

JULIA

By Daniella Alma

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Cast of Characters

JULIA: 30's

DR.AVA: 30's

Place

Edwardian House. St. Albans,
Hertfordshire, England.

Time

Present. Evening. 7 PM.

AVA, 30s, poised, intelligent and dressed in a suit, is sitting in her living room in her Edwardian home in St. Albans, Hertfordshire. She is attending to notes on her desk, it is raining outside. A calmness engulfs her house, until - a violent knock on her front door (upper stage right). AVA takes off her reading glasses, cautiously gets up from her desk and approaches the door, she hesitates before opening it and hears the knock again, she opens.

JULIA, 30s, drenched from the rain, striking in appearance, comes barging in.

JULIA: (She waves a piece of paper at Ava.) What is this? Was it you who left this letter?

Dr. Ava remains standing and slightly startled, she nods in response.

Why were you in my house?

DR. AVA: Let me explain, Julia. Here, come in, why don't you leave your umbrella on the side there? Father O'Connor gave me your address.

JULIA: *Why?*

DR. AVA: I'm a doctor that has attended to him recently. He informed me that you've been seeing him. I told him that I wanted to see you too.

JULIA: That doesn't explain how you managed to get in my house?

Julia is breathing heavy and trying to catch her breath.

DR. AVA: Take a seat. Would you like some water?

Julia slumps down from exhaustion on Ava's couch. She doesn't respond to Ava. She very briefly closes her eyes. Ava exits the room into her kitchen. Julia slowly opens her eyes and cautiously takes a look at her surroundings, Ava enters with a glass of water.

DR AVA: I have...experience with your condition.

JULIA: (No response.)

DR AVA: What I believe to be your condition.

JULIA: (Quietly frustrated.) Dr. Ava, is that correct?

DR. AVA: It is. And, you can call me Ava.

JULIA: Dr. Ava, what exactly did Father O'Conner tell you?

DR AVA: He didn't tell me anything.

JULIA: What were you doing in my home without my permission?

DR. AVA hands Julia the glass of water.

DR. AVA: The day that you had visited Father O'Connor, was when I noticed you. You see, I was there, I went to visit St. Francis's church that same day. I use to go there when I was young, my Mother went to church every Sunday and would take me with her to the service, my Father never attended. When my Mother passed, I stopped going every Sunday...I've been questioning if perhaps my work was losing its meaning, that...what some of my clients lacked was something medication couldn't prescribe. And so I took the train there that Sunday, it was just as I remembered, the stone steps hadn't changed, they were patterned in the same way, nor had the long walkway up to them or the vastness of the fields that made it all look so small. As I opened the gate and walked down its pathway, I noticed a figure exiting from its large doors. I approached and saw a woman, in a grey dress, walking down those same stairs..it was you. I noticed the movement of your hands, you brought one hand to your chest, the other followed and you sat down on the bottom steps, it seemed as if you had trouble breathing. I wondered if perhaps someone you loved had recently died, but then...I knew that it was something more than that. Something more painful than that...(Pause.) And so I knew. Then...I saw something I hadn't seen since I was a child, a blue jay bird approached you, it...brushed its coat against your body and burrowed its neck between your feet, it stayed there and you wept silently. You got up and walked away, as if you hadn't noticed its wings were beneath you.

JULIA: You followed me?

DR. AVA: No. I simply asked Father O'Connor for your address, and after explaining who I was, he gave it me.

Julia's eyes study the room, then back to Dr. Ava.

JULIA: ...I see. (Long pause.)

DR. AVA: It doesn't have to always be this way. Things can change.

JULIA: What makes you think that, Dr. Ava? You don't quite know much about me.

DR. AVA: I know enough Julia. I know that you are dealing with something...that can be difficult to understand.

Silence between them.

DR. AVA (cont'd) I cannot say that I have an answer for it either, but I have - an understanding on the subject.

JULIA: (*Watching Ava. Quiet pause.*) An understanding.

