

Beautiful Remains

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Beautiful Remains – Short Play – 1/3/19

Woman – Tidying up the gravesite. Sits down to rest for a bit and takes out her book.

Man - Walks up and starts brushing off leaves from his father’s stone, picks up a few sticks and a piece of trash and throws it to the right of him. He places a tiny bottle of cognac & 3 roses at the base of the stone.

Man - Why? Why, Why, Why? (He mumbles under his breath. Kneels down, begins sobbing)

Woman tries to go along with her business, reading her book but becomes distracted, glancing over occasionally at the grieving man.

Man – (Rests back on knees, looks up at the sky and again in a loud voice, almost shouting as if in pain) Why? Why?

Woman – Are you ok?

Man – (Abruptly turns off emotion/tears, speaks in a more agitated/annoyed voice) Do I look “OK” to you?

Woman – I’m so sorry.

Man – You should be.

Woman – Excuse me?

Man – I’m trying to grieve and you are invading my space! S U F F O C A T I N G ME!

Woman – I’m just sitting here visiting with my mother and was hoping to find a calm, quiet space today. Nobody’s ever here. I certainly wasn’t expecting you.

Man – (Agitated voice) WHY did you have to bury your mother so close to my father?

Woman – What kind of a question is that?

Man – The kind of question you ask of somebody who has BOUNDARY ISSUES.

Woman – My father is buried just over the hill there. Mother and father divorced though never remarried. They didn’t like each other much in the end. Had things been different, I’d probably be over there and not over here!

Man – Lucky me.

Woman - My desire was to have them buried side by side, the traditional way. Man on the left so that when risen at the time of rapture, he would be standing to the right of her, as in marriage. Guess I was clinging to something.

Man – Vena Amoris

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Woman – What’s that?

Man – Vein of love. It’s the reason the wedding band is worn on the left hand. The fourth finger is thought to have a direct vein to the heart.

Woman – Well, mother had it in writing that she not be buried anywhere near him.

Man – Was she anything like you?

Woman – Well, yes I’ve been told.

Man – Explains a lot.

Woman – Mother wanted to make sure there wasn’t even the slightest chance of her casket touching his. She always did like her space. It’s probably what drove them apart. She didn’t care if she was facing the east or the west, so long as she was not facing him. I tried to adhere to her wishes as best I could. I’m just grateful to be able to come here and spend time. It makes me feel closer somehow, connected.

Man – (Looks off, recites in softer tone) “Because I feel that, in the heavens above, The angels, whispering to one another, Can find, Among their burning terms of love, None so devotional as that of “Mother” (Poe) (Back to agitated voice) You should consider re-locating her sometime in the near future. Now if you don’t mind...I’m having a conversation here....with someone else!

Woman – Ok, but I took time off from work today to come out here. My mother, she loved to read those romance novels. They can get a bit steamy. I enjoyed those kinds of books myself once. Like mother, like daughter I suppose. I’ve since re-committed myself to my faith and well I seek out the cleaner versions these days. Love built on good character, acts of kindness....romance none the less! I’m in the middle of Marcia Schuyler right now. It’s my favorite. I’ve read it at least a dozen times. Anyway...I promised mother that I would spend time with her today, maybe finish up this chapter.

Man – (Man turns away, lays down on back, sprawls out on grave, turns on the tears, again crying and asking) Why, Why did you have to go? I wasn’t ready. I had more to say. I was coming back!

Woman – (Walks over to man and looks down upon him) Why haven’t I seen you here before? I’ve been coming here for almost a year.

Man – I left home a few years ago. I wanted to get as far away as possible.

Woman – Why?

Man - I cut off contact with everybody. I didn’t tell them where I was going. (Sitting up) I upped & moved. Moved around a lot....to Virginia, Baltimore, Boston, Philly. I’m a lover of poetry, of Edgar Allan Poe. I completely immersed myself in his writings, his surroundings, his

life...because I thought it better than my own at the time. Here I was trying to get away from my life, myself I guess and going about it in a completely self absorbed manner. After a few years, not voluntarily, some parts of me that I had tucked away began to resurface. I began thinking more about my past, memories, smells, all of these things were coming back. I thought about returning home and trying to make amends with my family...my father. When I left, I told my father that I hoped to never see him again. When I returned, I expected to find everyone & everything in the same place that I had left them. That wasn't how it turned out. I learned upon my return, that my father had died suddenly of a heart attack a few months ago. January 19th to be exact. It seems now, I will never get to say to him all of the things that I was hoping to, at least not to his face. I always thought he would be there for me. I never thought there would come a time when he wasn't. So here I am. Hoping to find some closure. I'll keep coming back until I get it.

Woman (turns to the audience, with some excitement in her voice) – “He spun her into his arms. She tried to push away, but his mouth swooped down to capture hers.” (Valerie Bowman)

Man – Excuse me?

Woman – (blushing, embarrassed) I'm so sorry. Here you are having this moment and I'm....Oh, I don't know what took over me. It's all those romance novels! I'm sure of it! Please forgive me and Lord give me the strength to come from a more God centered place!

Man – (rolls his eyes and turns away) “There is no exquisite beauty...without some strangeness in the proportion.” (Poe)

Woman – I'm sorry?

Man – Nothing... just Poe. It's ok. Talking about my father's death...it helps. I haven't talked much about it to anybody.

Woman – You know, I knew your father. I recognized his name on the stone. He owned that small diner in town. I was so sad to learn that he passed. I used to go in and he'd offer me up a bite to eat. He'd always make me my favorite sandwich, honey ham, mustard, a little cocoa mixed in...heavenly. Sometimes he'd even pay my tab. He had pictures of your family hanging on the walls in the restaurant. He mentioned you. He said you were the one who gave him the hardest time but the one he thought about the most. He said that you had been away for some time & that he had hoped you'd return. I remember him quoting Poe. He said “Never to suffer would never to have been blessed.” (Longer Pause) He said that you would return.

Man – Thank you. (Pause/wipes away a tear) He is the one who introduced me to Poe. Like father, like son I suppose. To hear that, it means so much. My father had two loves, his family and our restaurant. He did everything he could for both. He wanted me to take over one day, to run the restaurant when he and mom could no longer do it. I didn't want it. My whole life since as far back as I can remember has been that restaurant. There were things I wanted to see and do. I had other dreams for myself. It's partly why I ran. But you spend some time away and there are things you begin to miss. I'll always miss him.

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Man - You know...maybe there is a reason after all that your mother was buried so close to my father.

Woman – Maybe so.

Man – She can stay, if you'd like.

Woman – (smiles)

Lights go down.