



**EXCERPT**

**For My Silent Sisters**  
by Tara Meddaugh

***For My Silent Sisters***

A full-length play

**EXCERPT**

By Tara Meddaugh

Copyright © 2013 by Tara Meddaugh

All rights reserved. No part of this play may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the author, except by a reviewer, who may quote brief passages in a review. Any members of educational institutions wishing to photocopy part or all of the work for classroom use, or publishers who would like to obtain permission to include the work in an anthology, and actors looking to use portions of this play for audition or showcase purposes should send their inquiries to Tara Meddaugh Playwriting via email to [tmeddaugh@gmail.com](mailto:tmeddaugh@gmail.com).

CAUTION. Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that *For My Silent Sisters* is subject to a royalty. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion picture, recitation, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound taping, all other forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as information storage and retrieval systems and photocopying, and rights of translation into foreign languages, are strictly reserved. Inquiries regarding performing or producing this play should be sent to [tmeddaugh@gmail.com](mailto:tmeddaugh@gmail.com).

*EXCERPT*

*To the millions people across the world who suffer the injustice and cruelty of exploitation and human trafficking in our modern world. Your voices are not quiet. We hear you.*

*And to the many organizations, like Love 146, who hear these often silent voices, and make it their mission to wipe out human trafficking, rescue those who have been held in bondage, and rehabilitate and care for those starting a new life. You are a light in the darkness. You give us hope.*

**Special thanks** to Sara Jean Ford, Mia Cenholt-Haulund, Mat Young, Mike Bouteneff, Kevin Snipes, Gabriel Davis, Matt Schatz, Anya Martin, Arlen and Roberta Meddaugh, Nick and Olya Bouteneff, Mike Torpey, Ali Ahan, Emma and Mia Cenholt, Erika Diehl, Aaron Costa Ganis, Maggie Raymond, Lindsay Roth, Debarato Sanyal, Julie Thaxter-Gourlay, Erin Coulter, Xell Calderer, Lulu Hollman, Gina Shelton, Tam Tran, Jon Valenti, Crystal Manich, Love 146, Judy and Dick Schatner, Stacey Bell, Rebecca Frey, Courtney Winegar, Sandy Costa Giusiano, Manya Bouteneff, Iben Cenholt, Jens Haulund, Zoe Sophia Garcia, Allison Gourlay, Anna Lise-Jensen, Sean Mellott, Rachel Monroe, Lauren Regan, Rachel Zucker, Dawson Moore, The Last Frontier Theater Conference, Mosaic Theater Company, Ari Roth, Manya Haile, Rob Hegblom, Vargas, Irina and Bill Booth, Victoria Murray Baatin, Jayne Wenger, Cody Goulder, April Littlejohn

*For My Silent Sisters* was first presented on September 13, 2014, as a workshop staged reading at Manhattan Theatre Club's Creative Center in New York City with the following cast:

|              |                              |
|--------------|------------------------------|
| Marta        | <i>Maggie Raymond</i>        |
| Jorani       | <i>Ali Ahn*</i>              |
| Abhay        | <i>Debargo Sanyal*</i>       |
| Claire       | <i>Erika Diehl*</i>          |
| Woman 1      | <i>Julie Thaxter-Gourlay</i> |
| Woman 2      | <i>Lindsay Roth</i>          |
| Man 1        | <i>Michael Torpey</i>        |
| Man 2        | <i>Aaron Costa Ganis*</i>    |
| Maly/Purnima | <i>Emma Cenholt-Haulund</i>  |

With also *Sara Jean Ford\** and *Milo Cenholt-Haulund*.

Directed By Mat Young

\*Actors appeared courtesy of Actors Equity.

