

Senior Honors Project Cover Essay

From the moment their newborn takes their first breath, mothers must deal with the pain of raising their offspring. They are no longer just a woman; They are a mother who must selflessly submit to their child. But not all mothers are willing to sacrifice themselves to love their children, nor should every woman become a mother. There is a violence within being a mother and a certain despair and rebellion of daughters. In either case, the two must attempt to co-exist without destroying each other. By creating an atmosphere of intensity and brutality, "The Milk Play" explores the nuance between motherhood and daughterhood.

In "The Milk Play," I aim to explore the concept of cannibalism as the ultimate symbol of love. I delve into the idea that to consume someone whole is to love them without the barrier of atoms between skin. This notion is central to the mother-daughter relationship portrayed in the story, where the dynamics are inherently cannibalistic. The daughter must take from her mother, feed off her mother, and eventually outlive her, symbolizing a cycle of consumption and inheritance that transcends physical boundaries. Kalini, the mother, and Yela, the daughter both have a desire for control. Kalini wants to possess her daughter which manifests in her literal consumption of Yela's flesh, blurring the lines between love, possession, and violence. Yela wants to create distance between herself and Kalini as their tumultuous relationship began in her earlier years. The play in itself delves into the psychological motivations behind Kalini's behavior, portraying her as a deeply troubled and disturbed individual whose actions are driven by a desperate desire for control and validation.

Dr. Daniels plays a crucial role in unraveling the layers of dysfunction within the mother-daughter relationship. As Yela's therapist, Dr. Daniels provides insight into the psychological motivations behind Kalini's behavior and offers a glimpse into the trauma and mental illness that plague the family dynamic. However, Dr. Daniels also represents a futile attempt to break free from the cycle of abuse, as Kalini's delusions and control extend even into the therapeutic space. In contrast to Kalini's distorted perception of maternal love, Dr. Daniels embodies a more nuanced understanding of compassion and empathy. However, her character ultimately serves as a tragic reminder of the limitations of empathy in the face of entrenched dysfunction and abuse. The therapist serves as a voice of reason and compassion in a narrative fraught with tension and turmoil. Her efforts to understand and empathize with Yela's

experiences provide a counterbalance to Kalini's dominating presence, offering a hope for healing and reconciliation. However, despite her expertise and compassion, Dr. Daniels is ultimately unable to effect meaningful change within the family dynamic, highlighting the insidious nature of Kalini's influence over Yela. She serves as a poignant reminder of the pervasive impact of trauma and mental illness on interpersonal relationships, as well as the challenges of breaking free from cycles of abuse and control. Her presence in the narrative also underscores the broader theme of societal complicity in enabling abusive behavior. As a representative of the mental health profession, Dr. Daniels embodies the larger systems and institutions that often fail to adequately address issues of abuse and trauma. Her inability to protect Yela from Kalini's manipulation and violence reflects the systemic failures that perpetuate cycles of abuse and allow individuals like Kalini to continue exerting control over their victims. Through her character, the play offers a sobering commentary on the complexities of trauma, mental illness, and the enduring power of maternal bonds.

In *The Milk Play*, I draw inspiration from Han Kang's novel "The Vegetarian," which similarly explores themes of consumption, desire, and identity. While the narrative focuses on the protagonist's decision to stop eating meat and the subsequent unraveling of her life, this play takes a darker and more visceral approach to the theme of consumption. I also utilized the novel *Jawbone* by Monica Ojeda, which employs an interesting and tension-filled plot and dialogue. In the novel, Miss Clara, a teacher, deals with the pain of her mother, and the mothering of her students. After the death of her mother, Elena, Clara becomes obsessed with her, going as far as dressing and moving like her. "The mother—who had no choice but to die while she—the daughter—grew like a tree over her death, because children accentuate the mortality of their parents..." (Ojeda 25). In life, Clara had no choice but to be corrected and humiliated by her mother, to which now she must do the same for her students.

Overall, *The Milk Play* is a tragic story for the mother and daughter and shows how traumatic relationships sometimes can not be fixed. This challenges audiences to confront the darker aspects of love and power within the context of the family unit, ultimately leaving them with a haunting reminder of the destructive consequences of unchecked desire and control. Through its visceral imagery and thought-provoking themes, the play aims to leave a lasting impression, inviting audiences to reflect on the complexities of human nature and the depths to which we are willing to go in the name of love.

THE MILK PLAY

A One Act Play
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Character Descriptions

Kalini Copeland is a woman in her late 40s, with a haunting beauty that belies the darkness lurking within. Her long, dark hair cascades around her shoulders, framing a face etched with years of pain and torment. Her eyes, once bright and full of life, now hold a vacant emptiness, haunted by the demons that torment her mind. She moves with a grace that borders on eerie, her every movement calculated and precise. Despite her outward appearance of poise and elegance, there is a palpable sense of danger that surrounds her, like a predator stalking its prey.

