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EXCERPT FROM  
***FREE SPACE***  
By Tara Meddaugh

*Amelia, an awkward girl in her teens or early twenties, has just been fired from volunteering at a community center on Bingo Night, the only activity that has given her purpose in the past several years. Before leaving, she stuffed her pockets with her beloved bingo chips, followed her manager, Diane, home in an attempt to get her job back, but to no avail. She now returns home, defeated. She lives with her controlling mother, Bertha.*

ACT I  
Scene 3

(The living room. BERTHA sits. AMELIA enters)

BERTHA  
Where have you been?

AMELIA  
The Bingo Hall.

BERTHA  
Until 2am?

(AMELIA shrugs)

Your father was worried to death.

AMELIA  
I—

BERTHA  
He suggested I call your friends to see if you might have gone out for a cup of coffee or an alcoholic beverage.

AMELIA  
You know I don't drink, Mom.

BERTHA  
And you don't have any friends. I had to remind him of that too. He's become quite forgetful in his middle-age.

(AMELIA starts to walk away)

Where are you going now?

AMELIA

To bed.

BERTHA

Why are your pockets bulging? Did you win money at the Bingo game?

AMELIA

No, I didn't even play.

BERTHA

What's in your pockets?

AMELIA

Nothing.

BERTHA

What is it, Amelia? I can see you have them stuffed with something.

AMELIA

It's nothing. Really. I'm tired.

BERTHA

I did not raise my daughter to lie to me. You'll have to take lessons from your older sister in how to speak to your elders more respectfully.

AMELIA

She's here already?

BERTHA

Yes, she arrived this evening. Simply a joy to have around.

AMELIA

Where is this...sister?

BERTHA

I know you're anxious to meet her and you will tomorrow. But she's sleeping now and I really don't think it's fair to wake her just to see you. Don't good people have a right to sleep?

AMELIA

I'm sorry.

BERTHA

Empty your pockets.

(AMELIA dumps the Bingo chips out of her pockets)

You've brought these into the house?!

(she moves toward the chips, but AMELIA stands in the way)

AMELIA

Don't touch them!

BERTHA

You brought them into my house; I may touch them.

AMELIA

Please don't hurt them...

BERTHA

How would I hurt them?

(scoops up the chips into her apron)

Hm, I think they might make a nice "welcome home" gift for your new sister.

AMELIA

No—don't give them to her!

BERTHA

What a spoiled little sister you are! Oh, Amelia, you've never had a sister to share things with before.

AMELIA

You know that's not [true!]  
—

BERTHA

Well, you're going to have to stop being so selfish now.

AMELIA

But, they're mine! Please!

(tries to grab them from her mother)

BERTHA

Remember your manners!

(holds the chips away from AMELIA)

AMELIA

Don't take them away from me!

(grabbing onto BERTHA's apron)

BERTHA

Stop fighting with your mother, Amelia!

(she yanks on her apron hard and AMELIA loses her grip and falls to the floor. She stays there.)

Honestly, I want you to meet with your sister first thing in the morning so she can give you a lesson on proper behavior.

(starts to exit)

Why don't you use this time tonight to practice behaving appropriately?

AMELIA

I'm tired.

BERTHA

Well, your sister sleeps in your bed now—

AMELIA

But you already—

BERTHA

There's nothing wrong with the floor out here, I suppose. You have a coat. Just be careful of the dog. He doesn't like to share his space. Well, good night.

(BERTHA leaves. AMELIA stares after her for a moment. Her chin begins to quiver and she puts her head down. She stays like this for a moment, then suddenly lifts her head.)

AMELIA

What?

(she looks around and sees no one is there. After a moment, she settles onto the floor once more. Again, she starts suddenly and sits up.)

Who's there?

(she stands and looks toward the exit.)

Who said that? Who's talking?

(she walks around the room and looks under a piece of furniture. She stares at something and her eyes widen.)

You...

