

In Bed With My Mother

Paul, a San-Francisco based lawyer, is anxious about coming home for the first time after his mother was diagnosed with Stage IV Melanoma.

Minda, a middle-aged homemaker, gets an unexpected visit from her son whom she hasn't seen for three years.

Isay, the maid, watches television all day while taking care of a sick woman.

In Bed With My Mother is a play about love, forgiveness, kindness, and other words that seem hopeful.

SETTING:

Night. In a bedroom. The bed is in the middle of the stage beside a door. There's a bedside table on its left and a lampshade on its right. A rocking chair is situated on the front left corner.

CHARACTERS:

PAUL, thirty-something; think Piolo Pascual out of the closet.

MINDA, fifty-something; think Gina Pareño who speaks straight English.

ISAY, twenty-something; think any maid in History.

(MINDA IS ON THE BED, HER BACK RESTING ON THE HEADBOARD. THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.)

MINDA (loudly):

What?

(ISAY ENTERS THE ROOM.)

MINDA:

What is it?

ISAY:

Someone's here to see you.

MINDA:

Who?

ISAY:

He says he's your son.

MINDA (thinks for a moment):

Are you sure?

ISAY:

No. I haven't seen your son before.

MINDA (scoffs):

What does he look like?

ISAY:

Short hair, brown eyes.

MINDA (softly):

That's not Paul.

ISAY:

He looks like you.

MINDA (rolls her eyes):

Well, that makes it official then.

ISAY:

I asked him. I was like 'who are you?' and he said 'I'm her son' and I was all 'yeah right' and he said 'seriously' and I'm like 'okay'.

(PAUL ENTERS THE ROOM, CARRYING A HUGE BAG ON HIS LEFT SHOULDER.)

PAUL:

Ma, what's the hold up? It's me.

MINDA (to Isay):

You let him in? What if he wasn't my son? You just let a stranger come in my house without making sure.

ISAY:

I'm sorry.

MINDA:

Yes, you'll be sorry when he steals from me, rapes you, and sticks a mop inside your—vagina.

PAUL:

What the fuck are you talking about?

MINDA:

I saw it on the news. People do that these days. A bunch of psychos, I tell you.

PAUL:

That's sick.

MINDA:

Exactly my point. But Little-Miss-Idiot here thinks she knows better.

PAUL:

Okay Ma, that's enough. I'm neither a thief nor a rapist. (offers his hand to Isay) Paul.

MINDA:

This is my maid, Isay.

ISAY:

Hi, sir.

PAUL:

Just Paul. Thanks for the coffee, by the way.

ISAY:

You're welcome.

(ISAY LEAVES THE ROOM.)

MINDA:

She made you coffee? How long were you out there?

PAUL:

About half an hour.

MINDA:

Unbelievable.

PAUL:

Don't take it out on her.

MINDA:

Why not? She's my maid.

PAUL:

She was nice and hospitable. She let me wait in the living room because she thought you were still taking a nap.

MINDA:

I was.

PAUL:

See? She said you do that a lot now.

MINDA:

There's nothing left to do. I'm tired all the time. I haven't even left this room for a month.

PAUL:

She was just looking out for you.

MINDA:

She's still stupid.

PAUL:

How can you say that?

MINDA:

If she wasn't, she wouldn't be cleaning houses.

PAUL:

That's offensive.

MINDA:

I don't care. I'm old and I get a free a pass.

PAUL:

She's here because her mother died, her father left her, and she didn't finish High School.

MINDA:

How in the world do you know that?

PAUL:

We talked. (pause) Are you telling me you didn't even ask her why she ended up here?

MINDA:

It's not important. I'm her boss, not her shrink.

PAUL:

You're living in the same house. What if she is some psycho who creeps into your room and sticks a mop in your—vagina?

MINDA:

Very original.

PAUL:

You gave her the idea. It's only a matter of time.

MINDA (rolls her eyes):

Can you drop the subject? Talking about Isay is making me sick—sicker.

(PAUL PUTS HIS BAG IN THE CORNER.)

MINDA:

You can put that in your room.

PAUL:

I'll do it later.

(MINDA LOOKS AT PAUL INTENTLY.)

MINDA:

You cut your hair.

PAUL:

I did.

(SILENCE.)