Yela Copeland is a woman in her mid-20s, with a striking beauty that masks the scars of a troubled past. Her long, dark hair is often pulled back in a ponytail, revealing a face that bears the weight of years of suffering. Despite the pain she has endured, there is a kindness in her heart, a warmth that shines through even in the bleakest of moments.

Dr. René Daniels is a middle-aged woman with a no-nonsense demeanor and a keen intellect. Her short, cropped hair is streaked with gray, a testament to the years she has spent navigating the complexities of the human mind. She carries herself with an air of authority, tempered by a genuine compassion for those who seek her help. Though she may seem stern at times, there is a warmth beneath her professional exterior, a genuine desire to help others find their way out of the darkness and into the light.

Author's Note

Dear readers,

As you delve into the pages of this play, I invite you to journey into the depths of the human psyche. *The Milk Play* is more than just a play—it's a raw exploration of the complex dynamics that exist within the mother-daughter relationship, tinged with elements of revenge and gothic intrigue.

Drawing from my own personal experiences, I sought to capture the tumultuous nature of my own rocky relationship with my mother, a journey filled with both moments of profound love and agonizing conflict. Through the characters of Kalini and Yela, I aim to shine a light on the often-unspoken tensions that simmer beneath the surface of maternal love, exposing the raw emotions that lie at the heart of every mother-daughter bond.

But beyond the surface-level drama lies a deeper truth: that within every mother-daughter relationship, there exists a tie that binds—a tie forged in the fires of war and love, of pain and healing. It is this duality that forms the beating heart of *The Milk Play*, a reminder that even in the darkest of times, there is always hope for redemption and reconciliation.

As you immerse yourself in the world of *The Milk Play* I encourage you to reflect on your own experiences with motherhood and daughterhood, and to explore the complexities of these relationships with an open heart and mind. For within the tangled web of love and resentment lies the key to understanding ourselves and each other more deeply.

With love and light,
Marteena Mendelssohn

TO NOTE: When a scene is written in Times New Roman, it indicates action and dialogue that take place on stage. If written in Courier New, the action and dialogue takes place on screen.

Act I Scene I

Lights up on a kitchen in a small suburban home. It is an absolute mess. Clothes, both dirty and clean, spread across the entire kitchen. There are stacks of knick knacks and collective items that don't seem to quite match the rest of the house. Dishes pile up in the sink, most of the colors showing red sauces with bits of green mold penetrating the dish. On the table sits a superbly decorated cake that reads "Happy Birthday Yela and Aley" Uptown Girl by Billy Joel plays as KALINI, frosts and decorates a cake. She dances around the kitchen, a bit off rhythm. She smiles as she puts two pink candles on the cake. Then suddenly, and without warning, she begins to cry. She cries until she's in a full blown sob.

After a while, she begins to scream.

She reaches for the knife and let's it sit in her hand for a while. She counts silently up until twenty.

She takes the knife and makes small cuts on her legs and arms. It's not in a self harm way, but it seems like a game that only Kalini knows.

She sits for a moment.

A beat.

She makes a run for the door; barefoot, bloody, and completely out of her mind.

The music continues playing

She screams.

Black Out

Act I Scene II

EXT. THE DARK OF NIGHT OUTSIDE A SUBURBAN HOME. 1 A.M.

Light fades into KALINI dressed in all white. Carrying a gallon of milk. She is barefoot, bloody, and bowlegged, walking into.. the street? It's too dark to tell, but the sound of her feet smacking the wet dirt penetrates the silence of an otherwise quiet neighborhood. The sound of the milk shuffling back and forth in the bottle follows.

She makes eye contact with an animal nearby. She salivates. Breathing heavier and heavier.

An animal shrieks.

We hear tears, shredding, chewing, grunting. Moaning.

Heavy breathing.

TITLE CARD: THE MILK PLAY

KALINI (Off Stage) Hush little baby don't say a word; Mama's going to buy you a mockingbird. If that mockingbird won't sing, Mama's going to buy you a golden ring. If that gold ring turns to brass, Mama's going to buy you a looking glass.

Yela: Mom? Where are you?

BLACK OUT

Act I Scene IV

Lights up on YELA walking her mother back inside. Yela can't help but to look around the unkempt house, and the smell nearly makes her gag. KALINI walks into the house barefoot, shivering, purple lips, like she has been out in the cold for hours.

Yela: I'll run you a bath.

KALINI sits at the kitchen table and puts her head in her hands. YELA goes to the bathroom. We hear the water running.

Yela (over the water): How are you feeling?

Silence.

Yela (yelling): I SAID HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

Silence.

The water turns off.

Yela: THE WATER'S DONE!

Silence.

Yela: Are you alright?!

Kalini's head is still face down into the table, snoring loudly.

Enter Yela, who reaches into her back pocket for her phone and dials a number. It rings until the voicemail

Yela: Hey, Doctor Daniels, It's Yela Copeland from Deerfield. I know it's been a while, and I hope this is still your number.