# For My Silent Sisters

By Tara Meddaugh

A play in two acts

EXCERPT

## FOR MY SILENT SISTERS

### Character Breakdown (5 f, 3 m, 1-2 f children)

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| MARTA     | A girl from Romania. She is 16 years old.  |
| JORANI    | A girl from Cambodia. She is 11 through 14 years old.  |
| ABHAY     | A boy from India. He is 9 through 19 years old.  |
| CLAIRE    | A girl from the United States of America. She is 17 years old.   |
| WOMAN 1   | A woman (30s-60s) who plays mostly adult roles: CODRUTA, FATIME, KUNTHEA, BOTUM, EKTA, GAGGER 2, CAPTIVE 1 |
| WOMAN 2   | A woman who plays mostly child/teenage roles (15-30): TASARIA, CHANTOU, SAMNANG, CLAIRE BODY, CAPTIVE 2    |
| MAN 1     | A man (20s-60s) who plays: NIHAL, PHIRUN, MAN'S VOICE, DAN, ENRICO, GUARD 2, GAGGER 1                      |
| MAN 2     | A man (20s-40s) who plays: BILL, FREDRICK, GUARD 1, HARJEET, ROB   |
| MALY *    | A girl from Cambodia, she is 5 through 7 years old.  |
| PURNIMA * | A girl of about 7, from India.   |

\* Maly and Purnima may be doubled, if necessary.

### Setting

Set should be minimal, merely an impression of locations, as they flow from one to another—homes, streets, garbage heaps, cars, hotels, brothels...

### Time Period

Contemporary.



## EXCERPT

AT RISE: JORANI, CLAIRE, ABHAY and MARTA stand. JORANI is 11 when her story begins, and journeys until she is 14. She wears poor but modest Cambodian clothing. ABHAY is from India, and 9 to 19 as his story unfolds. He wears very poor Indian clothing, almost in rags, although his appearance changes over time. CLAIRE, from the USA, is 17 and wears a tank top and shorts. MARTA is 16 and from Romania. She wears a simple yet worldly dress. All four are standing facing out. Throughout, MARTA, JORANI, CLAIRE and ABHAY speak to the audience then join their scenes, as they open up to them.

MARTA (out)

Today, I wake up with purpose.

JORANI (out)

I wake up with a bruise on my face.

ABHAY (out)

Vomit on the floor.

CLAIRE (out)

I wake up alone.

MARTA (out)

The fire is burning beneath my hands...how did I get here... I'm coughing. No rag for my face. The flames are surrounding me. This is my death...this is my death...But this is also my life. This is my life!

JORANI (out)

The Buddha shows us suffering is life. We must rid ourselves of attachment. But is it wrong to hold onto the image of my face? It reminds me of who I am. Who I was. When he's outside for a moment, I pull myself to the bathroom mirror to see that face...I am quiet, like a mouse...But what I see...My face used to be caramel...now I see a girl whose face is yellow and brown and black...and red. This is not my face. I accept that now. And I will look in no more mirrors.

ABHAY (out)

The vomit on the floor is mine. They didn't make me drink, but...they made me watch. Nihal says I have to watch to learn. She was 8. I'd kill anyone with my bare hands who did that to my little sister. But my sister isn't here. So I watched. And I faked a smile like the rest of them watching. So I had to drink...Or I'd kill myself.

CLAIRE (out)

I should be studying for the SATs and waiting for some senior to ask me to the prom. I should be, like, using my phone for whatever I want, but do you know how long it's been since I've even used a phone? Now I have to just look at whatever magazines he brings me, like I'm an old person in a doctor's office...I never liked being alone before. And it might be weird, but, even now...I still don't like being alone.

MARTA

Neither do I.

(pause)

JORANI (out)

I'm Jorani and I am Cambodian.

MARTA (out)

I'm Marta and I am from Romania.

ABHAY (out)

I'm Abhay and I'm from India.

CLAIRE (out)

I'm Claire and I live in the United States of America.

MARTA

We don't know each other.

JORANI

We've never met.

ABHAY

We will never meet.

CLAIRE

Ours lives don't intersect.

MARTA

Yet they do intersect.

JORANI

We're tied to each other.

CLAIRE

Bound to each other.

Connected. MARTA/CLARIE/JORANI/ABHAY

(pause)

We don't belong where we are. CLAIRE

I don't know if I belong anywhere. ABHAY

You do. JORANI

(World changes to MARTA'S HOME, HER LIVING ROOM, ROMANIA. It is a bright and sunny day. CODRUTA, Marta's mother, enters holding a folkloric costume.)

We all belong somewhere. MARTA (out)

(ABHAY, CLAIRE and JORANI exit.)

