

ASHES

Synopsis:

A woman and a man about her son's age find themselves in her son's apartment looking for something, hostile to each other from the first, competitive and jealous. They each want something of her son's.

Setting: A minimal living room with a vase on a shelf or table., situated, perhaps behind the (imaginary) open door, so Mrs. G can enter searching intently and miss it until later.

Characters:

Henry - thirties

Mrs. G –fifties

Synopsis: Mrs. G desperately wants something from Henry, something associated with her son, but we are not sure and maybe she is not sure what.

MRS. G

(Entering looking around, not noticing the small vase on the counter/ table in the rear.)

HENRY

(Entering) What are you doing here?

MRS. G

Doing?

HENRY

Yeah, what are you doing here?

MRS. G

Me?

HENRY

Of course. You, doing, here.

MRS. G

You recognize me?

HENRY

Yes!

MRS. G

How? We've barely seen each other.

HENRY

Your hair, your dress, the expression on your face.

MRS. G

I don't have time to dress to please you. And I can't do anything about my face.

HENRY

But that's exactly what you could do...about That's you!

MRS. G

And you would mention it.

HENRY

It's so you, condemning and mean spirited.

MRS. G

Too bad. I came as soon as they called me. And you know why?

HENRY

No, I don't. And I don't believe anyone called you. I asked everyone not to.

MRS. G

They called, because of what happened and probably because you told them not to.

HENRY

Stop moving and snooping and sneaking around. You're here, what do you want?

MRS. G

What do I really want? I want it all to be different.

HENRY

Such a phony. It's too late. You made it the way it is. It's exactly the way you made it.

MRS. G

It's the same no matter how you say it. And it's a lie.

HENRY

A lie? Great. Goodbye. Go.

MRS. G

I want my Bobby back. I want my son back.

HENRY

You threw him out, kicked him out into the gutter. You stepped on his face.

MRS. G

I want him back.

HENRY

I was only there once, but it was probably that way often. Bobby said it was. We came to you in all... all...sin...

MRS. G
In all what? Sin?

HENRY
Sincerity.

MRS. G
That's something I never saw in you.

HENRY
Then get out. What's the point of talking if...

MRS. G
I didn't say you weren't sincere. I said I didn't see it.

HENRY
Good. What's the difference? Bobby was sincere. You grant me that.

MRS. G
I want Bobby back.

HENRY
You said that. We came to... you; though I never wanted to. Bobby wanted his mother, as a friend or something.

MRS. G
You're not friends with your mother. Your mother is your mother; you wouldn't know that.

HENRY
I know better than you. I went along, for Bobby. We came to you in openness. "I'm your son Bobby, Mother." You remember? I can. "This is what we are. Mother, my partner and I. I want you to know ..."

MRS. G
No. You brought him to flaunt it. You stole Bobby from me, and stole him from a normal life.

HENRY
Normal life? First of all, Bobby was what Bobby was before he ever met me. Second, you knew what Bobby was. You've always known. I had nothing to flaunt.

MRS. G
You think he was that way all his life. I don't. No, I remember him in his first baseball uniform.

HENRY
Yes. And all he wanted was to be the way he was. And big deal. I had a first baseball uniform too.

MRS G
Bobby loved it.

HENRY
He loved being in his baseball uniform. He loved baseball. So did I. We played on a team together but he hated what you did to baseball. He was never good enough for you.

MRS G
That was not me. That was his horrible abusive father, always mean to Bobby.

HENRY
And you protected Bobby, sympathized with him, helped him? No, you joined in the fun.

MRS G
I was trying to save my marriage. Until Bobby's father left.

HENRY
And then? Then you could be with Bobby, help him. Not a chance.

MRS G
Bobby didn't need help. He was a regular boy.

HENRY
A regular boy? Your kind of regular boy? Bobby was always what Bobby was.

MRS G
There was nothing wrong with Bobby. He could have gotten better if not for you.

HENRY
He was already better, the best, the best person, the best... everything. You wouldn't let him know it.

MRS. G
You made him sick.

HENRY
I did? In your stupid world of expectations, baseball leagues and scouting trips. Conformity everywhere.

MRS G
You made him sick.

