

My Family's Tax Evasion



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Tabitha Vaughan is a senior Theatre Arts B.A. major focusing on directing and dramaturgy, and minoring in stage management and creative writing. Currently, Tabitha is the Assistant Director of ECU/Loessin Playhouse's Fall 2024 production of *Sweeney Todd the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. Tabitha has also worked on other productions at ECU including *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical*, as the Stage Manager and *Intimate Apparel*, as an Assistant Stage Manager. Additionally, she is the current Secretary of The A.C.T Project. After graduation, Tabitha plans to begin her career as a director, stage manager, and playwright.



Abstract

My Family's Tax Evasion is a 10-minute dramedy that follows the character, Mom, as she tries to complete her family's taxes one April day. However, the task proves to be difficult with a family member interrupting at every passing moment. Although each disruption has comedic elements, we discover that Mom is experiencing built-up tension and emotions that go deeper than the present problems. It is not until the end that Mom's feelings are outwardly expressed, but the family is receptive and responsive to give her what she needs to complete the family taxes. This play explores themes of motherhood, womanhood, individuality, and family.

Characters:

MOM, a woman in her mid-40s

TYLER, a 16-year-old boy, MOM'S oldest son

CHARLES, a man in his late-70s, MOM'S father

MADI, a 14-year-old girl, MOM'S daughter

ANTHONY, a man in his late-40s, MOM'S husband and father to TYLER, MADI, and FINN

FINN, a 6-year-old boy, MOM'S youngest son

Scene:

Early April, inside a middle-class house in a living room. The action occurs in one place but has many different entrances/exits to other parts of the house; however, the audience never sees the other rooms.

** Note to the director: All roles are open to actors of any ethnicity. For lower-income productions, the space may make use of two established entrances/exits. So long as the actors enter and exit appropriately. **

Lights up.

MOM is sitting on a couch with papers spread around her. There is a laptop on a coffee table positioned in front of her.

MOM: (*To herself.*) Today is finally the day. I get to complete the family taxes. *She looks busy, noting things on some of the papers.*

MOM: (*Yelling.*) Everyone, remember not to disturb me for the next two hours; I'm doing our family taxes! *There is no response. MOM goes back to working on the computer and papers in front of her.*

Enter TYLER.

TYLER: Hey, Mom, what's for lunch?

MOM: (*Not looking up from her work.*) Didn't you hear me say not to disturb me?

TYLER: Oh. Uh... no. When

was that?

MOM: Less than a minute ago.

TYLER: (*Looking at his phone.*) Sorry, I was texting John. Apparently, his dad is getting married again.

MOM: I thought his dad already remarried two years ago?

TYLER: He did but got divorced again because there was a lot of fighting and something about her cheating. I don't know the whole story. Although John had good things to say about his new stepmom-to-be. He said she was a -

MOM: (*Stopping her work for a moment.*) Tyler, as much as I would love to hear more, I really need to get this done.

TYLER: Sure, Mom, no problem.

MOM goes back to making notes while TYLER continues to stand behind her, scrolling through his phone. He laughs at something. Then again, and again.

MOM: (*Sharp and annoyed.*) Tyler! Is there something else you need?

TYLER: (*Putting the phone*

back into his pocket.) Uh... why'd I come down here again? Oh, yeah, lunch.

MOM: (*Looks at the watch on her wrist.*) It's only eleven in the morning. You ate nearly two hours ago.

TYLER: Yeah, but this is usually the time I eat at school.

MOM: (*Sighs.*) There are sandwich fixings in the fridge. Just clean up after yourself once you're done.

TYLER: Do we have anything else?

MOM: No, your dad went to the store to buy groceries; he'll probably be back in an hour if you can wait that long.

TYLER: Sandwich it is.

TYLER exits through the kitchen door. MOM is left alone for a moment and continues to work diligently. Then CHARLES enters from the front door. He takes off his coat followed by his wool, flat cap, and places them on the coat rack. However, not without notice from MOM, as with every slow move and step CHARLES takes, he makes a painful grunt.

MOM: (*Stopping her work.*) Dad, do you need some help?

CHARLES: Ah, no, I'm fine, dear. Just taking my time, trying not to fall.

CHARLES leans on his cane as he walks to the chair at the end of the coffee table, continuing to grunt in pain even as he slowly tries to sit down.

