

MEMORIES OF THE GAME

A Play

By: Kristy Thomas

kristy@alwayswriting4u.com
*Seeking representation

SCENE ONE

It is early August, present time as the lights slowly fade up on the McIntosh household. It is a middle class home with a living room, kitchen, front door with a large window next too it. There are a set of steps leading upstairs to the bedrooms. There is a fireplace with pictures on the mantel. Family pictures saturate the area with the feeling of a close family unit, a celebration of family and love.

KENNETH MCINTOSH, *sits in the living room wearing a football jersey, the Kansas City Chiefs are his team. Football in hand he watches an intense game of football. The sound of the game can be heard.*

KAREN MCINTOSH, *laughs and stares at him for a moment. He is her joy. She opens the oven and checks on the food that is already warming.*

KENNETH

(to television)

Oh come on ref what game are you watching?

KAREN

I feel like it was just yesterday when I told you that the refs can't hear you when you yell at the television.

KENNETH

It wasn't yesterday it was *(to television)* you gotta be kidding me. What the hell game are you guys playing?

KAREN

(mocking) Come on ref clean your glasses. Damn coach where is your defense, offense, some kind of fence. Come on quarterback throw the damn ball!

KENNETH

Oh you think that's cute don't you. This isn't a game, this is Chiefs football!

(watching television)

Flag! Throw the flag ref! It's right there in your pocket. The thing you haven't touched all game. Pass interference!

Kenneth mimes throwing the flag a few times while Karen laughs at him.

KAREN

Chiefs equal life.

KENNETH

Chiefs and The Duke.

KAREN

Oh I forgot about The Duke, “The King of Westerns,” your girlfriend.

KENNETH

He’s an ugly girlfriend. Thirty years and you are still funny.

KAREN

Hilarious. The Duke, The Chiefs and me.

KENNETH

Game is back on.

KAREN

It’s preseason. What’s the point?

KENNETH

You already know the answer to that.

KAREN

(mocking) So I can listen to all these peckerwood sports casters bitch and complain about the team when they haven’t even seen the team. And to listen to these fools talk shit about each other. Now that’s the game!

KENNETH

(to television) Ref if you’d get your head out of your ass you’d be able to watch the same game I’m watching. *(to Karen)* It’s like the refs have been paid off.

KAREN

Or they know that it’s just preseason.

Kenneth smacks Karen on the butt, they laugh and he goes back to watching the game. Karen heads into the kitchen.

KAREN

The kids are coming over.

KENNETH

When do they start inviting us over to their house?

KAREN

When hell freezes over.

KENNETH

Or Jesus comes back.

KAREN

Or the (*insert lowly NFL football team*) win another Super Bowl.

KENNETH

That's my girl.

KAREN

I made some smothered pork chops, gravy, rice and collard greens.

KENNETH

Can I get a little saucer full before they get here?

KAREN

Can you come into the kitchen and get it?

KENNETH

The game is on.

KAREN

Not in the kitchen it's not.

KENNETH

Never mind, I'll wait until dinner.

KAREN

I don't know too many women who would give up six months of their marriage a year for football season.

KENNETH

Good thing I hate baseball.

KAREN

Good thing is right.

Karen goes into the kitchen opens the cabinet and takes out a few medication bottles. She takes out the proper dosage, fills a glass with water and goes back to sit it on Kenneth's lap. She puts the pills in his mouth and hands him the water; they kiss. SHARON EVANS enters watching both Kenneth and Karen.

SHARON

Oh God.

KENNETH

This is that good love.

SHARON

Thanks Daddy but I really don't want to see you and Momma love each other. I couldn't believe we were having dinner on a night the Chiefs had a preseason game.

KENNETH

You and me both.

SHARON

How you feeling?

KENNETH

I done told you I'm fine. I'm always fine and I'm always gonna be fine.

KAREN

(whisper to Sharon)

He's doing okay.

The mood in the room has changed. Kenneth hands Karen the glass. Karen returns to the kitchen with Sharon, still watching Kenneth.

KAREN

How are you doing? *(beat)* I know school just started. Maybe you need more time.

SHARON

Stop Momma. Just stop. I'm here for you and Daddy.

KAREN

I'm here for you.

SHARON

I'm fine.

KAREN

Grief is a process, it takes as much time as it takes.

Sharon's eyes find Kenneth looking at her. She turns away.

KENNETH

Is your husband coming?

SHARON

(beat) No Daddy. *(lying)* He has to work late.

KENNETH

That is a good man right there. Good man. Maybe he'll go with me to a few games this year?

SHARON

Maybe Daddy.

Sharon manages to hold herself together. MICHAEL MCINTOSH enters. He is in a rush, sweating and disheveled.

MICHAEL

Hey Ma, Sis, Pops, what smells so good?

Sharon looks him over noticing his present state. It is something that she has seen before.

SHARON

(whisper)
Are you high Michael?

MICHAEL

No, I'm hungry.

SHARON

Go wash your face and hands. You couldn't clean up for dinner?

Michael straightens his back and glares her down then goes to Karen and kisses her on the cheek.

MICHAEL

I know them ain't pork chops over there with all that gravy dripping off.

