

## Sins of the Mother – Audition Sides

A play in two acts by Israel Horovitz.

DUBBAH

(To DOUGGIE.) I always thought Sylvia Costello was wick'id smart. She'd get hundreds, every test. Doesn't surprise me she ended up goin' to a fancy New York college.

BOBBY My wife's brother's livin' down in New York. Flushing.

FRANKIE He a plumber?

BOBBY What's this?

FRANKIE Flushing ... plumber? It's a joke, Bob.

BOBBY Ho ho, that's rich, Frank. You ought'a be on stage. There's one leaving in ten minutes.

FRANKIE Hilarious, Bob. First time I heard that joke, I laughed so hard, the tears ran down my bib.

BOBBY

(To DOUGGIE.) Frankie's twin Philly's self-made. Owns a huge Toyota dealership down the South Shore, made himself a fortune.

FRANKIE Who gives a shit?

BOBBY My wife was crazy about the brother, when he was little ... like he was her own kid.

DUBBAH Across the street neighbors.

BOBBY Little Philly would come home from school, straight to my house, not his own.

FRANKIE He should've stayed there!

BOBBY

(Referencing FRANKIE.) Evelyn wouldn't let this one in her house.

FRANKIE As if I gave a rat's ass! My brother don't exist for me. If Phillip L. Verga walked into this room right now, I'd treat him like a bad smell, nothing more, nothin' less.

(An embarrassed pause.)

DUBBAH

(Diffusing the bomb.) How's Evelyn feelin', Bob?

BOBBY She's doin' okay. Good days and bad days. She's got her TV.

FRANKIE  
(To DOUGGIE.) His wife's wick'id sick. Can't leave the house.

DUBBAH  
(To FRANKIE, nodding toward DOUGGIE.) What are you, stupid?

FRANKIE What?  
(Realizes.) I was just sayin'.

DOUGGIE  
(Confused.) What?

DUBBAH Nothin'.

DOUGGIE What?

DUBBAH Nothing.

DOUGGIE Something I'm missing?

DUBBAH Nothing.

FRANKIE Bobby's wife's got a bad disease kind'a thing.

BOBBY What is with you, Frank?

FRANKIE I'm just sayin', Bob!

BOBBY Just shut your mouth, okay?

FRANKIE I was just sayin' generally, not specifically.

DOUGGIE What?

FRANKIE Nothin'.

DOUGGIE  
(To DUBBAH.) What's going on?

DUBBAH Ask Bobby.

DOUGGIE  
(To BOB.) So?

BOBBY Nothin's goin' on.

DOUGGIE Okay.  
(Beat.) Okay.

FRANKIE Bobby picked up a sickness and passed it on to his wife.

BOBBY I'll shut it for you, idiot!

(BOBBY charges at FRANKIE, grabs him in a headlock, smacking FRANKIE's head with heel of free hand, producing a thudding sound.)

BOBBY You get me? You get me?

FRANKIE Hey! Hey!

DUBBAH Hey, Bobby, chill out!

(BOBBY continues to smack FRANKIE.)

FRANKIE Hey! Hey! Hey!

(BOBBY continues to smack FRANKIE.)

BOBBY Did you hear this idiot?! Did you hear him?

DOUGGIE What's goin' on? What the hell's goin' on?

BOBBY Nothin's goin' on! I'm just shutting this one's loose lips!

(BOBBY continues to smack FRANKIE.)

DUBBAH Come on, Bobby, huh? The office is opening, any minute, now! They're gonna hear this!

BOBBY Do I care?

(BOBBY continues to smack FRANKIE.)

Suddenly, FRANKIE breaks free, shoves BOBBY, who reels backwards.

FRANKIE screams out at DOUGGIE.)

FRANKIE He got the disease from your mother, pal! Passed it to his wife.

(There is an astonished silence. And then...)

DUBBAH Jesus, Frank.

BOBBY Brilliant.

DUBBAH That's kind've private stuff, Frank.

FRANKIE Yuh, well, I'm just sayin'.

BOBBY Brilliant, Frank. No wonder Harv'id turned you down.

DUBBAH Jesus, Frank. You didn't hav'ta say nothin' on that.

DOUGGIE You got something from my mother, Bob?

FRANKIE His father did, too.

BOBBY Brilliant.

DOUGGIE Whose father?

DUBBAH Me.

DOUGGIE Your father, too?

DUBBAH He never got sick. He caught it, but he never got sick.

FRANKIE Yuh, but, what? Come on, Dub.

DUBBAH F you, Verga, huh?!

(Beat.)

DUBBAH My mother and father got divorced over it.

FRANKIE A lot of people.

DOUGGIE Got divorced?

FRANKIE Picked up something from your mother.

DOUGGIE A lot of people?

FRANKIE That's what I said: a lot of people.

BOBBY From sharing needles.

(FRANKIE laughs, ironically.)

