

THE SISTER'S GRIN

A Ten-Minute Play

by

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Cast of Characters

ASH: Age:40's VAL's unkempt, older sister who looks older than her years. SHE also looks like SHE needs a shower. SHE wears a rock n' roll T-shirt and worn jeans.

VAL: Age:30's ASH's significantly more successful younger sister. Although SHE is currently unemployed, SHE has had enough success in HER career to afford HER posh suburban home. SHE wears silk pajamas and a monogrammed robe.

THE SISTER'S GRIN

SETTING: The living room of VAL'S suburban home. A door (*STAGE-RIGHT*) leads to the off-stage exterior. A door (*STAGE-LEFT*) leads the off-stage kitchen. There is a sofa, an upholstered chair and a coffee table. On the table is a framed family photo, a soiled duffle bag and a cellphone.

AT RISE: *ASH, sits on the couch. SHE picks up the cellphone, looks at it and puts it back on the coffee table. SHE then picks up the photo, studies it and puts it back on the table. SHE looks tired and nervous.*

TIME: 3:10 A.M., Monday morning.

(An irritated VAL enters carrying two mugs of coffee. SHE hands one to ASH. ASH takes a sip of coffee)

ASH

Thanks, Val. Whoa damn, I really needed this.

VAL

It's not real.

ASH

Pardon me.

VAL

It's not real. It's fucking Sanka. It's not real.

ASH

Hey! Whoa! It's okay Val. Sanka's cool. It's fine. Really.

(VAL sees the filthy duffle bag on the coffee table)

VAL

Would you mind removing your filthy duffle bag from my brand-new coffee table? The table is not even paid for yet.

(ASH moves the filthy bag to the upholstered chair)

ASH

Sorry Sis... I didn't realize... So, how are the kids doing?

(VAL sees the filthy bag is now on upholstered chair)

VAL

(Seeing the filthy bag on the chair)

How about the floor? Would you have problem if we put the filthy bag on the floor?

ASH

No. Of course not. Yeah. The floor's cool for the filthy bag.

(ASH moves the bag to the floor)

VAL

So, again... why now Ashley? Why are you coming to me now?

ASH

I'm coming to you now because I really need your help Sis.

VAL

And that's my point then, isn't it? Same as it ever was! You *only* come to me when you *really* need my help...*SIS*. I never hear from you otherwise...*SIS*. In fact, I haven't heard a peep out of you in six years! Not a call, not a note, not even a fucking Christmas card!

ASH

I don't send Christmas cards to nobody!

VAL

Anybody! And I am not just anybody!!!

ASH

Shhh! You'll wake them.

VAL

Goddamn it, Ash! Don't shush me in my own house! What is going on with you? You look like shit. Do you ever sleep?

ASH

No, I don't sleep... and I don't eat... and I don't send Christmas cards. In fact, I don't do anything that you all do out here in Larchmont. And I definitely do not sleep!

VAL

Well you should. You look awful.

ASH

Why, thank you Val.

VAL

(Jokingly)

Sure. You're my sister. Your welcome.

ASH

(SHE looks at her watch)

Anyways, I do need to tell you what I'm here for. I'm running out of time.

VAL

Yes...what the hell time is it anyway?

(SHE looks at the clock)

It's 3:10 A.M.! Why are you here at this hour? You know, your phone call scared the shit out of me! Who calls at that hour?

ASH

I already apologized for that.

VAL

And I told you not to come! I have an interview tomorrow... no, not tomorrow... in four hours! I can't walk in there looking like I have been on an all-night binge.

ASH

You have an interview at 7 a.m.? Who the hell interviews somebody at 7 a.m.?

VAL

Somebody who is too busy to do it at a normal hour. Someone who is too important to fill the usual nine to five slots with something as mundane as a job applicant.

ASH

If I were you, I'd take it as a sign. You don't want to work for someone who does interviews at that hour. If he does that now, what's he going to be like after you're hired?