I have two younger sisters and five younger brothers. I am sixteen when my freedom ends. But I think it is just beginning. MARTA (out)  
(Joins her mother)

Did you feed the silkworms? CODRUTA

Yes, Mama, but you know no one else does this. MARTA

That's not true, Marta. CODRUTA

Aurelia's mother said women can't be expected to make their own maramă in this day and age. She isn't doing it, and she isn't making Aurelia even learn to weave. MARTA

Then Aurelia will be at a loss. CODRUTA

A loss for what? She could buy the kerchief at a shop. You can earn more money but you can't MARTA

earn more time. I'm the one who has lost, Mama. I've lost six weeks to feeding mulberry leaves to worms! Well, I'm not moving those worms to the sun to watch them die. Tell the boys to do it. They'll be happy to.

CODRUTA

Are you ready try on your costume?

(pause)

MARTA

Yes.

(CODRUTA hands her the costume. MARTA takes it and starts to leave the room.)

CODRUTA

Try it on here. I want to see.

MARTA

Mama, I'm not a child. I need privacy as a woman.

CODRUTA

You're sixteen, not a woman yet. You're still my child.

MARTA

Mama...

CODRUTA

The boys are gone with Papa for the day. Come. I want to see how it fits.

(pause)

MARTA

Fine.

CODRUTA

Good.

(she unzips the back of Marta's dress. Marta wears a white slip under her dress.)  
So what does Aurelia do with all of this time, since she doesn't feed silkworms?

MARTA

You know. What all the girls my age are doing. Except me. She goes to the city. She sees movies. You know she's going to the Cannes Film Festival this year and she's even going alone! Staying with her aunt in France. Aurelia is really very independent. You'd see I'm the same way if you let me.

CODRUTA

Marta, I let you be independent in ways, but it doesn't mean you have to leave Romania.

MARTA

But I don't know the life I want while I'm in Romania.

(pause.)

CODRUTA

Let's slip this on.

(begins putting the costume on Marta)

MARTA

Did you take this out from last year?

CODRUTA

Only in one place.

(MARTA smiles and smooths down the top of her dress)

You are beautiful, my love.

MARTA

Mama.

CODRUTA

I see it. Everyone sees it. But beauty is not a good thing, by itself. You're strong too. And smart. You have a good heart. So you're allowed to be beautiful.

(pause)

MARTA

Aurelia has a boyfriend. So does Helga. And Marina.

CODRUTA

You'll find the right one.

MARTA

I don't need to find the right one. Not yet. Let me find the right one when I'm 25. For now, I'll settle for "cute."

(CODRUTA smiles)

Mama, look at me. I've finished the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. I can leave school now. I don't want to turn down this opportunity.

CODRUTA

We've already spoken about this.

MARTA

Papa can't understand. He's never wanted to leave. But you understand, Mama. You've been to England. You know what it's like.

CODRUTA

If you have unrest in your heart, Marta, it will follow you wherever you go. You need to be at peace before you decide your life.

MARTA

I'm not deciding my life, Mama! I just want to...I want to see something of the world. I'll return to Romania. When my life leads me back. But this may be my only chance to live in London.

CODRUTA

You would be working.

MARTA

Haven't you raised me to work? And I can send money home to help you and the family. I will prove myself and I will make you proud!

CODRUTA

You've never translated before.

MARTA

But I know English. My teacher said I'm more than capable and this is a good start. He said I could work for the United Nations some day.

CODRUTA

Marta—

MARTA

What if I wait and stay for the festival... I'll see the cocoons turned into borangic. Made into my maramă. I'll wear the costume and I'll dance and I'll be happy! Then you and Papa can be happy for me.

(pause)

And let me go.

(pause)

CODRUTA

If this job will wait for you, then after the festival, I will talk to Papa.

MARTA

(smiling)

Thank you, Mama.

(pause. CODRUTA nods.)

It fits perfectly.

CODRUTA

It does.

(JORANI enters)

MARTA (out)

But I never do wear it.

(pause)

Because the job will not wait for me.

JORANI (out)

I wait to find out where he will take me. I don't ask. I'm quiet. Like a mouse.

(MARTA and CODRUTA exit.)

I'm in a city, but I don't recognize it. My older sister, Chantou, travels to the cities and knows them all. She says she will live in one some day and will travel the world until she finds the perfect one for her. But I don't want to travel. The Kingdom of Cambodia is beautiful and I've never wanted to leave. Not even for a day. It's my home. We have been tossed around from country to country, colonizations, occupations, bombings and civil wars. We have seen terrorism and genocide. There is blood on my people's hands. But I don't blame them. This is the nature of a people who know what it is like to have freedom ripped away from them. To never feel it is secure.

