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Product Code A0860.6

Statistically Speaking

by Craig Kenworthy

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

RORY; *a mildly developmentally challenged 17 year old*

JULIE; *his medical doctor, about 50-60*

PAM; *Rory's mother, about 40*

SETTING

A run-down apartment

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(AT RISE: the clean living room of a run-down apartment; RORY standing next to the couch, JULIE seated at a chair to the left.)

Rory

What kind of doctor did you say you were?

Julie

OB/GYN. Obstetrician/Gynecologist.

Rory

Are you treating my mom, Dr. Maxwell? Wait. If you were treating her, you couldn't tell me, right?

Julie

No, I am not treating her and you're almost an adult, Rory. You can call me Julie.

Rory

What do they call that? Patient confiden... confiden...

Julie

Confidentiality.

Rory

(With vigor) You should have waited for me, Julie.

Julie

(With a tinge of defensiveness) I didn't think there was time. I did the best I could. It was happening so fast...

Rory

Say the word with me.

Julie

Sorry. I'm so sorry.

Rory

Confidentiality.

Rory

Why did you just apologize? I was talking about how I could have gotten the word right. My mom knows to wait. So, how many babies have you delivered this week?

Julie

None. I've stopped doing that. I need to tell you something about that.

(PAM enters. SHE is overloaded with bags from a discount grocery store. JULIE stands up.)

Pam

(Beat, then recognition) What the hell? Rory, take this stuff and put it away for me, sweetie.

Rory

She's a doctor, Mom. An OB/GYM.

Pam

I know who she is. Now, take these bags. Go. Now.

(RORYR exits with all but one bag. PAM crosses to JULIE.)

Pam

Why are you here, doctor? *(Last with emphasis)*

Julie

I want to talk to him, tell him I'm sorry. About what happened.

Pam

Just go. I'll tell him you used to be my doctor and... you were in the neighborhood and dropped by to say hello, but got called away.

Julie

I am sorry for what happened. I am.

Pam

You didn't say that 17 years ago. A small check from the insurance company and a lot of forms to sign away our rights isn't, "I'm sorry."

Julie

That's the way they did things then. We were never supposed to admit anything. The lawyers...

(RORY enters unseen and is about to speak.)

Pam

You didn't have to... The lawyers didn't have to...

Rory

Mom?

Pam

Yes, honey?

Rory

You got the wrong kind of peanut butter again. I only use chunky. You got creamy.

Pam

They didn't have any chunky. I'll mix some nuts in for you.

Rory
Okay. (*Waits*)

Pam
I didn't mean right now.

Julie
Rory, can you come sit down with us?

Pam
I thought you had to answer a call. And he's got chores. Go check on the cat's water.

(RORY exits.)

Julie
He doesn't know what happened during the delivery, does he?

Pam
He just thinks he got the worst of his dad's side. They were never that bright. Please, just go.

(JULIE picks up the grocery bag and looks inside. SHE takes out a cheap brand of cereal and a melon.)

Julie
He's still in high school? Just a year behind?

Pam
(Takes the bag) How do you know that?

Julie
I just want him to know there is a reason. So he knows it's not his fault. That it's my fault.

Pam
He doesn't need to know that he's got a disadvantage. One you gave him. He's doing pretty well. And not in some stupid-savant kind of way, where he's only good at one thing. Except maybe miniature golf. He's uncanny at that.

(JULIE sets down the cereal bag and holds the melon in one hand and holds the other out in front of it.)

Julie
We used these once. In training. Ripe ones. We had to use the forceps to pull them out of a too small paper bag. Without cracking the melon.

Pam
Be careful. The food bank rarely gets those and it's the only fresh fruit he'll eat.

Julie
We could tear the bag if we had to. Guess they thought that was a good...

(JULIE'S hand trembles and SHE almost drops the melon. PAM grabs it.)

Pam

I really don't care about your obviously inadequate training. Or did you want to tell me that you delivered three thousand other kids without an incident?

Julie

Would that make it better or worse?

Pam

I wanted to make it part of the settlement agreement. That you could never deliver another baby. My lawyer said it would mean a lot less money, even if we could get it and he doubted we could.

Julie

Don't you think he should know?

Pam

Would that make it better or worse? That's my decision.

Julie

You reuse the grocery bags, so he doesn't know about the food bank, don't you?

Pam

They usually hold some chunky peanut butter for me. Why now? *(Sets down melon)*

Julie

I'm in the early stages of a neurological disorder; one that will take some time to kill me.

Pam

Good. Then come see me when he's 25. We'll talk then. Right now, I don't need him having a ready-made excuse for his English grade.

