

Mom Going Away

She was two years old, and happy, beaming inside, she could imagine no greater peace, she was brimful. How could this night be? How could she be so lucky as she was right now? Because, the thing was, she was with her mom, and not only that, she was going to spend the whole night with her mom, she was going to get to sleep with her mom, in the same bed, all night.

But then she noticed something. It was something disquieting. Not enough to make her panic, but something worrisome. Her mom, who was in the bedroom with her, a bedroom like in a hotel, was walking around the room, and picking up clothes and putting them on. Why would you put clothes on if you were going to stay there in bed and sleep with your little girl all night? Did that mean that she was getting dressed to go out?

What was also worrisome was that she was quiet. She didn't say, "Cindy, honey, get up, we're getting dressed, we're going out somewhere." She just started putting her grown-up clothes on, the kinds of clothes that ladies put on when they are dressing up to go out somewhere at night.

"Mommy, why are you getting dressed?" the little girl asked. She was fearful. Even more fearfully, her mother said nothing. She didn't say anything, she just continued to do things like zip up her skirt and button her cuffs. She went over to the dresser and picked up a necklace that she had been wearing earlier, and put it on, fastening it at the back of her neck. She looked in the mirror, and picked up a hairbrush and began brushing her hair.

"Mommy, aren't you going to stay here? Can't I come with you? Are you going out?" said the little girl. Fear was growing. It looked like her mother was leaving, was going off by herself. That meant aloneness, and instead of the wonderful night sleeping beside her mother, the little girl would be sleeping all by herself, with her mother gone. No warm body nearby, no one to say, "I love you, I'm here, you can go to sleep now, it's all OK."

The little girl began to cry. "Mommy, where are you going?" she sobbed. "Don't go away. Please, Mommy, stay here. Where are you going?"

Unfortunately, the crying seemed to make the mother increase her efforts to get ready and be gone. Well, who could blame her? She needed to go, and these appeals to the heart only made things more difficult. She needed to go, she had her reasons, and tears and pleas and heartbreaking questions made everything so uncomfortable, and who likes being made more and more uncomfortable? To

stay longer would be insane, she needed to get away from all this emotion and the guilt that this daughter was setting her awash in.

She picked up her lipstick and quickly outlined her lips. The little girl watched, crying. The light beside the bed made a soft glow, the sheets and blankets were slightly mussed, as if people had just been getting up and lying down on the bed, preparing to go to sleep. The blankets looked soft, the pillows were ready to be plopped on, but none of it meant anything. The soft lights were for soft nights, and soft dreams, and security, for things that existed somewhere else.

The little girl saw the scene in splashes, through her tears. She saw a crisply-pressed sleeve, the vivid red of her mother's lips, the flash of jewelry at her mother's neck and wrist, reflections of movement in the dressing-table mirror, as her mother moved purposefully and quickly from one item of item of dress to another. She still spoke not a word. Silence was all that the little girl got back as answers to her tearful questions. The more plangent her distress, the faster her mother seemed to move, in an effort to get away.

Finally the time came. Her mother threw her coat over her arm, picked up her purse, and headed toward the door. The little girl was sobbing non-stop. Her mother walked out the door and closed it behind her, making sure that it was locked. Inside the bedroom, the lights glowed softly. The little girl felt as if her sadness would make her disappear, no longer exist. She cried and cried, and finally fell asleep. Relief from consciousness, at last.

Cynthia Vautier
November 27, 2016