(pause)

I wonder how many massages I must give in this city before my sister's debt is repaid and I can return home.

(pause)

I'm eleven.

(Enter MADAM KUNTHEA, a woman in her 40s, MALY, 5-year-old here, and perhaps representatives of other children. World changes to BROTHEL, CAMBODIA. MALY sits on the floor, staring at a tv.)

I'm younger than many. Older than some.

(MADAM KUNTHEA grabs Jorani by the arm and pulls her into the room.)

KUNTHEA

You like cartoons?

JORANI

I don't know.

KUNTHEA

Watch with your family.

(JORANI sits next to Maly.)

JORANI (to Maly)

Hi.

MALY

The cat never gets the mouse. Oh, no! Did I just ruin the show for you?

JORANI

No, you didn't.

MALY

Good. Can I hold your hand?

JORANI

Um...

MALY

We're allowed to hold hands here. It's okay. We're sisters.

JORANI

I...don't know anyone here.

MALY

I have a number and it's a hundred and seven and I can even count that high sometimes, but my name is Maly and I'm five years old.

JORANI

I'm...Jorani.

MALY

Miss Jorani, my hand is dirty, but is that okay? That's why Miss Samnang said I should always ask. Some people don't like to hold a dirty hand.

JORANI

You can hold my hand.

(MALY beams and grabs Jorani's hand. JORANI looks at her hand.)

Such tiny hands.



(PHIRUN, a Cambodian man in his 50s, enters)

KUNTHEA

Mr. Phirun.

(MALY stands and pulls up Jorani.)

MALY

We stand on the boardwalk outside while they choose. We'll miss the end of the show, but that's okay, because remember, the cat never gets the mouse. Never.

JORANI

Okay.

MALY

Never ever.

(JORANI nods. MALY and JORANI move to line up.)

KUNTHEA (to Jorani)

Not you. Mr. Phirun is first.

(she pulls Jorani out of the line and pushes her toward PHIRUN.)

(KUNTHEA exits with Maly and any representations of children.)

PHIRUN (to Jorani)

You can stay here.

JORANI

This is where I will give a massage?

(ABHAY enters)

PHIRUN

Hm.

ABHAY (out)

I'm living alone on the streets of Mumbai, with the rats and wild dogs, and wild kids.

(JORANI and PHIRUN exit. The world changes to STREETS OF MUMBAI)

No one's dancing and singing in bright clothes like they say happens in the movies. Kids are trying to kill each other over a pair of shoes on some poor boy who died in a rubbish slide, and that boy could just as easily be me. Then one day, when I'm carrying my bag to town, I got wires

and some plastic bottles and cans and these scraps of metal—it's heavy—for some reason, my life changes.

(sorts through his rubbish)

(NIHAL, an Indian man, well dressed, in his 40s, enters.)

NIHAL

You selling that?

ABHAY

Yes, sir. You a scrap dealer?

NIHAL

(chuckles)

No, I'm not. You look like a strong boy. You carry all that metal yourself?

ABHAY

Of course, sir.

NIHAL

Hm. You got any family?

(ABHAY shakes his head)

How old are you?

ABHAY

I'm fifteen, sir.

NIHAL

You a hard worker?

(ABHAY nods)

You looking for a real job?

(ABHAY shrugs)

NIHAL

What's the matter with you? You like it here?

(ABHAY shrugs)

You think I'm gonna make you one of them fishing boys? Working 15 hours a day for a bowl of rice? Hm? What you hear?

ABHAY

(pause)

They say two boys last week got taken to a factory. Making ornaments for American trees or something. They never see light. Get beaten every day.

NIHAL

Who tells you that? Those are rumors. Do I look like a man to run a sweat shop? Please! Would a Hindu make ornaments for a Christmas tree?

(pause)

Listen. You really think any of that is worse than what you got right now?

ABHAY

(pause)

I got light right now. The sun and the moon.

NIHAL

Right. 'Cause you got no roof over your head at night.

ABHAY

I don't mind.

NIHAL

Of course you don't mind. You don't mind eating rubbish for dinner either, do you? You're walking in poison here. You know breathing in this stuff will make you sick, right? You wanna be like that rag picker twitching over there?

(pause)

You know people die here.

