

THE FRYING PAN

by Kelly Meadows



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CHARACTERS

POLICE OFFICER

SARAH, a teenage girl, a recent immigrant with her family, who came to America for political freedom. She should be dressed “typical,” but not too revealing, so that her father’s reproachment of her outfit appears to be unreasonable based on what she wears.

Her MOTHER, who is trying to integrate her daughter into American culture while still respecting the way she was raised.

Her FATHER, abusive and not open to the idea of women having a say in his home

SETTING: A police station, with flashbacks into the family’s living room. The station can just be a chair or a desk. The officer can interview SARAH at a front corner of the stage, while a simple living room set can be at center stage, or the other side.

OFFICER: ***(taking notes)*** You’re fully aware of what you’ve done.

SARAH: ***(SHE’s just been through a very traumatic experience.)*** We just couldn’t take it any more.

OFFICER: ***(HE stays calm, trying to assure her that it’s okay to talk to him.)*** So, you...

SARAH: ***(interrupting)*** I couldn’t let him do that to my mother! Not again!

OFFICER: Not again? Did this happen a lot?

SARAH: Yes! I just snapped. Everyone will say I was such a good daughter, and I turned on my father at a moment’s notice. They don’t know. I was ashamed to say anything, and my mother was too proud. And who listens to a young girl in our community? But I didn’t know what else to do. My mother and father would always fight about me. ***(On another part of the stage, MOTHER and FATHER enter and are starting to get into an argument, occasionally gesturing toward SARAH.)*** Father’s word was law, and he didn’t care what it meant for us. If you went against him, he’d hit you. ***(FATHER treats MOTHER aggressively.)*** I just wanted to be like all the other kids, and ***(embarrassed)*** they made fun of me. They said I shouldn’t live in America if I still act like I’m in another country. So mom let me go

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to school wearing – American clothes. For a while, he was going to work early, so he didn't know.

MOTHER: (***fighting with FATHER***) They harass her in school! They call her terrorist! She can't learn like that. So I told her she could dress like all the other students. Right now it's the best thing for her, to be safe. The other kids, they're prejudiced against us.

FATHER: So, our daughter goes out in public for all men to see she dresses like a streetwalker! And thanks to you for giving her the idea.

MOTHER: She's dresses like any respectable American girl. She wants to be an American girl. (***This takes a lot of guts for her to say.***) I gave her permission.

FATHER: Permission in this family belongs only to me.

MOTHER: Does freedom belong only to you as well?

FATHER: Women should be modest – at home or in America. It's all a bad influence, and you're not showing yourself strong enough to combat it. And you're encouraging Sarah to be part of it all.

MOTHER: So only you are allowed freedom! You're living in America but I'm still stuck back home. (***FATHER is very taken aback by MOTHER's strong attitude.***) I want to wear clothes that look nice. I want to come and go and feel like I can live without you watching me every minute. It's what we agreed to when we ran away.

FATHER: You're encouraging our daughter to be loose and to defy the way we raised her. Everyone else's daughter can dress like that. Ours will not.

MOTHER: It's not loose. It's just... different! (***uses another line of reasoning***) We came here to be free. Freedom is a beautiful thing. And in America, freedom is for everyone, not just for you! Suddenly you withhold it with an iron fist!

FATHER: (***pushes MOTHER away, roughly***) Where is she? (***calling***) Sarah!

SARAH: (***FATHER comes over to her. SHE shouts back to him.***) Don't! (***FATHER backs off, goes back to MOTHER... SARAH speaks to OFFICER.***) I don't want to talk about what happened! I want to take it all back.

OFFICER: (***trying to calm her down***) You have to tell us. We believe you. No one here will hurt you.

SARAH: Will you call me a hostile influence and send me back home?

FATHER: (***comes back, shouting, and grabs SARAH away from the OFFICER***) Sarah!

SARAH: (***meekly***) Yes father.

FATHER: (***pushing her around***) You went behind my back. You and your mother! That's why we have to keep women behind closed doors. You can't be trusted.

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SARAH: Then you try to go to school and let them call you names all day. I can't learn. I can't have fun. I just want some friends. It's hard enough as it is.

