

2020

Jalan Besar Salon
presents

Residency



QUARANTINE

E U G I N I A T A N

JALAN BESAR SALON²⁰²⁰

Presents

QUARANTINE

A Play by Euginia Tan

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SYNOPSIS

A daughter attempts to negotiate a murder on her mother during their time of quarantine.

Mother

Daughter

FOREWORD

Quarantine was a real journey for me to undertake. Most of my playwriting experience has been alongside different mentors. While that is very constructive in its own way, it is a new encounter as well starting a play from scratch and writing it on your own.

I've discovered that becoming your own editor is not so much all about criticizing. Sometimes it's also about renewing faith in your work and your relationship with it. I hope more artists get the chance to be free in their intensity. This was possibly one silver lining during this period in spite of the tension lockdown has brought.

A little bit more about the play: At its surface, while it is an extreme, dystopian take on how quarantine pushes the human tolerance, I wanted it to be about love. It is love in dysfunction, in hurt, layered love that still pushes through all our weaknesses and thresholds.

How do you say "I love you" to someone, in the most desperate and vulnerable of situations?

That was what *Quarantine* brought out of me.

Euginia

19 May 2020



Scene 1

A hyper clean, contained, air-conditioned room. White surfaces. Almost like a lab space.

No windows are open.

Mother and daughter are occupying the room. Each seemingly have their own tasks at hand to do. They are both wearing white, and it is spotless also on their clothes.

They meticulously keep the place clean, to a fault.

Daughter stands up to take a drink. Mother switches on a radio at the loudest volume.

Daughter: (suddenly slamming cup) I've had it with that!

Mother notices the spilled liquid from the cup. She rushes over.

Mother: Shhh! Why are you spilling things everywhere?

Daughter: Turn it down, will you?

Mother continues to clean., ignores daughter.

Daughter: I said. Turn it down!

The mess is cleared. The radio is still not switched off. Volume remains the same.

Mother: There. Better.

Daughter: Did you hear what I said?

Mother continues listening to the radio at full blast.

Daughter walks over and switches the radio off.

Mother: What...

Daughter: And keep it that way!

Mother: How am I supposed to know what's going on out there then?

Daughter: You don't have to know everything, all the damn time!

Beat.

Mother: We're in a crisis. I do need to know. Or how would we survive?

Daughter: Just... Will you just....

Daughter attempts to leave the room. Immediately, as she steps out, guards appear and push her back into the room.

The room clouds with some smog/ gas (to disinfect).

Mother: (coughing) Don't do that ever, ever again! Stop that!

Daughter is hyperventilating.

Daughter: I can't take this anymore! I can't take being in here, with you, and your... cups... and sounds.... Anymore!

Daughter catches a glimpse of the broken cup shards. She makes a cut on herself.

Daughter: Ouch!

Mother: What are you doing?

The first spot of blood stains the daughter's clean, white dress.

Mother: Stop that! Now we have to clean it up.

Daughter: It hurts... It hurts....

Daughter begins to cry.

Mother: Stop... stop....

Mother stops daughter's blood flow from the cut.

Mother: They said, we can't make a mess. For now.

Daughter: Who cares about the mess! I'm trapped in here with you! It hurts too much to...

Beat.

Daughter: To get rid of myself.

Mother: You cannot die in here now.

Beat.

Mother: If you die, they will come in, and take you away, just like that... and you will be gone.

Daughter: I know, okay? I fucking know! And nothing would have meant anything at all.

Beat.

Daughter: Not my dreams, not who I was... but the mess I left behind.

Mother: So don't do it.

Mother walks around the contained room, doing exercises.

Daughter studies Mother.

Daughter: That's right.

Beat.

Daughter: The mess doesn't bother me. It only bothers you.

She finds a knife. She holds it to the back of her mother.

Daughter: You're the cause of my misery. Not me!

Mother: What are you doing?! Get off me!

Daughter: Don't move. Or it will really hurt you. And there'll be more blood. And the mess will be bigger.

Mother freezes in fear.

Daughter: Don't. Move.

Mother: I...

Daughter: Don't say anything!

Beat.

Mother: Look, just calm down. Take breaths. They... They said this would happen, didn't they? This is... this is normal!

Daughter: No, this is not normal, you bitch! I've wanted to kill you the earliest chance I could!

Mother: Well... Well why didn't you then?

Beat.

Mother: (getting a bit more bold) If you were really so sure about it, why didn't you just –

Daughter: Shut up, right now!