ABHAY

I know that, sir.

NIHAL

Course you do. You won't last another six months here.

ABHAY

Why do you care?

NIHAL

Because you're a human. And I walked by you. Should we not care about each other?

ABHAY

Not strangers, no.

NIHAL

Well, maybe you remind me of myself.

Hm. ABHAY

(pause)  
NIHAL  
You're not sick, are you?

No, sir. ABHAY

(pause)  
NIHAL  
Are you a boy or a man?  
(pause)  
A boy or a man?

A man, sir. ABHAY

Hm. NIHAL  
(pause)  
You know, I was on the streets once too.

(ABHAY looks at him)

I don't come to you to make you some slave. I come to you to give you a chance, like someone gave me a chance when I was young. And I worked my way up. If you can prove yourself, some day, you can have a car with four doors and a house like me. Can you imagine.

(pause)  
I don't have to choose you.

(pause)  
I'm offering you a chance. You should say "thank you."  
(pulls out a pack of cigarettes.)

(CLAIRE enters)

I'm not going to beat you.  
(puts cigarette to his mouth)  
You ever seen a bar before?

ABHAY (out)  
I go with him. I got nothing to lose. He's right. Anything is better than how I'm living here.

CLAIRE (out)  
I think my life is worse than anyone's, but my dad says it's just because I'm seventeen.

(NIHAL and ABHAY exit)

But seriously, it's like, every day, Courtney and Shona text each other that I'm a slut, when I'm like, right there in gym class next to them, and I haven't even had a boyfriend. And, like, I never get the leads in school plays because I don't flirt with the drama teacher, even though I did a killer monologue from Game of Thrones at auditions. And the boys in my chemistry class are always grabbing my ass, and when I hit them, I'm the one who's sent to the principal's office. My mom died ten years ago, and I don't even remember her voice now. But my school counselor says I should be practicing Gratitude, so the one thing I'm always grateful for...is my dad. He works a lot and he's usually tired, but he's always nice to me. He smells like mouthwash and cinnamon and his face scratches me every night when he hugs me.

(World changes to OUTSIDE APARTMENT BUILDING, SYRACUSE, NY)

And I'm thinking of him, leaning against the glass door to Jessica's apartment. I'm thinking of everything we said tonight, and his girlfriend, and how everything's going to change. Jessica's not answering her buzzer, and I can't believe I forgot my cell phone, and I'm shaking. A couple years ago, there was snow at Halloween in Syracuse. But it was 80 degrees today. It's not now though. It's late and it's, like, really really cold. My legs don't want to hold me up anymore. A few people pass by on the street. But no one notices me. I'm crying. I'm lonely, and, like, shaking, at midnight. And no one notices me.

(BILL, a man in his 30s, enters)

But then someone does.

BILL

Hey. You alright?

(CLAIRE shrugs)

Do you have a coat or something? You look like you're freezing in those shorts.

CLAIRE

I'm fine.

BILL

Here.

(he takes his own sweatshirt off and hands it to her)

CLAIRE

Oh—no thanks.

BILL  
You're shivering.

CLAIRE  
I don't need it.

BILL  
But you want it. Take it. It's yours.

(pause)

CLAIRE  
Thanks.

(BILL starts to walk away, then turns back)

BILL  
Hey, you wanna talk about it?

(CLAIRE shrugs)

I listen good. If you want to talk. Life can suck. But it sucks less if you got someone to talk to. You know?

(They look at each other. pause)

CLAIRE (out)  
I don't know this man. But he's here and he's asking, and I guess I do want to talk. Because I tell him. I tell him about my dad, about his girlfriend moving in and her 4 kids. I also tell him about my mom, about how I'd hear her crying at night, even after I'd draw her all these pictures of rainbows. And how she killed herself. I tell him I know my problems are stupid. My problems are nothing compared to starving kids in Africa. But he tells me—

BILL  
No, they're real. They suck. You got handed some bad cards. That's not your fault, sweetie.

CLAIRE (out)  
This man is listening to me at 1 in the morning and when some thug walking by mutters at me under his breath, my man punches him in the gut until that guy tells me he's sorry.  
(pause)

I feel sick. I'm shocked.

BILL  
Assholes walking around at this hour.

CLAIRE (out)

I'm scared of this man.

BILL

You gotta be careful.