DR. AVA: We are all trying to -

JULIA: Stop. Would you consider yourself normal? When I look at you Dr. Ava, I don't just see a doctor. Your eyes tell me different. (*Slightly leans forward. Studies Ava.*) It has happened to you too, hasn't it?

DR. AVA: I can't answer that.

JULIA: (*Leaning back - knowing.*) It has.

DR. AVA: We aren't here to talk about me.

JULIA: Oh. (*Laughs.*) Oh yes (*Suddenly very serious.*) We are. We're here to talk about the truth, the impurity of it all. Without talking about you, there is no truth. If you want to know anything about "my condition", as you put it, then I'd rather not have silence exist between us. I came to see you because you looked for me. Why don't you be more specific and tell me, why did you look for me?

DR. AVA: The same way that you looked for me. (*Pause.*) I knocked at first Julia, but no one answered. I noticed your doors were unlocked and so I let myself in. I walked in through the hallway to the kitchen, that's when I saw you, through its windows, you were in the garden, examining the stump of a tree. I watched the sunlight carve itself between your fingertips...the sun, it, it...

JULIA: Disturbed you?

DR. AVA: I wouldn't say it was that. Anxiety perhaps, I couldn't exactly catch my breath for a moment. You were too familiar. Everything I saw in you is what almost killed me...(*Silence.*)

JULIA leans forward to take a sip of water from her glass on the table that is positioned between them.

How long Julia?

JULIA: For too long, Dr. Ava. (*Takes another sip. Puts her glass of water back on the table.*)

DR. AVA: Did anyone ever notice a change...in you? Family, friends?

JULIA: You ask a lot of questions Dr. Ava. I guess it is what your work is made up of. But your questions here are still worth more than

JULIA (cont'd): their answer. (*Gives her a chance.*) It is fascinating though...how anonymous you can be, with so many people around. (*Thinks for a moment.*) A change? Yes, yes of course, I guess they did. (*Smiles slightly.*) They all noticed, but if you are smart, you can always make a, a light excuse for it. I guess you could say, there was Julia before and then there was Julia after. Two different people, one changed from the other. But, what was to be expected? (*Studies her hands.*) I blame myself. Foolishness has caught up with me, I knew it would...much sooner than the rarity of logic. I should never have got on that train. (*Pause.*) When I look back at it all, my instinct let me down...I should have known better. I was a fool, as always...like a magnet, trapping myself onto something destructible. We can run, can't we? But not from the decisions that pave our way to where we are now. (*Pause.*)...there is only so much of it that we can live with. The priest that you met that day, Father O'Connor, is a dear friend of mine, are you surprised? I've never lost my faith. I still believe he has power to rectify what has led us here, but he won't, he decides not to. A noble priest, would you say? I told him that if God can't help, who will? He didn't respond, he just stared back at me. After several meetings with him, he was about to say something - that day, something that mattered, but he stopped himself, as if he knew what he couldn't tell. That was all I needed to almost throw me off the edge.

I drove home that day, in a daze, emotionally spent. God knew I had it with the world, it was his turn now. When I arrived home, I could barely get my key in the front door, I forgot which lock it was that would usually get stuck, eventually I entered my house but I had trouble navigating my way to the kitchen, I could barely recognize my own home. All I could think about was Father O'Connor...what was it he was saying, what was it? It was too late to not know what I didn't want to know. At some point, I found my way into one of the kitchen cupboards. I was searching for a bottle of brandy that I had hidden there, it was on one of the top shelves, it had been a while since I had a drink. I took it with me into the back garden and sat there, for hours, trying to find a way out. After a while, I realized that it can't be all that bad. What is the alternative anyway? A dark dream we all long to know. It's always there when we need it, one we can drift right into whenever it needs us more.

DR. AVA: You considered ending your life?

JULIA:..*(Hesitates.)*...Contemplated.

DR. AVA: For the first time?

JULIA: (*Fights any feeling.*) Yes (*Almost laughs.*) Well before the second drink. Only, in that very particular moment, I was distracted by the realization that our large oak tree had recently been cut down, I was admiring it the week before, perhaps subconsciously with the same intentions.

DR. AVA: To hang yourself?

