

GREEN TEA

a one-act
by

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SYNOPSIS

Lois pays an unannounced visit to her daughter's new apartment. She has a surprise and big plans for Meagan. Meagan has a few revelations of her own, which come as a big shock to Lois. Insults fly, tears flow, insights are gained, and conflicts, if not resolved, at least are aired, over green tea.

CHARACTERS

MEAGAN 21, brainy, tall, beautiful, careless about her appearance.
 PABLO 23, Peruvian, handsome, masculine, slightly overweight, inarticulate.
 LOIS Meagan's mother, 51, petit, skinny, emotional, a bit eccentric

PLACE: Manhattan

TIME: the present, a hot day in July

GREEN TEA

Scene 1

A small one-bedroom, fourth-floor walk-up apartment just off 9th Avenue in Hell's Kitchen. When you enter from the outside hall you are immediately in the living room. Upstage right is a tiny kitchen. The door connecting it to the living room has been taken out to save space. In the back of the kitchen is a door to the bathroom. The only way to the bathroom is through the kitchen. There is a window to an air shaft, which acts like a sound funnel: You can hear the neighbor's phone ring, dogs bark, people argue, etc. Stage left is the bedroom, the biggest and nicest room of the apartment, dominated by a huge bed. One of the two windows, facing north, has a gate with a fire escape behind it.

AT RISE: MEAGAN is lying on the bed reading and making notes. There are no sheets on the bed. Both windows are open and we hear noises from the Ninth Avenue Annual Street Festival which is in progress. It is early Saturday afternoon. The intercom rings. Meagan is very absorbed in her

work and doesn't respond immediately. The ringing persists. She gets up to answer.

MEAGAN

Who is it?

(we hear static from the intercom)

Who is it?

LOIS

(her voice mixed with static)

It's the mamma goat. Let me in, baby goat.

MEAGAN

What? ... Who is it?

LOIS

It's the mamma goat! Let me in! If you want to see my white paw, I guess you'll have to look out the window.

MEAGAN

Mom?

LOIS

For heaven's sakes, it's your mother. Buzz me in! Or I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down.

MEAGAN

Mom, you're supposed to call first.

LOIS

I can't hear you. There is so much noise down here. Just buzz me in.

MEAGAN

It's really not convenient right now.

LOIS

Meagan, I have a present for you and I have fantastic news. Buzz me in.

MEAGAN

I'll come down.

LOIS

No! I need to come up. I need to sit down. Wait till you hear the news! I have to use the bathroom!

MEAGAN presses the buzzer, starts unlocking the

various locks, leans in the doorway, waiting for LOIS. We hear the high-pitched yelping of a small dog through the air shaft. As LOIS passes the second floor another dog starts barking, this one low, full-throated. LOIS appears, carrying a strange looking basket. She is wearing a flowing Indian-looking top and slacks. She is out of breath.

LOIS

My God, I feel like the mother in 'Barefoot in The Park.' I have to sit down.
(she goes straight into the bedroom and sits on the bed)

MEAGAN

What's 'Barefoot In The Park?'

LOIS

Are you kidding?

MEAGAN

What?

LOIS

(gets up)

Come here, let me give you a hug.

(kisses Meagan on both cheeks)

Nibble, nibble on your cheek.

MEAGAN

Mom!

LOIS

(sits back down on the bed)

It's a play by Neil Simon, don't you know anything?

(picking up Meagan's book)

What's this?

MEAGAN

A Tocharian grammar.

LOIS

A what?

MEAGAN

A Tocharian grammar. Tocharian! (teasing her) Don't you know anything? I told you about it. Don't you remember?

LOIS

Where do they speak Tocharian?

MEAGAN

Mom, it's a dead language. The language that was found on those slabs along the silk route. Remember, I talked about it. It's in the Indo-European family. There are very few people who know it. I wouldn't have much competition if I became expert in it. Dad was finally able to find the grammar for me. It only comes in Dutch and German and since I don't know Dutch

LOIS

Great. I'm glad to see you're studying again. This is for you.

