

Six Fights on a Summer's Night

By

Madelyn Sergel

6265 Sleepy Hollow Lane
Gurnee, Illinois, 60031
847-856-0648
m.sergel@comcast.net

Six Fights on a Summer's Night Character Breakdown

Lolly – 20s. Kind, funny and very pretty. Professional wedding planner. Youngest sister of Tania and July

Greta – 30s. Pragmatic. Two months pregnant, a stay-at-home mother with two small children. A bit weary. Married to Lolly, Tania and July's brother Tommy

July – Late 30s. Strong, determined. Middle sister of Tania and Lolly. Married, mother to one young child and a recent breast cancer survivor

Marissa – 30s/40s. Recently divorced. A writer, cousin to Tania, July and Lolly

Tania - 40s. Battling clinical depression. Oldest sister of July and Lolly

Cleo – 60s/70s. Wise and accessible. Mother to Tania, July and Lolly, aunt to Marissa, mother-in-law to Greta

Setting: The family summer house

Time: The present

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ACT ONE

The back patio of an upscale summer home. It is late afternoon. A few garden chairs are scattered around the patio and remnants of a barbecue can be seen. A large, low trunk of costumes rests at the edge of the patio, overflowing with capes, swords and hats. An opened diaper bag rests in a corner. A baby bottle sits on a low brick ledge that encircles the patio.

GRETA and LOLLY enter from the house.

LOLLY

Oh, cut it out, Greta. You're doing great. No one could even tell you're pregnant.

Greta grabs the baby bottle and tosses it across the patio. It lands right inside the diaper bag.

GRETA

I feel huge.

LOLLY

I'm going to be an aunt again.

She does a little dance.

GRETA

Bully for you. I'm gonna be a mother again.

LOLLY

You're a brilliant mother.

GRETA

I'm a tired, worthless mother.

LOLLY

Who cares? I'm gonna be an aunt again.

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She repeats her dance, adding a flourish to the end.

LOLLY

And the kids are adorable. That little play they put on, with the knights and the battle, and the ledge was the castle. They are so cute.

GRETA

Yeah. Cute. They are cute.

Lolly throws herself down in a chair and props her feet up.

LOLLY

Are you going to go back to work after this one? You threatened, if guys you had a third, he had to get you a nanny and-

GRETA

(Waving her hand)

I know, I know. Of course not, Lolly. I'm going to let some stranger raise my kids? Plus it's cheaper for me too...you know...um...stay home really because...

Greta trails off as she looks off to the horizon.

LOLLY

See 'em?

GRETA

Yeah. Tommy's got Tina in the water and your mom's got Hank. She is the best mother-in-law. I've got nothing to bitch about with her. Cleo's...just so great.

Lolly gets up and begins halfheartedly picking up plastic glasses, emptying them off the side of the deck.

LOLLY

She's a cool mom too. No wonder she's a cool grandma. God, I would love to stay home with kids all day.

Greta slowly looks over to Lolly's back as Lolly rambles on.

I mean, to cuddle them and raise them, watch them grow. It just must be so magical. Guiding them, every day, inspiring them, nurturing their hopes and dreams. How could

LOLLY (CONT'D)

you leave that?

BUSINESS ONE and MOMMY TWO appear at either end of the patio. Business One will be the actress that will play Tania. Mommy Two, the actress that will play Marissa. Business One is wearing a soft, elegant suit. Mommy Two is wearing a stained sweatshirt and leggings.

Business One and Mommy Two begin slowly circling each other around the perimeter of the patio.

I mean, how could you face yourself? Knowing other people are raising your kids? Someone else is experiencing all those wonderful moments.

Business One deftly lunges and grabs Mommy Two in a wrestling hold.

GRETA

Yeah, but is it normal? Really, for one child to be so dependant on one parent? I mean, the nuclear family is abnormal! Please! The tribe, the village, there were a bunch of people taking care of kids for centuries. I think it just might be bad for kids for the mother to stay home.

Mommy Two slips free and attempts to lock Business One in an arm hold.

This stay-at-home mothering is for the birds! Children should have a lot of people loving them.

They struggle in a series of holds but Business One keeps the upper hand.

The mom gets more fulfillment, so she is happier, the immune systems of the kids are strengthened because of all the exposure to different...stuff...and everyone feels more connected to the group, the village, tribe thing. And, trust me, there would be a lot fewer women freaking out too.

Mommy One slips her arm around Business One.

LOLLY

Greta! I can't believe you're saying this. YOU stay at home! Why else...I mean, that's why...children need their mothers to feel safe. If your mother is going to abandon you, not be there for you when you are at your most vulnerable, weakest, what is that going to tell you about the rest of the world? About how worthy you are of being loved?

Mommy Two flips Business One and pins her to the floor. Hard.

Greta, you are the heart of your home. You know that.

