

ARTIFACT

by
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an excerpt

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CHARACTERS

NAOMI 31, Korean-American female. Straight-laced research scientist.

MR. PARK 63, Korean-American male with a broken hip and a drinking problem. Naomi's father.

MINA Naomi's little sister - three years younger than Naomi. Plays various ages.

DEE 28. African-American female. An ambitious reporter.

LILY 32. Caucasian. Privileged, sheltered, charismatic.

What he selling?
MR. PARK

Nothing important.
NAOMI

NAOMI quickly goes into the kitchen. She discreetly opens a cabinet and shoves the envelope inside.

SCENE 3

Night. The lights are off in the Park apartment. MR. PARK, in his bathrobe, painfully hobbles around the dark with his walker. He clears off the tchotchkes on top of the piano, opens the top, and pulls out a bottle of soju. He takes a large swig, puts the bottle in his robe pocket and shuffles to the couch. He lowers himself onto the couch and takes another swig of soju.

NAOMI enters and sneaks into the kitchen, without noticing MR. PARK. She opens a cabinet and scrounges around for the envelope. A crystal dish crashes to the ground.

Shit!
NAOMI

NAOMI turns on the light, retrieves a dustpan, and cleans up the shattered dish.

MR. PARK hastily hides the soju behind the sofa cushions.

As NAOMI stands up, she sees MR. PARK on the sofa. Startled, she drops the dustpan.

NAOMI
Dad! Jesus! What are you doing up?

MR. PARK

I can't sleep.

NAOMI

But you shouldn't get up without my help.

MR. PARK

If I don't walk, I forget how to.

NAOMI

Next time you want to take a midnight stroll, wake me up.

MR. PARK

What you break?

NAOMI

A dish.

NAOMI bends down and methodically sweeps up the glass. MR. PARK sees that NAOMI is preoccupied with cleaning and sneaks another large swig of soju.

MR. PARK

Make sure you clean up very good!

NAOMI

Cleaning up's the only thing I do around here.

MR. PARK

Which dish you break?

NAOMI

One of the crystal serving dishes.

MR. PARK

One of the dish your mother use for company?

NAOMI

(a little wary)

Yes.

MR. PARK

Everyone said how nice your mother used to set out meal. She had sense of true beauty.... She make kimchee like art in crystal cup!

NAOMI dumps the shards unceremoniously into the trash.

NAOMI

It's time for you to go to bed.

MR. PARK

Bed is so lonely.

NAOMI enters the living room.

NAOMI

C'mon, it's late.

MR. PARK

No one see your mother's dish collection anymore.

NAOMI

The Kims stopped by yesterday.

MR. PARK

But they don't stay for meal. No one does.

(beat)

Your mother, she drag me to Marshall Fields all the time in case Waterford crystal on sale. There was one thing she wanted so desperate - a bowl held up by seahorse. Six-hundred dollars for mortgage payment, I tell her, not stupid glass. Your mother, nose against case, say to me, look at seahorse - look at her straight back, proud, head bowed in prayer - she is beautiful.

NAOMI

You were right to pay off the house.

MR. PARK

For what? I own empty house now.

NAOMI

Don't I count anymore?

MR. PARK

You should find husband before you are old maid. Have your own family!

NAOMI

I tried! You hated Ben.

MR. PARK

(shrugs)

I don't hate Ben.

NAOMI

You changed the subject every time I mentioned Ben's name. You fled the room every time he walked in, like he had the bubonic plague. You couldn't even look at him.

MR. PARK

He white. You need Korean man.

NAOMI

Well, you managed to convince Ben of that too.

MR. PARK

I glad. He not good enough for you.

NAOMI

No. He wasn't good enough for you, Dad.

MR. PARK

Naomi! Forget Ben - he is stupid asshole.

A beat.

NAOMI

I saw him the other day at Jewel, in the dairy aisle. There was a blonde woman, in jeans and stiletto heels, pushing his cart, laughing at one of his pretentious, I'm-brilliant-I-went-to-Yale jokes.

NAOMI goes to the closet and takes out a blanket.

NAOMI

I didn't think he went for ditzy blondes.

NAOMI walks over to MR. PARK with the blanket. MR. PARK raises his hands in protest.

MR. PARK

No no, I don't need blanket!

NAOMI

It's chilly out here. You're still too cheap to turn up the thermostat.

As NAOMI wraps MR. PARK in the blanket, she smells soju on his breath.

