

A Play In One Act (based on a true story)



Dramatis Personae

Mother: A frenetic, distracted editor/columnist for a small local newsweekly. Obsessed with politics, culture, religion, and other esoteric abstractions. 40-something, but fancies herself much younger.

Daughter: A bright, energetic 4th grader with a great smile. Nine going on 35.

Scene

Mother sits at her desk in the breakfast nook, enthralled by something she's reading on her computer screen. As usual. Daughter is on the couch, watching a poorly-written sitcom with a ubiquitous laugh track on the Disney Channel. As usual. It's almost 5:30 pm.

Daughter: Mom, there's something I want to ask you, but I know you'll say no. You always say no.

Mother: (Not looking away from her screen.) You can't have a dog. Daddy says no dog. We have two cats and our house is too small. Don't ask me again.

Daughter: No, not that! Something else.

Mother: (Still engrossed in something very important online.) No, we're not going on the Nickelodeon cruise. I don't care if Sponge Bob, himself, sends us an engraved invitation...

Daughter: Mom, it's not the cruise! It's something else you always say no to...

Mother: Oh. (Long sigh.) Monopoly. You want me to play Monopoly, right?

Daughter: Mom, I swear it's fun! You're gonna love it!

Mother: (In her best mom-as-martyr whine) But this is Mommy's happy hour. I've been working hard all day. Edited a bunch of articles, started my column, *and* cleaned the bathrooms. And in half an hour, I have to start dinner. Right now, I just want to pour myself a nice glass of wine and jump on Facebook. Maybe read a few blogs. Chill out. Relax... Don't you have some homework to start?

Daughter: But Monopoly *is* relaxing, Mom. And I don't have much homework. Come on. *Please*
Do
it for me. You can bring your wine.

Mother: Oh, alright. For you. But you have to set it up. And you're gonna have to remind me how to play. It's been years.

(Daughter sets up game while Mother pours wine. Mother then joins Daughter on living room floor, with Monopoly board between them. They begin to play.)

Daughter: Mom, I made you The Shoe... even though you don't care about shoes and always wear those old clogs. I made myself The Puppy. Hint, hint.

Mother: So, what happens when I land on a property you own? I can't remember?

Daughter: You have to pay me rent. Whenever you have to pay something else – like the school tax or the hospital bill or something – you put it here in the middle of the board. And if you land on FREE PARKING, you get the whole pile of money! That's what Daddy says.

Mother: Hmmm.... I don't remember that rule, but it sounds good to me.

Daughter: Mom, I need to tell you something. (Looking sheepish.) When I played with Arthur last time... I cheated. I was supposed to land on "Go Directly to Jail," but I went one square further.

Mother: You realize that Arthur is a cat, right? When you play Monopoly with Arthur, you're really just playing yourself. You know that, right?

Daughter: Right. I know.

Mother: So, when you cheat Arthur, you're really cheating yourself.

Daughter: Mom, I'm the real me. Arthur is the pretend me. It's not the same.

(The game continues. Daughter begins buying up properties with alacrity – including Boardwalk and Park Place – and even purchases some houses. Mother doesn't fare so well. She doesn't understand economics. Never has. Her money starts to dwindle as Daughter's pile grows. Eventually, Mother lands on Park Place.)

Mother: Uh oh. I owe you a bundle. How much?

Daughter: (Looking at her Park Place deed.) Um... 50 dollars, Mom. You owe me 50 bucks.

Mother: Hey, I haven't played in a while, but I haven't forgotten the game entirely! This is Park Place! It's a hot property! And you've got four houses! Come on... lemme see that deed...

Daughter: (Puts card behind back). No, Mom, I swear! It's only 50 dollars! The market stinks right now. You said so!

Mother: (snatching card) Aha! 400 dollars! I knew it! Here, take your money.

Daughter: But, Mom...

Mother: Don't patronize me! Take your cash.

Daughter: What's patronize?

Mother: Nothing. It's your turn. Just role the dice...

(Daughter lands on St. Charles Place. Mother already owns the other two purple properties.)

Daughter: I'll pass. I don't want St. Charles Place.

Mother: But you need it! You could stop me from building houses on my properties! It's good strategy. And it's not even expensive...

Daughter: Nope. Don't want it. I don't like purple.

Mother: What? You *love* purple! You're patronizing me again. I'm fine! I don't need your help, sweetie...

Daughter: But, Mom. You're almost out of money. I don't want you to lose. You'll be sad.

Mother: No, I won't be sad... I promise! I'm your mom. This is fun for me. I love seeing how good you are at this game. You're so smart! You're brilliant! You're like a... a *tycoon*.

Daughter: Huh? I thought a tycoon was a poet. Some kind of poet. Like... a Japanese poet.

Mother: No, baby. You're thinking of Haiku. A haiku is a Japanese poem.

Daughter: Oh, right! Then what's a tycoon?

Mother: A tycoon is a very wealthy, powerful business person...

Daughter: (Frowning.) But I want to be an actress. Or a teacher. Not a tycoon.

Mother: Don't worry. You don't have to be a tycoon if you don't want to. It's only a game. You're just very good at it, that's all.

(The game continues. Daughter roles a 10, then quickly grabs the dice, hiding them from sight...)

Daughter: Nine! (Begins to move her piece.)

Mother: Hey, that looked like a 10 to me! In fact, that *was* a 10.... What are you hiding? Oh, I see... You're supposed to land on FREE PARKING.

Daughter: No! It was a nine! I promise it was a nine...

Mother: It was a 10. Go to FREE PARKING and collect your money from the middle of the board, sweetie. It's yours!

Daughter: But, Mom... It's not fair...

Mother: Yes it most certainly *is* fair. This is how you play the game. These are the rules. Collect your money.

Daughter: (Collects her money, grudgingly.) Okay. Your turn.

(Mother rolls. Lands on Daughter's property. Board Walk, this time.)

Mother: 400 dollars, I presume? Here, take it.

Daughter: (Takes the money, pauses, then places it in the middle of the board.) I'm donating it to charity.

Mother: What!? You can't! Can you? Are you even allowed to donate to charity in Monopoly? I'm pretty sure it's against the rules! It's just not done. Why would you even want to do that?

Daughter: 'Cause I love you, Mom. And I feel bad for you. I'm hoping you'll land on FREE PARKING and get all that money. I want you to win. Or at least not lose so badly...

Mother: (Finishing her wine.) Oh, sweetie. I'm so touched. I am *so* proud of you. Do you have any idea what a sweet, wonderful girl you are? (Getting a little teary.) Here you are, beating the pants off your mother – and not just because you're lucky, either. It's because you're smart! You really know how to strategize! You're winning, fair and square, and you're winning big. But instead of enjoying your success, you're worried about me. Your poor old mom. You're trying to let me win. You're giving your money to *charity*.

Charity! LOL. I have never been so proud of my little girl. You are *such*

a good person. You've completely renewed my faith in the next generation... Heck, you've renewed my faith in humanity!

Daughter: Well, Mom... if you lose too badly, you'll never play Monopoly with me again. And

you might not get me a dog, either. By the way... I really like Beagles.

Mother: It's your turn. Roll the dice, you rotten little tycoon.

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