this. (Pause. To BRIDGET) I am glad you have enjoyed the coffee.

BRIDGET

Thank you.

SIARA

(to KATHLEEN) You said she must “move on” from the strait jacket. You may now tell her to “move on” from me.

MEG

What the hell!

KATHLEEN

I’ll join you in the kitchen. Please.

SIARA exits.

MEG

(to KATHLEEN) You’re both witnesses: She’s sympathetic to suicide bombers!

BRIDGET

Nobody got bombed, Margaret Mary.

KATHLEEN

You weren’t even listening. She’s against violence. She’s a victim of violence. And she helped our mother. She did the opposite of / what you keep-

MEG

How could she help her? A woman who doesn't do, or know, anything medical? She flat-out said she has no home health care training / at all.

KATHLEEN

(in MEG's face, now) And where were you? You, a trained and licensed nurse: where were you?

KATHLEEN is looking on her cell phone.

MEG

I was . . . (re SIARA) Aren't you going to do something-? She's . . . (beat) Okay, up until recently, I was working a full-time job, highly stressful- and I had some personal, private- (re the cell phone) What?

KATHLEEN

Here. Recently, it seems you've been employed, on a temporary basis --- (reads her phone) --- by Medical Staffing Services as a . . . Yes. (shows the website to MEG) As "a home health aide."

BRIDGET

Ohhh.

MEG

So? (beat) I was- I am a home health aide.

KATHLEEN

You were a nurse.

BRIDGET

At St. Vincent's.

MEG

Screw St. Vincent's! Those assholes transferred me out of the emergency room! I hate that place. Charging poor, sick patients 75 bucks for an band-aid. I mean, the corruption.

KATHLEEN

If you don't like corruption, you shouldn't have gone into in health care. In any case, you can stop acting so holier-than-thou. I happen to know you were fired by St. Vincent's for drug use.

MEG

That's a lie!

BRIDGET

Margaret Mary tried to get Siara to give her morphine.

KATHLEEN

There you are.

MEG

That was a joke. And if I had been fired for drugs, no temp staffing service would hire me!

KATHLEEN

I have reliable information.

MEG

They're completely psycho over there, and now they've decided to spread rumors about me. That Sister Maggie Willie has it in for me: she always did; she never liked me.

BRIDGET

It's "Sister Margaret William."

KATHLEEN

You're telling us that the head of a major regional Catholic hospital is a psycho.

MEG

Because I wouldn't kiss her ring, or her rosary beads, or her sizeable ass, she transferred me to a sick ward. And then, because I wouldn't go along with their cover up-! Look. All I did: I reported a case of abuse, okay? This woman, her asshole of a husband beat the crap out of her! And the nuns didn't approve of me calling the cops.

BRIDGET

I don't know why they would fire you for that.

MEG

Because the guy turns out to be the archbishop's cousin, so I was supposed to look the other way. Sister Maggie Willie calls me into her office, and she cans me. Would've whacked me with a ruler if she thought she could get away with it.

KATHLEEN

That's not what my sources say.

MEG

I don't know why the hell you would believe a bunch of nuns! It doesn't matter. My agency stands behind me.

KATHLEEN

You got a job as a home health aide. And you couldn't be bothered to contact me. Or Mom.

BRIDGET

Or me.

KATHLEEN

Or Bridget. Even to ask if your services were needed?

MEG

My "services." You mean, to take care of her? No. No way in hell would I ever do that.

KATHLEEN

Then maybe you can stop being such an almighty pain about the woman who did.

BRIDGET's phone vibrates.

BRIDGET

Oh, shoot. (Answers) Joe? One second.

BRIDGET heads for the door.

KATHLEEN

Where are you going?

BRIDGET

I'll be right back, in a . . . in just a second. (To KATHLEEN) You have control issues. (on phone) I'm going outside. See if this helps, honey.

MEG

Bridge, don't.

BRIDGET exits through the front door. MEG goes after her.

MEG (CONT'D)

(as she exits) Come on, Bridge!

KATHLEEN steps to the kitchen door, knocks.
SIARA opens the door, remains in the doorway.

SIARA

I would like to have a conversation with you.

KATHLEEN

Give me five minutes. I'll call out. My sister- is making things difficult. But everything is fine. It will be fine.