A beat.

I got a call from my mother. She sounded like she was in really bad shape, so i went to pick her up. I found her hovered over something on the road. I didn't take a look at it, I didn't want to take a look, so I just grabbed her and brought her back to the house. I'm gonna wash her up and

take her to the nearest hospital and hopefully they can figure something out. I just wanted to let you know just in case. I don't know. You can call me back at this number whenever you–

Voice mail: the maximum length of your voice message has been reached. You can either re-record or leave as is. Press 1 to–

Yela: damn.

Yela turns back to face her mother. However, the mother is now wide awake and holding a knife, threatening her.

KALINI: WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

YELA: what are you talking about.

KALINI: WHO THE FUCK ARE YOU. GET OUT OF MY HOUSE!

Yela: Please, it's gonna be okay. Just please put the knife down.

KALINI remains unresponsive, holding onto the knife with both of her hands. She is shaking.

Yela: COME ON! It's Yela.

KALINI: Yela? No, no, no. Yela is gone.

YELA: I was gone, but I am here now.

Kalini drops the knife and looks toward Yela. She counts to twenty

KALINI: my darling Yela. Happy Birthday.

Kalini heads to the bathroom. Yela walks toward the bathroom but stops at the cake. She smiles for a minute and swipes her finger across the cake and tastes the frosting. She marches toward the bathroom singing

Yela: What a happy birthday.

Black Out

Act I Scene V

Lights up, it's sunrise. KALINI walks onto the stage. She is dressed in her robe with her hair falling wet on her shoulders. She returns to the same chair she got up from at the end of Scene IV. She seems more miserable than before her shower. Yela comes in, a bit soaked as she has helped her mother take a bath, but not without a bit of splashing.

YELA: You must be hungry. I'll cook something.

Yela takes a look at all the dirty dishes.

YELA: Or maybe we could order breakfast, (pulling out her phone) there's Denny's, McDonalds, Burger-

Yela notices Kalini tugging at the knots in her hair.

Yela: Hey, hey, stop, here I'll help you.

Yela runs back into the bathroom to grab a hair brush and begins to untangle the knots from her.

YELA: I remember once you brushed my hair like this. I sat between your legs as you ran the oil over my scalp and gave my head a massage. At first it felt slimy and when you brushed out the knots it hurt a bit. But once they were all out it felt like heaven. It was one of my favorite memories of us.

KALINI: I have some old cameras with some baby films of you.

YELA: really?

KALINI: Hold on.

Kalini walks off stage toward the bedroom and picks out a camera, USB, and laptop. She sits at the table and plays the video, which we can see projected.

YELA: Wow, I forgot you made all these. I smiled a lot back then

KALINI: Yeah, you were such a happy little baby.

Kalini plays another video, and another, and another. Suddenly, after watching for a while Yela becomes sad, and a bit angry as well.

Yela: I gotta use the bathroom.

KALINI: Should I pause it or-

YELA: No you just keep watching

Yela throws a thumbs up awkwardly and heads to the bathroom. Kalini chuckles to herself watching the videos.

KALINI: my little girl. I wish you could have stayed that way.

A beat.

At the same time, a toilet flushes, Yela comes out drying her hands on her pants. She grabs her keys on the counter.

YELA: How about we go for a drive? We can stop and pick up some food, maybe have a picnic and a walk.

KALINI: I would rather stay here and watch these videos.

YELA: I'm sure you would.

She rolls her eyes and watches her mother for a second.

A beat.

YELA: But you gotta eat, it's breakfast, the most important meal of the day! We can grab a triple decker of hotcakes and eat them in the car like we used to.

KALINI: You're eager to get out of the house.

YELA: You must always be cooped up in this house anyways, it'd be nice for a change of scenery.

KALINI: How do you know how often I get out?

YELA: What?

KALINI: It's been years, Yela. You have no idea who I am, what I do, or why i do it. You don't give a damn.

YELA: How could you say that I couldn't just.

KALINI: Couldn't what?

A beat

KALINI: I'm staying here and watching my videos so I can remember what it's like before you became an estranged little bitch.

A beat.

KALINI: You shouldn't have come back, Yela.

Yela freezes, her movements faltering for a moment before she resumes brushing Kalini's hair, her voice strained with a mixture of confusion and concern.

YELA: What do you mean?

KALINI: (murmuring) You don't belong here. Not anymore.

YELA: This was my home, too.

KALINI: (sharply) But, it's not. Not anymore. You left, remember? Shoved me in that fucking place so I can be someone else's problem.

YELA: I - I didn't abandon you. I had to leave, for me and I- You- you were sick

KALINI: You left because I was sick, You left me in that godforsaken place because you hate me and wish I was dead.

YELA: I don't hate you. I was young and I couldn't take care of you or myself.

KALINI: sure.

