

A Dinner Conversation

by

A. S. McPhie

Characters:

The Father
The Mother
The Grandmother
The Older Brother
The Young Girl

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THE FIVE PEOPLE ARE SITTING PROUND A TABLE HAVING A ROAST DINNER.

Father: (OFFERING TO THE MOTHER) Salt darling ?

Mother: No thankyou

Father: Mum ?

Grandmother: Hmmm ? Ohll not for me darling

HE OFFERS IT TO THE CHILDREN, THEY DON'T WANT ANY, SO HE SPRINKLES SOME ON THE SIDE OF HIS PLATE. THERE IS SILENCE FOR A WHILE AS THEY START THEIR MEALS.

Mother: Poppet, Daddy and I have been talking and we've decided that you're not to see Annette anymore

Young Girl: What ?!

Mother: Well we think she's not the sort of person you should be mixing with.

Young Girl: But she's my best friend

Mother: Yes we know that, but she's not the sort of person you should be playing with

Young Girl: Come off it Mum, we're older than that, we don't play like little kids

Mother: Okay, I'm sorry, but that still doesn't change the facts, you're not to see her anymore

Young Girl: That's not fair

Father: Look we'll have no arguements

Young Girl: But you always do that you know, as soon as I get a good friend you don't like them so I have to stop liking them

Mother: That's not true, we don't mind you seeing Vicky

Young Girl: Huh! I don't even like her anymore

Mother: Oh why not ?, you used to be great friends with her, she's a perfectly nice little girl

Young Girl: No she's not, she's a real pain

Mother: That doesn't matter, you and she should still be friends

Young Girl: Look I don't choose your friends, so why should you choose mine ?

Father: Cathy I said no arguments

Young Girl: You could at least give me a reason

THE MOTHER LOOKS AT THE FATHER AND BREATHES OUT.

Mother: Your Father said no, so that's the end of it

Father: Wait darling, it's okay. Look we don't want you to see that girl again because we don't approve of her standards, or her family's standards.

Young Girl: Oh standards, that's all I ever hear, why don't you give some examples then, you never do

Mother: Oh come off it, you only have to look to see what they are: the way she talks, the things she says, the things she does, the list is endless, I could go on forever

Young Girl: Oh right, you haven't said anything, everyone talks and does things

Mother: Yes but not like she does

Young Girl: What's wrong with what she does anyway ?

Father: That's enough out of you, you know perfectly well what we're talking about. So you're not to see her anymore, okay. Okay ?

Young Girl: (THROUGH HER TEARS) Okay

Mother: There that's finished. Cheer up little one

Young Girl: What for ?

Mother: Oh come on, it's not that bad

Young Girl: Yes it is, she was my bestfriend

Mother: That's okay, there'll be others

Young Girl: No there won't

Father: One thing you've got to learn Cathy is to be choosy about your friends. The sort of people you hang around with reflects greatly on the sort of person you are. And if you want to go up in this world you'll be very careful of who you associate with.

Young Girl: But if they're your friends, they're your friends

Mother: Yes, but not always. Some people who you think are your friends really aren't at all. And that can be terrible if that happens. You've got to think of friends in the same sort of way that you think of clothes

Young Girl: Oh right, well I should go round choosing and using friends

Father: No, that's not what we mean at all. We mean they are reflective of the sort of person you are, and when people come to judge you one way they'll do it is through the company you keep

Mother: And the clothes you wear. You've got to choose friends from the same background with the same standards as you.

Young Girl: (TURNING AWAY) Here we go again, more standards

Father: Cathy don't be rude! And look at your Mother when she's talking to you

SHE RELUCTANTLY TURNS BACK

Mother: Look darling, we don't want to hurt you, we love you very much, it's for your own good we're doing this

Young Girl: My own good ?!

Father: Yes your own good. And if you had any sense at all you'd listen when we talk to you, and take in what we're saying

Young Girl: Why ? Why is it you're always right and I'm always wrong ?

Mother: Look you're not always wrong darling, on come on don't cry

Young Girl: (RESOLUTELY, THROUGH HER TEARS) I'm not crying

Mother: But you've got to realise darling, you're only twelve years

Young Girl: I'm almost a teenager

Mother: Even then you'll only just be thirteen. Your Father and I are much older than you, don't you think we've seen it all before ?, don't you think we went through this ?, it was just the same

Grandmother: Oh come now, I never did this to you pet

Father: Oh yes you did

Grandmother: Did I ? Oh well (CHUCKLES) it's funny what nil age does to your memory

Mother: You see darling, nothing's changed, it's just the same; and look at us, we didn't turn out too badly now did we ?

Young Girl: Do you really want an to answer that ?

Father: Don't get cheeky Cathy

Young Girl: It was only a joke

Father: Well that might be, but you've got to remember that we you' re parents and we know what's best for you

Mother: And another thing

Young Girl: (BREATHING OUT) What ?

