

Fault Lines

by George Sapio
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Cast:

Anastasia – youngest sister, 40
Ginger – middle sister, 43
Theresa – oldest sister, 50
Shawn – Ginger's husband, 40-45

Setting: Anastasia's home. Living room.

Synopsis: Three sisters, one husband, one dead mother, and The Past, which refuses to stay there. Between cooking, secrets, misunderstandings, and years of sibling dynamics, is it possible to reach not just a detente, but an understanding?

Play History:

Post-workshop production. Fall Creek Theatre, Ithaca, NY, March 2013
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ACT I, SCENE I

[ANASTASIA on couch, GINGER next to her, stroking her hair. SHAWN enters from kitchen with hot chocolate which he gives to ANASTASIA]

SHAWN

Can't believe you were here the whole time.

ANASTASIA

I was in the kitchen and I heard a window break. I came out here and there was a man reaching in. He saw me. It was like . . . his eyes . . . he opened the window latch and started to come in. I ran into the kitchen and down the cellar. I heard him trying to open the door, but he couldn't. Then he started . . . tearing the place apart . . .

SHAWN

What did he get?

GINGER

[Shrugging] TV. DVD player. The police said just to report it to the insurance company and let them replace everything. They'll probably never catch the guy.

SHAWN

Jesus. Poor kid. Wait: What about your computer?

GINGER

The thief missed it. It's under the bed.

ANASTASIA

Thank you for the chocolate.

SHAWN

You're welcome. Better drink it before it gets cold.

ANASTASIA

I can't. I have an allergy. I get hives and some pretty harsh rectal itching if I drink it. My eyelids swell up pretty badly, too, and I get confused about things. Plus, if this is a major brand, then it probably means that they used child slave labor to pick the beans. I don't support child slavery.

SHAWN

I'm sorry! Jeez, lemme take it away.

ANASTASIA

No. I like holding it. It's warm. And I like the smell.

SHAWN

Okay. I guess. You just relax. [*Nods at GINGER. They cross away*]

SHAWN

Did you call Mother Superior?

GINGER

No. And would you stop calling her that?

SHAWN

When she stops calling me “Emeril.”

GINGER

She's kidding. You know that.

SHAWN

She's not. *You* know that.

GINGER

She'll be over for dinner anyway. Besides, you can kick Emeril's ass in the kitchen any day.

SHAWN

I love you.

GINGER

I love you, too.

SHAWN

I'm gonna go hang garlic on the door.

GINGER

That's for vampires.

[SHAWN begins to pick things up off of the floor.]

SHAWN

Well, look at it this way. It was just the tv and the dvd player. Nothing of any real value was taken.

[ANASTASIA begins sobbing]

SHAWN

Stasi, I'm sorry! I . . . should have realized how important they were to you . . .

[ANASTASIA shakes her head and continues to cry softly]

SHAWN

[Crosses to GINGER] What did I say?

[GINGER taps his arm gently and crosses to the couch]

SHAWN

I'm . . . I'll just go finish cleaning the kitchen. Start dinner. *[Sotto voce]* I did it again . . . *[Exits to kitchen]*

GINGER

Honey? Whaddya say we go out early tomorrow and shop for a new TV and DVD player? We'll get you a nice big one. Maybe a home theatre to go with it. How would that be?

ANASTASIA

Stop talking to me as if I was an idiot.

GINGER

I'm sorry.

ANASTASIA

I know I'm . . . weird.

GINGER

Stop that. You're not weird.

ANASTASIA

Theresa thinks I'm weird.

GINGER

Theresa's married to god, ferchrissakes. She has no right to call anyone else weird.

ANASTASIA

Mom never stopped telling me I was weird. "Anastasia, you're weird. Who would want to marry you, you freak?"

GINGER

Mom was wrong, Stazi. It will happen, honey.

ANASTASIA

Not at my age. Studies show that when you hit 40, your chances of finding a partner decrease exponentially day by day. And not only does your mind get more depressed, but your body starts to get depressed, too. Muscles start to sag faster, immune system begins to fail--

GINGER

Stazi, wait . . .