SIARA

It is very important that I tell you what happened. And that I understand how you will help us. I must attend to my mother.

KATHLEEN

I want to talk with you, Siara. I just have to be sure-

*

MEG enters and KATHLEEN closes the kitchen door in SIARA's face.

MEG

She won't listen to me.

KATHLEEN

Why would she?

MEG

(beat) Okay. That's fair. I know I haven't / been-

KATHLEEN

You cause a huge scene, you disappear --- and now you turn up with this attitude? Will you let nothing go, ever?

MEG

I don't know . . . how.

KATHLEEN

It would be so much less painful, for every one.

MEG

I know. I tried.

KATHLEEN

Try harder.

MEG

Why did you hire that woman? (Silence.) Faking a pronouncement of death is not a minor offense.

KATHLEEN

Siara . . . Where she's from, people just get hacked to death, or they starve, or they get shot with machine guns. There's no paperwork.

MEG

Who is Asad? At the coroner's. "Asad."

KATHLEEN

He's my contact there.

MEG

"Siara" and "Asad." Does this have anything to do with your time in the fucking Peace Corps? (silence) On the phone, you told Asad you're with the "AAC."

MEG gets out her phone. Begins to surf.

KATHLEEN

I have nothing to hide. What are you doing?

MEG

Turnabout. Fair play. (looking on Google) There's like six billion "AAC's."

KATHLEEN

You may not know this, but there is a large Somali community in this area-

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

They're being relocated here. By agreement with the UN.

MEG

No shit. You can't miss 'em.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

We place refugees: it's our specialty. Siara is part of this group, as are our friends at the funeral home, and Asad, at the Coroner's Office. We place / these-

MEG

Refugees: You said that. (Shows KATHLEEN her phone.) AAC. "Above All Corporation. Security Above All." (reading) You contract with the government for different programs: here, and overseas.

KATHLEEN

We're completely legitimate.

MEG

Jesus Christ, you're a goddamn defense contractor.

KATHLEEN

We're a security contractor, it says right there. (quotes the page) "A locally-based 501-C3 nonprofit fighting for peace around the world."

MEG

(reads) "Kathleen Mahoney-Finch, Assistant Vice President for Support and Intelligence." What is this, your prom picture? (puts away her phone) Peace Corps, my ass. You're a spook.

KATHLEEN

We're not CIA. Our hands are clean.

MEG

You're telling me you imported this woman from Somalia-

KATHLEEN

No: I told you. She's been living here. We- we sought her out. She's a special case. You don't get it, Margaret Mary. It's wartime.

MEG

Okay, whatever. Like I give a crap about Africa. There is a cover-up going on here. You know what, you might try pretending to be interested in the circumstances of our mother's death, just to be polite.

KATHLEEN

That's it; I'm not telling you anything. I have no obligation, and you have no need to know.

MEG

If you don't tell me what's going on this second, I am calling the fucking cops.

KATHLEEN

(thinks) Siara is one of the good ones. She's an asset.

MEG

An asset, why?

KATHLEEN

(beat) She's "an asset" because she helped our mother. She looked after Mom for months, while we . . . While we didn't. If something were suspicious, don't you think I'd be investigating it?

MEG

You'd probably shoot Siara and ask questions later.

KATHLEEN laughs. Recovers.

MEG (CONT'D)

Bridget said Siara's husband was shot in the head. Did you have anything to do with that?

KATHLEEN

Of course not.

MEG

You're so cavalier about shooting people. You "security contractors" can probably just go over there, and shoot whoever you / want.

KATHLEEN

See, this is where you show your ignorance. He was shot here, in town. At the farmers market.

MEG

I thought he was killed in the Somali civil war!

KATHLEEN

He was carrying a cabbage, in a bag. The way Bashiir was dressed. With his head covering, and his beard. And a cabbage might resemble a small, homemade bomb.

MEG

No, it doesn't-

KATHLEEN

The police officer believed Bashiir was a threat, so he shot him. It was a misunderstanding. Our job is to help these people-

MEG

You mean, after some trigger-happy cop blows away their head of household? Jesus Christ. Who on earth do you think she's loyal to?

KATHLEEN

That's the whole point! A job placement. ESL classes. Money to support her family, and her mother's family: that's the carrot. Do you have any idea how bad it is in Somalia?