NAOMI

(furious)

Where's the soju?

MR. PARK

Nowhere.

NAOMI

I thought you stopped! You promised me, after the accident....

MR. PARK
Promise what?

NAOMI
That you'd quit drinking.

MR. PARK
I have.

NAOMI
I can smell it, Dad.

MR. PARK
I not smell anything.

NAOMI rips off the blanket.

NAOMI
Where is it?

NAOMI angrily rips apart the couch and
finds the soju.

MR. PARK
Let your father have some comfort.

NAOMI
Where did you get this?

MR. PARK
(shrugs)
Don't be angry, Naomi.

NAOMI
Fucking Christ, Dad! What the hell are you doing?

MR. PARK
I just took little drink.

NAOMI
You're on painkillers!

MR. PARK
It is so hard now -- everyone is gone.

NAOMI
Drinking isn't going to bring anyone back!

MR. PARK
(pleading)
Please, give me soju.

NAOMI stomps over to the kitchen and pours out the soju in the sink.

Lights change. MINA, as a eight year-old, climbs out of the oven. She starts peering into the cabinets.

Mina!

MINA

Shh!

NAOMI

What are you doing?

MINA crawls into a cabinet underneath NAOMI.

Mina?

MINA
(fiercely whispers)

Shut up!

NAOMI
Dad said you're supposed to practice piano.

MINA
I hate the piano!

NAOMI
But Dad said--

MINA
--He's not going to find me.

NAOMI peers into the cabinet where MINA is hiding.

NAOMI
You're gonna get in trouble.

MINA
(whispering)
Shh! He's coming home soon.

NAOMI
He's gonna spank you if you don't come out.

MINA

Not if he can't find me.

NAOMI

He's gonna get mad at me if you don't do what he says. I'm supposed to be in charge!

MINA

Naomi? Hide with me.

NAOMI

I have to do my math homework.

MINA

Come in!

MINA tries to yank NAOMI into the cabinet. NAOMI pulls away.

MINA

I'm scared. Please? I don't want to be alone.

MR. PARK enters, holding a bottle of soju. He is clearly drunk. MINA closes the cabinet door, hiding herself.

MR. PARK picks up a magazine and rolls it up tightly. He slams the magazine against the counter to punctuate his anger.

MR. PARK

(slurring)

Mina! Where are you? Why you not practice piano? Mina! I tell you practice piano!

(to NAOMI)

Where is your sister?

NAOMI, frightened, looks away.

MR. PARK

(warning)

Naomi!

NAOMI reluctantly points to the cabinet where MINA is hiding. MR. PARK goes to the cabinet and hauls out MINA, who is sobbing.

MR. PARK

I tell you practice piano so you can be good for something!

MR. PARK pushes MINA against the table.
He takes the rolled up magazine and
hits her. MINA cries out in pain.

MR. PARK
Why you not listen to me? Huh?

MR. PARK hits MINA again.

MR. PARK
You just like your mother!

MR. PARK hits MINA again. NAOMI cries
out.

MR. PARK
(to NAOMI)
Go to your room! Now!

MR. PARK winds up to hit MINA again
when he freezes in place. MINA looks up
at NAOMI. MINA's demeanor suddenly
shifts to an adult's.

MINA
Fuckin' rat.

NAOMI
(quietly)
Shut up.

MINA
Backstabbing shit.

NAOMI
(louder)
Shut up.

MINA
Daddy's little bitch.

NAOMI
(yelling)
Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

MINA
You're no goddamn sister of mine.

Lights change. MINA and MR. PARK
disappear.

NAOMI collapses onto a chair, shaken. After a few moments, NAOMI stands up and goes to the cabinet where she had stashed DEE's envelope. She removes the envelope and sits back down at the table. NAOMI removes a sheet of paper and reads.

Blackout.

SCENE 4

Afternoon. A cafe. DEE sits at a table, riffling through some papers. She takes a sip of coffee and looks at her watch impatiently.

NAOMI enters and takes a seat across from DEE.

NAOMI
I didn't know if you'd still be here.

DEE
Not gonna get rid of me that easy.

NAOMI
(shrugs)
Construction on Damen. Sorry.

DEE
Want a cup of coffee?

NAOMI
No thanks.

DEE
You sure? I'd suggest the Sumatra - they roast their own beans here.

NAOMI
Ms. Lawson--

DEE
--call me Dee.

NAOMI
Please, I beg you, don't write this book.