

THE MOST HUMAN

By Catherine Rhoden-Goguen

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ISBN: 978-1-60003-979-9

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THE MOST HUMAN

A Dramatic Duet

by **Catherine Rhoden-Goguen**

SYNOPSIS: A year after the loss of ten year old Patton, Shawn and his wife Paula spend their anniversary dealing with their heartbreak and grief. Why were they dealt such a tragedy? Which one of them is really to blame? For Shawn and Paula, they alone endure the magnitude of the loss that no one else can seem to understand. An unexpected arrival pushes Paula to the breaking point. In a highly climatic ending, will their love for, "*The Most Human*" be enough?

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 1 male)

PAULA (f) Young wife in grief and depression. *(49 lines)*

SHAWN (m) Young husband, optimistic but struggling to remain so. *(48 lines)*

TIME: Present day.

SETTING: Paula and Shawn's living room.

COSTUMES: Normal, everyday apparel.

PROPS

- Mail (multiple pieces)
- Hallmark™ Card in Envelope

SET: Staging for the play may be as simple as two chairs with a throw or as elaborate as a couch or loveseat.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: You may omit any language not deemed appropriate for your cast.

In Memory of Patton, 2007-2016

AT RISE: *Lights up on PAULA sitting on the sofa staring in to space in deep thought. SHAWN enters carrying mail.*

SHAWN: Hey sweet girl. (*Kisses PAULA softly.*) You sure you haven't changed your mind?

PAULA: I'd be no fun.

SHAWN: Me neither, I guess. It's been a year.

PAULA: Yeah a whole year and here we sit in the exact spot where it happened.

SHAWN: Don't remind me.

PAULA: How long's it gonna last?

SHAWN: I wish I knew. I wish I knew. I thought maybe going out for dinner tonight would take our minds off of it.

PAULA: It's not that simple. My heart isn't gonna repair itself just because I'm in a different place with food in front of me.

SHAWN: Sorry. It was a bad idea. Nothing seems to help really.

PAULA: I know you mean well. But I'm empty inside. The pit of my stomach aches. There's just no joy in me left to give...even to you.

SHAWN: Maybe our anniversary is just one more event we've lost.

PAULA: Maybe it is. I don't know what to tell you.

SHAWN: I get it. I'm empty too. I just feel like I'm supposed to be the strong one.

PAULA: (*Under her breath.*) Where was "strong" this time last year?

SHAWN: (*SHAWN looks at her.*) Really? Did you really just say that? Hurting or not, Paula, that was pretty cold. You think I didn't try everything I knew to try? Do you think I don't relive that night over and over in my head every single day of my life? His lifeless body...He was my son too you know and I loved him as much as I could love anyone.

PAULA: Oh Shawn...you're right. I never should've said such a mean thing. I'm losing it here and I don't know what to do.

SHAWN: You have to know if I could trade places with him, I would.

PAULA: No. No. No. Don't say that! I want you *both* here. It's not an either or. But I'm...it's just that I'm so, soooo angry!

SHAWN: I know you are. It's not fair. It's just not fair. I can't go by a McDonalds without being reminded of him and his plain double cheeseburger...or turn on the TV and hear the theme song from

Andy Griffith. Remember that face he used to make when that song would come on?

SHAWN and PAULA smile.

PAULA: And then he dies on our anniversary right in front of us. How much can one human handle? And people...people don't help. (*Mockingly.*) "You'll have another one someday" they say. As if Patton can just be replaced like a car you wreck.

SHAWN: Who in their right mind says stuff like that?

PAULA: People who've never lost a son. That's who. Oh and then there's those people who say, "It was his time, sweetie."

SHAWN: There's nothing I can say to that...I mean...I guess they just don't know what to say so they just say anything they think sounds comforting...

PAULA: Is this going to ruin our whole life? Are we gonna be sittin' here five anniversaries from now having this same discussion?

SHAWN: I hope we are.

PAULA: What?

SHAWN: I hope we are sitting here together I mean. I guess my biggest fear is that this will destroy "us" and with losing Patton, you're all I've got left, Paula.

PAULA: Oh Shawn, I love you with all my heart, but I feel like I've only got this tiny piece of heart left.

SHAWN: Look, I get it. Patton was with us from day 1. Born on our wedding night and not a day went by for the next ten years that he wasn't the center of our universe. I think we're both just dealing the best way we know how.

PAULA: Maybe we need counseling. I just wish the emptiness that gnaws at me could be taken away and all the joy he brought me somehow scooped back in.

SHAWN: If only it were possible...

PAULA: What I said earlier...it isn't even how I feel, Shawn. I know we've never really said it because we've been so consumed in our grief but I feel so many things. I feel sadness and I feel anger. Anger at the universe. Anger at this day...this room...anger at us. Not just at you but at both of us. We both knew he wasn't feeling well but we went to that movie anyway because it was our anniversary.

SHAWN: I've wished a million times I could take back that decision. I'm the one who pushed for going ahead to the movie. You wanted to take him to urgent care.

PAULA: But he didn't seem worse when we got back home and he was just so happy to see us and once I called the doctor and he said he thought it would be fine to wait until morning.

SHAWN: I remember that big smile on his face when we told him that we'd spend the whole day with him the next day and take him to McDonalds after the doctor...who would've thought he'd be... (*Closing his eyes.*) I can't even say the word.

PAULA: I just turned away from him for a minute to send an email...It literally was only...one minute he was smiling and I turned back around to this exact spot and there he was laying face down with his arms out to his side. He never slept like that. I could barely speak to say your name.

SHAWN drops the mail.

SHAWN: Oh Paula. That moment plays in my mind like a newsreel over and over...I knew from the tone of your voice but my mind just couldn't accept it.

PAULA: I'm more to blame than you. I sat there paralyzed. Maybe if I could've called your name sooner. You grabbed him and tried to do CPR. I should've looked up how to do it properly. I should've known how before we needed it...I should've....we should've saved him.

SHAWN holds her close.

SHAWN: Shhh...its ok baby. We should've saved him. But for all those things we should've done, there are so many more things that we did do. We sure did love him. From the moment he was born until he took his last breath, we loved him. We provided for him. There wasn't a toy that he wanted or a food that he loved that we didn't buy for him. And we played with him and we laughed with him. We hundred and ten percent loved him and he knew that.

PAULA wipes her tears and starts picking up the dropped mail and sorting through it.

PAULA: We're never gonna have that love again. I guess that's why it hurts so bad. But we're always gonna have (*Sorting through the dropped mail.*) bills and junk mail and Jim and Jen's corny anniversary cards.

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