KAREN

Just a little something I threw together.

Michael exits the kitchen and begins to watch television with Kenneth.

KAREN (*cont'd*)

(to Sharon)

Talk to your brother.

SHARON

No.

KAREN

You will talk to your brother.

SHARON

No.

KAREN

Sharon Elise McIntosh.

SHARON

Momma, he has to have consequences for what he does.

KAREN

I'm just glad he's here.

SHARON

That's not good enough and he owes me money.

KAREN

Now isn't the time for fighting. Talk to him.

SHARON

He used to be my best friend. Now he's this ghost, always floating in and out.

KAREN

Fight for your friend.

SHARON

I can't fight harder for him than he's willing to do for himself. We did this Momma. We decided months ago we weren't going to give him any more money and we are all still doing it. He's a mess.

KAREN

You see his mess but won't see your own?

Sharon is hurt.

SHARON

I see my mess. I'm living in it everyday. Thanks for the reminder.

KAREN

We all got messes we need to tend to. He can't see himself through our eyes. (*Sharon looks over at Michael for a long moment.*) I need you two to stop. We still need both of you. Sharon, fix it.

Sharon continues to set the table as Karen exits the kitchen. Michael sits with Kenneth tossing a football in the air.

MICHAEL

What's the score Pops?

KENNETH

Shit 21-3.

MICHAEL

We losing? (*Kenneth looks at him*) Yes.

KENNETH

I feel like I'm watching you and the neighborhood kids play kickball.

MICHAEL

Hey, our kickball games were pretty solid. (*aside*) Hey Pops, I was wondering if you got a few extra dollars I can borrow.

KENNETH

Borrow? You don't have to lie to me and give me hope that I might get my money back.

MICHAEL

Pop's I been paying you back.

KENNETH

Eventually.

MICHAEL

Come on Pops I just got a few bills I'm behind on.

KENNETH

Owing your drug dealer is not a bill. Owing your druggie friends ain't a bill either. Asking to borrow money creates a bill. A bill that your ass is never going to pay back. Cause you think that I got money falling out of the sky over here right? Why get a job when me and your mother can bounce you, a grown ass man, on our knee for a few more years. No sir, not in my house, no more.

MICHAEL

Shh, I don't want Ma to know.

KENNETH

You don't think your mother knows you are an addict?

MICHAEL

I just need to get my feet on the ground.

KENNETH

Son, your feet haven't seen the ground since your senior year in high school when you were playing ball.

MICHAEL

When you were proud of me. This is who I am Pops. I still love football, love coming over and watching games with you like I did back then. Back when I made you smile. When Michael McIntosh was going to be your ride to the league.

KENNETH

I didn't need no damn ride to the league. Coaching you, watching the boys from the neighborhood commit to something other than gangs and drugs that is what the game was about for me. Having all the boys call me Dad because they didn't have one, but you calling me Pops meant so much more. You keep telling yourself that I'm the reason you became an addict.

MICHAEL

Stop calling me that.

KENNETH

But son that's what you are.

MICHAEL

You loved me back then.

KENNETH

I love you now too.

MICHAEL

I don't see it. Felt like I was in this shit all by myself. Then you stopped loving me.

KENNETH

Never happened. *(beat)* I can't keep giving you money to get high.

Kenneth places his hand on Michael's arm that has been shaking. Michael looks to Kenneth.

MICHAEL

(whispers)

I owe Pops and they gonna kill me if I don't pay.

KENNETH

How much?

MICHAEL

Like six hundred.

KENNETH

Like? If you owe someone you know how much.

MICHAEL

Six hundred. They know that you and Ma have money.

KENNETH

My money!

Karen looks at Kenneth and Michael for a moment then she continues to set the table with food filled plates.

MICHAEL

I told them you would help me.

KENNETH

Do you know how expensive my medications are? *(beat)* Selfish. Never thinking about nobody else because that damn pipe won't let you. This is the last time Michael.

Not another penny do you hear me? If they kill you dead in the street right outside of this house I will cover you with my best sheet and call the police but I will not give you another dollar. Do we understand each other?

Michael brings Kenneth the check book from the desk where he keeps it. Kenneth writes Michael a check. Karen has watched him.

MICHAEL

Yes sir.

KAREN

No more money. We told you that months ago and you keep asking and we keep giving but we are done. No money, no begging, no excuses. That's it.

Karen looks to Kenneth.

KENNETH

That's it.

KAREN

Come on boys dinner is served.

MICHAEL

It's late Momma I gotta go.

KENNETH

Boy it'll take you ten minutes. Have a seat.

Michael reluctantly moves and sits at the table with the rest of the family. Everyone sits.

KAREN

Kenneth, would you like to say grace?

Kenneth looks nervous, shakes his head "No." They lower their heads.

KENNETH

Lord, thank you for the food we are about to receive and for our family. Amen.

Michael begins to eat quickly as everyone else begins to eat.

MICHAEL

Let's eat, I gotta go.

SHARON

You could act like you want to be here, Jesus Mike it's just dinner.

MICHAEL

You always got some shit to say.

KAREN

Not at the dinner table.