(She pulls out a single bingo chip from under the furniture and holds it up)

She didn't get you... You're a lucky chip—she took all the others.

(pause)

So... what do you want from me?

(pause)

Just to listen? But... why me?

(pause)

You really think I'm that special? That pure?

(pause)

Yes, I think I understand Bingo more than them too. I'm glad you noticed. Some of them still think that if you're prettier or smarter or people like you more—that you have a better chance of winning... But you don't.

(pause)

Well, it's hard to remember really, what I did before Bingo. I know I just saw it last week, but I guess I didn't really do too much before it. I just...I stared out the window with my mother...but besides that...oh—I guess I used to look at the stars by myself sometimes. Is that doing something?

(pause)

Because if I squinted my eyes hard enough, I could see myself on one of those stars. And I'd wave down to myself from that star and think, "I look so tiny on that earth." And then I'd wave up at myself from earth and think, "I look so tiny on that star." Of course, I know I'd be dead if I were actually on a star...but, sometimes, I'd really like to be there. But my mom said I shouldn't think about things so far away from me. So...I stay here. Now that I don't have Bingo at the Center anymore.

(pause)

My own game? Oh, I don't know if I should start my own game. I'm really not that great talking to people and stuff.

(pause)

You'd help me?

(pause)

I don't know. Why would I even want to—

(pause)

Well, sure, I want people to notice me, but...

(pause, smiling)

You think so? Well...maybe this is my chance to shine in front of everyone!

(lies down on floor, next to chip)

And when the game is over, someone would win. But most people would lose. But that one person, that one extraordinary person, would be the luckiest one in the world.

(pause)

Well, I like talking to you too.

ACT I  
Scene 4

(The living room. AMELIA lies on the floor, eyes closed, clutching the chip in her hand. BERTHA enters, although her demeanor and walk appear more youthful. She is, indeed, acting as though she were the new daughter, TABBY, who has arrived in their household.)

TABBY (BERTHA)

Good morning!

AMELIA

Mom?

TABBY (BERTHA)

No, silly, I'm Tabby. Your new sister.

AMELIA

Oh.

(TABBY sits on the floor with her and sees the chip in AMELIA's hand)

TABBY (BERTHA)

Oh! I have some like that too. Mom gave them to me this morning.

(AMELIA rises and walks toward exit)

Oh, no! Don't leave yet, Amelia! We should get to know each other.

(pause)

Mom said I should spend some time with you. And I want to, too! I was so excited last night—I could barely fall asleep.

AMELIA

Hm.

TABBY (BERTHA)

Please! Just stay for a little while. Let's bond—we're sisters, right?

AMELIA

I don't want to do this.

TABBY (BERTHA)

You don't want to bond with me?

AMELIA

I don't want to do this again, Mom.

TABBY (BERTHA)  
Mom? Oh, am I nagging like Mom does? I'm sorry.

AMELIA  
No, I just—okay, fine. What do you want to bond about?

TABBY (BERTHA)  
Well...boys?

AMELIA  
What do you want to say?

TABBY (BERTHA)  
Are you dating anyone?

AMELIA  
No.

TABBY (BERTHA)  
Why not?

AMELIA  
I don't know anyone.

TABBY (BERTHA)  
Have you ever dated anyone?

AMELIA  
No.

TABBY (BERTHA)  
Have you ever been in love?

AMELIA  
I don't think so.

TABBY (BERTHA)  
Well, good.

AMELIA  
Why is that good?

TABBY (BERTHA)  
It's just better for all of us, that's all.

AMELIA

What do you mean by that, Mom?

TABBY (BERTHA)

My name's Tabby. I know it's hard to remember someone's name, especially when you first meet them. You just need to ask to hear the name again, instead of calling the person "mom."

