

DISCORD

TEN MINUTE PLAY

By Ben Kingsland

Copyright © MMXV by Ben Kingsland

All Rights Reserved

Heuer Publishing LLC, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

The writing of plays is a means of livelihood. Unlawful use of a playwright's work deprives the creator of his or her rightful income. The playwright is compensated on the full purchase price and the right of performance can only be secured through purchase of at least five (5) copies of this work. PERFORMANCES ARE LIMITED TO ONE VENUE FOR ONE YEAR FROM DATE OF PURCHASE.

The possession of this script without direct purchase from the publisher confers no right or license to produce this work publicly or in private, for gain or charity. On all programs and advertising this notice must appear: "Produced by special arrangement with Heuer Publishing LLC of Cedar Rapids, Iowa."

This dramatic work is fully protected by copyright. No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without permission of the publisher. Copying (by any means) or performing a copyrighted work without permission constitutes an infringement of copyright.

The right of performance is not transferable and is strictly forbidden in cases where scripts are borrowed or purchased second hand from a third party. All rights including, but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, broadcast, recitation, lecturing, tabloid, publication, and reading are reserved.

COPYING OR REPRODUCING ALL OR ANY PART OF THIS BOOK IN ANY MANNER IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN BY LAW.

PUBLISHED BY

HEUER PUBLISHING LLC

P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406

TOLL FREE (800) 950-7529 • FAX (319) 368-8011

DISCORD
By Ben Kingsland

SYNOPSIS: Letting go of your child is never easy especially when you're attached to your daughter by an umbilical cord. All parents want to hang on, but some parents want to hang on a little too long.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 females, 1 either)

DOCTOR PROCTOR (m/f)..... 30+; An OB/GYN. Calm, unflappable bedside manner. White lab coat, professional attire.
(15 lines)

WANDA ODWALLA (f) 40s; High-strung, controlling mother. Careful, tasteful, worried clothing. Dress or long skirt.
(41 lines)

MAIA ODWALLA (f)..... 19; Wanda's seething teenage daughter. Youthful clothes someone else picked out for her that she hates. *(36 lines)*

MOLLY SMOCK (f) Any age; Midwife and family therapist. Insightful, blunt, a little too clever. Earthy, slightly rumpled professional clothes. Maybe a blue lab coat. *(19 lines)*

DURATION: 10 minutes.

PLACE: DOCTOR PROCTOR'S office

TIME: The present

Discord by Ben Kingsland
Copyright © MMXV by Ben Kingsland

SETTING: *The office of DOCTOR PROCTOR, Ob/Gyn. A seat for the doctor and seats for his patients.*

AT RISE: *PROCTOR sits with his clipboard, jotting down a few notes. WANDA sits with her arms and legs crossed. MAIA stands by an empty chair next to her mother, looking furious. A long (6-foot-plus) umbilical cord connects WANDA's waist to MAIA's waist.*

PROCTOR: *(Unfazed.)* So, Wanda, your chart says you've been in labor for... nineteen years?

WANDA: Yes.

PROCTOR puts on surgical gloves and indicates for WANDA to stand. She does. MAIA is fuming, impatient.

PROCTOR: Uh-huh. Let's just check this out here...

He indicates for them to stand as far apart as possible. The red cord pulls taut as they do.

PROCTOR: *(Touching the cord, making notes.)* Uh-huh... The cord looks like it's in good shape... and she's healthy?

WANDA: You should feel her kick!

MAIA: *(Losing it.)* Gaaah!

MAIA gives PROCTOR a swift kick in the rear. WANDA is chagrined. PROCTOR laughs, rubbing himself.

PROCTOR: *(Unfazed.)* Magical. Well, so, what can I do for you?

WANDA: Well, doctor—

MAIA: What can you do? Doctor Proctor—get a good look at this situation here, and take a wild, crazy guess what it is we want you to do.

PROCTOR: I'm a doctor. I never guess. I discern.

MAIA: Fantastic.

Discord by Ben Kingsland
Copyright © MMXV by Ben Kingsland

PROCTOR: And what I'm discerning is some impatience with the pace of labor. Nineteen years is on the longer side...

WANDA: I do like to take my time. Just ask my husband!

WANDA and PROCTOR laugh.

PROCTOR: You know, many of my colleagues get a little antsy about long labors, especially when they butt up against happy hour or Dancing with the Stars. They probably would have gone with a C-section a while back—

MAIA: Do a C-section. Do a dissection, I don't care, just end this!

PROCTOR: But the way I see it, Wanda, there's no need to jump the gun as long as you and your fetus are still healthy.

WANDA: Thank you, Doctor. That's all we needed to—

MAIA: What did you call me?

PROCTOR: A fetus.

MAIA: *I'm nineteen years old.*

PROCTOR: A fetus only becomes a newborn when labor is complete. Since third stage—the expulsion of the placenta— appears to be ongoing, you're still a fetus. (*Consulting charts.*) With a gestational age of roughly a thousand weeks.

