

I 'm Not Dumb

by

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Cast of Characters

TABITHA:
MRS. GARDNER:

15
40's

Place
Guidance Counselor Office

Time
Day

2.

Setting: The play takes place inside a modest apartment. All the necessities are in place and fairly new with a few hand-me-downs as well.

At Rise: The play opens with Chester sitting on a one seat sofa and Tina sitting on a three piece sofa.

MRS. GARDNER: Come in, Tabitha. Take a seat.

TABITHA enters MRS. GARDNER's office.

MRS. GARDNER fumbles through various folders on her desk.

MRS. GARDNER: Oh! Here you are, right here. Lovely. Now...

MRS. GARDNER opens up the folder and examines it.

MRS. GARDNER: Okay, okay...right. So...tell me, what's new?

TABITHA: New?

MRS. GARDNER: In school, your school work, your teachers, other students...

TABITHA: Everything's good.

MRS. GARDNER: Right. Excellent. Okay, so, now tell me why you haven't been keeping your grades up?

TABITHA: I don't know. (shrugs her shoulders)

MRS. GARDNER: You are on the edge of an F with Mr. Myers History and a passing grade for, oh that's gym class, good on the physical ed, there's EW, biology is a real bummer, huh?

TABITHA: Yeah.

MRS. GARDNER: I wasn't much for biology either. Absolutely hated it.

TABITHA: You did?

MRS. GARDNER: Of course. Too many long, weird words to remember and I wasn't much on bugs and all that.

TABITHA: You mean Zoology?

MRS. GARDNER: What did I say, biology?

THEY both laugh.

MRS. GARDNER: Zoology and entomology if we are getting really specific on the creepy crawlies.

TABITHA: I feel the same way. Bugs freak me out.

MRS. GARDNER: At least it's good to know what to stay away from.

TABITHA: Exactly!

MRS. GARDNER: Looks like you are a straight D student, except for English class, you seem to excel there. Why is that?

TABITHA: I love literature.

MRS. GARDNER: You do.

TABITHA: I love to read.

MRS. GARDNER: So, what's the trouble with your other subjects Tabitha?

TABITHA: Nothing seems to get in my mind.

MRS. GARDNER: You can do much better than D's.

TABITHA: I try my hardest in school but I am always just passing by the skin of my teeth. I feel like I am dumber than the other kids. I don't know why I am not smart like they are. I study when I go home, I put in the time...sometimes I even stay after school for the extra help. And I always do extra credit.

Why am I not smart enough, Mrs. Gardner? I want to have a good future. I know I am young, but what I do now will mean something later in my life, I just know it. My parents, they are immigrants who came over to this country and I want to make them proud. They deserve it. But how can I make them proud when I'm stupid, when all I'm doing is barely passing? There's nothing special about that, is there?

MRS. GARDNER: Tabitha dear, you are not stupid. Don't call yourself such things.

TABITHA: But if I'm not smart, doesn't that make me stupid?

MRS. GARDNER: No, it doesn't.

TABITHA: Everybody is always ahead of me. I'm always trying to catch up.

MRS. GARDNER: That's a good thing. You know why? Because you have tenacity. You are someone who is willing to work as hard as it takes to achieve your goal. You said you want to make your parents proud, right?

TABITHA: Yes.

MRS. GARDNER: Listen, you are already making them proud by working hard on your school work. We are all here to help you. All your teachers think highly of you and want you to succeed. I want you to succeed.

TABITHA: Then I need a lot more than passing grades. I need to be an honor roll student if I am going to get a scholarship to college. My parents had a talk with me a few months ago, my mother, she was crying, told me she can't afford to send me to college, my father just sat there silent and I felt awful like it's my fault they even have to worry like they do. Since that day, the whole thing has been weighing on me, what if I don't get the grades I need? What's gonna happen then?

MRS. GARDNER: I've offered to work with you after school before. You agreed. Why didn't you show up?

