

**LITTLE ART TABLE**  
by Marla Porter

12,000 Dessau Road, #315  
Austin, Texas 78754  
(512) 689-9855  
[mporter59@austin.rr.com](mailto:mporter59@austin.rr.com)

# **LITTLE ART TABLE**

## **CHARACTERS**

MAXINE	40s, Artist
QUINN	40s, Maxine's sister
DANI	8, Maxine's neighbor
CHARLIE	8, Dani's new friend
HALEY	10, Charlie's sister

## **SETTING**

The curb in front of Maxine's home and then in Maxine's living room. There is a sofa and chair and a table with young kid art supplies spread out on it.

## **TIME**

Present day, early Saturday afternoon

(Light comes up on Maxine in her house, who is pacing in front of the sofa and talking on the phone.)

MAXINE

The painting for the bank in Odessa? The one with the mesquite trees and barn?

(listens)

Oh. Oh, yeah, that's right. They want the painting of the steer in the bluebonnet field.

(listens)

Could they give me another week?

(listens)

Oh. What if I knock \$500 off the price? Could you ask them?

(listens)

No! I'll eat the loss. You'd still get your commission on the contracted price.

(listens)

Okay, thanks. I'm sorry about this.

(listens)

I don't know.... just tired I guess.

(listens)

No, no! The mesquite trees and barn will ready to ship to the Lubbock law firm by a week from this Monday, so they will have it by the first of next month.

(listens)

Yes. I promise.

(The doorbell rings.)

There's my door. Is there anything else?

(listens)

Thanks. Thanks.... and sorry again...

(Maxine hangs up. The doorbell rings again and Maxine goes to answer it. Quinn is at the door.)

QUINN

Hey, can I come in?

MAXINE

Hey... Ummm, well I'm about to take a nap.

QUINN  
(walks in past her and goes to sit down)

Sweetie, I'm coming in.

MAXINE

What is it?

QUINN

Why weren't you at Doug and Gretchen's anniversary party last night?

MAXINE

Just tired I guess.

QUINN

You cancelled our lunch date with Dad last week too. Well... You didn't even cancel, just didn't show up.

MAXINE

I apologized.

QUINN

Sweetie, I'm worried you're not taking your meds.

MAXINE

What?

QUINN

You're off your meds, aren't you?

MAXINE

No, no I'm not.

(pauses)

Not completely anyway.

QUINN

When is your next medication visit?

MAXINE

Please don't nag me.

QUINN

I'm not. I'm worried about you.

(Maxine stares)

Do you even have an appointment? Aren't you supposed to go once a month?

MAXINE

(walking over to the front door)

Look... thanks for worrying about me but I'm fine.

QUINN

I'm not leaving.

MAXINE

I have to finish some commissions. Pay the bills.

QUINN

When did you stop taking your meds?

MAXINE

Finish another stupid cow painting for another stupid bank.

QUINN

*When* did you stop taking your meds?

MAXINE  
(sinks into the couch)

Three months ago.

QUINN

Oh, honey....

MAXINE  
(wiping eyes with a tissue)

I'm fine. I'm fine.

QUINN

Maxine. Maxine, look at me. *Maxine, you're not fine.* But you *will* be.

MAXINE

God, I'm sorry. I know I'm a drag. I feel bad for being *painfully* shy and unable to make a gazillion friends the way you can.

QUINN

That's not true. Everybody I know likes you. You're clinically depressed. You just *tell* yourself all this other stuff. Just stop *telling* yourself stuff.

MAXINE

I just.... it's just...

QUINN

What honey?

MAXINE

Reduced to painting boring cows and fields and barns for every boring bank and hotel and office complex west of Llano.

QUINN

But that's just to pay the bills!

(points to the moth painting)

*Your moth series...* Look at this one. Incredible. One of them got into the MOMA. The MOMA!!!

MAXINE

Over ten years ago...

QUINN

Paint some more. Maybe not moths, maybe something else. Another series, planets or insects or flowers...

MAXINE

Nothing inspires me.



QUINN

That's cos you're off your meds. Not that long ago you were feeling so hopeful.

