

Stay Awhile

By Dana Hall

Synopsis:

Samantha has been concerned about her mother, Janice, since her father's passing. This play deals with complex grief and how time can stand still for those mourning. It's a window into the world most families do not talk about.

Logline:

A family learns that loss is not a singular event but rather grief reveals itself over time and shifts the relationships around us.

Characters:

Samantha- (Daughter) Stage-age late 20s-40.

Janice- (Mother) Stage age 60-75+ Grief Stricken.

Resources:

Lazy by Irving Berlin

(This song is now in the public domain/royalty-free)

<http://blog.nyfos.org/irving-berlin-lazy>

<https://youtu.be/2AqrI2gOOQg>

[Lazy | Library of Congress \(loc.gov\)](#)

Setting

Samantha is in her home.

Janice is in her home.

Early evening.

At Rise: Samantha is alone on zoom call talking to herself. She is checking her email and waiting for her mother to log on.

SAMANTHA: (To self) Where is she? I sent very detailed instructions. Come on mom-just click the link.

With the camera off JANICE enters the call.

JANICE: Hello.

SAMANTHA: You have to turn the camera on/ (it's the button at the bottom)

JANICE turns on the camera.

JANICE: (Waves) Well, hello. I did it.

She looks longingly at SAMANTHA.

There's my little girl.

SAMANTHA: Mom, I'm married with a kid of my own.

JANICE: Don't care, you'll always be *my* baby. Aren't you proud of me? Look at me using technology like a millennium.

SAMANTHA: *Millennial* Mom.

JANICE: Can you hear me ok? Am I doing this right? Gosh-I'm afraid to touch anything on here! This is your Daddy's old computer and all he used it for was solitaire.

SAMANTHA: I'm glad you finally agreed to try this!

JANICE: I've just been busy dear.

SAMANTHA: Busy? Mom, how long has it been since you left the house?

JANICE: Awhile, I suppose/

SAMANTHA: Are you ok? You look terrible.

JANICE: Thanks.

SAMANTHA: I mean, it looks like you haven't been sleeping again. Are you eating?

JANICE: I'm fine/

SAMANTHA: I can pick you up tomorrow. Take you over to the salon/

JANICE: That's not necessary/

SAMANTHA: Oh- we could swing by the grocery store. I'll make you dinner/

JANICE: Samantha- no.

SAMANTHA: What? Why?

JANICE: You're a terrible cook dear.

SAMANTHA: Thanks. *(smiles)* Well, think of it as a consequence if you don't start taking better care of yourself. So- what've you been up to- I've been calling you for days and all I get is a text here or there. If you didn't agree to this video call I was heading over.

JANICE: I told you in the text thingy. I've just been going through some old paperwork. There's a lot to take care of in this big ol' house.

SAMANTHA: *(Noticing)* Mom, your hands are shaking.

JANICE: Oh, it's nothing. Dr. Trapps prescribed something to take the 'edge off.' Guess it makes me a little shaky- good thing I'm not a surgeon.

There's a pause. JANICE is going through some old mail. JANICE'S hands are visibly trembling.

SAMANTHA: It's been months. Don't you think it's time we talk about dad?

JANICE: *(Gestures to letter)* Look- the electric bill is still in your father's mother's name- she was a terrible woman. I'm sure I can't forward this to where she's at/

SAMANTHA: Mom/

JANICE: I know, I know- we shouldn't speak ill of the dead.

JANICE makes the sign of the cross and passes the letter to the garbage pile.

SAMANTHA: The cemetery called. *(Pause)* His headstone is done.

(Silence)

JANICE: *(Jovial)* How are the kids? Is Liam in school - is he doing half days again? Boy, he's sure growing up fast! A weed that one.

SAMANTHA: I could take you to see it. Maybe we should talk about Daddy, we haven't talked about his passing since the funeral.

JANICE: *(Firm)* There's nothing to talk about.

SAMANTHA: Not talking about it doesn't make it any less real.

(Silence)

JANICE: I can't believe he's four. Gosh, it feels like yesterday you were being induced.

SAMANTHA: Don't remind me.

JANICE: You remember when Daddy first held Liam he said, 'he has my father's eyes and Sammy's stubbornness.'

SAMANTHA mouths the last part as her JANICE

says it.

SAMANTHA: He had a way with words.

JANICE: Boy was he right though, that little guy gives you a run for your money. What's he into lately? Uhh don't tell me what was it-- oh uh the green guy- Hulk- right?

SAMANTHA: Yeah - this week it's the Hulk, last week it was Captain America.