HENRY
You said that. You're pathetic.

MRS. G
Bobby made mistakes.

HENRY

And you didn't? For his mistakes, you threw him out or maybe in simple disgust.

MRS. G

Not true, none of it. I didn't make mistakes; I didn't throw him out.

HENRY

You "found" out about him and threw him out, a teenager, no money and no good way to get money, barely anything to wear except his baseball uniform. You threw him in the street like a piece of garbage.

MRS. G

Civilized people don't throw garbage in the street.

HENRY

Apparently, we don't know any civilized people. People took him and used him.

MRS. G

I don't want to hear about it. I wanted him to see a doctor.

HENRY

What do you really want? We see doctors all the time.

MRS. G

Not your kind of doctor. A real doctor, who could help him. He was sick.

HENRY

You're sick. He wasn't. He was your son and you threw him out like an oily rag.

MRS. G

Bobby wasn't oily. He could have gotten better but not after he met you.

HENRY

Excuse me.

MRS. G

You're one of those... whatever they call you, your drugs, your own reality; you do it with whoever, whatever.

HENRY

Get out of here!

MRS. G

You gave him (barely audible) the AIDS. You took his life once when you made him what he was and you took his life a second time when you gave him (with emphasis) the AIDS.

HENRY

So ... lame. You don't even know and can't talk about your own son, his condition, because you refused to know him. Now you're blaming me.

MRS. G

It's your fault. He could have come back.

HENRY

No, even in this stupid historical fact, you're wrong. Bobby had AIDS when I met him.

MRS. G

Yeah sure. I read up on that stuff. If he had it...

HENRY

(Sadly) He did.

MRS. G

You're so... whatever. You would never take the chance of getting it, would you?

HENRY

(Softly.) No. Yes, I would, just because. People get together. You wouldn't understand. Get out.

MRS. G

I won't get out. I want my Bobby back.

HENRY

A little late. There's not much left of him and what there is, you can't have, not even that.

MRS. G

They called me, about... it . I cried, a lot.

HENRY

So you say but who called? What did they tell you? Everyone promised not to.

MRS. G

Who's everyone? They called me, maybe Bobby himself called me from the grave where the... sickness you gave him put him. I want his ashes.

HENRY

Not quite in the grave yet. You're crazier than Bobby said you were.

MRS. G

Bobby never said I was crazy. Bobby loved me.

HENRY

But you never loved him.

MRS. G

I'm sorry, I'm sorry you think so. I want Bobby back. I know he was going to be cremated and I want his ashes, whatever's left of him. Where are they?

HENRY

You can't have them.

MRS. G

Why not? I'm his mother. There. They put ashes in a vase, just like this one. This is it, isn't it? These are Bobby's ashes. Now they're mine. (Grabs the vase.)

HENRY

(They fight over the vase; he gets it.) I'll be damned if I'll give you anything, certainly not Bobby's ashes.

MRS. G

You have to. I'm sorry but he was my son.

HENRY

'Was'. The thing is you're not sorry really and I wish you were; maybe there's nothing to be sorry about. You were just mean, ugly, the you that you are and always were. (Puts the ashes down.)

MRS. G

I'm not ugly. I made a mistake. I realize that now, should have been different and taken care of Bobby, no matter what.

HENRY

No matter that the what was me.

MRS. G

I should have taken care of both of you; I should have let my son become two sons.

HENRY

You gotta be kidding. Bobby hated you.

MRS. G

I loved my son and he loved me.

HENRY

He may have loved you as a mother but never as a you.

MRS. G

You resented me because you were always so poor. You resented my money.

HENRY

I loved your money, but the cost of getting it was too high. Besides you never offered.

MRS. G

I thought, by withholding it, I could pressure Bobby to come back.

HENRY

You did, pressure him, to stay away. You won't pressure me.

MRS. G

But I'm... all alone now. I have no one, not even Bobby, not even his ashes. You're the closest thing to Bobby there is.

HENRY

You look a little like him, he like you. But you never had him and I won't share him, even now.

MRS. G

I'm... all alone now. I have no one. You don't have to resent my money. I could take care of Bobby now, his memory anyway. I have no other family.

