

The Machine

by

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Cast of Characters

FARAH:

25

GRIFFIN:

28

Place

Apartment

Time

Afternoon

2.

Setting: The play takes place inside a small apartment within a building complex. The place is bare, dark with paperless concrete walls.

At Rise: The play opens with Farah and Griffin sitting at a small metal square dining table.

FARAH and GRIFFIN sit on opposite sides of a small dining table, having just finished eating dinner.

FARAH: You barely touched your food.

GRIFFIN: Smells delicious.

FARAH: Why don't you eat? You're looking too gaunt.

GRIFFIN: I'm trying.

FARAH: A full stomach always makes you feel better.

GRIFFIN: Does it?

GRIFFIN eats a few spoons of rice. He then cuts into his main meal and chews.

He swallows but leans back in his chair.

FARAH: ...We shouldn't have to go through this.

GRIFFIN: No, we shouldn't.

FARAH: Want me to clean up your -

GRIFFIN: *(snapping)* Leave it! *(beat)*

Griffin gets up from his chair, with a desire to kill.

...That son of a bitch, Friedman. He's the cause of all this. Telling you now, I'm bringing my knife to work and I'm gonna gut him like the pig he is.

FARAH: Griffin! Please!

GRIFFIN: Like a pig!

FARAH: Stop it, stop it! I can't take this anymore!

Griffin attempts to breathe properly and sits back down in his chair.

GRIFFIN: I can't get over it. Not once did he take a single action on any of our concerns...not once. We've been working under dire conditions for years. I know what happened shouldn't have ever happened. What I don't know is if I'll ever escape the image of him tied up in the machinery, tangled in his own blood...poor bastard didn't want to die, he wasn't ready to die, but they took him, didn't they?...Must have given them evil bastards some kind of relief.

GRIFFIN (cont'd): Don't you think? You know what his last words to me were? "Save me"...right before his eyes rolled into the back of his head...and I'm supposed to come home every night, have dinner, go to bed and start a fresh day as if that day didn't exist? As if nothing ever transpired? As if *Amelio* wasn't real?...They left him there, his ghost and everything, while all of us were forced to go back to our stations day into night and continue on working. It was days before they removed the machine he drew his last breath in, days in which we were forced to relive the nightmare that won't ever leave us...it won't ever leave us Farah and I'm supposed to go on?

FARAH: We have no choice.

GRIFFIN: We should have a choice!

FARAH begins cleaning up the food.

I'm eating!

FARAH: ARE YOU?!

GRIFFIN: Leave it, I'll clean up.

FARAH: I never wanted you working there! This could have been YOU!

GRIFFIN: It wasn't me.

FARAH: It could have been..and what would have I done then? What would Amber and me do?

GRIFFIN: It wasn't me, it wouldn't be me. I've never trusted those machines...

FARAH: You don't think I think about you each day, going off to that hazardous plant?

GRIFFIN: Farah, I told you it -

FARAH: If it's not the equipment that kills you, it'll be all the fumes you keep breathing in.

GRIFFIN: I have strong lungs, if there's anything that'll save me, it'll be my lungs.

FARAH: I've been reading reports.

GRIFFIN: Reports? What reports?

FARAH takes a paper out from a draw.

FARAH: (*handing it to Griffin*) This was left at the front doorstep. It's a report explaining in detail the harm all the workers are being subjected to.

FARAH (*cont'd*): (*beat*) You have toxicity inside your bloodstream and it will takes years before leaving your body and by then they say it could lead to cancer or other forms of disease that...all lead to...it's terrible.

GRIFFIN: Why did you read this junk?!

FARAH: It was left for a reason.

GRIFFIN: To hell with them!

GRIFFIN tears up report and throws it across the room.

GRIFFIN: I don't want you reading anymore bull crap!

FARAH: Why'd you do that? We need that paper!

GRIFFIN: I don't need some report to tell me what I already know.

FARAH: And what do you plan to do about it?

GRIFFIN: What do you mean?