JANICE: They grow up so fast, Sammy. You give him kisses from his abuela.

SAMANTHA: I always do.

(Pause)

SAMANTHA: (cont.) Did you talk to the lawyers about the estate yet? They've been leaving me messages. *(pause)* I can help you. Apparently, we have to put some things in your name and settle up some medical bills.

JANICE: Did you hear that?

SAMANTHA: What?

JANICE is staring off and distracted.

SAMANTHA: (cont.) Mom. You ok? Is there someone there with you? Is it the Millers? They text to say they were bringing you over some food this week.

JANICE: Oh- there you are...

JANICE leaves the screen.

SAMANTHA: Who? Where are you going?

We see glimpses of JANICE walk away then walk back past the screen slowly.

SAMANTHA: Mom.

JANICE OS: Don't go. No!

SAMANTHA: Mom. *(Pause)* Answer me or I'm driving over there!

After a long pause, JANICE returns to the camera jovial.

JANICE: Hi Honey. Sorry. I just needed a glass of water.

SAMANTHA: Who were you talking to?

JANICE: Talking to? Oh, must've been the old record player. I took it out the other night.

SAMANTHA: (concerned) You shouldn't be moving heavy things mom. Tomorrow

after Dave gets home I'll stop by. I can help you with stuff around the house or we can just sit together- whatever you want.

JANICE: That's nice dear. No need though.

JANICE starts coughing.

SAMANTHA: Take a sip of your water.

SAMANTHA looks worried.

JANICE: I don't have any. Hold on honey.

JANICE leaves the screen again. She is singing Irving Berlin's Lazy. This does not have to be performed by a vocalist- it can be a sing/song version we might sing when no one else is listening. OS we hear her singing and coughing a bit more. She sings OS:

Ev'ry time

I see a puppy upon a summer's day

A puppy dog at play

My heart is filled with envy

That's because

My heart is yearning to pass the time away

JANICE comes back with a glass

of water.

JANICE: There- all better.

SAMANTHA is a bit emotional as she recognized the song.

SAMANTHA: Have you been forgetting things, mom?

JANICE: *(Smiling)* No more than usual honey.

JANICE goes to take a sip of the water. Exposing her hand is bandaged in a towel. This is new.

SAMANTHA: *(Alarmed)* Mom! What's on your hand? Did you just cut yourself?

JANICE: Oh this? It's nothing. You know me- clumsy. Remember when Liam knocked grandma's antique plate off the wall? I picked a rogue piece off the floor.

JANICE stares off in the same direction as before.

SAMANTHA: Just now? Liam hasn't been to see you since Daddy died 3 months ago. Are things ok? Mom. Are you ok?

JANICE with a slight smile continues singing. She closes her eyes for long stretches as she sings...

JANICE:

Lazy

I want to be lazy

I want to be out in the sun

With no work to be done/

SAMANTHA interrupts the last few lines as

Janice sings.

SAMANTHA: Mom. *(tearful)* I'm still here.

JANICE (cont):

Under that awning

Stretching and yawning

And let the world go drifting by

SAMANTHA: I'm worried about you. Should I be?

JANICE: Oh no dear, things are fine. I meant to tell you the Fosters are moving. Saw a truck yesterday.

SAMANTHA: I'm concerned with you being all alone/

JANICE: (Aggressive) I'm not alone.

SAMANTHA: I know- you have all our support, I just mean in the house.

JANICE (Leans in and whispers) Drop it, Samantha.

SAMANTHA: Mom?

JANICE: There were so many boxes.

SAMANTHA: (Confused) Where?

JANICE: The Foster's honey- I was telling you they sold the house. Turned a little profit on it from what I hear/

SAMANTHA: Are *you* thinking of selling too?

JANICE: No, dear.

SAMANTHA: Well, it might not be a bad idea if the Foster's sold so fast. You could come and stay at our house/

JANICE: (*Tantrum*) I said NO! NO! NO! I'm not leaving him! You and your brother think you know what's best but you don't. Leave it alone -Ok Sammy?

SAMANTHA: (*Choking back emotions*) Ok. Hey- I understand Mom. It's ok. No one is saying you have to. I know you have a lot of memories in that house. Daddy built that beautiful sunroom for you -and Tommy and I still have all of our stuff in the crawl space/

JANICE (*As if nothing happened*) How *is* your brother- he doesn't call much these days? So busy with work I imagine.

SAMANTHA: He's great- Becky and the kids were over the other day. He said he stopped by the house last weekend to see you but no one answered.