(she hands her the basket, beaming)

I picked it up at the street fair just now. It took me half an hour from 59th Street to get through the crowds. Could we close the windows? This Latin music's driving me crazy.

MEAGAN

What is it?

LOIS

It's a basket.

MEAGAN

I can see that. What do I do with it?

LOIS

You put cutlery in it. Since you don't have any drawers in your kitchen Or you can use it for stationery and pencils, and stuff like that.

MEAGAN

Actually, I do need something for that. Thanks, mom. It gets too hot if I shut the windows.

LOIS

Just for a little while, while I tell you the news.

LOIS tries to close the windows, struggles with the gate. MEAGAN helps her.

Why don't you make us some tea? Do you have any green tea? I hear it's very good for you. We can sit here and be cozy, sip our tea, and make plans. I am so excited.

(notices the bed)

Oh, you got a new bed. My God, it's enormous. What is it - queen size? I can never remember if queen or king is bigger. Don't you have any sheets? Do you want me to buy you some sheets?

MEAGAN

Mom, I don't want you to buy me sheets. I have sheets. They're being washed. I don't want you to buy me anything. Just tell me the great news.

LOIS

Well, that's good, you should have a big bed. You can stretch out. A six-foot girl should have a big bed. I still feel guilty for not getting you a bigger bed sooner. You never said boo.

MEAGAN

Mother, forget it. That was ten years ago. Besides, I'm not 6 feet. I'm five eleven. I have Peppermint and Lipton; I don't have green. Which do you want?

She goes to put the kettle on. LOIS follows her out to the kitchen but stops in the living room as there is not enough room for two people in the kitchen.

LOIS

Green is supposed to have all kinds of healing properties. I'll buy you some. Let's have peppermint.

LOIS sits down and looks around the tiny squarish room.

What's all this hifi stuff? You got a new television? Such a big television?

MEAGAN

It's Pablo's.

LOIS

That figures. He would have a huge one. That's all he ever does – watch television.

MEAGAN

Mom, I think you

LOIS

Well, that's all I've ever seen him do when he came over. In your old place too, remember? I never knew anybody rented so many movies.

MEAGAN

Mom, I would really appreciate it if you

LOIS

(interrupts)

You're right. Let's not talk about Pablo.

She has a way of lingering on the "a" sound of Pablo's name that seems to express amused

tolerance.

You know he bugs me. I'm sorry. I brought some goodies to have with the tea.

She goes back to the bedroom and takes cookies, her date book, and a letter out of the big cloth bag she has brought with her.

LOIS (cont.)

Let's have it in here. The living room is too depressing. I like the vibes in this room. You need a shelf for all these books though. I want to buy you a book shelf. You can pick it out. This can be your sanctuary, your study room. One can study in here. The living room is like a vestibule. Your ivy is doing okay. Hi ivy, you like it here? It's really doing well considering it's to the north.

MEAGAN

I must have inherited your green thumb.

MEAGAN places the tea tray atop a pile of books in front of the bed. She sits cross-legged on the floor and takes a cookie.

Pims, your favorites.

LOIS

I thought you liked them too.

MEAGAN

I do. I do. Mother, I'm kidding you. Are you going to tell me or what? I have things to do this afternoon.

LOIS

What on earth is this?

(picks up a long wooden pole)

MEAGAN

It's an Aikido stick. I told you we started Aikido classes. Pablo is really good at it. He passed the fifth and fourth kyu already. Apparently, he has a real talent for it. Mom, will you please sit down and tell me what's on your mind. I have plans for this afternoon. I have things to do.

LOIS

Your dad wants you to come over and stay with him this summer. I am so happy. Can you believe he is sending the plane fare? God knows where he got the money. Maybe one of his cockamamie schemes paid off. I am so thrilled. He says he's met some people who have connections at that museum in Berlin you liked so much. What was the name of it?

