

SCENE 3

(Lights up, and SON is sitting across the table from MOTHER, who is staring at him. She doesn't move.)

SON:

I have to leave. You know that, don't you?

(He waits for a response. None comes.)

SON:

I can't stay here- not anymore. It's not healthy. Don't look at me like that, you know as well as I that I'm going crazy pent up here. What? What's wrong?

(MOTHER doesn't move.)

SON:

I'm gonna call the doc, see if he can pick me up. He's supposed to come by soon anyway, maybe he'll be able to make it out sooner. What am I supposed to do here? Why won't you say anything? Just sullen glances? The silent treatment? I can't tell what you are thinking. Am I crazy? Is this crazy?

(YOUNG SON sulks into the room.  
MOTHER turns and interacts with him-  
ignoring SON.)

YOUNG SON:

Why can't we go out ever?

MOTHER:

You know why.

YOUNG SON:

But I've been fine for so long! I feel better.

MOTHER:

I wish that we could- I want you to be healthy so much, as much as you do, but it's just not safe.

YOUNG SON:

But I hate it here! I only get to hang out with you!

MOTHER:

You hate me? You hate hanging out with me?

YOUNG SON:

Well, no, I guess, but I never get to see anyone else.

MOTHER:

What about the doctor? He comes out and sees you, and he tells you stories about the village.

YOUNG SON:

But he's old! I mean he's funny, I guess, but there's no one around that's my age.

MOTHER:

I'm really sorry that you're lonely, I wish that things could be different. But they can't.

YOUNG SON:

Why?

MOTHER:

You know why. You're sick- and others can make you more sick.

YOUNG SON:

The doctor doesn't make me sick.

MOTHER:

That's because he is very safe. And he knows what he is doing.

YOUNG SON:

I can be safe with other people.

MOTHER:

This is just the way it has to be right now.

YOUNG SON:

Well what if I run away? What if I just leave?

SON(simultaneously):

What if I just leave?

(MOTHER freezes in place.)

SON:

Nothing's keeping me here anymore. Not even you. I haven't had an incident in almost a year, and now...

(MOTHER moves again, suddenly.)

MOTHER:

Where would you go?

YOUNG SON:

I don't know- somewhere other than here.

MOTHER:

What would you do if you got sick again? How would you treat yourself? I take care of you. I always have, and I always will. You know that. I love you.

YOUNG SON:

If you loved me you would let me have friends!

SON:

If you loved me you would let me go.

(MOTHER turns to SON suddenly.)

MOTHER:

I'm not stopping you, am I?

SON:

Not anymore.

MOTHER (to both of them):  
Could you really leave me behind?

YOUNG SON:  
Yes!

SON:  
I don't know.

YOUNG SON:  
Maybe.

SON:  
You left me first.

YOUNG SON:  
I think so...

SON:  
I'm already alone.

YOUNG SON:  
Maybe for a little bit.

SON:  
If I get sick, I get sick. You aren't even here to stop me.

MOTHER:  
Aren't I?

SON:  
No.

MOTHER:  
Then who are you talking to?

SON:  
Air. Myself. Grief, maybe. You're in your bedroom right now. Lying there, cold. I

haven't been able to go in since I found you. I've been meaning to call the doc but I haven't worked up the courage yet.

MOTHER:  
Why haven't you?

SON:  
When I do it will be real. Once he gets here, carts you away? Maybe I'll go with him, find someplace else, someplace safe. I know that once we leave, we won't leave together. Once I step out that door, and they put you in the back of some car, it will be over.

MOTHER:  
It's never over- not really.

YOUNG SON:  
Maybe I'll leave, and then call you, so you know where I am.

(MOTHER turns back to YOUNG SON, as if forgetting that SON is there.)

MOTHER:  
Well then what's the point of running away? Isn't the whole point that I can't find you?

SON:  
The point is freedom.

YOUNG SON:  
Well at least then I can have some friends.