MAXINE

Hope scares me. I'll just keep painting stupid cows and barns. Pay the bills. Speaking of...I really do have to get one finished this weekend. It's already late.

QUINN

Please call the doctor.

(The doorbell rings and Quinn goes to answer it. Dani, Charlie, and Haley are at the door.)

Hi girls.

DANI AND CHARLIE AND HALEY  
(together)

Hi Quinn.  
Hi.  
Hello.

QUINN  
(to Maxine, exiting)

Call me when you've made your appointment. I'll come with you, okay?

MAXINE

Okay.

DANI

Hi Miss Maxine. This is Charlie and Haley. Their family is moving in next door today so I asked them to play.

HALEY

Hi.

CHARLIE

My real name is Charlotte, but my family calls me Charlie.

MAXINE

Hello.

DANI

I know it's Saturday and not one of my after-school days, but can we come in and color at your little art table? Pleeeeease???

MAXINE

Oh Dani, not today. I'm pretty tired.

DANI

Oh! Just for a few minutes then? Please, please, please?!

MAXINE

Okay, tell you what. You guys can color, but don't get too noisy. Deal?

DANI  
(loudly)

DEAL!!!!

CHARLIE

Okay, deal.

HALEY

Thank you.

MAXINE  
(exiting)

Okay, I'm going to go in the next room and work on something at the big art table.

DANI

Okay, bye.

CHARLIE

Bye.

HALEY  
(pointing at the moth painting)

WOW! Did she paint this butterfly!

DANI

Yeah, but it's a moth. She's like *famous*. Last spring we got all dressed up and went to this fancy party at this art gallery where they were showing her paintings and stuff.

CHARLIE

NEAT!! I want to be a famous painter too!

DANI  
(Takes them over to the little art table.)

Okay, what should we color?

(The girls start coloring while they talk.)

HALEY

I'm gonna draw myself winning a track meet!

CHARLIE

Haley wants to be on the track team when she starts middle school.

DANI

Cool! I'm gonna draw myself too!

HALEY

What as?

DANI

Ummmm... I think I'm gonna be a GREAT THINKER. What are you gonna draw Charlie?

CHARLIE

A truck. I'm gonna draw our moving truck, only I'm gonna put a horse on it. A green horse with pink spots. The Green Horse Moving Company. And then I'm gonna frame it and give it to an art place.

HALEY

Okay! Hey, why does she have two art tables?

DANI

I think the big one has a whole room to itself and it stinks in there. Maxine says the paints are dangerous so she set up this table for me to color and make yarn flowers and stuff like that. I stay here after school til my parents come home.

CHARLIE

Oh.

HALEY

You know what I was thinking?

CHARLIE AND DANI  
(concentrating on coloring)

What?

What?

HALEY

Liiiiiiike, what if, like what IF I'm not really me. What if last night in my sleep someone switched places and gave me their brain and took mine. The brain in me right now would THINK I was them. So how should I know if I'm me or if I'm them?

CHARLIE

Yeah, but you don't have a bandage on your head, so how could they have opened your head without giving you a bandage after?

HALEY

Oh. Yeah.... Yeah, that's true. I guess I'm really me then.

CHARLIE

Hey, are my wheels on straight?

DANI AND HALEY

Yeah.  
Sure are.

DANI

You know what *I* was thinking?

CHARLIE

What?

DANI

I was thiiiiinkiiiiing.... I was thinking that there are just so many blades of grass on Earth and there is an exact number growing and wouldn't it be super cool to know that exact number?!

HALEY

Yeah, but that's impossible.

DANI

Why?

HALEY

Because I hear a mower. If someone is mowing grass **RIGHT THIS SECOND**, then the number of blades of grass is never one number.

DANI AND CHARLIE

Good point.  
Yeah, that's true.

CHARLIE

I wonder if there are any real green horses? I bet there are. On Mars! But I bet they don't have pink spots like mine.

DANI AND HALEY

Yup.  
I bet you're right!

CHARLIE

Hey. What's a good way to draw a horse?

DANI

I bet Maxine knows. She's good at drawing cows anyway.

