

# ***Beneath The Surface***

*by*

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Cast of Characters

MARTHA:

30's

FIONA:

Teens

Place

Martha's house

Time

Afternoon

Setting: The play takes place inside Martha's house. A modest three bedroom home provided by the government. The house is kept decent due to Martha's hard work and care but rests in a polluted neighborhood as a result of the power plant just a mile up the road from them.

At Rise: The play opens up with the stove turned on and a pot being cooked on top of it. Martha descends down a staircase and looks quizzically at a strange contraption that has flies attached to it. She may even sniff it and leap backward in horror.

MARTHA: FIONA, get in here!

*FIONA appears at the window outside,  
which is part of the dining room.*

FIONA: What, Ma?

MARTHA: What is that contraption?

FIONA: That's a flycatcher.

MARTHA: How?

FIONA: I put pear juice in the cup and placed masking tape on top, if you look closely you'll see a few flies already stuck to the tape.

MARTHA: That's disgusting. I want it out.

FIONA: But it's working.

MARTHA: Out.

FIONA: But we're catching them flies.

*FIONA disappears from the window and on MARTHA'S  
dialogue she enters the living room.*

MARTHA: It smells. All day I been cleaning and wondering what that weird smell I kept receiving was, until my eyes landed on that contraption and I want it gone. We're having guests comin' ova here this evening and I can't have that thing out in the open on top of the odor it exudes. Out!

FIONA: But Momma, you rather have flies buzzing past your face all day long? How you gonna feel if your guests get attacked by them flies. Ain't that gonna make us look like dirty people?

MARTHA: We ain't no dirty people.

FIONA: But ain't that gonna make us seem so?

MARTHA: You must be jokin'? There are flies all over this here county. Step outside and you get a mouth full of them. Can't tell you the many times I've brushed my teeth in the morning and spit out some fly.

FIONA: No way!

MARTHA: Dozens of times.

FIONA: Quit foolin' me!

MARTHA: I ain't foolin', not when it comes to critters.

FIONA: I been to all my friends' houses and they ain't got no flies buzzing round they house.

MARTHA: That's cause their parents afraid to let in some fresh air and sunshine.

FIONA: And we ain't afraid?

MARTHA: Nope.

FIONA: Should we be afraid though?

MARTHA: I don't believe everything I hear.

FIONA: But we sometimes get them fumes that protrude through here. Remember last week we had to close all the windows and curtains?

MARTHA: That only happens once in a pink moon.

FIONA: But that can't be healthy for us.

MARTHA: What would you rather I do? MOVE?

FIONA: Can't we?

MARTHA: Ha! Now I know you're puttin' me on. We lucky we even got this roof over our heads and that's because Mr. Reynolds was kind enough years ago to push us to the top of the list or God only knows how we'd still be lookin' for a place and livin' on the streets.

FIONA: Who's Mr. Reynolds?

MARTHA: He's the man that helped us get this home.

FIONA: Oh. That man that come through here ever so often to check on things? Always checkin' on how we---

MARTHA: The very one.

FIONA: I don't like him.

MARTHA: Nobody asked you to like him.

FIONA: Do you like him?

MARTHA: He's alright.

FIONA: Does he like you?

MARTHA: Who knows and who cares? He got us a house, didn't he? And in time, when things get better out there, we gonna sell it and move on and buy ourselves a better house in a cleaner neighborhood. We ain't gonna be here forever, you know. It's all gonna work out, I got my plans in place, just gotta put up with the way things are for a little while longer. I have been saving you know. And pretty soon you gonna be workin' and together we can save a whole lot faster and we gonna buy us a brand new home with lights that don't have minds of their own, and refrigerators that don't growl in the night, or these leaks we've had to put up with, these damn leaks...but most of all, the thing that worries me is them smells we often get that gives me them headaches that I don't tell you anything about.

FIONA: You getting' headaches Momma?

MARTHA: Normal stuff.

FIONA: What kinda headaches you get?

MARTHA: Nothin' worth discussin'. Now remove that contraption and help me set the table.

FIONA throws out her contraption in the trashcan.

No, no! Not there...darn. I meant to say outside, put it in a bag and throw it outside cause the stench is gonna spread itself throughout the air and I'm determined to get rid of it.

FIONA: Why didn't ya say something. It's all over the inside of the--

MARTHA: Just replace the garbage bag and that'll do the trick.

FIONA changes the garbage bags. She goes outside and throws out the one bag.

