

Zoe Farzam

Blink

On lined paper, she wrote personal words which evaporated back to the words evaporated and returned to thought when her ballpoint pen had cried itself dry. It left not a black mark on the page, but a vague, temporary, indentation of cursive scar tissue. Mary set down her empty pen in a newly emptied bottle of Valium.

Dianne dragged her arthritic index finger underneath the faded letters on the yellow pages of an aged hardcover novel. Rhythmic thumping broke her hypnotic fixation and turned the woman's eyes from attentive high-beams to a dim, idle, glow. Her daughter in her doorway.

"Mom?"

"Uh-huh?"

"Do you want anything?"

"I want a lot. Maybe to win the lottery. Maybe to..."

Dianne raised her hand from the book and wiggled her fingers, grinding her rusty joints. A wince spiraled on her face. Then a grimace.

"...Y'know"

"Maybe a facelift"

Mary's mouth-corners upturned and revealed her teeth.

"Do you want anything of mine, or from me, that I could give you?"

"Probably not, no"

"Just don't lose momentum in your life"

"Don't start doing weird shit"

"Did you want anything?"

"Do you have a pen?"

"Somewhere around here. Check in the mug on the drawer"

"Is something the matter?"

"Why did you want to have me?"

“Because I wanted to have someone to look after”

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“I thought it would give me more direction in my life”

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“Your grandparents always wanted a grandchild”

“They always talked to me about it when I was around your age”

“I told them that it was too early to think about that”

“They were old fashioned like that, I guess”

“I used to think they only had me to have grandkids”

“Is that why you had me?”

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“No”

“Did you really want to have me?”

“Oh Jesus”

“Yes. Mary. I did”

“Would you be sad if I died?”

“Yes, Mary. I would be”

“Why?”

“Because I love you”

“How come?”

“Because I do”

“Because wh-“Because I didn’t tolerate looking your father in his eyes when I fucked him. And I didn’t get pregnant three different times to have an only child that I prayed I could celebrate the birthday of. And I didn’t almost die bringing you into this world just for you to die before I do.”

Dianne's voice went from ballerina slippers gliding across a freshly glossed room to work boots tiptoeing on dry rotted attic floorboards.

"Fuck. Sorry."

"Do you want a hug?"

"I do"

"I'm sorry"

"Don't be"

"I'm sorry for yelling"

"It's okay"

"I love you"

"I love you too"

"I don't want you to die"

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