

Pressed Against The Road

by

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Cast of Characters

HARLENE :

18

BETSY :

40's

Place

Bedroom

Time

Afternoon

Setting: The play takes place inside a small bedroom with a bathroom attached. There's a bed, a full length mirror and bureau full of make-up.

At Rise: The play opens up on Betsy taking her curlers out. Her daughter Harlene watches from the bed where she sits.

HARLENE: Phone's ringing again?

BETSY: Answer it for me.

HARLENE: I'm not answering it.

BETSY: Pick it up!

HARLENE: It's Roxanne, I'm not speaking to Roxanne!

BETSY: My hands are tied up with these curls. Ask her what time she's getting here.

HARLENE: Mom, there is no way I am speaking to Roxanne.

BETSY: What is your problem?

BETSY picks up phone.

Hello? Hello? She hung up. See? You couldn't just have a word?

HARLENE: With Roxanne there is no word, more like a mouthful of annoyances, (imitating) "Any thoughts on college?" or "Have you found a boyfriend yet?" As if I'm supposed to be hunting for boys day and night. She's a weirdo. Loud. And obnoxious.

BETSY: What's gotten into you? Roxanne is your Godmother. Something ever happens to me, she becomes your legal guardian.

HARLENE: You must be shittin' me.

BETSY: I'm not shittin' you one bit. And mind your manners, don't like the way you've been talking lately. It's rude.

HARLENE: That's how people talk in the real world. No sense puttin' it on and acting like the Virgin Mary.

BETSY: Excuse me? You are a virgin and you will stay a virgin until you are at least forty (laughing).

HARLENE: Mom!

BETSY: Ha, ha. Thirty-five!

HARLENE: It don't matter cause I don't like boys.

BETSY: That's true. I've forgotten. That still holding up?

HARLENE: Yes.

BETSY: You definitely don't like boys?

HARLENE: I wouldn't be caught dead with one, you know, dating one...no way.

BESTY: Okay, just asking.

HARLEN: You said you don't mind it.

BETSY: I don't.

HARLENE: So, why you asking me about it then?

BETSY: Can't I ask?

HARLENE: You can.

BETSY: I already told you, emphatically, you can love whomever you desire in this great big world of ours.

HARLENE: Why are you so agreeable all the time?

BETSY: I'm agreeable because I know what it feels like to be met with opposition.

HARLENE: Ha! Well, it doesn't seem like it, seems like you always do what you wanna do.

BETSY: It hasn't always been like this. My whole life I've taken up arms to fend off trouble. Ever since I married and divorced your father..it was then that I realized I wouldn't be much good to myself or you if I didn't stand up for my own set of beliefs and live life how I needed to live it.

HARLENE: Did you always know you liked women?

BETSY: I believe I did, but those emotions got pushed far down where no one could see them and I thought by fitting in, by being part of the crowd, I'd be happy, wouldn't have such urges and for a minute or two it worked...forgot my true self. Tricked myself into thinking I was what I wanted to be, married, in love, pregnant...I mean I got to experience giving birth and I wouldn't change that or having you for the world...but I was ignoring who I was, I kept pushing those feelings down, till that day happened...I remember it, there was so much fog that day while I was driving. I could just about see clear, so I went to pull the car over, but then I felt a strong thump, I hit something...I thought, maybe it was a post or fire hydrant, but when I stepped out the car, I looked on the road and it was a dog, the poor creature was stuck under the wheel and I watched as it took its final breath...my blood drained from me...I remember how my legs buckled from under me and how my chest fell and pressed against the road...was a terrible, terrible accident...you were crying in the backseat and it wasn't until we got back home that the shock I was feeling reawakened what was living dormant inside of me for years...

BETSY (cont'd): I may have taken that poor dog's life, but it's like it gave me back my own...your father wanted me to see someone, he would say to me, "Betsy, maybe we can take you to a specialist."

All the while my mind was already made up. There was no use in trying to get him to understand. A man like that would never understand. How could he? He'd never be able to find it within himself, the courage to set me free. After a physical altercation, to put it mildly...we finally parted ways...I did feel bad for him and I still do...it wasn't his...I mean, he wasn't to blame...he only loved me, really and I loved him but not that way, not in the way he needed me to, not in the way two people should be in love...so, you see, when you stay true to yourself, there isn't nothing I wouldn't do to support you.

HARLENE: Why didn't you ever tell me about the dog?

BETSY: Well, it's awkward, you know?

Phone rings.

HARLENE: It's Roxanne. I'll get it.