MOTHER:  
I'm your friend.

YOUNG SON:  
A friend my age, I mean. It's lonely here.

MOTHER:  
Come here.

(A pause. An embrace.)

MOTHER:

I know that it can be difficult, and lonely. I get lonely sometimes too. But you aren't ready to go out into the world. It isn't time.

YOUNG SON:

When? When will it be time?

MOTHER:

When it is safe. I love you- I will always love you. You are the most important thing in the world to me, and when I get lonely, or frightened, or upset, I just have to remember that, and then I feel better. You'll never have to be alone when I am here with you.

YOUNG SON:

Ok. I love you too. I'm sorry.

MOTHER:

Oh darling, you have nothing to apologize for.

YOUNG SON:

Do you want to read some more?

MOTHER:

I would love to. Go find your book.

(YOUNG SON leaves the room, and  
MOTHER goes to follow. She turns, and  
looks at SON.)

SON:

You'll never have to be alone.

SCENE 7

(SON is standing by the phone, staring down at it.)

MOTHER:  
Don't call him.

SON:  
I'm calling him.

MOTHER:  
You don't need to.

SON:  
I'm calling him.

MOTHER:  
Why?

SON:  
Someone has to deal with you. I can't.

MOTHER:  
You know he'll want you to leave.

SON:  
I know.

MOTHER:  
It won't be safe for you.

SON:  
How often do we have to have this conversation?

MOTHER:  
Until you realise how dangerous it is.

SON:

I'm calling him. I have to.

MOTHER:

Well don't expect my blessing.

SON:

I don't need it.

(SON picks up the phone and begins to dial.)

MOTHER:

What time is it? Will he even be up, do you think?

SON:

It's ringing.

MOTHER:

He's not going to have time to come out here.

SON:

Can you stop- Hey! I'm sorry to call you so late- or early, I guess. I uh, I meant to call you earlier but- well, it's been a rough day. I didn't wake you up, did I? Oh ok, good. I was wondering if you could move up your visit out here. No, no, I'm ok- it's mother. She's... um, she's dead. Sometime yesterday- I went into her room and... and that's when I found her. No. Yeah, I don't know what to do next, could you, could you come down here as soon possible? Thank you. Yeah I'll be here. Ok. Thank you. Goodbye.

MOTHER:

Why not just bury me in the backyard?

SON:

You wouldn't want that.

MOTHER:

What do you mean? I just suggested it, didn't I?

SON:

Yeah well you're not you, are you? You are a figment of my imagination- a manifestation of grief.

MOTHER:

Are you sure?

SON:

... yes.

MOTHER:

You don't sound sure.

SON:

Yes.

MOTHER:

Maybe life doesn't end at death. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

SON:

You mean your philosophy.

MOTHER:

How can you write me off so quickly?

SON:

Because I saw you. You are not here, you're in your room.

MOTHER:

I wasn't able to cross.

SON:

What?

MOTHER:

The river. I wasn't able to cross. You never gave me a coin, so now I am forced to wander the banks of the River Styx, watching as everyone passes me by.

SON:

Should I give you a coin?

MOTHER:

Or I can stay here with you. You are my unfinished business.

SON:

I am my own business.

MOTHER:

You don't want me gone. You can't let me go. I have always been there for you. Taken care of you. I carried you when you were small, held you when you were scared, or sick, or hurting. I love you.

SON:

I love you too. And you are right, I don't want you gone. But you are. And so I called him. I did. And he's coming. And you will have to cross the river.

MOTHER:

Maybe eventually. But not right now. Not while you need me.

SON:

He'll be here in a couple hours. I guess you have till then. And you're right. I do need you. I desperately wish you were here.

(MOTHER steps forwards and extends her arms. SON hesitantly reaches out, as though unsure if he can touch her. He grasps her hands.)

SON:

Sit with me?

MOTHER:

Of course.

(They sit on the couch, MOTHER wraps her arms around him.)