Julie

Statistically speaking, it will take awhile to kill me, but I won't be talking by the time he's twenty-two. *(Picks up melon again)*

Pam

Statistically? You want to know about odds? I can tell you the betting line put out by schools, therapists— Put down the goddamn melon. *(Starts to break down)*

Julie

We don't have these kinds of injuries now, with the equipment we have. When it happened, it was... it was a mistake. Using the forceps was a mistake.

Pam

A mistake is backing over a trash can. A mistake is sugar instead of salt. Do you even remember what his head looked like when finally you got him out? To look at your own baby and hope that's he's just really ugly. Because his head can't look that way. It just can't.

(JULIE steps towards PAM and touches her shoulder.)

Julie

I'm sure it's been...

(PAM backhands JULIE who staggers slightly. RORY enters with a knife and plates and rushes to JULIE.)

Rory

(To PAM) Why are you always so angry at people?

Julie

It's my fault, Rory. I... it's my fault. *(Beat)* That doesn't mean it's okay to hit people. You know that, right?

Rory

Of course. Geez.

(RORY sets down the plates and knife.)

Pam

I'm sorry. No, I don't know if I am. Yes, I am sorry. Let's sit down.

Rory

Is Julie staying for dinner? She could help me make the lasagna.

Pam

He's taking a culinary arts class at community college. And he knows how to sew.

Rory

I'm not planning on going from table to table to offer alterations while people wait for their food, Mom. Would you like some water, Julie?

Julie

Yes, please. I bet that costs a lot. Tuition and all.
(RORY exits once again. PAM and JULIE sit.)

Pam

We can manage.

Julie

I could wait until he is walking home from school, you know. Just stop him on the street and tell him.

Pam

So you can really destroy his life this time? Tell me you lived with this all this time. That even on some beach in the Bahamas, it never left you.

Julie

Not all the time, but enough of it. Enough of it to be able to...

(RORY returns with a glass of water and gives it to JULIE. HE sits next to his mother.)

Julie

(Hands melon to PAM) I delivered you, Rory. I was the doctor who delivered you.

Rory

I knew it. I've heard about things like this.

Pam

No, honey. It's not...

Rory

Where is he?

Julie

Who?

Rory

My twin. The one you stole to raise as your own.

Julie

No, sweetie. Not that your twin wouldn't be nice to have raised.

Rory

Was I switched at birth? Is that why we never go to the hospital?

Julie

You have quite the imagination.

Pam

He likes to read my romance novels. He's kind of fixated on them. *(Low)* I blame you for that.

Julie

(Low) Responsibility accepted.

Rory

Do you want any of this? I brought three plates. *(Beat)* I could hear you yelling, Mom. My mom yells at my teachers sometimes. Tells them they are the ones not trying hard enough.

Julie

I need to tell you something, Rory. When you were born, things were not going right. I was delivering you and you got stuck.

Pam

(Rising) You don't have to listen to this, Rory. She doesn't have the right to make you listen to this. I don't want you to listen to this, understand?

Rory

Should I go to my room now, Mom? I have math homework. Or are you going to tell me to go water the cat again?

Pam

(Beat) No. No, I'm not.

Rory

So, you mean if I ask her to stop, she will?

Pam

Will she? Will you, doctor?

Julie

Yes. And I won't come back. Unless I forget I already came here once. There is some risk of that.

(PAM exits. RORY begins slicing melon and putting it on plates.)

Julie, Continued

We were worried that you weren't breathing right. Your mom never wanted you to know this. But we should wait for her.

(PAM returns with a jar of peanut butter, a spoon and a bag of peanuts in shells. SHE begins breaking them open and mixing them into peanut butter.)

Julie, Continued

I think... I think you'll understand why she didn't want you to know in a moment.

Rory

My mom never lies to me. We agreed. Not even about Dad.

Julie

Sometimes people don't tell other people everything. Because it's too hard.

Pam

Or because it's the right thing to do.

(PAM spreads peanut butter on RORY's melon slice, never looking at JULIE.)

Julie

So, I was hurrying to get you out, Rory. I was trying so hard to get you out, but I couldn't. No matter how hard I tried. So, we... I had to make a decision. (*Looking at PAM*) A tough decision.

(*PAM hands RORY his melon slice.*)

Rory

Was my twin already out? (*Pause*) I'm just messing with you, Julie.

(*PAMP resumes breaking open the peanut shells and mixing in the peanuts.*)

Julie

So, your mother... your mother told me to save you even if she had to sacrifice her life for yours.

(*PAM looks up at her.*)

Julie, Continued

Because she'd do anything for you. Even give up her life, Rory.

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