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## **Cast of Characters**

MR. (GRAY)

MRS. (GRAY)

MEGHAN GRAY

## **Author's Note**

The author grants permission for groups to omit swear words as required.

# BREAK FAST

by Douglas Craven

*(The action takes place at the Gray family breakfast table, located in the dining room. There are exits on stage left and right. Through the stage left exit is the kitchen. Through the stage right exit is the stairway to the second floor and the front door of the house. All the audience sees is the dining room. The table is set with bread, cereal, milk and orange juice. MR. and MRS. GRAY have divided a newspaper between them. Mr. Gray's briefcase, containing at least one file folder, some papers and a pen, is under the table. Mr. Gray's chair is on the stage right side of the table, Mrs. Gray's is on the left, and Meghan's faces the audience in the centre of the table. The lighting suggests early morning. Occasionally we hear traffic sounds outside.)*

*(The action of the play focuses on the same breakfast, and spans twenty years.)*

*(Music cue, if desired: Eric Satie's Trois Gymnopedies.)*

*(MR. GRAY is sitting at the table, beginning his breakfast. MRS. GRAY enters right. At this point in the play, they are a young couple in their twenties.)*

**MR. GRAY.** Good morning.

**MRS. GRAY.** Oh, is it morning already? I thought we got to sleep first.

**MR.** Is Meghan finally asleep?

**MRS.** Yes. *(With tired irony:)* I do so hope she is colicky.

**MR.** I hope *not*. Ever find it hard to believe that we're parents?

**MRS.** No. The birth convinced me.

**MR.** It's been a week. Aren't you over it yet?

**MRS.** *(Speaking:)* Ha ha.

*(MRS. GRAY joins her husband for breakfast. Soon, we hear footsteps coming down the stairs. Enter MEGHAN, a little girl of five, dragging her doll behind her.)*

**MRS.** Good morning, sweetie.

*(MEGHAN rushes to her and they hug.)*

**MEGHAN.** Morning, daddy.

**MR.** Hello, Meggie.

**MRS.** Well, what do you want for breakfast?

**MEGHAN.** Cereal. Can I have Honeycomb instead of Rice Krispies?

**MRS.** Well...

**MR.** One bowl's not too much sugar, is it?

**MRS.** No, I guess not. Okay. I'll get it.

**MEGHAN.** *(Crossing to kitchen:)* No, I can do it myself.

**MRS.** Are you sure?

**MEGHAN.** Yes!

**MR.** You spilled the milk all over yesterday, Meggie.

**MEGHAN.** I won't. I can do it.

**MRS.** All right. Be careful.

*(MEGHAN exits left.)*

**MR.** You didn't have to clean up the mess yesterday.

**MRS.** Yes I did.

**MR.** Oh, right. Sorry.

*(They eat and read the paper.)*

*(MEGHAN enters, now a girl of eight. There should be a sharp distinction between the two ages. A simple costume change might add to the effect, but MEGHAN's ages should be distinguishable by performance alone.)*

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(MEGHAN has a bowl of Honeycomb. It is overflowing. She eats as she walks.)

**MEGHAN.** Can I just say that I love this cereal?

**MRS.** Eat it at the table.

(MEGHAN sits.)

**MRS.** Did you pick up after yourself?

**MEGHAN.** I spilled some milk, but I cleaned it up. Don't worry.

**MRS.** Did you rinse out the cloth?

**MEGHAN.** I think I did.

**MR.** Better hurry. Almost time for school, Meggie.

**MEGHAN.** I know. *(Pause.)* You really need to tell me that, dad.

**MRS.** Don't use that tone with your father.

**MEGHAN.** What? All I said was I know what time it is.

**MR.** Why are you getting angry?

**MEGHAN.** I'm not. Why is everyone always against me?

**MR.** We're not against you.

**MEGHAN.** You are. You're always shouting at me.

**MRS.** No, we aren't.

**MEGHAN.** You just did. I wasn't even doing anything and you shouted at me. "Don't be rude to your father!"

**MRS.** You're the one who's shouting, sweetie.

**MEGHAN.** I am not!

**MR.** Okay, keep that up and no *[Insert age-appropriate television show title here.]* for you for a week.

**MEGHAN.** That's not fair. I wasn't shouting.

**MRS.** We'll talk about it later. Go up and get ready for school.

**MEGHAN.** But I'm not even done my breakfast!

**MRS.** You can finish it when you're dressed.

**MEGHAN.** You're so unfair and very RUDE.

*(She storms off, right. MR. and MRS. GRAY share a mutually sympathetic "parent look.")*