YELA: and you got out soon enough right? The doctors got you all better in no time so I didn't want to—

KALINI: You didn't want to come near me until you thought i was "cured" enough for you. I didn't need to be cured, I just needed to be appreciated.

YELA: Well you were a terrible mother, so how could I?

A silence lingers through the room. Yela stops in her tracks as she realized what she says. She's horrified by herself as she waits for her mother's reaction.

Kalini's lips curl into a bitter smile, her eyes glinting with a manic edge as she reaches out to cup Yela's face in her hands.

KALINI: (whispering) And now you've come crawling back, just like I knew you would.

YELA: what a fucking joke. I came back to *take* you back. You're a danger to yourself and if i didn't pick you up tonight who know what you would have do-

KALINI: That baby should be mine.

Yela is now completely shaken, it's as if the room suddenly grew cold.

KALINI: You wouldn't think I would know? What's yours is mine and what's mine is yours. That rotten fruit of your womb was created by me, and it belongs to me.

Body trembling, Yela reaches out for the door, her fingers curling around the handle as she struggles to steady her racing thoughts. But before she can take a step forward, the sound of heavy footsteps echoes from the hallway outside.

Kalini returns, her eyes wild with desperation as she runs toward the door and pushes Yela to the ground.

KALINI: (breathless) I can't let you leave, Yela. Not when you're carrying my baby.

YELA: (frantically) please, you're not thinking clearly. There's no baby, it's all in your head.

But Kalini's eyes flash with a fervent intensity, her voice rising to a fevered pitch as she advances towards Yela, her hands reaching out with a desperate urgency.

KALINI: (insistently) You can't deny it, Yela. I can feel it growing inside you, just like I felt you growing inside me all those years ago. You're mine. And so is that baby.

Yela's breath catches in her throat, a wave of panic crashing over her as she realizes the depths of her mother's delusion. She backs away, her eyes darting around the room for an escape that seems to elude her grasp.

YELA: (pleading) Mama, please... let me go. We can get help, we can—

But Kalini's expression hardens, her grip tightening on Yela's arm as she pulls her closer with a strength that belies her frail appearance.

KALINI: (ferociously) No, Yela. I won't let you leave me again.

Kalini drags Yela towards the door leading to the bedroom, her delusions consuming her like a ravenous flame as she locks her daughter away from the world, leaving Yela to face the darkness alone. A camera inside the room projects onto the stage as a tearful Yela screams. Kalini grabs the remote and mutes the audio.

BLACK OUT

Act I Scene VI

[The scene opens with Yela pacing back and forth in Dr. Daniels' office, her fists clenched at her sides. Dr. Daniels sits calmly in her chair, watching Yela with a compassionate gaze.]

DR. DANIELS

Yela, I know this is a difficult time for you. Why don't you take a seat and tell me what happened?

YELA

What happened? What happened is that I found my mother covered in blood, with that same look in her eyes like she wasn't even there!

DR. DANIELS

I can only imagine how upsetting it must have been for you to witness something like that.

YELA:

Upsetting? Upsetting doesn't even begin to cover it! My mother is out of control, Dr. Daniels. She's lost touch with reality.

DR. DANIELS

You're not alone in this. It will take time to feel comfortable around her again, if you want to be. But eventually you will be strong enough to carve your own path and do what Yela wants to do. We can work through this together.

YELA

(stops pacing, her breath coming in ragged gasps) Work through this? How? How can we possibly work through something like this? My mother is sick, Dr. Daniels. She's sick, and I don't know if she'll ever get better.

Dr. Daniels watches Yela closely, noting the sudden shift in her demeanor.

DR. DANIELS

Yela, are you alright?

YELA

(her voice quivering) I-I can't... I can't do this anymore.

her hands shake uncontrollably as tears stream down her face.

Dr. Daniels moves quickly to Yela's side, gently guiding her to sit down in a nearby chair.

DR. DANIELS

Take deep breaths. Inhale deeply and slowly exhale.

YELA

(struggling to compose herself) I can't... I can't stop thinking about her, she's gonna find me, she's gonna get me. she's gonna get me. she's gonna get me. she's gonna get me.

her breathing becomes more erratic as she clutches her chest.

DR. DANIELS

Yela, I need you to focus on your breathing. You are safe here and no one can get you. You are in control.

Yela nods weakly, attempting to follow Dr. Daniels' instructions. But her panic only seems to escalate, her body trembling uncontrollably.

YELA

(voice barely a whisper) I'm so scared.

Act I Scene VII

Kalini sets up the camera in the bedroom where Yela lays unconscious. It takes a minute for her to steady the camera and make sure everything is working. She smiles the entire time.

She grabs Yela legs and bounds them together with ducttape. She is aggressive and the tape seems too tight around her legs. She then moves to Yela's arms and ducttapes those too. She puts a couple of piece over her mouth and lays her against the wall.

KALINI

Oh my little Yela, you should have stayed a child for longer.
But now I've got no choice.

Kalini walks off screen as Yela lies still.

