

Power

An original play.

Written by: Nah Damien
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Runtime: 15 minutes

Characters:		Actor:
Sasha		Crystal
Simon		Jervis
Mother		Steph
Father		Jeffrey
Chorus:		
1		Christine
2		Jun Yi
3		Jie Ying
4		Xin Yi
5		Ji Heng
6		Janice
7		Steph
8		Jeffrey
9		Jervis

Single lines (-) indicate one Chorus member.

Light types:

1. *Neutral*
2. *Frozen*
3. *Overwhelming*
4. *Memories*

Scene 1: Introductions

Sasha struggles through the crowd, trying to introduce herself. Frustrated, she yells "Stop!", stopping the motion of the Chorus. Light change (2).

Sasha: Hi. My name is Sasha. I'm fifteen, and I have the power to *freeze time*.

Chorus mockingly gasps.

Sasha: Not that you'd know, because it's not like I would tell anyone. Why would I? But you must be curious about what I can do. And I have to tell you... it's not much. All I can really do is... freeze the universe. It's not as great as it sounds. In reality, the only advantage I have is that I have all the time in the world to stare at my notes before an exam.

7: Or stare at the questions in an exam.

8: Or stare at the floor in disappointment after the exam.

3: Or stare at that really cute guy in class until his face turns ugly --

Chorus lets out a teasing 'ooh'.

Sasha: So really, you're not missing out on much. Neither am I, but that's besides the point. The point is, my power doesn't define me.

1: It's only a tiny slice,

5: a hidden talent

9: that no one needs to know about.

Sasha: Frozen worlds are merely places for me to think and compose myself.

2: For me to daydream in class without getting called out for it.

9: For staring hard at the never-ending sunset just above the horizon.

7: For those moments when I need to time out, take a breather, and get myself going.

Sasha: And just so we're clear, I don't use it to cheat. (*pause*) It is kind of tempting, though...

5: So tempting to give yourself that extra minute before the invigilator says,

Chorus: Time's up!

7: So tempting to take a peek at the next person's answers.

Sasha: But, that's not who I am.

7: Really? Not even once? Not even on a harmless, little test?

Sasha: No...

9: Come on, just lean over and peek!

8: You know what they say, teamwork makes the dream work!

Chorus: It would be so easy!

Sasha: No - I'm not a cheater! I'm not going so far as to cheat my way to the top. Rules are rules, they're meant to be followed!

9: Wow, you must be so fun at parties.

Sasha: Anyways. How did I get this power? I don't know. It's like asking yourself how you met your brother, or your best friend. These things just happen, though sometimes I feel like I'm such a waste of potential. If only my power was in the hands of a...

9: Superhero! Who could use it to fight injustice and save lives.

4: If only it was in the hands of a scientist, who could use the time to calculate, evaluate and formulate --

5: And advance ourselves through knowledge and technology.

Sasha: So far, it's not going anywhere. And thus, freezing time has become second nature to me. But sometimes, I wish I had the power to do something else. Sometimes I wish I could go back in time, to right all my wrongs. (*pause, change in tone*) Or, become a genius in primary school.

8: Or see a band performance from before I was born!

1: What a hipster!

5: I could prank someone else by becoming their fortune teller!

7: Or maybe, I could even prank myself from the past!

Sasha: (*jumps 7, 7 reacts in shock*) It's just a prank, bro!

Sasha: All that seems cool, I guess, and it would be, if I could go back in time. But, if there's anything I want more than that, it's that I could speed things up.

Scene 2: Parents

Father: Every time. Every time!

Mother: What, you think you can blow away all your money on useless garbage? You think we can afford glowing shower heads and glowing decorations and glowing everything throughout the house?

Father: (*defensive*) Oi! I didn't say that. It's always the case with you. I say one tiny little thing, and you go and blow it up.

Mother: Hello, we live in Singapore. One cramped little flat costs half a Ferrari. You think we can afford little little things here, and little little things there. Soon we'll be drowning in little little debts.

Freeze. Light change (2).

Sasha: Stop. Sometimes I wish I didn't have to go through this. I wish I could turn into a dove and fly out the window. Like one of those magic tricks. (*pause*) But I'm just stuck in a cage. At least Simon is usually with me. Say hi, Simon. Besides, there's no point in pausing it here. All I can do is wait it out with my brother.

Unfreeze. Light change (1).

2: The worst part isn't the shouting,
- or the yelling.

Chorus: It's... the silence.

3: Because you'll never know when or what they'll say next.

Father: (*interrupting*) It's me. It's *always* about me. I'm always in the wrong.

Mother: (*in confusion*) I didn't -- what did I do? Is it so wrong to be realistic?

Silence.

5: I feel like I'm only five and powerless to do anything.

Father: (*calmer*) All I ever wanted was to make our house a place we can call home.