MAIA: That doesn't strike you as horrifying.

PROCTOR: No, but I've been incapable of feeling negative emotion since I started eating these breath mints the last drug rep left behind.

WANDA: Here's the thing, Doctor Proctor. A few weeks ago, my little fetus was doing some unauthorized reading after nummies-go-night-night, and got this idea in her head that since 936 weeks gestational age, she's been legally empowered to 'emancipate' herself.

MAIA: I'm over eighteen. I have rights.

WANDA: Sweetheart, I don't know what you want me to do about that.

MAIA: Cut the cord.

WANDA: Not safe until the placenta detaches.

MAIA: A shot of pitocin will stimulate contractions and push it out.

WANDA: I'm allergic.

Discord by Ben Kingsland
Copyright © MMXV by Ben Kingsland

MAIA: Hey, Doc, I'm just going to yank this cord as hard as I can until I'm born, okay? Help me pull, or get my mom some gauze.

WANDA: You see how agitated she is, Doctor?

PROCTOR: Sometimes the fetus finds it soothing if you rub your belly in a circular motion.

MAIA: *I'm over here!* She could rub her belly with a belt sander and I wouldn't feel it!

WANDA: She says the cruelest things to me, Doctor Proctor, don't you agree?

PROCTOR: I've discerned that this appointment is growing emotional. I'd like to refer you to a specialist who has more interest in that particular area.

WANDA: A specialist? Can't we just settle this here?

PROCTOR: (*Holding up a tin.*) I could write you a prescription for this box of what I assume are Altoids. For they are curiously strong.

WANDA: I can't take drugs. They'll pass through the cord! What if they stunt her growth?

They look at MAIA.

PROCTOR: (*Setting the tin down.*) I'll just leave these here then. My colleague will be with you shortly.

PROCTOR exits. MAIA refuses to sit.

WANDA: Sit and wait, will you?

MAIA: I want to look out the window.

WANDA: Now, no tantrums. Remember, Mama's the one who pulls the strings.

WANDA gives a playful tug on the cord.

MAIA: Oh my God.

WANDA begins playing a pretend bass line on the taut umbilical cord.

***Discord* by Ben Kingsland**
Copyright © MMXV by Ben Kingsland

WANDA: (*Singing, as low as possible.*)

BA DUM DUM DUM DUM DUM DUM DUM DUM
WHO'S MY LITTLE GRUMPY ONE?

MAIA: I'm not grumpy.

WANDA: (*Singing.*)

BA DUM DUM DUM DUM DUM DUM DUM
DON'T BE GRUMPY, LET'S HAVE FUN

MAIA: Parenting much? I thought it was rude to make music with your body parts.

WANDA: You want to hear a body making rude music, listen to your father after a three bean salad! Oh, Maia, it's good to be able to laugh with you.

MAIA: Oh, mom, it's good to be able to go more than eight feet away from you. Oh wait—I've never been able to do that for a single moment of my life because *you won't finish giving birth.*

WANDA: Don't be ridiculous. A placenta isn't something you can just decide to hold in, like a number two when there are only public toilets available. You heard the doctor. These things take time.

MAIA: In case you haven't noticed, time has happened. We passed the window where this was a delivery complication a long time ago. I can't decide if we're in carnival sideshow territory or full-on urban legend yet.

WANDA: You can't pretend that you never enjoyed this. Remember playing jump rope with your friends?

WANDA begins spinning her end of the cord like a jump rope.

MAIA: No, mom. I remember spinning the umbilical cord with you at the edge of the playground as you hollered for girls to jump on in. Baby's first pepper spraying.

WANDA: I think you're just grumpy because you need a nap.

MAIA: Come over here so I can throw you out this window.

SMOCK enters on the last line, looking over PROCTOR's clipboard.

SMOCK: Hey hey! Hostile, homicidal, and tethered. I think you two just became my new favorite patients.

Discord by Ben Kingsland
Copyright © MMXV by Ben Kingsland

WANDA: Excuse me. We were having a private conversation.

SMOCK: Doctor Proctor asked me to join your private conversation.
Molly Smock. I'm a midwife and a family therapist.

WANDA: Midwife? So you're one of those, like, mail-order brides?

SMOCK: That's a truly terrible guess. I'm an expert in birth and women's health, and I work with Doctor Proctor to bring a different perspective and fewer chemical dependencies to the table. So tell me, how are you not dead of infection by now?

WANDA: It's called hygiene, Ms. Smock. Maia and I give the cord a good Windexing every other day. I don't need your wifing, and I don't see what good a therapist can do. We're only here so a doctor could tell Maia that there's no medically safe way to separate us before nature runs its course.

SMOCK: Nature's done, Mrs. Odwalla. Nature lapped you about nineteen years ago. 97% of placentas detach within thirty minutes of fetal expulsion.