MICHAEL

She's still pissed off that Keith left her ass. All that bitching all the time I'd leave her too.

KENNETH

I thought you said he was working late?

Michael laughs.

MICHAEL

That's a good one sis. Working late, yeah Pops he's always working late now.

SHARON

It's not a competition to see which one of us is the most fucked up, you'd win that. Yes, Keith left and I have to deal with that but you can fix your issue and you choose not to.

KENNETH

He left? When did he-

SHARON

It's fine Daddy. *(to Michael)* Don't sit too long, I'd hate for the pipe to burn a whole in your pocket.

Sharon stands and takes her plate.

KENNETH

Stop, both of you. Sit, shut up and eat. We will have a nice family dinner even if it's so damn quiet I can hear my heart beat.

They sit in silence and eat for a few moments forks hitting the plates almost in a melody.

MICHAEL

(to Sharon)

Sorry.

SHARON

Sure.

Sharon stands and takes her plate to the sink. Michael follows her.

MICHAEL

Hey sis you think I can borrow a few until next week?

SHARON

Two seconds ago you were laughing about my husband leaving.

MICHAEL

Cuz you always coming for me.

SHARON

How much?

MICHAEL

A few hundred.

Sharon looks at him for a moment, debating. He begins to wrap his plate with foil. His hands are shaking so bad he drops the foil. They both go to pick it up as Sharon holds his hands for a moment until he stops shaking. She takes the plate and wraps it for him.

MICHAEL

Look Keith is an ass.

SHARON

I don't know how to live without him.

MICHAEL

Come on sis, fuck that dude.

Sharon glares at him.

MICHAEL (CONT.)

Naw, I'm not being a dick real talk. Ya'll went through all that shit then he left. He's weak. He should have been there for you through that shit. You gotta get over this dude.

SHARON

Meet me at the house tomorrow.

MICHAEL

(to Karen)

Okay Momma we ate good, no arguing and I even wrapped up a little bit for later with my favorite sister. May I please go now?

KAREN

Yes.

MICHAEL

I love you.

She looks at him then he kisses her and goes to exit.

KAREN

Love you too.

Michael exits out the door.

KAREN

(to Kenneth)

Kenneth?

KENNETH

Yes honey.

KAREN

How much?

SHARON

(from kitchen)

Ya'll smell that? I made an apple pie. Momma's recipe with Daddy's finishing touches of extra cinnamon and butter.

KENNETH

(to Karen)

It doesn't matter.

KAREN

When I take over paying the bills I have to know where our money goes.

KENNETH

Why would you take over paying the bills? I done paid the bills in this house for almost thirty years.

Karen looks at him realizing he doesn't remember his present situation.

KAREN

The time will come Kenneth...when bills will need to be paid and...

Kenneth has wondered to the window and is looking out longingly, he has not heard a word she has said.

KENNETH

He's my son.

KAREN

He's our son.

Kenneth turns and bumps into the table. He walks towards the steps then turns and looks around the room like he isn't sure where he's going. He goes back to the television and begins to flip channels.

KENNETH

What channel is the game on?

KAREN

We need to talk about-

KENNETH

What channel?

Karen gives in.

KAREN

Same channel it's on every week.

SHARON
Daddy you want some pie?

KENNETH
What kind?

Sharon looks to Karen.

SHARON
I made apple pie.

KAREN
(to Kenneth)
You have got to stop. You are killing him.

KENNETH
I am not-

SHARON
I give him money too. *(beat)* Just a few hundred dollars here and there.

KENNETH
Why didn't you tell us?

KAREN
We need to come to an understanding, no one in this family will give Michael another dollar until he gets help for his addiction. We can't keep fighting in separate corners. We have too many things pulling us apart right now.

KENNETH
I love my boy.

KAREN
We all love him.

KENNETH
But I'm his father. I should be able to bring him back. To who he use to be. *(laughs)*
Sneaking girls in through the bathroom window at all hours.

SHARON
You knew about that?

KENNETH
Of course, I heard a scuffle in the bathroom one night and caught him pulling a girl through the window. He said she needed a glass of water.

SHARON

Of course she did after climbing through that little window.

KAREN

You told him he had five minutes to get her out of the house.

KENNETH

He tried to make her leave through the window and I popped him on the side of his head and reminded him that she earned that damn water and the right to walk out the front door.

They all enjoy this moment. Kenneth looks towards the door. Waiting.

KAREN

He's not coming back tonight.

Sharon hugs both of them as Kenneth makes his way back to the chair in front of the television holding his football and the remote.

SHARON

I'm headed home. I'll see you two tomorrow.

Sharon exits the house.

KAREN

(to Kenneth)

Did you find the game?

KENNETH

Hell no. They must have changed the numbers on me. Damn cable companies playing games with my football.

KAREN

You're just getting old. Here give me the remote I'll find it.

KENNETH

It's them damn pills. They don't work for shit. I can't be missing the game now.

Karen takes the remote and changes the channel. She hands the remote back to Kenneth then sits on his lap.

KAREN

There, same channel. Seventy- two.

KENNETH

Seventy- two? Really? *(beat)* Thanks. Seventy- two got it.

He holds her tight as they both watch the television.