

## Cast of Characters

MAMA, a mother

LIL, her daughter

JASON, Lil's lover

## THE BREAK-UP

by Julia Cho

**LIL.** In my life, I'm usually the one who suffers from unrequited love. I'm comfortable in that role, you know? I don't mind it—being the one with the big crush, being the one all nervous, hoping someone will call. I know the script. So that's why, I guess, it was such a surprise to realize that my mother was in love with me.

**MAMA.** This is Lil's baby spoon. See her little teeth marks? She used to gnaw on this thing to death, I got so worried, thought she'd pry one of her new little teeth right out of her head.

**LIL.** The knowledge made me... Well, it made me a little sad to tell you the truth. Because sure I cared for her, I mean, there's no one like her in my life. But could I ever love her the way she loved me? Love her the *amount* she loved me? Well, no. To be honest. No.

**MAMA.** It's not like I keep a *shrine* to her, I mean, I'm not like some women, can't get over the fact that—oh look! It's the book she learned to read with! Look at it!

**LIL.** It took me a long time to catch on; I'm sort of thick that way. And when I finally figured it out, I was astounded, because I realized this woman has been in love with me for decades, I mean, for my entire life, I mean, maybe even ever since I was born.

What happened, see, was I called her—she liked for me to call her. Which I understood. But of course I never called her as much as she would've liked, and I guess that's what kind of started me thinking...well, look, I'll just show you.

So this is what happened: I called her.

(MAMA appears.)

**MAMA.** Hello?

**LIL.** Hey, Mom, it's me!

**MAMA.** (*Very pleased:*) Lil!

**LIL.** Yeah, I just had a spare moment so I thought I'd give you a call.

**MAMA.** Oh. You just had a spare moment?

**LIL.** Yeah.

**MAMA.** Just some leftover time? That's when you call?

**LIL.** Well... I just wanted to say hi...

**MAMA.** I see.

LIL. Why are you getting all upset?

MAMA. Because think of what you said! Think of what it is to tell someone, Oh I just called you because I had a few minutes to kill, that's how important you are to me, which is not that important at all. How is that supposed to make me feel?

LIL. I am totally confused.

MAMA. It's okay, you don't understand, how could you understand?

LIL. I'm going to get off the phone now.

MAMA. You do that. Get back to your life. Your *busy* life.

LIL. Jesus Christ!

MAMA. Don't use that bad language!

LIL. I have to go. (*Almost under her breath:*) And you wonder why I don't call.

MAMA. So don't call! You only call because I ask you to call?

LIL. I'll talk to you later, Mom.

MAMA. Okay. Fine. Bye.

(*They hang up.*)

LIL. Needless to say, I found this entire conversation quite perplexing. I mulled it over for a long time.

During this period, I was in love with... Well, let's just call him Jason for now. As in "Jason, who betrayed Medea, for whom she killed her kids." I'm not saying I'm Medea-ish, but this guy was very... He kinda made you feel a little crazy.

I was, as I said before, always falling in love with people who didn't love me back. Things with Jason were more complicated, because he *did* love me, in his own way. So it was like I *almost* had what I wanted, and that *almost* was really what was killing me.

(*She calls JASON.*)

JASON. Hello?

LIL. (*Trying to sound very bright:*) Hey! You're home!

JASON. Uh... Yeah.

LIL. How long have you been home?

JASON. I dunno... Like an hour?

LIL. Oh.

It's just.

I thought you were going to call me when you got home.

JASON. I just got home, Lil.

LIL. Well, an hour's not quite "just." And I mean, it's not a big deal, but I thought we had plans. And you know, I got so *worried*...

JASON. Jesus Christ, Lil, what are you, like my mom?

(*The conversation comes to a screeching halt. Or maybe the sound of a record player slipping off the groove.*)

LIL. Now, this, *this* was pause for thought.

Was...I...like...a mom?

The next time I saw my mother, I observed her very carefully.

(*Mama's house. The kitchen table.*)

MAMA. Eat, you must be hungry, can I give you something to eat?

LIL. Sure.

MAMA. I made lasagna, your favorite!

LIL. You made lasagna? I only told you I was coming over like 45 minutes ago.

MAMA. It's a very quick recipe. I just had to run out and buy some ricotta but I didn't mind.

LIL. You made this...for me?

MAMA. Of course!

LIL. Is that... Is that my sweatshirt?

MAMA. Oh, I found this in the closet. It's so nice and warm.

LIL. That was my varsity sweatshirt...for tennis...like in high school...

MAMA. It was, wasn't it?

LIL. You wear it now?

MAMA. Sure!

LIL. (*To us:*) And at that moment, I looked down and realized I was wearing one of Jason's shirts, and I looked at myself wearing Jason's shirt and I looked at my mother wearing my sweatshirt and I thought: Holy Shit.

My mom's in love with me.

(*She gets up. The kitchen is gone.*)

LIL. Well.

This was quite a pickle.

I tried to think it through.

Is it okay that my mom is in love with me?

Pros:

She gives me things: love, attention, food, etc.

Cons:

Quite possibly psychologically unhealthy.

A certain lack of respect for borders.

Very likely that it prevents her...from getting on...with her own life.

Because look at her.

