

# Mother

By Gus Prouty | 1590 words

The first thing that strikes me about Hector's place is how big it is. You expect rich people to have extravagant homes, but you don't realize just how much space two people and a few servants can occupy until that great white monstrosity lurches out over the hill as you make the final turn. The property is immense, a grand twenty-room estate all done up in white with gold trim. Despite its size, even more impressive is an obvious attention to even the most insignificant details of design. In contrast stands the pool house, tucked to the right and hidden slightly behind a poorly groomed stand of trees. My new digs for the foreseeable future, which suits me just fine considering it's still twice the size of my old place.

As I drive the last hundred feet of the house's immaculate driveway, I see Hector standing out front to greet me. I generally find that children of money take one of two paths in life. They either let their status go to their heads and become pompous little pests, their money robbing them of both their empathy for the struggle of others and their ability to live a life as anything but a parasite feeding off a bank account. Or their money grants them a wonderful gift; it lets them not care. Standing there in mismatched sandals, baggy cargo shorts, and tacky Hawaiian shirt, it's not hard to see which path Hector has chosen. As I step out of my car he greets me warmly; it's been too long.

"I told you those on-campus apartments were shabby," he says with a smirk. "Well at least class was finally good for something," I reply. The banter feels good after so much time spent cooped up studying for the past few weeks. I swear the robbery was almost welcome after the monotony, even if the jerk did trash my room in the process of

taking everything of value. Though, as a college student, that really wasn't much.

Fortunately, I have good friends. I didn't even need to ask Hector for a place to stay.

“So, how are things with you? Dine with any royalty lately?”

“Not lately.” The response is murmured as he takes in the suddenly very interesting hood of my car.

Uh oh, the Hector I know never misses a good chance to quip. Something must be wrong.

“Um, before you get settled in Wade, my uh mother wants to talk with you.”

Bingo. Can I call it or what? This was not ideal. As you may have guessed, Hector does not earn his own money. Like most rich kids, the money comes from a rich parent. The parent in this case was not well known for her charming demeanor. But, “grin and bear it” was my battle mantra so I nodded my head and followed him into the house.

What I had managed to piece together from snippets of conversations and other top-notch sources was that Hector's and my own mother had been close friends in college. One night, his mother had a bit too much to drink and spent the night in the sort of situation that usually comes complementary after enough free drinks. Her hangover stayed longer than her partner. But Hector stuck around. Soon after, my own mother fell into a similar position thought she at least knew my dad's name. My mom decided family came first. She got married and dropped out of college. Hector's mom chose differently. After he was born, she pawned him off on my mom whenever possible. I gained a best friend, but Hector lost a mom.

After leaving the estate's arching entrance behind, Hector led me into what I believe counts for their living room. If a living room can have its own zip code, that is.

His mother was standing there in a sleek, stylish black suit that looked like it cost more than my entire wardrobe. She was currently embroiled in a conversation on her Smart phone. I wasn't a stranger to being ignored, so I stood waiting, but Hector evidently found her behavior uncouth.

"Ahem" he made a grand display of hacking in her general direction.

Her eyes moved from her screen to us for the first time.

"You would pick this of all weeks to have friends over, wouldn't you?" she inquired, completely ignoring me.

"Well I'm sorry he doesn't schedule his burglaries to better suit you, mother," Hector all but shouted before I could get a word out. I could see the vile response forming in his mother's mind and decided to cut in to avoid standing there for the rest of the day.

"So you wanted to see me?" her eyes darted to me as if just noticing I was there for the first time. The bile settled and cool indifference took its place.

"I just want to be sure you're all right. Despite what my son thinks, I do worry."

Yeah, right. I doubted she spared me a second thought before I walked in the room. Heck, I wondered if she would care even if it had been Hector who was robbed, unless of course the thieves took anything of hers. Still, I am nothing if not polite, so I nodded and made with the standard formalities. "Of course you worry."

"It's a terrible thing to happen, especially with you being so close to finishing your degree." The last word was a flaming arrow aimed directly at her son, and I realized I was just here to be ammunition against Hector. Well, Wade Pierce is nobody's bullet.

"Well, I hate to keep you. I know you're busy. Don't worry about me. I've been here before, and I probably won't leave the pool house much anyways." I spoke quickly

glancing from her to the door as suggestively as possible. Watching her, I can see her eyes filling with the important concerns of her life. Hector and I are quickly forgotten. She power-walks out, murmuring good-bye to the room, leaving Hector and me alone with our thoughts.

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Hector doesn't often smoke. He knows all the health risks, all the reasons not to. Still, on quiet nights when he wants to relax, he seems drawn to his balcony and the single pack he keeps in his desk for special occasions. His mother is usually the cause. He smokes slowly savoring the flavor and the calm it promises. After the conversation earlier that day, he had helped Wade move into a spare room in the pool house. He didn't see it as much, but Wade seemed to like it well enough. He said it had a bed, so it was more than home enough.

Right now he was on the phone with his own mother, assuring her that he was fine and that the National Guard did not need to be called in to search for the thief. God was he jealous. That's part of the reason he was out here in the first place. He wasn't used to feeling this way, especially towards his best friend. But after his mothers' remarks, he found himself in the sort of sullen, reflective mood he seemed to fall into more and more as of late. He longed for direction in life. His money gave him means but no motive. That's why he had dropped out of college in the first place. It wasn't too difficult. It was simply that he had just been spinning his wheels, even in the classroom.

He was stirred from his ruminations by an opening door. Wade had finished talking to his mom. Hector flicked his now burnt out nub over the railing and sauntered down to find some company.

He found Wade squinting hard at a broken piece of junk.

“I don’t think that laptop is going to be working anytime soon,” he interjected from behind his friend’s shoulder. Wade gave him the “no, seriously?” look as he sat down on the couch in surrender.

“I know I should probably be grateful it wasn’t stolen, but the guy still trashed it when he was tearing up my place. I have a term paper due in two days and my only copy is currently locked in cyber limbo,” he groaned leaning back in his chair.

Ah, the heart of the problem. Hector could work with this.

“I know a few tech guys. I’m sure they can pull the paper off your hard drive.”

“And how exactly would I pay for this?” Wade inquired from his diagonal position. Now it was Hector’s turn to give the “seriously?” look.

“Did you really just ask that question? Before you start, you can’t humble your way out of this. I have known you since before I could walk, so I know you don’t stick around me for my money. Let me use it on something besides myself for once.” Hector found the speech flowing almost naturally from his lips as if it had been rehearsed.

“Well, when you put it that way, how can say no? You call your guys, and I’ll start taking this thing apart to get to the drive.” As Wade spoke, he stood and held out his hand in an old gesture familiar to both of them. Hector couldn’t help but smile, and clasped his friend’s hand in his as they shook on their plan of action. The sullen mood had left him because he remembered he had a friend who gave him purpose, even if it was as simple as calling tech support.