FRANKIE Yuh, right, Bob. From sharing needles. That's all they did.

DOUGGIE What's he sayin', Bob?

BOBBY Excellent, Frank. You're an idiot.

(And then, to DOUGGIE...) There was crazy shit goin' on, back then. Most of us came home from Nam with a habit. Times were wick'id tough around here. No work. Fish business was dead. Big Boston drug-dealers started runnin' drugs through Gloucester ... Fishermen could make a hell of a lot more money carrying a cigar box full'a something, than a boat full'a fish. A lot of local guys got in on it.

DUBBAH Tell him about your father, Frank.

FRANKIE Tell what? There's nothin' ta' tell.

DOUGGIE

(To FRANKIE.) Your father sold drugs?

(FRANKIE turns away.) I'm askin' you a question: did your father sell drugs?

FRANKIE So fuckin' what?! People had to feed their families! Everybody was doin' it.

DOUGGIE

(To DUBBAH.) How about your father? Was he doin' that? DUBBAH My father was in on it for a while, but, he stopped, 'cause he knew it was a wrong thing, unlike some people.

FRANKIE That some kind'a smart remark against my father?

DUBBAH I'm just sayin', Frank.

FRANKIE Fisherman who didn't get in on it starved to death.

DUBBAH My father couldn't pay the insurance on his boat. He fished with no insurance, for a while. He got rid of his boat, finally...

FRANKIE Jeess! How'd he get rid of his boat, Dub?

DUBBAH Go F yourself, Frank!

FRANK Tell him, Dub!

DUBBAH It sunk.

BOBBY Fifty trawlers sunk in one year, they pulled the plug.

DOUGGIE What's that mean?

FRANKIE They pulled the plug, sunk their boats.

BOBBY Half of Gloucester's fleet sunk in one year.

DUBBAH You can't blame anybody for that. Insurance premiums went up to a million a year. Nobody could pay that.

BOBBY A lot of people who were carrying drugs started usin'.

DUBBAH They were frustrated. My father started usin'. That's how he got infected. Like Bob. From sharing needles with your mother, and, ya' know, from being intimate with her.

DOUGGIE You did drugs with my mother, Bob?

(BOBBY looks away.)

DOUGGIE Bob?

FRANKIE Bob and everybody else.

BOBBY There's no need for this, Frank! FRANKIE Bob was with her when she died.

BOBBY Jesus, Frank... What is with you?

(Beat.)

DOUGGIE You were?

BOBBY I was.  
(Faces DOUGGIE.) I was the one called the police.

DOUGGIE You were alone with her? Just you?

BOBBY There was three of us – plus her. Me and Maxie Glidden, from over near United Shoe in Beverly. And Ronnie Morrison.

FRANKIE Dubbah's father.

DUBBAH My father.

BOBBY She went quick. Wick'id. There was nothin' we could do. Ronnie and I knew CPR from the Y. We both worked on her for a long time, but there was no bringin' her back.

(Beat.) Your mother was a nice woman, in spite of everything else. She didn't have a lot of chances.

FRANKIE Bobby liked her.

BOBBY Shut it, Frank.

FRANKIE That's what my father always says about the two of ya's.

DUBBAH Jesus, Frank!

BOBBY You're a sicko!

FRANKIE What? I'm just sayin', Bob. He only got one mother and Louise Martino was it. No harm in tellin' him she was liked by somebody, is there?

BOBBY Sick in the head!

FRANKIE I'm just sayin', Bob.

BOBBY

(To DOUGGIE.) She didn't have a lot of chances, Douggie. That's the truth of it.

DOUGGIE I guess.

BOBBY Maybe she's the luckiest one of us.

(Beat.) She got out.

(Beat.) It's tougher for the ones of us still hanging around, puttin' in our time for nothing.

(BOBBY moves away from the others, stands alone by the window.

There is a substantial pause.

A distant foghorn sounds. A seagull screeches. And then...)

DOUGGIE

(To FRANKIE.) Your father was the one sold her the drugs, wasn't he?

(Beat.)

FRANKIE Who told you that?

(Looks at BOBBY, angrily.) Bob told you that?

BOBBY No.

FRANKIE  
(To DUBBAH.) You say this?

DUBBAH I said nothing.

DOUGGIE I remember your name from the paper. My sister sent me clippings ... articles about my mother dyin'.

FRANKIE Nobody proved nothin'!

BOBBY Get real, Frank, will ya'?!

FRANKIE No court proved nothin'!

BOBBY I don't need no court, do I, Frank? I was there.

FRANKIE You saw her buyin' stuff from my father? Is that what you're sayin', Bob?

(BOBBY walks across the room to FRANKIE, faces him, nose to nose, before answering...)

BOBBY Yuh, Frank. That's what I'm sayin'. I saw Louise Martino buyin' drugs from your father the morning of the day she died.

(Suddenly, FRANKIE punches BOBBY. It is a solid, ferocious punch.