MAIA: Call me a fetus again. Go ahead. Say it right to my fetus face.

SMOCK: You're not a fetus, Maia. A fetus is the size of a lemon, or a butternut squash. You're the size of an emu. You're a grown woman.

WANDA: What are you doing, putting these ideas in her head? Now she's going to want to read a book on emus.

SMOCK: Look. Why don't we all take a seat?

*MAIA sits in PROCTOR's chair, as far from WANDA as possible.
WANDA sits. The umbilical cord is taut. SMOCK scoots the third chair to sit between them.*

SMOCK: Tell me why you came here today, Wanda.

WANDA: I came here to humor my fetus. She won't listen to me that labor has just got to take its course. I thought she'd listen to a doctor.

SMOCK: Did you want to listen to a doctor, Maia?

MAIA: I didn't want to listen to a doctor call me a baby. I want a doctor to put an end to this. I want a doctor to take a pair of scissors and make a little snip.

Discord by Ben Kingsland
Copyright © MMXV by Ben Kingsland

WANDA: Don't you understand how much it hurts me that you can't be patient? It's a process! And I promise you that when this process naturally winds down, you won't have to be tied to dear ol' mom any more than you *want* to be.

MAIA: I don't want to be tied to you at all.

Pause.

WANDA: You see, Smock? This is what happens when you get a therapist involved. Everybody talks, and everybody gets sad, and then we have to pay you for having made us sad.

SMOCK: And how does that make you feel? *(Beat.)* That's a little joke. Maia. You said you want a doctor to take scissors to the cord. You said you don't want to be tied to your mother at all. Why don't you just grab the scissors yourself and emancipate?

MAIA: Because I'm not a medical person. Because... because if I do the cuts wrong, what if I bleed out? What if my mom bleeds out?

SMOCK: You don't want your mom to bleed out?

MAIA: Of course not.

SMOCK: Your mom's health means something to you.

MAIA: Look, don't try to make this some secret unconscious love thing. I know you new agey midwives. Not wanting my mother to bleed to death isn't the same as wanting to play medical waste jump rope with her all day. I am dying for some freakin' space.

SMOCK: Fair enough. Wanda. Did you hear what Maia just said?

WANDA: She wants space.

SMOCK: And?

WANDA: She doesn't like jump rope.

SMOCK: And?

WANDA: ...she doesn't want me to die.

SMOCK: You matter to her. After all this time, right here, at the height of your mother-daughter vendetta, she still won't just run away. She doesn't want to see you hurt.

WANDA: But when she goes away, it will hurt.

SMOCK: Probably. But guess what, Wanda? You're not going to die.

Discord by Ben Kingsland
Copyright © MMXV by Ben Kingsland

MAIA: She's right, mom. You can let me go. You won't die, and I won't disappear.

SMOCK: I mean, really, you're not going to die, because this isn't an umbilical cord.

Pause.

MAIA: What?

SMOCK: I mean, it's pretty obvious. This is a rope with some red spray paint or something. Your mom's just had you on a leash for nineteen years. Isn't that right?

Slowly, WANDA undoes the rope around her waist and lets it drop. MAIA picks up the rope and examines it in disbelief.

WANDA: *(As she unties it.)* I just wanted to keep you close as long as I could. I did it out of love.

MAIA: I was on a love leash for nineteen years.

WANDA: And now you're free to do whatever you want. My big girl.

MAIA is twitching, about to explode. Oblivious, SMOCK comes towards her with arms outstretched for a hug.

SMOCK: I'm going to facilitate this emotional moment by starting what I call a "hug waterfall." First, I hug you, then you hug your mother, then—

MAIA: GAAAAAH!

MAIA kicks SMOCK as hard as she can. SMOCK takes a cartoony tumble backwards and lies still. MAIA and WANDA look at her.

WANDA: You know, if you're still wearing the cord when she presses charges, you could probably get tried as a minor—

MAIA: Not gonna happen.

WANDA: I figured that was a long shot.

MAIA: Why would you keep your own child physically tied to you for nineteen years?

Discord by Ben Kingsland
Copyright © MMXV by Ben Kingsland

WANDA: We're going to be tied to each other for our whole lives, no matter what. This just made it...clearer.

MAIA: (*Shaking her head, deflating.*) You really screwed up, Mom.

WANDA: I know.

MAIA: I'm still going to emancipate myself.

WANDA: I understand. You have rights. You're a grown emu now.

MAIA: ...do you think you could help me look for a place?

WANDA: I'd like that. We should head out through the fire escape so the lobby security guards don't have a chance to ask questions. Bring the rope.

MAIA: Mom!

WANDA: You wanted an adult relationship with your mother, you've got it. Come on, then... you big baby.

WANDA stands by the window. Shaking her head and smiling, MAIA grabs the cord and heads towards her mother.

THE END