On stage, Kalini walks out and begins playing "Don't You (Forget About Me)" by Simple Minds. She makes herself a drink. She dances around the kitchen and comes across the cake where Yela swiped her finger across earlier. She starts to fix up the cake. While speaking to Yela through the screen.

KALINI: Just because it's your birthday doesn't mean you can have the first swipe.

KALINI laughs at herself.

KALINI: You gotta save some for your sister too!

On screen, Yela wakes up and is screaming, but the volume is muted. She's crying, sobbing, balling her eyes out.

KALINI: "a good mother is a good teacher, she teaches her children what is right and wrong." You know I always thought I'd be a great mother. The perfect mother even. My own mother was a raging bitch, your grandmother... my apologies. I'd walk home from school when I was younger and everyone had their mothers or fathers waiting for them. To take them home, maybe do their homework together, then read a bedtime story to fall asleep. Well, I would go home, alone. My mother, working or smoking, or hiding to avoid me. I would grab anything I could find to eat, shower, and sleep alone. Only when my mother thought i was sound asleep would she crawl out of hiding spot and prepare a meal for herself, or a drink. She did that until the day she took her life. I was 19 years old.

Yela kicks the door with her feet

She wrote me a letter though, when she died. It's probably the sweetest thing she ever did for me, not to mention the only thing. She had written, "take, eat, this is my body, please acknowledge in remembrance of me." I never knew she was religious. She must have thought she was a fucking god. Or God.

I told myself I would never be like her. I guess daughters are bound to become their mothers. I was gifted a daughter, while another was taken away. I can never have my cake and eat it too. I have a successful career as a model, then I get married. I get married, then divorced. I get pregnant from a one night stand, I am blessed with two children, One child eats the child in the womb. I have the child, and I can't support myself let alone her.

Yela bangs her head on the door.

Being a mother is hard. Not because you have to raise them, but because you are only considered a mother. God forbid you are also a woman. With desires, with hopes, with dreams... I am a human who just wants to be appreciated and respected. The only person I have in my life is me.

She starts to tear up. Maybe this has been going on for a while.

I wish I never became a mother. To be responsible for another life in this world. Sometimes, only sometimes I just wish I can make the same choice as my own-

She stops herself from saying the rest of the sentence. She chokes up a bit, perhaps even sobs for a few moment.

Yela continues to bang her head on the door. Then blood. Then silence.

A beat.

Kalini takes a drink.

She starts to chuckle slightly which becomes a full cackle.

BLACK OUT

Act I Scene VIII

Insert dream sequence multimedia scene. It is Yela's dream.



BLACK OUT

Act I Scene IX

Lights up on KALINI in the kitchen chopping meat and vegetables. After a while, we hear groans coming from the screen where Yela seems to wake up after passing out. She seems to have wet herself while sleeping.

YELA (projected): Hey mom, listen. I'm so sorry for everything that happened and I'm sorry for calling you sick. Just please. Let me go.

KALINI: You're awake! How'd you sleep.

YELA (projected): I slept well, Ma. Thanks

KALINI: I'm fixing you something to eat, I ate the same when I was pregnant with you and...

She stops, almost tearing up, but able to hold it in.

KALINI: It's good for the baby's growth. My little baby is gonna grow so well.

YELA (projected): right, your baby.

KALINI: You'll see, Yela. Once this baby arrives, everything will be different. We'll be a family, just like we were meant to be.

YELA (projected): I don't know about that.

KALINI: Trust me, Yela. You'll understand once you hold your little sibling in your arms. It'll all make sense then. Oh, and I've been planning the nursery too. It's going to be perfect for our little one.

YELA (projected): HOLY SHIT IT ISN'T YOUR FUCKING CHILD.

KALINI: What do you mean, Yela? Of course, the baby is mine. I can feel it. I can feel them growing inside you, just like I did with you.

YELA (projected): That's not possible. I'm the one who's pregnant, not you.

KALINI: (shaking her head) No, Yela. You don't understand. The baby belongs to me. You're just carrying her. You're helping me bring my baby into this world.

YELA (projected): You have to snap out of this goddamn delusion. You need help.

KALINI: (angrily) No, Yela! You're the one who doesn't understand. You're the one who needs to accept the truth. The baby is mine, and I won't let anyone take them away from me.

KALINI: (advancing towards the screen, eyes wild) You'll never leave me, Yela. You'll stay here and do as I say, or else...

YELA (projected): (voice breaking) I tried to kill myself. I want this baby dead anyways.

KALINI: what?

YELA (projected): I wanted your babies to die.

Kalini becomes enraged for a moment, she is trembling.

YELA (projected): So, do whatever you want. You can even kill me now!

KALINI: Yela, my dear, you are so sick. I should have ripped you from your hiding place long ago. None of this would have happened. But at least you are here with me now.

YELA (projected): what are you talking about?

KALINI: (reaching out towards the screen) You are home, Yela. You're with me, and with our baby. And you'll stay here, where you belong.

