

CHARACTERS

MOM	Wearing a bathrobe with pockets over nightgown or sweats.
SON	Casual dress. The narrow end of a beautiful bluejay or other blue feather sticks up from his shirt pocket.
DAD	Casual dress.

SETTING

Interior of a home. A small table and two chairs, with an empty wine bottle on its side, and an empty glass. There are two ‘doors’- one to the outside; one, interior.

TIME/TONE

It is during the night. Pace is gentle, slow, with meaning in the pauses. The audience should feel that a lot remains unspoken. Ellipses (...) indicate a trailing off, while dashes (-) indicate quick interruptions, as the actors finish each other’s sentences.

(Lights up on MOM, asleep at the kitchen table. Her head rests on her stretched out arm; the other is folded. After a few seconds, there is a knock at the door. She stirs, confused. Another knock; she rises to answer. SON enters.)

MOM

Oh my God! Why didn't you call? I can't believe it's you! Come in, come in! *(They embrace.)*

SON

It's good to see you, Mom.

MOM

How long did it take for you to get here? I still can't believe it- what a wonderful surprise!

SON

It sort of came together, last minute. I've missed you.

MOM

Not as much as I've missed you. *(They laugh. SON sits beside her.)* Ever since you-

SON

Moved away.

MOM

Moved away. Flew the coop. Left us in the lurch. However you want to say it. I've missed you not being close. *(She reaches for his hand.)*

SON

You're up awfully late. You always went to bed before I'd get home from work, so why...*(He indicates the empty bottle.)*

MOM

I just...couldn't sleep tonight. It happens now and then, so I came down for...a snack. I guess I dozed off. *(Taking in the sight of him.)* Oh my. It's just so...it's so great to see you. It's been too long. Much too long. Since you-

SON

Moved away.

MOM

Since you moved so *far* away. *(Fussing gently.)* Honestly, honey, the one place you could've moved to that doesn't have a cell tower? I did *not* sign off on that! Not that anyone asked my permission.

SON

Mom.

MOM

I know, I know. But I can't even text you. See how your day's going. Find out what you're up to...

SON

'Up to no good.' I used to text that back, remember? Sometimes it was even true.

MOM

Not now, though. Just look at you! You look older. Taller, even. How did *that* happen!? I mean, it hasn't been that long. I guess when you see someone every day, you don't notice...Do I look older to you?

SON

Of course not! Maybe it's the kind of work I'm doing...it sort of grows a person up fast. I'm learning so much, Mom. You'd be amazed.

MOM

Anything you can talk about?

SON

(Rises, walks around as if absorbing his surroundings.) Not really. It's challenging work, though. Nothing like I ever dreamed about before I-

MOM

'Moved away,' I know. I get it. *(She chuckles.)* You always did have a way of simplifying things for your ole' mom.

SON

(Smiles.) It's not like I planned this. It caught us all off guard. The opportunity...The way I see it, I had the right resume for the right job at the right time.

MOM

(Rising.) Are you hungry? I'll make you a sandwich. Let me- oh shoot. I never got to the store yesterday-

SON

No, Mom. Really. I'm not hungry.*(Pause.)* And I can only stay a few minutes.

MOM

What? Why? That's not...I mean...don't get me wrong, I'm delighted to see you for however long you can stay, but...it doesn't seem fair. *(Beat. A glance at interior door.)* I should get your dad. He'll want-

SON

Nooo. Let's not. He works so hard, I'm sure he needs his rest. And you know it's different with him. He...I'll see him another time.

MOM

(Excited.) That would be awesome! When? Can you get back...oh, I don't know. Once a month? Holidays?

SON

(An arm around her.) You know I can't. It's not like that..the work...I can't. I don't call the shots. You understand, don't you?

MOM

Of course, I do...No...Not really. *(Sighs.)* But that's okay. An opportunity like this for you...for *my* son? It's what I always dreamed of for you. I can't get too upset, can I, since it's what I hoped for? Prayed for? That you'd fall into something amazing like this? It just took me by surprise. It was so sudden that you-

SON

Became geographically absent.

MOM

(Laughs.) Well, la-de-da. That too. *(She starts to stumble and he catches her.)* Sorry...the wine... *(Points.)* What's that in your pocket?

SON

(Takes feather out.) Isn't it pretty? I found it outside, just as I came up the walk.

MOM

You were always bringing little treasures home. Feathers, shells, leaves, rocks...

SON

Stray animals, people. *(They laugh.)* Here. You keep it.

MOM

(Takes, admires.) Are you sure? It is my favorite color, which you knew, of course. But wouldn't you like to keep it as a reminder of home? A memento? You didn't take much with you...and you're so far away...doing God only knows what...

SON

Mom. You keep it. I don't need reminders, believe me. I think of home all the time. Of you and Dad. Everyone. Everything. So many good memories. *(Wandering again.)*

MOM

(Plays with feather as she speaks, stroking her cheek now and then before eventually placing in pocket of bathrobe.) So many good times...I hope you don't think about the bad ones, too.

SON

Never. What you would call 'bad' I don't think of at all. Not in that way, at least. *Ever.* No, really. My memories of growing up, of you all, are only good.

MOM

That I definitely don't understand. (*Idly sets up the bottle.*) There are plenty of things I wish we'd done differently. Your dad, always working. Distant. Some of my more ill-fated attempts at creativity or trying to earn a little extra money. I could be...too much, I know. Oh my God...that summer we signed you up for that sleep-over camp, when you were so little? What in the world were we thinking?!

