

When Life Gives You Lemons

By Pamela Morgan

Cast of Characters

MOM: 40-50, she dresses conservatively, makes an effort but not much, she is tired and worn down by life

ANDY: early to late teens or early 20s, Andy is high functioning autistic or Asperger's, he doesn't see the outdoors much and rarely makes eye contact or smiles.

Place

Outside their house, perhaps on a trail or the sidewalk or any place to comfortably take a walk.

Time

Present day.

Synopsis

A mother and son help each other to work through bad news.

SETTING: Outdoors, on a sidewalk, trail, or someplace to take a walk.

AT RISE: Mom is waiting on the sidewalk as Andy approaches.

MOM

Andy, thanks for joining me out here.

ANDY

I don't like it outside.

MOM

I know, honey, I know. But I wanted to talk to you.

ANDY

We could talk inside.

MOM

But it's such a beautiful day out and I thought we could take a walk.

ANDY

The temperature is 86.5 degrees. Last week when it was 86.5 degrees you said,

(Andy's voice becomes animated, like his Mom's, as if he's imitating her)

"I can't stand this heat, I never want to leave the air conditioning." Even though you hate the air conditioning.

MOM

I do hate the air conditioning, but last week it was a lot more humid.

ANDY

That makes a difference?

MOM

It does. But that isn't what I came out here to talk about, It's about your father.

ANDY

Is he unwell?

MOM

He's fine, Andy.

ANDY

Is he joining us on this walk?

MOM

No, Andy.

ANDY

Why aren't you forcing him to take a walk, like you forced me?

MOM

I'm not forcing you to take a walk.

ANDY

(picking up his phone and reading, using his animated Mom voice)

"Andy, come out for a walk. Now."

MOM

Alright, I admit it sounded a little forceful.

ANDY

So can I go back inside?

MOM

No, because I need to talk to you.

(Andy stops walking and crosses his arms, waiting for his mom to talk. She considers what to say, starts and stops a few times, Andy waits)

Sometimes, life gives you lemons and you have to make lemonade.

ANDY

I don't like lemonade.

MOM

That's not the point.

ANDY

I think that is the point. And why would life give me lemons?

MOM

It's a saying, Andy. An idiom, like it's raining cats and dogs.

ANDY

(Andy uses another voice, more animated than his own, gruffer, different than his "mom" voice.)

"Don't step in a poodle."

MOM

Yeah, your father always loved to say that.

ANDY

So I should make lemonade?

MOM

No, it means that sometimes life is hard, Andy. Sometimes its hard and we have to make the best of what we have.

ANDY

Why would lemons be hard?

MOM

Because they're sour.

ANDY

That doesn't make any sense. Limes have a higher acidity rate, and definitely a more sour taste than lemons.

MOM

But you can't make lemonade from limes, Andy.

ANDY

I don't like lemonade.

MOM *(tiredly)*

I know. I'm making a mess of this, Andy. I'm sorry. Can we start over?

(Andy nods and turns to walk back to where they began. Mom starts to say something to stop him, then reconsiders and joins him back at the beginning)

I'll cut to the chase.

ANDY

That's a reference from early silent films, meaning get right to the point.

MOM

Another one of your father's favorites. The point is . . . your father's leaving.

ANDY

Where is he going?

MOM

I don't know, we didn't really discuss that.

ANDY

When will he be back?

MOM

He won't, Andy. He's not coming back.

ANDY

What does that have to do with lemons?

MOM (*aggravated*)

Nothing! Forget the lemons!

ANDY

I don't understand.

MOM

*(she closes her eyes and takes a deep breath,
before continuing)*

Your father has decided that he needs to move out.

ANDY

He doesn't like the house?

MOM

No, he likes the house.

ANDY

Is his room uncomfortable?

MOM

No, the room is fine.

ANDY

His bed?

MOM

Andy.

ANDY

His pillow? He should try a cooling memory foam for better posture. Is he sleeping well?

MOM

It's not the pillow.

ANDY

Is it the air conditioning?

MOM (*exploding*)

He's not happy with us!

(she realizes what she has said and rushes to correct it)

Me. With me, not us. He's not happy with me and he wants to be happy and he thinks moving out will help him be happy.

(They are silent for a moment.)

