

# **Under the Ashes**

a 10 minute play

by Tara Meddaugh

*EXCERPT*

For the complete play, please visit <http://www.tameddaugh.com/under-the-ashes>

*UNDER THE ASHES*  
EXCERPT

Cast

LORNA      A middle aged wife.

EMMETT     A middle aged husband.

Setting

The kitchen/living room of an apartment.

**UNDER THE ASHES**

Excerpt

At rise: An apartment. LORNA polishes a small glass trinket. She hums an upbeat tune. EMMETT enters and moves around the room, searching for something.

LORNA

I'm polishing today.

(pause)

I said, I'm polishing today, Emmett!

EMMETT

Mm.

LORNA

Do you see how I polished the kitchen window? The sunlight now absolutely floods into the apartment!

EMMETT

The window faces a brick wall, Lorna. There's no more sunlight now than before you polished it.

LORNA

Well, maybe you can't tell the difference, but I can. You need a seasoned eye to notice the distinction. My eyes have seen enough to know. Your eyes are too—Emmett, are you listening to me?

EMMETT

Mm.

LORNA

I want to tell you about my day.

EMMETT

Mm.

LORNA

Just look over here, Emmett. Now before I polished the window, the dust particles were barely perceptible, but now, if you just—

EMMETT

What are you polishing now? Are you still fawning over that silly thing?

LORNA

Well, I think that's a mother's right. My son sent it to me.

EMMETT

Your son?

LORNA

Yes, you remember Freddie, of course. I received this lovely trinket in the mail last week from him.

EMMETT

Did you?

LORNA

He wrote such a darling note with it—how he misses my singing Wagner to him every night, and the smell of my lilac perfume, and—

EMMETT

Where is this “letter” your son wrote you?

LORNA

Oh, well, it was right here. I—hm, I seem to have misplaced it.

EMMETT

Well, I seem to have misplaced my office keys. Do you have any idea where they might be?

LORNA

I said I was polishing and—

EMMETT

Now, Lorna, I know you have a lot on your mind—what with your polishing and all, but now is a time when I really need your help. I need to get into my office.

LORNA

Well, I need to start my green bean casserole and it is rather important to—

EMMETT

Alright then. Neither of us has time to play this game tonight, so just tell me where they are, then you can finish your cleaning.

LORNA

Well, before I began my day of polishing, before I'd even picked out my cleaner, I was noticing how your eyes have darkened when you watch me.

EMMETT

(starts to leave)

Go back to your polishing, Lorna.

LORNA

You're leaving now? You can't—you don't have your—

EMMETT

You're clearly not capable of caring about me or my presentation.

LORNA

I know how to care.

EMMETT

Do you, Lorna?

LORNA

I do. I cared for my son.

EMMETT

Interesting.

(returns)

You cared for your son. Well, I cared for him, as well. How do you feel about that, Lorna?

LORNA

I don't remember your caring for him. You only wanted him when I held him—but you never cared for him. When I held him, you thought he had value. But when I set him on the marble, you forgot about him.

EMMETT

Oh, that's not true, Lorna. We never even had a marble floor. Now, in our relationship, in this marriage, we need to help each other out, right?

LORNA

Well—

EMMETT

I helped you practice when you wanted to be ballet dancer, and you helped me study when I was working toward my PhD.

LORNA

But I never became a ballet dancer.

EMMETT

That's true.

LORNA

But you became a *psy* . . . ?

EMMETT

*Chi . . .*

LORNA

*A-trist.*

EMMETT

That's right, I did. But you became a mother. An important mother. I could never be a mother, Lorna. But I still cared for your son. Do you agree?

LORNA

You played marbles with him.

EMMETT

Now, what an important wife you'd be if you'd start caring for my presentation and tell me where my keys are. Remember our vows, my presentation reflects not only on me, but you, as well.

LORNA

I don't see why you keep it locked in the first place. No other room in our apartment needs a padlock. Sometimes after I bring you your grapefruit in the morning, I want to sit in your office and smell the books.

EMMETT

And that's exactly why I cannot leave my office unlocked, Lorna. I can't have people sitting in my office and getting into my books. My work is confidential. You know that.

LORNA

Well then, you won't let me smell the books and now I have to defrost the green beans. Can you please step aside?

EMMETT

I won't eat dinner until I find my keys.

LORNA

You won't eat my green bean casserole?

EMMETT

No, Lorna. Not a single bean.

LORNA

But I'm making dinner for you. I don't want to eat green beans all alone.

EMMETT

Well, I won't eat them.

LORNA

(pausing for a moment, then continuing to the kitchen)

You'll eat.

EMMETT

I won't, Lorna.

LORNA

You always do.

EMMETT

I didn't eat dinner yesterday or the day before, or the day before, or for the past four weeks, in fact.

LORNA

You didn't . . .? You did! I know because I washed the red wine sauce out of your shirt yesterday.

EMMETT

I—Lorna, the point is, I am making this presentation tomorrow to some of the finest doctors in the country. They are depending on me to shed insight into—Lorna, you know I need this, so stop—

LORNA

Sometimes I wish you'd look at me instead of watching me all the time.

EMMETT

We've only gotten to where we are today because of—

LORNA

If you have your keys, will you eat with me then?

EMMETT

Yes, yes! Fine, if I have my keys, I'll eat dinner with you!

LORNA

I'll start dinner! So today, before I'd chosen my cleaner—sometimes I like it blue, but today I wanted clear—no color, you see? Colorless.

EMMETT

Lorna, I don't have time for your babbling. Can you focus, please?

LORNA

I'm trying.

EMMETT

Well, my patience is wearing thin! My future in this profession depends largely on this conference tomorrow—

LORNA

Well, *my* future depends largely—

EMMETT

Lorna, I've had enough! You have no future!

LORNA

But I have a past!

EMMETT

Don't talk of things you don't know.

LORNA

I have a past and a son—  
(holds up the trinket)

For the complete play, please visit: <http://www.tameddaugh.com/under-the-ashes>  
For permission to perform, please email [tmeddaugh@gmail.com](mailto:tmeddaugh@gmail.com)