SON

It was tough, but I learned a lot...good things! I learned *good* things. Actually, all that stuff still helps me. The changes, not having you guys around. You know, even when we were all home, I sometimes missed Dad...and I so wanted to live up to your expectations. But every lesson I learned...everything you both taught me...whether you saw it as a good thing or not...it all sort of prepared me for this job. Does that makes sense?

MOM

I guess. Your father loves you, you know. Loves...he just...I don't know. He doesn't always...say things. His own father was a man of few words...

SON

I remember. Growing up with Grandpa, it's surprising that Dad's capable of tenderness at all. (*They share a chuckle.*)

MOM

(*Goes to him; acts the scene out.*) I can't get over how tall you look. You know, I can picture you right now, walking me down the aisle, taking your place at the front of the church to wait for your beautiful bride. Everyone else would turn to look at *her*, but my eyes would be locked on *you*, watching your reaction when she came in on her father's arm...

SON

I know you wanted that for me.

MOM

(*Playfully.*) But you had to leave and get caught up in that mysterious job of yours that I apparently can't know anything about. Top secret! Can't even tell your mom.

SON

(*Gestures for her to sit. Takes her hand.*) I love that I could always talk to you about anything. And you know I mean about *anything*.

MOM

Your first date. First kiss. Your *laundry*...That utter dweeb who was the only person on the planet you couldn't get along with! He was so jealous of you.

SON

Says the woman who is just a bit prejudiced.

MOM

A bit. (*Concerned.*) I loved talking to you, too. About so much...but maybe...I shouldn't have? You didn't need to hear about all that...

SON

I lived here, Mom. Do you really think I didn't know when you and Dad were having problems? You didn't tell me anything new, you trusted me with your heart. That meant a lot to me. *Means* a lot to me.

MOM

You understood me, even as a boy.

SON

I still do.

MOM

Do you remember what you told me when I was thinking about leaving?

SON

I made you promise not to stay on *my* account if you were that unhappy-

MOM

And that you would-

SON

Stay with Dad because he'd need me. I love that he let me work with him. Yard work, fixing the sink that time...

MOM

(*Laughs.*) What a catastrophe that was. Lord knows, he wouldn't be able to program the remote without somebody around. A lot has changed since you left, but not that!(*Beat.*) I'm glad I stayed. Because when you...

SON

(*Gestures with his hand, flying away.*)

MOM

I think it may have been harder on him in some ways than it was on me, at least in the beginning. We both missed you, but I *embraced* it. (*Rises, emotionally gesturing and pacing.*)The uncertainty, wondering how you were, what you were doing. At first, I was a mess. Got my crying out of the way all at once. Well...not all. I still have a meltdown now and then.

SON

I would expect nothing less. It's not every mother whose perfect child-

TOGETHER

Moves away. (*They share a laugh as she sits again.*)

SON

(After a few seconds of silence, stands.) I have to go, Mom. Please go easy...*(He indicates the bottle.)*

MOM

I will. I'll try. No promises.*(Rises to hug him.)* Whatever helps get us empty-nesters through, right? *(Pause.)* Are you sure you have to go? Already? You just got here. Can't you at least stay until your dad wakes up? Have a cup of coffee with him?

SON

I can't, Mom. Duty calls. I don't choose the timeline. But give him a big hug from me, okay? And be patient with him? He's just...Dad...and that's okay, isn't it?

MOM

(Rises to embrace him. As she speaks, she's following him to door.) You were always one of the smartest people in the room. The sweetest, too. Thank you for coming, honey. Tell them I said I appreciate the visit, even if it was **incredibly** short. Which they will hear about when I get a chance to tell-

(He is gone.)

MOM (CONT.)

(Returning to table.) Them. *(She folds her arms and puts her head down, shaking silently for only a few seconds then brief blackout.)*

(Lights back up as DAD enters from interior 'door.')

DAD

(Tapping MOM gently on shoulder.) Honey? You okay? You never came back to bed.

MOM

(Rousing sleepily) Yeah...yes, I'm fine. Is it morning?

DAD

I'll make coffee. Then...I thought...*(Hesitant, fidgeting.)* I thought maybe we could go to the cemetery.

MOM

(Absently.) But...you don't like to go to the cemetery.

DAD

No. And I didn't like the photographs everywhere, either, but you said-

MOM

(Still not really engaging, still drowsy.) That seeing them every day was hard, but the only thing that was harder would be **not** seeing them.

DAD

You were right. I’ll admit, I try not to think about it. That way...but this morning I woke up thinking it’s been 10 years today. I figured you’d want to go, and it’s been a while since I...I mean, I’ve got yard work I had to put off because of all the rain that I really should get to...

MOM

(Blinking, now wide awake.) I had...the strangest dream.

DAD

Okaaaay. *(Looks at watch.)* Look, do you want to go or not? If we do, I don’t want to stay long, but-

MOM

It seemed so real.

(DAD is impatient, puzzled.)

MOM (CONT.)

It seemed so real. *(Stands, hands in pockets.)* He was...*(Pulls out the feather, amazed, draws in a breath. Smiles.)* Let’s just stay home today, okay? I’ll even help you with the yard work.*(Rises and gently caresses DAD.)* He always loved that, didn’t he?

(Blackout.)