GRETA

Different people can give a child different things.

Business One tries to break free but can't.

Traditional doesn't always mean right. And if one person bails out, like the dad, those left behind are weaker and more exposed because their skills are more specialized. Or just plain obsolete.

LOLLY

Tommy would never leave you! He adores you and the kids. He's a wreck when you go to the movies with me.

Business One is working loose.

GRETA

But I'm going crazy. Nuts! Bonkers! These kids. 24 hours a day? What was I thinking? If the mom isn't happy how can the family be? Staying at home makes you a weak, pathetic blob.

Business Two breaks free. Winded, they circle each other.

LOLLY

You weak? Greta, could take on that...ummm...boxer guy, the big one, that Tommy was watching last month. You sound-

GRETA

-tired. I'm tired. I'm just wrestling with this. This one is hard.

Mommy Two springs an unexpected hold from behind on Business One.

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GRETA (CONT'D)

It was a surprise. This baby. I was...we were dumb. And lazy.

Lolly bursts out laughing. Business One and Mommy Two grab, struggle and release. They eye each other.

LOLLY

Hey, I was a surprise too. Mom told me. I asked why I was so much younger than Tania and July...or why they were so much older...whatever...and she told me. But she said she and Dad were really happy. All that stuff. Never did I feel...like she regretted me. The opposite, really.

GRETA

Your mom makes everyone feel special.

LOLLY

Do you have regrets about the last six years?

Business One and Mommy Two lunge again.

GRETA

Yes.

Business One grabs and holds Mommy Two but then loses her grip.

No. Yes and no. There's just no winning this one. It feels like there is no way to win.

A bell rings from inside the house. Business One and Mommy Two break away from each other, panting and sweating, shake hands and exit.

LOLLY

Oh, good. Thank god you made Greta pie.

GRETA
(*Shrugging*)

I hate letting people down.

Greta rises and exits into the house.

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LOLLY
(Calling to her)

You never do, Greta!

Greta merely grunts. Marissa and July enter from the side of the house, coming from the beach. Both are wearing comfortable summer clothes with ancient, worn sweaters thrown over their shoulders.

Whose idea was swimming?

JULY

Your crazy brother's!

MARISSA

No! It was your crazy cousin's!

JULY

They look at each other in mock rage and begin a girly slapping fight.

My cousin's not crazy!

MARISSA

My brother's not crazy!

JULY

Is so!

MARISSA

Is not! And, is so!

JULY

Is not! And is so!

MARISSA

Slap. Slap. Slap.

Stop it.

LOLLY

Lolly points to Marissa.

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LOLLY (CONT'D)

Your cousin Tommy's crazy.

Lolly points to July.

Your brother and mine, Tommy, is crazy.

They stop the feigned fight and throw themselves down on the patio chairs.

MARISSA

Hey, Lolly, I've just squeezed myself into a bathing suit, a bit tighter than it was last year, so please stop looking so thin and beautiful and young. Is that Greta pie I'm smelling?

LOLLY

Yeah.

JULY

We should order pizza.

MARISSA

July, we just ate a ton of food.

JULY

I have a zest for life. Lolly, call. I'm serious. Jake said I could get fat, he wouldn't mind.

LOLLY

Did we not just have an entire of barbecue?

JULY

Tell me you all don't want some Antonio's Pizza! Come on, Lolly, you call. They love you. Just do your Lolly thing and it'll be here so fast and they'll give us that twenty percent off. Antonio loves you.

GRETA

(Yelling from offstage)

Pizza does sound good.

Marissa, who has been watching the horizon, calls to Greta.

MARISSA

Greta, Tommy's waving. That befuddled thing that he...

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GRETA
(Still offstage)

Tell him the side door, Marissa.

Marissa stands.

MARISSA
(Screaming)

THE SIDE DOOR!

*She waves him furiously to the left.
July stands and helps her point.*

GRETA
(Offstage)

The kid's clothes are there and the towels and...

MARISSA
(Screaming)

THE KID'S CLOTHES ARE THERE AND THE TOWELS! WE'RE ORDERING
PIZZA!

Marissa calmly sits back down.

JULY

My god, Marissa. You scare the hell out of me. Come watch Freddy for me for a week, will you? You are amazing. Where did you get those lungs?

MARISSA

Try living with, and then divorcing, an Italian man, excuse me, an Italian boy in men's clothing, you get really good at shouting.

JULY

Yeah, he could get going. Can't say I miss him.

MARISSA

Me either.

LOLLY

So, we're ordering pizza?

JULY

No, you're ordering pizza, you young Lolita you. I want that discount.

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MARISSA

Where's Tania?

LOLLY

Upstairs. Napping.

MARISSA

Still? Wow.

JULY

Are we sure?

LOLLY

Yeah. I checked and Mom checked and I think Tommy checked.