(calls loudly)

*MAXIIIIINEEEEE...*

(pause)

*Ohhhhhhhh.....MAXIIIIINEEEEE...*



MAXINE  
(entering)

Girls! I thought you guys were going to be quiet.

DANI

C'mere, c'mere!! Charlie needs help drawing her horse.

MAXINE  
(walks over to the little art table and looks)

Okay, let me see.

CHARLIE

Are you really a famous artist?

MAXINE

Yeah. Maybe a little famous.

HALEY  
(showing Maxine)

Wanna see me winning my high jump??? See??

MAXINE  
(to Haley)

Hmmm...that's really good.

HALEY

I'm gonna put some faces in the bleachers too. OOO! And I'm gonna make it raining so I win even when it rains!

DANI  
(importantly)

Changed my mind. I'm NOT gonna draw myself. I'm gonna draw a bunch of colors! THAT's what they call an *abstract*.

CHARLIE

We know that.

HALEY

Sure. We've even been to the MOMA in New York City.

(more importantly)

THAT's where all the good *abstract* art is.

DANI

You've been to the MOMA?! COOL!

(most importantly)

*Maxine* had a painting in the MOMA once.

CHARLIE AND HALEY

WOW!  
You did? Really?

MAXINE

It was a few years ago.

DANI

Hey y'all. What if...What *IF* the color I see as blue is the color you see as red, but you call blue what I think of as red. How are we supposed to know what is blue and what is red?

CHARLIE

Stop! She came over here to help me draw my horse.

HALEY

She can help me too!

CHARLIE

(to Maxine, importantly)

See? Here is my big moving truck.

MAXINE

(sits on couch wiping her eyes)

Give me a minute, okay...

DANI

Hey... Miss Maxine, are you crying?

CHARLIE AND HALEY

Yeah, whaasa matter?  
Are you okay?

(The girls crawl onto the couch on either side of Maxine.)

MAXINE

No, girls. I'm okay. Just a little sad.

THE THREE GIRLS

(in unison)

Why?  
Tell us.  
Want me to color you a flower?

MAXINE

No, kids, I'm fine. We all get sad sometimes.

HALEY

Yeah! Like when our dog Sport died last year.

DANI

(hugging Maxine around the neck)

Or when Mimi died last year. Oh! I know what!

THE THREE GIRLS

(The girls get up and step away whispering to each other, then, in unison, pull Maxine over to the little art table.)

After you help Charlie, you can draw with us!  
What's your favorite color?!  
Draw yourself coloring a painting!!

MAXINE

(dabbing eyes)

You want me to color with y'all? Okay.

CHARLIE

Favorite color! Favorite color! Favorite color!

MAXINE

Black.

THE THREE GIRLS

Black?  
Black?  
Black?

(The girls look at each other, cock their heads, shrug, then laugh.)

Okay, Black!  
Black!  
Black!

CHARLIE

Hey! You have to help me draw my horse!

DANI

She's really best at drawing cows though! Her cows are always standing around in bluebonnets so they always smell good.

CHARLIE

COWS! Cows are much better. I love cows.

(envisioning)

The Green *Cow* Moving Company!

(seriously, to Maxine)

But the cow has to have pink spots.

MAXINE

You love cows?

CHARLIE

Yeah....they make chocolate milk!

DANI

Do not. They make regular milk and then you put chocolate stuff in it.

HALEY

Yellow spots would look better on a green cow.

MAXINE

No, pink will work.

(Gets a book from the coffee table and brings it over.)

Once there was this painter named Gauguin. See here, girls? Look at this. He would paint people with green faces, blue faces... You girls can paint whatever you want.

THE THREE GIRLS

Neat!

Yuck!

Cool!

MAXINE

Okay, Charlie. Why don't you start over and draw a new truck so we can put a cow on it instead of a horse. I'll help you. Just hang tight, I'll be right back.

(goes over to the coffee table and picks up a phone and dials)

Hello? Hello, Is this Dr. Martinson's answering service? I'd like to make an appointment.... Yes. Next week is perfect.

**END OF PLAY**