AMELIA

I don't—

TABBY (BERTHA)

Don't be embarrassed. Mom said you need a little help socially. Hey, I've even done it before too. I went to this Christmas tree lighting ceremony once—in a really big city far far away from here. And I was standing there by myself—I wasn't by myself, but I just didn't know anyone else around me. Well, when they lit the tree, I noticed the lights—all lit together—looked rather like a Jelly Bean Snow Globe. So I said to the man next to me, "Have you noticed how the lights—all lit together—look rather like a Jelly Bean Snow Globe?" Well, he certainly hadn't noticed, but he said he did see a resemblance now. And he put out his right hand and said, "My name is Chuck." Well, we talked for the next minute or so and I realized I'd completely forgotten his name. So I just asked, and maybe you should try this with me, I just asked, "I'm sorry, can you tell me your name again?" And he just said, "Sure. It's Chuck." I still forgot a few more times, but I just kept asking and he just kept telling me it was Chuck. And finally I remembered. Why don't you try?

AMELIA

I know you said your name is Tabby—of course, it's Tabby. It's always—

TABBY (BERTHA)

Well, it's obviously not that easy since you keep forgetting. Try asking me.

AMELIA

Look, it was nice we talked and—bonded, but I really have a lot of things to do today, so...

TABBY (BERTHA)

Just practice. Say, "I'm sorry, can you tell me your name again?"

AMELIA

(pause)

I'm leaving.

TABBY (BERTHA)

Wait—I don't want to chase my own sister away! Not on our first morning together.

(AMELIA grabs her coat)

Where are you going?



AMELIA

I'm just—doing some things differently today.

TABBY (BERTHA)

Really? Like what?

AMELIA

It's something I'm doing on my own.

TABBY (BERTHA)

That's silly. You can't do anything on your own. Why don't you let me help you? Mom says I'm a great helper. I always come and help her out just when she needs me the most!

AMELIA

Okay, Tabby. I have to go.

TABBY (BERTHA)

I'll miss my little sister.

(TABBY disappears and AMELIA turns and walks into the Community Center. She pulls the bingo chip out of her pocket and strokes it.)

AMELIA

Yes, of course I'll ask her. That's why I'm here. I—no! I won't gouge her eyes out if she says no! If that's a joke, that's not funny! You really shouldn't—

(DIANE enters and AMELIA shoves the chip back in her pocket. As soon as DIANE sees AMELIA, she turns around.)

DIANE

Oh, no!

AMELIA

(running after her)

Miss Diane! It's me—Amelia!

DIANE

I know who you are!

AMELIA

Miss Diane, I wanted to tell you some good news!

DIANE

I can't believe you came back here.

AMELIA

Now, I know you might be a little grumpy. I'm sorry that I woke you up last night. I really am. I just wanted to show you how serious I was—about the game. But I won't bother you about my old position anymore.

DIANE

Then why are you here?

AMELIA

I wanted to talk to you about my new idea.

DIANE

But why did you come to me?

AMELIA

See, I'm starting my own Bingo game.

DIANE

Oh, boy...

AMELIA

Yeah, and I'm going to get people from all over to come and play and bear witness to the greatest game of luck yet!

DIANE

Well, good luck to you.

AMELIA

Wait! I just—I just wanted to see if maybe you could, I don't know, lend me your Bingo equipment.

DIANE

No.

AMELIA

But Miss Diane, I don't have any money to buy my own and I know you only use it on Thursdays, so the chip and I were thinking—

DIANE

The chip?

AMELIA

My ch—...I mean...Well—I was thinking—

DIANE

Amelia...stop...You're not a bad kid.

AMELIA

Thank you.

DIANE

You're a little strange, but the world needs that every now and then. I just can't help you anymore. I gave you a job and it didn't work out. That's the end of my relationship with you.

AMELIA

But, Miss Diane—

DIANE

Whatever kind of game you're planning, you go on in your world, and I'll go on in my world. And our worlds don't meet. Do you understand, Amelia?

(pause)

AMELIA

Yes, Miss Diane.

(pause)

DIANE

I hope your game is a success.

(DIANE exits. AMELIA stands still.)

(TABBY enters and brushes by Amelia)

TABBY (BERTHA)

Oh, hello, Amelia.