A kitchen timer dings

KALINI: Food's ready!

Kalini prepares a tray of soup with water accompanying the meal. She opens the door slightly and she appears projected on the screen. She sets the food down in front of Yela, who remains silent. Kalini picks up the bowl and tilts Yela's head back to drink the soup. This goes on until the soup and water are all gone. Kalini collects the tray and heads to the door.

Yela: Could I have a glass of warm milk?

KALINI drops the tray on the floor, rage evident on her face.

KALINI : My milk was free

Yela stares in confusion.

KALINI: HOW DARE YOU THINK OF DRINK ANOTHER'S MILK. YOU SHOULD BE FEEDING OFF OF ME. I GAVE YOU LIFE HOW DARE YOU! YOU FUCKING INSOLENT BITCH. YOU ARE MY DAUGHTER YOU SUCK FROM MY TEET, YOU CAME OUT OF MY BODY. YOU ARE PART OF ME. YOU ATE MY CHILD. YOU ATE PART OF ME, AND NOW YOU TAKE FROM SOMEONE ELSE'S? IF YOU WANT MILK YOU TAKE IT FROM ME.

Yela sits in awe at her mother's delirium.

Kalini collects the bowl, cup, and tray, and slams the door shut.

BLACK OUT

Act I Scene X

The scene opens in Dr. Daniels' office, with Kalini seated across from Dr. Daniels, her posture rigid and her expression filled with hostility. Dr. Daniels sits calmly, maintaining her composure despite the tension in the room.

DR. DANIELS

Ms. Copeland, thank you for coming in today. I know this isn't easy for you, but I believe it's important for us to have this conversation. Your daughter has had a few sessions with me and I think it's important to ensure we develop a conversation, a dialogue-

KALINI

(spitting out the words) dialogue? What do you want to talk about, huh? How much of a failure I am as a mother? How my daughter can't stand the sight of me?

Dr. Daniels remains unfazed by Kalini's aggression, her tone measured and steady.

DR. DANIELS

I understand that you're feeling frustrated, but lashing out isn't going to help anyone. We're here to work through this together, to find a way forward.

KALINI

(scoffs) There is no way forward, not for me.

DR. DANIELS

Your daughter doesn't hate you. She's hurting, yes, but deep down, she still cares about you. She wants to see you get the help you need.

KALINI

(voice rising) I don't need your damn help. I need my daughter to show me some respect, to acknowledge everything I've sacrificed for her.

Dr. Daniels remains calm in the face of Kalini's outburst, her voice steady as she responds.

DR. DANIELS

I understand that you're feeling angry and resentful, but blaming your daughter isn't going to solve anything. We need to focus on finding constructive ways to repair your relationship with her.

KALINI

(sneers) There's nothing left to repair. My daughter is dead to me, Dr. Daniels. She abandoned me when I needed her most, just like everyone else.

[Dr. Daniels sighs softly, her expression filled with empathy as she reaches out to Kalini.]

Kalini recoils at Dr. Daniels' touch, her eyes flashing with anger as she pulls away.

DR. DANIELS

I know this is painful for you, but pushing your daughter away isn't going to make things better. You have to be willing to confront your own demons, to acknowledge the role you've played in all of this. To be a better mother to Yela, to play a role in her life that is not a villain, but a source of love and positivity.

KALINI

You don't know anything about me or what I've been through. And you certainly don't know anything about my relationship with my daughter.

Kalini begins to leave, Dr. Daniels watches her departure. As Kalini reaches the door, she suddenly stops, her demeanor shifting dramatically. A disarming smile spreads across her face, though it's tinged with an unsettling intensity.

KALINI

You know, I realize I may have come across a bit harsh just now.
I can be misunderstanding sometimes.

Dr. Daniels eyes Kalini warily, sensing the sudden change in her demeanor. Despite her apprehension, she responds calmly.

DR. DANIELS

Ms. Copeland, I appreciate your willingness to reconsider. It's important for us to have open and honest communication if we're going to make progress.

KALINI

Yes, progress. That's precisely what we need, isn't it? And I think I have just the solution to our little predicament.

Before Dr. Daniels can react, Kalini lunges forward, her hands wrapping around Dr. Daniels' throat with surprising strength. Dr. Daniels gasps in shock, struggling to break free from Kalini's grasp as panic sets in.

DR. DANIELS

(choking) Ms. Copeland, stop! Please, let go!

Kalini's grip tightens, her smile twisted into a cruel grin as she leans in close to Dr. Daniels' ear.

Just as Dr. Daniels begins to lose consciousness, the sound of hurried footsteps fills the room. Security personnel burst in, pulling Kalini away from Dr. Daniels and restraining her as she struggles against them.

SECURITY OFFICER

(to Dr. Daniels) Are you okay, Doctor?

[Dr. Daniels nods weakly, still gasping for breath as she watches Kalini being dragged away.]

