

LACUNA

Written by

David F.M. Vaughn

INT. HOSPITAL - MORNING

A hushed murmur of activity. Various NURSES, DOCTORS, and STAFF go about their quiet morning routine.

WHOOSH!

LANI (54, dark-skinned Hawaiian tomboy) squeals around the corner of the hallway in her wheelchair being pushed by her daughter JODIE (39 and unkempt).

A collection of balloons, tied to a bouquet in Lani's lap, barely keep up with the laughing girls.

A NURSE runs after them.

NURSE

Ma'am! Ma'am! You can't run in here!

Lani and Jodie keep their pace.

JODIE

Sorry 'bout it!

They giggle with mischief as the wheelchair peels around the corner of the front desk, knocking over a brochure stand.

They run through two automatic doors, exiting the hospital.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

LANI

Freedom!

They stop at the edge of a carport, catching their breath.

The nurse finally catches up to them, also out of breath, and out of patience.

NURSE

I ain't got time for this today.

The nurse takes the chair, and leaves them outside.

JODIE

You feeling ok, Mom?

Lani takes a big breath in, looks up at the pale blue sky, and smiles.

LANI

I'm alive, ain't I?

Jodie looks at her phone.

JODIE
Dad's pulling around now.

INT. CAR - DAY

Lani rides shotgun next to MAL (50, strong and masculine, deep pockmarks on his face). Jodie rides in back.

JODIE
President?

LANI
Barack Obama.

JODIE
Month?

LANI
October, though I wouldn't have minded sleeping through another few months so it could be Spring. I love the Spring.

JODIE
Secretary of State?

LANI
(annoyed)
Honey, I don't know those kind of things. And my head is starting to hurt after all these questions.

She touches the bandages on her head.

MAL
(sternly to Jodie)
Doctor said to take it slow.

LANI
Jodie, I promise you I remember everything.

JODIE
Mom, a coma is a serious thing.

LANI
Not for me. I'm the strongest woman in the world. No?

Jodie smiles at her Mom. She knows this is true.

LANI (CONT'D)

And it was more of a three week nap. Which was lovely, actually.

Lani sneezes, and groans.

LANI (CONT'D)

Why is it that I haven't been sick in over eight years, yet a few weeks in the hospital gives me a nasty cold?

Lani grabs onto Mal's hand, which rests on the stick shift.

LANI (CONT'D)

I'm just so happy to be with my family right now.

Mal's hand doesn't engage, but doesn't object.

Lani looks to Mal and smiles.

EXT. FAMILY HOME - DAY

The car pulls into the driveway of a modest single-level home, whose lavish landscape of trees, flowers, and tropical plants hide the home's true state.

There are two cars parked sloppily in the driveway, blocking them from pulling into the garage.

LANI

The boys are here?!

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lani pushes the front door open, and peeks inside with a wide smile on her face. Jodie is close behind, ready to catch her if she falls.

LANI

Evan? Kyle?

EVAN and KYLE (both 29 and very thin) come racing around the corner.

EVAN

Mom!

KYLE

Why are you walking? Jodie!

JODIE

She wanted to walk by herself!

LANI

I need everybody to stop fawning
over me and just relax. I'm fine.

Mal comes in and pulls Jodie aside. They speak in hushed tones as Lani, Kyle, and Evan continue their conversation.

KYLE

Are you hungry? I can make you
something to eat.

LANI

No thank you, baby.

Lani notices Mal and Jodie.

LANI (CONT'D)

Hey! Whisper friends! Wanna
include us in your secrets?

They smile politely at Lani.

Lani motions for them all to gather around her.

LANI (CONT'D)

Come, give Mom a hug.

They oblige.

LANI (CONT'D)

I'm so happy to be back home with
you guys.

Kyle and Evan connect with their eyes, but decide to not go any further.

JODIE

We've missed you too, Mom. We are
glad you're home and feeling
better.

Mal breaks the embrace first.

MAL

I need to head out.

EVAN

Ok.

LANI

Where are you going?

MAL

I need to check with Sonny back at the office.

Lani walks to Mal.

LANI

Well, don't be too long, Evan is making us pork adobo tonight.

EVAN

No I'm not.

LANI

Ooooooh, I suddently feel so woozy!

EVAN

Of course you do. Ok, pork adobo it is!

They share a laugh.

Lani grabs Mal's face, and pulls him in for a simple kiss.

At the last moment, Mal turns his head and lets her kiss him on the cheek.

Lani's kiss lands with a heavy thud.

Mal smiles at her politely. Lani looks at him strangely, then playfully slaps his chest.

LANI

You are such a germaphobe!

Mal locks eyes with Jodie, who is waiting with baited breath.

MAL

Yep.

He pulls his car keys out of his pocket and walks out.

Lani turns back towards the kids, and rolls her eyes.

LANI

It's just a cold!

KYLE

Well, the doctor says you need to take it slow.

EVAN

Yeah, you went through a very traumatic event, let's lay down.

Lani sees a shelf of photos next to the couch. They are photos of her and her kids. Most of them of Jodie, Kyle, and Evan as children.

She grabs a photo of the four of them and smiles.

LANI

My babies.

Jodie grabs her purse.

JODIE

I gotta check in on the sitter situation for tonight. I'll be back by seven.

LANI

Tell Dex I said hello!

Jodie leaves.

Lani sits down on the couch and takes in her surroundings.

The house is generically decorated like a model home.

KYLE

Wanna watch TV for a bit while we work on dinner?

LANI

I want to wash the hospital off my hands first.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Lani walks to the sink of her sun-drenched kitchen. A large bay window looks out onto the yard, and a few small dead plants sit in the windowsill.

She touches some of the lifeless plants.

LANI

Sorry, friends.