Mother: Okay. Okay.

Daughter slowly releases her grip. Mother quickly backs to another corner.

Daughter: (gestures to knife) I'm not putting this down. Don't, make any sound.

Mother: You crazy bitch!

Daughter advances towards Mother with the knife.

Mother: I'm sorry! I'm sorry! Don't... Please....

Mother begins to cry.

Daughter: So you do have some feelings.

Beat.

Daughter: In that cold, white body.

Mother: I have to stop. My mucus will drip all over me, and I will make a mess, they said... we can't make a mess now... I have to stop, I have to stop...

Daughter: Why is it always about making a mess with you! Just...

Beat.

Daughter: (resigned) Can't you just leave it? I know they said it... But...

Mother: We have to stay alive. We have to stay alive.

Mother calms herself.

Mother: We have to stay alive.

Daughter: No, we don't *have* to do anything!

Mother: No, we have to.

Daughter: Who says?

Beat.

Mother: We just have to. It's wrong to die now. It's bad.

Beat.

Daughter: It... It's our choice...

Mother: People are dying everywhere! Without a choice! We have. To stay. Alive.

Beat.

Mother: It's the right thing to do.



Scene 2

Night falls. Mother and daughter are still in their respective corners.

Daughter is slowly falling asleep. She drifts into slumber.

Mother seizes this chance to try to snatch the knife away from daughter, which is by her side.

Daughter feels the movement, catches the knife in time.

Daughter: What are you -

Mother: Please, please give it to me.

Daughter: No. It's mine!

Mother backs away when she sees her daughter guarding the knife defensively.

Mother: Okay, okay, you can keep it...

Daughter: Go to sleep.

Beat.

Daughter: I won't touch you in your sleep.

Beat.

Daughter: It's too cruel.

Mother: Then why do you even want to kill me at all? Killing is cruel! Watching over me like a hawk, with that knife in your hand is also cruel!

Beat.

Daughter: How many today?

Mother: You didn't let me switch on the radio, how would I know?

Beat.

Daughter: Will you give me permission to let me kill you?

Mother: What sort of question is that! Of course not!

Beat.

Mother: How did I raise you to become like this? How did I...

Daughter: You didn't "raise" me.

Beat.

Daughter: You didn't lift a finger.

Beat.

Daughter: You simply... let me be. I just... Was. I look at you doing things every day. Just, doing and doing. You would clean the table. Then sit at the table and talk on the phone. You would talk on the phone like... You were just talking. I couldn't... I couldn't feel anything from you. I heard your voice. I felt how clean the house was. But... where were you?

Mother: Do you know how many people would want to be you! Just to have a mother who does something for them! Do you know?

Beat.

Mother: What are you talking about with all this doing and doing? Of course I would be doing things! Life is about doing, it is about moving on. Who else would keep the house neat? Who else would keep things going? It was just two of us. I needed to be sure of everything!

Daughter: Yeah. But you looked at me, like I was just one of the objects in the house!

Beat.

Daughter: I could talk. I could breathe. I could dance, sing, bleed. Where was I to you?

Beat.

Daughter: Did you ever ask me how I feel about my father?

Mother: Don't talk about him.

Daughter: You feel him gone. I feel him gone!

Mother: Don't talk about him.

Daughter: You see! This is what you do! You just... do! You do, and do, and do. And nothing really gets done. You are cleaning this house. You are listening to the news. And you are just... a series of doing!

Mother: Give me the knife.

Daughter: Okay, I will. If you give me permission to use it on you.

Mother: No!

Daughter: Even if you don't let me kill you, at least let me use it on you.

Mother: Why... Who would even do that? I will call them. You are crazy!

Daughter: Yes. I really am. So how? Call them.

Beat.

Daughter: Call them, let them come in their uniforms. Their gas. Their germs from the outside, into your clean house.

Mother picks up a phone/ receiver type device. She contemplates.

Daughter: Call them. You are also not sure what they will do. They don't even have voices. They may not even be human, who knows? They will handle me, like I am a thing. They will lift me up like a vase. The corner where I touched will be empty. Then, they will move me away. They will take me away to somewhere run by them. Where everything is also clean. And nobody talks. And I will slowly spend my days there, alone.

Beat.

Daughter: You will no longer have anyone to do things for, at home. And then, what will you do?

Mother slowly puts down the phone/ receiver device. As soon as she puts it down, she seems to remember something. She begins to clean the phone, before she puts it down.

Daughter sees Mother cleaning, and lets out a slow, bitter laugh.



