

*I'm Not Hungry Anymore*

“A mother’s love is patient and forgiving when all others are forsaking, it never fails or falters,  
even though the heart is breaking.”  
– *Helen Rice*

There is but a morsel of me left;  
what else do you want?

## **CHARACTERS**

Mother, 40; Calling her anything other than Mother/Mom would be an affront to social norms accepted within the household, upholds power dynamic/reinforces authority; Mother

Ramon, 15, Son

## **SETTING**

Some indigent apartment, anywhere.

## **LEGEND**

*Plátanos* – Plantains

*Pegao* – Crispy rice

*Mijo* - Darling

*Aye* - \*Exclamation\*

*The kitchen of a meager household (bijou yet dank).*

*Night is falling, but dinner is brought with it. Ramon sits at the kitchen table, gazing distantly at a pack of cigarettes on the table in front of him. Marlboro Red 100's. Mother shakes a box from the pantry to get the boys attention*

MOTHER

How about macaroni and cheese?

RAMON

I had that at school today.

MOTHER

Got to it before I did.

*Mother snaps fingers*

Well, that's alright.

*Mother replaces box and scours pantry*

RAMON

Mom, do you think we can talk?

MOTHER

What do you think about rice and beans?

RAMON

That sounds good. Will you make *plátanos* too?

MOTHER

We ran out of plantains a couple of days ago.

*Mother comes out of pantry, begins to boil water for rice on the stove-top*

But you already knew that.

RAMON

I told you that I was sorry, mom. I was hungry and just needed something to eat.

*Mother sucks teeth*

MOTHER

We can't just eat whenever we want to, Ramon. Look around us-

*Mother motions around the kitchen with spoon in hand, pointedly aiming at nothing in particular*

-we have nothing to spare.

*Mother turns back to tend to rice on the stove-top. Ramon's stomach gurgles, a distressed outcry for sustenance*

RAMON

Have you talked to pa?

MOTHER

What would I say to him?

*Ramon shrugs*

RAMON

I don't know. Maybe if you asked him for-

*Mother whips around in a rage*

MOTHER

If you think I'm going to ask that cheating, bastard father of yours for money, you're out of your mind!

RAMON

But we need-

MOTHER

What we NEED is to watch our mouths when we are speaking to our parents! What we NEED is for you to eat what I make you and nothing more!

*Mother stares at Ramon, as if daring him to say something else*

Now be quiet.

*Ramon looks away from Mother and out the kitchen window. Mother turns and tends to the rice*

RAMON

Dad would feed me anything I wanted if I were hungry.

*Mother stops stirring rice*

MOTHER  
Be quiet.

RAMON  
We can eat whatever we want at dads. He even takes us out to eat.

MOTHER  
BE QUIET.

RAMON  
But-

MOTHER  
BE QUIET!

*Mother stares at Ramon in disbelief, filled with loathing. Ramon stares back defiantly, yet filled with a subtle remorse*

I have told you for the last time, you'll eat what I give you. If you want more food, go get a job and pay for it yourself. Until then, you'll be happy with what you're given.

*Ramon deflates*

RAMON  
Okay.

*Mother turns back to the stove*

RAMON  
Can we still talk?

MOTHER  
We've been talking.

RAMON  
About something else, something I've been wanting to talk to you about for a little while now.

*Ramon apprehensively shifts in the kitchen chair he is sitting in. Mother acknowledges him with a slight nod*

W-well it's a field trip. They want to take us to the botanical gardens for the day on Wednesday so we can learn about native plant species. It's actually really cool, the way that-

MOTHER  
What do you want to ask me?

*Ramon sags*

*Mother idles*

RAMON  
Each student has to pay 25 dollars for-

MOTHER  
Ask your father. He has all the money in the world to feed you whatever you want at his house, he can certainly spare 25 dollars for you to go on this beloved field trip of yours.

RAMON  
I already asked him.

MOTHER  
So why are you asking me?

RAMON  
He said that you should pay for one of my field trips since he pays for all the other ones.

*Mother stiffens*

MOTHER  
What did you just say?

*Mother turns around and approaches Ramon*

RAMON  
I'm sorry! I shouldn't have said anything.

*Mother bends over to meet Ramon at eye level as he sits at the kitchen table*

MOTHER  
No, I must have heard you incorrectly. Tell me what he said again.

RAMON  
Mom, please-

*Mother puts her face to Ramon's*

MOTHER  
Say it!

*Ramon whimpers*

RAMON

He-he said that you should pay for it...

*Mothers stomach gurgles*

MOTHER

And?!

RAMON

That you should pay for it this time because he pays for all of my other school trips.

*Mother stares at Ramon incredulously*

MOTHER

So that's what you two talk about when you're together? How broke I am? How I can't provide for my kids?!

*Mother slams stirring spoon on the ground, rice disbands. Ramon shutters and closes his eyes. His stomach gurgles with hunger*

How all we have to eat is this cheap food? How I can't pay for your little trips?!

RAMON

It's not like that, mom.

MOTHER

Then what's it like?

RAMON

It's just... I don't know. It's hard to explain. Dad never says anything bad about you, though.

MOTHER

And what would he say?

RAMON

Nothing! That's what I'm saying, he never talks bad about you.

*Mother collects herself. She gestures towards her spoon on the floor*

MOTHER

Get my spoon for me.



*Ramon retrieves the spoon and rinses it off in the sink before handing it back to Mother. He sits back down at the table after this exchange.*

Do you want pegao?

