

After-School Activities

by

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Cast of Characters

MOTHER:

38

LAQUISHA:

16

Place

Park

Time

3:00 PM

2.

Setting: A bright summer day inside a well kept park. We rise at a track & field. There is also a row of metal bleachers alongside the track.

At Rise: LAQUISHA enters the scene running and out of breath. Her MOTHER has a whistle wrapped around her neck and is holding a stopwatch.

MOTHER: I blew this whistle fifty times, you going deaf?

LAQUISHA: I was running.

MOTHER: But I was calling you back.

LAQUISHA: I didn't want to come back, I wanted to run.

MOTHER: The stopwatch wasn't on.

LAQUISHA: So what?

MOTHER: What's with your attitude?

LAQUISHA: What's with yours?

MOTHER: Don't play games with me, I asked you a question.

LAQUISHA: ...I don't like how you train me.

MOTHER: It's called hard work, get used to it.

LAQUISHA: No, it's off, it doesn't feel right to me.

MOTHER: I bring you hear so you can practice your running or else how are you going to get any good?

LAQUISHA: Why can't you drop me off and come back later?

MOTHER: Because if I did that you would walk around the track instead of run.

LAQUISHA: That's not true, I'd get way more done without you.

MOTHER: Is that so?

LAQUISHA: Why do you always push me too far?

MOTHER: What are you talking about now, LaQuisha?

LAQUISHA: I'm talking about the pressure you put on me.

MOTHER: Pressure?

LAQUISHA: Yeah, with everything, whatever it is I want to do, you always have to make me feel like I'm not doing enough.

MOTHER: Because you get lazy.

LAQUISHA: How am I lazy?

MOTHER: I catch you moping around the house in your pajamas till two in the afternoon. When I was your age I was out and about.

LAQUISHA: Just because I'm home in my PJ's doesn't mean I'm not doing things.

MOTHER: Like what?

LAQUISHA: Like everything.

MOTHER: Like...what?

LAQUISHA: You always say you are going to help me but you don't help me, you bring me down. You know why I stopped volleyball?

MOTHER: Because you're too short.

LAQUISHA: Because you were training me too hard and it didn't become fun for me anymore.

MOTHER: Oh, I see, that's your excuse, I'm training you too hard. I must have trained you too hard for everything else you've quit on me.

LAQUISHA: What's wrong with trying things out?

MOTHER: You don't stick with anything long enough to give it a fair shake?

LAQUISHA: I did volleyball for half the year.

MOTHER: And what about bowling? What was that...two weeks?

LAQUISHA: I injured my thumb and it's still not right.

MOTHER: What's wrong with your thumb?

LAQUISHA: I can only bend it to a certain point before it hurts.

MOTHER: Everybody's thumbs are like that.

LAQUISHA: It's from the injury.

MOTHER: The doctor said it was just a bruised bone, get over it already.

LAQUISHA: I got hurt, that's why I quit and if I went back my thumb would be worse.

MOTHER: Fine! Fine! You give me a headache!

LAQUISHA: I'd do more if you didn't try to make me.

MOTHER: You make no sense.

LAQUISHA: Mom, I'm trying to tell you something and you as usual you never really hear me. (beat) Each time you come with me to the park and try to train me, it always turns dark and you become abusive. You don't even realize it but you change, you become this other person.

And I become worried about what I'm doing. I become so aware of my actions that I'm mentally crippled because I just want to please you, so that you will get off my back and stop criticising me.

Nothing I do is ever good enough in your eyes!

All the fun I have when I'm running drains out from me cause I feel you watching me like a hawk. I can't concentrate on me because I'm so concerned about you.

Isn't that horrible?!

And for the record, I am not afraid to work hard. It's working with you and the way you express yourself to me that turns me off to all of it.

I rather train by myself or at school with my coach and team, at least they encourage me and it's supportive. Your involvement sets me back from moving forward.

MOTHER: It's not that you aren't good enough, LaQuisha. You are. You are good enough to achieve anything you set your mind to doing.

LAQUISHA: Why do you treat me like a dog?

MOTHER: A dog?

(MOTHER laughs)

LAQUISHA: Yes! Stop laughing!

MOTHER: Do I toss you doggie treats when you do a good job and pet your head. Ha, ha. (beat) I don't ever want to make you feel that way but you do anger me because I see your potential and I see how you squander it.

LAQUISHA: But I put in the work.

MOTHER: You can go further.

LAQUISHA: But I'm not trying to be the greatest runner of all time.

MOTHER: Don't you want to reach your full potential?

LAQUISHA: You don't allow me to explore all the things that interest me. As soon as I show an interest in anything you instantly have me zero in on whatever that thing is as if my life depended on it. Is that normal?

MOTHER: So, be half-assed your whole life.

LAQUISHA: I'm getting freaking anxiety over the shit you do to me.

MOTHER: Don't you use that language with me young lady.

LAQUISHA: Fine! But don't you see what you are doing to me? You're giving me a complex. I feel like whatever I want to do in my life, I'm not good enough.

MOTHER: Oh, stop it.

LAQUISHA: It's true.

MOTHER: And stop making a scene, people are starting to stare at us.

LAQUISHA: This is how I feel.

(pause.)

MOTHER: When did you start feeling this way?

LAQUISHA: I don't know, past year or so---

MOTHER: And it's specifically because you are saying I push you too hard?

LAQUISHA: With everything.

MOTHER: Right...(sighs)...You know, I never had parents that gave a damn. When I was growing up, there was no after-school activities, there was no extras on anything. We had no money, clothes, no nothing. Everything we had was to the penny...not a loaf of bread wasn't factored into the equation for the month.

Your father and me promised that we would give our children everything that we wish we had. That meant money so you can go eat lunch during school, it meant any after-school activity you desired, it meant giving you money to go out with your friends on the weekends...

I push you because I want you to take advantage of the opportunities I never had at your age.

LAQUISHA: But Mom, I am.

MOTHER: Shhh, listen to me...when I see you get lazy---

LAQUISHA: I'm not!

MOTHER: LISTEN, when I see you get lazy and not take full advantage of what your father and me do for you, it hurts me and you father because you don't realize how quickly it all goes by and when you look back, you will wish you did things differently.

My job as your mother is to give you the best guidance I can give you and I'm not asking you to become an allstar athlete but at least appease me and put in the work, not just for me but for yourself, and that goes for all things, so when that day comes and you're looking back on your life, you will smile.

Now, if you want me to drop you off at the park so you can hit the track on your own, that's fine, I'll put my faith in you.

LAQUISHA: I don't want you and dad to, you know, I don't want you guys looking down on me.

MOTHER: We're not, you are our daughter and we love you but that doesn't mean we don't expect you to push yourself. I'll bac off but you have to promise me that from now on, whatever it is you wish to do, you give it your all.

LAQUISHA: I promise. Did dad say he was disappointed in me?

MOTHER: No, your father is very proud of you and so am I. We just want to see you make more of an effort, that's all.

LAQUISHA: Alright, I'll try.

MOTHER: Let's make our way back to the car. Don't leave your water bottle on the grass over there.

(LAQUISHA picks up her water bottle)

(MOTHER puts her arm around LAQUISHA and they walk off.)

END OF PLAY