*(Lights go up on Mama's house. MAMA watches TV.)*

Look at her, tired, after a long day of work.

Look at her, watching TV alone because my father and she divorced five years ago and he has a new family in Atlanta.

Look at her...waiting...

*(MAMA slowly looks from the TV over to a phone sitting on a table. She stares at the phone. She slowly looks back at the TV.)*

Oh, it just kills me, it KILLS me, I tell you.

So what else is there to do but put her out of her misery? To end this longing, this yearning that can never, will never be filled?

*(Mama's phone rings. MAMA jumps up to get it.)*

**MAMA.** Hello?

**LIL.** Mom, it's me. We need to talk.

*(A restaurant.*

*The two women sit at a table.)*

**MAMA.** So.

**LIL.** So. You look nice.

**MAMA.** You wanted to talk?

**LIL.** Yes.

Mom... I don't know how to tell you this. But. Um. I... I'm—

**MAMA.** You're getting married??

**LIL.** What? NO.

**MAMA.** Oh.

**LIL.** Who would I be getting married to???

**MAMA.** Oh, I don't know... I just thought... You know, sometimes it happens fast.

**LIL.** That's not even—I mean, it's not even like a little, tiny, dot of a glimmer on the horizon.

**MAMA.** Okay, okay.

**LIL.** What I'm trying to say is, I—

**MAMA.** You got a job?

**LIL.** Why would I get a job? I have a job.

**MAMA.** But a real job.

**LIL.** I have a real job.

**MAMA.** I always thought you could go back to school, be a lawyer, you were always so good with words—

**LIL.** Mom. What I want to say is not about me, it's about us. You and me.

**MAMA.** Us? What about us?

**LIL.** It's about our relationship.

**MAMA.** What about our relationship?

**LIL.** Well... I think... I think it would be good if we took a little time off from each other.

**MAMA.** Well, it's not like I see you that much now...

**LIL.** I come by once a week!

**MAMA.** You think that's a lot?

**LIL.** YES, in my book, it IS.

**MAMA.** See, that's always been the problem!

**LIL.** Okay, I'm SELFISH, okay?

**MAMA.** It's not that you're *selfish*, you just don't think!

**LIL.** Mom, I've just—look, we've always been friends, haven't we?

**MAMA.** The best. All of my friends, I tell them, Lil and me, we're best friends, like *that* I tell 'em—

**LIL.** And we always will be—friends. But...the fact is... I'm a grown woman now. And. I need...space. I need...a lot of...space.

**MAMA.** You want a bigger place?

**LIL.** NO. Metaphoric space! Emotional space! Mental space! To be alone, Mom!

**MAMA.** You are alone.

**LIL.** Not *single*. *Alone*. As in, no one around me, *no one*, not even someone who gave birth to me.

**MAMA.** So...let me get this straight... You don't want to see me anymore?

**LIL.** Well, just for a little while... I think it'd be best... Take some time off, you know. For awhile. But then...slowly...eventually...sure. Because I still want us to be friends. I want us always to be friends. But things can't keep going on like this. They just can't, Mom. You're not happy, I'm not happy. I just can't *do* this anymore.

**MAMA.** Friends. Just friends.

**LIL.** I'm sorry. I know it must hurt. But it's for the best. You'll see. You need to see what else is out there. Who else is out there. You deserve so much more. Do you understand?

**MAMA.** *(Coldly.)* Yes, I understand. Don't worry. *(She spits out the words.)* I'll leave you alone. But let me just say this.

*(She stands up and draws herself to her full height.)*

You have no idea, NO IDEA, what you're doing, missy. Not to me, to yourself! If you don't appreciate me, then that's YOUR problem, not mine. Because if you think you're going to be able to find someone else—*anyone* else—who will love you like I love you, then—you're—wrong—you're just—completely—wrong—!

*(She runs out sobbing. LIL is very sad.)*

**LIL.** Well.  
That wasn't so bad.

*(That is: It was horrible.)*

Ironically enough, Jason and I had a very similar conversation not too long after.

*(JASON appears.)*

**JASON.** I know it must hurt. But it's for the best. You'll see. You need to see what else is out there. Who else is out there. You deserve so much more.

**LIL.** And I think... I said something a little like what my mother said to me... Although, I didn't realize it till later. That, you know, I'd used her lines, so to speak.

True to her word, she didn't call.

*(LIL sits. She looks at her unringing phone.)*

She didn't visit.  
And me... Well, I left her alone too.

And it was funny. I missed her. Especially after the whole Jason thing... I really did.

I think she's seeing someone else now.  
I was out at the supermarket the other night and I could've sworn I saw her in the canned goods aisle. She was wearing a polka-dotted minidress—I'm not kidding, a minidress!—and she was putting a can into a basket that this handsome older guy was holding and they were laughing. She looked good. Really good. Better than ever, in fact.

And I was glad to see her like that, I really was.  
Happy. With someone. Who loves her in the way she deserves.  
But I have to admit.

When I walked out of the supermarket and came home... Came home and turned on the TV... I did feel a little sad.  
And just a little bit...jealous.

No one will ever love you like I love you, she said to me.  
And you know what?  
She was right.

*(Lights fade.)*

**End of Play**