Scene 3

The next day comes. The house is very, very slightly in a mess.

Daughter and Mother are keeping to their respective corners. They are both slightly dishevelled from the lack of sleep the previous night.

Suddenly, Mother switches on the radio. Some noise is emitted.

Mother: I have to know, I have to know.

Radio: Weather report, normal. Crowd control, normal. Death count, 899, a five percent decrease after twenty four hours...

Daughter: Turn it off!

Mother desperately clings to radio.

Mother: I have to...

Radio: Weather report, normal. Crowd control, normal. Death count, 899, a five percent decrease after twenty four hours.

Daughter: You do not have to know!

Daughter destroys the radio.

Mother: No... No!!!!

Daughter: When all is well, they will let us out. That is when you would know.

Beat.

Daughter: You just, have to wait. Till then.

Mother: I have to... I have to know.

Daughter: Why do you need them to tell you what you want to know? Does knowing bring you some kind of sick pleasure?

Beat.

Daughter: Then you don't have to know. Not knowing can sometimes help.

Mother: But only they know.

Daughter: And so, how do you know what they know is true?

Mother: They wouldn't lie to us.

Daughter: Oh really?

Beat.

Daughter: For all you know, we could step outside right now and the air is... fresh. Uncontaminated.

Beat.

Daughter: Maybe what's keeping us inside, is just ourselves...

Daughter reaches out for the door.

Mother: Please! Don't! Okay. Okay. We don't have to know.

Daughter: For all you know, this disease is self-made. Ha! Like a... Millionaire.

Mother: Okay. I know what you want now. You want to talk. Right? You want to talk to me. Let's... Let's talk. Let's... Let's communicate. Like people.

Daughter: Ha! Ha! Ha ha ha!

Beat.

Daughter: Look at how that word rolls about in your tongue so awkwardly!

Mother: No, no. I can talk. I'm... I can do it.

Daughter: Okay. Let's.

Beat.

Mother: What... What do you want to...

Beat.

Daughter: Go on.

Mother: Do you think we can... Get something to eat first? It's... It's been a lot of... energy.

Daughter: Let's eat.

Mother cautiously makes a meal. Both sit down to eat.

Mother: It's... It's soup. There's no need for... For....

Daughter: The fork or knife?

Beat.

Daughter: Why are you so afraid of me?

Mother: You... You.... Look at the mess! Look what you did to it! (points to radio)

Daughter: No, I mean, before this all happened.

Mother: I wasn't afraid of you!

Daughter: You were. You looked at me like... Like you couldn't believe I was.... Breathing. Sometimes, you looked through me.

Mother: I... I wasn't ready for a child... Your father and I didn't get along...

Daughter: Then get angry at me! Spite me! Treat me disdainfully!

Beat.

Daughter: Anything would have been better than... Just trying to keep me alive.

Mother: But I want... The best for you...

Daughter: What am I to you?

Mother: My child, my... A daughter I birthed.

Beat.

Mother: A burden.

Daughter is slightly taken aback. She tries to eat.

Mother: Sometimes, a lesser version of me.

Daughter continues to eat.

Mother: A reminder of a mistake I had made. Mistakes I have made.

Beat.

Mother: Yet, someone I... feel responsible to. Someone, I feel a strange sense of tenderness toward.

Beat.

Mother: Sometimes, anything you did was pathetic to me. Really! The way you came out after the shower. The way you drank a glass of water. The way you... Left the house. Without a care in the world, trying to make some kind of impossible dream happen. And your talk about dreams. Hah! How was I to tell you, so scrawny and full of hope, that the world would simply shatter you?

Beat.

Mother: I couldn't. So, I served you.

Daughter stops eating.

Mother: I fed you. Clothed you. Tended to you when you were ill. Cleaned up your fucking messes!

Beat.

Mother: And now, you want to kill me. And you want me to accept you. Because that's what you have been wanting. You wanted a mother so full of life and longing as you. You wanted a mother who was scrawny and brash and filled with impulse and whim! Like you, your idiotic, disgusting, entitled self!

Daughter moves her seat back.

Mother: What are you going to do now? You wretch. Are you going to break something else? The bowl? You constantly make me afraid. You constantly make me out to be weak and pitiful. So what? Maybe your mother is! Your mother is spineless! She only bends to your will! Is that what you want to hear?

Daughter stands up.

Mother: You think you know the first thing about dreams. You think you know the first thing about wanting to hurt, or be hurt.

Beat.

