

By

A capstone project submitted for  
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University Honors  
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APPROVED

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Dr.  
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## Abstract

THE SPICE OF LIFE

ACT 1

Scene 1

SETTING: Living room of MARY JANE'S home.  
Room is emptied of all normalities  
and has tools and rags on the  
floor.

AT RISE: MARY JANE is sitting on the floor  
looking over the big industrial  
floor sander. Cell phone rings.

(Scott's voice will not be heard, but his lines are  
included.)

MARY JANE

Hi, Scott.

(Hey, how's it going?)

I've made some progress, but this sander's shaking funny.

(It's supposed to shake.)

But it's not shaking like normal.

(Well, call the store and they'll help you fix it.)

Yeah, I'll call if I can't figure it out. What time is it?

(10:15)

Aww, crap. I have to take it back at 12:00. For an  
industrial sander, this is way too temperamental.

(Sorry I can't be there to help.)

Don't worry. You're working the swap meet?

(Yeah. Are any of the kids coming?)

Yeah, Becks should be here in a few.

(Pause Did you tell her?)

No.

(Why?)

I don't know how to tell her.

(You should probably do it sooner than later.)

I know. (Pause) Blasco brought a family by Thursday.

(Oh really, how'd it go?)

They seemed really interested.

(Mary, you're doing good.)

I don't feel like I'm doing that good of a job. To be honest I never thought this would happen. It just kinda felt like a bad dream that I had to play along with until I woke up.

(You did the best you could do.)

You know, I keep wondering about that. What if I had done something different? I keep wracking my brain and I just...

(Don't blame yourself.)

I feel like it's my fault.

(I'm sorry... Hey, my break is about to end.)

Oh, okay. Thanks for checking in.

(We'll talk later.)

Sounds good. Oh hey, it looks like I fixed it.

(What was wrong?)

A loose nut. I wish life was that simple.

(Yeah. I'll call you later, okay?)

Okay, bye.

*(MARY JANE starts replacing a sanding pad. REBEKAH unlocks the front door and enters.)*

MARY JANE

Hi, Honey. Thanks for coming home.

REBEKAH  
*(annoyed)*

It's where the heart is.

MARY JANE

The junker clothes are on my bed.

REBEKAH

My usual?

MARY JANE

Uh huh.

REBEKAH

Did you eat breakfast yet?

MARY JANE

No. But I need your help with the floor.

REBEKAH

You never eat when you get like this.

MARY JANE

We'll pick up lunch from Tio's.

REBEKAH

Really, I can make you up something real quick.

MARY JANE

*Really*, I really need you right here.

REBEKAH

But you need to eat.

MARY JANE

I also need to return the sander in an hour and a half.

REBEKAH

An hour and a half, huh? I'm guessing you've been at this all night?

MARY JANE

Pretty much.

REBEKAH

Mom, you're not as young as you used to be.

MARY JANE

Look, did you come home to help or just remind me that I'm old enough to have a college-age daughter? By the way, how are your classes?

REBEKAH

Still on the Dean's List.

MARY JANE

That's my Becks.

REBEKAH

So. Breakfast?

MARY JANE

Honey, I'm not hungry.

REBEKAH

Mom.

MARY JANE

Anyways, I feel pudgy.

REBEKAH

You are not pudgy.

MARY JANE

Well, you're not in my skin.

REBEKAH

Yeah, because if I were, I'd be eating breakfast or taking a nap.

MARY JANE

What is it with you? Did you wake up on the wrong side of the bed?

REBEKAH

No, did you? Oh wait, you didn't even sleep last night.

MARY JANE

Becks, go change.

REBEKAH

Do I have to?

MARY JANE

What's that supposed to mean?

REBEKAH

Do I have to?

MARY JANE

How many times have I asked you to come home and help?

REBEKAH

Well, this is the first, but...

MARY JANE

So why are you complaining?

REBEKAH

When I was at home I helped all the time. I mean, I felt like it was all the time. I know I wasn't here always, like with the garage...

MARY JANE

That's for sure.

REBEKAH

But I helped a lot. And, now I just don't want to do the floor.

MARY JANE

I don't either, Becks, but we need to get it done.

REBEKAH

Okay, but it's your project. You're just doing way more than you should, like always, and it sucks seeing you this way.

MARY JANE

You know why I have to do this.

REBEKAH

But why didn't you just hire someone to fumigate.

MARY JANE

Too expensive.

REBEKAH

Oh, come on. You wheel and deal like nobody's business. You could have convinced the fumigator to do the work and pay you.

MARY JANE

You know, you're so much funnier since you moved out.

