

**Out of the Rubble**

A ten-minute play

by

Dale Griffiths Stamos

**[EXCERPT]**

AT RISE: LOUISE sits on a pile of debris. There are a couple of other similar piles of broken cutlery, twisted remnants of metal, pieces of tile, etc. - all that remains from a house that has burned down. She looks around, rather calmly. At one moment, she gets up, goes over to another pile, rummages through it, pulls out something, but realizes it wasn't what she was looking for and throws it back into the pile. She goes offstage to look at another part of the property. BARRY and NICHOLAS enter.

NICHOLAS

Why are you so certain she'll be here?

BARRY

Scene of the crime.

NICHOLAS

That's a ridiculous thing to say.

BARRY

I think on some level that's how she feels.

(They look around at the destroyed house. LOUISE comes back on stage. She has a broken mug in her hand. She stops, startled.)

LOUISE

What are you two doing here?

BARRY

Don't you think that's what we should be asking you? Mom, it's Thanksgiving!

LOUISE

I know.

BARRY

Then what are you doing?

LOUISE

This is where we always have Thanksgiving.

NICHOLAS

Yes, but, Mom... we can't exactly do that this year, now can we?

LOUISE

I know that, don't you think I know that!

BARRY

So then, why don't you just... put down that mug and come on home with us. Everyone's waiting. The turkey's getting cold.

LOUISE

No. I'm staying here.

BARRY

That's crazy, Mom!

(Beat. They stare at her.)

LOUISE

I haven't gone around the bend. Don't look at me like I have.

NICHOLAS

We don't think you have. It's just...

BARRY

It's just there's nothing left here, Mom. It's a burnt out hull. There are a few broken dishes and pieces of furniture.

LOUISE

Maybe. Maybe not.

(She again seems to spot something in the rubble. She gets up, rummages through things. She seems disappointed.)

BARRY

What are you looking for?

LOUISE

Nothing. It's nothing.

BARRY

We went through this rubble with a fine toothed comb. If there was anything left of worth, we would have already found it.

LOUISE

...Do you know that your Dad's toothbrush didn't burn up?

BARRY

Yeah, I know, I'm the one who found it.

LOUISE

I don't know why I hadn't thrown it away when I gave away his clothes, but... I guess it comforted me somehow... seeing it hang there, next to mine. But isn't that extraordinary? Of all the things not to burn up? His toothbrush?

BARRY

Yeah, it's amazing. Now, if we could just get going, we could maybe get home in time for--

LOUISE

You go ahead boys, I'm fine here.

BARRY

No, you're not fine here. Mom, you cannot spend Thanksgiving on the burnt remains of your house!

LOUISE

It's my Thanksgiving, I can spend it any way I choose!

BARRY

It's not *your* Thanksgiving, damnit!

NICHOLAS

Hey, cool it, Barry.

BARRY

(to NICHOLAS)

No!

(TO LOUISE)

Mom, it's *our* Thanksgiving, the whole family. And I know you're in pain, I get that. But has it crossed your mind that we're in pain too. That we've lost something here too, not just you? And we're making the choice to go on.

LOUISE

I know that.

BARRY

Do you? Do you really?

NICHOLAS

Barry, don't.

BARRY

Why not? We all lost Dad, not just her. And now, this house!

(to LOUISE)

Mom, you have to make something clear to me, okay?

LOUISE

(a little wary)

All right...

BARRY

Five hours before the house you and Dad lived in for 30 years, the house Nick and I grew up in, five hours before that house burned down, you were given a voluntary evacuation order.

LOUISE

Yes...

BARRY

You left the house but you didn't take anything with you. Correct?

LOUISE

Yes. This neighborhood had never burnt down before. I thought they were being overly cautious.

NICHOLAS

Sure, of course. It makes perfect sense.

BARRY

(glares at his brother)

Okay. But what about the second time?

LOUISE

The second time...

BARRY

You came back, right? For the mandatory evacuation.

(LOUISE concentrates, as if this is hard to bring up in her mind)

LOUISE

Yes. I came back... I could see the flames were still pretty far away, but closer than before. So I packed up some clothes.

BARRY

You packed up some clothes.

NICHOLAS

Barry, don't...

BARRY

I just need an explanation, that's all.