MARISSA

I checked too, awhile ago.

JULY

Great. That should make her happy. Not that she believes in being happy.

GRETA

(Offstage)

I checked on her too.

They all sheepishly begin to laugh.

JULY

Well, what does she expect? So, Marissa?

MARISSA

So?

JULY

Yeah. So?

MARISSA

So?

LOLLY

Yeah! So!

MARISSA

Oh! Well, the divorce. God, well, it's done. I'm single. A divorcee. It sounds so...sexy.

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JULY

You are sexy.

LOLLY

Very.

MARISSA

Am I? Good. I suppose. I've actually started a book about it. A novel. Fiction but I'm using all my notes and stuff.

JULY

Al's worst nightmare! Yowzaa! Marry a writer, treat her like shit, you're gonna get what you deserve! Yee haw.

MARISSA

I've got the story. It's in my head and it's really not about Al. I mean, of course, he'll think it is. He thinks global warming and fruit filled Pop-Tarts are about him but it really isn't. But I'm stuck. And it's the weirdest thing! It's the point of view. I can't decide whether to tell it from the first person-

FIRST PERSON (the actress that will play Cleo) appears stage left.

-or third person.

THIRD PERSON (the actress that plays Greta) appears stage right. They raise their fists and begin circling each other.

It's all about form. I'm ready to begin. But I can't choose! I want to talk to Aunt Cleo about it. I did decide to place it in a different era. I wanted it in a more elegant, formal time.

First Person and Third Person lower their fists and cross to the trunk of costumes and pull out two swords and assume dueling stance.

I've put it in the mid 1800's. And I know it will be told completely from the woman's side. Her experience.

First Person and Third Person lower their swords, look at Marissa, and then go back to the trunk and rummage, finding some skirts and

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putting them on. Third puts on a hat.

LOLLY
Why?

First and Third look at Marissa.

MARISSA

It felt right. I wanted to make it, the divorce, really hard. Socially, culturally and emotional. Because it is. It seems simple but it's not. It affects your entire world.

First and Third resume dueling stance but also have to draw up their skirts and adjust, allowing for the extra fabric.

It's complicated today but it was really complicated then.

First and Third begin to thrust and parry. Marissa rises and crosses stage right, stops and observes the duel. Lolly and July watch Marissa.

JULY

Marissa, sweet cousin, are you actually seeing something?

MARISSA

In my mind's eye, yes, July, I am.

*July and Lolly grin at each other.
July suddenly runs to the trunk.*

JULY

You said 1800s, right? Come on, we'll help!

She puts a hat on and tosses a couple of hats to Marissa and Lolly, the hat going to Marissa flying right between the dueling swords.

MARISSA

Hey, don't interrupt my creative flow.

Marissa slams the hat on her head.

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JULY

I thought you were blocked, not flowing.

First blocks Third's thrust. July then crosses directly between the dueling action and pulls Lolly to her feet. She grabs Lolly's shoulders and turns her. Hats on their heads, they watch the "imaginary" action.

Come on, Third Person. Fight back! Hit her!

Third Person tosses her sword up, grabs it at its' base and then slugs First Person with her other fist.

As Lolly, July and Marissa banter, TANIA, in a dark, shapeless dress, appears far upstage right.

LOLLY

Come on...(to Marissa)Who am I rooting for?

MARISSA

First Person.

LOLLY

Come on, Firsty. Clean her clock.

First Person spins, whacks Third Person with her sword and then leans in and snatches Third's pocket watch, fob and chain away and "polishes" it against her skirt. Marissa groans in disdain.

MARISSA

(To Lolly)

Are you nuts? They did not clean clocks in the nineteenth century. You guys are being no help at all! I've got to work this out.

Tania turns to exit. First and Third redouble their efforts. Marissa spies Tania.

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MARISSA (CONT'D)

Hey Tania!

First and Third freeze.

TANIA

Hi.

MARISSA

Come. Play. I mean, sit, we were just goofing around.

Lolly and Marissa pull off their hats, tossing them in the trucks as First and Third exit, swords in hand and costumes on. Tania crosses back to the patio and sits.

I'm creatively blocked and Lolly and July were being no help whatsoever.

JULY

Hey, I was participating in your psychosis. That's my motto. If you start hearing voices, take notes. Lolly...pizza! Come on. Work your magic.

Lolly exits as July sits, her back to Tania, closes her eyes and begins sunbathing.

MARISSA

How was your nap?

TANIA

Good.

MARISSA

Doing okay?

TANIA

Yeah. Good. The barbecue was good. I'm not used to so much food. God, I don't need it though. The meds have me so bloated.

Greta enters.

GRETA

Hey, Tania! You're up. How was your nap?

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Good. TANIA

You doing okay? GRETA

Yeah. Fine. TANIA

She pauses and then repeats.

