

MAMA

by Katarzyna Müller

Inspired by the headline:
***DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SPIKES
DURING LOCKDOWN***

MAMA

Characters

SUE: F, 40s, White
JOE: M, 40s, White
ANNIE: F, barely a teen, not White.

Place and time

Anywhere USA. But probably the Southwest Side of Chicago, or a small town in the Midwest. The recent past.

Synopsis

A family of three is stuck inside their small house during a national lockdown. Sins that had been ignored or hidden have no place to hide any more. In a time of personal and public trauma, how do we hold ourselves together, when the world is falling apart?

Tagline

In a new world, sins have no place to hide.

Content Advisory

Violence

MAMA

(Lights UP on the interior of a bungalow.)

(JOE sits at a small table, which functions as their dining room.)

(ANNIE is perched on his lap.)

(SUE stands at the stove, her back to everybody, until the end.)

JOE

An' im gonna buy you a pony. Wait and see, cupcake. When this is all over, Im gonna walk outta here, get a new job and a big, big wad of fuckin' money, and im gonna buy you a fuckin' pony.

SUE

Don't say "fucking," Joe.

JOE

It's just a word.

ANNIE

Daddy, it's a bad word.

JOE

(To SUE:) Now why you tryin' to fuckin' turn my own daughter against me, huh?

ANNIE

I'm too old for a pony.

JOE

A pony don't got no age limit.

SUE

Don't say "fucking," Joe.

JOE

I didn't say "fuckin'." Jesus Christ!

ANNIE

I don't want a pony.

JOE

(To SUE:) You see that? Huh? You see what you fuckin' did? You turned a beautiful thing into a, into a fuckin' pile of shit. You proud of yourself, Sue? Huh?

SUE

I didn't do anything.

(JOE leaps to his feet.)

(ANNIE tries to balance herself.)

JOE

Bullshit! The first day you brought her home, you been settin' her up 'gainst me. Tellin' her I ain't her real dad ev'ry chance you get. That's fuckin' bullshit!

SUE

The social worker said it would be better for her to be honest -

(JOE jumps across the space and stands inches behind SUE.)

JOE

(Into SUE's ear:) Now who you gonna listen to? Your own husband, or some stranger?

(Beat)

(JOE slaps SUE on the ass, his version of affection.)

JOE cont.

Love you too, babe.

(JOE's attention returns to ANNIE.)

JOE cont.

Now, where were we, cupcake? Whatchya doin' on the fuckin' floor? Come on back and sit on your daddy's lap.

(HE pulls ANNIE up and onto his lap.)

Did I hurt you?

(HE kisses her forehead.)

You sweet, sweet cupcake.

SUE

Joe, she's too old for kisses.

JOE

Jesus Christ, Im just kissin' her head. Is there a fuckin' law against a daddy kissin' his daughter's head?

(JOE kisses ANNIE's forehead again.)

SUE

Joe, you said you were gonna build the deck out back.

JOE

The lumber yard's closed.

SUE

What about paintin' the hallway?

JOE

I ain't got the right brushes.

SUE

You said you'd try colorin' my hair.

JOE

Who the fuck is gonna be lookin' at ya anyway? I already know what you look like.

(JOE sniffs ANNIE's hair.)

JOE cont.

What is that? Apple? Strawberry?

ANNIE

It's coconut, Daddy.

(JOE sniffs her hair again.)

JOE

Coconut. Huh. You sure?

ANNIE

I'm sure.

(JOE sniffs again.)

JOE

Yeah ok. Smells real good.

(JOE hugs ANNIE.)

SUE

Joe, she's too old for this.

JOE

Too old for what, Sue? I ain't doin' nothin' that I ain't been doin' since the day you brought her home.

SUE

Where do you go at night, Joe?

JOE

Huh?

SUE

You're not out in the yard, 'cause I look.

JOE

What the fuck you talkin' about?

SUE

You're not in the bathroom, 'cause I look in there, too.

JOE

You're outta your fuckin' mind.

SUE

The bars are closed. The cops are in the streets. So where the fuck do you go at night, Joe?

(Beat)

JOE

I ain't doin' nothin' wrong.

SUE

I used to sleep like a rock. You know that. On my feet all day, every day, ten hours at the diner then makin' dinner when I get home. I used to sleep like a rock. Nothin' woke me up. You know that. But I ain't been sleepin' so good now. I stare at the ceiling in the dark, listenin' to you breathin', thinkin' about the day I married you, thinkin' about, about the day that Annie came into our lives.

Then you get up. You get up and walk outta the room. I wait a coupla minutes, to see if you're gonna come back. And you don't. You don't come back. So I go and I look for you. There's only one room in the house that I ain't checked.

So I'm gonna ask you again, Joe. Where the fuck do you go at night?

JOE

You motherfuckin' -

(SUE turns around, holding a gun.)

(SHE points it at JOE.)

SUE

Let her go, Joe.

JOE

What the fuck has got into you?!

(SUE grips the gun tighter.)

SUE

I said, let her go!

(JOE lifts his hands up.)

(ANNIE, frozen, remains on his lap.)

JOE

OK I see it now. I fuckin' see it now. You're fuckin' jealous. You're goddamn fuckin' jealous that your own daughter is fuckin' better than -

ANNIE

Mama!

(SUE closes her eyes and squeezes the trigger.)

(Lights OUT)

(In the darkness, pulsating red and blue police lights.)

(A spotlight UP on ANNIE.)

(SHE sits at the edge of the stage, wrapped in one of those silver blankets that paramedics give to survivors.)

ANNIE

The news will report it as domestic violence. They'll call it a murder-suicide, and wonder how or why the youngest family member survived. Some people will even wonder if I did it. That cloud of suspicion will follow me into adulthood, until I change my name and move far away.

(MORE)

ANNIE cont.

People will forget about me. That will make me feel a little disappointed. I had hoped for an episode of Dateline, with Keith Morrison looking very concerned and prodding me for all the gory details. I don't know, sometimes I wonder whether it's a race thing. Sometimes I wonder if there are too many of us now. In some countries, since the world shut down, reports of domestic violence have doubled.

Oh, and the experts? They're trying to change the name from Domestic Violence to Intimate Terrorism. I'm just not sure who's the terrorist. The person who hurt me, or the person who pulled the trigger?

(Lights FADE)

(END OF PLAY)

