

WATCHING MOM

by Shawn Deal

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A Dramatic Monologue

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SYNOPSIS: As a senior in high school, I have so many things to ponder. Smaller items like the prom and parties... larger decisions like applying to colleges and winning scholarships. But I'm doing little of that as I come home every day and watch my mom die a little bit more.

TIME: Present.

SETTING: Anywhere.

SET: Bare stage

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female)

NARRATOR (f)..... Teenage high school girl

PRODUCTION NOTES: This can be done very simply: bare stage, no costuming and no props.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES: The main character goes through a variety of emotions in this play. The actor should try to interweave as many of these emotions throughout the beats of this play. The last thing you want to do is to only focus on one of the emotions.

NARRATOR: They always say that your senior year in high school is the toughest. They, of course, being parents, teachers, counselors and pretty much any college recruiter you come in contact with.

They also say that senior year is the most important year of high school. It's the year you find yourself, that year you come into your own, that transition year where you go from teenager to adult and have to figure out your future in life. Maybe not your entire future but, at least, figure out what path you should start walking down first.

It's also supposed to be the funnest year: all the dances, the winter formal, the prom, spending time with your friends, and all the parties.

I've been able to have some of that fun, but at a much more subdued level.

For me this year has been a year where I have questioned every decision I've made or should make. I can't focus on my future. My present is so right now, in my face, and heavy. It's the elephant in the room. And there's barely any place for me to stand.

I'm in a constant depression mixed with a huge dose of anxiety, just to muddy the waters even further.

Beat. Take a deep breath.

I've been watching my mother die for the last eight months.

That's tough to say out loud. I need to take deep breaths just to keep any kind of control. Even though it's been eight months, I still cry any time I think too hard about her or her condition.

There had been signs of her illness for years, not that Dad or I, really noticed or even thought about it in that way.

We thought it was just Mom being, well, Mom. Like anybody else, Mom has her idiosyncrasies, and Dad and I were so used to them that we took them for granted. We just never really realized that they were potential warning signs.

I mean, really, who would of?

On any given day, in the last five years, my mom would ask me or my dad what time it was. And she'd ask that eight to ten times a day, every day.

At first, my dad thought it was a not so subtle way of her telling him that she wanted a nice diamond watch for Christmas, which my dad got her.

But she kept asking long after Christmas, even though she was wearing the watch.

We teased her about it, and she laughed along with us.

When making dinner, she would often take out pots, pans or plates a couple of times, then put them back and then take them out again. I just thought mom was thinking what she was going to make for dinner or her mind had drifted to thinking about a project at work or something like that, and her body had just gone into autopilot for awhile.

I mean, doesn't that happen to everybody.

There were other things, too. Small things, but Dad and I didn't see them as problematic at all. We should have, I guess. It just never occurred to me.

Everyone has weird little idiosyncrasies.

It wasn't until some big things began to happen that Dad and I really began to worry.

Mom forgot to pick me up from cheerleading. It was pretty late at night. Dad was still working, and I couldn't get a hold of Mom, so I ended up walking home. It wasn't that far, but it took a long while to walk. And that wouldn't be the only time she forgot me.

Mom started forgetting more and more things, more and more often.

It was after the kitchen fire that Dad insisted she go see a doctor. She had left dinner on the stove with the stove on and went off to do something else. The pan caught fire. The fire alarm went off and there was so much smoke, yet not much really got damaged. Dinner and the pan were both lost causes.

My mom was really scared at that doctor's appointment. I was completely naive. I thought all they would have to do is give her a shot or change her diet or something like that. You know, a pill she would have to take for the rest of her life. But no, it was nothing like that.

It was early onset Alzheimer's.

I wish I had known more about that disease earlier on, that I understood earlier what was going to happen to her. I didn't though.

I wish I had told her my feelings, had been more open and honest with her, when I knew she could still process what I was saying and could respond back.

The doctor gave her a timeline of two to three more years; that was only ten months ago, and she has weeks left at best.

A nurse comes and checks in on her every day. My dad has taken family leave from work to stay home and watch over her. My mom lays in bed in the guest bedroom where my dad has her favorite music playing, or one of her favorite movies playing, or sometimes he's even reading to her.

She doesn't really speak anymore, a few sounds, sometimes a word or two, but only sometimes.

Essentially, what this disease is doing to her is attacking the brain. The brain, when healthy, sends out signals to every part of the body with instructions on what it should be doing. That's what keeps your body going. Now that her brain is being attacked and is sick, it is not sending those signals the way it should. Eventually, the brain is going to stop sending those signals entirely. So one of these days soon, my mom's brain will stop sending signals that tell her heart to pump blood or her lungs to breathe in oxygen or some other organ to do its job.

And when that happens, well...

Takes a deep breath. Beat.

My time with my mother comes as soon as I get home from school. I put my backpack down, grab a quick snack, and walk quietly over to the guest bedroom. I knock softly on the door and go in. That is, of course, where my dad is, watching Mom.

He'll give me a recap of their day, tell me how she has done, good or bad... the quality of their days swing up and down. He then reminds me to talk to her. Dad reminds me to tell her all about my day, not leave out any detail. She likes details, he says. I nod. And let my dad escape. He needs the break. For the next couple of hours, it's just me watching Mom.

It's tough finding things to talk about with my mom now. My days don't really change much. I stopped cheerleading and pretty much every other activity that happens after school, so I can come straight home and help out.

Those were the interesting parts of my life. The rest is just classes, lectures and homework. Nothing much changes in that, at least, not in any kind of interesting way.

And I've talked about everything else already. I've talked to her about scholarships, getting into college, and all the colleges I applied to, my friends and all their little dramas. But I don't see much of them beyond school, so I'm out of the loop on their dramas anymore.

Most recently, I've just been apologizing. I haven't been the easiest teenage daughter to raise. Honestly, my mother and I fought pretty much through my sophomore and junior years. About all kinds of things, but mostly about boys.

And really, we didn't need to fight about any of it. We fought because of me. I started every fight. And if I could go back and change it all, I would, especially since it turned out my mom was right about mostly everything. I hate to admit that, but it's true.

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