The one in Dahlem? You know the one I mean. He thinks you can get a job there for the summer or longer even. Or perhaps you decide to continue your studies over there. It would be so much cheaper. You know the Universities in Germany are practically free. I know - you don't like Germany, but you could study somewhere else in Europe. Anyway, you can always decide about that later. For right now I think it's just so great that you get to spend some time with your father. You haven't seen him in - God, how long is it?

MEAGAN

Yoh! Mother! Slow down! Hi there. I know all that. Dad's written to me too. I'm not going. I have other plans.

LOIS

You haven't heard the best of it. He first wants to spend three weeks on Sylt. Three weeks! Three weeks of heaven! I love that place. You know how I love that place. I am crazy about that place. The only family vacation we ever had together. You were six years old. No, five. Or was it four? Five, I think. Do you remember? I've already talked to my travel agent. Sometimes they have these mother daughter deals, where the child flies for free. If you book early enough

MEAGAN

Mother, I am not a child. I am twenty-one. You're not going to get any mother-daughter deals. Besides, I am not going. Are you listening?

LOIS

Why on earth would you not go? He is paying for the flight. I'm paying the expenses. You see your father. You make professional contacts. You check out the Universities. It's perfect.

MEAGAN

I have a life here.

LOIS

What life? You have a temp job. You live in a crummy little apartment in Hell's kitchen.

MEAGAN

(hurt)

I like my apartment, thank you very much. And I am waiting to hear from the Tibetan Museum in Staten Island about that job. I am happy with my life.

LOIS

That job has been pending for months.

MEAGAN

Mom, they have to get funding for it. If they do, the job is mine.

LOIS

Even if you get it, it's going to pay a pittance. You need to continue your schooling. You have to have at least a masters in your field. You know that. And eventually you have to have a Ph.D. It's essential in your field.

MEAGAN

Mother, it's been less than a year since I graduated. I graduated a year early. Most of my friends are still writing their BA papers. I want to be in life. I don't want to be in school. I've gone to school for at least sixteen years straight. I need time to figure out what to specialize in. I am doing a lot of reading. We've talked about all that. Pablo and I are thinking

LOIS

It's Pablo. That's what it is. I'll never understand in a million years why you had to pick him. He has no profession. He has no education. He has no ambition. Worst of it, he doesn't seem to have any interests period.

MEAGAN

(very hurt)

He does too. For your information, he is extremely intelligent. He's thinking about signing up for more computer graphics classes. And he's gotten me to take up Aikido. You're always harping on me not doing anything physical. He is very good for me. Why are you so mean?

They become aware of the numerous locks of the front door being unlocked. PABLO enters with a huge laundry sack. He is 23, quite tall, but appears shorter because of his stocky build. He has beautiful dark eyes and black hair which he wears in a ponytail. He flips on the TV in the living room with the remote then comes into the bedroom with the intention of emptying the laundry sack onto the bed.

PABLO

Oh. Hi. Hi Lois.

LOIS

Hi Pablo. How nice of you to do Meagan's laundry. It's quite a chore when you have to lug it to the laundromat, I remember. I'm so lucky to have one right on my floor now. This is really considerate of you. You surprise me, Pablo. How are you?

PABLO

(mumbling)

Alright.

LOIS

Have your parents moved back to Peru yet?

PABLO

No.

LOIS

Oh, I thought Meagan told me they were planning to go back last Christmas.

PABLO

They did.

LOIS

Didn't you just say they didn't?

PABLO

No.

LOIS

No, what?

MEAGAN

They planned to move back, but they didn't because their house isn't finished. They just went to visit.

LOIS

Oh. I see.

MEAGAN

Mom stopped by to drop off a present she got for me at the street fair. Do you want to have some tea and cookies with us?