ANASTASIA

--you put on weight, eyesight goes downhill, estrogen levels start to fluctuate all over the place--

GINGER

Stazi . . .

ANASTASIA

--mental acuity decreases dramatically and your vagina loses elasticity and the ability to lubricate. In ten years I'm gonna be a confused, blind, flabby, hysterical bitch with a desiccated vagina.

GINGER

Thinking that way is counterproductive to a healthy homeostasis. He's out there.

ANASTASIA

I wouldn't even know what to do. It's been a really long time since anybody's . . . you know . . .

GINGER

I think you're worrying too much here. Its not like you forget how.

ANASTASIA

You got lucky.

GINGER

I know. But it took me a while. And, unlike our dear eldest sister . . .

ANASTASIA/GINGER

“Whose spouse created the universe . . .”

GINGER

Should I be jealous because Shawn isn't god?

ANASTASIA

Probably not. You call him that sometimes, though.

GINGER

No, I don't. When?

ANASTASIA

Last Thursday. Around 1:30 am.

GINGER

Oh my god!!

ANASTASIA

I think you were an octave higher than that.

[They crack up. SHAWN enters, smiles at them laughing, looking around]

ANASTASIA

What are you looking for?

SHAWN

Oh, nothing. Not important. [*Exits*]

GINGER

Look. I know we're imposing on you . . .

ANASTASIA

I told you already. I don't mind. I'm glad I could help.

GINGER

And as soon as Shawn gets settled in a new job . . . And I pick up some more clients.

ANASTASIA

But I really like having you here. The last six weeks have been really nice. Otherwise it's just me. And it's bad enough being alone . . . I got used to it. But now I realize how bad it was. I look at you two and I feel even more alone than I thought I was. But I love having you here. I really do.

GINGER

We will move out, you know.

ANASTASIA

I know.

GINGER

Soon, probably.

ANASTASIA

You got lucky.

GINGER

Come on. Let's tidy the place up.

ACT I SCENE II

[ANASTASIA and SHAWN cleaning up the living room. They get distracted a lot, so not much gets done]

SHAWN

It was harrowing. I get there, meet the head chef, tour the kitchen. You gotta see this place. Holy moley. It's huge. Must be a dozen stations, ovens and burners everywhere, pots hanging everyplace. It's a miracle anyone can even move in there. Talk about loud . . . everyone's yelling orders, scrambling for ingredients, hollering that their broccoli is wilting, the bearnaise is overheated . . . it's a zoo.

ANASTASIA

Sounds crazy.

SHAWN

So they stick me at a station and start throwing orders at me. Deliberately overloading me to see how fast I'd crack. Sautéed scallops in white wine sauce, braised veal medallions, mushroom wine sauce, hollandaise, slivered rare steak . . . it didn't stop for hours. One hundred and two orders. When it was all over they said they'd never tasted food like I made it.

ANASTASIA

You're brilliant. I have tasted some really good food, but you do something with it that's unbelievable. And you cook veggie for me!

SHAWN

That's because I have a secret weapon.

ANASTASIA

What is it?

SHAWN

I put a ton of msg in everything I cook.

ANASTASIA

Oh, that's gross! You do not!

SHAWN

I don't.

ANASTASIA

Anything I can eat there?

SHAWN

Not really. But I talked to them about that afterwards. They're definitely open to vegetarian options. They're just not known as a veggie place. Typical American bistro.

ANASTASIA

Charred dead animal flesh. They'd get my business if they went veggie.

SHAWN

I told them that. Said my sister-in-law is a vegematarian and so are thousands of her friends.

ANASTASIA

“Thousands.” Right. So what happened?

SHAWN

They want me to start Friday.

ANASTASIA

That's wonderful! I'm going to miss your meals. I've never enjoyed eating so much in my life.

SHAWN

I'll still cook for you . . . whaddya think?

ANASTASIA

You'll be too busy. You'll be wiped out after a shift at that place. You could teach me, though. I'd love to learn.