The barbecue was good. I'm not used to so much food. God, I don't need it though. The meds have me so bloated.

Cleo enters.

Tania, you're up. How was your nap? CLEO

She goes over to Tania and pushes some hair out of her eyes.

JULY
(Eyes closed, still sunbathing)
It was good. She feels fine but she's not used to so much food but she doesn't need it, boy, the meds have her really bloated. Lolly's ordering pizza.

Greta merely looks at Lolly, still stretched out in her chair.

CLEO
(To Greta)
Tommy's struggling. He asked me to find you.

Cleo crosses to a potted plant and pulls off a few dead blooms as Greta groans.

I'll go. I'll go. JULY

You are a goddess among sister-in-laws. GRETA

July rises.

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JULY

Yeah, yeah. When it's not your own kid it's easier. And husband too, for that matter. *(yelling as she exits into the house)* Tommy, you are the most pathetic brother in the entire world, you can't handle a couple of kids in swimsuits. Aunt July is coming to save you and tickle you. The tickle monster is coming...

CLEO

Greta, honey, you look beat. Go take a lie-down before the next food onslaught. Remember, Scrabble and cards later.

TANIA

Yeah, I don't want to be the only one indulging. Help me not look so bad in the eyes of my family.

GRETA

You look fine. But I will. Cleo, if Tommy or the kids need me, don't tell them where I am.

CLEO

Well done, Greta.

GRETA

Just following your advice.

CLEO

No, I don't give advice. I-

GRETA

-I know, I know, you don't give advice, merely suggestions to be considered. But Cleo, your suggestions are worth about ten years of other people's advice.

Greta kisses Cleo and exits. Marissa and Tania sit in silence as Cleo surveys the garden.

CLEO

I'm so glad I put in those late blooming flowers. The touch of color is so nice at the end of the season.

MARISSA

The place looks amazing.

CLEO

One of the many benefits of retiring. Growing old has tremendous drawbacks but it certainly has its rewards too. Whenever I see a house with a garden I envy, or admire, I

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CLEO (CONT'D)

know they either employ a wonderful gardener or somebody in that house is retired.
How's the book coming?

Cleo sits.

MARISSA

Currently, not.

CLEO

I'll go dig up some desert plates. Oh god, and pizza. Alright.

She heaves herself up and starts to exit.

TANIA

Need help, Mom?

Cleo waves her away.

CLEO

You rest, Tania. I'm fine.

Cleo exits.

TANIA

God, you all are so mad at me.

MARISSA

No. No, we're not.

TANIA

Yes. I don't blame you. I would be, if I were you.

MARISSA

No! No, we are not mad at you. Confused and...confused but not mad.

TANIA

It's okay.

MARISSA

Where's Danny?

TANIA

Fishing trip. With Jake and Freddy. July wanted them to do the boy's fishing trip. I think she wants everything back to normal. And Danny needed a break. With...me...everything.

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TANIA (CONT'D)

He likes me being here with Mom and you guys.

MARISSA

Do you like being here with your mom and us?

TANIA

I guess. Yes. It's the same. Sort of. Everybody's sort of...kind of...tense. Tense around me.

MARISSA

Well, we're worried.

TANIA

That I'm going to try to kill myself again? That you are going to walk into the bedroom and find me, dead on the bed.

MARISSA

Well...yeah. That and just worried about you. Wanting to help.

TANIA

Hell, if I knew something you could do, trust me, you all would be the first to know.

MARISSA

How's the new house?

TANIA

Gorgeous.

MARISSA

Lolly said the garden was huge. Did you...

TANIA

Yeah, I started to put one in but...everything's mostly dead from neglect now. I forget to water and...you know...

Tania trails off. Marissa picks up a dead flower head and fiddles with it.

MARISSA

Tania, I think we just don't know what to say. I mean, the first time, I think everybody understood. You were just so sad and the meds, you said they never got them right. But this time. I don't get it.

TANIA

I'm just tired of it.

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MARISSA

I've known people with clinical depression before. Once the meds are-

TANIA

-Three years, Marissa. And they still haven't got them right. Try it. For three years. Three and a half years, in fact. Three and a half years, living in-

MARISSA

-What? Living in what?

The patio grows darker as the sun begins to set.

THUG ONE (actress that plays Lolly) leans against the upstage doorway to the house. She coldly eyes Tania.

TANIA

It. Hovering. Waiting. Every day, checking over my shoulder, in my brain. Every moment, checking my thoughts. Where are my thoughts today? And then the doctors. Having to give a description, every single time, of every med, every mood, how I feel, why I feel how I feel and what I feel I should do about it. It's like describing a guy that mugged you on a dark street, late at night.

Thug One begins playing with a small knife, spinning it, flipping it.

After awhile, I just run out of words. I'm saying the same thing, over and over again. But they can't catch him. He is this slithering snake in my brain, coming up from behind, or even innocently strolling up, right in front of me.