**MRS.** Eight!

**MR.** Quite an age. Pass the jam, please.

*(They eat and read. During the next scene, MR. GRAY takes his briefcase from under the table and pulls out a file folder containing some of his work. He finds a pen and begins to work at the table.)*

*(Enter MEGHAN. She is now between 10 and 12. She wears headphones around her neck which are turned up so high that the audience can practically hear the words. She carries a copy of Redwall.)*

**MRS.** Turn it down.

*(MEGHAN rolls her eyes, but turns down the headphones. She sits in her chair and begins to eat the cereal she left there.)*

**MRS.** Did you finish all your homework last night?

**MEGHAN.** Yes. I did a great job on my book report. I read the novel fast so I have lots of time to work. Can I just say that I hate math?

**MR.** You used to love it.

**MEGHAN.** Uh, not really, dad. I mean, it was okay when it was just adding and subtracting. Now we have to do word problems.

**MRS.** You're a smart girl. You shouldn't have any trouble with that.

**MR.** We just want you to try your best, Meggie.

**MEGHAN.** Yeah. *(Pause.)* Dad, would you mind not calling me that?

**MR.** What?

**MEGHAN.** Meggie. Would it be okay if you called me Meghan?

**MR.** Sure. No problem.

*(They eat, they read, they work. MEGHAN opens Redwall.)*

**MRS.** Why are you reading *Redwall* again?

**MEGHAN.** I don't know. I just like it.

*(They eat, they read, they work.)*

**MEGHAN.** So, can I go to Pam's party this weekend?

**MR.** We talked about this yesterday.

**MEGHAN.** You said you'd tell me at breakfast if I could go. Please.

**MRS.** We talked it over and we decided "yes."

**MEGHAN.** All right! Yes!

**MRS.** On the condition that Pam's parents are there the whole time.

**MR.** There won't be any boys there, will there?

**MEGHAN.** Yeah right, dad. Great! I'm going to call Pam and tell her.

*(She stands and runs towards the kitchen. As an afterthought, she runs to her parents and hugs them.)*

Thanks!

*(She runs off, left.)*

**MR.** She'll be okay, right?

**MRS.** Don't worry.

*(Pause. They read. MRS. GRAY checks her watch.)*

It's late. Meghan, get off the phone. It's almost time to catch the bus. Meghan! Meghan, get off the phone, please! *(To MR. GRAY:)* She doesn't even hear me these days. Can you get her, please?

**MR.** Why do I always have to be "The Motivator"? *(He stands and moves towards the kitchen door.)* Meghan. Meghan. Get off the phone right now. You're going to be late.

*(Enter MEGHAN. She is now 14. She carries a cell phone and a copy of The Mists of Avalon.)*

**MEGHAN.** *(To the phone:)* Yes, yes. I was so hyper! Okay, Pam. I'll bring it to school.

**MR.** Meghan. Helloooo.

*(MEGHAN communicates non-verbally with her parents throughout the following phone conversation.)*

**MRS.** Come on, sweetie. The bus will be here in fifteen minutes.

**MEGHAN.** *(To the phone:)* Uh-huh. Pardon? Sorry, I didn't hear you. Yes, okay, it IS him. Yes! I know. He's so *[Insert current slang term for "hot." ]!*

