

THE COMFORT OF CONCRETE

by

ZACHARY MARK

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Cast of Characters

- BRIDGET: Female (14-18), high school student, active with many friends, sincere and caring with a great sense of humor.
- JOSEPHINE: Female (40-50), teacher in small town, strict but loving, overworked and underpaid, deals with depression.
- MICHAEL: Male (40-50), blue collar worker, never works just one job at a time, loving father, lives with regret that he can't shake off.
- VALERIE: Female (18-22), former college student, she's been missing for years and presumed deceased, has come to terms with her being.

ACT IScene 1

(We are invited into a working class family's kitchen. A door is located up center stage. A window frame hangs to the side of the door that shows a glimpse of fall outside. Center stage is a small kitchen table with two chairs. Down stage left is a kitchen island table. The island has a few dishes piled up and ready to be cleaned and put away, a stack of mail made up mostly of credit card offers and coupons, as well as a statue of the Virgin Mary facing towards the audience. Offstage right is the doorway to the rest of the house. Entering from offstage right is the family's youngest daughter Bridget. She attends the local high school but is off for the weekend.)

(Bridget enters the kitchen as she is finishing eating her ice cream in a bowl while trying to keep her eyes on the her ever so important phone. She makes it over to the island and puts down her empty bowl in the stack of others. She looks at her phone in disbelief)

BRIDGET

You have got to be kidding me! Ugh!

(She rushes to the window)

BRIDGET

Come on mom! Where are you?

(Bridget starts to walk back to her room offstage when she looks back at the kitchen island. The statue of Mary catches her eye and her demeanor changes. It stops her in her tracks and she walks slowly over to examine it. She checks the statue's position to see if it has moved. Her best guess measurement is determined by a thumb and a shut eye to focus. A smile comes over her face and she takes a deep breath and walks offstage right with a grin on her face no longer in a hurry.)

(Josephine can be seen walking to the front door through the window. She is carrying groceries and her purse. She opens the door and closes it behind her. She puts the groceries on the table

and walks over to the kitchen island. Josephine picks up the stack of mail and rifles through them. She finds one of interest and opens it up. Reading through it quickly, she puts her hand on her forehead and shakes her head.)

JOSEPHINE

What the.... I thought we paid this one. (She stops to quickly look at the statue and then lightly touch Mary's head as if to comfort it. After a brief moment of reflection she abruptly snaps back into reality.) I told Michael..(She puts the letter down and goes back to the table to unload the groceries frustrated.)

(Bridget enters the room from offstage right)

BRIDGET

Hey momma! Need any help? (She goes over to the table and gives her mom a heartfelt hug, as her mom returns the hug in a half hearted way.)

JOSEPHINE

I see you left your bowl for me to put away again Bridget. (Pointing at the kitchen island)

BRIDGET

I know, I know. I will get to them ALL later, I promise.

JOSEPHINE

What do you mean LATER?

BRIDGET

I'm heading over to Maggie's today. I told you about it yesterday and I even texted you a reminder this morning.

JOSEPHINE

OK, OK. I had a meeting this morning and it threw my whole day off. What time you heading over there?

BRIDGET

Like 10 minutes ago.

JOSEPHINE

Bridge, I haven't eaten since this morning and I was gonna start an early dinner.

BRIDGET

That's fine mom. No worries. Whatcha making anyways?

JOSEPHINE

Was thinking beef and noodles with mashed potatoes.

BRIDGET

Sounds good! Hopefully you and dad will save me some leftovers.

JOSEPHINE

Oh, I'm sure there will be plenty. Your dad has probably already grabbed something to eat on his way home. He's never liked my cooking.

BRIDGET

He does too.

JOSEPHINE

Really? I bet you a ride to Maggie's he comes in and finds out what I'm making and he just sighs and says he already ate. Whether he actually did or not.

BRIDGET

He loves when you make Gumbo though. Why don't you cook that? You haven't made it in so long. It's A-MAZ-ING! You used to LOVE getting all those ingredients and spending hours cooking it just right. I remember you would turn on Jazz music and me and Val would dance around the kitchen the whole time. And that one time...

JOSEPHINE

(Cutting Bridget off sternly but politely) Well maybe some other time. Just don't feel like it right now. Tonight's beef and noodles and that's it. I'm sorry to ruin everyone's meal demands.

BRIDGET

Mom, I'm sorry..

(Michael enters the kitchen through the door just as he hears Bridget apologize. He works construction and his clothes and boots are dirty.)

MICHAEL

Sorry for what exactly?

JOSEPHINE

Nothing. Nothing at all Michael.

(Bridget runs to give her dad a big hug, she receives yet another half hearted hug in return)

MICHAEL

So what's for dinner?

JOSEPHINE

Beef and noodles with some mashed potatoes.

MICHAEL

(He sighs) Well, don't make too much, I already ate on my way home.

(Bridget and Josephine make eye contact and Bridget rolls her eyes.)

JOSEPHINE

Good then. I can stay home and cook and you can run Bridget to Maggie's since she doesn't seem to have a ride there anymore.

MICHAEL

What? I thought we all didn't have plans today. I thought it was going to be a nice quiet evening. Why didn't you tell us about your plans Bridge?

BRIDGET

I did, I told..*(Stopping in her tracks trying not to get her mother in trouble)*

MICHAEL

(Looking at Josephine with disdain) She told you and you forgot?! You forgot to even send me a text? That's all I ask. One simple text. YOU need to communicate better so I don't have to deal with little SURPRISES. Anything else someone forgot I need to know about?

JOSEPHINE

Actually there is.

MICHAEL

Great! What now?

JOSEPHINE

YOU forgot to pay another medical bill and now WE are in collections....Surprise!

BRIDGET

(Realizing the growing tension) I'm just gonna grab my bag and walk there. It's no big deal really. I need the exercise.

MICHAEL

No, I'll take you. Looks like a storm is coming anyway. Grab your stuff and we'll go.

(Bridget leaves off stage right to get her bag from her room)

JOSEPHINE

So now what?

MICHAEL

I'll take care of it. I have to move some money around but I'll make it work. I'm doing my best Jo. I don't know what else to do. Something has to change. I don't want to live like this....I can't.

JOSEPHINE

I know. We can sit down later and talk..

MICHAEL

Yep, ALWAYS later.

JOSEPHINE

What is that supposed to mean?

(Bridget comes back onstage with her bag)

BRIDGET

I'm all set!

(Thunder is heard and through the window we can see that the once bright day has turned grey)

MICHAEL

Well, sounds like the storm is here. We better hurry up.

BRIDGET

Bye mom. *(Hugs her mother)*

JOSEPHINE

Bye sweetie. *(This hug is one Jo doesn't want to let go of quite so quickly).*

MICHAEL

(Opens up the door, the wind has picked up, it's raining, and lightning can be seen) Come on Bridge! Let's go before the next bolt!

(Bridget and Michael leave out the front door. Josephine watches them out the window to make