

Tuition.

By Thomas Daniel Valls

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CHARACTERS

MA; Female, Mid 50's. Believes in Guilt. Takes in a lot of sun these days. Jewish-accented.

BEN; Male, 24. Ma's boy, if you can image that. He lives in New York City now, and acts like he does.

NOTES

The play takes place at 3:55 PM. Give or take. Close to 4 PM. This is an important time for Ma!

It'll be sunny. In Fall; so there's less birds than usual. Waves are still crashing though.

MA will wear a one-piece swimsuit with a big straw hat and big sunglasses.

BEN will wear what he wore the night before; ideally a long sleeve wool shirt; torn in the back. Tight jeans. Busted boots. The laces are still bunched in his pocket.

His face will be bruised. His wrists too. His arms are scratched and when he walks, he walks in pain for the glass that's still dug up in his heel.

Pre-Show MUSIC: *BABY DON'T GO* by DUM DUM GIRLS.

LIGHTS UP:

Waves crash. Let us know where we are. MA doesn't look much at BEN. She's reading ELLE.

BEN

You'd think the Metrorail would've been built to go to the fucking beach by now. Instead, we gotta 8-inch cut dick of a retractable roof stadium where we prefer talking about the views from our fucking *seats* over- you know- the fucking *BASEBALL* team. If you ask me- hey, Ma. ...Ma. Ma, you *listening?*

MA

...They added that Metrorail extension to the airport.

BEN

A *radical* idea that was.

MA

They built Dolphin Mall too, that's got a Dave n' Busters.

BEN

You don't even care about what I'm sayin'?

MA

-The city didn't make you late, Benny.

BEN

Benjamin.

MA

I *birthed* you, I can call you whatever I want.

BEN

I'm a different man now.

MA

Still as late as always, though.

BEN

I made it, didn't I?

MA

Ten minutes to four, ya made it. I gotta head back home round four-fifteen; your step-father's taking me out to Sushi Sake.

BEN

That place's shit.

MA

Better than that overpriced *hoopla* you and Henry suggested we go to in *Winewood*.

BEN

'Wynwood'.

MA

It's a *grand opening*, mister New Yorker *mouthpiece*, for your *information*.

BEN

It's Miami, Florida, there's a grand opening of a Sushi Sake every *week*. It's your fucking *anniversary* for Christ's sake.

MA

We can't all be running around Times Square eating up at your delis and delicatessens and *goddamned* what (!?), *M&M's* store!?

BEN

I don't do that tourist-trap bullshit.

MA

Ah-Ha, my bad; you get drunk; *NYU* and *LIQUOR; WINE AND BEER AND HENRY!*

BEN

You're wrong.

MA

Anything I got in my *mind's* better than what you tell me goes on between you two.

BEN

Henry and I don't live together anymore.

MA

So, what, now you only *travel* together?

BEN

I'm real sorry I'm late, Ma, okay? There. I am. But I'm // here, now...

MA

// JUST the sort of thing to say 'you're sorry', I'm *SORRY* too- I say I want a day with your stepfather and you tell me that, 'NO, you wanna spend a bit of my day with *me*,' The *FUCK*-?

BEN

It seemed appropriate!

MA

You and I aren't married.

Gross. BEN

I SAID WE AREN'T. MA

Yeah, Ma, but the inferred reverse of that implication. BEN

Fucking A' I paid eighty thousand dollars of private university tuition for you to become an educated jackass, you outsmarting your *own* mother. You wear that outfit last night? MA

...Benny-

BENJAMIN. BEN

I BIRTHED you! MA

- It's nothing. BEN

MA starts to pack up the beach camp.

I'm going home. MA

'My coming with you? BEN

Up to you, // the fuck you do. MA

//What the *Hell* Ma? BEN

I only slept in *half* as long as I would've liked to today because *GOD* knows your stepfather puts me to fucking *SLEEP* if I haven't rested and had my Sprite Zero; but I got *UP*, because my son wanted to beach with me. MA

'Go to the beach *with* me'. BEN

That correction cost me eighty thousand, too, I thank *myself*. MA

BEN

The only reason we came to Miami was so that I could *visit* you!

MA

And why'd you have to come with *Henry*?

BEN

So I could *FUCK* him in the moonlight, Ma // What's it *MATTER*-!?

MA

// What time did you guys *REALLY* wake up today, ah?

BEN

...Things would've been much better if we'd just been able to stay at your place.

MA

He's not *ALLOWED* in my house.

BEN

I know that, you said it for a month after we all New Years-ed together.

MA

That night and my sayin' so was a good sign for you to ditch him.

BEN

Henry's different now, he lives in *L.A.*

MA

That New Year's Eve he knocked over my exercise bike, yelled in my face, and pushed up against me and your stepfather so that he could *leave* the house. I'm gonna tell you something *BENNY*, the thought of you with that *drunk* after all that, after all the other times he came after you and *you* alone-.

BEN

I forgave him.

MA

I raised you by myself for eight years so that I'd never have to see you be so *weak*.

BEN

I thought it'd be *WORTH* it *eventually*.

MA

Ah-*HA* and *where's* he now Baby, YOU GOT BLACK N' BLUES // ON YOUR FACE!

BEN

// It was an *ACCIDENT*-

MA

A slip and a fall and 'OOPS' in the fucking FACE (!?), *COME ON, BENJAMIN!*

BEN

-HE'S GONE HE'S LEFT HE'S NEVER COMING BACK.

MA

...Wow, the name really does it for you. You hit him back too?

BEN

...Ma-

MA

-*Boy*, I hope you fucking hit him back *good*. No, I fucking do, I hope you got him out of your system, all that *love*.

