

Exploring  
By  
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*A bedroom, with a 40-year-old man, LIAM, tentatively removing the bedspread. Each time he tries to get into bed, he stops, as if there is a force field preventing him from proceeding. He tries fluffing up the pillows. The door creaks open, and a younger man, Grant, enters.*

GRANT

Oh, I'm sorry, it looks like you were trying to get to sleep.

LIAM

That's a good word, "trying," but not succeeding. You know, this is the first time I'm sleeping in this bed. Since Betty died, I've been sleeping on the couch in the living room. How could I dare to be on this mattress without her by my side?

*LIAM almost tears up but stops himself.*

LIAM (CONT'D)

Did you want to talk to me about something?

GRANT

The memorial service for Betty.

LIAM

I thought it went okay. I guess it was a good thing that we waited until all the family from out of town could attend. I think your sister would

have appreciated the event.

GRANT

Yes. The thing is I'm worried about *you*. I know it would have been difficult for you to speak. But you hardly talked to anyone afterwards. You're usually such a good conversationalist.

LIAM

I think the grieving process is catching up with me, or I'm still in shock. We were married for fifteen years, but it feels like a lifetime. Cancer is such a shit storm. And we were so intimate with one another. I didn't want to share that with anyone.

*GRANT sits down on a chair by the bed.*

GRANT

I know that Betty wanted to be a mother. You both would have made such great parents.

LIAM

Don't remind me. If there had been a child, I wouldn't feel so alone.

GRANT

You know Betty told me that I should act like some sort of Guardian Angel after she died. That you didn't have any

friends besides her. I  
should take care of you.

*LIAM laughs.*

LIAM

Ha! She told me the same thing about you, "My brother is going to need lots of help after I'm gone. Think about it. He and I lived together most of our lives. And he's never had any kind of long-term relationship. It's a good thing he's living with us."

GRANT

And she probably said I was immature and a slut because I've been with so many men. And that I was bad with money. She was so supportive of me with my dreams of being an actor. That was part of the reason she wanted me staying here. That if I didn't have to pay rent, I could pursue my acting career full time. Look how *that* turned out. I failed her!

LIAM

Betty never said that. She was always proud of you. You don't know how lucky you are to even have a sister. I'm an only child, and so many of my friends are either not close with their siblings or even estranged from them. I mean, you guys were like twins!

*GRANT starts to cry.*

GRANT

If your goal was to make me cry, you've succeeded.

LIAM

But I have to tell you, that it's a blessing having you here. There are times when I get home from work and can't bear to open the door. Like this place is a tomb. So quiet without Betty. You're a piece of her, and that is so comforting to me.

GRANT

In some ways, you're a piece of Betty, too. You know the clichés about after you're married, you take on the characteristics of your spouse. Sometimes even looking alike. Look at you; how you would finish each other's sentences! I was jealous.

LIAM

Oh, come on! Talk about *jealous*! How do you think I felt when you and Betty were so tight with each other. There were times that I felt like a third wheel when you guys reminisced about the past.

*LIAM looks at his hands and winces.*

LIAM (CONT'D)

I've started chewing on my fingernails again

since Betty died. Damn!  
She would always  
reprimand me. She would  
clean up my nails and  
figure out a way for them  
to heal. I miss that.

GRANT

I watched her do it once.  
Do you want me to attempt  
it?

LIAM

As long as it doesn't  
make things worse.

*GRANT finds a bowl in the bathroom, fills it with warm water and takes LIAM's large rough hands and gently places them in the bowl. He begins massaging the palms searching for pressure points. Then GRANT cups his hands like a fist and rolls his closed fist up and down LIAM's fingers.*

GRANT

Am I hurting you?

LIAM

No pain, no gain!

*GRANT continues massaging LIAM's fingers and then stops.*

GRANT

Why don't you take off  
your wedding ring? You  
probably have dry skin  
under there.

LIAM

I've never taken off the  
ring since we got  
married.

GRANT

Just for a minute. I  
promise we'll put it  
right back on.

*As GRANT uses oil on LIAM's fingers, the ring naturally falls off into the bowl. LIAM gasps, closes his eyes and lets GRANT take the ring out of the bowl. LIAM looks liberated. GRANT finalizes the massage. LIAM smiles looking at his fingers.*

LIAM

You're a miracle worker.  
Almost as good as your  
sister.

GRANT

It *is* amazing, the  
change. Good enough for a  
commercial. Now don't let  
my work go to waste by  
biting your nails.

LIAM

How much do you charge?

GRANT

How about we do a trade?  
Wanna' give me a  
pedicure? My toes are in  
almost as bad shape as  
your fingernails.

*LIAM takes the bowl of water and begins massaging GRANT's feet until GRANT starts giggling.*

GRANT (CONT'D)

I'm ticklish! Stop!

LIAM

Don't be such a baby! I'm  
just getting started.

*LIAM uses his knuckles and kneads them against GRANT's feet. When GRANT moans, LIAM stops.*

LIAM

Your sister used to joke  
that when I massaged her  
feet, it felt like she  
was having an orgasm.

GRANT

Ach! Too much  
information.

*After drying GRANT's feet, LIAM takes a special  
jasmine moisturizer and rubs some on GRANT's  
feet.*

GRANT (CONT'D)

Boy, you are good! I can  
see why Betty fell in  
love with you. Wow!

LIAM

When I was massaging your  
feet, they reminded me so  
much of Betty's. Even  
your smell is similar to  
Betty's. In some weird  
way, it feels like Betty  
is still alive  
And with us.

*As LIAM takes away the bowl, GRANT stands up. He  
loses his footing and collapses into LIAM. LIAM  
is about to kiss GRANT, but GRANT stops him.*

GRANT

What's going on? Do you  
know what you're doing?  
I'm your brother-in-law!

LIAM

But I've seen the way  
you've looked at me. It  
never bothered me. To be  
honest, I was flattered  
by it. I've always been  
secure in my sexuality  
but there is something  
going on between us.

GRANT

But still this doesn't  
make sense! You should  
stop!

LIAM

And you're telling me  
that my wife dying at  
thirty-five makes any  
kind of sense?

GRANT

I'm going back to my  
bedroom.

*LIAM doesn't let GRANT leave and attempts to kiss  
him. GRANT tries to resist but eventually  
succumbs to LIAM's affection. Then GRANT becomes  
the aggressor and begins sucking on each of  
LIAM's fingers. GRANT takes his hand and leads  
him to bed. Lights dim. Pause*

*When lights come up, LIAM is frantically  
searching the room.*

LIAM

Where is it?

GRANT

What?

LIAM

My wedding ring. My hand  
feels naked.

*GRANT gets up out of bed and finds the ring on  
the bedroom cedar chest and shows it to LIAM.  
Only when GRANT slides the ring on LIAM's finger,  
does LIAM relax.*

LIAM (CONT'D)

It's a sign from Betty.  
She wants me to grieve. I  
don't deserve any  
happiness! I don't  
deserve you, Grant!

*GRANT holds LIAM's hands.*

GRANT

Don't say what you don't  
deserve. Honestly, I have  
always had a crush on



you, but I would never do anything about it. I wouldn't dare do something to hurt my sister. And anyway you're straight.

LIAM

Then why am I feeling this way about *you*? I just had a crazy thought. That this is what Betty meant about taking care of one another. Could she have had that kind of insight? That we might be attracted to one another? This is dangerous territory, but you know, maybe I don't care.

GRANT

I think she would approve.

*GRANT begins kissing LIAM.*

THE END