AMELIA

What are you doing here?

TABBY (BERTHA)

Me? Oh, I came over this morning after you left. See, I work here now. I mean, it's only a volunteer position, but I like it.

AMELIA

How—

TABBY (BERTHA)

Miss Diane needed a replacement and she saw how intelligent I was and how I had so much *savoir faire*, so...the more perplexing question is, why are you here?

AMELIA

I was just—out walking.

TABBY (BERTHA)

Mom says it's not good to go out walking by yourself. You should always have a buddy with you, to make sure you don't hurt yourself. I can be your buddy, Amelia.

AMELIA

I don't need you.

TABBY (BERTHA)

I think you do. I think sisters should never let each other out of their sight. Especially when they leave the house to walk.

(pause)

AMELIA

She wouldn't let me come, Mom.

(pause)

TABBY (BERTHA)

So silly again. Forgetting my name. It's Tabby. So. You're having problems with your Bingo Game, right?

AMELIA

How did you hear that?

TABBY (BERTHA)

I have ears. Besides, Diane tells me everything.

AMELIA

Oh.

TABBY (BERTHA)

It's too bad you can't find any equipment.

AMELIA

I can find stuff.

TABBY (BERTHA)

Really—how?

AMELIA

I've got the chips and—

TABBY (BERTHA)  
No, I've got the chips.

AMELIA  
But they're mine.

TABBY (BERTHA)  
Mom gave them to me.

AMELIA  
But she took them from me!

TABBY (BERTHA)  
And you took them from here.

AMELIA  
(pause)  
Okay, well, I can find something. I can use—pebbles maybe.

TABBY (BERTHA)  
That's not a bad idea. But people might shoot them at each other—or the window. You don't want to break a window, do you?

AMELIA  
No.

TABBY (BERTHA)  
And you don't want the people to stone someone to death, do you?

AMELIA  
Why would they—

TABBY (BERTHA)  
What about the boards?

AMELIA  
I can make them.

TABBY (BERTHA)  
You know how to make Bingo boards?

AMELIA  
I could find some cardboard and use a ruler and a marker. I've memorized all the spaces on all the cards—I could do it.

TABBY (BERTHA)

They might look sorta ugly. What about the balls?

AMELIA

I don't know.

TABBY (BERTHA)

Yeah, that's a problem.

AMELIA

I could use magic marker on some dice.

TABBY (BERTHA)

No one will be able to read them.

AMELIA

I don't know, but I'll figure it out!  
(turns to leave)

TABBY (BERTHA)

I could help you, Amelia.

AMELIA

What do you mean?

TABBY (BERTHA)

I could get the Bingo equipment.

AMELIA

How?

TABBY (BERTHA)

I work here now, remember?

AMELIA

You'll steal it?

TABBY (BERTHA)

I wouldn't even have to. Diane loves me!

AMELIA

She just met you!

TABBY (BERTHA)

I could get you the equipment so you could have a real game.

You'd do that for me?

AMELIA

Sure, I would!

TABBY (BERTHA)

(pause)

Okay, thanks.

AMELIA

I just want you to let me help.

TABBY (BERTHA)

Well, you can help by getting the equipment.

AMELIA

Yes, I'll help by doing that. But I want to help with the rest of the game too.

TABBY (BERTHA)

I don't know what else there is for you to do.

AMELIA

I'll find something.

TABBY (BERTHA)

Well, maybe.

AMELIA

Maybe I'll pick out the prize.

TABBY (BERTHA)

I think I want to get the prize.

AMELIA

What are you getting?

TABBY (BERTHA)

I don't know. I just thought I'd find something really special, you know? So... whoever held that prize, whoever's luck was the best that very special day—they'd go home with something that would change their life forever too.

AMELIA

I think I can find that.

TABBY (BERTHA)

AMELIA

What?

TABBY (BERTHA)

Leave the prize up to me, Amelia. I'll make sure it changes all of our lives.

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