TABITHA: I wanted to do it on my own.

MRS. GARDNER: Yeah, I get it. But sometimes in life we can use a little help to get us where we wish to go.

TABITHA: I just don't want to seem like I'm not capable. It makes me so angry that I need help when it seems like nobody else does. Maybe my mind just isn't wired in that way...I can't figure things out the way the others do, the other day in math class, my mind went blank, all I saw were numbers and symbols that had no meaning, no connection, I didn't get any of it...and then I speak to classmates like John and Sasha and they can't even have a mature conversation about life, it's always about meaningless things, what bags they're gonna buy, what cars they're gonna get and yet they're the ones succeeding, they're the ones that'll probably end up in the best college, with the best teachers and having a career. I'm not giving up, I'm just angry at myself, I know I'm better than this.

MRS. GARDNER: For someone so young, you sure have a lot of pride.

TABITHA: Maybe I'm not as young as I look. Maybe I'm just old, maybe I've just lived too much and I see no point in any of this.

MRS. GARDNER: The decisions you make now can change the course of your life. There is no shame in receiving guidance with your studies Tabitha. It will be regretful if you don't.

TABITHA: What if I just can't do it? What if my brain just doesn't work that way?

MRS. GARDNER: Self-pity never got anyone anywhere. You are too intelligent for me to have any pity on you. What you are suffering from is pride induced and the pressure you are putting on yourself. It isn't from any kind of lack of intelligence.

TABITHA: You think so?

MRS. GARDNER: I'm one-hundred percent certain.

TABITHA: If there's anyone's opinion I can trust, it be yours.

MRS. GARDNER: I want to help you but you'll need to show up and do the work.

TABITHA: I understand.

MRS. GARDNER: How does Monday, Tuesday and Thursday sound?

TABITHA: Erm---

MRS. GARDNER: We can do 3:30 to 4:15pm. Does that work?

TABITHA: Yes, yeah, that works fine.

MRS. GARDNER: I'm taking this seriously because I take you seriously. Do you know why?

TABITHA: Why?

MRS. GARDNER: I believe in your dreams. I also come from a family of immigrants. I had language barriers, didn't fit in with any of my peers, it was hard to make friends and understand my school work. I know what you've been up against.

TABITHA: I didn't know that. You don't seem like the kind--

MRS. GARDNER: That's why we shouldn't put labels on each other, let alone ourselves. And that's why I want you to meet me three times a week because I know you can make it, just like I did, but again, you need to show up or else all of this conversation is simply a waste of time for both of us.

TABITHA: Yes, I see. You're right.

MRS. GARDNER: It'll be worth it in the end.

TABITHA: Mrs. Gardner, what if, what if college isn't for me? What if I'm meant to do something else with my life, like I don't know, writing poetry or something or becoming a dancer even? What then?

MRS. GARDNER: Then that is what you'll do. You know learning or doing anything that expands our mind has a way of finding itself useful for all areas of our lives, it's nothing to be afraid of. Listen, I get it Tabitha, you're afraid of being trapped in a college you don't want to be in, in a job you hate, you want something more out of life. You don't think I see that in you? I was sitting right where you're sitting now when I was your age and there were a lot of problems I was facing. I knew I wanted to be a teacher but I was failing in everything. I wasn't just passing, I was failing. I see a lot more than what you think I do, that's my job.

MRS. GARDNER (cont'd): Now, in this moment in time, all we can focus on is what is right in front of us, the problems we face and the problem here is your grades, together, we can change that problem. In life, you'll find that if you can fix one problem, you'll be able to fix another...that's the foundation we are setting here.

TABITHA: Mrs. Gardner, I'm sorry for last time. If I don't ever get to say thank you, if for some reason I forget, I just want to say it now. I don't often get the chance to talk to someone like you. Thanks for helping me through this. I'll be there on Monday, you have my word.

END OF PLAY