PABLO

I'm really hungry. I thought we go and eat at the fair. - You and me.

(he opens the windows)

Hot in here.

¹Por favor, di a ella que se va, mi amor. Tengo dos películas.

MEAGAN

Mom, why don't we talk another time?

LOIS

I think we should finish this. This is important. I promised to have some dates for the travel agent on Monday. We can sort this out right now. It won't take long.

¹ Please tell her to go, my love. I have two movies.

I'm really hungry.

PABLO

He sits down, hugging a pillow in front of his stomach.

²Di a ella que se va, mi amor.

LOIS

Pablo, would you mind? You can visit some other time. And please, don't talk Spanish when I'm present. It's very rude.

PABLO

(under his breath)

³Coño.

LOIS

Why don't you go on home. You can see Meagan tomorrow. I really need to work this out. Do you mind? Thanks for doing the laundry. That's so sweet of you. Maybe we can all have a bon voyage dinner - my treat.

PABLO

I ... uh I

(he falls silent)

MEAGAN

Mom, he is home.

LOIS

What?

MEAGAN

This is his home.

LOIS

What do you mean?

MEAGAN

Mom, he lives here.

LOIS

What do you mean?

² Tell her to go, love.

³ swear word

MEAGAN

He lives here.

LOIS

He lives here? You mean he lives here? Why didn't you tell me? You didn't even tell me!

MEAGAN

Mom, I should think it's obvious. Besides, you never let me get in a word edgewise. Why don't you go home now. We'll talk later.

LOIS

I am not going home. This is unbelievable! This place is hardly big enough for one person. How can you get any reading done with him here and his goddamn television on every minute?

(to Pablo)

Would you mind turning it off.

(to Meagan)

He isn't even in the room and he has it on. This is just impossible.

MEAGAN

It's none of your business, mother. It's my life! Butt out! I can't deal with this.

(to Pablo)

I'm going out and get some food for us. Mom, I hope you're gone when I get back.

LOIS

(screaming after her)

Great, run out. That'll solve everything.

MEAGAN

(comes back in)

Alright, we'll deal with it. There is nothing to solve. It's very simple. I am not going to Germany this summer. I have other plans. So, nobody needs any tickets. So, there is nothing to discuss.

LOIS

There is plenty to discuss! There is a lot more at stake here than a trip to Germany! Don't you dare run out on me! I am not finished with ...

PABLO

(is playing with the Aikido stick)

Don't you scream at Meagan. You have no right to talk to her like that.

LOIS

She is my daughter. I talk to her any way I like! I'm her mother! Don't you realize she is a brilliant girl?

PABLO

(gesturing with the stick)

I know that. Don't you think I know that? You just get off her back. She is very sensitive. You're upsetting her. You are always upsetting her. Leave her alone. **You** go home.

LOIS

My, my, all of a sudden, he can put more than two words together. You're telling me she is sensitive? I don't know she is sensitive? I'm her mother. She is all I care about. I want her to be happy. I want her to fulfill her potential. She needs to get on with her education. You are not helping matters. You are a dead weight around her neck.

PABLO

How do you know what she needs? I am here for her. I am here when she needs me.

LOIS

And I am not? She has always been my first priority. We limited ourselves to one child so she could have the best. We didn't have a dime, but we made sure she went to the best schools in the world - literally! She came first - always. Unlike your parents, who don't seem to give a damn about your future. They don't even care whether you go to college or not. They're too busy buying boats and flying to Peru every other minute. Will you put that stick down. Are you threatening me?

MEAGAN

Of course, he isn't threatening you. Don't be ridiculous. Can we all calm down.

PABLO

(very upset)

She comes to me when she has problems. When she didn't want to go on with college - did she tell you about that? No, because she can't talk to you, because you never listen. Because every time she talks to you all she gets is to hear **your** problems.

LOIS

So I'm not perfect. I am human.

