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EXCERPT FROM KNOCKING LOUDER

By Tara Meddaugh

At rise: LILAH, a girl in her late teens, stands by a doorway, or an impression of one. She speaks to a girl on the other side of the doorway, but one we never see.

LILAH

He's not here.

(Pause.)

I'm sorry. Zippy's not home.

BLACK OUT

LIGHTS ON

(LILAH is sitting with her family. She is eating a tv dinner on her lap. Her mother, RITA, an oddly elegant woman, is sewing on a sheet. Lilah's sister, CAROL, in her early twenties, is putting together a small wooden model of a tanker.)

LILAH

She came by again.

(A piece of Carol's model snaps.)

CAROL

(to her model)

Shoot!

RITA

What a persistent girl!

LILAH

What should I tell her next time?

RITA

Tell her, she's a persistent girl, but . . . she wears too much make up. Tell her that.

LILAH

I don't think she wears any makeup.

RITA

Too much eye shadow then. She looks like a hussie—all done up like that.

CAROL

I need some stronger glue, Mother.

RITA

Why don't you use my needle, Carol? Thread holds stronger than glue.

CAROL

Hm...

(she takes the needle and thread)

RITA

Now what am I to do while Carol sews her model tanker?

LILAH

I was wondering if maybe we could let her in next time.

RITA

Pass me that glue, Carol.

LILAH

What do you think, Mom?

(RITA puts the glue on her sewing.)

RITA

What?

LILAH

The girl. I thought it might be nice if we let her in.

RITA

Maybe you should ask your sister, dear.

LILAH

I don't want to ask her.

RITA

Why not? It is more her territory after all.

CAROL

She doesn't like me anymore.

LILAH

Carol—

CAROL

She's jealous I have him. And she knows I won't let that girl in.

LILAH

I'm not jealous!

RITA

In any case, I suppose I'll think about it, Lilah.

LILAH

Can I tell her that?

RITA

You can tell her about the make-up and that's all.

LILAH

But—

CAROL

She's turning into a rather argumentative girl. Don't you think, Mother?

RITA

Well, she hasn't gotten to her dessert yet. Eat your dessert, Lilah.

LILAH

I'm not hungry.

CAROL

Well, try harder.

RITA

Don't blame her, Carol. You don't know what it was like to be held back in the first-grade.

(Doorbell rings.)

LILAH

I'll get it!

(LILAH grabs Rita's sewing sheet and turns to leave)

BLACK OUT

LIGHTS ON

(LILAH opens the door and stands by the doorway again.)

LILAH

Stop wearing so much eye shadow. My mom thinks you look like a loose girl.

(holds out the large sheet Rita was sewing)

Here. Wear this instead. It's all I have, but it ought to cover you better and you'll look more modest. It's a little sticky, I know, but then it won't fall off.

BLACK OUT

LIGHTS ON

(LILAH is looking at a book. CAROL is playing with her tanker, which is basically a few pieces of wood with thread spun around them. RITA enters with a small toy missile and a few other toys.)

RITA

He was choking again. On this toy missile.

LILAH

Those toys are too old for him.

(she picks one up)

The label says not for children under three.

CAROL

What does that matter? He's probably older than three anyway.

LILAH

He's not. He's a little baby. We just got him.

CAROL

I just got him. When I finish painting it, I'm going to give him this tanker.

RITA

What a born mother you are!

CAROL

Maybe he'll grow up to be one of the men who paints the camouflage on army tankers!

RITA

One must always have dreams for the children of today.

LILAH

I think the paint might be bad for a baby.

CAROL

Nothing done in love can be bad for a baby, Lilah. You can't understand because you've never loved a baby.

LILAH

Well, you can love until your head falls off, but one of these times, I'm going to let her in.

CAROL

No one will ever let her enter this house!

LILAH

(pointing to a baby toy)

That one is hers—she brought that one. See?

(picks up a stuffed animal)

It's a baby toy. A stuffed polar bear. No small parts to choke on. That's the difference. She has a right to see her stuffed animal.

(Doorbell rings.)

CAROL

Polar bears are dangerous.

(LILAH turns to leave.)

BLACK OUT

LIGHTS ON

(LILAH stands by the doorway.)

LILAH

I see you took the eye shadow off. Good...But...I was hoping you'd wear the sheet like you were a nun.

(pause)

It's okay, I mean, it's not your fault. It's just—they'll think you're from the desert now. They'll never let you see him like that...Come back and look American next time—wear jeans or something, and I promise you, Zippy will be home.

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