Mother: You don't know the first thing about dreams, until you have felt them gone from you.

Pause. Mother starts to eat. She eats loudly.

Daughter: Is this revenge for me trying to kill you?

Mother continues to eat without answering.

Daughter: Mother.

Mother: Yes.

Beat.

Mother: Do you even remember my name? Did you know I had a name before you?

Beat.

Daughter: No, I can't remember your name.

Beat.

Daughter: Did you?

Mother finishes her food.

Daughter: What was that like?

Mother: All mothers lose their names to their children. Amongst other things.

Beat.

Daughter: I'll do the dishes.

Mother: No, I will.

Daughter watches Mother do the dishes.

Mother: Yes. Watch me. Just like how you have all these years, silently.

Daughter: I can't help...

Mother: I hated it when you watched me.

Beat.

Mother: You might think you have your own mind now. But you wanted so badly to copy me before.

Daughter: There's nothing else to look at in the room!

Beat.

Mother: So, you look at me.

Daughter: You're the one moving, you're the one.... Breathing. You're the one... I can look through.

Mother turns to face Daughter.

Mother: Who is the thing then? Me, or you?

Daughter: You... You're.... I....

Mother clears the mess of the radio. Daughter continues to watch.



Scene 4

Night falls. Daughter is asleep.

Mother paces around the room.

She watches Daughter sleeping. She reaches out to touch Daughter.

Daughter wakes up.

Daughter: What's wrong?

Beat.

Daughter: It's late. Let's get some rest.

Beat.

Daughter: The day will be long tomorrow.

Mother: I want to walk out of here.

Daughter sits up.

Daughter: What?

Mother: I want to walk out of here.

Daughter: Why?

Mother: You're right about me. I never did anything for myself.

Daughter: I didn't...

Mother: I'm old. There isn't much I want to do for myself. You're grown. There is less I can do for you.

Daughter: I...

Mother: And since you wanted me gone... I should get rid of myself.

Daughter: You saw how they were when I tried to walk out. They'd just push you back in and gas the room.

Beat.

Mother: Not at this time, they won't.

Beat.

Mother: Can you hear that?

Daughter: Hear what?

Mother: Precisely. Nothing.

Beat.

Mother: It's that time of the night when nothing can be heard.

Beat.

Mother: I have to make use of it, fast.

Daughter: Please, don't.

Mother: I should go now.

Mother makes to leave. Daughter holds her back.

Daughter: Please! Don't!

Mother: I can't. I can't. I have to. I'd rather die out there... Then... Then letting you kill me.

Daughter: I won't ask to kill anymore. I won't. Okay?

Mother: But you already asked. Don't you see?

Daughter: Please, Mother.

Mother: You already asked.

Daughter: If you go, what...

Beat.

Daughter: What will become of me?

Mother: You can finally... Be rid of me. Like you wanted. I don't quite care.

Daughter: I...

Mother: Is that not what you want?

Beat.

Daughter: I do.

Mother: That settles it then.

Daughter: But I can't let you go.

Mother: Why?

Beat.

Daughter: I don't know.

Beat.

Daughter: This is not the way I wanted you to go.

Mother: You don't deserve to tell me how I want to go!

Beat.

Mother: What gives you the right over my life!

Daughter: You're right, you're right. I don't.

They get into another tussle. Daughter manages to subdue Mother, by holding a knife to her neck.

Mother: I won't let you kill me. I will die on my own terms!

Daughter: Please! Don't! I don't want to do this!

Mother: You wanted to. You wanted to. Fine! Do it. Do it! I give up!

Daughter: Please... Don't push me...

Mother manages to get the knife. She makes a cut on herself.

The blood drips. Daughter screams.

Daughter: No!

The knife falls.

Mother: It...

Beat.

Mother: It hurt.

Daughter rushes to get medical supplies for Mother's wound. She tends to Mother's wounds.

Mother: It hurt.



Scene 5

The next day, the house is slightly messier again than the previous day.

Mother and Daughter are asleep.

The door suddenly opens, a package is dropped indoors. Disinfecting gas fills the room.

Mother and Daughter wake up, coughing.

Mother: What...

Daughter is still coughing.

Mother: Breathe. Try to breathe!

Daughter: I... I can't...

Mother rushes to get some water. As she gets the water, she notices the package at the door.

Mother hands Daughter the water, retrieves the package.

Mother: Look. Look!

Daughter: (while drinking water) What?

Mother: This came.

Daughter opens the package. She takes out a radio device, similar to the one she had broken.