DR. DANIELS

(hoarsely) give her 120 mg of Phenobarbital. Restrain her please, and can I get a damn ice pack.

Act I Scene XI

Yela, on camera, lays idly against a wall. She seems somewhat delirious and dissociative. She speaks directly to the camera

YELA

(murmuring) I'm not sick, you're sick, sick and twisted, twisted and sick Yela.

She laughs

A beat.

I thought you got help. But tonight I knew you weren't sick, you were just you, not a woman, not a mother, but something much worse. Something that crawled out of hell to torture and torment. You're beyond redemption.

She looks dead at the camera.

And do you know what's the worst part? The worst part is that I wanted to believe in you. Despite everything, despite how much you fucked me up and over, I still held onto the hope that you could change, that you could be the mother I always wished you were. But you shattered that hope, just like you've shattered everything else in my life.

There's no saving you, "Mom".

I'm tired of living in fear. Tired of constantly looking over my shoulder, waiting for the next outburst, the next delusion, the next descent into madness. You may have given me life, but you've also taken so much from me. You've stolen my innocence, my peace of mind, my sense of security.

A beat.

I had dreams. Dreams that do not revolve around you. Fuck you, and fuck this.

She pauses and begins to cry.

She takes a breath and touches the cross on her neck.

Flashes of the first scene with KALINI eating the animal plays on the screen as Yela's voice dictates in the background.

YELA (V.O)

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. God please, please, deliver me from this evil.

Black Out

Act I Scene XII

Yela's heart pounds in her chest as she braces herself for the inevitable confrontation with her mother. Every creak of the floorboards, every distant sound sends shivers down her spine, but she refuses to let fear paralyze her. Suddenly, the door creaks open, and Kalini steps into the room.

YELA: Why the fuck are you doing this to me.

KALINI: Do you not listen? I'm not doing this to you, I'm doing this *for* you.

YELA: ???

KALINI: When we were looking at those videos, I saw you smile, I saw the happiness in your eyes like I did when you were a little girl. We can have that again, all we have to do is try a little harder. You even tried to kill yourself, and kill the baby. You are a danger to yourself. You must stay with me so you can be a better person, I am the positive guiding light.

YELA: You really are out of your mind, aren't you?

KALINI: Delusions? Yela, you misunderstand. Everything I do, I do out of love for you. You want to know why I did that last night? Why I hovered over the road and split open that possum and ate its guts? It's because our true nature is violent. We are violent creatures! Why does a daughter feed from her mother from the time she is conceived til the time she dies? And why does that mother continue to feed her? In order for a girl to become a woman, she must kill her mother, eat her alive. I'm extending my lifespan by keeping you close, the closer you are, the more I can control how much you feed. And when you have that child, you, too, will feel the change inside of your body, the hunger, the resentment, the excitement, the happiness, the rage. Before a daughter hates her mother, the mother must hate that daughter. Let's at least enjoy this moment before you and I both fall short again.

YELA: You call forcing me into your twisted version of reality love? Making me a literal fucking prisoner? That's not love. It's control.

KALINI: Love is control. We only want what's best for our loved one's. By controlling them, this is how we show our love. I've sacrificed so much to give you a better life, to protect you from the harshness of the world outside. Can't you see that?

YELA: What I see is a woman who can't distinguish between love and possession. You suffocated dad, yourself, me, and now you want to suffocate my child.

KALINI: But...but I can't lose you, Yela. You're all I have left. Without you, I'm...I'm nothing.

YELA: As it should be. You don't deserve to be anything.

KALINI: We'll see about that, Yela. You can escape, you can beat me. You could even fucking kill me. But what I have taught you as a mother, you will teach to your daughter. And then you will turn into me and your daughter will kill you.

With that ominous warning hanging in the air, Kalini advances towards Yela, her presence like a shadowy specter haunting the darkness of the room. She slaps her and grabs her head. Yela struggles to keep consciousness but it's no use.

BLACK OUT

Act I Scene XIII

The scene opens with Yela seated in a therapist's office, facing the camera. The therapist is off-screen, only their voice is heard.

DR. DANIELS

We have diagnosed your mother with Dissociative Identity Disorder, Schizophrenia, and Severe Chronic Depression. You mentioned before that after you were born she exhibited symptoms of post-partum psychosis, right?

YELA

Yeah, uh. My mom's coworker used to help look after her before she moved away six years ago. But yeah, she told me how my mother changed after giving birth and she was put on a bunch of medications the first ten years of my life and then quit altogether.

DR. DANIELS

It seems her symptoms have progressed exponentially thereafter. You told me in our last session that her delusions have become abusive. Can you tell me more about that?

YELA

(staring directly into the camera, her tone cold and detached)
Yeah, sure. She lives in this twisted reality where she's the center of everything, and everyone else is just a pawn in her game. If I don't come home from school on time she rage calls me. Like 200 times, literally. Or she will start talking to my dead twin sister from the womb like a psycho. Or I'll come home and she's sitting at the kitchen table with a knife in her hand, counting.

