



Mom, Shakespeare and Me

a short five-act play by **Clare Higgins**

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

MOM, *a college professor of English.*

CLARE, *her daughter.*

Induction

The Bronx Kitchen, 1960.

[Enter Clare and Mom.]

Clare. Mom, can I talk to you?

Mom. Of course, dear! What is it?

Clare. Mom . . . I hate my voice.

Mom. But why?

Clare. It's so deep. I sound like a boy.

Mom. You do not sound like a boy, dear, you sound like me. We both happen to have low

voices. I think it's better than having a high, squeaky girly voice! *[Clare is not convinced.]*
Dear, let me tell you something Shakespeare once said. "Her voice was ever soft, gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman."

Clare *[brightening]*. Did he really say that?

Mom. He certainly did. And if *he* thought a low voice was beautiful, *well . . .*

[Clare smiles.]

Act I

Driving Home from the Stratford, CT. Shakespeare Festival, 1970.

[Enter Mom and Clare.]

Mom. Well, I didn't care for *that* production at all. I mean those costumes were *ridiculous!*

Clare. Well . . . they were just trying to be authentic. I mean, Lear is set in prehistoric Britain.

Mom. But all those furry leggings? This is

Shakespeare, not the Flintstones!

[They laugh.]

Act II

Clare's apartment, 1988.

[Enter Clare on telephone.]

Clare. Oh my God, it was HELL in scene study class last night.

Mom. What happened?

Clare. Well, you remember when Hamlet is yelling at Gertrude about what a bum Claudius is? She tries to get away and he forces her to stay? And he says, "you shall not leave until I set you up a glass where you may see the inmost part of you!"

Mom. Sure.

Clare. Well, Jack had to shove me in a chair and hold me, and then he leans over and starts yelling into my face, and Mom, his *breath* would have knocked out a dinosaur.

Mom. Oh, dear.

Clare. I've tried everything! Last week I offered him some Tic-Tac and he took it, but this week he said, "No thanks!" I wanted to die! Do you think it'd be a little too obvious if I wore an oxygen mask in class?

Mom. Uh, yes. Maybe you could work something into the text!

Clare. Now there's a thought. Hmmm . . . let's see. "Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended . . . and speaking of offending, hie thee to yon bathroom and partake copiously of yon Listerine!"

[They laugh].

Act III

Clare's Apartment in Winter, 1995.

[Enter Clare on telephone.]

Clare. Hi, it's me. Are you feeling any better?

Mom. Well, I'm still pretty tired. The anesthesia

hasn't totally worn off.

Clare. How's your eye?

Mom. It's still pretty watery, but my vision is getting less cloudy.

Clare. I don't mind telling you I was awfully worried. I mean, a detached retina...

Mom. It's going to be perfectly all right. The doctor said it was only slightly torn and he fixed it very quickly with a laser.

Clare. Anything I can do?

Mom. Not a thing. Your father's taking excellent care of me. We have to expect these things at my age, you know.

Clare. I was thinking . . . I mean, I know how you love to read, and the thought of your not being able to was just . . . I mean all of a sudden, when I was ironing today, I thought, "So long as men can breathe, or *eyes can see*..."

Mom. Oh, dear.

[They weep.]

Act IV

A funeral parlor in Winter, 1997.

[Enter Mom, Clare and family.]

Mom. I can't get over how beautiful he looks.
Your father had such a beautiful face.

Clare. When I knelt next to the casket, I thought,
"Why art thou yet so fair?"

[Mom smiles gently.]

Act V

Clare's Apartment in Summer, 1999.

[Enter Clare on telephone.]

Clare. So, how'd it go?

Mom. It was fine. I can't believe I'm so tired when
all I did was sign a contract.

Clare. I can't wait to see the apartment.

Mom. It's beautiful. I'm really excited. I'm going to need a lot of help from you. I don't just mean moving, but making copies of all these papers, getting them out, all that stuff. Can you come over this Saturday?

Clare. "We shall obey, were she ten times our mother."

Mom. *[laughing]*. I just love it when you do that.

Clare. Thanks. Well, our friend Will is a big help at times like this.

Mom. You're a great help to me, too. In fact, "haply I think on thee, and then I scorn to change my state with kings."

Clare. Thanks, Mom.

[They smile.]

Finis. ▶

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