Mother: A radio. A radio!

Mother is seized with uncontrollable joy.

Mother: We can fix it. And now, we can know!

She sets about fixing the radio.

Daughter: Don't.

Mother is still fixing the radio.

Daughter: Don't! How do they know?

Mother pauses.

Daughter stands.

Daughter: How do they know our radio's broken?

Mother: There must be some... wireless connection.

Daughter: They're watching us, Mother.

Mother: That's stupid!

She fixes the radio.

Mother: There. It's set up.

She looks at the radio.

Mother: There.

Beat.

Mother: Well, I'll turn it on now.

She goes to turn it on, but is reluctant to.

Mother: You do it.

Daughter: No. I didn't even want to set it up!

Mother touches her neck, where she's cut herself.

Mother: You do it.

Daughter goes near the radio.

Daughter: I don't want to touch it. We don't know who's touched it. We don't know why it's here. We don't know anything!

Mother: That is why we need it!

Daughter: Let's give it some time. Can we?

Mother paces.

Mother: Can we do it now?

Daughter: What if they've watched us, all these days?

Mother: So what?

Daughter: They... They've seen everything! They've heard everything! That we've done here!

Beat.

Mother: Then, we make like nothing happened.

Beat.

Mother: It's here now, and nothing's happening. So.

Beat.

Mother: Nothing's happened.

Daughter: But... We...

Mother suddenly notices the house is messy.

Mother: Ah! It's time to tidy!

Daughter: We were finally talking.

Mother: Help me out with these things, would you? And our clothes. Look at us! We need a change.

Daughter: Can we leave it? As it was?

Mother tidies. The house is relatively neat again.

Mother: It's always been this way!

Beat.

Mother: Will you turn it on now?

Beat.

Mother: You've got to do something around here.

Daughter: Don't you want to know when I first wanted to kill you?

Beat.

Daughter: Aren't you even a little bit curious?

Beat.

Daughter: I was nine. I saw a dead bird outside the house.

Beat.

Daughter: It was mangled at the neck.

Beat.

Daughter: You chose a hand bag over me.

Mother: I did no such thing.

Daughter: When I was nine.

Mother: Ridiculous.

Daughter: You did. You were getting dressed, and you were picking out a bag.

Beat.

Daughter: And I asked, “Mom, would you choose me over that bag?”

Beat.

Daughter: And you said...

Mother: This is rubbish.

Daughter: You said, “I worked hard for that bag.”

Mother goes to switch on the radio.

The radio emits static sounds.

Mother: It’s not set up properly.

Daughter: That’s because it’s not meant to be heard!

Mother fiddles with the radio, but it still doesn’t work.

Daughter: I’d never known hate like that day. And the bird... It appeared in my head.

Mother: This useless thing!

Mother ends up destroying the radio.

Mother: This worthless, battered piece of junk!

Daughter: Was I better off dead?

Mother: Yes. Yes! We both are!

Daughter: Why did you choose it over me?

Mother: I really, really worked hard, for anything I've ever owned!

Beat.

Daughter: Except me.

Mother: This is entirely different! I don't remember that day. I don't know what I was doing, feeling... I don't know. I might have eaten an entire pie of shit that day, and said that! And you were the closest thing to take it out on! Okay?

Beat.

Mother: Just like how, I am now, to you!

Daughter: You taught me to want to hurt you!

Mother: Of course. Blame all your faults on me. Because I have to be so bloody responsible for everything!

Daughter: You can't keep using that as your excuse!

Mother: Oh, I can't? And you can, with all this talk of murder and dead birds? When you were nine? How many years ago was this? Why is it even still in your little head?

Daughter: They're my memories! I can't erase them!

Mother: Oh yes, you can.

Beat.

Mother: You just don't want to. And I could. I've erased every memory you've been in, for the past few days, so we can get some goddamn peace!

Daughter: Remember, we might be watched.

Beat.

Daughter: Do you really want the world to know you hate your only child?

Mother: Why not! You've been babbling on about how you're trying to kill your only parent!

Daughter: Because I don't care! I don't care if anyone knows! I want you to know!

Beat.

Daughter: But you care, because you want to love me in public. Not in private.

Mother: No mother loves fully in private.

Beat.

Mother: Not one.

Beat.

Mother: You've said your piece. And I don't want us to talk like this anymore.

Beat.

Mother: The door will open again tomorrow. And probably, a new radio will come. And we can make a plan. We can barge out of there, the both of us, together. We can overtake them together.