MOM: Dad, are you sure you don't need anything? The doctor said you could take stronger painkillers if you needed to.

CHARLES: Like I said before, and I will say again... I will not become a drug addict if it kills me.

MOM: Taking a dose of painkillers does not make you a drug addict, Dad.

CHARLES: Well, it certainly could...and I'm not taking that chance.

MOM: But the doctor said because of your back—

CHARLES: I don't care what the doctor said; I will not take them. So just go back to your work, and I will read this magazine here.

CHARLES nods to the magazine on the coffee table, then slowly begins to lean forward to grab it, still grunting in pain. MOM cannot take the distraction, so she quickly grabs the magazine and hands it to CHARLES.

CHARLES: Thank you. Now, I'll be as quiet as a mouse so you can go back to your work.

CHARLES begins to flip through

the magazine even more slowly and winces with every hand movement. MOM tries to focus back on her work, but she can't from the noise.

MOM: Dad, I love you, but take the medication and go lie down. You're obviously in pain.

CHARLES: I told you I would not do it. I'm fine.

MOM: Dad, please, I will hold onto the bottle, so you won't become...addicted.

CHARLES: (*Huffs.*) Fine, fine, I'll go lie down. Just give me the damn pill.

MOM opens a drawer on the side table next to the couch and pulls out a prescribed medicine bottle. She hands one pill to CHARLES. He swallows it dry and begins to lean on his cane to get up, still wincing in pain. He hobbles off to a door and exits. MOM then takes a deep breath to gather her thoughts. As soon as she sits down, MADI enters the room in a frenzy.

MADI: Mom, Sam broke up with me! (*She hugs MOM, crying.*)

MOM: (*Comforting MADI.*) Oh no, sweetie, that's terrible.

MADI: They said it's because they want to fully transition into being non-binary, and they know I'm only into those that

are feminine presenting.

MADI continues to cry while MOM rubs her back as she speaks.

MOM: So, Sam broke up with you because you're only into women, and they want to focus on themselves right now?

MADI: Yeah.

MOM: Are you only into women?

MADI: Well, I thought so, but now I'm confused because I just liked Sam so much, and now they're gone; I don't know what to do.

MOM: Maybe being broken up is the best thing for you.

MADI: Mom! How could you say that?! How could being broken up be a good thing?

MOM: Well, if Sam is trying to transition, they really need to focus on who they want to be without fear of you leaving them. And to me, it sounds like you might also need to think about whether Sam is the person you really want to be with. Once they have fully transitioned, you may feel differently about them, or you may not. Either way, you need time to think about your decision.

MADI: But what am I supposed

to do right now? It hurts, mom. I'm so angry and upset. I don't know what to do with myself.

MOM: I'll tell you what you're going to do. You're going to pick yourself up (*Helping MADI to a standing position.*), wipe the tears from your eyes, and scream into a pillow.

MADI: Scream into a pillow?

MOM picks up a throw pillow from the couch and hands it to MADI.

MOM: Yes, that is exactly what I said. Scream into a pillow. The only way you'll get your anger, frustration, and sadness out is to scream about it. So go on, scream into the pillow.

MADI is hesitant. She quietly screams into the pillow.

MOM: Oh, come on, I know you can scream louder than that.

MADI screams again into the pillow, this time with full force.

MOM: How do you feel?

MADI: A little thirsty, but better.

MOM: To be expected. Now, get yourself some water from the kitchen and then later tonight we can talk more about it. Sound good?

MADI: Yeah, thanks, Mom.

MADI exits through the kitchen door, and MOM sits back down to continue her work. A few moments pass, and ANTHONY enters through the front door, carrying a cardboard box with something inside.

ANTHONY: You are not going to believe what I found on my way to the supermarket.

MOM: You're home early. Wait, where are the groceries?

ANTHONY: I didn't get any, but I have a good reason.

ANTHONY sets the box down and takes off his coat and places it on the coat rack. Once done, he picks up the box carefully and sits in the chair at the end of the coffee table. There is a small "meow" noise, which catches her attention.

MOM: That better not be what I think it is.

ANTHONY: If you're thinking it's a kitten, then you'd be right.

MOM goes to look inside the box and sees a kitten.

MOM: Anthony, you know we can't keep it.