MEG

I do, in fact. /This orderly-

There's violence everywhere, they've got no clean water. A constant risk of getting raped. If you can believe it, people are escaping to Yemen. A job here, in the US: that's the carrot, it's how we get them over to our side. We gain their trust, and then: their loyalty.

MEG (CONT'D)

You think you have her loyalty?

KATHLEEN

Our military operations are better funded, without a doubt. That's the stick. But the carrot is a crucial / element-

MEG

Can you please shut up about the carrot?

KATHLEEN

It's an analogy.

MEG

Carrot and stick is only a good analogy if you think people operate like donkeys.

KATHLEEN

The bottom line is- Counter terrorism begins at home. We can't just take out targets inside their country, it's not enough. Margaret Mary, we're rescuing them.

MEG

(beat) You are a complete fucking idiot. Kathleen, if you hire someone from Somalia, from outside our culture, from a violent background. What do you get? You get Unintended Consequences, that's what. I saw it all the time at the emergency room. You do something, thinking it's a good thing, and, BAM! Unintended / consequences.

KATHLEEN

"Unintended consequences." Not the case, here.

MEG

Somebody puts a light bulb up their ass. Thinking, hey, sexual pleasure. And, BAM!

KATHLEEN

"Bam." Seriously?

MEG

Compact fluorescent, absolutely. You would not believe what people will put up their asses: light bulb, kitchen whisk. Big ol' carrot. You think that woman is loyal to you? To our country? No. She's carrying the flag for her own people. Somalia. Islam.

KATHLEEN

I have complete faith in Siara, and I am satisfied. We all knew Mom was going to die. Then, bingo: she died. It all seems perfectly reasonable, and following the natural order of things.

MEG

I'm glad it all seems very reasonable to you, Kathleen. It never occurred to you that living with our mother . . . our mother . . . might make someone turn against America?

KATHLEEN

No. It did not.

MEG

Maybe you should have considered it. Add to that, this so-called "tragic mistake" with her cabbage-carrying husband? I think there's a very real possibility that there has been a terrorist attack on our fucking family!

KATHLEEN

There's no reason / to-

MEG

You're protecting her, and I don't trust you for a millisecond. (beat) Goddamn hamster killer!

KATHLEEN

Hold on. (answers phone, which has vibrated.) What? (listens) On CNN: you mean, right now? Just a minute.

KATHLEEN presses "Hold" and uses her phone to get CNN.

MEG

You have CNN on your phone?

KATHLEEN

What? Everybody does. Oh, for- *[heaven's sake]*

Suddenly, bombing sounds from KATHLEEN's phone. They look and listen for a moment.

MEG

Where the fuck is that happening?

KATHLEEN

(to MEG) Never mind. (back on phone) You tell Team Stick: this is the second time they've failed to give Team Carrot some kind of heads-up. It's unacceptable. Now, you listen to me: Pick up the mother. Do it now. I'll be there shortly. (She hangs up) Don't you say anything to Siara about this. I should check: *al Shabaab* may be tweeting.

BRIDGET reenters, teary. MEG goes to her.
KATHLEEN checks Twitter, and texts.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

(To MEG, not paying attention) Will you deal with her, please?

MEG

(To BRIDGET) Are the kids okay?

BRIDGET

Oh, yes. He doesn't- I mean, he wouldn't.

MEG

Jesus, Bridge. Is this really better than before you went to counseling?

BRIDGET

He's improved. A lot.

MEG

This doesn't sound. . . Your counselor, what does she think?

BRIDGET

He. Dr. Powell: "Colin Powell," which I thought was funny. Although he's very self-conscious about his name.

KATHLEEN

(still preoccupied with her phone) What is he doing / about that animal?

BRIDGET

He said, maybe Joe has a behavior disorder. He's ordered some tests: for "Intermittent Explosive Disorder, he thinks. "IED."

KATHLEEN

"IED?"

MEG

And here I thought Joe was just an abusive fucking asshole. "AFA"

BRIDGET

The doctor hasn't ordered any tests for that!

MEG

"IED"- is that a real diagnosis?