PABLO

I had to get her a secondhand computer so she could get her paper done.

LOIS

She never opened her mouth. Anything she ever asked for, if it was humanly possible, I got it for her.

PABLO

She doesn't ask you. She doesn't want to ask you. She doesn't want you.

MEAGAN

Stop talking about me. I am right here.

LOIS

And what do you want? Nothing, I suppose! You're only thinking of Meagan, I suppose. Playing house! Oh, I can just imagine! You want Meagan to play wifey up in Spanish Harlem with umpteen children like the rest of your relatives?

PABLO

I don't have to listen to this.

He slams the stick in a corner and goes to the door, calling back to Meagan.

⁴You tell her. Di le tu, coño.

(he exits)

LOIS

(after a silence)

Tell me what?

MEAGAN

Nothing.

LOIS

It can't be nothing.

MEAGAN

I can't believe the things you said to him.

She takes the tea things to the kitchen, comes back into the bedroom, empties the laundry out and starts putting a sheet on the bed.

I want you to leave. Now. Go home, mother.

LOIS

He'll get over it.

She tries to help with the fitted sheet, MEAGAN yanks it away.

MEAGAN

He has feelings like everybody else. He is very smart. So he isn't articulate. So he isn't good with words. Who needs them?

⁴ Tell her yourself, dammit

LOIS

And that from a girl who speaks four languages and is learning ... what? ...Tocharian?

MEAGAN

Language was meant as a tool for communication. There is a listening part to it, you know. You never shut up. If you listened once in a while, perhaps you and dad would still be married and you wouldn't be messing around in my life.

LOIS

This is not about me.

MEAGAN

It's always about you. With you as an example I'm lucky I have any relationship at all.

LOIS

I'm talking about Pablo. Why doesn't he go to college? How can he ever get a decent job without a college education?

MEAGAN

It's his life. It's none of your business. It's none of my business. School was a very bad experience for him. I think he is dyslexic. He got suspended once for hitting a nun,
(this makes her laugh)
 so he isn't anxious to get back into a school environment.

LOIS

I just want you to be happy. I don't want you to miss all your chances like I did.

MEAGAN

So you wanted to be a set designer, big deal. What a loss to the world. Pablo is my boyfriend. How can you insult him like this? You always put him down? I think he is pretty wonderful. I never said I wanted to marry him. We're living together, he makes me happy. He is good for me. He doesn't want to get married either. I don't ever expect a man to support me. Maybe we will get married.

LOIS

Maybe you expect too little. If you were crazy in love with him. But I never get that feeling. It always seemed to me that he chose you, and you just got used to him. He should make your heart sing. The world should light up when he walks into the room. It doesn't, does it?

MEAGAN

(quietly after a short silence)

No, but I miss him when he walks out of the room.

LOIS looks at her surprised, seems to take her in fully for the first time.

MEAGAN

What would make me happy right now is you leaving me alone. I want you to go, and I want Pablo to come back.

LOIS

Alright, I'll leave.

(gathers her things together)

Perhaps what you need is a summer apart to gain perspective. Relax, be out of the city, take it easy. A summer apart might clarify things.

(she is gaining momentum)

There is no better place to think than Sylt, that wonderful island. It might be the perfect solution. You've been working hard in this horrible job. We spent our honeymoon there. I could take my paints. Perhaps I'll finish your portrait finally. The agency owes me vacation time. We only have to work out the dates with dad. I could fax him from work on Monday.

MEAGAN

Who says you're invited?

LOIS

What do you mean?

MEAGAN

Who says you're invited? Does your letter say you're invited? Mine doesn't. Mine doesn't mention you at all.

(LOIS is stunned)

LOIS

You don't want me to come? I wasn't planning on staying with you and dad. You two stay at the inn, I'll find a little bed-and-breakfast. I have no illusions about dad and me, believe me. You can have all the time in the world alone with him. I have been working hard, I deserve a vacation. You don't want me to come? You know how I love that place and you don't want me to come?