THUG TWO (the actress that plays July) enters and spies Thug One. One, knife in hand, freezes, waiting. Thug Two's hand slowly slides towards the back pocket of her jeans.

Everything looks normal from far away.

One and Two watch each other.

I seem fine. But this sharp little knife is there, in my brain, waiting for the chance to plunge into me.

One and Two whip their knives out, Two lunging for One and missing.

TANIA (CONT'D)

*One and Two now circle each other,
knives out.*

Unexpected. Quick but...creeping.

*One and Two are very slowly
gauging their opponent.*

And I know I look odd, trying to dodge it. The knife in my head.

*One twists awkwardly, avoiding
Two's blade.*

“Why is she acting like that? Why is she sleeping again? She’s so different. Not like the old Tania. She’s so stiff...”

*Two twists and jumps, avoiding the
knife in One's hand.*

“...so distant...”

*Boxed in, One jumps up on the small
patio ledge and races to a better
position.*

“...so weird.” And I’m just trying not to get killed. To keep myself safe from me. And trying to find me, the old me, in the process.

She takes a deep breath.

So I attack it. With meds.

*Tania rises and crosses into the
center of the fight.*

With therapy. And sometimes it gets better.

*One and Two back up, assessing
Tania's intrusion.*

It slinks into the background. But it is always still there, hanging around the street corner. Waiting. Waiting and smiling. Waiting to lunge again, plunging its knife into me. Quick. Fast. And deadly. Deadly me.

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One swiftly moves and plants a knife right in Tania's back.

TANIA (CONT'D)

I hate this neighborhood.

Tania's shoulders merely droop. One puts her hand against Tania's back, yanks the knife out. One and Two then exit, playing with their knives.

MARISSA

So you were tired of fighting?

TANIA

I'm tired of living here. In this mental ghetto with no way out. Ever. It felt inevitable. That...it would get me. It felt that not being would feel more real, more natural and normal and healthy... than being. To be Tania...I just had to stop being me.

MARISSA

And now? Today?

TANIA

"How do you feel today, Tania?" Hum, well let me check my brain and I'll update your score card.

MARISSA

Sorry. I just-

TANIA

-No. I'm sorry. Sorry. I'm fine. Today is mostly fine.

Lolly enters with a large piece of pie.

LOLLY

Greta said I could. It's great. And pizza's on its way.

Lolly shovels a large piece into her mouth. Marissa rises.

MARISSA

Want any, Tania?

TANIA

After pizza.

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MARISSA

(Gesturing to Lolly)

She is scary, isn't she? *(To Lolly)* How do you stay so small?

LOLLY

You forget. I'm the youngest. Everybody likes me small. Small and pretty.

MARISSA

Oh please! It could be worse. Wait until you're old and huge like me!

Marissa exits. Lolly munches pie for awhile.

LOLLY

Where's Mom?

TANIA

Plates, maybe? Get the discount from Antonio?

LOLLY

As ordered by Lieutenant July.

TANIA

Did I ever say sorry, Lolly?

LOLLY

Yeah. A bunch of times. At the hospital mostly.

TANIA

Sorry.

LOLLY

It's okay. I guess. I'm still sort of mad. Not for me. Not at you, really.

TANIA

What?

LOLLY

This time I was mad for Mom. She's getting...did you see? She's got some gray hair. I mean, a lot. And...I don't know. I was just sad and mad for Mom. And you. I love you.

TANIA

Yeah. I know.

Lolly finishes her pie.

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TANIA (CONT'D)

How are you?

LOLLY

Huh?

TANIA

You? How are you? How's the job?

LOLLY

Good. Busy. Incredible that I got off this weekend. It's good that we do it every year...so I know, I like, have a year's notice to block it out. Late summer weddings are popular. Almost as bad as June.

TANIA

What's the worst part of being a wedding planner-

Lolly cuts her off before Tania can finish her last word.

LOLLY

-the bride. I wish I could prescribe medication to these girls. Unbelievable. And they're not all beastly. Sometimes they just can't say no. That's even worse. The jellyfish, I call 'em. Run by their mothers or sisters. God, if I was them, I'd kill my...oh...um...I'd be just really...um...

TANIA

They must hate you. Does being so pretty get in the way? I mean, you must be prettier than most of the brides you work with.

Lolly puts her empty pie plate down.

LOLLY

Yeah. Sometimes being pretty gets in the way.

July, Greta and Marissa enter. Greta and Marissa each have a piece of pie. July has an entire pie tin in one hand and fork in the other.

MARISSA

I can't believe you made her her own pie.

GRETA

It's what she asked for.

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MARISSA

July!

JULY

Go to hell. It was right after the surgery, Greta asked if there was anything she could do and I said I wanted my very own apple pie, all for me, at the weekend at the summer house.