HENRY

So, neither do I.

MRS. G

And while I'm taking care of Bobby, his ashes, I could take care of ...you. You could help me dress better, take care of my hair.

HENRY

(Attracted to the idea.) Be like my mother? (Recants with fright.) Are you crazy? You think I'm going to be your fashion fag? Because I'll have his ashes and you have money?

MRS. G

Stupid thing to say. I just meant we'll have Bobby's memory together. You'll have his ashes? (She grabs the vase.) I'll have them and I won't let you take it back this time, never.

HENRY

I won't try to take them back this time. This time, I'll just tell you that you can have those ashes.

MRS. G

(Challenging him.) What?

HENRY

Those aren't Bobby's ashes.

MRS. G

You liar. What are you talking about? They're ashes. I see them inside the vase.

HENRY

They're real human ashes. Couple of years ago, the woman next door died; she was very old.

MRS. G

Liar.

HENRY

No family; her will said cremate her and put her ashes in this vase. Funny, huh. Very special, we thought, although we couldn't figure out what was special about it.

MRS. G

This has Bobby's ashes in it.

HENRY

Bobby used to help the woman around the house, kind of take care of her things, especially in the end, like she was his mother.

MRS. G

I'm his mother. He was a good boy. She was not his mother.

HENRY

Maybe he was pretending.

MRS G

Pretending she was me.

HENRY

Like you're thinking I might pretend to be Bobby. I might. When they delivered the ashes, no one knew what to do with them, except leave them with Bobby, 'til someone claimed them.

MRS. G

I wish I had died first so Bobby could care for my ashes .Bobby would have kept them in a vase like this.

HENRY

I would have thrown them out. Maybe these are your ashes.

MRS. G

They're Bobby's. This is some bargaining trick you're playing.

HENRY

You don't know that. No one ever came around to claim these ashes, until you. They're all yours now.

MRS. G

Disgusting. I don't want them if they're not Bobby's. You shouldn't have told me. (Crying) I want my Bobby back.

HENRY

Your Bobby? What difference does it make? If I didn't tell you, you never would have known.

MRS. G

I'm sorry. Please. I'll take care of you, whatever you want. Give me Bobby's ashes.

HENRY

(Drawn in.) Why are you doing this? Really?

MRS G

We do what we do so we can be with someone.

HENRY
Like mating.

MRS G
I don't want to fight. I didn't know any better.

HENRY
Fighting can be part of mating. We'd be a strange pair.

MRS G
Not a pair exactly, but something.

HENRY
I almost believe you. You've almost convinced... you, but not me.

MRS. G
Of what? That I love Bobby, that I'll take care of his ashes, that I'll take care of you. You're very much like him, you know.

HENRY
And you, as I said, remind me of him. I'll think about your offer.

MRS. G
That I'll take care of you, so I have a son again. And you'll give me Bobby's ashes? My two sons.

HENRY
Why did you say we do all this, act this way?

MRS. G
I didn't say; I don't know. I just know I don't want to be apart. I want something to draw me together with someone.

HENRY
The same things that tore us apart.

MRS. G
Yes, maybe. Once you know things can tear you apart; you know they can hold you together.

HENRY
I already miss Bobby too.

MRS G
What do mean already?

HENRY
Whatever holds us together, that's what we need.

MRS. G

So, you'll do it. I mean try it? Share Bobby's ashes with me. Let me keep them for us.

HENRY

Maybe, maybe tomorrow. I can't today.

MRS. G

What do you mean? Why not?

HENRY

Because he's not quite dead yet.

MRS. G

Rat! Liar!

HENRY

They say he could go any time; but for now he's still clinging to life. AIDS does that.

MRS. G

You're making that up; they called me.

HENRY

Sorry. You got the wrong message.

MRS. G

You're denying reality, aren't you? But this is Bobby we're talking about not some hallucination you're having, with all the drugs you've taken. I knew I shouldn't trust you.

HENRY

Maybe, but the truth is that Bobby is hanging on. No ashes yet. And you have to trust me.

MRS. G

You're lying; you have to be. I'll take these. I don't want them but... I have to have something of his, to cling to.

HENRY

We do, both of us, together.

END