The Challenge

a short play in two homes

By Yilong Liu
WHO:
A father and a daughter.
The daughter is in college.
He is a single parent.
She is a Tik Toker.

WHERE:
In their separate homes.

WHEN:
Now.

WHAT:
A dad finds her daughter's Tik Tok and...

HOW:
This play can be read together.
This play can also be read in two homes.
In that case I imagine it being done via an actual phone call.
Invite as many callers as you want to "eavesdrop."
On the phone.

We hear a man and a younger woman talking.

WOMAN
What am I wearing?

MAN
Yes, sugar.

WOMAN
Um. Pajamas?

MAN
What kind?

WOMAN
The kind that one wears at home?

MAN
I know what pajamas are.
I’m asking what yours look like.
Describe them to me.
What color are they?

WOMAN
Grey?

MAN
What kind of grey?

WOMAN

MAN
Silver.
Silver then.

Shiny.

WOMAN
Yeah, I guess.
And the fabric?

SILK?

Yeah?

Yeah...

Like the see-through kind?

... Huh?

With little laces on the sleeves?
Kinda cute, but really just more...
Sexy?

What the --
How did you --
Where did you see that?!

Is *that* what you are wearing?

Are you stalking me online??

Well you said I wasn’t interested in your life --

I meant what kind of shows I like to watch...
What type of music I listen to...
Not --
Ugh, you totally invaded my privacy!

I don’t think you want any privacy when you posted a Tik Tok like that.
DAD

What are you doing?
Changing?
You do realize I can’t actually see you, right?
We’re on the phone, sugar, not FaceTime.

DAUGHTER

Stop calling me that.
God, I’m in college!
And everyone’s doing it -- it’s just a new challenge.

DAD

Sure.
Yeah.
“Drop The Towel Challenge.”
Walk out in front of the boyfriends, naked, while they are busy playing video games --

DAUGHTER

And record their reaction.
The look on their faces.
It’s a prank.
It’s epic.
Millions of people are watching it.

DAD

Trust me honey, I don’t think it’s the dudes that people are watching.

DAUGHTER

It’s supposed to be funny.
And you are just
You are totally making it...

DAD

What?

Creepy!

DAD

I am creepy?!
DAUGHTER
Yes.

DAD
For what?
Being a father?
Wanting to protect my daughter?

DAUGHTER
Now you are being creepy and paranoid.

DAD
And since when did you have a “boyfriend?”

Ugh.

DAUGHTER
Who is this guy?

DAD
Stop --

DAUGHTER
Seriously, who is he?

DAD
No. Nope. No.
I’m not having this conversation with you.
I’m not doing this with you just because all of a sudden you want to play a caring dad.

DAD
Play?!

DAUGHTER
I’m still talking!
You can’t just pick up the phone and demand me to... share.
It doesn’t work like that.
Like I said, ask me what shows I’ve been binging.
Ask me why.
Then watch an episode or two.
Talk to me about it.
Do this a couple of times.
Then maybe, maybe, I will want to talk about the boys I’ve been seeing.
DAD

Boys? Plural?

DAUGHTER

Dad, I don’t owe you an answer just because you are... freaking out or whatever this is

DAD

I just
I really
...
just because I don’t know how to talk to you doesn’t mean I don’t care
I just want to know what’s going on with you.

*A silence.*

DAUGHTER

It’s not like you tell me everything.

DAD

What do you mean?

*Another silence.*

DAUGHTER

So I called you.
A couple of weeks ago.
Was up all night studying for finals.
And just wanted to... talk to you.
Some woman picked up.

*Beat.*

DAD

She didn’t tell me you called.

DAUGHTER

I hung up.

DAD

Oh...
Well.
Look --
DAUGHTER

It’s fine.
I’m actually happy for you.
Really.

DAD

Didn’t mean to hide anything from you, you know.

DAUGHTER

You don’t have to explain.
It’s about time that you --
that we move on.

A silence.

DAD

This would’ve been such an easier conversation to have with her, right?
Clothes.
Boys.
Shows.
College.
Life.
...

DAUGHTER

Yeah...
I...
I don’t know.
Sometimes, I kinda like having to
figure things out by myself
And I like that you are not part of it but want to be part of it
Like I don’t want you to know everything
but I want you to want to know everything
I don’t want you to freak out but I also...
like the fact that you freaked out?
Does that make sense?

DAD

... I guess?
...
...
...
Okay
Yeah, it does.
There you go.
So
I guess I’m saying
Thanks for freaking out?
I appreciate that.

DAD
So, still not telling me who that boy is, huh?

DAUGHTER
Dad.

DAD
Just kidding.
...
It *is* funny.

DAUGHTER
What?

DAD
The video.
All the Tik Toks, about the,
um, challenge

DAUGHTER
Right?!

DAD
It’s addicting.
Once you clicked one you just
couldn’t stop watching
and before you knew it
hours had passed

DAUGHTER
Exactly!
Wait.
Did you follow me?
Did you make any?

DAD
Nooooo I just watch.
DAUGHTER
You don’t just watch Tik Tok.
You *make* Tik Tok.
Come on.
You have to do it.

DAD
What? I don’t even know how to --

DAUGHTER
I’ll teach ya.

DAD
Yeah?

DAUGHTER
Yeah!
Omg you need to do this Blinding Lights Challenge.
It’s gonna be legit.

DAD
The what now?

DAUGHTER
It’s a dance challenge.
Just some dance moves to the song.
It’s super simple.

DAD
Easy for you to say, you don’t have thirty years of arthritis on you...

DAUGHTER
We’ll go slow.
Promise.
Come on.
What do you say?

*Beat.*

DAD
Yeah.
Sure.
Let’s do it.
DAUGHTER

Yay.
Omg omg this is awesome.
Now go change into something you can move around in.
I’m gonna hang up, okay?
Call you back on FaceTime in a few?
Let’s do this!!
Byeeeee.

She hangs up.

DAD

Yeah.
Let’s do this.
Let’s do this new... challenge.

End of Play.