ANTHONY: Why not? He's just a little guy. He was all alone in the parking lot. I couldn't leave him there.

MOM: Because we just got done having babies, and now, I have to take care of my dad. Having a kitten isn't the right thing for us now. It's too much responsibility.

ANTHONY: Funny, you should say that because I thought this would be the perfect opportunity for the kids to learn a lot.

MOM: How's that?

ANTHONY: Think about it: Tyler and Madi are high schoolers, and Finn is already six. I think they're all more than capable of taking care of one small kitten.

MOM: (*Sighs.*) We can discuss this more later. I really need to finish our taxes; in the meantime, don't let the kids see.

Enter FINN, who is carrying handfuls of art supplies. He sets the supplies down on the coffee table, covering the papers and laptop that MOM is using. FINN then sits down on the floor and starts to spread the supplies out more, unaware of the kitten inside of the box and not caring about where he is placing things.

MOM: Finn, what is all this?

FINN: The stuff for my science fair project, it's tomorrow.

MOM: What do you mean tomorrow?

FINN: The science fair; it's tomorrow.

MOM: You never told us about a science fair.

FINN: Yeah, I know.

MOM: (*Taking a deep breath.*) So, how long have you known about this?

FINN: When was January?

ANTHONY: Almost three months ago.

FINN: Then, three months ago.

MOM: Why didn't you start it sooner?

FINN shrugs his shoulders.

MOM: (*Increasingly becomes louder.*) Oh my God! This family is unbelievable! Does no one remember that I was supposed to be left alone for two hours today so I could get our taxes done? (*Enter MADI. She quietly stands in the background.*) Two hours is all I need, but no! Finn needs to have a project done by tomorrow. Madi's partner broke up with her. I basically had to force my dad to take his pain medication because he thinks he's going to become some kind of drug addict if he takes them. You don't have any groceries, so we can't make dinner. (*Enter TYLER mid-way through biting a sandwich.*) And to top it all off, Tyler

needed me to tell him what to eat at the specific moment I said not to disturb me! Am I missing anything else?

There is another "meow" from the cardboard box.

MOM: Right, and now we have a kitten!

Enter Charles.

CHARLES: What's all the fuss about out here?

MOM: Nothing, Dad, go lay back down.

CHARLES: No, there's something going on.

MOM: You want to know what's going on? Okay then, why is it that this family seems to rely on me for everything? I was trying to get taxes done ahead of time, but no. When I tried the first time, someone had a soccer game and then there was a chorus recital and then a parent-teacher conference. Our taxes are due tomorrow, but it seems our family is keen on tax evasion this year!

MOM sits down on the couch in defeat. There is a moment of silence among the group.

CHARLES: It seems to me that we need a plan. (*Approaching FINN with no*

grunting.) Finn, my boy, what's those supplies for?

FINN: My science fair project.

CHARLES: What do you have to make?

FINN: Some kind of baking soda rocket.

CHARLES: Do you have instructions?

FINN: Yeah, I have a video that my teacher sent me.

CHARLES: Then gather your things and meet me in the kitchen.

FINN: Yes, sir.

FINN gathers his things and exits through the kitchen door.

CHARLES: (*To ANTHONY.*) I'll oversee the science fair project.

CHARLES exits through the kitchen door.

ANTHONY: You're probably right. Now might not be the best time for a new kitten. We should take him to a shelter or something.

TYLER: Oh, Dad, I can help with that. We can take him to John's. Apparently, his new

stepmom is a veterinarian. She might be able to help.

ANTHONY: I thought his stepmom was a freelance artist.

TYLER: No, no, that was his last stepmom; this one is new. John's dad is getting married again.

ANTHONY: Ah, well then let's take the little fella to her. Maybe she can find him a new home.

TYLER: What about my sandwich?

ANTHONY: Take it with you in the car.

ANTHONY stands up from the chair with the cardboard box and goes to the front door, putting on his coat. He exits with TYLER holding his sandwich following behind.

MADI: (*To MOM.*) I think I'll go with them. I can remind Dad to stop at the grocery store so we can make dinner when we get home.

MADI exits, leaving MOM in the living room alone. MOM takes a deep breath, savoring the quiet in the room. After, she opens the laptop and begins to work on the taxes once again.

Blackout.