

Mother's Grave S2 Ep1 Lauren

Transcript

[00:00:00] **Dana:** Hi. Hi, congrats. You did it. You did it. You pressed play on a podcast called, I Swear on My Mother's Grave. Out of all the shows you could possibly listen to and topics to explore, you chose this one. So thanks for being here. Uh, you might be a regular listener coming back for season two, or you might be listening for the first time or a friend told you about this show and said, Hey, you should check this show out.

[00:00:44] You might like it. And so you press play, even though you were wondering, like, "I don't know, am I up for this emotional journey today? Will this be too heavy? I mean, I have an 11:00 AM dentist appointment. Is this gonna be too much emotional labor before I get my teeth cleaned?" And I get it. You're not alone in your hesitation or your fear around listening to people talk about the loss of their complicated moms, but this show isn't just about our moms.

[00:01:13] It's about you, the living, the, the person who's listen. The child, the mother, the daughter, the son, the friend, the aunt, the person left. It's for you. I started this podcast in the early days of the pandemic because, well, the truth is I never really got into bread making, and I knew I wanted to start talking more openly about my anger and shame around my relationship with my mother.

[00:01:38] And I also wanted to feel less alone in those feelings in a time of deep isolation, but what I really really wanted was to learn how to forgive her and ultimately forgive myself and I'm getting there. I'm getting there, it's a journey, but I do know that I have way more love for her than I did two years ago.

[00:01:57] And I think if she was here today, my mom would say that she has even more love for me too. So we are back season two, baby back with more bold, funny, vulnerable conversations about the loss of our complicated mothers and not just in death. Okay. That's my tagline. I'm working on it. So there you go. When I decided to start working on season two, I was vaccinated, right.

[00:02:20] And the world was opening up more and I decided I wanted to try to do more interviews in person. I wanted to hug people and process and laugh and talk in real physical space. I also wanted to sit on my 95 year old Nana's vintage upholstered pink chair while I was doing it. So I found a little space in Evanston, Illinois, outside Chicago.

[00:02:40] I got some gear and a desk off Facebook marketplace, and I started inviting people in. And the first person I sat across from this past April was Lauren Montgomery. She's an actor and a friend of mine in Chicago and a theater professor at Truman College. She's sassy wise, red haired, honest and talks fast.

[00:03:04] She talks about as fast as I did because we were so excited to be together in person again for this conversation. And as a new mother, I think Lauren was just happy to be out of the house. In this episode, we talk about my upcoming wedding on the patio of my Nana's nursing home, which happened just this past June.

[00:03:21] Yay. I did it. And how to manage a big life moment like that without your mother, by your side, how romantic relationships are modeled to us by our folks. And what do you do when your own mother asks you to be her maid of honor? Thanks for pressing play. I'm so glad you're here. This is Lauren Montgomery.

[00:03:51] **Lauren:** Hi.

[00:03:52] **Dana:** Hi. Yay. We're doing it. Oh my gosh. My gosh. It's exciting. So, you know, you know that I am about to get married. Yeah. In June and we've talked cuz we're friends, we've talked off the mic and stuff about my fear of marriage and like whether or not I wanna do it. And you know, was my parents divorce after 37 years, a reason why I believe that love never lasts and you know, I'm scared of committing, but I've obviously come around and I've had therapy and I, she's silent laughing.

[00:04:28] She's she... she's a silent laugher Lauren. Yeah. But so I've come around and I've, we've done pros and cons and all the things. Why I wanna get married and, and why Jonathan is the right person for me, cuz he is, but I'm still, I'm still anxious to make such a big commitment. I mean, buying a house is a commitment, but also getting married as a commitment.

[00:04:50] Yeah. Cause it feels forever. So if I treat it, like if I just keep choosing him one day at a time and I don't treat it, like this is forever and I, we take that language out. We take, which we might in our vows take. Oh we did. We took that out. Yeah. I'm taking that out. Yeah. You know, but if it's like, I'm choosing him every day.

[00:05:06] It feels more manageable and that it's a commitment to him. Every day, right? Yes. That's a positive way to look at it. It can be a celebration of

what you already have instead of, and you've been together for a decade. Yes. And he makes me dinner every night. Like what, who am I kidding?