FATHER: You're a disgrace!

MOTHER: ***(stepping in to defend SARAH and to deflect FATHER's anger)*** Sarah and I both are as much a part of our culture as you are. I don't see *you* following it to the letter. ***(HE slaps her, but SHE remains defiant.)*** We want to live in the modern world. You really don't care a thing about "how they do it in our country." You just want to rule us like a military general. Our front door might as well be a prison. It's not better than the dictator we had to live with in-

FATHER: ***(shouting, cutting her off)*** I will not allow women under my control to walk the street like hookers! ***(to MOTHER)*** You put yourselves out on display for every man out there with those indecent things. Sarah! Throw those clothes away!

(HE throws her back towards the OFFICER, who protects her. FATHER exits.)

SARAH: ***(to the OFFICER)*** It got worse. See, Father spent two years in prison back at home because they accused him of crimes against the state. Actually, he just wanted political freedom. So we had to sneak out of the country and start life here. But to him, only men were allowed to disagree. In school I was afraid to think for myself sometimes because of how I was raised. But mother was a strong woman. She tried to teach me differently. At first I was afraid.

(MOTHER takes SARAH gently.)

MOTHER: You have a right to look pretty. You're young. Boys should notice you. ***(SHE pulls out a small bottle of perfume.)*** Your father noticed me when I was your age, because I was pretty.

SARAH: ***(amazed)*** Where did this come from?

MOTHER: Your father bought it for me, so I would smell nice for him. ***(laughs a bit)*** I hope he won't notice this little bit missing.

(SHE and SARAH put some on, MOTHER exits, and SARAH goes back to the OFFICER.)

SARAH: ***(to the OFFICER)*** He was back when we got home. He must have got off work early.

FATHER: ***(enters, pulling MOTHER in and threatening her)*** Where were you?

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MOTHER: (**defiant, but lying**) We were out. I took Sarah shopping at the mall.

FATHER: (**goes from MOTHER to SARAH, annoyed**) What's that smell? (**grabs them both**) You're wearing perfume!

MOTHER: (**proudly**) Both of us.

FATHER: For who? (**sarcastic**) You're trying to show off for hot American men?

MOTHER: You bought it for me so I should smell good. So now I'm here in front of you, and I smell good. We look good, mother and daughter. You should be proud of us.

FATHER: So now you're teaching our daughter to be a streetwalker like you. I thought I was the one you would look pretty for.

MOTHER: I love you...

FATHER: Prove it!

MOTHER: ...But you're making it difficult!

FATHER: If you love me, you will obey me.

MOTHER: No! We are to be equals. You should cherish your family, not imprison it.

SARAH: (**to FATHER**) We went to a movie. A movie about women in our country, and their quest for freedom. (**talks to the OFFICER, as MOTHER and FATHER argue in pantomime**) Here in America I see how women can live free. We can make our own choices. We can work good jobs, and we can do what we want with our lives. My mother taught me how to be respectful and modest but still carry myself with pride and freedom.

FATHER: (**screaming at MOTHER**) From now on, you don't leave this house without me! Or I'll fix you so no man will ever want to look at you!

SARAH: I thought he was going to kill her. (**SHE runs between her parents.**) Stop it, Father! Stop!

FATHER: (**slaps her away**) Stay out of this or you will get the same! Where we come from, the daughter doesn't presume to rule the household! (**to MOTHER**) Another great creation of yours, that Sarah.

MOTHER: I'll make sure you never see me again! Not after this!

(SHE tries to escape, and HE pulls her back and starts to choke her.)

SARAH: (**to the OFFICER, while still in the middle of this fight**) It was always one thing or other. What she wore. What she said. It was like we needed a passport to go from one room to the next. I love my mother and I couldn't stand to watch him hit her all the time. (**SHE starts to exit and calls back to the OFFICER, nearly in tears, but resolutely.**) When I saw his hands on her throat, I had to – I had to!

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(SHE comes back in with a pot or pan and raises it over her FATHER's head... calmly looks back at OFFICER as SHE readies herself to hit FATHER, and makes a motion to hit FATHER as the lights go down or curtain closes.) So you see... I do know what I did. I had no choice.

END OF PLAY



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