VAL

Thank you, Ash, for your masterful career counseling, but you are not me! I *am* going on this interview, red eyes and all! I cannot believe you had to choose this particular night to darken my doorstep!

(The cellphone on the coffee table rings three times. After three rings ASH nervously answers it)

ASH

Yes, I'm here.

(ASH puts the cell phone down on the coffee table)

VAL

Who the hell was that!?! What did you tell them? You're here? You're where? You're in my house? Do they have this address? Are you bringing your shit into my house?

ASH

Calm down, Baby Sister. It was a business call.

VAL

A business call? At three a.m.? And it couldn't wait? In fact, all of it...your problem... your being here? Fuck!!! Well, let's get on with it. What is it?

ASH

Val, if you keep screaming you will wake them.

VAL

(Totally losing it)

Tell me! Just tell me!!! What is it you want?

ASH

Actually, I can't believe they're not already awake with all of the commotion.

VAL

(Calmer)

No. I mean... right.

ASH

Is something up Val? Are they here? They are here, right? And they are all right?

VAL

Yes, I'm sure they're fine.

ASH

That was a two-part question. Are they here?

VAL

No. No, Ash, they are not here.

ASH

What? What do you mean they are not here? Where are they?

VAL

I don't know.

ASH

What!?! You don't know? What do you mean, you don't know? I entrusted them to you. I asked you to watch them.

VAL

That was on a Sunday. You said you would be back in a few days. A few days meant, like, Tuesday... Wednesday maybe. A few days did not mean six fucking years!

ASH

I can't believe this! So where are they? And please don't tell me you don't know!

VAL

They're with their father. Your ex-husband.

ASH

Howard!?!

VAL

How many ex-husbands do you have? Yes, they're with Howard.

ASH

You gave them to Howard!?! How could you?

VAL

How could I!?! He took them. I didn't give them to Howard. He took them. Howard said you kidnapped them, Ash. He said you had no legal right to them, and I would be an accessory to the crime. He said he wouldn't press charges if I turned them over. So, I did, and he didn't. He said he was taking them and moving somewhere you could never find them. And he did. I haven't heard from them since.

ASH

I trusted you.

VAL

Oh, you know what Ash? Fuck you!

VAL (Continued)

That night in a scene very much like this one, you came into my house, again looking and smelling like something I'd find under my front porch, and you asked me to watch your kids. And you left. No explanation. You just said you'd be back in a couple of days...six years ago! How dare you question my actions!?! Please, just go fuck yourself!

ASH

I'm sorry...I'm not questioning... of course, you are right.

VAL

I think you should just leave. Please, leave now!

ASH

But I need your help. It's okay about the kids. I'll find them. I don't blame you. It is my fault.

VAL

Your Goddamned right, it is!

ASH

I was just surprised is all. I'm sorry if I overreacted.

VAL

Okay. What do you need? I need to get back to bed.

ASH

I need you to watch something for me...just for a few days.

VAL

You are kidding, right?

ASH

Oh, come on Valerie... don't give me any shit...

VAL

Wait...no wait. Wow! I am having a major deja vu. Have you lost your friggin' mind, Ash!?!

ASH

Why are you so angry with me? Why are you being so difficult?

VAL

Oh, was I being difficult? How could you have done what you did? Okay, so you don't give a shit about me. Time flies, years pass, who cares, fuck it, you got busy.

VAL (Continued)

I'm only your sister. But your own kids. Jesus Ash, how could you not give a shit about your own kids? We might have been dead by now, and you'd never have known it!

ASH

Dead? How could you be dead? And you're wrong about me not caring about you too. You forget...I spent my whole teenage life caring about you. I can't believe you said that!

VAL

Firstly, we are not teenagers anymore. We are adults. Each with our own lives...with our own responsibilities. Secondly, what the hell does that even mean? You spent your whole teenage life caring about me! What does that even mean!?!