Daughter: What if there's more than one of them?

Mother: How's that going to stop us? Pent up anger is more lethal than any force.

Daughter: Maybe we don't have to be angry anymore, Mother. Maybe we could use this chance to....

Beat.

Daughter: To... work this out.

Mother laughs.

Daughter: What... What's so funny, Mother?

Mother: This is what I mean! You and your dreams!

Daughter: I was just trying to help....

Mother: What's holding us together all these years?

Beat.

Mother: It's our anger. At each other! When that's gone... You'd be void.

Daughter: That's not true. I'd give anything to stop being angry at you.

Mother: Do you know yourself without your anger?

Daughter: Y-Yes.... There's lots of things about me, without my anger.

Mother: Well, good for you. Because my anger is up to my ears, ringing every day, and you won't even let me turn on a radio to block, it, out!

Daughter: But you can just... chuck it!

Mother: I'm not free, like you. Or that bird you saw.

Beat.

Mother: We're cooped up now. You feel it now. But I've been cooped up before this, for all my life.

Beat.

Mother: I can do everything right. And neat. And cleanly. But I also can do everything wrong. And every day, the more right I do... The more wrong I feel. You can call it what you want. The doctors have names for it now. You can study the mind in all manner of ways to try to make sense. But some people are born content. And then... I think there are others like me. Just trying to.... Do. But we don't say it to each other. What good would it do? Can pity help? Medicines? Exercise? Purpose? A child? All these words meld into one thing and everything just means one thing: a distraction. From yourself.

Beat.

Mother: And there is a magic, secret word that seems to work. Love. People throw it around or revere it. It's supposed to work wonders. But it's so elusive, so ordinary... I can't tell anymore. There are too many things like love, these days.

Beat.

Mother: Let's say we tell each other, we love each other. The moment passes. We hold on to the moment. But the world moves a little and we would forget. Losing grasp of that, for me... I lose everything.

Beat.

Mother: Do you love me? Still?

Pause. Daughter goes to touch Mother's neck.

Daughter: I do.



Scene 6

The next day. Mother is tidying the house.

Daughter is making a meal.

Daughter: I don't feel good about this.

Mother hums.

Daughter: Mother, I said. I don't feel good about this.

Mother: Well, cook something else then.

Daughter: Not the food. You know what I'm talking about! The plan!

Beat.

Daughter: The plan for later? When the radio comes? How do we even know...

Mother: They'll come at the same time.

Beat.

Mother: You seemed to think it was a good idea last night.

Daughter: Because I was tired, and wanted to sleep! So I just went along with it!

Mother: Then stay here. I'll do it myself.

Daughter: How...

Mother: I'm going to. Nothing's going to change that.

Daughter: And the body? Do we just leave it there? You haven't even thought it out far enough!

Mother: There's too many of them. They wouldn't care about one person.

Daughter: Yes, but they'd come to find out sooner or later!

Mother: Then we just... Let it happen. Look at us.

Beat.

Mother: A single mother, driven out of her mind. Her only child, forced to depend on no one else.

Beat.

Mother: They'd let us off easy. What's the worst they can do? And in times like this...

Beat.

Mother: Any death not caused by the virus would just be... another death.

Daughter: That's how you've thought of us all these years? Like some kind of crumbling unit?

Beat.

Daughter: Has it worked to your advantage somehow? Thinking of us as some.... disempowered state of being?

Daughter finishes cooking.

Daughter: We should eat something.

They sit down to eat.

Daughter: If they come before the meal, we...

Beat.

Daughter: We finish eating after we do it.

Mother: This tastes good.

Beat.

Mother: So you do want to do it.

Daughter: Are you going to answer me?

Beat.

Mother: Could use a little pepper.

The door opens. A package is about to be dropped in.

Mother and Daughter spring into action.

They rush out the door and grab the guard who has dropped off the package.

Mother takes out a knife. She wounds the guard. The guard is slightly weakened, tries to struggle back.

Daughter: (begins to cry) Mother, I can't... I can't....

Mother continues hurting the guard.

Mother: The only way to get by in this world, sometimes, is to be seen as useless! As weak!

Daughter: Why couldn't you answer me just now...

Mother: I had to survive! I had to... (begins to break down) Do things I didn't want to do...

Daughter attempts to hurt the guard.

Daughter: Me too, me too...

Mother: Your father was but a common man... I couldn't believe he had it in him to leave our life...

Daughter now hurts the guard more confidently. The guard starts to yell.

