

Typical Teen

by

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Cast of Characters

MOM:

41 years old, mother.

SHADIRA:

16 years old, daughter.

Place
Suburbs

Time
Night

Setting: Upper-class family home in the suburbs.

At Rise: Mom and Shadira are sitting at the dining room table. Mom has a mountain of paperwork in front of her. Shadira sits in front of an empty plate of food.

SHADIRA: I'm trying. It's not always as easy as you think. I have so much going on in my life and I can only do so much. I know you think I'm Wonder Woman, I know how things look to you and everybody else on the outside, but I'm still only *sixteen* and sacrificing so much of my youth for what I want in my life.

I get that this is what I want and I've brought this upon myself. You are right, this *is* what I want but you can't continue to burden me with things you need me to do for you. I don't have time to run to the store on the way home from practice, when I have exams and homework on top of it all. I don't have time to have hour-long dinners with you and the family, or do chores or any of the things that all the other girls my age do...I can't even date anyone or go to house parties or any of it.

(beat)

It's not that I don't want to do those things, well, I can do *without* the chores, but I need to be disciplined and fully committed to figure skating. You know this Mom, you know what this means to me. Please try to understand me better. I'm not your typical teen.

MOM: Well, you are a typical pain in my ass. I ask you to clear your plate and place it in the sink. Surely, you are capable of that. I ask you to keep your room tidy and I am sure that isn't beneath your workload. You know, I do the best I can for you kids.

SHADIRA: Mom, I know.

MOM: And I'm drained too. I still work and look after you girls. You think this is easy for me?

SHADIRA: No. I know it isn't--

MOM: You go on and on like you're the only one that has a life. I have court cases that demand all of my time because people's lives depend on the choices I make. I'm constantly watching over you and your sister...your father is no help, he's too busy flying around the world to truly know what goes on in this house.

MOM (cont'd): He has no idea. It's all on me! Everything is on me! The least you can do is the one or two things I ask and expect of you. Yeah, I get it, you have a passion, that's wonderful, I see the sacrifices you make for it and I'm proud of you, but as a family we need to come together. It's not a one way street. And because you are the older sibling, you influence what Tara does. She looks up to you.

SHADIRA: I know, Mom.

MOM: Do you? Or are you only thinking of yourself?

SHADIRA: It's hard, things are hard.

MOM: Yeah, well, I have a man I have to defend tomorrow in court who is facing ten years for attempted murder and he's innocent. How's that for hard?

SHADIRA: I just wish...

MOM: What? (beat) What were you about to say?

SHADIRA: Nothing, forget it.

MOM: No, tell me. What were you about to say just then?

SHADIRA: I wish you were there for me more and would get off my back with all these stupid little things. I'm sick of it!

MOM: I'm not there for you, Shadira?

SHADIRA: All you do is go on about your court cases...that's all you talk about. You're always in a mood, always angry or sad or complaining and I-it drives me crazy because I don't understand why you are always so high-strung. You never smile, you're never happy. Whenever I try to talk to you, *about anything*, I'm always met with this pent-up negative energy.

(beat)

MOM: You know what it is? (beat) You are exactly like me and I don't know how much of a good thing that is kiddo.

MOM (cont'd): You are just like your mother...driven, focused, intense...hmmm. You just made me realize something.

SHADIRA: What?

MOM: ...I think we're missing out.

SHADIRA: Missing out on what?

MOM: One another...I don't want you to end up like me in your life...that's the last thing I want. To get so tunnel visioned that you forget about the other things that should matter...believe me, this isn't the way I ever wanted things for our family. I wanted so much more.

SHADIRA: We already have everything. We have a nice house, we have---

MOM: That's what you think but sooner or later it will catch up to us all, we'll all be strangers without ever realizing where we went wrong. We don't have communication...not the way we need it. Your father and me, we're so busy with our work, we've hardly been able to have a solid conversation in the past month. Both you girls...I don't have a clue what your schedule is like, I haven't seen much of Tara, she's always staying by friend's. It's been on my mind but now, now you've really made me see it and I don't know how to stop it or change it...maybe it's too late.

(pause.)

I want us all to be a family but I don't know how.

SHADIRA: Don't...don't cry, Mom...please, don't cry.

MOM: I've got to talk to your father this weekend. Maybe we can all go away somewhere, like a vacation...I think we all need to spend some quality time together.

SHADIRA: I have to train, Mom.

MOM: One week won't kill you. It won't kill your father, me or your sister. One week, to get us back on track.

SHADIRA: Where would we go?

MOM: Anywhere. Somewhere sunny. I don't know...Australia, New Zealand...where would you like to go?

SHADIRA: I would love Australia.

MOM: We need to, to be together, be a real family...

SHADIRA: We are a family.

MOM: Not like what we should be. This distance between everybody isn't a common thing. I was never close with my parents because they were always managing their own careers and I always swore to myself that I would be different. Such a cliché isn't it, when the child becomes the parent. I want us to break that cycle.

SHADIRA: How?

MOM: We'll start with that trip. We'll go from there. I want us all to be close, make memories, be more involved with one another. I can't believe I'm actually saying these words, it's been on my mind for so long.

SHADIRA: I had no idea you felt this way Mom.

MOM: I think it's what we all need.

SHADIRA: Yeah, we do.

MOM: Now go put your plate in the sink and we will talk more about this later.

SHADIRA: But Mom, this still doesn't solve---I'm not trying to be selfish...I need you to know now, that I feel as though I am slipping with my skating. I feel like I have to compete harder and I feel like you keep putting demands on me that are taking me away from what matters most in my life right now. You know? I want to do good, I need to be great and I need you to understand.

MOM: What demands do I ever put on you?

SHADIRA: You know it's always bickering. As soon as you see me, you bicker at me. I get up before you do, to go skate and I come home after you because I'm out there skating...it's not something I'm doing because it doesn't matter. You get on my case about little things and you have no idea what I go through.

MOM: We just had a nice conversation and I want to keep it that way. What do you expect me to do for you?

SHADIRA: I want you to get off my back and let me live my life.

MOM: How? You're sixteen. There is no living your life without me. Not yet.

SHADIRA: By being less of a bully and more of a Mom.
(beat) Ask about me once in a while. You don't always have to give me orders and yell at me. I know you joke around sometimes and take on this bossy tone but that's stressful too, I don't want it becoming, replacing who you truly are.

MOM: I understand darling. Just remember you are my daughter and I hope you will also be there for me when I need you, despite yourself. I said it once and I'll say it again, it's a two way street here. I don't ask you for much and your father and I give you everything you need to do well with whatever you want in your life. The least you can do is cooperate with the little things because the little things to you are big things for me. That's all I expect from you.

SHADIRA: Don't be such a bully about it then.

MOM: I'm not trying to bully you, I am your mother, there's a difference.

SHADIRA: You know what I mean, don't you?

MOM: Look, Shadira, it's been a long day for me and it isn't over yet...I hear what you're saying, okay? Let's agree to work at it. Deal?

SHADIRA: Deal.

End of Play