REBEKAH

Perhaps I'll change my major to comic relief. Maybe minor in under water basket weaving.

MARY JANE

You've changed your major enough. In fact, I'd like to see you graduate before I die.

REBEKAH

Well, don't make those plans anytime soon 'cause I don't have money to bury you. You know, my accounting professor keeps reminding me that students have a negative net worth.

MARY JANE

It's not just students.

REBEKAH

And that's precisely why I'm going to school.

MARY JANE

Well then today you have the opportunity and privilege to attend the University of Hard Knocks. We require uniforms, so go change.

REBEKAH

I don't remember applying.

MARY JANE

No application needed.

REBEKAH

What a shame. I wonder what the retention rate is.

MARY JANE

Guess we'll find out.

REBEKAH

Well, I planned on helping in the kitchen...with breakfast.

MARY JANE

Plans change. Better learn that now.

REBEKAH

Sounds like you're speaking from experience.

MARY JANE

Maybe so.

REBEKAH

Maybe we should talk about it.

MARY JANE

And maybe we shouldn't. Go change.

REBEKAH

Well, you've always been honest with me before.

MARY JANE

Honesty, is that what you want?

REBEKAH

Please.

MARY JANE

Well then, let me give it to you straight. This "project," as you call it, isn't like before. In fact, it's very different.

REBEKAH

*(Challenging)* How?

MARY JANE

Because I'm selling the house.

REBEKAH

What?

MARY JANE

A family came by Thursday and will probably make an offer.

REBEKAH

Why?

MARY JANE

'Cause it's a nice house.

REBEKAH

No, I mean why are you selling it?

MARY JANE

I can't afford it anymore.

REBEKAH

You're selling this house?

MARY JANE

Yes.

REBEKAH

You're selling my home?

MARY JANE

It's mine too.

REBEKAH

You didn't grow up here.

MARY JANE

Rebekah, go change.

REBEKAH

No. Scott and I played soccer in the backyard before his accident. He stayed here with us. *(Pointing)* His bed was right by that window. Remember?

*(MARY JANE begins clearing  
the floor of tools and  
rags.)*

REBEKAH

Liz and Sarah would jump off the top bunk in our room, and I'd pile all these blankets and pillows beneath them.

MARY JANE

I'm selling the house.

REBEKAH

Remember one time Liz jumped too far and sprained her wrist. Remember how you wrapped it. We didn't have medical 'cause dad was out of work.

MARY JANE

I'm counting on the family making an offer.

REBEKAH

*(Knowing she will get MARY  
JANE'S attention)*

I remember kissing Billy Henderson under the oak tree.

MARY JANE

Rebekah Grace, you kissed Billy Henderson?

REBEKAH

It was a dare.

MARY JANE  
*(disbelief)*

Really?

REBEKAH

Well, I liked him.

MARY JANE

First kiss?

REBEKAH

That is not the point.

MARY JANE

Then what is?

REBEKAH

You're selling off my entire childhood and everything I am.

MARY JANE

Millions of people sell their homes.

REBEKAH

This is different.

MARY JANE

How?

REBEKAH

It just is.

MARY JANE

And so is everyone else's case.

REBEKAH

How can you be so apathetic?

MARY JANE

Apathetic? You think I want to sell my home?

REBEKAH

You could've fooled me.

MARY JANE

I did everything I could.

REBEKAH

Then why didn't you tell me you were short on money?

MARY JANE

How was that gonna help?

REBEKAH

I could have gotten a job.

MARY JANE

And go to school full time?

REBEKAH

Tons of students do it.

MARY JANE

Well, I wasn't about to kill you making you do both.

REBEKAH

I feel pretty dead right now.

MARY JANE

I don't know what to say to you.

REBEKAH

You've said quite enough. Thank you.

MARY JANE

Well do you want me to say I'm sorry? Sorry I could never get a job that paid enough. Sorry I'm too stupid or anxious or both to take that darn CSET.

REBEKAH

Mom, you're not stupid.

MARY JANE

Or how about that after I had you five kids I thought to myself, "Hmmm, I really want them to have a good education and good foundation in life." So for 19 years I home-schooled, pinching every penny because most of the time your dad was out of work. Then, after 25 years, we divorce. And I'm left without a career, practically no money, and now no home. So let me say it again. Becks, I am sorry.

REBEKAH

Now I don't know what to say.

MARY JANE

You can say, "Yes mom, I'll help you finish the floor."

REBEKAH

I'll go change.

*(REBEKAH exits)*

MARY JANE  
*(to self)*

Billy Henderson?

THE END