CLAIRE (out)

But somehow...I also feel safe.

BILL

Sorry you had to see that, Claire.

CLAIRE

It's...ok...

BILL

No, a girl like you shouldn't see something like that. These streets—at this hour—this isn't safe for you. Why don't you come back with me? Your friend's not gonna answer.

(MARTA enters)

Look, I'm not far from here. Why don't you stay with me tonight? Take a hot shower, get some sleep. The world will look different tomorrow. I promise.

(CLAIRE looks at him. He smiles.)

I promise.

(BILL puts his arm around her)

MARTA (out)

The world looks so different to me as I leave my home to find her.

(CLAIRE and BILL exit)

My home—it's lovely and charming, my mother always says. But for ten of us? It's small. And I know it's time to walk toward something larger.

(FATIME, a worldly woman in her 40s, enters. World changes to VILLAGE CAFE, ROMANIA. FATIME and MARTA have tea.)

My future. I meet with Ms. Fatime.

FATIME

This festival, Marta, it's amazing, no doubt. Amazing. You'd be stunning.

MARTA

Thank you.

FATIME

Woman to woman? You'd be a sight for all the other girls. The boys. The men. But, please. Marta. We can't wait a month.

MARTA

When does the job start?

FATIME

Next week. Thursday. We've barely enough time to get you trained.

MARTA

You didn't say it was that soon before.

FATIME

Things have changed. There are a lot of other candidates for this job.

MARTA

Oh.

FATIME

I lucked into finding you here in the country. But I was on my way to Bucharest. If you can't commit, I'll still head there and I'll find someone else.

MARTA

Well, I want to come. I want the job. But, I promised my mother—

FATIME

Look, Marta. You're a smart girl. If this isn't the right time for you or it's not appealing, I understand. Rest assured, you'll find another job at a later point.

MARTA

I will?

FATIME

Of course. I even saw a sign for a seamstress on my way over.

MARTA

I don't want to be a seamstress.

FATIME

Well, whatever you want to be.  
(shakes her hand)  
I wish you the very best.



MARTA

Are you leaving?

FATIME

If you can't accept the position, I really must be going.

MARTA

But I—I haven't turned it down.

FATIME

I can't play games, Marta. My time is too valuable. If you'd like the position, come with me now. We'll set you up in a beautiful flat in London. We'll fill your refrigerator with jams and breads. We'll even give you an allowance for work clothing. But you have to come now. I've already been in this village longer than I expected.

(MARTA nods. Pause)

MARTA

Yes. Ok. Yes. I'll accept.

(laughs)

I accept!

FATIME

Wonderful!

MARTA

I'll just—I'll get a few things from home, say good-bye to my family.

FATIME

Oh, Marta. You know they want you to stay for the festival. They won't let you leave if you return to your home. But maybe this is what you want? Then you can blame them for your missing this opportunity.

MARTA

No—

FATIME

But it is yourself, Marta—you and your childish fears of new experiences—that will not let you leave this village.

MARTA

That's not it. I want this.

FATIME

Do you?

MARTA

I do.

(pause)

FATIME

Then come with me now. Don't dawdle like a fickle little girl.

(JORANI enters)

You can call your parents from the airport and visit them in a month on your first break.

MARTA (out)

On the way to the airport, Ms. Fatime tells me she has already called my mother for me.

JORANI (out)

Madam Kunthea says she is my mother now.

(FATIME holds Marta's arm and they exit)

She doesn't sing to me or hold my hair as my mother did, but she gives us candy when we do well, and says I will do well if I listen to her advice. Stand up straight, lower my head, look up at the men through my lashes.

(pause)

And the men are there. Night after night. The men who come to us might keep us for a few hours, or a week, a month. I dread standing on the broken boardwalk outside the shacks as the men decide. If they've been here before, they might choose the same girl. This might be ok if they fed us, let us sleep and had fans in the windows. But the sick ones who treat us like dogs, who chain us to their beds and make us eat food without using our hands, who do the worst things that I don't say out loud...

(CLAIRE and BILL enter.)

They are the ones who make my blood run cold when I see them again.

(World changes to BILL'S APARTMENT, SYRACUSE. CLAIRE is cuddled up on a couch)

CLAIRE (out)

I'm not cold anymore. It's morning now—or afternoon really. It feels weird I'm still here.