GRETA

She did. What could I say?

MARISSA

True.

JULY

One of the advantages of getting a tit whacked off at thirty eight is that people will say yes to pretty much anything.

TANIA

You are surrounded by a lot of people that love you.

JULY

People did bring the food. And flowers. Cards.

GRETA

I was thrilled when you actually gave me something I could really do.

JULY

You should see the Tupperware collection I have now. And matching lids and everything. Pizza coming?

LOLLY

Yeah.

JULY

Get the..?

LOLLY

Yes, I got the discount.

JULY

Not that it's a big deal, I just think it's hysterical how people roll over for you, Lolly.

LOLLY

It's not for me.

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JULY

What?

LOLLY

It's not me. What they are "rolling over for." It's not me. Lolly.

JULY

Okay, right. But just ignore those voices in your head if they tell you to go towards the light.

TANIA

That's my specialty.

JULY

No kidding.

GRETA

What do you mean, Lolly?

LOLLY

I mean, my looks. They're not me. They are just this external thing that I have no control over.

PRACTITIONER of Tae Kwon Do (the actress that plays Cleo) comes out in a gi (traditional white martial art outfit). She begins going through an advanced form, which is a ritual of practice involving a person performing a series of kicks, jabs and moves repeated in a set pattern. Throughout Lolly's conversation, the Practitioner repeats the form again and again.

It's just an arrangement of bones and hair that everybody else then gives meaning to. Like I'm some being closer to perfection than everybody else.

Practitioner goes through a rapid series of kicks and punches, gracefully dueling with the air.

But I haven't...earned anything. I haven't won a big court case by my brilliant arguing. Or found a vaccine for...something. Or written this great book that everybody loves.

MARISSA

Or an obscure book of short stories that sells nine hundred copies. A hundred, I'm sure, that Aunt Cleo bought.

JULY

Oh god, Lolly, we just think it's funny. And great. That's all. You're terrific. And beautiful. This is not exactly a bad thing.

Lolly starts to turn on the patio lights.

LOLLY

But it is a big thing, to everybody else. I have a leg up on everybody else because of...this arrangement of bones.

JULY

Come on. You haven't exactly suffered because of your looks.

LOLLY

But their not mine. They're everybody else's. I look out from them. My eyes don't see me as I move through the world. But I walk in a room and I'm given qualities that I don't understand. I don't reveal them over time, by what I do or say. My perceived qualities are revealed to me by how other people react. So, my appearance isn't mine.

She lights an outdoor candle. Its light casts her shadow, looming large against the house.

I'm like somebody shadow boxing just fabulously but everyone assumes I've already won the fight just because I have really...pretty moves.

Practitioner finishes her form, bows towards the center of the mat, and exits.

JULY

Okay. You win. Your life does suck. Here.

July holds up her pie tin. Lolly takes it, and the fork out of July's hand, sits cross-legged smack in the middle of the patio, right where the Practitioner just was, and proceeds to eat.

Six Fights/Sergel

LOLLY

I still want to see it, by the way.

JULY

What?

LOLLY

The new one.

Lolly points with her fork to July's chest.

GRETA

It's wonderful.

JULY

It really is pretty good. And they boosted the other one to match. This they don't tell you.

MARISSA

What?

JULY

Insurance pays for what they call "symmetry." Really. They boosted the left one to match the new right one when they made the new nipple. I'm perky like a girl.

GRETA

Well, I've seen it. Sorry July, but your tit is old news to me. Come on Lolly, let's dissuade you of this stay-at-home mommy fantasy.

MARISSA

I'll come too. I should help Cleo with the coffee and stuff.

*Lolly rises, hands the pie tin to July.
Then she, Marissa and Greta exit
into the house.*

GRETA

(Yelling)

Tommy, are you upstairs? We should probably put the kids down soon.

*They are gone, leaving Tania and
July together on the patio.*

TANIA

We should all go in. Eat the pizza inside.

July and Tania sit in silence. July finally drops the empty pie tin down on the patio with a clatter.

TANIA (CONT'D)

Mom will have a cow if you leave it there. The ants.

July merely drops her fork into the tin.

Look, July, I'm really, really sorry. I-

July holds up her hand to stop her.

JULY

Look, no need. Really. I understand. Clinical depression is a disease. I get it. Mom's told me. Again and again. You're like an alcoholic or...epileptic or something. You can't help it.

July reaches down and picks at the remains of the pie.

TANIA

You want to. But, it's-

JULY

-No need. I get it.

TANIA

Sometimes, um, well, I just get mad at it. All of it.

JULY

I get it, Tania. You don't have to explain anything to me.

July gets up and starts turning off the outside lights.