SHAWN

You got it.

ANASTASIA

So what's your secret weapon?

SHAWN

I'm never telling.

ANASTASIA

Well, I don't care. Just keep on using it . . . whatever it is.

*[GINGER enters in a bathrobe; she
has just showered]*

GINGER

Hey--

[ANASTASIA jumps and screams]

GINGER

I'm sorry, Stasi!

ANASTASIA

No, it's me. I'm just a little jumpy. Sorry.

GINGER

Shawn, honey, want me to cook tonight? You must be exhausted.

SHAWN

Nope. Sunday dinners are now a tradition. In fact I was just going out. There are a few things I need to replace. That burglar threw all my vegetables on the floor. There are sneaker marks on the radicchio.

[Doorbell rings; the sound of front door opening, closing. All freeze. THERESA enters. She is dressed secularly, if somewhat subdued. She wears a veil]

THERESA

As usual, Stazi, your house is a pigsty.

ANASTASIA

I was robbed.

THERESA

Oh, shit. When?

ANASTASIA

Today.

THERESA

Why didn't anybody call me?

GINGER

Nobody was hurt. You were coming over anyway.

THERESA

Are you okay? *[Crosses to ANASTASIA and hugs her]*

ANASTASIA

I'm fine. Just a little jumpy.

THERESA

What did they take?

SHAWN

TV. DVD player.

THERESA

So nothing important. *[ANASTASIA turns away; THERESA doesn't notice]*
That's good. Did you call the police?

SHAWN and GINGER

Yes.

THERESA

They make a report?

SHAWN and GINGER

Yes.

THERESA

Any chance of catching the guy? Just one of you, please!

[Neither answers]

THERESA

Well?

GINGER

Which one of us do you want to answer you?

THERESA

No wonder Mom was so disappointed in you. You can't even answer a simple question.

GINGER

[Heatedly] No, they will not catch the guy and no, they will not get the stuff back.

THERESA

Come give me a hug. I'm not infected.

[Reluctantly, GINGER crosses and they hug, if not very affectionately on GINGER's part]

THERESA

You should have called me immediately. And cover yourself up. I can see your boobs. How are you, Emeril?

SHAWN

Fine. In fact I was just going out for some supplies. *[He crosses to hallway with bags in hand]* Including garlic. *[Kisses GINGER and exits]*

THERESA

Well, I guess we're all a little sensitive today.

GINGER

We *were* robbed, T.

THERESA

Are you still crying, Stasi?

GINGER

A stranger destroyed her house while she had to hide in the basement, okay?

THERESA

You must be a wreck. [*She hugs Stasi*] But you always have been the touchiest one. Well, don't worry. We'll help you clean up and put everything right. And then Emeril will cook you one of his wonderful meals and you'll feel a lot better. Tomorrow we'll go out and get you some nice new locks and an alarm system. Ginger, maybe you should dress and start helping us clean the place up. I'll be right back, Stazi. I need to go take a dump.

[THERESA exits. ANASTASIA and GINGER look at each other, then start to laugh. GINGER exits. ANASTASIA calms down a bit, then begins to pick things up. It becomes evident that she is looking for something that she cannot find. After a bit she sits on the couch and puts her head in her hands]

ANASTASIA

I'm sorry . . . I'm so sorry . . .

ACT I, SCENE III

THERESA

I thought you got rid of this thing years ago.

ANASTASIA

That was from Mom's honeymoon.

THERESA

It's a snow globe. Of Iowa. Snow falling on rows of corn.

ANASTASIA

Just put it on the shelf over there, okay?

THERESA

This is like being back at Mom's house. Why are you keeping all this shit?

ANASTASIA

I don't know.

THERESA

Whatever.

ANASTASIA

Just chalk it up to Stazi the freak.

THERESA

You realize you're the one who said that, right? Not me.

ANASTASIA

But it's what everyone thinks.

THERESA

When did you learn to read minds?

ANASTASIA

Can you not badger me today, please?

THERESA

I am not badgering you. Can you stop being so goddamn sensitive?