JULIA: For whatever else, Dr. Ava?

(Long silence...Dr. Ava watches Julia)

...Hasn't the same thought ever occurred to yourself?

DR. AVA: Killing myself?...Yes, it has.

JULIA: It can be inviting...

DR. AVA: That's the danger of it...

JULIA: You still haven't mentioned what it is you want from me?

DR. AVA: ...

Julia's glass of water slides across the table on its own and crashes on to the floor. Glass shatters.

Julia and Dr. Ava continue to sit still in silence, as if they have witnessed this before.

Julia looks up at Dr. Ava, an everlasting moment lives between them as they stay seated across from one another, in a fixed look at each other.

DR. AVA: There's nothing to be afraid of Julia.

JULIA: *(Julia straightens her posture and reaches for a cigarette.)* There is a lot to be afraid of Ava. *(Her demeanor changes. She stays seated and lights a cigarette.)* I mock weak minds like yours, do you think I'm going to allow one incident to have power over my life? Do you think I am like you, Dr. Ava? A weak woman? Is that why you came looking for me, to find yourself in me? To grieve with me. How original of you. Have you taken a look at yourself? You are barely holding on, you should be ashamed of that, following me around, thinking that you know what it is that haunts me, thinking you have some kind of 'familiarity' with it. Familiarity. There's nothing familiar in any one of us. It is a false idea, thinking our souls are somewhat entwined, as if we've all walked and crept in the same old mud. Whatever you think it is that I might have Dr. Ava, I will destroy it. I am not like you, Ava. I don't dwell in the dirt of it all. It's a different blend of mud that makes us part of who we are, what we're willing to endure, what we're made of, what we're willing to look dead in the eye.

DR. AVA: It won't give up.

JULIA: *(Laughs.)* It won't, will it? And is this what Ms. Local Dr. Ava specializes in, hmm? Did it destroy you? You look awfully fine to me, you seem to carry yourself with a knowingness, certainty,

JULIA (cont'd): awareness, beauty even. It didn't destroy you then, did it? (*Dr. Ava doesn't respond*) Answer me! Did it destroy you?

DR. AVA: I haven't allowed it to. I know what it feeds off of and what it doesn't.

JULIA: (*Gives in.*) It's useless. (*Long pause.*) I like a good fight but not one that will have no end. It's all so pointless then. (*Coldly.*) I am lonely Ava. You have that right. I'm broken. I was once, Julia. I remember exactly who I once was, you might have taken a liking to her. She was many things but one thing she couldn't help being was...is that the danger that eventually engulfs us, our weakness?

DR. AVA: If you want to call it a weakness. It can also be looked at as an, awakening.

JULIA: And you, for how long?

DR.AVA: Since I was a child, and after many years, things changed, they can change...

JULIA: Who else have you met?

DR. AVA: I know of four others but you are the first of them that I have met, in person.

JULIA: And you found me.

DR.AVA: I won't leave you Julia.

JULIA: Ava...(*As if examining the sound of her name*)...Ava. Was it your Mother that chose your name?

DR.AVA: I never asked.

JULIA: Perhaps it was both of them, your Father and your Mother?

DR.AVA: Perhaps.

JULIA: I never met my real parents. I've always taken that as a blessing. I've noticed that some parents can be like dogs, loyal for no reason. You'll never know if you've been loved for who you truly are or for who they've tried to mould you into becoming. I was lucky in that respect, to be born free, free of another's expectation. I did have a childhood friend once, called Ava. Ava was like no one you'd ever meet, when she'd enter a room, a veil of light surrounded her. Every time I think of her face, it brings me a peace I have never quite gotten anywhere else. She had those, those crystal eyes that would laugh with mischief every time she smiled. And that chuckle of hers was one you could never forget. Funny how you can meet so many people throughout the years, thousands even, but then there's always that person and there's always that one thing they do, that no one else can hold a candle to. That was Ava...before I lost

JULIA (cont'd): her. One could argue that she left this world too soon but in my opinion, she deserved, more than anyone, to know the dark dream we've all been longing for.

(Lights fade out.)

THE END