FARAH: You have all this wisdom, what is your plan?

GRIFFIN: I have no plan.

FARAH: We are sitting ducks.

GRIFFIN: We can go on through the years, making all the complaints in the world, we can bring down the union, bring on down the inspectors...we can have this go on for as long as we both live, you think they'll shift? It's too much money they've got buried deep in their graves, too much of it to fix anything, nothing will ever be done.

FARAH: Quit.

GRIFFIN: You know I can't leave the plant.

FARAH: Yes, you can Griffin. You can quit. We can leave this place, the three of us, we'll find Amber a new school in a new town, we'll *both* be able to work once she's in school. Just think about the possibility of it all!

GRIFFIN: And what would we live on in the meantime?

FARAH: Quit the plant, Griffin.

GRIFFIN: There's nowhere for me to go, Farah! No one is hiring!

FARAH: Your work is killing us.

GRIFFIN: Don't say that!

FARAH: It took Amelio! What's next? If it doesn't kill you, it'll find its way to kill what is left of us!

GRIFFIN: I told you I am going after Friedman.

FARAH: What good will that accomplish?

GRIFFIN: We'll have him removed, we'll join forces, all the workers, I'll get them to -

FARAH: It's impossible.

GRIFFIN: *(beat)* He murdered the most loyal friend I ever knew.

FARAH: It won't make a difference.

GRIFFIN: Something needs to be done!

Pause.

FARAH: What about Jackie and his children?

GRIFFIN: I don't know.

FARAH: What do you mean you don't know?

GRIFFIN: There's no workers compensation, insurance or anything like that.

FARAH: What exactly are you saying?

GRIFFIN: ...in those early days you knew just how desperate we were, we both needed the job, they made us sign an agreement that states if we get hurt on the job or die that they aren't liable.

FARAH: And you agreed to those terms?

GRIFFIN: It's my responsibility to put bread on the table.

FARAH: So Jackie and the children are going to receive nothing?

GRIFFIN: Not a dime.

FARAH: And what's going to happen to them?

GRIFFIN: *(shakes his head)*

FARAH sits down.

FARAH: (*cries*)

GRIFFIN: Fay...Fay listen---

FARAH: Shut up! I can't hear your voice right now...not right now.

GRIFFIN: (*softly*) I did it for you and Amber...there's no other choice.

FARAH: Why are we trapped?

GRIFFIN: All I need is another five years on the job. That's long enough for us to save up enough money and get the fuck outta here. Right? ..Right? Haven't we spoken about this many times before? We can't forget. We can't.

FARAH: Five years is a long time, Griff.

GRIFFIN: Depends on how you look at it.

FARAH: And how am I supposed to look at it?

GRIFFIN: Well, you can ignore reports for the time being. Stay focused on raising Amber and spending time with me and before you know it, this will all be a bad dream left behind.

FARAH: That sounds lousy.

GRIFFIN: Does it?

FARAH: Horrible.

GRIFFIN: You're right it does, but if we think about the future, if we see what's coming, we have a guiding light, don't we?

FARAH: You said you wanted to kill Friedman.

GRIFFIN: That's all talk...you know I don't have it in me to do such a thing.

FARAH: (*stares at him*)

GRIFFIN: Honestly...

FARAH: And after five more disastrous years Griff, what then?

GRIFFIN: Then we buy that cottage up in the mountains near our creak. By then I am sure things will improve and I can find another form of work outdoors that will get all this gunk out from my bloodstream and we will -

FARAH: I'm not having anymore children.

GRIFFIN: I thought we -

FARAH: We had Amber *before* you began working at the plant. She's healthy.

GRIFFIN: I -

FARAH: I'm not having a child of mine carry any harmful ailments because of the work you do.

GRIFFIN: ...That's a heavy one...

FARAH: How can you disagree with me?

GRIFFIN: It's heavy because I agree with you...that's the crutch.

FARAH: Do you?

GRIFFIN embraces FARAH. They hold one another for a time.

Lights slowly fade out to black.

END OF PLAY