MINDA:

Are you hungry?

PAUL:

No, I'm good.

MINDA:

How was your flight?

PAUL:

Long.

MINDA:

Are you tired? I can get Isay to fix your room.

PAUL:

I'm fine.

MINDA:

How's work?

PAUL:

Stop it.

MINDA:

What?

PAUL:

You're making small talk.

MINDA:

Okay. Then tell me, why are you here?

PAUL:

What kind of question is that?

MINDA:

I think it's a valid question.

PAUL:

I'm here because I wanted to see you.

MINDA:

Try again. Why are you here?

PAUL:

To take care of you.

MINDA:

You can do better than that.

PAUL:

I missed you.

MINDA:

Now you're just making me laugh. Why are you really—

PAUL (loudly):

Because you're fucking dying!

(SILENCE.)

MINDA:

God, you don't have to be so dramatic about it.

PAUL:

That's what you wanted me to say right?

MINDA:

I knew it was because of that.

PAUL:

Yes, it is.

MINDA:

You want balcony seats to my wasting away.

PAUL:

You're unbelievable.

MINDA:

I bet you're enjoying this, watching your mother frail and weak. You can't wait for me to breathe my last dying breath.

PAUL:

Now who's being dramatic?

MINDA:

If you're here to claim the money you're getting, you're wasting your time.

PAUL (chuckles):

My so-called inheritance? Is there even any?

MINDA:

No.

PAUL:

I thought so.

MINDA:

I suppose you're getting this house.

PAUL:

Really?

MINDA:

Your father doesn't want anything to do with it.

PAUL:

And what would I do with this house?

MINDA:

It's up to you. Just don't sell it. I've done a lot to make this place what it is now and I want it to stay that way. I don't like the idea of other people using my kitchen and my toilet.

PAUL:

Why would you care? You'd be dead.

MINDA:

I've decided to haunt this place.

PAUL:

What?

MINDA:

I'm not going to the light, Paul.

PAUL:

If this is your attempt to get me to live here, it's not working.

MINDA:

This is your home.

PAUL:

I live in San Francisco and that is my home now.

MINDA:

You first masturbated here.

PAUL:

How would you know that?

MINDA:

You were thirteen. You did it in your room.

PAUL:

You saw me masturbating?

MINDA:

Saw? I watched the whole thing.

PAUL:

You're kidding me, right?

MINDA:

You weren't so smart. You left the door unlocked.

PAUL:

So you just stood there and watched me *pleasure* myself?

MINDA:

I thought it was remarkable! You were a very quiet boy, distant and aloof. I thought for a while you were incapable of having sexual feelings. Of course, I didn't know you were gay then.

PAUL:

That's fucked up.

MINDA:

What are you so upset about?

PAUL:

The fact that you're even asking is why I'm upset.

MINDA:

I'm your mother. I was supposed to see those things.

PAUL:

No, you weren't.

MINDA:

That's what mothers do, Paul. They embarrass their children.

PAUL:

And you're pretty good at that. You've made every single moment of my life worth killing myself.

MINDA:

Oh stop being such a drama queen.

PAUL:

You know what, I've been trying to keep myself—wait, what did you just call me?

MINDA (smiles):

If the crown fits.

PAUL (laughs):

You're horrible.

MINDA:

I try my best.

(PAUL SITS ON THE ROCKING CHAIR.)

PAUL:

How are you?

MINDA:

Aside from dealing with Isay every day, I'm good.

PAUL:

How are you feeling?

MINDA:

I told you I'm good. You're here now. I'm good. Never better.

PAUL:

I don't believe you.

MINDA (groans):

Oh why do you have to ruin it?

PAUL:

What?

MINDA:

We were having a moment. We were bickering and laughing and finally talking. I'm good.
We're good.

PAUL:

You said that already.

MINDA:

Because that's all there is to it. I'm fine. You didn't have to come really.
After what, three years?

PAUL (sighs):

Okay, so now you're making me feel guilty.

MINDA:

I'm not. I just thought once you heard I had cancer, which was about six months ago, you could've come right away. I know you were busy with work and defending criminals, and I didn't want you to leave everything just because of me and I get that, even if I was really sick at that time. I mean really, really sick.

PAUL:

I told you I couldn't get off work.