BRIDGET

It's on Google. But, what . . . Dr. Powell was telling me --- and Joe too, but I wasn't sure Joe was listening. He explained . . . in these families. There's a cycle. It goes "rescuer," then "victim," and then. . . sometimes, the rescuer becomes the abuser.

MEG

He used that word: "abuser?" Jesus, Bridge, you need to get out of there.

BRIDGET

It's like a triangle. Dr. Powell showed us on this diagram. . . Abuser, victim, rescuer . . .
It's Joe's cycle. But really, the kids are dealing with it pretty good right now. Last time,
when Joe broke this chair?

KATHLEEN

(puts away her phone) I will give you a gun. As a gift.

BRIDGET

No, not on anyone. Just, you know, against the wall. For his penance, Joe took us all to
Disney World. So the kids are practically rooting for him to break something else!

MEG

Christ. Look, I was going to get a room at the Comfort Inn. I'll get a double. You, the kids
-- you can all stay with me.

BRIDGET

I can get him calmed down. It's up to me, to help him.

MEG

Bridge. You know how in the airplane, when they give you the safety talk, they tell you
to put on your own oxygen mask before you try to help anyone else? This is one of
those deals.

There is a crash from the kitchen. SIARA enters
with a bowl of dates and a plate of cheese and
crackers, sets these down. From the kitchen, a
low sound of the television: CNN. No one eats
anything in this scene.

SIARA

(stiff) The coffee pot. . . It fell.

KATHLEEN

(to SIARA) Don't say anything.

BRIDGET

Are those dates? Thank you, Siara.

SIARA

Miz Mahoney-Finch will come look at this. It is very important news on CNN.

BRIDGET

(to SIARA) Gosh, I just love dates.

KATHLEEN

I'm coming, right now. You know, you can't always believe CNN!

SIARA exits with KATHLEEN. Sound of CNN disappears as the door closes.

MEG

What the fuck is going on.

BRIDGET

I can't remember the last time I had Easy Cheez. These old brands are great. Remember we almost lost "Twinkies": when was that? We really dodged a bullet on that one.

MEG goes over to listen at the door.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)

This was nice of her: to put out Easy Cheez. Did you know that it can keep fresh for something like fifty years in your glove compartment? Well, not exactly "fresh. . ."

MEG

Can you stop talking, please?

BRIDGET

I don't know why you think I would ever want to spend the night with you.

MEG

We're bombing them: Somalia, I think. Kathleen has something to do with it.

BRIDGET

I don't think Kathleen can bomb a country. She's kind of controlling, but / I don't-

MEG

Not her, personally. She's mixed up with this . . . They're bombing.

BRIDGET

I don't see why we have to bomb everybody.

MEG

(referring to the kitchen) They're talking really softly. (beat) Kathleen says we're "rescuing them."

BRIDGET

That's the cycle, though, Margaret Mary.

MEG

More like bombing the fuck out of them.

BRIDGET

First, Rescuer, and then poof! Abuser.

MEG

Kathleen just said something.

BRIDGET

In "Catholic Remedies for Codependence," they say "Keep the focus on yourself." And "Never create a crisis."

MEG

I don't think we can use your relationship book to manage U.S. foreign policy.

Momentary silence. SOUND CUE: The TV is turned up in the kitchen. Sounds of bombs.

BRIDGET

Oh, no, now I'm scared.

MEG

It's okay, Bridge. (tries the door.) Fucking shit. Kathleen locked the door!

BRIDGET

I don't feel well. Margaret Mary. I think I might throw up.

MEG

Don't, Bridge. Please don't throw up. Put your head between your legs.

BRIDGET

I don't feel well. (softly, barely heard over the offstage noise) Oh, God. This is just like . . . I know what she's doing.

TV sounds.

MEG

What?

BRIDGET doesn't respond. They both look at the kitchen. The bomb sounds flood the room, as BRIDGET experiences a vivid flashback.

BRIDGET

Kathleen's covering up something. What she's doing, and what Siara is saying. Hiding it with that noise.

MEG

Goddamn it!

MEG goes to KATHLEEN's purse, rummages. Takes out a set of keys, stuffs it in her pocket.

BRIDGET

This is just like when . . . Joe and I were having this fight, and the kids are right there, asleep in their rooms- (beat) Margaret Mary?

MEG

Go on.

