

PEACH TEA

Written by

Susanna Cole

Susanna@SusannaCole.com

213-274-1256

CHARACTERS

STACEY LASSEN is in her mid thirties. A woman who's had the spark beaten out of her from a lifetime of disappointment and bitterness. She hasn't stepped foot in her hometown or spoken to her father in over a decade.

TOM LASSEN, late sixties, is Stacey's father. A sweet man, a good husband, and a father who did his best. Cancer causes him to move slowly and with great pain.

REBECCA, late thirties, is Stacey's firecracker cousin. Blunt and unapologetic, with a lot of love for her family.

Rebecca's homey living room/kitchen.

TOM sits at the table, nervously organizing shortbread cookies on a plate.

REBECCA sits across from him, sipping beer.

TOM

We should have some sort of signal.

REBECCA

Signal?

TOM

So I know when to come out.

REBECCA

Couldn't you just ...come out?

TOM

I don't wanna shock her.

REBECCA

I think she'll be shocked, regardless.

TOM

Why don't you just say, "I have a surprise for you"?

REBECCA

Sure.

Tom rearranges the shortbread into a new pattern. Rebecca watches.

REBECCA

Whatever you're worried about, it's not gonna be that bad.

TOM

Maybe not for you. No one hates their cousin.

REBECCA

She doesn't hate you.

TOM

I'm old, not stupid.

The DOORBELL RINGS.

TOM

Wait. I need a minute. *(He furiously rearranges the shortbread.)*

REBECCA

The cookies are fine.

TOM

We haven't set out the peach tea. *(He struggles up.)*

REBECCA

Tom. *(She helps him stand.)* It'll be fine. Just go wait in another room while I get her settled.

TOM

Don't forget the signal.

REBECCA

I promise, I won't.

He exits as the DOORBELL RINGS.

REBECCA

I'm coming, I'm coming.

Rebecca opens the door. STACEY bursts in with a suitcase and grocery bag.

STACEY

(Leaping on Rebecca.) Oh my god, it's good to see you.

REBECCA

It's been too long. *(Squeezing Stacey.)* You dyed your hair.

STACEY

You stopped washing yours.

REBECCA

Fuck you. *(Grinning.)* Drink? ...shortbread?

Stacey sets the grocery bag on the table. She clocks the cookies with a frown.

STACEY

Anything alcoholic. I stopped on the way and picked up a chicken. *(She pulls a steaming rotisserie chicken from the bag.)* Closest thing they had to a casserole.

REBECCA

(Handing her a beer.) Casserole?

STACEY

You know, funeral food. *(She rips off a drumstick and bites into it.)*

REBECCA

Right...

STACEY

I hope you don't mind, I haven't had food since breakfast yesterday and a coffee in Atlanta that tasted like piss.

REBECCA

Go for it.

STACEY

Thought we could eat it and commiserate together. Cheers. *(She drinks.)*

REBECCA

... About that.

A MUFFLED CRASH sounds from somewhere in the house.

REBECCA

Shit.

STACEY

You hiding a secret boyfriend I wasn't supposed to know about or something?

REBECCA

Not exactly. Uh, I have a surprise for you.

Tom hobbles in. SILENCE.

TOM

Hey there, kiddo...

STACEY

What the hell?

REBECCA

Stacey --

STACEY

(To Tom.) Your funeral is Saturday.

TOM

I know. I can explain.

STACEY

I took two unpaid days off and booked a last-minute red-eye for this.

REBECCA

Stace, I know you're pissed, but he has a good reason for --

STACEY

(With boiling rage.) Pissed? This is a fucking ambush. You had no right.

TOM

Look, I'm sorry.

REBECCA

No, don't apologize. This was my idea, and I'm not apologizing.

STACEY

(To Tom.) What part of "I don't ever want to see you again" didn't you understand? I'm only here because I was told you were dead.

REBECCA

That's enough! *(SILENCE.)* Stacey, sit down.

Stacey obeys.

REBECCA

Tom, could you give us a minute?

STACEY

I don't want --

REBECCA

Can it. Tom?

Tom nods and exits.

REBECCA

Want another beer ...or something stronger?

STACEY

You told me he was dead.

