

## Ashes to Ashes

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A 10 minute play

By Pamela Morgan

### Synopsis

Two brothers try to cope with three unexpected deaths in their family in a single year.

### Characters

Ron - male, mid 20s, tries not to take things too seriously

Jamie - male, 4 years younger than Ron, the responsible one but not by choice

Setting: A cemetery.

Time: Present day.

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*Ron sits unapologetically on a headstone. Jamie approaches, something falls from his bag as he approach. Ron notices, but says nothing.*

RON

I didn't think you were coming.

*Jamie glares at Ron until Ron hops down from the headstone.*

JAMIE

Honestly, neither did I.

RON

What made you change your mind?

JAMIE

It's not like I can ignore a dying wish, Ron.

RON

Jamie, you were always so melodramatic. Lighten up, kid.

JAMIE

Lighten up?

RON

Yeah, lighten up. It's not that serious. Ashes to ashes and all that. You did bring the ashes, right?

JAMIE

Of course I brought the ashes. Would I be here if I didn't bring the ashes?

RON

Okay, where are they then?

*Jamie proudly pulls something from his pocket. It is not the ashes. He checks his other pocket. Nothing. He turns around a few times, notices he dropped something a few steps behind him. He retrieves it, relieved its the ashes.*

Well that was a close call.

JAMIE

Sorry, Ron. I'm probably the wrong one to be given this job.

RON

Jamie, you're the only one.

JAMIE

You don't think I know that? Since Mom died, its always fallen to me. Like you and Dad could be responsible for anything.

RON

I'm sorry, kid.

JAMIE

Don't call me kid, I'm not a kid anymore.

RON

You're right, you're not a kid anymore.

JAMIE

Not after the year I've had.

RON

Did what's her name make the service? Vanessa? Veronica?

JAMIE

Victoria. No, we broke up.

RON

Broke up? When?

JAMIE

Two months ago. I didn't get a chance to tell you, what with...well, it didn't seem important compared to everything else.

RON

Of course, it's important. How you holding up?

JAMIE

Well, let's see. I've lost every important person in my life in the last year, and my girlfriend tells me she doesn't feel we're connecting like she needs and leaves me. Who does that? In the middle of my family dying?

*Beat.*

RON

In her defense, she didn't know it was the middle.

JAMIE

That's not funny, Ron.

*Beat.*

I'm not ready to do this.

RON

None of us ever are. Okay, what did we do when Mom died, do you remember?

JAMIE

It was so stupid, Ron.

RON

Did it help?

*Short pause.*

JAMIE

Yeah, a little.

RON

So lets do that.

JAMIE

It's not the same though, we didn't cremate Mom.

RON

Lay down, Jamie.

*After a moment, Jamie lays down on the grass on his back, staring up at the sky. Ron lays beside him. He looks over at Ron, then back up at the sky. A short moment passes.*

JAMIE

Now what?

RON

You don't remember? Like a conversation on the phone.

JAMIE

Only silence on the other end.

RON

Not if you listen the right way, Jamie. So try and listen. Tell me about your day.

JAMIE

I woke up at 4 AM, I couldn't sleep.

RON

Valerie on your brain?

JAMIE

Victoria! And no, I had a dream and I woke up from it and couldn't fall back asleep.

RON

Tell me about the dream.

JAMIE

We were in the living room, in Mom and Dad's house, before we sold it. The plastic still on the chair in the corner, you remember that one?

RON

Yeah, who keeps plastic on furniture?

TOGETHER

Mom.

JAMIE

You were there, covered in mud, I don't know why, but you insisted you had to sit on that chair. And you slid right off.

RON

Slid off the chair?

JAMIE

Yeah, because of the mud. So you started tearing the plastic off.

RON

Mom must have been furious.

JAMIE

She was. She came running down the hall, screaming your name, and you just sat there on the chair, mud everywhere. Her beautiful chair totally ruined. I kept telling you, go, Ron, get out of here! She's going to kill you! But you didn't budge, just sat there grinning at us. Right when she got up close to throw you out the chair, I woke up. It was so real.

*Short pause.*

RON

Well, she didn't kill me.

JAMIE

No, she didn't.

RON

What happened to that chair?

JAMIE

Sold it.

RON

Did you make some money off of it?

JAMIE

A couple hundred dollars. A pristine, never been sat in, some kind of knock-off 18th century french chair.

RON

I bet you could have sold it as an original.

JAMIE

They have appraisers for that kind of stuff. People know chairs.