BRIDGET

He- He . . . This is like . . . This one time Joe comes home at three in the morning, and he's drunk, and I can't- I can't take it any more, and I just- Margaret Mary, I get so mad. Then he gets so mad, and you know how he is. . . and I remember he- he reaches over me, and he clicks the remote. This movie comes on-

Movie bomb noises, loud, terrifying.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)

And he turns up the volume- Bombs going off. And sounds of men, yelling, and feet running, and these loud . . . blasts. It reminds me-

Crescendo of movie bombs. Then, tapering off.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)

Joe shoves me, and my head hits the floor. I see these bright, explosions of light. I try to get away . . . but he's hitting me with his fists. I try to keep my eyes closed, and stay so still. If I could be invisible, I would. But then Joe turns me over . . . and then- then, he's on top of me; I feel his weight on me, and his breath on my face. And- and he forces himself- he pushes himself . . .

MEG touches BRIDGET.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)

(startled) Am I oversharing?

MEG

It's me, Bridge. You say whatever you want or need to say.

BRIDGET

The movie is so loud! There's "Boom! Boom!" And the sounds of men, and feet running. And then I figure it out: Joe wants to hide any noise I make from the kids.

MEG

Oh, Bridge . . .

BRIDGET

In case I might scream. But I'm very quiet, Meg. I swear. I'm just as quiet as a little mouse.

MEG

I hate that motherfucker!

TV bomb noises stop abruptly.

BRIDGET

Doctor Powell says: Joe might change. If I- if I would just stop pushing his buttons.

SIARA and KATHLEEN enter. As they do-

MEG

That man is an asshole! And what he told you is a huge pile of bullshit!

KATHLEEN

(to BRIDGET) Is she badgering you?

SIARA

We must go immediately. She is / very ill.

MEG

(to KATHLEEN) None of your business. What were you doing in there?

SIARA

If harm comes to my mother-

KATHLEEN

(to MEG) That has exactly nothing to do with you. (to SIARA) In a minute! *

Bridget, stay here and tell Father Chang I had to run an errand. I'll meet him at the funeral home, tomorrow at 10 a.m. (to MEG) Not you. If I see you within 50 feet of the place, I will have you forcibly removed. *

KATHLEEN gets her purse, rummages.

KATHLEEN

Where are my keys?

SIARA

(to KATHLEEN) You must allow my mother / to return to her home!

KATHLEEN

(to MEG) I have had enough! (to SIARA) We'll let you see your mother.

MEG

The hell you are taking her out of here: Not until I find out what happened-

BRIDGET

(to KATHLEEN) Her mom is sick.

SIARA

She have had chills and fever, since yesterday. You have no right to take her! *

BRIDGET

(to KATHLEEN) What are you doing with her mother?

SIARA

(indicates KATHLEEN) They have taken my mother from her home!

KATHLEEN

We're only asking her a few questions. Everything is fine.

MEG

What did she tell you? (to SIARA) What happened to our mother, goddamnit!

SIARA

When your mother- When she died- (hesitates) I have not caused harm!

MEG

And we're just supposed to believe that? What, just take your fucking word for it?

SIARA

(to MEG) I cannot have harmed your mother. It is not possible. I was not with your mother, when she died. I was not even in the house!

They take this in.

BRIDGET

This is very confusing to me, because I thought you were.

KATHLEEN

She's done nothing wrong. It's not as if she was a prisoner here.

BRIDGET

But if you weren't here . . . Are you saying she made a small smile after she died? Because that doesn't seem possible.

KATHLEEN

She explained to me - her employer - what / happened.

MEG

Can I just say one thing?

KATHLEEN

Is there any conceivable way we can stop you?

MEG

Our mother died, alone. In this house.

SIARA

Yes.

MEG

You left our mother alone.

SIARA

(beat) As did you.

MEG

I knew it! I knew she was responsible! She left a dying woman by herself in the middle of the night!!

BRIDGET

All the shouting? It's too much, Margaret Mary.

MEG

Excuse me? You let yourself be assaulted, and now you're complaining / when I raise my voice?

BRIDGET

Just shut up! / Shut up!

KATHLEEN

I thought we were going to put aside Bridget's alleged molestation, and focus on happy memories.