(JORANI exits)

Bill's been nice to me, but I'm sure my dad's worried. He's probably called the cops by now. I need to go home, but Bill says he has a better idea.

BILL

Last night, you were saying you always wanted to see the shore, right?

CLAIRE

Yeah...

BILL

Let's take a drive there.

CLAIRE

Where?

BILL

The ocean. Wherever you want.

CLAIRE

Like—Miami?

BILL

(laughs)

No, not like Miami. That's over a thousand miles away, Claire.

CLAIRE

Oh, I didn't—

BILL

It's ok. You're cute. Miami.

CLAIRE

Well—

BILL

No, I was thinking, New Jersey maybe.

CLAIRE

How far is that?

BILL

Four or five hours or so.

CLAIRE

That's too far.

BILL

Let your dad stew in his fear a little longer. He's been taking you for granted.

CLAIRE

Yeah...but, that seems so—

BILL

Don't you think you'll have fun with me? The boardwalk? Cotton candy? Don't you want to smell that salty breeze?

CLAIRE

What do you, like, work for New Jersey Tourism or something?

BILL

I'd sell anything for you, Gorgeous.

CLAIRE

(pause)

Maybe another time? I'm kind of tired today.

BILL

You don't have to drive. All you have to do is be your beautiful self and do whatever you beautiful girls do in the car. Listen to music or paint your nails, read your Cosmo...talk with me. Am I really that bad?

CLAIRE

No...

BILL

Look, I know I'm the lucky one. You're stuck with some older guy in a suit, and I'm the one who gets to hang out with this amazingly gorgeous—you know you're gorgeous, don't you?

CLAIRE

Shut up.

BILL

This amazingly gorgeous girl. It's all my honor. I know that. Because what's cool about you, is you're not just pretty. You have this quality about you. This...there's no word that fits what I feel about you.

CLAIRE

What do you feel?

BILL

I don't know. It's just—when I look at you...when you look back at me, and I see your eyes, sort of looking up in this way...it just...it melts me to a puddle. You know what I mean? It's hard for me to think. You have this, this spell over me.

CLAIRE

You're making me sound like a witch.

BILL

Not a witch. Just...you're spell binding. Has anyone ever told you that before?

CLAIRE

No.

BILL

You'll break a lot of hearts, Claire.

CLAIRE

Stop it.

BILL

I have to watch myself. I let my guard down you'll break my heart too.

CLAIRE

I won't.

(he gently touches her face and hair)

BILL

Please. Please. Do you want to see a grown man get down on his knees and beg? I will. You know that. I will.

(MARTA enters.)

(BILL gets on his knees and holds her hands)

Please. Come with me. You will literally make me the happiest guy in the world. Please.

(CLAIRE reaches down and touches his face)

CLAIRE

Okay.

MARTA (out)

I'm happy. Giddy, like when Papa gave me a puppy when I was eight. Excited.

(CLAIRE and BILL exit)

Nervous, of course, and I can't help but feel that tinge of sadness in the way I have left my home. But I dream of my first return to Romania, in only a few weeks, bringing money and gifts for my brothers. How proud my family will be of me.

(World changes to A VAN, ROMANIA, driving across the country.)

We meet two men, Ms. Fatime's friends, who have a van and we travel in it with them, picking up other employees before we make our flight. It's a long trip, through Sofia, Skopje, Tirana, but the girls we pick up are excited, like me. So the time passes quickly. The start of a new life. Ms. Fatime speaks to the border officials in Greek or Italian, which none of us understands. I wonder why she doesn't speak in English. But she does not allow questions at this point, so I know not to ask. Instead, I make friends through our travels.

(TASARIA, a girl of about 16, enters and sits by Marta)

Tasaria is so sweet to me, and so beautiful. She's Romani, a real gypsi. She will have a job at a department store in Paris. I tell her—

(to Tasaria)

You really must improve her French if you don't want the ladies to be rude in the store.

TASARIA

And you really must improve your manners if you plan to work for the UN some day.

(they look at each other, then laugh)

MARTA (out)

In the days we sit by each other, we tell each other everything about our families, our lives, our schooling, boys, how we celebrate holidays. We know each other more than friends since childhood.

TASARIA

You are my sister now.

MARTA

And you're mine.

(out)

We love our travels.

