

# ***Natural Tendency***

*by*

*Joseph Arnone*

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Cast of Characters

<u>ROMELLA:</u>	32
<u>HAMMERSTEAD:</u>	48

Place  
Mansion

Time  
Evening

2.

Setting: A gorgeous, bright victorian mansion during the 1880's.

At Rise: Romella sits powdering her nose, Hammerstead stands on the other side of the room holding a silver tray with finished tea on it.

(staring at check)

ROMELLA: Add another zero.

(hands check back)

HAMMERSTEAD: Another zero?

ROMELLA: Another zero. (beat) What's wrong?

HAMMERSTEAD: Nothing.

ROMELLA: What is it?

HAMMERSTEAD: It's not for me to say.

ROMELLA: Too much?

HAMMERSTEAD: Well, it's your son, I understand.

ROMELLA: He's a real lousy piece of work though, isn't he?

HAMMERSTEAD: Mrs. Romella, I---

ROMELLA: Oh Hammerstead, let's be honest. You are more family than that young man will ever be to me. It's a sense of duty, my duty, as his mother, to give him what he needs, even though he doesn't deserve one bit of any of my hard earned money. Am I right?

(HAMMERSTEAD nods)

Of course I'm right. There's nothing of me in him. Whenever we'd spend time together, I'd catch myself staring at him, trying to find one single thing that I could identify as me. It got to the point where I'd deliberately spend more time with him simply because I was frustrated by the fact that I couldn't detect one piece of myself in him. And I was determined to, so determined but I failed. How does that happen? All that is good and all that is bad within me, doesn't exist in him, not even a fraction. He's foreign to me. My only regret is never finding the connection, perhaps if I did, things would have been different. I even tried to influence him, get him to be more like me, who was I kidding but myself. I guess we are who we are, no matter who spawns us.

HAMMERSTEAD: Please, don't blame yourself.

ROMELLA: Oh no, I'm not. Not when it comes to him.

HAMMERSTEAD: Should I go out and deposit the funds then?

ROMELLA: Make him wait another day.

HAMMERSTEAD: Would you like me to start on dinner?

ROMELLA: Tell me something Hammerstead, am I a terrible mother?

HAMMERSTEAD: That's not for me to say Mrs.---

ROMELLA: Please, tell me...

HAMMERSTEAD: I think you are an individual first madam.

ROMELLA: Surely that makes me a terrible mother, does it not?

HAMMERSTEAD: It's not your natural tendency...some women, they long to have children since they were children themselves, others, such as yourself, are much more passionate about the work that you are chosen to do. I don't believe that makes you a terrible person, but it does in fact make you a lousy mother. Forgive me, but you are asking me---

ROMELLA: No, no, you are right, you are right. It wasn't planned.

HAMMERSTEAD: Mrs.?

ROMELLA: Lawrence...he wasn't planned. I never wanted to have kids, it was Malcolm, Malcolm was the one who sprung it on me early one morning after some damn awards show and he was careless, WE were careless and nine months later, there you have it. (beat) I couldn't do anything about it, I was trapped. Malcolm was a complete disaster. Never took him for what he became, but I should have known...I was young, blind, optimistic, but that all came crashing down during my pregnancy...I discovered the whole truth, what I was and what made Malcolm truly tick...by the time I gave birth I wanted to run out of the hospital room, believe me, if I could have I would have ran till I was never found.

Do you know that there hasn't been one day since Lawrence was born that I ever felt like I was his mother? I don't know if it's because I hate him for what his father had done or if I'm simply a monster. Which do you think?

HAMMERSTEAD: You are no monster, Mrs. Romella, that much I know for certain.

(ROMELLA dabs the corners of her eyes with a handkerchief)

ROMELLA (big sigh): Screw it. It is what it is. If I was meant to be a mother I would have been one by now. That doesn't make Lawrence a bad human being. He must know I can't stand the sight of him, which is why he has become who he has become in his own life. I can't blame him, how can I blame him? I shouldn't blame him.

HAMMERSTEAD: Would you like me to start on dinner?