BRIDGET

(to MEG) I hate you so much right now! (to KATHLEEN) Don't say "alleged." Don't you ever say "alleged!"

MEG

And exactly which happy memories should we focus on, Kathleen? The time Mom got drunk and in a rage- and she hauls you out of choir practice, so hard she breaks your wrist?

KATHLEEN

(deeply rattled) That's not- really- the point- I- I- I-

MEG

/ None of this explains what went on here, last night! After you left our mother alone.

KATHLEEN

I- I- I- I don't have to listen to your- your- your- constant / vulgar-

SIARA

I went to care for my mother, who is suffering, as I have said. I have cooked for her, and bathed her, and then I waited by her bed as she fell asleep. When I have returned, I found your mother, your Missus Mahoney, lying on the floor of her bedroom, close by her closet . She was strictly dead.

MEG

On the floor. You're covering something up.

SIARA

(to MEG) There is one thing more. I will show you, since you insist you must know. (to KATHLEEN) I will show her, and then you will take me to my mother.

SIARA exits out the hallway door.

MEG

(to KATHLEEN) You're just going to let her leave?

BRIDGET

She went to see her mom? Was that in her employment contract?

KATHLEEN

No one is "leaving." I- I don't really understand why everyone is so upset.

MEG

Neither of you gave a damn, but I knew. I knew there was something.

BRIDGET

She would have told you. But she was afraid of you.

MEG

She should be. (to KATHLEEN) How much were you paying her?

KATHLEEN

Minimum wage, / is what?

MEG

Oh, for Christ's sake!

KATHLEEN

She doesn't really have any home health care training!

MEG

This is the problem. You pay seven-twenty-five an hour; al-Shabaab probably pays eight!

KATHLEEN

It's standard. Headquarters pays everyone the same. We tip on Muslim holidays.

BRIDGET

Did Mom really have a small smile?

MEG

No! This is seriously screwed up, Kathleen. To let her just traipse / around town-

BRIDGET

But how do you know that?

KATHLEEN

It doesn't matter! What matters is that there was no "traipsing." There was, instead, a family emergency.

MEG

Not only did she leave mom alone--- but somehow. . . Fuck. Somehow, Mom's big, blue, ceramic statue of the Virgin Mary --- The Protector of the Innocent. It's missing!

KATHLEEN

(puzzled) "Missing." No, it's not.

SIARA enters carrying a wooden stool. She overturns the stool.

SIARA

This is the stepladder. I found it, like this, on her floor. With her body beside it.

MEG

What is this?

BRIDGET

That's, like . . . That's a stool. You said it was a stepladder.

MEG

(to BRIDGET) She told you?

BRIDGET

Mom climbed up on this? Because that is definitely a stool.

SIARA

(beat) I understand that, now. Now that I look at it more closely. Perhaps I should have said "step stool?"

MEG

Do you SEE any steps?

SIARA

My English is not perfect.

MEG

I think your English is pretty fucking fucked-up.

BRIDGET

Don't insult her.

KATHLEEN

Filthy mouth.

MEG (CONT'D)

You're telling me our mother took a header off a bar stool in the middle of the night? And all of you knew about this?

BRIDGET

It doesn't look like a bar stool.

KATHLEEN

Siara is a housekeeper, and she was never hired for round-the-clock / care-

SIARA

(turns on KATHLEEN) I have told you what information I know! Now what will you do for my family? When your soldiers have come to our / town-

KATHLEEN

It's a fiction that the United States has any troops / on the ground-

SIARA

You have troops! Why will you say you have no troops?

MEG

(to KATHLEEN) Jesus, you're gas-lighting her, now?

SIARA

Your AAC is making promises to my family in Somalia --- that they will be safe!

KATHLEEN

(to SIARA) This is not for discussion.

BRIDGET

What's happening to your family?

MEG

Can we please get back to our fucking mother-

SIARA

(to BRIDGET) They have given the location and the movements of the enemy, and Kathleen made this promise: if war comes, my family will be protected.

KATHLEEN

We can't talk about this right now!

BRIDGET

Kathleen, what is going on?

SIARA

There is killing on the ground, and killing from the air- Where is our safety?