RON

Mom knew chairs.

JAMIE

Dad knew baseball.

RON

(rolling his eyes)

Did he ever know baseball. How many different life metaphors can you make for baseball?

JAMIE

It's a whole new ballgame.

RON

You only score when you cross the plate.

JAMIE

Swing for the fences.

RON

Leave everything on the field.

JAMIE

(rolling on his side to face Ron)

What does that one even mean, anyway? I've never left my equipment on the field.

RON

(rolling on his side to face Jamie)

It means tell the people you love that you love them, when you're able to. Life is too short to hold back.

JAMIE

Why didn't we do this when Dad died?

RON

(rolling onto his back)

I don't know, it was different when he died.

JAMIE

Different how?

RON

I don't know, Jamie, it was different. Dad was...I don't know.

JAMIE

An asshole sometimes?

RON

Yeah.

JAMIE

You two never got along, not one time that I can remember.

RON

Look, I loved the guy, he's my dad and all, but no, we didn't get along.

JAMIE

What happened?

RON

When I was in ninth grade, he forced me to try out for the varsity baseball team. I didn't want to play, but he didn't give me a choice and I made the cut. Every morning, he dragged me out of bed two hours before school. Every frigging morning.

JAMIE

Jeez. I don't remember that.

RON

You were just a baby.

JAMIE

I'm only four years younger than you are, Ron.

RON

That's a long time when I'm in high school and your kid brother is, what would that be? Fourth?

JAMIE

Fifth.



RON

Anyway, every morning, throwing the ball. Watch your spin, Ronald. Mind your feet, Ronald. Loosen your grip, Ronald.

JAMIE

How much did you hate it, Ronald?

RON

So much. But I did it, for all of ninth grade and part of tenth.

*Ron pauses. Jamie remains silent, waiting.*

Then it was right after one of the championship games. I had a great game, Jamie, I played first base, I hit a double on my first bat. My game was flawless, but the team lost.

JAMIE

So what did Dad do?

RON

He blamed me. Said if I wanted it bad enough, I would have inspired my teammates to play their best too. It was my fault we lost. Got in my face and told me I need to get mad, to get the fire in my belly going. He kept pushing me, nose to nose like, calling me names, telling me I didn't care enough, didn't want it enough. I snapped. I hauled off and punched gut punched him and then I quit. Never played the game again.

JAMIE

I don't remember any of this.

RON

Why would you? You were barely out of diapers.

JAMIE

Fifth grade is not barely out of diapers.

RON

Maybe you're learning how to listen. We never talked about it. I thought he was going to kill me, like seriously murder me. But nothing, not a word. For a month we moved around each other, barely speaking two words, and then eventually life went back to some kind of normal.

*Short pause as they contemplate the sky.*

JAMIE

Well, he didn't kill you.

RON

No, he didn't. Mom knew chairs, Dad knew baseball. What do I know, Jamie?

JAMIE

Girls.

RON

Yeah, I know girls.

JAMIE

You never would have fallen for Victoria.

RON

What kind of person leaves someone in the middle of their family dying?

JAMIE

None of us knew it was the middle.

*Beat.*

It was the middle, wasn't it?

RON

God, I hope so.

JAMIE

Why'd you make me promise to spread your ashes here, after Mom died?

RON

I thought it would be easier than putting me in the ground.

JAMIE

It isn't any easier.

RON

I know, kid. I know.

JAMIE

I'm not ready to let go, Ron.

RON

Yes you are, Jamie. You've had enough practice this last year. It's time to step up to the plate.

JAMIE

Why did you have to go and die?

RON

We don't have a choice in these things. Cancer got Mom and a heart attack got Dad.

JAMIE

And you got a drunk driver on a dark road on your way to watch your kid brother playing college baseball.

RON

Did you win?

JAMIE

Lost by two.

RON

I bet your game was flawless.

*Jamie gets up. Ron remains lying on the grass, on his back. Jamie opens the ashes and starts to let handfuls of ash drift down.*

JAMIE

Ashes to ashes. Dust to dust.

RON

(irreverently)

Don't let your jock strap turn to rust.

*Jamie grins as he turns in a full circle, spreading the ashes all around. Then again, and again, until the last of the ashes are drifting to the ground and Ron is no longer there. Jamie stands staring at the spot where Ron was lying, their parents' grave. If Ron cannot disappear, then he can fold his hands across his chest, as though in death. Jamie looks up at the sky.*

JAMIE

I love you, Ron.

BLACKOUT.