ASH

Think about it, Val! You had no friends of your own. You had no hobbies...no interests. I had to give you my friends...my interests. In fact, everything that was mine, I gave to you. And for those things that I didn't give you...you went ahead and took! Even Jeremy. Your prom? He did it as a favor to me, and then you did him in the backseat of my Chevy Impala...which you also borrowed for the night!

VAL

I can't believe you are bringing this shit up after over 20 years. I cannot believe the Jeremy thing still bothers you.

ASH

I'm just saying that for much of your life I gave you everything you had. Giving you my kids to watch...I thought you would have enjoyed that. You always took everything else without question...or even permission.

VAL

An old sweater...even Jeremy, a teenage romance...is not the same thing as giving me responsibility to raise and protect your children! Let's move on. What do you want from me?

ASH

I need to leave this bag with you...just for a few days. I swear, I will be back in a few days to pick it up.

VAL

What!?!? This filthy, fucking bag? You want to leave this filthy bag here? What am I supposed to do with it?

ASH

Just keep it here. Just for three days. It's small enough. You won't even remember it's here. And it's easy to store.

VAL

Oh, convenient too! What's in here?

(VAL opens the duffel and is shocked by its contents)

Holy shit Ash!

ASH

I know. Right!??!

VAL

How much is...

ASH

Four-hundred thousand...

VAL

Holy shit Ash!

ASH

You said that.

VAL

What is this all about?

ASH

I'm in a shitload of trouble Valerie. That's why I need a few days. I got the money...but there is one more thing I got to do. To close the problem for good.

VAL

The problem?

ASH

Yes, the problem. Leave it at that. I need to do this one more thing to solve the problem.

VAL

And if you can't get it done?

ASH

(Nervously)

No! No, I will get it done. I have got to get it done!

VAL

Jesus Sis, you're shaking. This is really serious.

ASH

Yes. If the problem doesn't get fixed...well, it will. There is one other thing I need you to do for me. In just a few minutes, they are going to call.

VAL

Who? Who is going to call? You gave them my number?

ASH

No, of course not. They're going to call on that cell phone. They call every fifteen minutes and I cannot take the phone with me. I can't risk it ringing at the wrong time.

VAL

Okay. So, they are going to call...

ASH

Please, when they call, pick it up on the third ring and just say, "I'm here". Then hang up. But you must pick it up on the third ring.

VAL

The third ring.

ASH

That's right VAL. If you don't do it like that...it will all be over.

VAL

But I don't understand why...

ASH

Please! Just do this one thing for me!

VAL

Okay!

ASH

Do it for Jeremy and the prom.

VAL

Fuck Jeremy, Ash. I'll do it for you, but you are scaring the shit out of me!

ASH

I am scared shitless too. See we're still sharing everything. I gotta go.

VAL

Three days. Right?

ASH

Three days. And if it doesn't work out...and if you see my kids, tell them I love them and tell them...I'm sorry. And please tell Howard I didn't mean to be such an asshole.

VAL

I will, Ash. I will tell them. But I'm sure it's all going to be okay. I don't know why I am sure...but I am.

ASH

Bye Sis. Take care of yourself.

(THEY hug and ASH exits. VAL locks the door and watches out the window as we hear a car start and drive away. VAL then moves to the closet. SHE takes out a well-worn suitcase and puts the dirty duffel bag and a handful of clothes and shoes into the suitcase. SHE then sticks her head into the door leading into the kitchen and addresses the off-stage, unseen Howard)

VAL

Howard, she's gone. Did you get the luggage in the car? Good. Now get the kids in the car and start the engine. We gotta get out of here fast. Use the back door. I'll be right there.

(Under her breath...really just to herself)

Oh, and Howard...Ash wanted me to tell you...she didn't mean to be such an asshole.

(VAL pauses as SHE looks at the cellphone on the coffee table and grins broadly. SHE then turns out the lights and exits. Heard from off-stage are the sounds of car doors slamming, a car starting, and then driving away. Then the cellphone on the coffee table begins to ring. It rings four times and then stops as the lights fade)

(BLACKOUT)

END OF PLAY