MARTHA stirs the pot on the stove and checks over dinner as it cooks.

FIONA enters the house.

FIONA: Nice outside.

MARTHA: I know. Why I put them windows up. Lay out them dishes, forks and knives and all.

FIONA: Who's comin' over?

MARTHA: Tina and her son Drew.

FIONA: Drew? Again?

MARTHA: Now, now, hush up.

FIONA: They were just here the other day weren't they?

MARTHA: Now, now I said, Tina be goin' through some trouble at home. They like family, so...

FIONA: I hate Drew!

MARTHA: Stop that kind of talk. Drew is the closest thing you have to a brother.

FIONA: I don't want a brother!

MARTHA: I don't care what you want. They're family.

FIONA: He's such an asshole.

MARTHA: What did you just say young lady?

FIONA: Drew is a real creep. Actin' all nice and smiley in front of you but when him and I are alone he acts like a right dick.

MARTHA: I never knew you had such a colorful vocabulary. Since when do you speak with such---

FIONA: I have many words to describe that lunkhead.

MARTHA: I don't like that kind of talk in this house.

FIONA: You should see the things he does. We were outside near the pond and he tried to kill a cat. Was throwing empty glass bottles at it, tryin' to smash it and he almost did, he nearly hit--

MARTHA: And what you do, just stand there and let him do it?

FIONA: I told him to stop and he told me to fuck off!

MARTHA: Okay...Fiona, that's the last derogatory word you are going to use or else you will spend the week in your bedroom.

FIONA: I didn't say it, he said it.

MARTHA: I don't care. Refrain from using those kinda words 'round here. Understand?

FIONA: Yes.

MARTHA: He's a boy. Boys do wild things.

FIONA: I can be just as wild as he can.

MARTHA: Can you now?

FIONA: He ain't seen wild. He acts wild but he don't really know wild.

MARTHA: And you do?

FIONA: Uh-huh.

MARTHA: And what makes you an expert in the wild?

FIONA: Because I'm smarter than he is and he's just a dummy and when you got marbles for brains you are limited in your capabilities.

MARTHA: You sound smart.

FIONA: I am smart. Smarter than he is anyway. And when you are smart you can be more wild. It's just a choice is all.

MARTHA: Why don't you be wild and finish setting the table missy?

FIONA: Yeah, yeah.

FIONA places napkins under the forks and knives  
she set down earlier.

What we eatin' anyway?

MARTHA: We eatin ham and cabbage with potatoes.

FIONA: AGAIN?!

MARTHA: That's right.

FIONA: Same shit.

MARTHA: That's it! Go on up to your room before I put my foot in your ass!

FIONA: I'm sorry! Sorry! Alright?

MARTHA: One more time. What am I raising here? Cabbage. Gonna complain to me about ham and potatoes? It's food alright. Be lucky you even have food to eat. There are people that don't have nothin'...look here, what we've got, might not be much but it's something. And it ain't gonna last forever, we'll be eating more different kinda meals, just gotta have a little more time on our hands, sooner than later, things'll be different...I got my plans alright.

FIONA: What kind of plans?

MARTHA: I told you them already.

FIONA: Alright...just hope they're nothin' crazy...I don't mind the way things are, I don't mind it here.

MARTHA: You might not mind it but it can't last forever. Now and go wash your face, you look a mess.

FIONA: Do I?

MARTHA: Never seen such a dirty child.

FIONA: I'm not a child and I ain't dirty.

MARTHA: Things you eat still stick to the corner of your mouth like your two years old. Go wash up and let me see those fingernails.

FIONA: No.

MARTHA: Fiona, get your...come here, please.

FIONA: Another inspection?

MARTHA: As many as it takes till you start keeping yourself clean.

MARTHA inspects FIONA'S dirty fingernails.

Unbelievable. How does that much grime get under your fingernails? How is that humanly possible. I make sure you bathe each night before bed, don't I? Do you deliberately make the effort to go out into the backyard and run your fingers through the dirt like a rake?

FIONA: No.

MARTHA: Go wash them hands, that face and put on some new clothes.

FIONA: Everything's dirty.

MARTHA: You don't have fresh clothes?

FIONA: Nope.

MARTHA: Guess what you'll be doin' tomorrow?

FIONA: No.

MARTHA: Laundry!

FIONA storms upstairs.

MARTHA stirs the pot lightly. She chuckles to herself.

LIGHTS slowly dim to black.

END OF PLAY