Mother: Just remember that our family have got a very good name here, and it's up to all of the children to keep that up

Young Girl: I know

Father: Well don't take things as lightly then

Young Girl: I don't. (PAUSE) I was gonna go with Annette the movies on Saturday

Mother: I beg your pardon (LOOKS AT THE FATHER, THEN TURNS BACK) we never heard anything of this

Young Girl: I was going to ask you tonight

Father: Well you can jolly well get on the phone right after dinner and tell her you're not going

Young Girl: (TRYING TO HOLD BACK HER CRYING) Ohll, what am I going to tell her ?

Mother: The truth

Young Girl: What my parents won't let me see you anymore

Father: No, you don't need to say it like that, just tell her that you don't want to go

Young Girl: But I already told her I do

Mother: Just tell her that we won't let you

Young Girl: And whadoo I say when she asks why ?

Mother: Because we don't think you should be going to the pictures with her. Who was going with you ?

Young Girl: Just Annette

Mother: By yourselves

Young Girl: Yes Mum, we're old enough for that now

Mother: Oh are you just ! ?, well we'll be the judge of that. What film were you going to see ?

Young Girl: Summer Vacation

Father: Well there's no way you're seeing that anyway

Young Girl: Why not ?

Father: Because it's too old for you

Young Girl: No it's not, it's meant for kids like us

Mother: What's it rated ?

Young Girl: M

Father: Well there you are, you know you're not allowed to see M films.

Young Girl: I saw Witness

Mother: Yes, but it's different

Young Girl: Why is it different ?

Mother: It's a quality film

Father: It's not like one of those cheap American films, full of sex and alcohol, aimed at the younger generation

Mother: That's half the trouble with the world today, the younger generation are being encouraged to be rebellious

Father: They're being encouraged to lower their decency and drop their standards. You're not going to be a part of that.

Young Girl: I like it how it's always what you want of me

Mother: Darling, as parents we've got to bring you up the best way possible

Young Girl: And this is it ?

Father: Yes. And don't answer back.

PAUSE

Young Girl: So even if I want to see this film by myself I can't

Father: That's correct, and the same goes for any other films like it

Older Brother: Dad I think you're being a bit unfair, these films aren't that bad, they're mainly just light comedy

Father: Phillip this is no concern of yours' so just keep out of it

Older Brother: I won't, not if I think you're doing the wrong thing

Father: Cathy is our daughter and the way she is brought up is our responsibility

Older Brother: But she's my sister

Father: You just mind your own business, I would have expected a more mature approach from you

Older Brother: That's what I'm giving. I only want to help. The poor kid's just sitting there and everyone's having a go at her

Father: We're not having a go at her, we're bringing her up the correct way. And you're not helping

Young Girl: At least he's sticking up for me. Thankyou Phillip

Older Brother: That's alright, but look I was only making a point about the films

Young Girl: That's the problem with you, you're never always definate. (SHE FINISHES HER MEAL) May I be excused please ?

Mother: Yes darling

Father: Don't you want any sweets ?

Young Girl: No thankyou

SHE GETS UP AND STARTS TO WALK AWAY

Mother: (HOLDING OUT HER HAND) Come here darling

THEY KISS AND HUG, THEN THE YOUNG GIRL EXITS. EVERYONE EXCEPT THE OLDER BROTHER HAS FINISHED THEIR MEALS BY NOW

Grandmother: Oh well too-toot, I'm off (SHE STARTS TO STAND UP)

Father: Oh you're off. Can I get you some dessert Mum ?

Grandmother: No thankyou pet, I've seen enough (SHE STANDS UP)

THE FATHER AND THE OLDER BROTHER STAND UP, AS THE MOTHER GIVES THE GRANDMOTHER A HAND

Grandmother: She's got to learn to do what she's told, that's her problem. (TO THE OLDER BROTHER) And you've got to learn to keep your mouth shut. Goodbye darling (THE GRANDMOTHER AND THE FATHER KISS ON THE CHEEK)

Father: Hooroo Mum are you right there ?

Grandmother: Yes it's okay, Margaret'll take home

Father: Okay, see you darling (THE MOTHER AND THE FATHER KISS)

Mother: Bye

Older Brother: Bye

THE MOTHER AND THE HE GRANDMOTHER EXIT, THE FATHER AND THE OLDER BROTHER BIT BACK DOWN

Father: I really do expect more from you Phillip, how we bring up Cathy is our concern and doesn't involve you in anyway what-so-ever

Older Brother: I was only making a point and that was about the films anyway

Father: But that's just it, you shouldn't have said anything. If someone's being disciplined and it doesn't involve you then stay out of it. We brought you up the same way, this isn't having any detrimental effect on Cathy, it's the best thing for her

Older Brother: Okay

Father: It's a hard thing to do in it's own right, but if you join in when you're not involved it only makes it harder

Older Brother: Okay

Father: You wait to you're a parent, and you have to do it.

- CURTAIN -