JANICE: Becky is so lovely and the girls are precious.

SAMANTHA: Mom, are you avoiding us? I thought maybe you were just taking some time to yourself but as time goes on I'm starting to think it's something more.

JANICE: I think I'd know if someone came by Sammy.

JANICE *is not paying attention as SAMANTHA speaks she appears to be staring into a corner of the room, sort of smiling.*

SAMANTHA: Mom, this isn't healthy. You have to talk to someone. If not me, maybe Aunt Linda or... (*tries a different angle*) ya know there are people that are trained to be able to help people through their grief. I could take you or maybe we could find something online like a support group you know? - Mom. Mom, are you listening to me?

JANICE: Sure honey. I'm so glad we had a chance to catch up.

SAMANTHA: You know we all miss Daddy. Just hearing his records take me back to five years old- remember how he'd let me dance on his feet? I'd make him twirl me around and around. *(Pause)* You know, I went to his gravesite the other day. I brought some flowers Liam picked. Maybe we could go together sometime- now that the headstone is done.

JANICE: *(cold)* Why would I want to go there?

SAMANTHA: To say, goodbye, mom. It might do you good to see he's at peace.

JANICE: *(Shaking/very upset)* You listen to me daughter- I will not be told what to do by any of you. You hear me- I loved that man for 40 years and I will love him until I take my last breath- no amount of time changes that. Peace? A piece of my heart- of who I am is gone- just like that- gone! And now *you* want to take from me my pain? This is all I have Sammy- this is all that is left. After creating a life together, a house, two beautiful kids, grandbabies - I'm alone- I lay in bed and there's his pillow. I can still feel him next to me. He's there. You don't understand- you can't possibly. I'm not saying goodbye Sammy- I won't lose more of him/

SAMANTHA: Mom- please. You don't have to do this alone.

JANICE: His memory is all I have- What happens when that's gone too? No- I won't let it go.

SAMANTHA: *We* need you mom.

JANICE: No. I said NO.

JANICE hums to herself.

SAMANTHA: I miss you- you've been shut away for months. What about us? Don't you think the grandbabies miss their Yaya?

SAMANTHA tries to pull herself together.

SAMANTHA (CONT): Fine.

(Pause)

JANICE Stops humming.

Why don't you just let me pick up some dinner for you?

JANICE as if nothing happened.

JANICE: Oh dear, that's so kind of you - but I'm making your Daddy's favorite dinner tonight.

SAMANTHA: (*Defeated*) Ok- Mom.

JANICE: (*Happily*) You know how dinner has to be on the plate by 7:00 pm sharp.

SAMANTHA: Yes, no matter where we were it was always-*(imitates father strict rules)* Home by 6:45 pm, wash-up, set the table, then dinner. We would sit around that table for hours just chit-chatting. Those were great *memories*, Mom.

JANICE: It has to be nearly dinner time over by you too.

SAMANTHA: We ate already mom.

JANICE: (*Hurt*) Oh- I see.

SAMANTHA: Liam is still little mom we have to eat earlier/

JANICE: No-no, it's fine honey. You're such a good mom. I don't tell you that enough.

SAMANTHA: Thanks, I try- I learned from the best. (**pause**) Well, I should get going. Nowadays it's bath by 7:00 pm, jammies, storytime, then off to bed.

JANICE: You've made your father and me very proud.

SAMANTHA: You know I love you *so* much right?

JANICE: Of course my love. It was so nice seeing you - you should visit more often. Oh and tell Tommy and the girls that I love them too.

SAMANTHA: They know. We all know mom. I'll stop by tomorrow and check in on you. You sure you're ok tonight?

JANICE: Oh yes- going to start prepping the ribs with Daddy's secret recipe- you know what Daddy's secret ingredient is?

SAMANTHA: Ha. Yah. Love-

JANICE: *(She looks around then whispers)* He also adds a pinch of sugar. Bye, darling.

SAMANTHA: Bye, Mom.

JANICE: **(Waves)** Bye dear.

SAMANTHA logs off. JANICE remains.

JANICE is still on the computer.

JANICE: Oh my -how does this fancy contraption work?

JANICE sings the following as she tries to figure out how to leave the call.

JANICE: (cont) *Lazy I want to be lazy
I want to be out in the sun
With no work to be done
Stretching and yawning in the sky/*

JANICE looks off in the direction of the kitchen.

JANICE: (yells off) Coming Dear!

JANICE throws a small kitchen towel over the camera.

JANICE: (cont. singing) Stretching and yawning and let the world go drifting by-

-End Play-