**MR.** Meghan. Hang. Up. The. Phone. Nowwah.

*(MEGHAN flares her eyes at her father in a silent, "Daa-add!")*

**MEGHAN.** Listen, I have to go. Yeah, "dad-trouble." Bye.

*(She disconnects.)*

**MR.** *(To MRS. GRAY:)* I don't think I'm that much trouble, am I? *(Pause.)* Can I get a hug before you go?

**MEGHAN.** Yeah right, dad.

*(She exits right.)*

**MRS.** *(Shouting after her:)* And put on a different shirt, please.

**MEGHAN.** *(Shouting back from offstage:)* Mom!

**MRS.** It's a bit cold for that I think.

**MR.** If it were August, it would be too cold for that.

**MEGHAN.** Whatever!

*(MR. GRAY finishes his work. He checks his watch.)*

**MR.** I should start thinking about going too.

**MRS.** Finish your bread first.

*(MR. GRAY eats his bread.)*

*(Enter MEGHAN. She is now 17 and she is obviously going through a personal crisis. She is withdrawn. She carries a copy of Steppenwolf. She walks to the table and sits in her chair. She opens the book and reads.)*

**MRS.** *Steppenwolf?*

**MEGHAN.** Is there some problem with that?

**MRS.** No, of course not. *(Pause.)* Mr. Wallace called last night.

**MEGHAN.** What, doesn't he have a life of his own?

**MRS.** He says you're failing calculus.

**MEGHAN.** Then I guess I am.

**MR.** What? You said you had a "B." Meghan!

**MEGHAN.** What?

**MRS.** He says she's missed nine days.

**MR.** He did? Have you been skipping out?

**MEGHAN.** Yes, dad. I've been "skipping out."

**MR.** Hey, don't talk to me like that.

**MEGHAN.** Talk to you? I was just reading my book, and you start giving me a hard time.

**MRS.** You need this credit.

**MEGHAN.** There still lots of time. I'll handle this.

**MR.** I think this means that you need to stay home more often.

**MEGHAN.** What?

**MR.** At least four nights a week.

**MRS.** Until the mark comes up, anyway.

**MEGHAN.** This is BULLSHIT!

*(The play stops dead. Then:)*

**MR.** Meghan!

**MEGHAN.** You're putting all of this on me and you don't even know what I'm dealing with. You just don't know.

**MRS.** Whatever it is, we can talk about it.

**MR.** Without that kind of language.

**MEGHAN.** Or what? You'll take away my TV privileges, or maybe ground me? I'm used to it.

**MR.** I never thought I'd need to ground a 17-year-old, but if that's what I have to do, I will.

**MEGHAN.** *(Overlapping with the end of MR. GRAY's last line:)* Pam's in the hospital, okay?

**MRS.** What?

**MEGHAN.** She passed out at a party. Two weeks ago. She almost died.

*(MR. GRAY reaches out to touch MEGHAN's arm. MEGHAN shrugs him off violently.)*

**MEGHAN.** So you know all things considered calculus is not exactly high on my fucking list of priorities! *(If desired, delete expletive.)*

*(She races to the kitchen, left. MRS. GRAY follows her.)*

*(MR. GRAY stays at the table, staring off into space. He looks as if he is also going to cry. He puts his head down on the table.)*

*(Enter MEGHAN. She is now a self-possessed 18-year-old. She carries The Catcher in the Rye.)*

**MEGHAN.** I better go. I'll be late. *(She sees him.)* Dad, are you okay?

**MR.** Oh. Yeah, I'm fine, Meghan. I'm just worried about your mom.

**MEGHAN.** It's just a routine operation. She'll be home in two days.

**MR.** I know. I know you're right. Thanks.

*(MEGHAN looks at her father. She crosses behind him and then holds him. He responds with surprise and then deep gratitude. It is clear that they have not hugged for many years.)*

**MEGHAN.** I've really got to go. I'll call you at lunch, okay?

**MR.** I'd like that.

*(She moves towards the right exit.)*

**MR.** Hey, Meghan. I'm proud of you.

**MEGHAN.** *(Smiling.)* Who wouldn't be?

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