

Chrysanthemum

Written by
Sophia Casey

Copyright (c) 2024

Draft
information

Contact
information

(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Everything is a shade of BLUE on this WINTER day. We see the back of a MAN, just turned 40, looking out a bare window. His hair is dirty blond, thinning, some gray is spread throughout.

A smattering of pictures frame this scene. Many of a LITTLE BOY from birth to mid 30s.

A GREEN TINTED VASE sits on the window sill, holding a single CHRYSANTHEMUM. The petals are droopy and WILTING.

The WINDOW is dusty, smeared, COBWEBS in between the panes.

We can make out a CAR parked below, bits of RED PAINT peak through the snow piled on top. The TIRES are surrounded as well. The side facing us bares a large DENT.

The GROUND IS UNTOUCHED.

Nothing but uninterrupted WHITE.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Ben?

MAN, now 25 with a full head of dirty blonde hair, turns to face the warm voice, belonging to...

BEN

(smiles)

Hey, mom--

MOM

I didn't see you come in!

MOM, 45, hurries toward Ben for a hug. She wears mom jeans and a loose floral-print blouse, the sleeves flow along with her long brown hair as she moves.

MOM (cont'd)

How long have you been here?

BEN

I just got in.

Ben hunches down when she wraps her arms around him. He squeezes her tight, rests his head against the side of hers. Lingers for a moment.

MOM

(laughing)

Well, my God. This is ridiculous! I don't remember you being this tall.

Mom pulls away from the hug.

BEN
(chuckles)
You say that every--

MOM
I knooooow, I know. You must be
hungry! I think dinner is ready...

Mom turns and begins to walk out of the room. Ben follows behind, close. His HAND is open, positioned behind her back as they walk along a floral carpet runner printed with PINK CARNATIONS.

The walls are covered in FOREST GREEN, FLOWERY WALLPAPER.

MOM (O.S.)
I made that... ohhh... that pasta you
like-- what's that--

BEN
The vodka sauce.

MOM
(trailing off)
That's the one. Vodka. Vodka, vodka--

As they walk downstairs the wallpaper gets more PEELED and DISTRESSED. Mom KEEPS REPEATING 'VODKA' under her breath. Flakes and strips of wallpaper collect on the stairs.

BEN
I am pretty hungry, that was a long
dri--

MOM
I'm sure you must be *starving* after
that drive. Lucky for you, I made
that pasta you like!

CUT TO:

DINNER TABLE

Warm toned light casts down from the chandelier above the table.

A LARGE POT sits in the center on a hot pad. NO STEAM.

There is NO FOOD on the table.

None.

Except for a BOWL OF MOLDY, ROTTING FRUIT sitting at the center of the table runner.

FIVE SETS of bowls and silverware have been placed around the table. All EMPTY.

Ben looks down at the bowl with a tired expression.

Mom, 55, MORE WRINKLES on her face and patches of GRAY HAIR along her scalp, FRIZZY and UNKEPT, wears a KNITTED SWEATER and SWEATPANTS. She stares at her bowl for a moment.

Ben, A COUPLE YEARS OLDER NOW, looks up at his Mom.

A beat.

Mom snaps her attention towards Ben.

MOM

So, what are you doing now? Are you still at the grocery store down the road?

She grabs her spoon and goes toward the bowl, stopping as she realizes there's nothing inside.

BEN

(downcast)

I quit working there a long time ago, Mom, remember? When I graduated--

MOM

(chuckles)

Well that wasn't *too* long ago, I remember, you'd ride your bike there on the weekends and every time you came home you'd have brought back some pastry or, or---

BEN

That was ten years ago, Mom. I've been over at the fire department for a while now.

MOM

Fire huh? You did always want to be a fireman when you were little, wearing your cute red hat--

BEN

No, no, FILM. I'm a filmmaker, Mom. I always wanted to work on films.

MOM

Yes, yes that's right, you always loved going to the movies. Oh, that's wonderful, Ben! What have you-- have you made anything so far?

Ben hesitates, then...

BEN

I'm... not sure what you mean. I'm not a filmmaker, I'll never be one. Lately, it seems... I just don't have the time.

Mom pauses, her smile falling into a look of confusion and frustration.

Ben looks into his bowl, absent minded. He fiddles with his spoon. The room is silent except for the metallic clinking of the ceramic bowl.

MOM (O.S.)

(weak)

I'm sorry, Ben.

We pan from Ben to the living room.

Mom, 60, lays in a hospital bed. Her head is sunken into the pillow below it, hair dark gray, brushed and laying neat on her shoulders. She's tucked in under bland covers, wearing a yellow gown with BABY BLUE FORGET-ME-NOTS on the fabric.

Ben, 40, meets her side with a HAIR BRUSH in his hand. Delicate, he runs it through her hair as he says...

BEN

(shakes his head)

It's not your fault.

Mom's eyes wander in increments. Her mouth stays agape, jaw slack with white, dry saliva at the drooped corner of her lips.

The petals on Moms gown are now eaten away with MOLD.

Her lips quiver as she says...

MOM

(hanging on)

You didn't deserve this.

BEN

Neither did you. You didn't ask for any of this.

Ben sets the hairbrush down on a table beside the bed.

MOM (O.S.)
You were just a boy. You were... you
were *my* boy...

Mom's frail hands now hold onto a PHOTOGRAPH of herself,
early 20s, holding a NEWBORN Ben close to her chest. There's
NO ONE ELSE in the picture.

Mom's mouth trembles, she struggles to smile.

Ben looks at his Mom with wistful sorrow.

BEN
It wasn't-- it *isn't* your fault, Mom.

MOM
(shattered)
And you had to watch me... Dying...
every day.

Mom's arms begin to WITHER and ROT.

They drop down to her sides, the photograph held loose
between her fingers as her skin grows thin and blue.

Tears stream down Ben's reddening face. His hands
desperately grab onto hers.

He squeezes them.

They try to squeeze back.

BEN
(desperate)
Hey, hey, hey. It's going to be
okay... okay? I'm not going anywhere,
okay? I'm going to take care of you.
I--I'll *always* take care of you--

MOM
You never should've had to.

BEN
But I did! I did, and--and we're here
now and you're not... you CAN'T do
this, PLEASE. Please, please,
please...

Ben, incoherent, pleads and begs for her to stay.

There's no response.

The bed is GONE.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Cold.

We return to Ben, 40, standing in front of an OPEN WINDOW four stories up.

The WIND RAGES outside.

Ben looks on. Forlorn.

Silent, his shaky HANDS GRASP THE LEDGE.

A RUSH OF WIND WHIPS THE CURTAINS.

The CHRYSANTHEMUM is whisked away, joining the desolate storm.