KATHLEEN

(to SIARA) That's enough! We made no guarantees! You didn't have a husband to support you. We gave you a job, and ESL classes. We made sure remittances got to your family. That was the deal, the only deal. There may have been a mistake. A misunderstanding. There may be . . . unintended consequences.

MEG

BAM.

KATHLEEN

(to MEG) Smart-mouth. Know-it-all.

MEG

It's always a "misunderstanding" with you, isn't it.

KATHLEEN

We did our best! My hands are clean.

BRIDGET

(to KATHLEEN) If her family is in danger, you can't just turn your back.

SIARA

When will you take me to see my / mother?

KATHLEEN

I don't have my keys.

BRIDGET

Margaret Mary stole your keys.

MEG

(to KATHLEEN) I want to know what this goddamn terrorist did to our mother!

SIARA

Who is the terrorist?

SIARA exits abruptly.

MEG

Christ. (beat) What did that mean?

KATHLEEN

If you would just give me the car keys, we would be on our way.

MEG

I will get to the truth.

BRIDGET

Siara explained everything that happened, Margaret Mary. You don't have / to keep-

MEG

Then where the hell is she going?

SIARA returns with a statue of the Virgin Mary.

SIARA

I have found this. In the morning, on the top shelf of Missus Mahoney's closet.

SIARA sets the statue on the stool.

MEG

Her closet?

SIARA

It was far above her body. Because she is placing the statue there, so you will never find it. Here is the truth for which you have asked. (beat) You have killed your mother!

BRIDGET

(it dawns) Ohhh.

MEG

No. That's . . . wrong.

SIARA

It is you who have been wrong . . . to leave a selfish message, putting blame on your mother! She heard your message, and then she must place the statue far away from you!

BRIDGET

I can't believe you killed her.

MEG

She was taking it down! So that when I got here, we would pray together . . . That's what this means.

KATHLEEN

No. That's not what it means.

BRIDGET

That doesn't sound like Mom. Not like our Mom, not at all. *

MEG (CONT'D)

She left the house!

SIARA

Missus Mahoney was hiding the statue! When she turned to step down, she fell. She fell to her death, so she would not have to be with you!

KATHLEEN

BAM.

MEG

Fuck you! You weren't here! She was taking it down from the closet!

KATHLEEN

You weren't here. She moved it upstairs months ago. She kept it right on her night stand.

BRIDGET

How many Hail Marys will you have to say?

SIARA

You have said these words yourself: She was a terrible woman! As are you!

MEG

You left her alone!

KATHLEEN

Calm down.

SIARA (CONT'D)

She was hiding the statue! Disrespectful daughter of this monstrous woman! Spiteful, bigoted women. Both of you: born of a crooked rib! As the mother, so is the daughter. She would die rather than pray with you!

MEG advances on SIARA.

SIARA (CONT'D)

Jooji! naga aamus! Shaydaamad yahay! [meaning Stop! Don't speak to me! Evil woman!]

For a moment it looks as if MEG will strike SIARA. MEG stops, retreats.

KATHLEEN

(to SIARA) Stay away from her! (To MEG) A strait jacket is the best place for you. And we don't hit. (her phone vibrates.) Hello! (beat) In a minute. She's cooperative. What about the mother? (listens) I'll be there as soon as I can.

KATHLEEN hangs up.

SIARA

(to KATHLEEN) Now you will get from her the keys!

KATHLEEN

You're giving orders now?

SIARA

(turns on KATHLEEN) And what will you do! When will you look at what you have done?

KATHLEEN

Siara, I have nothing to do with this. Whatever may be going on . . . It is entirely an action of the U.S. government. My hands are clean.

SIARA

Your hands are "clean," because you wash your hands of everything! Your parent, who is old, and ill! Your family, and those who have helped you. The homelands of other people, and their parents, and their children!

KATHLEEN

Don't lecture me about homelands. Your homeland is a cesspool.

SIARA

And yours? Look in the mirror.

MEG contemplates the statue on the stool.

MEG

(privately) I used to pray to her. To be safe. "Our Lady, Protector of the Innocent."

SIARA

(to KATHLEEN) I am ready to see my mother, now. Since I may not "give orders," perhaps, then, you will get your keys.

KATHLEEN

You'd better not become a problem.

BRIDGET's phone rings.

