

WE DON'T HAVE A F***ING SWEAR JAR

Characters

Maya, 18. Has always wanted to be good.

Melody, 20. A young businesswoman.

Hal, 52. An actor.

Setting: A dining room. China plates in the cabinet, abstract art on the walls. Floral tablecloth on the table. Kitschy fall decorations. Acceptance letters to prestigious colleges framed on the wall next to an old landline phone.

Act I, Scene I

HAL sits at the head of the dining room table, MAYA and MELODY next to each other on the other. There's an empty seat. All three have thin crust pizza on their plates and wine in nice glasses. HAL gobbles his a little too aggressively. MELODY, Instagram-ready in a crop top and mini skirt with perfectly wavy hair, eats hers with a fork and knife. MAYA, drowning in sweat pants and a high school cross country shirt, tries to pick her piece up but the cheese falls off. She toys around with it without eating.

MELODY

Hey sis, would you mind changing your shirt?

(MAYA looks down at her high school shirt.)

MAYA

Is there sauce on it?

MELODY

No, I just want to take a Thanksgiving family selfie!

MAYA

For the gram?

MELODY

Ew, don't call it that. Yes.

HAL

I thought you were taking a break.

MELODY

It's Instagram, not YouTube.

MAYA

You said I can't be in your stories if I'm wearing sweatpants.

MELODY

It's a candid.

MAYA

Ok. So sweatpants and a t-shirt. What's the problem?

MELODY

It's a high school t-shirt.

MAYA

Yes. I went to high school. Even graduated.

MELODY

Exactly. So it's time to retire it.

MAYA

I like it.

MELODY

Then wear it to bed. Just not in my selfies.

MAYA

I don't feel like it.

MELODY

Fine. We'll do the pic without you.

MAYA

You don't want them to think I'm embarrassed.

MELODY

I didn't say anything.

MAYA
You think I'm embarrassed.

HAL
We don't know what you think.

MAYA
I'm embarrassed. Can I be excused?

HAL
It's Thanksgiving.

MAYA
I'm full.

HAL
Wait until Mom calls.

MAYA
She's calling tonight? But we just/

HAL
/She misses you.

MAYA
It's been two days.

MELODY
She needs us.

MAYA
I don't want to talk to her.

(MAYA pours herself more wine.)

HAL
What she did, she did for you.

MAYA

What *she* did?

MELODY

What the family did.

MAYA

Not me.

HAL

If you had just practiced...no, we're not doing this tonight.

MAYA

I did practice. I practiced Dorine/ from *Tartuffe*.

HAL

/How's the pizza, Mel? When you were a kid Mozza used to be your favorite.

MELODY

I've always loved the crust. I love the texture of it. Like when you hit one of the air pockets? And there's never too much sauce. The kids from Chicago at school keep telling me I need to try deep dish? But that's just like a lot. Like, it's like a whole casserole? Would probably make a good picture though. If I ever went to Chicago. Kailey said I should come after Christmas, although she said it's like super fu...like, really cold. And it snows like a ton. But I kinda want to see snow. Like, the whole White Christmas thing? But this was before... I mean probably Kailey would still let me come. She's a good friend. Maybe it'd be good to get out of here. Go somewhere colder for a little while. Model with pizzas.

HAL

I'd love to see those pics. As long as you're back in time for school.

MELODY

(Doubtfully.)

Yeah. Of course.

(Beat.)

Maya, I want you in the picture. Can you please just change your fucking shirt?

HAL

Swear jar.

MELODY

I'm twenty years old.

HAL

Decency doesn't have an age.

MAYA

Oh, now we're talking about decency?

(MELODY slaps a dollar on the table.)

MELODY

Can you please change your shirt?

MAYA

Are you going back to school, Mel?

MELODY

I'm a junior.

MAYA

I just don't know why you go to school if you don't go to your classes.

MELODY

I go to my classes. Why the fuck would you say that?

(HAL gives MELODY an inescapable look.)

I'm just saying your character on that show swore every other damn sentence.

(MELODY slaps four quarters on the table.)

MAYA

The school sent you a letter yesterday.

MELODY

Why are you reading my fucking mail?

(Beat.)

We don't even have a real jar.

MAYA

Mr. Button Nose knocked it over last Christmas.

HAL

You know it's not about the jar. What did the letter say?

MELODY

It's normal. Everyone fails a couple classes.

HAL

Failing?

MELODY

It's not so easy to have a career! All the shoots, the meetings with sponsors, the time in makeup, networking. I don't have the same kind of time the other kids do. But who cares? I'm an Instagram model, not fucking Einstein!

(Beat.)

I'm out of singles. And quarters.