*Ramon picks pieces of rice from his foot*

RAMON

Yes.

*Mother puts a lid on the rice. She stares at the pot vacantly. Ramon appraises Mother, gazing curiously at her*

MOTHER

I wish you knew what it costs me to raise you, Ramon.

*Mother dejectedly throws herself into the kitchen chair across from Ramon. She picks up her lighter sitting atop her cigarette pack, removes one cigarette from the pack, and lights the cigarette. Mother blows smoke across the table, not AT Ramon, but in the direction in which he sits. Ramon revels the smell a bit, for it reminds him of Mother herself*

If you knew what I've had to do just for you to be happy, what I went through to have you in the first place...

*Mother flicks ash from cigarette*

you wouldn't be so partial to your father.

RAMON

I am happy, mom.

MOTHER

And I've done everything in my power to ensure that. But your happiness has consumed mine.

*Mother drags cigarette*

I've given everything for you, Ramon.

RAMON

And what about dad?

MOTHER

What about your father? What does he do that I haven't done twice over?

*Mother gestures towards the stove, cigarette in hand*

Put the beans on.

*Ramon gets up from his seat and opens the top to a can of black beans. He pours them into a small pot and begins to stir them. Mother smokes all the while, looking out the kitchen window*

RAMON

What do you want me to put in them?

MOTHER

There's diced onion in the fridge, next to the lime wedges. Should be some cilantro somewhere in there too.

RAMON

Okay.

*Ramon retrieves ingredients from the fridge. Mother catches his eye, and stares at him with silent accusation.*

MOTHER

You look just like your father sometimes, you know that?

RAMON

And he says I look like you.

*Ramon goes back to the stove top with ingredients. Mother laughs, the anger vibrating within her expelled through bouts of counterfeit giggles. Mother's stomach gurgles, famine, and she caresses it with her non-cigarette hand. Mother coughs in the midst of her laughter and suffers a fit of smokers cough (phlegmy, hacking)*

You really should stop, mom.

MOTHER

Jesus, you whine just like him too.

*Ramon clutches the spoon in his hand, visibly holding his tongue (stiff yet shaking, labored movement). Ramon tends to beans in the pot, Mother snubs cigarette in ashtray*

RAMON

Do we have ANYTHING else to go with this?

MOTHER

Imagine those *plátanos* you ate with it.

*Ramon ignores Mothers dig*

*Ramon daydreams*

RAMON

Food's ready.

*Ramon retrieves bowls and silverware. He doles out a portion for Mother, and then himself. He brings both bowls to the table, one in each hand, and sets one in front of Mother. Mother takes a bite*

MOTHER

The rice is cooked perfectly!

*Mother sighs, pitifully*

Aye, the beans. They could have used more spice.

*Mother sighs, woefully*

What a shame it is that such a simple dish should be tarnished.

RAMON

What's wrong with you?!

*Mother regards Ramon with a neck-snapping movement*

MOTHER

How dare yo-

RAMON

Why do you hate me? What have I ever done to you?

MOTHER

I don't hate you, *mijo!* It's just-

RAMON

Just what? That I look like dad? I can't help that! Just like how I can't help that you two fucked and made me in the first place.

*Mother suddenly rises from her chair, chair flings out from behind her*

MOTHER  
Watch your mouth!

*Ramon suddenly rises from his chair, shorter in stature but equal in resolve. Mother inflates like a pufferfish*

RAMON  
Or what?!

*Mother presents the back of her hand to Ramon's face*

MOTHER  
Do you want another?!

*Mother keeps her hand cocked warningly, yet regards Ramon with compassion. Ramon tries to maintain stoicism through a stream of tears. His stomach, desperate for food, growls with fury; he manages to utter, with a meager register-*

RAMON  
No.

MOTHER  
No, what?

RAMON  
No, ma'am.

*Mother retrieves her chair and sits down at the table. Ramon sits down at the table, head sunken. After a short/long silence, Mother chimes-*

MOTHER  
You must listen to me, Ramon.

*Mother grabs Ramon by the chin and lifts his head so they are eye-to-eye with one another. Ramon is no longer crying, but maintains an air of frustration and embarrassment.*

I love you, Ramon.

*Mother brushes his cheek with her cracked hands*

RAMON  
It doesn't feel like it sometimes. Not now.

*Mother takes Ramon's hands in hers*

Why do you always compare me to dad?

*Mother clutches Ramon's hands, as if his question were a bolt of electricity, sending her rigid with tension. Mother attempts to speak several times but withdraws each time. Ramon waits for a reply but grows sullen in the silence*

MOTHER

Go into my room and get my purse.

*Ramon, quizzical, goes and retrieves Mother's purse. He returns and places it on the table. Mother looks around in it for a minute (tilling), sneakily handling it (at an acute angle, trying to retain the sights and sounds of the contents), and ultimately produces three folded bills. She hands them to Ramon*

RAMON

What's this?

MOTHER

What's it look like? For your field trip. Take it before I change my mind, and you better not lose it cause I'm not giving you anymore.

*Mother shakes the money at Ramon. Ramon takes it and looks at Mother in awe, taken aback. Ramon rushes in and embraces Mother before she has time to react or reciprocate the embrace*

RAMON

I'm going to tell Julien that I can go!

*Ramon turns and runs out of the house. Mother yells after him*

MOTHER

RAMON! Your food!

RAMON

I'm not hungry anymore!

**MOONLIGHT**