BETSY: That's fine. (answers phone) Roxy? Hi darling. I can hear you just fine. What time?? One hour?! ...Don't worry I'll be ready. YES!! One hour! BYE!

BETSY takes the curls out from her hair.

HARLENE: You're gonna be late.

BETSY: Don't make me nervous.

HARLENE (teasing): You are so gonna be late Mom.

BETSY: Not if you help me.

HARLENE: Why do you always make people wait on you?

BESTY: It's nice to know I'm wanted.

HARLENE: Is that why?

BESTY: What other reason could there possibly be darling?

HARLENE: Bit inconsiderate.

BETSY: How dare you. (smiling)

HARLENE: Mom...

BETSY: Yes?

HARLENE: ...I met someone...

BETSY (turns to HARLENE): You did?

HARLENE: ...Yeah.

BETSY: Tell me.

HARLENE: ...Okay, she's a singer.

BETSY: A singer?

HARLENE: Yeah...she's got long jet black hair, big dark brown eyes, plump lips, nice cheekbones...beautiful voice, almost sings when she talks but like in a nice tranquil way, she's a few inches smaller than me and has a smile that can light up the world.

BETSY: How did you two meet?

HARLENE: We met after a show in Brooklyn. She was performing there, she's in an indie band and all but she's up and coming, her music is on another level and my friends and I went to this bar next-door after the show and she showed up and we started talking and you know, things happened...

BETSY: What kind of things?

HARLENE: We got together. We're supposed to meet up after her next show this Saturday, but I need to borrow money cause I want to pay for things.

BETSY: You work don't you?

HARLENE: I'm short Mom.

BETSY: Why are you short?

HARLENE: Cause I've already spent my money on food this week and going out expenses.

BETSY: I've already told you how to budget your earnings. You can't expect to always borrow money from me.

HARLENE: Not much.

BETSY: How much is not much?

HARLENE: Like a hundred.

BETSY: A hundred?!

HARLENE: I'll pay you back.

BETSY: NO. I can't afford that.

HARLENE: Why not?

BETSY: Because we're broke as it is. Who do you think pays to keep the lights on?

HARLENE: It's only a hundred.

BETSY: That's more than I can part with.

Pause.

I'd like to meet this...what's her name?

HARLENE: Sandra.

BETSY: Sandra. When will I meet her?

HARLENE: It's not like that Mom.

BETSY: What's it like?

HARLENE: We're not there yet, nothing is official.

BETSY: I see.

HARLENE: We're just hanging out. We like each other.

BETSY: How old is she?

HARLENE: She's twenty-eight.

BETSY: Did you say twenty-eight?

HARLENE: Yeah.

BETSY: Twenty-eight?!

HARLENE: Mom, she's really---

BETSY: What does a twenty-eight year old want with a teenager?

HARLENE: I'm eighteen.

BETSY: Eighteen going on twelve!

HARLENE: Come off it!

BETSY: She's way older than you.

HARLENE: What does it matter?

BETSY: She's using you.

HARLENE: Don't think so, she's the one with all the experience...

BETSY sits down.

BETSY: Can't you find someone your own age?

HARLENE: It's not like I haven't been on the lookout. I haven't found anyone like her, no one really took my interest until Sandra. She's amazing. Don't you want me to be with someone amazing?

BETSY: HARLENE! ...Let me, give me a second to process this... (sighs) I'm not happy about the age difference. Go out and see her again, if that's what you want, you are old enough to make your own decisions, but I'm not pleased about the age...

HARLENE: It's really not a problem...think you're over exaggerating like you do with everything.

BETSY: Yeah, well, famous last words.

HARLENE: You said you'd support what I do.

BETSY: Don't be cute!

HARLENE: You did.

BETSY: I know what I said and you're taking me out of context. There are limits, things within reason, right?

HARLENE: And I like her. I really like her, you're not gonna change my mind.

BETSY: Yeah?

HARLENE: Yes.

BETSY: (smiles) You're a fool.

HARLENE: I learn from the best.

BETSY: Not funny.

HARLENE: I know.

BETSY: ...I can give you fifty, but you'll have to scrounge up the rest on your own. If you like Sandra so much, you will find a way.

HARLENE: Deal.

BETSY: And I want a full report, WITHIN REASON, I want you being safe out there, she is older and wiser than you. No drugs!

HARLENE: I'm not gonna do anything stupid, i'll be careful, just stop worrying.

BETSY: I'm thankful that we can talk like this...I don't ever want you keeping things from me.

HARLENE: I know. I'm thankful too, Mom. Give me a hug (they embrace) and get ready, you're gonna be late!

END OF PLAY