BRIDGET

Joe. Where? "Tam O'Shanter Motel, East Highway." Do they have a pool? (beat) I'm not being critical, there's no need- I will. I'm losing you! (She hangs up.) Joe's here. I mean . . .at the motel. (to SIARA) Will your family be okay?

SIARA

I do not know.

KATHLEEN

(to BRIDGET) You have to understand . . . Our concern is families here, in the United States. Keeping them safe.

MEG

“Safe?” Is this woman safe? What about her dead husband: was he safe? And her mother? Is Bridget safe, and her kids? Me, am I safe? No. (beat) Do you feel safe, Kathleen? Tell us. Do you ever feel safe?

KATHLEEN

(quietly) If you don't return my keys, right now. There will be consequences.

A moment. MEG gives KATHLEEN the keys.
KATHLEEN and SIARA prepare to leave,
cross to the door.

BRIDGET

(to SIARA) I'll say a prayer for your family.

SIARA

Thank you, Bridget. (to the others) And here is my prayer for your family . . . May you know the Justice of Allah.

SIARA exits. KATHLEEN follows her. Pause.

MEG

Bridge?

BRIDGET

Yes, Margaret Mary.

MEG

When we were younger . . .? When we were younger, like, as kids. . .

BRIDGET

Yes.

MEG

Was I good?

BRIDGET

I think so. I think you were good. (beat) What about me? Was I a good girl?

MEG

God, you were the best kid, Bridge! You were, like, a champion of a kid, just the sweetest- You were a fucking ace little kid. And now you have two very, very good little kids.

BRIDGET

Brendan hits, sometimes, now. I'm really afraid. Joe's not "better," not at all. I'm afraid all the time.

MEG

I can't tell you . . . how sorry I am, Bridge. For everything.

BRIDGET

I'm really, really afraid.

MEG

Look. You and I are going to get in the car, and we're going --- right this minute --- we're going to go get your kids. And we're going to-

BRIDGET

Oh, I don't know- I wonder if that's a good idea.

MEG

-whisk them away. Right out of there. And you, too.

MEG (CONT'D)

We'll make a plan, Bridge.

BRIDGET

I don't know if he'd let us go.

MEG

Fuck him! Fuck Joe! (hefts the statue of the Virgin Mary.) I'll smite him, okay? He lifts a finger, or breaks a chair, anything, I will smite him with the Protector of the Innocent. He so much as bats an eyelash- I almost hope he does, you know what I'm saying? I'll cold-cock that motherfucker with the Blessed Virgin Mary.

BRIDGET

(small laugh) You can't do that, Margaret Mary-

MEG

(crosses, sets the statue in its place) And then: you, and me, and the kids -- we'll all check in at the Comfort Inn. Not some fucking Tam-O'Shanter Motel, with Joe. We'll get a big ol' suite with a bunch of deluxe king beds.

BRIDGET

Is there a pool?

MEG

Hell, yes, there's a pool; there's two pools, and a water slide -- there's two water slides -- and a miniature golf course, and a video game room, and cable TV, and there's a giant buffet that serves all the old brands.

BRIDGET

I want to. I do. But probably. . . I don't think he'll let us go with you, even if you smited- or, smote him. (silence) You're not trying to rescue me, are you?

MEG

(thinks) Okay, you know what: no. No. I won't hurt him, Bridge, and it's your choice. Completely your deal. Whatever you decide to do.

BRIDGET

My deal. (stronger) What I decide.

MEG

Either way: I'll have your back.

BRIDGET

We can pretend I'm taking the kids to go shopping --- at the big box store.

MEG

He hates that, doesn't he? Oh, that's good.

BRIDGET

I'll say it's for snacks! Easy Cheez . . . for the wake.

MEG

Right. But we're not going to that wake, Bridge. We're going to care for the living. So you'll pick up the kids. And we'll drive away, waving goodbye: "Bye, Joe! Goodbye!" . . . And when you look out the back window, he'll be this little fucking dot in the distance, and then he'll be even littler, and littler, and then: Then, he'll be gone.

MEG crosses to her backpack. Dumps out the diaries. BRIDGET hugs MEG, a big bear hug.

BRIDGET

What about Siara's family?

They look at each other, but no answer comes. MEG puts on her now-empty backpack. The two women exit. Lights fade on the statue.

END OF PLAY.