Mother: It's already our home.

Father: (*abrupt*) *You call that blank canvas a home?*

Mother: Fine. If you think you can earn enough money to buy it, go ahead. Go buy whatever you want.

Pause. Both parents sulk and say nothing. Set changes, they're now standing up.

Father: You know, perhaps you could be just a little bit more grateful. Maybe you should be more grateful of the fact that I'm not the kind of man to stay out drinking late at night. Maybe, you should be grateful I'm not sleeping with another woman. Maybe, just maybe, you should be grateful that I've never laid a finger on you for the past twenty years.

Mother: *(considering his last sentence)* Is that a threat?

Father feels wrongfully misjudged. He throws a chair across the floor. Mother takes a moment to recover from the shock.

Mother: Are you going to pay for what you're going to break?

Father: *(outraged)* Are you going to SHUT UP?

Mother takes a moment, as if wanting to say more, but stops herself. She exits. Set shifts.

Sasha: When I was five, I remember they once had an argument. It was at Ikea, too. I remember kicking things to try and get them to stop --

4: Daddy, stop it.

2: Mommy, that's enough.

5: I want to go home. Let's go home.

6: Daddy, calm down.

1: Mommy!

3: Just stop it!

Sasha: But they didn't seem to like that. My brother was wiser, he just stood in a corner quietly and so I followed. My father drove himself home; three of us took the bus instead. I never tried to intervene their arguments again. I mean -- what can I do? What should I do? Should I even do anything?

Light change (3).

Chorus: Sasha --

Mother: Sometimes I can't stand your father. He thinks our house is like a dollhouse, waiting to be accessorised. He thinks as long as we have food on the table, he can buy whatever he wants.

Chorus: Sasha --

Father: Sometimes I can't stand your mother. She thinks money is as rare as gold. She thinks that in order to survive, we have to give up everything else.

Chorus: Sasha!

Mother: Listen to me. Your father has no idea how to manage our money. He just spends on impulse. If he continues on like this, we'll be as good as homeless!

Chorus: Sasha!

Father: Listen to me. Your mother has no idea how to stop worrying. She's a control freak. If she continues on like this, our house is as good as a prison!

Slowly, the two parents start to overlap each other. Sasha gets more and more affected.

Mother: Sasha, stay with me. Your father will ruin you. The two of you won't know how to live by yourself or manage your wallet. | You'll burn through money as fast as your father burns through cigarettes! Don't follow him, don't listen to him, stay with me!

Father: Sasha, come with me. Your mother will ruin you. You won't know how to enjoy your life. I can buy you and Simon anything you want. Life is too short to be worrying all the time!

Chorus: *(intensity builds over time)* Sasha... Sasha... Sasha!

Sasha: Stop it! Just stop talking!

Everyone freezes. Light change (2). Sasha takes a few deep breaths. (Sasha has to check if everyone is ready and sigh once down)

1: They're not always like that. We usually go out on certain weekends to have food at the hawker centre. Mom wouldn't allow us to eat anywhere else. But at least it felt like we were a proper family.

6: Occasionally, Mom would let us get some western food, and she'd indulge in a hearty meal of fish and chips herself.

Light change (4). A moment for Mother to take care of Sasha.

Chorus: sway in the wind

4: My mother's more than her beliefs in money, or her assertiveness in their arguments. (Starts line only when 6 is ready and swaying)

2x Thunderstorms (Ensemble starts flapping the raincoats); when Chorus finish their line, they will twirl the raincoats and tie a cape and walk in circles.

1: When I was seven years old, under a midnight thunderstorm,

2: I wanted to freeze the world, but that wouldn't make the storm go away.

3: Instead it was my mother who sat next to me, while I pulled my head out from under the blanket,

4: As she stroked my hair and sang me a lullaby,

5: And all the lightning and the thunder faded away into the distance.

6: When I woke up, she was still there, right beside me.

Slow down.

Mother: It's okay, Sasha. There're much bigger things to be scared about in the world. There are bad men and women that are much scarier than any thunderstorm in the world.

Sasha: *(as seven-year-old)* Is daddy a bad man?

Mother: *(pause, ponders on how to answer her question)* No, he's not. He's just... rash, sometimes. But he's not a bad man.

Mother kisses Sasha's forehead.

3: She's my mother. And my father's more than his bad temper, or his overpowering shoutings.

1: When I was eleven, celebrating my birthday with my brother and a small party of friends.

2: We talked and we ate and we laughed

3: And we played four different board games we would never touch again

4: But we had so much fun.

5: My father refilled our plastic cups with infinite soda and helped us to take pictures,

6: Pictures I still have printed and pasted on my bedroom wall.

Chorus exits; family waves them goodbye. Mother and Simon clear up (set change).