...How good'ju get him?

BEN

Busted lip. Black eye. Brought out the baby in him.

MA

And to you?

BEN

Bashed my head against the wall. Threw jars and bottles and cans. Beer spraying in the room like geysers. They had to remove the glass from underneath my feet.

MA

'They'.

BEN

Started the same way shit always did, you know, just fucking comparing and then destroying-

MA

-Who removed the glass from your feet?

BEN

And then I wanted him to leave but he wouldn't and then I fucking climbed on him and like, and then, like, it just went all out-

MA

...Benjamin...

BEN

...And he screamed at me, he fucking screamed at me the fucking bastard and he went **'LOOK AT WHAT YOU DID TO MY FACE'**, // Just like *THAT!*

MA

// Tell me, Benjamin...

BEN

...So you *know*, he called the fucking cops on me and like, they came on over and he moped and cried and shit like the stupid fucking martyr he wishes he could be and-

MA

-They took you to jail?

BEN

...I mean, that's what happens when someone calls the fucking cops.

MA

...Eighty thousand dollars to have you *thrown* in-

BEN

I fucked up.

MA

I placed a *WAGER* on you.

BEN

It was a *FUCK-UP*.

MA

You *disrespected* me. To have to *put* up with that *boy* in my house, for me to tell you I never wanted him around, for YOU to continue to see him; I *PAID* for you to be smarter and instead you got yourself arrested.

BEN

HE called the cops on me.

MA

I *TOLD* you not to date another fucking *writer*; the both of you were toxic, *ARE* toxic and the damn boy's too pudgy and too much of a fucking alcoholic to put up with *your* kinda honesty.

BEN

Or my strength.

MA

Don't flatter yourself, I coulda beat the shit out of that immobilized *cesspool*.

BEN

Then why *didn't* you?

MA

Because I can't do everything for you anymore. In order for me to let go of you living in that city I gotta believe that you're capable of living and making the right decisions by yourself. You've both ruined *you*. You *knew* what he was capable of doing and you *knew*, you *KNEW* Benjamin, what he was capable of making *you* do to *him*.

BEN

You hound me whenever I come down, I brought him down to escape that.

MA

And you wanted to *beach* today to escape *HIM*.

BEN

There's some sort of irrational balance to it all, I get that; some quasi-masochistic equilibrium jerking off in my fucking head; We are what we are and I want what I think I *need*.

MA

What about what you *deserve*!?

BEN

'To be loved'?

MA

To *ACCEPT* mine and *MOVE* on!

BEN

You're my *MOM*.

MA

You oughta take it rather than *BEG* for his.

BEN

I haven't changed in 17 hours. My back smells like piss and Egg McMuffin and my jeans smell like rotted wood and moth-eaten cotton; I'm missing 3 centimeters of the tip of my hairline because all I would fucking do is pull strand by strand; guys thought I was a fucking coke addict- No – a Coke *LORD* because I was a Cuban *JEW* moving around and around and around; some of the fuckers in the cell were practically salivating with their tongues out *BEGGING* to catch a strand of my hair. I need a *different* kind of *LOVE*; one *devoid* of you, one that I had with him. One that would hold me-

MA

He *BEAT* you up. He *broke* you.

BEN

And he also held me together. That's *it*, that's the only fucking way someone can know how to hold you. If they know *how*.

MA

He brought out the worst in you.

BEN

He brought out everything else that there was.

MA

I don't like that *everything* else.

BEN

You're my Ma. You're not supposed to know about it all.

MA

I'm trying to know all that I can.

BEN

It's unfair to *give* you that though.

MA

I'm trying to be my own person and being a mother's a part of that, I *deserve* plenty.

BEN

You deserve to go to *Sushi Sake* too?

MA

Whatever it takes. I'd rather be at home with my pinot noir and my box set of *QUE PASA U.S.A* but we do what we must.

BEN

Like give into his bullshit *idea* of a good time?

MA

We accommodate one another. It's more than you know, more than you're supposed to know now that you think you're able to take and take and hold as *much* as you think you deserve. You'll learn to give things up. Not to *them*. You just give them up.

BEN

I can't want that.

MA

I taught you *that*. You'd rather jump off a bridge before giving up what makes you 'you'.

BEN

You ever wonder if the guy who invented bridges thought that one day some poor fucker was gonna jump off of one?

MA

I think the guy who invented bridges just wanted to make a bridge.

BEN

Or maybe he thought, 'fuck it'.

MA

Or maybe he didn't pay as much as I fucking did to put you through.

BEN

When are you gonna stop with that?

MA

With what?

BEN

The guilting.

MA

I don't guilt.

BEN

No, you do.

MA

No.

BEN

Yeah. You do.

MA

I'll stop with it once I become the person you believe will one day become 'no-longer' your mother.

BEN

I'm my own guy, though.

MA

It ain't about that, though.

BEN

Yeah.

MA

At least you didn't call me when you were in jail.

BEN

Right.

MA

That was good of you, I would've woken up and been pissing till morning.

BEN

A nice white cop saw me and helped me through the system in half the time.

MA

Cause you were white too?

BEN

I like to think it's because he wanted to bone me.

I didn't wanna wake you. That's why I didn't call.

MA

Thank you.

BEN

No problem.

MA

You got a lawyer, too, then?

BEN

Yeah. A hipster named Julio.

MA

I didn't know Miami had those.

BEN

They don't. Not really.

MA

I know you're your own man. I just like to think there's more time to teach you.

BEN

So I learn?

MA

So I have something to do.

BEN

I'm okay with that.

MA

I'm okay with that, too.

BLACKOUT.