

WITH YOU

by Chris Van Strander

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CHARACTERS

SAM

SAM'S MOTHER

SETTING

Sam's late mother's old sickroom.

(Small room. Pitch dark. Sheeted furniture. Pillow on the floor, lying separate. Pause. Outside, SAM unlocking the door. He enters carrying a tape recorder (not handheld, larger) and a small portable lamp. He holds the lamp up, taking in the room, coughing (it's dusty). He sets the lamp and recorder down, closes the door, pulls a sheet off a small table and chair. He places the lamp and recorder on the table, goes to pick up the pillow (to sit on), halts, leaves it alone. He sits at the table, takes an index card from his pocket, takes out and unwraps a brand new cassette tape, puts it in the recorder, presses RECORD. He speaks in a measured voice, consulting the index card from time to time.)

SAM

It is exactly *(checks his watch)* [time] on [day and date], the anniversary of Mother's... *(beat)* I'm in her, uh—no, 'scuse me—my home... Uh... Sorry—on Kinnesaw Avenue... In her room. Her little... sickroom on the second floor where she... Sorry—spent her last... Lost her battle with... *(beat)* Uh, for the record I'm completely sober... tonight, and... also for the record I, uh, had the room blessed after... *(beat)* I've, I've stopped all the clocks, 'cept my watch, which... *(sticks his watch in his pocket)* Disconnected all the phones. Nothing from the street—cars or kids... Door's shut tight; doesn't squeak. Walls are thick, floors are thick, ceiling's thickest of all thanks to Father. Quiet house. Always been. She hated noise. Forbade it. *(beat)* I'm the only one here. No... no other family is present. So the only sounds heard will be produced in this room. *(beat)* So all right.

(SAM centers himself and recites from the index card.)

SAM

I ask all my spirit guardians: be with me here tonight. Watch over my work, protect me from harm if a troubled spirit is attached to this place. *(beat; puts the card down)* Beloved Mother: I can't see you, but... *(beat)* Are you here? *(waits three seconds)* Mother are you in here? *(waits three seconds)* Do you know me? *(waits three seconds)* Do you mind my presence here? *(waits three seconds)* Are you at peace? *(waits three seconds)* Do you remember how you died?

(SAM waits three seconds, stops the tape, rewinds it to somewhere towards the middle of his prayer, listens.)

SAM (ON TAPE)

Are you here? *(pause, three seconds)* Mother are you in here?

(On the tape, a low but clear voice.)

MOTHER (ON TAPE)

With you yes.

SAM (ON TAPE)

Do you know me?

MOTHER (ON TAPE)
Samuel.

SAM (ON TAPE)
Do you mind my presence here? (*pause, three seconds*) Are you at peace?

MOTHER (ON TAPE)
No.

SAM (ON TAPE)
Do you remember how you died?

MOTHER (ON TAPE)
Smothered.

**To read the rest of this play, please contact me at:
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