

The Sea Forgets the Shore

A One-Act Play by C.M. Lozano

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Running Time: Approx. 20–25 minutes

Recommended For: Upper High School | College Theatre | Community Theatre | Theatre Festivals

Cast Size: 3-4 actors

A once-acclaimed writer, now drifting from motel to motel under the weight of addiction and self-imposed exile, experiences the unexpected return of his creative voice. Over the course of a single night, fragments of his past...an agent, a former lover, an old friend...surface in fleeting encounters and memories. As dawn approaches, he must decide whether to write...or not.

Cast

- **DEAN** — late 30s to early 50s. Once acclaimed. Now scraped thin. Intelligent, funny when cornered, honest when exhausted.
- **MARTIN** — Dean's agent. Pragmatic with warmth. May be performed as a voice (V.O.) or by an offstage actor.
- **MARA** — a former lover (or the great love). She appears as a memory/scene. Not sentimental; sharp, alive.
- **CAL** — an old friend. He appears as a memory/scene. Grounded, blunt, tired of lies.

PERFORMANCE & DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The Sea Forgets the Shore is a quiet, interior one-act.

Its power comes from restraint, accumulation, and attention to small, human rituals. Writing, waiting, pacing, listening—these actions matter as much as dialogue. Silence is not absence here; it is active. Pauses are not gaps to be filled, but moments in which memory and resistance surface.

The setting is intentionally spare: a faded roadside motel room that has seen many occupants but remembers none of them. The room should feel temporary, slightly worn, and emotionally porous. The outside world—wind, passing trucks, flickering neon—presses in gently but persistently, reminding us of time moving forward whether Dean does or not.

Memory enters the space without announcement. Characters from Dean's past do not arrive as ghosts or hallucinations, but as lived presences—direct, grounded, and human. These scenes should feel immediate, as if the room itself has briefly remembered them. Transitions into memory should be subtle, guided by light, stillness, or sound rather than grand theatrical effects.

Addiction is implied, not depicted. There are no overt scenes of substance use. Instead, we observe erosion: avoidance, ritual, hesitation, self-negotiation. The central tension of the play is not sobriety versus relapse, but resistance versus engagement—whether Dean will allow himself to remain present with the work in front of him.

Dean should not be played as a tragic figure or a cautionary tale. He is intelligent, weary, occasionally funny, and deeply human. His struggle is quiet and internal. Martin's presence carries professional history and restrained hope, not rescue. Mara is not sentimentalized; she is sharp, alive, and unresolved. Cal is grounded and direct, offering reality without moralizing.

Transformation in this play is modest by design. No grand declaration is made. The only victory is a small, deliberate choice made at dawn—one that feels fragile, private, and earned.

If a moment feels as though it is being “performed,” it is likely being overplayed.

Trust stillness.

Let the audience lean in.

— C.M. Lozano

Setting

A faded roadside motel in the American Southwest.

Bed. Table. Chair. Flickering lamp. Cracked blinds.

A window that won't fully close. Wind. Neon outside: **VACANCY**.

Sound Design

Sound should be minimal and unobtrusive.

Ambient elements—wind, distant traffic, passing trucks, faint neon hum—may be used to suggest time passing and the outside world pressing in.

Transitions into memory should be guided subtly through stillness, light, or sound, rather than overt effects.

The Sea Forgets the Shore is available for performance by high schools, colleges, theatre festivals, and independent theatre companies.

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Minimal technical requirements and a small cast make this play ideal for black-box theatres, acting showcases, one-act competitions, or classroom performance units.

SCENE ONE

Night. A motel room in the American Southwest...faded, functional, forgettable.

A bed. A small table. A flickering lamp. A window that won't quite close. Wind presses the glass. DEAN sits at the table. On the table: a battered notebook, a pen. He writes on a scrap of paper. Stares at it. Checks his phone. Nothing. He turns it face down. He opens the notebook: blank pages, torn pages, crossed-out pages. He tries to write. Nothing. He flips back a few pages, reads quietly. He shuts the notebook. A truck passes. Neon flickers: VAC—VAC—VACANCY. He crosses to the window, presses it shut. It doesn't help. Reaches into his jacket pocket. Pulls out a folded slip of old paper. A fortune cookie paper. Unfolds it. A single line:

"You Inspire Others."

He stares.

DEAN

That was a lie. That is a lie. Haha (soft defeated chuckle)

*He folds it, puts it away. Returns to the table. Opens the notebook again. This time he waits...listening to the room breathe. He writes one word. Stops. Looks at it. He writes a second word. Closes the notebook immediately like it burned him. Gets up. Paces once. As if he is trying to resist writing. Strung out. Sits again. Opens to a fresh page. He Writes. He gets into a 'groove'. He very slowly realizes, giving in to writing is the better drug. Wind rises. Neon flickers. **For the first time in a long while, the room feels occupied.***

End scene.

SCENE TWO

Later that night. The notebook is open now...several pages filled. Not beautiful handwriting. Not frantic. Working. DEAN sits at the table, pen in hand. He stops himself from rereading.

His phone rings. He looks. Answers.

DEAN

Yeah.

MARTIN (V.O.)

Jesus Christ...Dean...

DEAN

...Hi, Martin.

MARTIN

I didn't think this number still worked.

DEAN

I keep it charged.

Most days.

MARTIN

You sent me pages.

DEAN

I know.

MARTIN

At three in the morning.

DEAN

Yeahhh...

MARTIN

It's ok. Hey, I read them.

Look...I won't bullshit you.

It's rough around the edges.

But it's *you*.

DEAN grips the pen. Looks at the pen. Taking it all in.

DEAN

That's dangerous talk.

MARTIN

it's been a long time since I heard your voice on the page.

People still ask about you, you know.

DEAN

(exasperated chuckles)

People ask about dinosaurs too.

MARTIN

Yeah, but hey, they still build museums, right?...

DEAN

Yeahh, haha, yeah they do

You really think there's something here?

MARTIN

I think there *could* be.

And I don't say that lightly. Send me more.

DEAN doesn't answer immediately.

MARTIN

Not tonight. Not perfect.

Just... keep going. Ok?...

DEAN

Ok...

MARTIN

I'm glad you reached out, Dean.

DEAN

Yeah.

MARTIN

We'll talk soon.

Click. DEAN holds the phone for a bit. He sets it down. He looks at the notebook...now it has weight.

DEAN

Alright.

He writes. Outside, VACANCY hums.

End scene

END OF PREVIEW

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