As she washes her hands, she looks into the yard at Jodie and Mal. They are having a somewhat heated conversation as Mal aggressively puffs on a cigarette.

Lani watches with laser-like precision.

She dries her hands and watches the two finish their conversation with seemingly no resolution.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lani comes back into the room, prompting the end of an intimate talk between Kyle and Evan.

LANI

What's going on with your dad and Jodie?

KYLE

What do you mean?

LANI

Those secret hushed talks. What's going on?

KYLE

Don't know.

Lani knows they're lying. The alpha in her emerges.

LANI

If that man screwed around while his wife lay lifeless in a hospital, I swear to you -

EVAN

Mom, relax!

KYLE

Mom, please lay down.

She stands her ground. The boys know not to push this.

LANI

There's something you're not telling me.

EVAN

Mom, please. You've been home for less than an hour and you're already stressing yourself out. Don't worry about Dad.

He kisses her.

EVAN (CONT'D)

I love you.

KYLE

I love you too, Mom.

LANI

What would I do without my boys?

They boys head to the kitchen, and just before Evan's hand hits the knob, he turns and whispers something to Kyle.

Kyle then reaches for a laptop sitting on a table next to the door.

Lani catches a glimpse of it.

LANI (CONT'D)

Why are you taking my computer?

EVAN

You know the doctor said no computer or phone for a while.

LANI

Yet TV is ok for my brain? Doctors know nothing.

The boys leave to the kitchen just as the doorbell RINGS.

Lani huffs her way to the front door, and opens it revealing FRANCIS (late 20's, stocky with a tucked in collared shirt), a newspaper delivery person in the neighborhood. He holds an iPad and is somewhat nervous.

FRANCIS

Hello...(He looks down to his iPad)...Ms. Lani Bute. I'm with the Oahu Currier, and I have a special offer for you today. Today. For our longtime subscribers, we are offering you our digital newspaper for half-off this month only.

LANI

No, thank you. And my name is Lani Darling. Mrs. Bute is my maiden name.

FRANCIS

I'm so sorry, Ms....I mean, Mrs...

LANI

Darling.

FRANCIS

Mrs. Darling, yes. It says here you've been our subscriber for three years now, and we want to thank you for your patronage by offering you a digital...

LANI

Honey, we've subscribed to the paper for almost eighteen years, since my babies were babies. Does that entitle me to the online version for one hundred percent off?

FRANCIS

Oh, I don't know.

He scours his iPad nervously.

LANI

I'm kidding.

FRANCIS

I'm so sorry. It's just that my records state a Ms. Lani Bute signed up with us in 2011. I'm new.

Jodie takes a moment. What is he saying?

LANI

You obviously have some sort of mistake.

She rubs the temple of her head.

LANI (CONT'D)

Listen, I'm not feeling so great. Can we do this another time?

FRANCIS

I'm sorry, Ms...I'm sorry-

The door is closed.

Jodie stands in the hallway, still facing the door, motionless.

She looks around the house.

She notices the photos on the shelf again.

They're all of her and her kids. Where is Mal?

She starts to pour through drawers in a side table, and finds her iPad.

Lani pulls out the iPad and opens her Facebook page. Without checking her numerous notifications or messages, she searches "Mal..." and clicks on his page.

Mal's profile photo is of him and a YOUNGER WOMAN raising their drinks to the camera on a beach. She looks over to see the "Add Friend?" button.

The SQUEAL of worn brakes is heard, and through the window blinds, Lani sees Mal sitting in his truck, parked slightly down the street.

She watches him sit in his truck, not moving. Then, the engine starts again.

EXT. FAMILY HOME - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Lani darts out of the front door, and runs towards his truck barefoot.

INT. MAL'S TRUCK - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Mal smokes a cigarette and plays with the wedding band on his finger.

He catches Lani running towards him in his rearview mirror.

LANI

Mal!

He depresses the brake, and shifts the car into drive.

EXT. MAL'S TRUCK - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Lani sees the brake lights light up from behind. She's almost there. Her gait increases at the last moment.

INT. MAL'S TRUCK - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Lani lands with a thud at the front of his car, blocking him from going anywhere.

LANI

Are you cheating on your wife, you fuck?!

She slams her hands against the car hood.

Mal takes a big breath in, and puts the truck back into park. He shuts off the engine.

Lani's aggression relaxes a bit. She slowly walks around to the passenger side of his truck, and gets in.

They sit in silence for a bit, eyes forward.

LANI (CONT'D)
I can't believe you. It's been
three weeks, Mal.

He is deliberate and steady with his words.

MAL
It's been four and a half years.

Lani slowly turns towards him.

LANI
Since what?

Mal finally looks at Lani. There are tears forming.

MAL
Since you fell out of love with me.
And left.

LANI
I...

MAL
The doctors told us not to rush too
fast back into it, but you've never
been one for doctors advice.

LANI
But...I remember everything. This
has got to be some sort of joke. I
answered all the questions.

MAL
It's called Lacuna. It's a memory
disorder that erases certain
periods of time or events in your
life. You forgot you didn't love
me anymore.

LANI
But...but I do.

Lani turns back forward. She looks down at her fingers.
There is no wedding ring on her hand.

She looks to the simple gold band around Mal's finger.

LANI (CONT'D)
You're...

MAL

Yes.

She nods her head, indicating she understands this.

The heat from the hood of the car distorts the view down the street.

LANI

But you're the love of my life.

The air hangs heavy.

MAL

I have to go home. She'll wonder where I am.

Lani's eyes gaze at Mal's, looking for some other way.

EXT. MAL'S TRUCK - DAY

Lani steps out of the car and shuts the door.

Through the open window, she gazes at Mal.

He pulls away, leaving her standing in the middle of the street, still staring sideways to where Mal once was.

THE END