**HOLDING HER ALIVE
by Dave Carley**

**CHARACTERS:**

Mother, elderly, hospital gown

Son, in his 40s, likely a business suit

**STAGING:**

There are a few alternatives for staging:

The simplest is, as written: Mother and Son moving and speaking their lines.

Alternately, if a more movement-oriented interpretation is desired, there could be two actors at music stands stage right or left, reading the lines while Mother and Son move.

And, finally, if the choice is made to suggest the words exist only in the characters’ heads, their lines could be pre-recorded and played, as the characters move about the stage.

If music is used, a light, contemplative piano fugue would work, under. Bach, Mendelssohn, and Shostakovich all have evocative, simple pieces that could underscore the movement and speech.

Slashes / suggest possible voice overlap.

**HOLDING HER ALIVE**

*Lights come up on SON, waiting – maybe pacing - on stage. MOTHER enters slowly and sees him.*

MOTHER

It’s him, he’s come!

SON

Oh my God she’s so frail.

*Music starts, under.*

*MOTHER begins to crumple. SON runs to her and catches her as she falls. For the rest of the play they are physically linked. Mostly SON holds MOTHER, sometimes completely bearing her, although usually her feet work, and she moves with him. The exception is when MOTHER is talking about holding SON and waiting for the ambulance; in that segment their positions are reversed, and she seems to be the one with the strength. Their voices can overlap slightly.*

MOTHER

Why’s he here/

SON

I’m here.

MOTHER

Why now/

SON

It’s me, Mom.

MOTHER

It’s been so long.

SON

I’m here.

MOTHER

Why isn’t he talking to me?

SON

Hold me.

MOTHER

I know it’s him. He smells like him. Feels like him. They can’t tell me it’s not him this time.

SON

I’m sorry it took me so long, I’m sorry/

MOTHER

So soft. So small. So precious. *(Inhales him)* Damp socks. Chocolate/

SON

You smell the same/

MOTHER

Socks and chocolate and sweat/

SON

Lily of the valley.

MOTHER

Sweat. He hates baths. Hates me scrubbing him. *(Looks behind his ears)* Hates me washing here.

SON

Lily of the Valley.

MOTHER

Why is he here now?

SON

I meant to come sooner.

MOTHER

I’ve waited for this for so long.

SON

I tried.

MOTHER

Why did he stay away so long?

SON

Life got in the way.

MOTHER

Why now?

SON

Things happen.

MOTHER

*(Pulling back Son’s hair).* That terrible wound. *(Searches and feels for it.)* It’s gone. *(Ruffles his hair)* I told you. Didn’t I tell you.

SON

*(Leans his head forward as she ruffles his hair)* Lily of the Valley. I gave it to you for Christmas. The bottle said ‘Eau do Toilette’. I was six and couldn’t resist. Toilet water.

MOTHER

Why would he come now, when I look so terrible/

SON

How do I look/

MOTHER

They haven’t bathed me in days. Weeks. Years.

SON

Lily of the Valley.

MOTHER

They don’t bathe us here.

SON

How I hated those baths. You yanked at my ears.

MOTHER

You’ve turned out exactly as I hoped.

SON

I never thought you’d feel like this. So thin. Your bones. You were so strong/

MOTHER

I knew he’d be successful. I hope everyone is looking. I hope they all notice. They never believed me. *(calls out.)* This is my son! My son! He lives!

SON

You look good, Mom.

MOTHER

He’s so handsome! *(More agitated, getting some control)* Does your head hurt?

SON

Are you in pain/

MOTHER

Does it hurt, let me hold you/

SON

Should I lie you flat, should you sit up, am I squeezing you too much? *(Out to room.)* Should she be sitting I don’t know what to do/ *(Seems about to move away, maybe to get help)*

MOTHER

Don’t go don’t go keep your eyes open/

SON

Should I call your doctor, I’ll call the nurse/

MOTHER

Just stay awake keep your eyes open/

SON

Is there a bell can someone please call a nurse/

MOTHER

Do you hear the siren? I can hear a siren. Can you hear it? It’s coming closer/

SON

Lily of the Valley/

MOTHER

Chocolate. *(Ruffles his hair back.)* It’s just blood, just a bit of blood, don’t close your eyes.

SON

I want to sleep/

MOTHER

Think about chocolate. All the chocolate in the world/

SON:

Eau de toilette/

MOTHER

The ambulance men will fix you/

SON

I have to let you down/

MOTHER

I’ll stay with you/

SON

You’ve lost so much weight. You still smell nice.

MOTHER

Lily of the Valley, all I’ve ever worn. Bottles and bottles of it on my dresser, little boy armies of it, I’d buy a new one every anniversary/

SON

I meant to come sooner.

MOTHER

I wasn’t ready.

SON

I know.

MOTHER

It would have been too soon, but you’re here now/

SON

I’m going to close my eyes/

MOTHER

It’s just a bump.

SON

I want to sleep/

MOTHER

You’re stronger than any car/

SON

I want to sleep/

MOTHER

You close your eyes you’ll never come back/

SON

You smell so nice/

MOTHER

Your skin is so/

SON

I want to go/

MOTHER

You can’t/

SON

It’s time Mom.

MOTHER

Don’t go/

SON

It’s time. We have to go.

*Son lets mother collapse gently to the hospital floor. As he walks off, lights fade to black.*

*CURTAIN.*