MINDA:

You did and I understand. I love that you love your job and you have good work ethic. It's admirable. I was just mortified when Dr. Santiago gave me the results and I felt really alone. I mean really, really alone.

PAUL (smirks):

Wow, you're really good at this passive-aggressive shit.

MINDA (smiles):

Oh I could go on and on and on.

PAUL:

You've really mastered your craft. This is why I gave up arguing with you.

MINDA (disbelief):

Right.

PAUL (nods):

You're worse than the other lawyers in court. I could never win with your I-gave-up-my-dreams-just-to-raise-you stories. Seriously, how could I fight back with that?

MINDA:

You did win.

PAUL:

How?

MINDA:

You left.

PAUL:

That's not winning. That's being a coward.

MINDA:

Maybe, but you still made a decision for yourself. You were tired of our endless arguments and my constant disapproval of everything you do. You made a choice and—

PAUL:

And what?

MINDA:

I was proud of you.

(SILENCE. PAUL EXAMINES THE ROCKING CHAIR.)

PAUL:

I can't believe it's still here. (rocks it back and forth) It still works!

MINDA:

It's not a machine, Paul. It doesn't just break down.

(THERE'S A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.)

PAUL:

Come in.

(ISAY ENTERS THE ROOM WITH A TRAY ON HER HAND. A BOWL OF SOUP, GLASS OF WATER AND A BOTTLE OF PILLS.)

PAUL (stands):

Let me help you with that.

(PAUL TAKES THE TRAY FROM ISAY AND PLACES IT ON THE BEDSIDE TABLE.)

ISAY (to Paul):

Do you want anything?

PAUL:

No, I'm good.

ISAY:

I can fix something up for you.

PAUL:

I don't want you to go to any trouble.

ISAY:

It's no trouble at all. I can cook anything you want... (smiles) Paul.

MINDA (to Isay):

He's gay.

PAUL:

Ma!

MINDA:

She's clearly flirting. I don't want to get her hopes up.

PAUL (to Isay):

I'm sorry.

ISAY:

That's fine. I just thought you were nice.

PAUL:

Thanks. (pause) How long have you been working here again?

ISAY:

Three months.

PAUL:

Impressive.

ISAY:

I know.

PAUL:

No one lasts one week. Two weeks tops.

ISAY:

I'm patient and I'm good with difficult people.

PAUL:

That's great.

ISAY:

And you just kind of get used to her.

PAUL (chuckles):

You do, don't you?

ISAY:

I just shut her out sometimes.

PAUL:

I do that too!

ISAY:

Especially when she's in one of her moods and she just talks and talks and talks, and I'm like 'waaah, kill me now!'

PAUL:

And she's like 'you're doing everything wrong' and I'm like 'shut up. why don't you do it?'

(THEY BOTH LAUGH)

MINDA:

I'm still here.

ISAY (to Paul):

Don't forget to give her the pill.

PAUL:

Okay.

ISAY:

Are you sure you don't want anything?

PAUL:

Maybe a glass of water.

(ISAY LEAVES THE ROOM. MINDA REACHES FOR THE BOWL.)

PAUL:

Let me do it.

MINDA:

I'm not paralyzed.

PAUL:

I know.

(PAUL TAKES THE BOWL AND SITS ON THE BED BESIDE MINDA.)

PAUL:

Whatever happened to Elsa? She was your maid the last time I was here.

MINDA:

She stole from me.

PAUL:

Really? She seemed trustworthy. (pause) What did she steal?

MINDA (thinks for a moment):

My—couch.

PAUL:

You're just making that up.

MINDA:

She was suspicious and she was about to steal something. I could sense it.

PAUL:

That's insane. You think everyone steals from you.

MINDA:

They do. Remember Martha?

PAUL:

That was one time.

MINDA:

And I won't let that happen again.

PAUL:

This is why no one ever stays with you. You think they're always up to something, and you just fire them for no reason.

MINDA:

I have my reasons.

PAUL:

What about Cecile? Or Risa? Or Inday?

MINDA (laughs):

Inday.

PAUL:

Well, what was wrong with her?

MINDA:

She had bad breath.

PAUL:

Seriously?

MINDA:

Yes. It's like she ate dog poop or something.

PAUL:

No, I mean you fired her because she had breath?

