by Donna Beveridge

READ AS A PLAY:

 **Sister**, the writer **Sandy**, her sister **Mom** **Director**

**Sandy:** I think I should stay home from school today, Mom. I'm sick. Really, I am.

*Sister:* I don’t believe my fifteen-year-old sister for a minute. She hates school.

This is just another one of her excuses to stay home. Again Mom isn't as sure as I am. She's a working mom who struggles with guilt for not being home for us.

She gives Sandy the benefit of the doubt. Again!

Mom: You can stay home but you have to stay in bed. And I want you to eat chicken *noodle soup for lunch.*

*Sister:* We always eat canned chicken noodle soup when we're sick.

 It's the only time either of us likes it.

Director: Mom feels Sandy's forehead as she kisses her good-bye.

***Mom:*** You don't feel warm, are you sure you need to stay home?

Director: The dramatic Sandy lays one hand across her forehead.

**Sandy:** I feel dizzy and my head hurts. I must have that *bug* that's going around.

Director: Mom *reluctantly* leaves for work.

***Mom:*** "I'll call you later, Dear," (and closes the door)

*Sister:* I have to catch the bus for school. "Enjoy your day, Sister Dear," I holler over my shoulder, "and get well."

Director: Sandy waves to her sister from the kitchen window and grins.

 She tries her best to look *pathetic*

*Sister:* When I come home from school, loaded down with homework. I hear her *scurry* into the bedroom we share as I open the door. "Mom will be home soon. You'd better get your act together," I warn.

Director Sandy peers through *drooping* eyes.

**Sandy:** I'm feeling a bit better (she sighs).

*Sister:* Then why are you still in bed?

**Sandy:** *Paying my dues* for a day off

*Sister*: Well, save it for Mom, you're going to need it. I need a snack. What's in the *cupboard*?

**Sandy**  Well, I found some donuts, and there's popcorn, and Mom hid a package of candy bars on the top shelf.

*Sister:* Got you, you *little faker*. Wait until Mom comes home.

 This was a chicken-noodle-soup day, remember?

**Sandy** Oh, she'll never know.

*Sister:* **Famous** last words. When Mom comes home, I'm at my desk doing homework. I open the door a crack so I won't miss anything.

Director: Sandy is on the couch, pressing a cool washcloth to her forehead.

***Mom:*** How are you feeling tonight? (in a tone of proper concern)

**Sandy:** Better, (with only an edge of brightness to her voice),

 I think I can go to school tomorrow.

*Sister:* “smart move, Sister,” I think.

***Mom:*** The chicken noodle soup must have made you better. Did it taste good to you?

**Sandy:** Soup always tastes good when I'm sick

*Sister:* “Liar,” I think. “Watch out. You have become an *unsuspecting prey*.”

Mom: Well, Dear, you just lie there while I get supper. I don't want you to *overexert* yourself. Are you up to eating your favorite pizza?

*Sister:* “Probably not,” I think, “after a day of junk food.”

**Sandy:** I think I could eat a little. (in a weak voice)

Director: Mom rattles around in the kitchen, stretching pizza dough and filling it with our favorite toppings. I hear her open the trashcan.

*Sister:* I know what's coming next. I think I'll stay right here in my room.

Mom: Sandy, I don't see your soup can in the trash. Where is it?

*Sister:* “If I were you, Sister, I'd confess now. Otherwise, you're done for.” But my cornered sister attempts a getaway move.

**Sandy:** I pushed the can to the bottom, so I wouldn't smell the chicken. It was upsetting my stomach.

*Sister:* That's a good one, I have to admit. But Mom's *not buying it*.

Mom: Poor dear. I'll get rid of it for you.

**Sandy:** That's okay, Mom. I'm feeling better now.

 Why don't I empty the trash while you get dinner?"

Mom: No need, Dear. Just relax.

*Sister:* I hear a *clatter* of cans and bottles in the kitchen.

Mom: OOPS, I dropped the trash.

*Sister:* I could help her clean up, but think I'll stay here and begin my essay for English class. I have my topic, thanks to Sandy. I think I'll call it, "What a Tangled Web We Weave." Mom's voice remains calm and pleasant. Too pleasant.

Mom: "That's strange, Sandy. I can't find the chicken noodle soup can anywhere!"

Director: There is a long silence. Sandy makes one last attempt to get out of the trap, but she is definitely the weaker one in this *predator/prey* game.

**Sandy:** I forgot, Mom. I put the can in the bag on the porch.

*Sister:* I know that there are at least four bags on the porch, all tied up, waiting for trash day - just as I know that Mom and Sandy will play this game to the death.

I have finished a draft about the complications of lying by the time Mom calls me to dinner.

Director: They all sit at the table in silence.

 Four bags of trash are *strewn* on the floor.

 Mom and Sister eat pizza, made just right, and drink soda.

 There is a special treat in the oven for dessert.

 In front of Sandy sits one solitary mug of chicken noodle soup.