Father: Your friends were wonderful -- you should tell them to come by more often, I'd be happy to have them. It's nice to see you getting along well and having fun.

Sasha: *(as eleven-year-old)* Thanks, dad.

Father gives Sasha a hug and ruffles her hair.

Sasha: *(back in the present)* The best memories of my life were with them - my family, in moments far from empty, lonely, lifeless frames of the universe. You don't get any of that in a frozen world.

Scene 3: Siblings

Simon enters; he's just returned from school.

Simon: I'm home.

He places the bag on the sofa, sitting beside it. Looking around, it appears there's no one there to greet him.

Simon: Mom? Dad? Sasha?

Sasha walks out to meet him.

Sasha: Mom's in her room. Dad's out, don't know where.

Simon: Did they...?

Sasha: What do you think?

Simon: And did you...?

Sasha: *(getting up, walking towards Simon)* Did I what? What is it, Simon? What did you expect me to do? He smashed the mirror this time, you know. And her screaming wasn't making it any better. What did you expect me to do, Simon? Hold a peace treaty, pacify them into submission, make them apologise? You weren't here, Simon. You think it's so easy, don't you?

Simon: *(in mild frustration of being misunderstood)* I didn't-

Sasha: Then what! What is it you want me to do?

Sasha glares at Simon. Her glare softens, it melts. She looks away, almost in guilt.

Simon: I'm not stupid, you know. I'm not some innocent baby brother who's ignorant of the horrors of our parents. I was there with you, so many times. *(he sits down; with a change in*

tone) I know how difficult it is. I know how daunting it feels. I want to stop them sometimes, just like you, but I hesitate too. You know why?

Sasha: *(moving closer towards him; empathetically)* Because you're scared.

Simon: Because I'm scared.

Sasha: *(genuinely)* Sorry, I guess.

Simon takes away his bag to hug it, and to let Sasha sit down beside him, which she does. They sigh.

Sasha: Maybe one day.

Simon: Perhaps.

Scene 4: Divorce

Everyone is frozen.

Sasha: Last week, we met with a car accident. Simon was alive, but then he wasn't, but then he was. He was put in a coma. They said... they don't know when -- or if -- he'll wake up.

Simon. The only person who was with me when our parents were arguing. The only person I knew who was perfect. My best friend since the day he was born. I remember being frozen, just before the impact. I looked at him. I couldn't see his face. He was looking away, at the headlights.

Light change -- unfreeze. Crash. Chorus is on the floor, grabbing their heart as if they were dying.

3: What if he dies?

4: What's this tight feeling in my chest?

2: Why am I mourning for him when he's not even dead?

5: He won't even know if you're honoring him.

1: Why do I feel like crying so much?

6: Why don't I feel anything?

Chorus: Why don't I feel anything... why don't I feel anything... why don't I feel anything...
(softly murmured, slowly standing up, looking at themselves like they're in a completely different body.)

Sasha: Simon? Simon... can you hear me?

Chorus shifts to being accusing. Hunch (Static's back boys)

6: You're useless.

2: You're helpless.

4: You're powerless.

1: Your power is a waste.

5: You can't even save your brother.

Chorus: *You can't even save your brother! (stomp on the floor and try to grab, some leeway time)*

Sasha: Stop, stop, *STOP!* (Chorus is startled, backing off slowly and scrambling away) This is supposed to be... my own time, my own space, why are you doing this to me? *What do you want me to do?*

Light change. Sasha retreats into a sitting position on the floor.

Sasha: I closed my eyes as hard as I could. I wanted to cut off time and weep forever. I felt so tired, but I didn't want to sleep. I wished I could have gone back in time and stopped my father from driving us for lunch that day. I wished I could skip to the day where he finally wakes up. But all I could do now, is wait.

Chorus: An eternity of silence. (Ruben effect)

Parents are arguing again.

Father: Now, I'll have to take bus to work. Are you happy, now that I don't have to burn all of *our* money for gas?

Mother: Our son is in a coma and all you can think about is *money?*

Father: I thought that would be you.

Simon wakes up. He coughs a little.

Sasha: (hushed) Simon!

Simon: Sasha! (pause) Mom and dad -- where are they?

Mother: I know what you're thinking. We should get a divorce.

Father: Oi-

Mother: Let's do it. Let's get divorced. We won't have to argue again. You can have one, I'll have the other. Then we'll live happily ever after.

Sasha: ...yeah.

Pause.

Simon: I wish we could do something.

Sasha: So do I.

Father: Is this really what you want?

Mother: Isn't this what *you* want?

Sasha: *(deep sigh.)* I guess we can't wait it out forever. *(getting up)* I'll be right back.

She stops at the door. She takes a moment to reassure herself. She walks through the door, parents stare at her.

Sasha: Mom, Dad... *(pause)* We need to talk.

End.