

# Sparrows

by Molly Wu

Director's Notes . . . . . pg 25

Pastor's Notes . . . . . pg 26

**GENRE:** Dramatic Monologue

**SYNOPSIS:** Following a difficult medical diagnosis, a woman struggles holding onto faith.

**TIME:** 5 minutes

**CAST BREAKDOWN:** 1F

**THEME:** Christian Living, Faith, Doubt

**SCRIPTURE REFERENCE:** Matthew 6:26; 10:29-31

**CHURCH YEAR SEASON:** Any

**SUGGESTED USE:** Sermon Starter, Worship Service

**CHARACTERS:**

VAL - a woman in her early thirties

**PROPS:** None

**COSTUMES:** Contemporary

**SOUND:** One wireless microphone

**LIGHTING:** General stage

**SETTING:** Unspecified

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## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

### The Heavy Stuff

Weighty subject matters should usually be handled with kid gloves, and when delivering emotional lines on subjects like crushed dreams and the fear of dying, less is usually more. As an actor, it's a delicate balance. Pushing too hard runs the risk of overdoing it, but keeping your emotional 'distance' from the material will make Val seem flat and phony, which is toxic to this kind of material. I tend to believe that underdoing it is always better than overdoing it, but as the director, you'll of course need to be the judge of when your actress is hitting the right tone in her delivery.

Tricky too is the fact that the monologue begins on such an apparently lighthearted note. Knowing the subtext will of course help the actress, but even the opening lines about Jess should be a little...heavier... than we'd typically expect from a young woman discussing her sister's family. There should be an unmistakable 'minor note' in the delivery of all of the lines about Jess and the pregnancy test---not to telegraph the ending, but to give the audience the nonverbal clue that something's not quite right here. (This also provides a bit of an emotional lead-in for the actress, so when the break-down comes, it doesn't seem to appear out of nowhere.)

Save the real emotional fireworks for when they're really needed. Val is packing down the tears, doesn't truly 'lose it' until cancer comes up, then manages to regain composure for most of the rest. These kinds of mild ups and downs are important for the 'rhythm' of the piece, as too much of either extreme will risk losing the audience's compassion.

### Picking

*Sparrows* is perhaps most effective if the actress is allowed to find her own way. Direction and feedback should of course be given, but this is a fairly grim monologue and earnestness in the delivery is

important. Too much 'picking'—at any monologue—can run the risk of rattling your actor, making them self-conscious and reducing the material to a mathematical exercise (breathe in here, pause here, louder there) that sucks the life out of the work. Things like timing and beats are important and should be addressed, but let your actress have the freedom to make Val her own.

### Ain't Over 'Til It's Over

The ending of the monologue calls for lights to fade down on a crying Val, as opposed to a real 'exit' as such. Not every performance space allows for a full blackout, so take care that whatever technical device is used to get the actress offstage doesn't ruin the emotional effect of the scene's closing. Bear in mind that without some sort of technical cue, an audience may have no idea when a scene is done, so even if your actress has to drop her head and exit in full stage light, be sure she remains in character. (Music is of course always a great tool to let an audience know that the scene is 'done'.)