MINDA:

If you had smelled it, you would've done the same.

PAUL:

Sometimes I just don't get how your mind works.

MINDA:

Although I feel bad for Inday. Having that name alone, it's like she was destined to be a maid.
(pause) What time is it?

PAUL:

Seven-thirty.

MINDA:

Already? I just woke up and I feel sleepy again. I hate being sick.

PAUL:

About that, what did Dr. Santiago say?

MINDA (groans):

I told you, I don't want to talk about it.

PAUL:

We have to.

MINDA:

It's depressing.

PAUL:

You brought it up, and sooner or later, we're going to have to talk about it.

(PAUL HANDS MINDA HER PILL. SHE DRINKS IT.)

MINDA:

Stage Four.

PAUL:

The last time I called, you said the cells diminished.

MINDA:

Well, they're back.

PAUL:

How bad is it?

MINDA:

There's no Stage Five. Next level is up heaven. Or hell, if Isay's wishes ever come true.

PAUL:

We can do chemo, right?

MINDA:

Stop it.

PAUL:

I'll call Dr. Santiago so we can schedule you for the treatment.

MINDA:

I don't want that.

PAUL:

Why?

MINDA:

I'll lose my hair. I have beautiful hair.

PAUL:

You can wear a wig.

MINDA:

I'll look like a drag queen.

(MINDA TRIES TO GET UP FROM THE BED.)

MINDA:

Help me up.

(PAUL HOLDS MINDA'S HAND. SHE WALKS OVER TO THE ROCKING CHAIR AND SITS ON IT.)

MINDA:

You're right, this feels good.

PAUL:

What about surgery?

MINDA:

The doctor said I'm too weak to survive surgery.

PAUL:

Radiation?

MINDA (loudly):

I don't want it!

PAUL:

Then what do you want to do?

MINDA:

I have my medications.

PAUL:

A few pills won't save your life. We have to exhaust every treatment there is.

MINDA:

God will take care of me.

PAUL (loudly):

That's fucking bullshit!

MINDA:

Watch you're language. A little respect for fuck's sake.

PAUL:

So you think God will miraculously heal you from cancer?

MINDA:

He will never put me in harm's way.

PAUL:

He just did! He gave you cancer!

MINDA:

He's testing me. He's testing all of us.

PAUL:

Fine let's do it your way, but don't blame me if those pills fail you. And when you're dead, I'll be the first one to say 'I told you so'. I mean, I'll say that—on—your—grave.

MINDA (sighs):

I don't want you to think I'm giving up because I'm not. I just don't want to spend the next few days on a hospital bed with wires all over me. Your father and I talked about this and it would mean a lot if you're on board too.

PAUL:

Wait, you talked to Papa?

MINDA:

Of course I did. (pause) I still do.

PAUL:

Since when?

MINDA:

Since forever.

PAUL:

But you hate him.

MINDA:

I did, but that's a long time ago.

PAUL:

So you just decided to forget what he's done and move on?

MINDA:

We had to make peace eventually. We were good for each other and we had good years together. You know, once you love someone, you never stop loving them. Maybe a little less or maybe differently, but you never stop loving them.

PAUL:

Are you quoting Sharon Cuneta?

MINDA:

She has a way with words. She's the megastar for a reason.

PAUL:

I can't believe this.

MINDA:

We were a happy family once, you know that.

PAUL:

Yes, until he started fucking one of his students.

MINDA:

It wasn't a one-time thing. They're still together.

PAUL:

Well I guess Viagra works.

MINDA:

Stop being so hard on your father. No pun intended.

PAUL:

I'm surprised you're not. And you were not the only one who got left behind. He left me too! He just ran away and played house with that slut. No wonder I was a fucked up kid.

MINDA:

Your father loves you.

PAUL:

He certainly didn't show it.

MINDA:

He did. You don't remember this but when you were a baby, he would sit on this chair and rock you to sleep. He adored you.

PAUL:

Is this the part where I'm supposed to cry? Because I won't.

(ISAY ENTERS THE ROOM WITH A GLASS OF WATER.)

MINDA:

Where did you get that? From a well in Africa?

ISAY:

I'm sorry I was watching TV.

MINDA:

You were watching?

ISAY:

Yes and I took the garbage out as well. After that, I felt really dirty so I also took a hot shower.