TANIA

But I do. I just...I don't think you should have to stay alive just to make other people happy. I'm mean, it's my life. Mine. I know you're angry-

JULY

(Interrupting)

Oh, but I'm not. You're not allowed to be mad at a person with clinical depression. Because, it's not their fault. It's a disease. Like cancer. So we both have a disease...no, wait...I got mine removed. I had a doctor, with a scalpel, cut my breast off so I could stay

JULY (CONT'D)

alive, be alive for-

TANIA

Don't you think if a doctor could cut my cancer out, my depression, I would do it in a heartbeat?

July blows out the candle. Moonlight and lights from the house shine down on them.

Out of the shadows, two BOXERS (Greta and Marissa) appear at either end of the patio. Throughout the following dialogue, they stand in the middle of the patio, toe-to-toe, and beat each other bloody. A light, probably from a bedroom window high above, shines down on them like a spotlight on a center ring.

JULY

A heartbeat? But, you're not into that. A heart beating. Too bad you didn't get breast cancer. Then you could have just laid around the house, eating pie, and in a couple of years, you'd be dead. Oh my god, but that is a great idea! No fuss, no muss. Hey, Tania, just don't get a mammogram for a few years and maybe you'll get lucky.

TANIA

My therapist said that...

JULY

Oh, fuck your therapist. If he was so great, why didn't he stop your little drama last month, huh? Oh and, yes, you are supposed to stay alive for other people. That's part of the deal. Yeah, sorry, I know it sucks, but deal with it. Everybody has crap, Tania. You might not see it sometimes, 'cuz, god knows, people lie about it something awful, but everybody's got it. So, yeah, if it comes down to that, you stay alive for other people. You spend a few days in the ICU with the bitchiest nurses on the planet, who don't understand how grief and fear and rage are consuming you as you vomit and the morphine does nothing but make you sicker and you've been cut in half so they can take that pot belly you've always hated and make it a new breast. They ignore your bell and you lie alone because your husband has to go home because of visiting hours and he's got to take care of your nine-year old who may lose his mommy. You watch your mother's face blanch as you moan and vomit and heave and weep that if you had known, if you had known the pain, you never would have done it.

Bloody is dripping down the faces of each boxer but neither retreats.

JULY (CONT'D)

And you are rigid and lost and can't swallow and the nurses, the bitches, they turn away when you buzz for help. So you are alone. I hope they get cancer someday. No, even bad, cold people should never have this. I am lost. July is gone.

A COACH (Cleo) appears at the upstage left corner of the patio, another COACH (Lolly) at the upstage right corner. A bell rings.

And then my husband brings me my older sister.

The boxers retreat to their corners and their coaches gently wipe the blood from their faces and give them water.

And she saves me. She gets me up. I must get up. She gets me up. I have to walk and eat and drink and take pills and piss into a pot and I do. She enters my darkest, bloodiest place, the death place and pulls me out. She is my second. I never really understood what a second was. But, a second is...you. A stronger you. When you have died, your second resurrects you. When you want to die, they bring you back.

The boxers stagger back to the center of the patio. A bell rings. Both coaches exit and the boxers resume fighting.

So you can keep fighting. So how the fuck can you do that for me and then turn around six months later and take a handful of pills? What if I need you again? How can you do that to Danny? To Mom? She already watched Dad die, and then you did it the first time, and then she had to watch me almost...and then had to watch you again...and someday, I might get this...again. I'm never safe again. Yes, you are supposed to stay alive for other people. Fuck you forever and ever, yes, if you can't stay alive for you, stay alive for us. That's the deal. Sorry, it sucks but get over it.

By this point, the boxers are so spent, after a flurry of jabs, they end in an odd embrace, almost holding each other up.

Six Fights/Sergel

JULY (CONT'D)

I have to every day. Every day, I think, “yeah, something could be growing inside me but, hell, time for carpool.”

The bell rings again. The boxers stop and stagger away from each other.

But, no, I'm not angry.

The boxers tap gloves and exit.

CLEO

(Offstage)

Hey! The pizza. Isn't anyone going to get the door?

MARISSA

(Offstage)

Got it. Got it.

Greta steps onto the patio from the house.

GRETA

Pizza's here, guys.

Lolly leans in the doorway.

LOLLY

(To Greta)

So you just leave him with the kids like that?

Greta spies the diaper bag and crosses to grab it.

GRETA

Yes, I just leave him with the kids like that. We had a deal. Trust me, you'll get familiar with this. I took this morning, he gets the afternoon. Parenting isn't compromise, isn't love, isn't mutual, shared goals and values. It's deal-making.

Greta sees the empty pie tin.

That was quick.

JULY

Pizza was coming.

Six Fights/Sergel

*July grabs the tin and strolls past
Greta and Lolly into the house.*

GRETA

We should probably do the pizza inside. The mosquitoes.

*Greta exits, diaper bag over her
shoulder.*

TANIA

Lolly?

