

To Lose a Mother

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A short play

By Jarred Corona

AT RISE:

An empty stage, or one lit so as to appear empty. Perhaps there's plenty of darkness. There is a single stool or pedestal. On it, a bowl.

A WOMAN enters. She's young, though perhaps not physically. The Woman is dressed in all black. Of course she is; she just came from a funeral. There is a fashion to her, though not necessarily a beauty. Perhaps parts of dress appear to be decaying on her body. Her mother is dead, and so the Woman has finally reached the age where she, too, is dying.

She takes a moment to collect herself.

It is awful out there in the world.

A voice speaks. Perhaps it's a pre-recorded voice from the Woman. Perhaps it's an actress entirely disconnected from the space. Whoever it is, it isn't the Woman in the Now, Here, This.

VOICE

Dearest Diary, My mother died today. You might find that to be a factual error given that the car crash happened last Wednesday and the coroner claimed she was killed instantly on impact, though the fire would have finished her off either way. Yet still, today is the day she really died.

The Woman approached the stool with its bowl stood there in all the vast emptiness.

VOICE

I don't think I cried at all today. I woke up the way I do every morning, and I took a piss and a shit. I made coffee in the hotel room because I don't care for continental breakfasts. I ate a bagel with butter and black pepper while lazily scrolling through videos on my phone and laughing at the ones that called for laughter.

The Woman brings out a sharp instrument of some kind from somewhere, perhaps from bowl or perhaps from her dress.

She steels herself for the steel.

#### VOICE

When you drive in the morning traffic to a viewing, it's much the same as driving anywhere else. The other drivers are all idiots. The lights are convenient at times and cruel at others. The sun comes up and you hope it'll be ugly on this one day, but it paints the horizon with its same old little dabs of paint. You start to wish Monet and those other pointillist bastards had been shanked for daring to draw your attention to how beautiful the sky can be.

The Woman present the steel to her breast and brings it down. The pain takes her instantly. Perhaps she doubles over the bowl. She saws through her chest and bone. Let her cries mask the voice if they do so. Let them be restrained if they feel restrained.

#### VOICE

You don't normally open the casket for someone who got burned that bad. "You don't want it to haunt your dreams and become a ghost," the mortician said when Dad and I asked. So we made do with photos and flowers and videos. People sobbed, and they laughed. I laughed, mostly. We piled in our cars and drove over to a cemetery owned by the city of Memphis -- Did you know cities owned graves? The Baptist Church wouldn't bury my uncle after he died from AIDS way back when, so Mom's will said, "Fuck 'em. No priests get to sleep with my sexy corpse." The mortician said it wasn't sexy.

The Woman's heart falls out of her and lands in the bowl. It's wet and disgusting. It hurts.

It hurts.

The moment it escapes her, we can hear it pounding. It's fast, at first, filled with the adrenaline that comes when one cuts their own heart out. It gradually slows, filled with the calm that comes with being outside of one's body.