ROMELLA: I'd like you to talk to me! Am I always to be alone IN THIS DARK CRUEL WORLD?! Why are you standing there like something's poking your behind? SIT! SIT DOWN ANND TALK TO ME!

(HAMMERSTEAD sits on a nearby chair  
with a silver tray on his lap)

And please for God's sake throw that damn tray somewhere far away. You're always hiding behind that thing.

(HAMMERSTEAD places tray on stand  
and sits back down)

There. (fans herself) Isn't that better? Now you can relax. Sprawl for all I care Hammerstead. Stretch your arms, legs, wiggle your shoulders for all I care, but SPEAK.

HAMMERSTEAD: Now?

(ROMELLA nods)

Oh, ah, it's been quite a lovely day outside.

ROMELLA: Has it?

HAMMERSTEAD: The sun was beaming golden bursts of light directly on the front fountain and it was---

ROMELLA: Enough. (beat) When was the last time you saw your parents?

HAMMERSTEAD: I'm afraid both my parents are deceased, Mrs.

ROMELLA: Were they good parents?

HAMMERSTEAD: Yes, I miss them so.

ROMELLA: Hmmm. Give me a memory, something sweet.

HAMMERSTEAD: Ah...mmm...AH, my father came home early one afternoon and gave me a train, just head of the train and he said to me, "One day you will have an entire train, with a track and we will ride it together." Made me want to become a train conductor, but...my life changed as did everybody's during the war. We never completed the train.

ROMELLA: I asked for something sweet...that was sad.

HAMMERSTEAD: I'm sorry, madam.

ROMELLA: Tomorrow morning we leave for town. We are going to buy you a train set, complete with its track. Can you build one?

HAMMERSTEAD: I've never, there is no need to---

ROMELLA: Can-you-build-one?

HAMMERSTEAD: ...Yes, I can.

ROMELLA: Excellent. We will set it up in the upstairs lounge. It never gets used and there is plenty of space. Will that suit you?

HAMMERSTEAD: I don't know what to say? It isn't something I feel that I need.

ROMELLA: You do. Deep down inside yourself, you do.

HAMMERSTEAD: ...Thank you.

ROMELLA: You are a good man my dear Hammerstead. A good man indeed. I don't get to show my appreciation. You know, I am alone.

HAMMERSTEAD: I know.

ROMELLA: You get me through the day.

HAMMERSTEAD: Yes.

ROMELLA: Have you no siblings?

HAMMERSTEAD: They are dead as well.

ROMELLA: How many siblings?

HAMMERSTEAD: One brother, one sister...I am the eldest.

ROMELLA: I'm sorry for your losses.

HAMMERSTEAD: Thank you.

ROMELLA: You never considered marriage?

HAMMERSTEAD: I have no way of taking care of a family Mrs. Romella. Besides, I am loyal only to you.

ROMELLA: But you are still a relatively young man.

HAMMERSTEAD: I go into town from time to time, but there is nothing substantial out there waiting for me.

ROMELLA: I may know someone.

HAMMERSTEAD: Mrs.?

ROMELLA: Yes, on my mother's side. Her name is Elena. She's beautiful, homely, doesn't have much life in her, well, I shouldn't say that...she's shy, plain and simple. Simple, not in the harsh sense, but simple in the good sense that she doesn't make much fuss.

HAMMERSTEAD: Why would she possibly like me?

ROMELLA: Because I like you, Hammerstead. You've been working for me for over twelve years and I know you better than you may imagine. Sure, we haven't truly ever spoken, but one doesn't need to speak in order to understand and I understand...you. It isn't custom to bring you in to a family such as mine for instance, but as you have already grown to know I am a modern woman, I have my own beliefs and I do whatever I want. I want you to meet my cousin.

HAMMERSTEAD: I would love to.

ROMELLA: There, it's settled.

HAMMERSTEAD: When?

ROMELLA: I will give you lead time, don't worry. Make dinner and we will talk further on it.

(HAMMERSTEAD grabs the tray from the stand and smiles warmly at Romella before exiting the room)

**END OF PLAY**