BOBBY flies backwards, knocking chairs everywhichway. HE lands on the floor.

DUBBAH leaps in, grabs FRANKIE...)

DUBBAH Jesus, Frank! What are you doin'?!

FRANKIE  
(Pulling away from DUBBAH.) I ain't taking his bullshit, Dubbah! I been hearin' his smart remarks against my father for years and years, now. Enough is enough!  
(Moves to the fallen BOBBY, ready to attack...) My father's worth a hundred of you, Bob! You got no right to be putting a man like him down, sayin' shit!

(Suddenly, BOBBY stands, facing FRANKIE. There is an open fish-knife in his hand.)

## EPILOGUE

In darkness, we hear a single organ playing Bach, slow, sad, funereal.

A candle is lit, as TIGHT WHITE LIGHT fades up on CASKET, center stage.

BOBBY MALONEY stands next to casket. HE wears dark suit, white shirt, necktie; holds lit candle, speaks directly to the audience, eulogizing the deceased.

BOBBY For those of you who don't know me, I'm Robert Maloney. I met Sammy Verga the first time when I was 2 days old. I don't actually remember meeting him, but everybody tells me I did. We were in the baby-nursery together, up Addison-Gilbert Hospital. Our mothers and fathers were very close with each other. Sammy and I were best friends when we were little kids. Later on, when we were grownups with our own kids, Sammy and I weren't too friendly. I have to be honest on this. We lived across the street from each other, over East Main. Our wives were friendly, even if we weren't. But, when you know somebody from age 2 days right up to age 55 years or so, you know them almost as well as you know yourself. At least, you think you do. Sammy Verga's suicide took me by surprise, shocked me. I haven't known a whole lot of people who have done what Sammy did – taking their own life -- but, I hav'ta' say, Sammy Verga seemed like the least likely one of us to do that kind'a thing. So, from thinking about this, we gotta' learn that you just really never know what's goin' on inside of somebody else's head. From the outside, it looked like Sammy was nothin' but happy, havin' a great life. But, now, we know that something was playing on his conscience, makin' him feel really bad about himself ... bad enough to do what he did. So, from now on, when you think about Sammy Verga, you're gonna' hav'ta wonder what bad thing Sammy Verga did to make him feel so guilty. The good thing I can say about the way Sammy Verga died was that he was in control of it. He definitely brought it on himself. So, I am personally able to say "Sammy Verga, rest in peace."  
(Beat. And then...) That's it.

LIGHT CROSSFADES from BOBBY to PHILLY VERGA, wearing tinted eyeglasses, dapper suit, dark gray shirt, designer necktie. HE holds a lit candle, speaks directly to audience, eulogizing the deceased.

PHILLY I'm Philly Verga – Samuel J. Verga's son Phillip. I met my father when I was even younger than Bob was when he met my father.  
(Beat.) I hope you don't think it's weird of me to say what I'm going to say, now, but, I personally think it's a great thing my father went the way he did. It was quick, and he was in a relatively happy place in his life ... no disease we know about, no debts, no big worries ... except, of course, the demons that drove him to end his own life the way he did. But, those demons are, now and forevermore, also at peace. My father was very very upset about my twin brother's drowning. My brother was important to him and ...  
(Doesn't finish thought.) My mother's death, also.  
(Doesn't finish thought.) Things change, really fast...  
(Doesn't finish thought.) My father will never have to face the nightmares most people have to face in old age. There was no love lost between me and my father. Most of you people know that. But, the connection between a father and son is very special. Some people say it's even magical. You only get one father, and, for better or worse, Sam Verga was what I got. And so, I will pay for this funeral and for the dinner, afterwards, and I will bury my father as a son should do. It is the natural order of things.  
(Takes small handwritten note from his pocket.) I want to read an ancient kind of poem I found online. It says something that I think sums up best what I really wanna' say here.

(Clears his throat, reads aloud.) And on the murderer this curse I lay --On him and all the partners in his guilt -- Wretch, may he pine in utter wretchedness! And for myself, if with my privity He gain admittance to my hearth, I pray The curse I laid on others fall on me.

(Crumples paper into his pocket, speaks directly to audience.)

I want to end by sharing with you the greatest lesson I have learned in my whole life. It's about people who cause us pain. Some of these people exist physically in our lives – we see them, sometimes every day, and we think we have to deal with them. Some of these people exist only in our memories. We remember them and we remember the pain they caused us in our lives, and these memories keep those people and that pain alive.

(Beat.) So, what I have to say – this life-lesson I've learned from a very very wise person -- is simple and quick. You won't have to write anything down. You'll remember it, if you let yourself remember it.

(HE pauses, stares at audience ... and then ...) We do not need these people who cause us pain. We can let them go. We do not need them. Let them go.

(Beat.) That's it.

ORGAN MUSIC concludes.

SPOTLIGHTS fade out.

PHILLY blows out the candle.

THE PLAY IS OVER