(ABHAY enters)

We laugh together, harder than I have laughed in years. And they let us drink champagne in the car. It goes well with our pastrami sandwiches.

ABHAY (out)

There's so much laughter in the bar. Yelling, fighting, quiet too. The laughter makes me sick, but I learn to make my face a statue.

(MARTA and TASARIA exit)

It's clearly not just a bar Mr. Nihal has taken me to. He has me work the street at first, asking men if they want to meet a girl. One of the girls he has. Behind his bar. I never know who to ask, how to say it. I'm not as pushy as some of the other kids he's got working for him. Bringing in customers.

(NIHAL enters. World changes to BAR/BROTHEL, INDIA)

He sees I'm no good at it, but he's still nice to me. I don't understand why, but he is. He says I can do clean up inside for a while instead.

NIHAL

I was no good at it at first either.

ABHAY

How did you get...better?

NIHAL

Well, I educated myself. Just because you're from the streets, doesn't mean you can't be smart.

ABHAY

How do I know if I'm smart?

NIHAL

You're alive, aren't you?

(ABHAY nods)

That's a start. But, you become smarter when you try harder. Learn several languages. I'll work with you over lunch. You won't appear so desperate then, grabbing at their wallets like the other kids do. And that's fine. It brings in some business. That's fine for them. But not for you. Not for my Abhay.

ABHAY

Thank you for teaching me, sir.

NIHAL

You'll prove yourself.

ABHAY

I will always work hard, sir.

NIHAL

But for now? You clean the toilets. Haul out the trash, clean up if someone gets sick. Get rid of as much blood, as much piss, as you can. You can do that?

ABHAY

Yes, sir. I can do that.

NIHAL

And smile sometimes.

(pats him on the back)

Life could be worse.

(ABHAY nods.)

ABHAY (out)

He could be right. My blood boils when I see the faces of the young girls—this is not what I signed up for. But then, I think, what other option do I got?

NIHAL

You have good food here, from the bar.

ABHAY (out)

No wild pig is fighting with me over rubbish.

NIHAL

There is no rain on your back when you sleep.

ABHAY (out)

They even pay me. It's not much to others, but I have money for the first time in my life. I can buy a mango from the vendor if I want, and I don't have to steal it.

**END OF EXCERPT**

To read the entire play, please visit:

<https://www.tameddaugh.com/for-my-silent-sisters>



## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT



Tara's plays have been presented by theater companies around the world such as Fusion Theatre, Mosaic Theater Company of DC, The Directors Company, Le Petit Theatre de Terrebonne, Theatre One, Tutti Bravi Productions, Westchester Collaborative Theater, Possibilities Theater, Tagragg Productions, One Armed Man, Oracle Theatre, Inc, the Bobik Theatre Ensemble, The Acme Theatre Company, The Harlequin Players, Woman Seeking, and numerous schools, universities and colleges including Colgate, Gardner-Webb, Prince Williams, and Peru. Her work has showcased at festivals such as the Artists of Tomorrow Festival in NYC, The Bangkok Community Theatre Fringe Festival, the Pittsburgh New Works Series, and the Last Frontier Theatre Conference in Alaska. Tens of thousands of teachers, actors and students world-wide have utilized her monologues for competitions, course material, auditions, showcases, and in workshops at theaters, acting studios, colleges and schools. Tara has taught Playwriting at Carnegie Mellon, the Pittsburgh Public Theatre, for The Westport Country Playhouse, and she has led Creative Dramatics Workshops for children and teens in underserved areas throughout New York and New Jersey. She has script consulted on several animation and VR projects. Tara's work has been published by Oxford Press South Africa, the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (LAMDA), Limelight Editions/ Applause Acting Series, YouthPLAYS, The Hunger Journal, Meriweather Publishing, Applause Theatre & Cinema, Performer Stuff and Ace-Your-Audition. She is a recipient of the Shubert Fellowship in Dramatic Writing, the Sloan Screenwriting Fellowship, the New Works for Young Women [Actors] Award, The Write Stuff Award, and is a member of the Dramatist's Guild. She holds her MFA in Dramatic Writing from Carnegie Mellon University.

For more information about Tara Meddaugh or her work,  
visit her website at [www.tameddaugh.com](http://www.tameddaugh.com).

For more information about Tara Meddaugh or her work,  
visit her website at [www.tameddaugh.com](http://www.tameddaugh.com)