

PAULINE SIDES #2

Reader reads THOMAS

Pauline: You don't get to decide that.

Thomas: You abandoned *me*.

Pauline: And I'm trying to explain!

Thomas: With this? This is the *most* violent communication.

START Pauline: Fine, sure. I'm pure evil. Everything is my fault! Shit, is that closure?!

Thomas: (*sharply hushing her*) You don't swear in here.

Pauline: (*hushed*) Well fu-... Tommy the things you said. I deserve an apology too. The names-

Thomas: That was in reaction to what you did.

Pauline: So beyond that.

Thomas: Please, you've been called way worse.

Pauline: Never.

Thomas: Right.

Pauline: You said that I'm worse than mom and dad.

Thomas: Well.

(*beat*)

Pauline: Still? You haven't thought that one out? You don't want to take that one back?

Thomas: You disappeared on everyone. The minute someone got sick.

Pauline: That's not true.

Thomas: Sitting at the back of their funerals doesn't count.

Pauline: I was doing my best.

Thomas: That's what I was saying at first, she's doing her best. Then it kept happening, another one sick and you can't make it out for drinks. Then I'm only seeing you when it's us. Then I got sick, and told you... The look on your face, the flinch. Mom and Dad all over again.

Pauline: Don't you dare say that one more time.

Thomas: You wouldn't even touch me. Move on, Pauline. Please.

(beat. Thomas turns to leave)

Pauline: No. Don't leave. Tommy. *(yelling, her voice echoing in the church:)* Shit! Damn it! Shit! Shit!!

(Thomas turns back to her, urgently shushing-)

Thomas: Stop swearing!

Pauline: Do you know, um- Tommy, when you told me-!

Thomas: I don't care.

(He goes to leave again)

Pauline: Fuck! Shit fuck!

Thomas: *You're in a goddamn church.*

Pauline: I'm going to fucking keep shit bitch swearing....

Thomas: Stop it!

Pauline: Then shitting listen to me, fuck.

Thomas: What? Say it then!

Pauline: I, uh. Okay. Uh. *(beat)* Do you remember, at all those funerals- when I would *sit at the back* apparently, even though that's not true- do you remember the dress I always wore? The one with the big shoulders? My funeral dress. So I found it the other day when I was doing a clean out because my awful apartment only has one closet-

Thomas: Poor you. Bye.

Pauline: Neil... Your friend Neil died and I felt just close enough to come with you to the funeral. I threw on the dress and came out to get you to zip it up and you gave me this look and *You're not wearing that are you?* Thank you so much. You thought the shoulders were too big but I wore it anyways and I looked great.

Next thing I knew, you were zipping me up in that dress once a month, then twice a month, then once a week. That dress went from paying respects to acquaintances to saying goodbye to my closest friends. I went to Richard's funeral in a dress he had complimented the week before. Jason asked me to pair it with a veil for his to which I said *oh we're taking requests now*, and then about three weeks later I had to ask myself whether or not he was joking. Do you know, Thomas, do you know that I couldn't wear that dress to Jamal's funeral because it was at the dry cleaners? Think about that. I didn't have time to get my funeral dress cleaned between funerals.

Tommy. Tommy. I'm sorry. I freaked out. You tried to hug me and I flinched and backed up. That was so shitty, it was a shitty, disgusting reflex, but it's scary, okay? Everyone is dying!! That scares me. I was handling it, I was keeping my paranoia and stupidity at bay, but then you... we're basically one person, so if it can get you... and it is not rational but it's effing terrifying, so there. And maybe that makes me an awful, ignorant person, but worse than Mom and Dad? I spent most of my life protecting you from Dad, and I mean come on, Mom? I didn't go to college so that you could live with me... Worse than them? So I ran away. I'd been so barely holding it together in the first place, Tommy. And it's not an excuse, it's not about making excuses, it's just the truth. I avoided you for a while, and then it became a long while, and then I didn't know what to say to you and I was so MAD at you. And then I assumed you wouldn't want to hear from me and then I was too ashamed to try and make things right. And then I found that black dress *and nearly gagged on my own f-ing tears* because I realized that I'd way rather wear the dress than have no one left to wear it for.

You've always said that the only person who's a bigger asshole than you is me, and if you don't freaking forgive me I'm about to prove you more right than you ever thought possible. Please Tommy. I forgive you. Please.

(Long pause. Thomas looks at her, then looks away. He sits back down on the pew, then looks at her)

Thomas: What are you doing with your hair?

Pauline: It's a perm.

Thomas: You look like a llama.

(They both laugh)

Pauline: *(Steel Magnolias)* *Laughter through tears is my favourite emotion.* **END**