DR. DANIELS

And how does that affect you?

YELA

Growing up with her was like living in a nightmare. She would say and do things that no child should ever have to experience. I shut it all down. I became numb to it all.

DR. DANIELS

It sounds like you had to protect yourself in order to survive.

YELA

Yeah, exactly. Survival. I wanted to run away, to escape from her, but I knew she'd find me. She always does.

DR. DANIELS

What makes you say that?

YELA

(leans back in her chair, a bitter laugh escaping her lips)
Because she's convinced that I belong to her. That I'm nothing without her. And no matter how far I run, she'll always be there, lurking in the shadows, ready to drag me back into her twisted world.

DR. DANIELS

It must feel incredibly isolating to be trapped in that situation.

YELA

(nods slowly) Yeah. I always end up right back where I started.

DR. DANIELS

Have you ever considered seeking help or reaching out to someone for support?

YELA

What's the point? No one would understand. And even if they did, what could they possibly do? My mother's delusions are so deeply ingrained that I don't think anything could ever change her.

DR. DANIELS

It's understandable to feel hopeless in the face of such a challenging situation. But there are people who care about you and want to help.

YELA

Yeah, right. People like you who sit behind a desk and pretend to care while the world falls apart around them.

DR. DANIELS

I assure you, Yela, I'm here to help you navigate through this. But you have to be willing to take the first step.

YELA

(pauses, her expression softening slightly) And what step is that, exactly?

DR. DANIELS

The step towards healing. Towards reclaiming your life and your autonomy. It won't be easy, but it's possible.

YELA

(considers the therapist's words for a moment before nodding) maybe when I'm dead.

Act I Scene XIV

The scene opens with Yela opening her eyes as she's awoken by a vibration on the floor. On the other side of her prison, her phone illuminates with a call from Dr. Daniels.

Kalini, on stage, sleeps against the door.

Yela, swims in fetal position toward the phone, trying not to make a noise. She tries to answer the call with her face, but it disappears before she can press her nose against the screen.

She begins to cry.

A minute later, the phone brightens again, it is Dr. Daniels. Yela answers the phone

DR. DANIELS (from the phone)

Yela, I got your call a few days ago. I've been on vacation in Cabo. Which hospital did you take her to?

YELA (whispering)

Dr. Daniels. She locked me in the house. I've been bound up since.. Since I don't know when. Call the police. Call someone.

DR. DANIELS

What? Umm where are you. What's your address?

YELA

8921 West -

The phone dies.

YELA

No

Yela scream cries and Kalini wakes up. She notices the phone near Yela and runs into the room to grab it.

KALINI

WHO DID YOU CALL?

YELA (sobbing)

I-I called Dr. Daniels. She was supposed to help us.

KALINI

(snatching the phone)

You stupid girl!

YELA

I don't want this baby. I'll give it to you. Just let me shower and change clothes and I'll stay here as long as you want me. I'm so tired.

KALINI

That wasn't so hard.

Kalini and Yela exit to the bathroom.

The camera remains on while the stage has a black out.

The water runs until the bath is filled and it turns off.

We hear Kalini singing in the background

KALINI (O.S)

Hush little baby don't say a word; Mama's going to buy you a mockingbird.

Yela joins in.

YELA/ KALINI

If that mockingbird won't sing, Mama's going to buy you a golden ring.

If that gold ring turns to brass, Mama's going to buy you a looking glass.

Suddenly, police sirens move toward the house. They are right outside.

KALINI (Off Screen)

What did you do?

YELA (Off Screen)

I didn't do anything

KALINI

Tell me what you did!

There's a knock at the door. Kalini runs on camera for a second and on stage to the front door. The lights flash red, white, and blue. This goes on for a while. Kalini stands at the door holding her breath. After a minute, the police cars drive away.

Kalini walks back to the bathroom and we hear a scream. It is not shown on screen, but Yela is lying unconscious in the bathtub. Kalini murmurs to herself on screen but it is intelligible. She wraps a sheet over Yela and drags her out onto camera. She begins to cry over her daughter's body.

She goes on stage to the kitchen and grabs a knife, she moves back onto camera and begins to cut pieces of her daughter.

BLACK OUT

Act I Scene XVI

The stage is bright and Uptown Girl by Billy Joel blasts throughout the theater. Kalini is cooking. She sings along, dancing the tune and smiles brightly.

Yela's phone, on the charger, rings.

Kalini answers the phone with a smile

KALINI: Hello Dr. Daniels, it's been a long time! Yes, this is Yela's phone. She's in the other room... (she smiles) cooking right now. Yeah, we patched things up and I've decided to get some real help. Thanks for calling again, have a wonderful day.

KALINI: Breakfast, the most important meal of the day.

Kalini take a bite of her food, a bite of Yela.

Dollhouse by Melanie Martinez plays as the curtains fall.

Black Out

End of Play