Daughter: You both were common people... I can't believe you'd decide to add to this miserable place...

Mother: And you, a common child!

Daughter: What's my name then, Mother?

The guard is heavily wounded at this point. More guards come. Mother and Daughter are surrounded and restrained.

Daughter: Children lose their names to their parents too.

Mother: Girl, the air... Can you smell it?

Daughter: Yes... It's....

Mother: It's fresh. Like you said. It's clean.

Daughter: They lied. You all lied to us!

Mother: I love you.

The guards sedate them.



Scene 7

Mother and Daughter are contained. They are still sedated.

The room they are contained is eerily similar to the house they lived in.

It is severely clean to a fault, but smaller, with less furniture than before.

After some time, Daughter coughs and wakes up.

Daughter: Where... Mother?

She looks around. She sees her mother sprawled on a bed next to her.

Daughter: Mother? Mother! Wake up! Wake up!

Mother doesn't wake up.

Daughter: Somebody! Help!

Daughter rushes to what seems like a door.

She tries to open it, but can't find a door handle or any way to escape. She bangs it.

Daughter: Please! Help! My mother won't wake up!

No one responds to Daughter's cries.

She tries again to wake her mother.

Daughter: Please, please! Say something! Anything!

She sees her mother in a vulnerable state.

She slaps her mother.

Daughter: Wake up! Wake up! You cannot leave me like this. You can't! You can't!

Mother wakes up, with some difficulty, from the slapping.

Mother: What... Stop.... Stop!

Daughter sees her mother awake. She stops.

Daughter breaks down in relief.

Daughter: You're up... Nobody would help me...

Mother: Why were you.... Where are we...

Daughter: I don't know... I told you it was a bad idea. I told you!

Mother: You hurt me when I was unconscious?

Daughter: You... You were just lying there, like a corpse... I had to do something!

Mother struggles to sit up.

Mother: I'm up. I'm okay.

Daughter: Mother, we have to get out... We have to...

It is Mother's turn to study the room.

Mother: This is... jail?

Daughter continues to cry.

Mother: It looks... So much better than I thought it would.

Daughter: I'm too young to be stuck here... I'm too young...

Mother: Will you just, be quiet for once?

Daughter tries to calm herself.

Mother: This is... Good. It's not bad.

Beat.

Mother: Give it a few days. They'd let us out of here in no time.

Daughter: What if they won't?

Mother: Well.

Beat.

Mother: If this is the rest of my life... I'm happy with it.

Beat.

Mother: I don't even have to make food now! They'd probably drop something off to me. I don't have to... Be normal, pretend to have a life with my friends...

Mother relishes the rest of the room.

Mother: This is... how I want to live before I die.

Daughter: That's you, Mother. How about me?! Me!

Mother studies daughter pensively.

Mother: Why should I feel sorry for you?

Beat.

Mother: You've tried to kill me! You hurt me when I was down!

Beat.

Mother: Take this as your punishment.

Daughter: Tell them to let me out, Mother. You can stay in here. I want to be out there.

Mother: Why should I?

Daughter: You... You said you loved me. Didn't you?

Beat.

Daughter: Oh god. We killed a man, Mother. We killed a man...

Mother: We're not sure if he died.

Daughter: We hurt someone, Mother... We hurt someone.

Pause. Daughter is now calm.

Daughter: It felt pretty good.

Beat.

Daughter: We let him have it... Didn't we.

Mother: We did.

Daughter: You were right. It just took... Anger.

Mother: Men are weak, girl.

Beat.

Mother: They are not built like us.

Beat.

Daughter: Are you hungry, Mother?

Mother: No.

Daughter: Neither am I.

Mother: Thank you for sticking by my side.

Beat.

Mother: With the plan.

Beat.

Daughter: It's okay.

The door slides open. Two trays of food are brought in, and a package.

Daughter: We'd best eat.

Mother: Another package.

Mother opens the package. It is a radio.

Mother: Ah.

Daughter eats.

Daughter: The food is quite good.

Mother: We can set this up later.

Mother begins to eat.

Mother: It is quite good.

Daughter: You were the worst cook.

Beat.

Mother: You didn't turn out too bad.

Daughter: As a cook?

Beat.

Mother: As a person.

Beat.

Mother: There were times you were kind. Especially to me.

Beat.

Mother: There were times I didn't deserve you.

Daughter: There were times I didn't deserve you.

They keep eating.

Mother: You think the utensils are eco-friendly?