ANDY

This makes you unhappy.

MOM

It does. Very unhappy. I loved your father. Love . . . your father. Very much, and I thought that we'd be . . . forever. Marriage is supposed to be forever. But things happen in life that we can't plan for. Things happened in your father's life and in my life too, in *our* lives, and we didn't plan for them.

ANDY

What things happened?

MOM

Life happened.

ANDY

Life isn't a thing.

MOM

Oh Andy, what difference does it make? He isn't happy here and he needs to go find what makes him happy.

(there is a long pause while Andy takes this in)

ANDY

Will you leave next?

MOM

No! Oh Andy, I will never leave.

ANDY

But now you're not happy.

MOM

I'm happy with you, sweetheart. I'll always be happy with you, wherever we are. I'll never leave you. And your father hasn't left you either. Please know that. He's still here.

ANDY

But he's not here, he's leaving.

MOM

I mean, he'll come visit, or pick you up and go out.

ANDY

I don't like going out.

MOM

We'll figure out something for you to do. It's going to mean a lot of changes.

ANDY

What kind of changes?

MOM

We might have to move.

ANDY

But I'm happy here.

MOM

I know.

ANDY

Why would we have to move? You said Dad was leaving, not us.

MOM

I might not be able to afford the house, Andy.

ANDY

I don't want to move.

MOM (*emotional*)

It doesn't matter what we want, I don't want your father to leave, I don't want to be having this conversation with my son, I don't want to do this alone, I don't want any of this!

(*a short silence*)

ANDY

I don't understand why Dad has to make us unhappy, in order to make himself happy.

MOM

Sometimes people need to do things for themselves that hurt others. Your father doesn't want to hurt us but he doesn't want to hurt anymore.

ANDY

You said he was well.

MOM

He is.

ANDY

Where is he hurting?

MOM

His feelings, Andy. His soul, he's hurting. He feels . . . trapped here. He wants to figure out how he can be happy. And you and I . . . we must figure out how we can be happy too.

ANDY

I'm not going to be happy about any of this.

MOM

Don't say that, Andy.

ANDY

I don't want Dad to leave and I don't want to move and I don't want you to be unhappy and I don't want lemonade.

MOM

Remember what Dad always says, when you start feeling overwhelmed by change?

ANDY

(using his Dad voice)

"Go with the flow, Andy. Ride the waves."

MOM

That's right.

ANDY

But Dad isn't doing those things. He's not going with the flow, he's leaving.

MOM

I know, honey. And I know how hard this is for you. For both of us. It will mean a disruption in our schedules, for sure. I will probably have to take another job. Maybe sell the house and move, but I'll see what we can manage. You'll have to help out more, with meals and with chores. We'll find our new normal, I promise. We have to make the best of a bad situation.

(There is a silence while Andy processes this.)

ANDY

Lemons don't occur in nature.

MOM *(exasperated)*

Forget the lemons.

ANDY

Lemons are a hybrid between the sour orange and the citron.

MOM

Okay, so we make orange juice. Do you like orange juice?

ANDY

But the sour orange is a hybrid of the mandarin and pummelo.

MOM

I'm not sure where you're going with this, Andy.

ANDY

The lemon is not a naturally occurring fruit.

MOM *(uncertainly)*

Okay.

ANDY

You said:

(he puts on his Mom voice)

"Sometimes, life gives you lemons and you have to make lemonade."

MOM

It was a bad analogy, I should have started with something else, I'm sorry.

ANDY

But life literally can't give us lemons.

(he looks at his mom directly for the first time, she looks at him not sure she heard him right, before bursting out laughing. Andy looks confused by her laughter)

What's so funny?

MOM

Nothing. Everything. Ok, so life can't give us lemons and you wouldn't want to make lemonade anyway.

ANDY

But I think I understand now.

MOM

(not at all sure he does)

You do.

ANDY

I think so. Things happen. Life happens. Dad is leaving and we have to make the best of it. When life *can't* give us lemons, we have to make our own.

MOM

Yeah . . . yeah I guess that's right, Andy. We'll make our own lemons.

ANDY

But not lemonade. Now I want to go inside in the air conditioning and have some orange juice.

MOM

C'mon, it is so hot out here!

(they exit)

End of Play.