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SARAH BEDFORD

Judged by Etruscan author Bruce Bond

“She’s fucking nuts! I’m done,” I stormed through my aunt’s house, the trash bag filled with dirty rags clamped in my left hand. The rain which had saturated my clothes only remained in small blotches around my shoulders and neck. Grandma Irene had pulled her shit again, this time though, trying to make it her final hurrah on Earth. Minutes before I would throw away my job—a great paying one, too—that woman would try to jump out Dad’s moving truck as storm clouds surrounded us in a near apocalyptic scene straight out of the horror movie that I call life.

Make no mistake; my grandmother is not depressed or suicidal. She’s all theatrics all the time; she’ll do anything for pity and a good show. At a minuscule 4-foot-tall, Irene has a larger than life personality fit to send even the most stable person into a spiral of insanity. Like a monster out of a science fiction movie, Irene stays dormant until her prey is least suspecting.

I was told to hold her back. And I did, though years later I have fleeting moments when I think maybe life would have turned out differently if I didn’t. With every back handed comment, every unanticipated visit, I think what if. If I let her jump, maybe my college graduation dinner wouldn’t have been about her putting her dog down hours before, how I didn’t need to continue my education to be a writer, how my boyfriend was getting fat at his desk job. Maybe if I let her jump I wouldn’t be spending family dinners slowly chewing my food as a means to bite my tongue. Maybe I wouldn’t have to fight with Dad or resent my brother. Maybe if she jumped, life would be better.

But I did do it. A clenched fist directed at my face, her bottom lip trembled. She screamed, “You do not touch me!” I can still see her face contorted, mouth agape, and sunken eyes. Despite her wishes, I did as instructed because I’d rather rationalize why I saved her on our bad days rather than why I didn’t for the rest of my life.

“Nothing attested, everything sung”

- H. L. Hix