MINDA (to Paul):

You see what I have to deal with everyday?

PAUL (to Isay):

It's fine. Thanks.

ISAY:

I also fixed your room. I put fresh sheets on the bed so you can sleep comfortably. If you get scared in the middle of the night because you know, you haven't slept there in a long time, my door is always open.

MINDA (rolls her eyes):

Unbelievable.

PAUL (to Isay):

That's very kind of you.

(ISAY LEAVES THE ROOM. PAUL'S PHONE RINGS. HE TAKES IT OUT FROM HIS POCKET AND LOOKS AT THE SCREEN.)

PAUL:

Sorry I have to take this. I'll be back one minute.

(PAUL LEAVES THE ROOM.)

PAUL (off-stage):

Hey! Yes I got here about two hours ago. I'm still jetlagged but I'm fine. You just woke up? You don't have to worry, I'm good. Well, you know how she is. Yes, she's here. She's on her medication. Yes. Okay. Enjoy your day. I love you too.

(PAUL ENTERS THE ROOM.)

PAUL:

That was Mark. He says hi.

(MINDA DOES NOT RESPOND. HER EYES ARE CLOSED.)

PAUL:

Ma?

(PAUL STARTS TO LOOK WORRIED. HE WALKS OVER TO HER)

PAUL:

Ma?

MINDA:

Don't get too excited. I'm not dead yet. I'm just resting my eyes.

PAUL:

Let's put you back to bed.

(PAUL HELPS MINDA GET UP AND LEADS HER TO THE BED. MINDA SIGHS.)

PAUL:

Do you want me to leave? I can go to my room now.

MINDA:

Stay.

(PAUL WALKS TOWARDS THE ROCKING CHAIR.)

MINDA:

No. (pats the bed) Here, take the other side.

(PAUL GOES BACK TO THE BED AND LIES BESIDE MINDA. THEY ARE SILENT FOR A MOMENT.)

MINDA:

How's Mark?

PAUL:

He's good.

MINDA:

Good.

PAUL:

He just got a book deal. They're publishing his novel next fall.

MINDA:

Good for him.

PAUL (softly):

It is.

MINDA (looks at Paul):

What's wrong?

PAUL:

What? Nothing.

MINDA:

There's something you're not telling me.

PAUL:

Nothing's wrong.

MINDA:

I know you. Is Mark cheating? Do you have AIDS?

PAUL (laughs):

No, we're completely monogamous.

MINDA:

Then what is it?

PAUL:

He wants us to adopt.

MINDA:

So?

PAUL:

It's a big step! I know we've been together long enough and having a baby might be the next logical thing to do, but—I'm just not sure if I'm ready to be a father.

MINDA:

You don't think you can handle it?

PAUL:

I don't. (pause) How did you do it? Raise a child by yourself.

MINDA:

Drugs. Lots of it.

PAUL (smirks):

That explains everything.

MINDA:

I don't know. It was difficult not having your father around to help me. I guess you just have to take it one day at a time. Plus, I don't think I'm one to give advice about Parenthood. I'm not the perfect mother you thought I was.

PAUL:

I never thought that.

(THEY BOTH LAUGH. MINDA RESTS HER HEAD ON PAUL'S SHOULDER.)

MINDA:

Paul?

PAUL:

Hmm?

MINDA:

I think you'll be a great father.

(SILENCE.)

PAUL:

Ma?

MINDA:

Hmm?

PAUL:

Are you scared?

MINDA:

Of course I am.

PAUL (holds Minda's hand):

I'm sorry I wasn't here when you needed me.

MINDA:

You're here now.

PAUL:

I missed you.

MINDA:

I know.

PAUL:

Remember when I was kid, like five or six. Every time there was a storm and I got scared, I'd cry in the middle of the night and I would go to this room and crawl up on this bed. You would hold me tight and say everything's going to be all right. I always felt better afterwards.

MINDA:

Is this the part where I'm supposed to cry?

PAUL (laughs):

Yes it is. (pause) I know I don't say this often but—I love you, Ma.

MINDA (groans):

Stop talking, Paul. I'm trying to sleep.

(PAUL SMILES AS HE REACHES FOR THE LAMPSHADE ON HIS SIDE AND TURNS IT OFF.)

CURTAIN.