

# Leave-taking: A Scene

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Scott Memmer

Setting: the empty living room of a vacant house

LAURA (*Off*)

Okay! Give us a honk on your horn when you're ready!

(*LAURA enters from left, closes door behind her*)

LAURA (*Continued*)

Five minutes, Ma. They're puttin' the last few things on the truck right now.

MOTHER

Alright . . . alright . . . I can't get over how bare this room looks, Laura— can you believe it? You'd think after forty years, with all the livin' gone on here, it wouldn't look so empty. But look at it—frayed carpet, dusty windows—look at it!

LAURA

I can hear your voice echoin' off the walls, Ma. It's strange—like you're talkin' from far away.

MOTHER

Well, maybe I *am* talkin' from far away. And maybe I shouldn't 'a sold this place in such a hurry like you told me.

LAURA

What's done is done. Get your things together: five minutes.

MOTHER

In a second, in a second.

*(Pause. She crosses slowly to window.)*

I remember the day your father stood at this window here and looked out over the field—the day we bought this place. It was winter—corn stalks pokin' up through the snow—a day like today. "Nice view," he says. "Look, Viola," he says to me, "you can see the river from here!"

LAURA

*(Bitterly)*

You can't see the river anymore. Not with all those condominiums goin' up across the way.

MOTHER

No, but you can *feel* it still, Laura . . . under your skin, in your veins. You can feel it—and it's the feelin' that counts.

LAURA

Well, I'm glad to be going all the same, feelin's or no. Ever since Pa died we ain't been able to keep this place up, the two of us alone.

MOTHER

*(Still looking out)*

Seen the Andersons today?

LAURA

Said my goodbyes yesterday. Send you their best.

MOTHER

Alice over her cold yet?

LAURA

Just about.

*(Pause)*

MOTHER

*(Turning from window)*

This old house . . . How does a woman leave a home she's lived in for forty years? How does she turn away from the place her children were born, the place her husband died? What's the way to do that?

LAURA

I don't know. I don't think there is a way, come down to it. You just kind of say goodbye.

MOTHER

"Just kind of say goodbye . . ." You make it sound so simple, Laura, so easy! Anyone should be able to do it, shouldn't they? Shouldn't they?

LAURA

I'm not sure.

MOTHER

Anyone except me. But everytime I put my hand on that doorknob to go I hear some sound from twenty or thirty years ago playin' through my head like a broken record—your brother and you fightin', the wind rustlin' through the willows out there, your father snorin' up a storm in the back bedroom. And I smell things, too, Laura: springtime, summer, leaves, lakes, autumn . . . Forty years of seasons and sweat!

*(Pause)*

It all kind of runs together after a while, doesn't it? It all kind of—

*(A truck horn sounds offstage)*

LAURA

There's the horn, Mama. It's time to go.

MOTHER

Not yet. Not just yet.

LAURA

I promised the men I wouldn't keep them waitin'. It's freezin' out there!

MOTHER

*(Going to window)*

One last look at the river before I go. One last look.

LAURA

But you can't see the river, Ma. The condos are—

NORTHRIDGE REVIEW

MOTHER

I can see it! I can see it, though I were dead!

LAURA

Mama—

MOTHER

Don't tell me what I can and can't see!

*(Pause)*

LAURA

Alright.

*(Pause)*

Alright.

*(The horn sounds again)*

There's the horn again. Can we go now?

MOTHER

In a minute.

LAURA

Get your things together. It's cold out.

MOTHER

Alright.

*(She buttons her jacket and gets her purse)*

LAURA

Are you ready?

MOTHER

I—I don't know. I think so.

*(LAURA takes hold of her MOTHER'S arm)*

LAURA

Here we go!

*(They walk toward the door)*

MOTHER

Laura?

LAURA

Yes?

MOTHER

I'm cold;

LAURA

I know, Mama. I told you it was cold.

*(They walk)*

MOTHER

Laura?

LAURA

Yes?

MOTHER

Don't let go of me.

LAURA

I wouldn't.