REBECCA

Sorry, I didn't know how else to get you here.

STACEY

I stopped coming for a reason.

REBECCA

I get that you don't like your dad --

STACEY

That's an understatement.

REBECCA

Will you just give him a chance? I think you'll be glad you did.

STACEY

I don't wanna talk to him, Becks.

REBECCA

I know, but I'm asking you to anyway. Please. Five minutes?

STACEY

(Beat.) Five minutes. But only because I've missed you and I'm too tired to go find a hotel.

REBECCA

Thank you.

Rebecca exits.

Stacey goes to the counter and pours herself a shot of gin. She downs it and pours another.

Tom enters. He stands awkwardly by the door and watches Stacey.

TOM

There's some peach tea in the fridge for you.

STACEY

I'm not twelve anymore.

TOM

Right. *(He moves to a couch with visible difficulty and sits.)*

STACEY

You injured?

TOM

Kind of.

STACEY

What does that mean?

TOM

That really what you want to ask me about?

STACEY

I guess not. *(She pulls tonic and a lime from the fridge.)* So...?

TOM

I don't know how to start this.

STACEY

What, not going with the standard "It wasn't my fault" schtick?

TOM

If I told you it was, would you forgive me?

STACEY

No. *(She pulls a knife and cutting board from a drawer and goes to work on the lime.)*

TOM

I don't know what to say.

STACEY

Maybe start with why you had Becks lie to get me here.

TOM

Just needed to talk to you.

STACEY

But what if I don't want to talk to you? Shouldn't that count for something.

TOM

I know. It does.

STACEY

You know what I felt when she told me you'd passed? Nothing. Not a damn thing.

SILENCE.

STACEY

You know what, no. I'm not doing this. *(She gathers her suitcase and heads for the door.)*

TOM

I miss her too, yah know.

Stacey freezes.

TOM

She made the best apricot crumble -- whole house used to smell of it. She loved being your mom.

STACEY

Stop. You don't get to talk about her.

TOM

I think about her all the time.

STACEY

Then you shouldn't have killed her.

SILENCE.

TOM

You still believe that?

STACEY

I watched it.

TOM

She killed herself, Stacey.

STACEY

You told her to go, practically handed her the keys.

TOM

Stace --

STACEY

You stood in the driveway and watched her car take off after she told you she was going to kill... You knew what was going to happen, and you didn't stop it.

TOM

I did everything I knew to do.

STACEY

You gave up!

TOM

I know! *(Beat.)* It'd been months... almost a full year of her telling me every single day that she was going to do it. We'd tried everything: meds, counseling, I even called the police a couple times... I was exhausted -- exhausted and afraid that some day when I was at work or running an errand she'd do it with you there to see it. Or you'd be the one to find her. *(Beat.)* I realized that one way or another, she was going to do what she wanted to do. So, I let her go. And I hoped, god I hoped, she would come back to us.

Stacey stares at Tom. A long silence.

STACEY

Months?

TOM

Months.

STACEY

I didn't know.

TOM

I regret it... so much. I'm sorry that I...

Stacey lets go of the suitcase and sits beside him.

STACEY

I lied earlier, when I said I felt nothing about you... When Becks called, I was angry with myself, for wasting so much time.

TOM

(A pained laugh.) That's a relief.

STACEY

(Beat.) You're sick, aren't you?

TOM

What makes you say that?

Dad. STACEY

...Yeah. I'm sick. TOM

How bad? STACEY

The funeral thing wasn't a complete lie. Cancer. TOM

Where? STACEY

Pretty much everywhere. TOM

...Shit. STACEY

TOM
(Without self pity.) I'm sorry I had Becks lie to get you here. I didn't want to waste more time. I've got weeks. Maybe days.

STACEY
(Beat.) What would you like to do? Skydiving?

TOM
That gin and tonic you were making earlier looked pretty nice. Maybe a couple of those and we just talk? *(He brushes away a strand of her hair.)* I'd like to get to know my daughter: the Grown Up, if you're open.

STACEY
How about some peach tea? I hear there's some in the fridge.

TOM
Sounds good. *(Beat.)* Maybe add some gin.

Stacey laughs.

FADE TO BLACK.