ANASTASIA

I AM NOT SENSITIVE!

THERESA

My mistake. I apologize. What are you looking for?

ANASTASIA

Nothing.

THERESA

You keep going into the kitchen. Then you come back out. You look in the cabinets. You look behind the doors. You hardly ever pick anything up.

ANASTASIA

It's nothing.

THERESA

Well then you should be little miss chipper cheery, cuz that's all you're finding.

ANASTASIA

I'm sorry.

THERESA

Stop apologizing. I'm trying to help.

ANASTASIA

I know. I'm sorry.

THERESA

I'm going out for a cigarette. *[She exits]*

[ANASTASIA sighs, keeps looking, but soon despairs. Gets frustrated, picks up an object and throws it. Lets her frustration take over, begins throwing stuff everywhere. She stops. Sits. THERESA re-enters]

THERESA

Well, I see progress was made. If you say "I'm sorry," I'll strangle you with my rosary.

[Stands looking at her for a brief moment, then crosses and hugs her from behind]

THERESA

You wanna tell me what's wrong?

ANASTASIA

I can't.

THERESA

You don't trust me?

ANASTASIA

Partly.

THERESA

I'm your sister.

ANASTASIA

That's not it. I keep thinking that everything I say to you goes straight to god's ears.

THERESA

Well, that's just stupid.

ANASTASIA

Thanks.

THERESA

You're a forensic pathologist. A damn good one. You are supposed to be sensible.

ANASTASIA

Mom said it all the time. "God hears everything you say to Sister Theresa." I think it stuck.

THERESA

That woman took everything way too seriously. Ever since the day I got nun-erized she thought I was some kind of holy hotline. Forget about god, okay?

ANASTASIA

I can't tell you. I can't tell anybody. *[Breaks away]*

THERESA

Come on, Stazi. Let me help. I really want to.

ANASTASIA

Look, I don't trust you, okay? It's like talking to Mom. You always criticize.

THERESA

How can you accuse me of reminding you of Mom when you're the one who has all of her shit all over the place. Snow globes, furniture, pictures. This place is a freakin' shrine.

ANASTASIA

I just couldn't throw it away. I will, though.

THERESA

You've had it for five years, Stazi.

ANASTASIA

So?

[GINGER enters, dressed]

GINGER

I thought we cleaned this stuff up already.

THERESA

Hurricane Stazi had one of her moments.

[ANASTASIA gets up and flees to kitchen]

GINGER

That was nice.

THERESA

I do not believe you two. I am your sister. You both treat me like I was some kind of . . . disease.

GINGER

Well, maybe there's a good reason for it.

THERESA

I'm too critical.

GINGER

Yeah. There's that.

THERESA

Oh brother. You don't get it.

GINGER

No. We get it. It's your way of communicating.

THERESA

“Communicating.”

GINGER

Fine then. Talking to us like Mom did. Like we were your idiot children.

THERESA

Sometimes you act like idiot children.

GINGER

We are who we are.

THERESA

Really. Who else would you be?

GINGER

Stazi's been through a negatively impactful experience. She could have been attacked. Her house was broken into. Invaded.

THERESA

And she's gonna whine about it forever?

GINGER

It happened TODAY.

THERESA

I understand that. But if we just mollycoddle her, we're not doing her any good. You know how fragile she is.

GINGER

She gets upset when we argue. It hurts her.

THERESA

What doesn't?

GINGER

So calling her “stupid” is better?

THERESA

You heard that.

GINGER

I heard it. I was listening behind the door.

THERESA

Okay, okay. I could be a little more . . .

GINGER

Could you? Ya know, I don't think I'll wait for that miracle.

THERESA

As it so happens, I have an issue I was *hoping* to bring up with you two.

GINGER

Life-threatening?

THERESA

No.

GINGER

Then it will have to wait. You're not going to preempt her calamity with yours.

THERESA

Wow.

STAZI (OS)

Dammit! Dammit!

[Sounds of wreckage emanating from the kitchen. Both THERESA and GINGER start for the kitchen]