(MAYA slaps one down on the table for her.)

You don't have to do that.

MAYA

Everything's Venmo anyway.

MELODY

We should make a swear Venmo. Real 2019.

HAL

Melody, after everything, you're failing?

MELODY

I'm sorry.

HAL

Your Instagram is suspended until you get up to a 3.0/

MELODY

(Simultaneous.)

/Bullshit! You can't do that!

MAYA

(Simultaneous.)

/She has like a million followers!

(Beat.)

She isn't putting a dollar down.

HAL

Swear jar is about knowing/

MELODY

/the right language for a situation.

HAL

(Nodding.)

This is not how we handle situations. Pay up.

(MELODY puts down a five.)

MELODY

That's four more. We can split them two and two. Dad. I know you think you're doing what's right. I know your publicist handles your Insta, that it isn't as important to you. But my online presence is my future. That's what will define me. My sponsors are already starting to drop. I need to be posting.

HAL

Not if it's interfering with your education.

MELODY

Listen to me! This is more important than my education!

(A beat. Tense.)

HAL

Don't ever let your mother hear you say that. You're going to get your grades up.

MELODY

I built this. I crafted every picture. Every detail, from eyeliner to lighting to the logos on my shirts. I bought the leaves. I straighten the china every Monday. I made this place picture perfect.

HAL

I want you to put that effort into school.

MELODY

I don't know how.

HAL

You'll figure it out. And Maya, no more disresp/

MAYA

/I'm dropping out.

(MELODY does a spit take. HAL starts to refill the wine in his glass, hands shaking.)

MELODY

You are not going to fuck me over like that.

MAYA

You don't want to go to school either.

HAL

You are not going to fuck your mother over like that.

(He slaps a single down.)

MAYA

No, because then she won't fuck you.

MELODY

Maya!

MAYA

Is that it? Is that all the words you paid for, Mel? You think we can just buy ourselves out of all the mistakes we make, don't you Dad? Buy our cusses, buy our SATs/

HAL

/That's enough! Sit down, Maya. Have a drink. Let's talk this out.

MAYA

I don't want a drink!

MELODY

I do.

(She chugs her cup. Refills it. Chugs again.)

MAYA

During the PSAT I was so close to getting one of the answers on the math test but then I ran out of time. It was a no-calculator section, but during the break I snuck my calculator and did the problem anyway. I just wanted to know the answer. But once I knew it, I wanted to put it on the page. I felt guilty about that for three years. The dumbest little thing. But I always wanted to know that whatever score I got, it was mine. You took that from me.

HAL

You know, I was a wretched student at a perfectly middling school. Then a Junior year drop-out.

MAYA

Yes, I've read your Wikipedia, Dad.

HAL

"What does it matter?" I thought. "It's not like I go to Harvard. Who's gonna care?"

MELODY

You were right. You made it with a headshot, not a diploma.

HAL

Does Wikipedia tell you how much guilt I carried in those early years? Even when I got my first roles in the background or on regional commercials? It wasn't about success or failure. I didn't quit because of opportunity. I quit because of shame.

MAYA

It's not the same.

HAL

You shouldn't be embarrassed. You didn't cheat. Your mom and I played the same game as everyone else. 20% of your school is legacy admissions. I couldn't give you that, and I couldn't buy you a building, but I gave you what I could.

MAYA

Then why are you here right now?

HAL

Someone needs to support this family. Your mother's getting older, and it's going to be harder for her to get work. With you both in school, I need to keep my job.

MELODY

Chick/

(The PHONE RINGS. MAYA picks it up, holds it for a beat, then puts it back on the line.)

HAL

You should talk to her.

MAYA

It won't change my mind. I'm not going back.

MELODY

You should talk to her because it's Thanksgiving and she's alone.

MAYA

I don't have the words.

MELODY

They say a picture's worth a thousand.

HAL

Your Instagram is still suspended.

MELODY

I'm suspended. Why kill the 'gram if we're not even sure I'm going back?

HAL

You're both going back.

MAYA

No. We're going forward.

MELODY

Really? That's your caption?

(Beat.)

Do you want to be in it with us, Dad?

(He picks up the pizzas and exits the room. They look at each other, nervous.)

MAYA

Do you still want me to change my shirt?

MELODY

Fuck it.

(MELODY looks at herself through the camera lens. She takes her admission letter off the wall, places it on the table. MAYA takes hers off too and slams it to the ground. MELODY pours some of the wine on hers, then takes a swig of the rest of it. She then puts her arm around MAYA and holds out the phone in her other hand.)

MELODY (CONT.)

3...2...1...

(SNAP. Blackout.)

MELODY (CONT.)

Can you put on lip gloss?

(End.)