MEAGAN

(is crying quietly)

It's not about you, mother. It's about me. Me! Can you understand that? Can you get that through your brain?

LOIS

Are you crying? Oh my God, now what did I do? I am so sorry. I didn't mean it. What did I do? What do you want me to do? Do you want me to run down and get some food? I wonder if Pablo is coming back. I mean, of course he is coming back.

MEAGAN

(blowing her nose, composing herself)

He is probably waiting for you to leave. I wouldn't blame him if he never said another word to you.

She puts a handwoven Peruvian cover on the bed.

LOIS

This is gorgeous. Where did you get it?

MEAGAN

Pablo's grandmother gave it to us when she came over for dinner last week.

LOIS

You're having his grandmother over for dinner?

MEAGAN

She is a sweet woman. And she likes me very much.

LOIS

Why wouldn't she?

MEAGAN

She has seven grandchildren already and she is only a few years older than you.

MEAGAN sits on the finished bed, tracing the pattern of the cover with her hand.

Tell me something, mother, tell me, would it really be so terrible if I got married and had a family? I'm not saying that that's what we're planning to do. In fact, we're definitely not planning to do that. But would it be so terrible? I mean, there are things beyond academia and getting degrees, and careers, and perhaps they're more important. Isn't life more important?

LOIS

Getting married now? And to Pablo? It would ruin your life. Totally. I can't believe you would even voice a thing like that. Tell me you're joking.

MEAGAN

Well, then the joke's on me, because it just may be that I am pregnant!

LOIS

No! No, no, no! You can't be!

MEAGAN

I probably am.

LOIS

That son-of-a-bitch, that no good son-of-a-bitch! I'm going to kill him. I knew it! That stupid son-of-a-bitch! I bet he did it on purpose!

MEAGAN runs into the bathroom, locks the door.
LOIS tries to open it.

Meagan? Please come out.

MEAGAN

Go away, just go!

LOIS

Come on out honey. Meagan, please, I'm sorry. You gave me a shock, what do you expect? Please talk to me. Please come out. I'm sorry. Please Meagan.

MEAGAN

Leave! And don't ever come here again uninvited!

LOIS

I'm not going to leave while you're in there. Please forgive me. Please, sweetheart.

(the phone rings in the bedroom)

Meagan, the phone, the phone is ringing. Don't you want to answer it?

(LOIS picks it up)

Hello? Yes, I'm still here! She can't talk just now..... alright, alright, just a minute.

Meagan, it's Pablo, he wants to talk to you. Please Meagan.

She can't talk just now. Look, she's locked herself in the bathroom. She won't come out. Yes, of course it's my fault. She sure did. So am I, so am I, believe me. You ever heard of birth control? Alright, calm down. I would like you to come back up here right now. Please I apologize for that. I said, I apologize I am asking for your help. Thank you!

LOIS sits on the floor, leaning with her back against the bathroom door. In a soft voice.

Meagan, you are my one-and-only, my baby, my everything. I love you. Please come out. We'll work it out. We'll look at all the options. We'll talk it all out. You talk, I listen. I will listen, I promise. I will learn to listen if it's the last thing I do. Please come out and let me give you a hug. Hugs instead of talk. I love you. If you don't come out this minute, I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down.

The door opens slowly, MEAGAN emerges red-eyed. She sits down on the floor next to LOIS, who puts her arm around her. They sit silently as we hear the locks of the front door being opened and PABLO enters, carrying bags of food.

PABLO

(stands there looking at them for a moment)

I got mostly Indian. We all like Indian.

He puts the food on the steamer trunk, which serves as a coffee table and goes to fill the kettle with water. LOIS and MEAGAN follow him with their eyes, they haven't moved.

We'll have green tea with it. This guy says it's very soothing.

(LOIS and MEAGAN look at each other and smile)

CURTAIN