Daughter: Yes, they seem quite sustainable.

Mother: Very considerate.

Daughter: Maybe even the beds are eco-friendly, you think?

Mother: Ah yes. The sheets, perhaps.

Daughter: You're right, it's really quite good, for a jail.

Mother: It is! Why, in my time, for a crime... This wouldn't be the way things were handled at all.

Daughter: Maybe some people even become more humane in jail.

Mother: Oh, I don't know about that. Times were hard in the past.

Daughter: Well, I mean now.

Mother: Shall we set that up?

Mother gestures to the radio.

Mother: I know how you hate it. But... There really isn't much to do now.

Daughter: I'll do it.

Mother: Alright.

Daughter: You probably fiddled with it wrong the last time. That's why nothing came out of it.

Mother: You're better at these things.

Daughter fixes up the radio. She sets it in the middle.

Daughter: You ready?

Mother: Yes.

Daughter switches the radio on.

Radio: Weather report, normal. Crowd control, normal. Death count, 0, a zero percent decrease after twenty four hours. Virus has been contained past the forty eight hour count. End of quarantine commences. Citizens may resume routine.

Beat.

Radio: Weather report, normal. Crowd control, normal. Death count, 0, a zero percent decrease after twenty four hours. Virus has been contained past the forty eight hour count. End of quarantine commences. Citizens may resume routine.

Daughter switches the radio off.

A silence ensues.

Mother: Well. All's good.

Daughter: Right.

Mother: They'd let us out.

Beat.

Daughter: I think so.

Mother: They'd have to come talk to us, sooner or later.

Daughter: They'd have to.

Mother: And we...

Daughter: Don't worry, Mother. We've got time to figure it out.

Beat.

Daughter: We'll make a good plan. Like what we did. We'll talk about it, weigh the pros and cons. Test each other's stories and alibis.

Beat.

Daughter: The best part is, we won't have to run it by each other much. We'd just... know. We just know each other, Mother. It's a gift. We can use it.

Beat.

Daughter: No one else knows us, like we do ourselves.

Mother looks at Daughter. Mother lets out a slow smile.

They look at each other, basking in happiness.

END

This play was produced as part of the *Radical Transparency* Open Call Residency programme produced by *Jalan Besar Salon* from 20th April 2020 - 1st June 2020.

About Euginia Tan

Singaporean writer Euginia Tan writes poetry, creative non-fiction and plays.

Her third poetry collection, ***Phedra*** (*Ethos Books*) was nominated for the *2018 Singapore Literature Prize*. Her play-writing credits include ***Holidays*** (under mentorship of Joel Tan), ***Tuition*** (*Twenty Something Theatre Festival*) and ***Modest Travels*** (produced by Tan Kheng Hua for *Uniqlo*). She is currently an Artist in Residence for Gateway Theatre (mentored by Jean Tay) and has written a play on addiction scheduled for 2021.

She also pens curatorial essays and contributions for visual artists in Singapore.

Euginia can be contacted through email at: eugtan@hotmail.com
View Euginia's work during the residency: [Artist in Residence](#)

About the Radical Transparency Residency Programme (20 April - 20 August 2020)

We are limited by the physical confines of bodies and boundaries, our ways to create and digest culture and knowledge is changing with the rapid acceleration of digital migration and the new realities of social distancing.

Radical Transparency emerged out of our collective pursuit for a flatter structure and more equal ways to distribute knowledge and information. This increasing demand to change the way institutions operate, to adopt a more transparent system that champions accessibility, clarity and accountability; are what is needed for communities to communicate, co-exist and co-create.

How do we mitigate such distance created in the process? When technology is brought in to mediate social distance, what do we stand to gain or lose?

Jalan Besar Salon invites you to participate in the process of Radical Transparency, to forge open discussion and communication.

Find out more about the residency here: [OPEN CALL 2020](#)

About Jalan Besar Salon

Conceptualised by *EOMM Emporium of the Modern Man*, the annual *Jalan Besar Salon* popup seeks to provide a platform for learning and communication.

The Salon serves to act as a catalyst for the hotbeds of creativity and progressive ideas in the fields of urban management, psychology, intimacy and socio-environmental topics through the means of art, design and philosophy.

Against the decline of face-to-face human contact in our digital age, our workshops, programmes and exhibitions aim to provide a platform for people to come together and hone their tastes through passionate conversation and the exchange of ideas.

To learn more about *Jalan Besar Salon* and our programmes, visit us on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) or at www.jalanbesarsalon.space.