

Grotto

a play in two acts

Written by Emma Grace Myers

Emma Grace Myers
emmagmyers@gmail.com
(518) 466 - 8558

Characters

Maddy Marcoccia – daughter of the deceased. High-strung.

Alec Marcoccia – son of the deceased. Fuck-up.

Laura Marcoccia – wife of the deceased. Withholding.

Bert Johnson – mailman of the deceased. Around.

Setting

Time – Now. After the funeral. We're thinking of you.

Place – The Marcoccia home. Where Maddy and Alec grew up. Lower middle class.

Notes

It may be easy for the comedy to get lost in the content. I would suggest avoiding that at all costs.

// signals an interruption, indicating that the following line should start.

Words that appear {in braces} signal a non-verbal response. Example: {fair enough} may indicate a shrug or facial expression. You tell me. I'm not an actor.

Dialogue-heavy parts of the play can be said in the overlapping, talking-over-each-other way of a family dinner. Speed and rhythm are the name of the game.

The play should have an intermission between acts one and two.

Act One

One.

A nice, well-kept sitting room. It is not a living room. It is a sitting room. It has no TV, and hardly looks lived in. It is clean to a point of aggression. The forbidden room that your mom kept for “guests” and “parties” that she never had. It has a couch at center with a coffee table in front of it, chairs on either side. It’s very symmetrical.

Keys jingle outside of a door at stage right. Enter MADDY, wearing all black: a pencil skirt, pumps, a blazer. She looks quite no-nonsense. Her hair is up, but not too tight. She drops her bag and a rolled up funeral program in her hand a table by the door. She locks the door behind her. She looks around the space a moment. She notices the blanket on the back of the couch is askew. She crosses to fix it. Her eyes fall on a music box that sits on the coffee table. She opens it, and it quietly plays “I’ll Fly Away” on its tuned comb. MADDY watches it. She smiles lightly. It’s a sweet moment. She seems a bit lost in a memory.

LAURA

(from offstage)

Turn that shit off!

(MADDY jumps at the sound of LAURA’s voice. She thought she was alone. She sits down on the couch and gently closes the music box.)

(LAURA enters from upstage left, carrying a manila folder.)

MADDY

I didn’t realize you were here.

LAURA

Sorry. Didn’t mean to disturb you in my own house.

(LAURA drops the folder on the couch next to MADDY and sits down in one of the chairs. She pulls out a pack of cigarettes and a lighter. She puts a cigarette between her lips.)

MADDY

You're smoking inside now?

LAURA

(with the cigarette in her mouth)

Who am I keeping up appearances for?

(LAURA lights her cigarette. She blows the smoke in MADDY's direction.)

MADDY

Please don't do that.

LAURA

Accident.

(It wasn't.)

LAURA

Well. That's all you needed, wasn't it?

(She gestures toward the file. MADDY picks it up.)

MADDY

Is this everything?

LAURA

Life insurance. Bank account statements. Birth certificate. Marriage certificate.
Mortgage. And the last will and testament.

(MADDY takes a breath.)

MADDY

Okay. Thanks.

(MADDY stands.)

LAURA

Oh, you're not sticking around? You seemed pretty ready to make yourself at home
when you thought I wasn't here.

MADDY

Well. I wanted to listen to the song.

(MADDY looks at the music box.)

LAURA

You were going to hang out for a while.

MADDY
No, I was just...

(MADDY desperately tries to come up with a lie, but this is not her strong suit.)

MADDY
I was... Taking a moment to grieve.

LAURA
Bullshit.

(MADDY glares at LAURA.)

MADDY
Okay, well, maybe we aren't all as heartless and crass as you.

LAURA
Crass? The ladies I play cribbage with think I'm a hoot.

MADDY
You're playing cribbage?

LAURA
I was. For a little while. They kicked me out of the group because I kept smoking in the house.

(She takes a drag.)

MADDY
You smoke in other people's houses? You shouldn't be smoking at all, let alone inside!

LAURA
Madelena, I am sixty years old, there is no should or should not, there is only what is.

(She takes a drag. MADDY stares at her blankly.)

MADDY
(blunt and bothered)
That means nothing. That was such a nothing thing to say.

LAURA
But it felt real, didn't it? It's because I can punctuate it with the cigarette. This is why people smoke, Madelena. There's power in finishing your thoughts with a drag on a bogey.

(She takes a drag. She coughs a nasty smoker's cough.)

MADDY

Ugh. Who says, “drag on a bogey.” You sound like RuPaul on a golf course.

(LAURA stares at MADDY.)

MADDY

It’s a // joke.

LAURA

No I got it.

(LAURA stares at MADDY. LAURA actively doesn’t laugh, smile, move.)

MADDY

Okay. I think I should go.

LAURA

(dripping with sarcasm)

And leave your only living parent alone. Wonderful.

MADDY

Did you need something?

LAURA

Oh no. I wouldn’t want to trouble you.

(MADDY stares at LAURA.)

LAURA

(dead serious)

For the love of God. Please go.

(LAURA takes a drag of her cigarette.)

(MADDY stares at her a moment. She sits down on the couch.)

MADDY

How are you doing?

LAURA

Excellent. Weren’t you leaving?

MADDY

I thought you said...

LAURA

I said that I wouldn’t want to trouble you. And I don’t. Go.

MADDY
...Are you serious?

LAURA
Do I look anything other than serious?

(She takes a drag of her cigarette. MADDY waits, as though LAURA may say something redeeming. We all know she won't. LAURA stands, not looking at MADDY.)

LAURA
You can see yourself out.

(LAURA exits, smoking as she goes. MADDY is alone.)

LAURA
(from offstage)
Don't touch anything.

(MADDY looks in the direction LAURA went. She sighs. She sits back down on the couch. She flips open the music box and listens. We can almost hear the words.)

(From the front door emerges ALEC, unbeknownst to MADDY. He is ruggedly handsome: messy hair, loosened tie. He's dressed nice, in a suit, but looks a little disheveled. Just by looking at him you can tell he's going to ruin your life.)

(ALEC silently shuts the door behind him and leans back on it. He watches MADDY. It shouldn't be creepy, but it might be a little bit creepy.)

(The music box winds down. The song stops playing. MADDY reaches out to close the box.)

ALEC
Bit of a morbid choice of song, Mads.

(MADDY is startled. She accidentally slams the music box shut. She quickly checks it to be sure that it's not broken.)

MADDY
(not looking at him)
It just comes like that. You don't get to pick the song.

(MADDY stands up, trying to busy herself. But there's nothing to do.)

MADDY
I didn't know you were here.

ALEC
I've been following you for weeks, Madelena.

(MADDY stops doing whatever she's occupied herself with and turns to face ALEC, quizzical, concerned.)

ALEC
I'm kidding.

(MADDY rolls her eyes and turns to look at him.)

MADDY
I didn't even know you were coming today.

ALEC
Yeah, didn't you hear? My dad died.

(MADDY scoffs and turns away.)