LOLLY

Yeah?

TANIA

Are you...um...do you feel...

LOLLY

What? What, Tania?

TANIA

Do you feel-

Tania hesitates for a long moment.

-hungry already?

LOLLY

Nah...but I probably could eat.

TANIA

Me too. Come on.

*Tania crosses up to the house. Lolly
grabs Tania's arm and hangs on it
as they walk inside.*

*After a moment, Cleo walks outside
with a piece of pizza in her hand.
The light from the moon illuminates
her in a cool glow. She takes a big
bite of her pizza, places the rest on
the last pie plate, and savors the
flavor as she watches the stars.*

CLEO

(To audience and herself)

I want to tell them it goes by in a heartbeat. No, a year. It feels like you live one full year, and then your hair is gray, you can't remember the last time you got eight hours of sleep or woke up before the sunrise no matter how late you went to bed, or could run up a flight of stairs just because. I'm not even that middle aged woman. I'm that old lady behind the middle aged woman in the grocery line. People like to be nice to me because I'm old, not because I'm pretty. Should tell Lolly that. That it does come back around. Poor Lolly. Such an odd gift to be given. Like carrying an eighty pound bag of long stemmed roses around all the time. Tough to maneuver but everyone hates you if you complain about the stench. And when the roses start to die, boy, who do you think they're gonna blame?

Lolly calmly walks onstage, dressed in loose comfortable clothes identical to Cleo's.

I can't tell them not to fight their battles. Your battles help define you, who you are, how you choose to engage life.

Lolly begins a Tai Chi form.

But I wish I could pass on...economy of effort. Energy is finite, no matter what those damn exercise gurus and New Age philosophies say. Energy is finite so pick carefully where you spend it. You're gonna get bloody, no doubt about that

July as Thug, knife in hand, enters.

But some fights are just...unwinnable. So you learn to step aside or accept a draw.

Thug lunges and Lolly deftly steps aside, causing Thug to fall on the floor.

Sometimes a draw is winning. Tania will never be the old Tania again. That thing in her head will always be there.

Thug slowly rises.

But she can't kill it. It's taken up residence. But she will have to learn how to dodge it.

Lolly watches as Thug eyes her but merely makes her way to the doorway of the house, leans against it and watches her, playing with her knife.

CLEO (CONT'D)

But she might not. My daughter, my first born, might die by her own hand. Cancer might still get July and Tania might get Tania. I can help them with strategy but the battle itself, well, that's their lot. Their lot from God.

Thug exits.

All of it, the kids, the jobs, the work, the husbands and lovers, the exhaustion, the conflict, the friends. All just so much damn fun.

Throughout this last passage and onwards, Marissa as the Boxer, Tania as the business Woman and Greta as the Sword Fighter, all come onstage and attack Lolly, one at a time. Lolly quickly and gracefully dispatches with each one, Greta being the last to end up on the ground.

The thrust and parry of choice and ideas and conflict and careers and beauty and sex and body and heart and soul. What do I tell them? They look at me, expecting...answers? Relief? Some kind of truth? All I can say is you just have to keep slugging.

Greta stands back up and raises her blade. Marissa returns and tentatively picks up a sword. They look at Cleo. Lolly also turns and looks at Cleo as July returns and stands next to Lolly, also watching Cleo. Cleo gestures for Greta and Marissa to begin fighting. They do.

To Lolly and July.

See, see there? See. See there how she evaded the attack by deflecting and diving? Lolly, did you expect her to do that?

Lolly shakes her head.

No! That's why it was so effective. You don't have to do the expected thing. You don't have to take the discount on the pizza. If it makes you feel smaller, don't. Make July

Six Fights/Sergel

CLEO (CONT'D)

negotiate her own damn discount. Or she can make her own pizza. You make yours.

Tania enters from upstage right and watches the action.

Alright, now Greta, assess your opponent. See her habitual moves. She always lunges after blocking above her head. Use that. You always get hostile in the first trimester. So, counter with a block.

Tania turns away.

Where's Tania?

Cleo spots Tania.

Oh no, my dear. Get your fanny over here.

TANIA

Mom, I just want to take a quick nap-

CLEO

-Nope! Sorry. Time to engage.

TANIA

But-

CLEO

-no butts!

JULY

HA HA! Mom said "butt"!

July grabs a sword and whacks Tania on the butt.

TANIA

Stop.

July does it again.

TANIA

Stop!

JULY

Make me, sucker.

Six Fights/Sergel

*July taps her on the top of the head
with the sword.*

TANIA

You are so going down.

*Tania grabs another sword and she
and July begin laughing and
sparring. Everyone gathers around
them in a semi-circle, chanting
“Fight! Fight! Fight!”*

*Lights continue to fade until just the
swords are illuminated, flashing as
they thrust and parry against each
other.*

Fade to blackout.

THE END