[00:05:20] **Lauren:** You know? Right. And, but I understand your apprehension.

[00:05:23] I, I come from a mother who is married three times. Mm-hmm it was not, you know, and that is the lot. That

[00:05:28] **Dana:** is the... to a lot of, to, not a lot of, yeah. How much time are we gonna talk about these, these, uh, not winners.

[00:05:37] **Lauren:** well, it's so hard. Like, it's just complicated, but it definitely skewed my feelings about marriage.

[00:05:43] And my stepdad is a good man. Who's struggled with some mental health issues. So that was the challenge there, but certainly my biological father and certainly my mom's last husband are not good people or have made really poor decisions that have affected my life. And that is, and your mom's. Yes. And my mom's and unfortunately like that's the lasting, the negative part of the legacy is that I still have to deal with all three of these people in one way or another mm-hmm and, and it's a real challenge. Also. It, it made me apprehensive about marriage as well. I mean, I definitely, what is the national average? You get married at 23 or something. I know that's absurd,

[00:06:24] **Dana:** but it is. I left my wallet in a cab, like every day in my twenties.

[00:06:28] **Lauren:** That's what in my twenties. I mean, I was the hot, hot, hottest mess. So I can't imagine. And I was 36 when I got married and that seemed right. You okay? Okay. That seemed right.

[00:06:38] **Dana:** If not young. And my mom died at 36, I'm just trying to think, like I was 36 lost my mom, but now I'm getting married

[00:06:44] **Lauren:** early forties.

[00:06:44] Mm-hmm and I think that's, that seems right. And your apprehension apprehension is nothing but healthy. Like, I think if you go into it. Okay. I knew I, I was nervous about marriage. I wasn't nervous about the person, which is what I'm hearing from you, right? Yes. I'm pointing

[00:06:56] **Dana:** at her. I'm pointing. Yes. That's it.

[00:06:58] Ding dinging. So during therapy, we did an exercise where we had to look at our parents' marriage. Or, or our maternal figures in our life, how love was modeled to us at a young age, you know, and what we saw and what we, what we aspired to. And, and of course I saw a lot of love and I saw this commitment and they were, they seemed to be best friends.

[00:07:17] And they, you know, my mom helped my dad and his career while she had her own career. And she was this perfect mom, but that's also her own disease of perfection and trying to be this perfect brick. Yeah. And you can't be perfect all the time. And then they outgrew each other and there were other issues and, you know, depression and...

[00:07:31] So you go, oh, well they seem so good at the front so that Jonathan and I seem great. So who knows in 20 years, if it all falls apart, like, but again, we don't know what's coming. We don't know what's coming tomorrow. I don't, the world is burning. Like, so I guess I keep thinking I can control it. I can control this relationship or if I can see the future I'll know it's the right, right thing to do.

[00:07:53] **Lauren:** But once you can consider your parents' marriage a success, ultimately. Oh, yeah,

[00:07:58] **Dana:** yeah, I guess you're right. And they were great to me. They were good parents. Yeah. Good to me. Good parents. And

[00:08:02] **Lauren:** that it ultimately didn't work out, but like

[00:08:04] **Dana:** my dad found love again with a new person and that, and I'm so happy for him and my mom didn't.

[00:08:09] And,

[00:08:10] **Lauren:** but did that, does that feel like when you look at it, does it scare you because it feels like their divorce contributed to your mom's? Yes. Yeah. That's hard for

[00:08:17] **Dana:** sure decline for, cause she never got over it. But she wouldn't have, she was already in a place where she wasn't getting over really anything, you know, she was reliving the past even when they were together and blaming him for things.

[00:08:28] And there was a lot, you know, there was a lot going on and I really wanna interview my dad, but mm-hmm , you know, and he, wow. But not big one. Not yet. He knows. He

[00:08:38] **Lauren:** knows. He knows he's on the

[00:08:39] **Dana:** list. Yeah, he's on the short list, but how so, looking at your mom's legacy of choices that she made. Which you know, were complicated.

[00:08:47] How did that affect you choosing Blake, your current husband? Yeah. I mean, and wanting to be married.

[00:08:54] **Lauren:** Yeah. Yeah. I think as you know, a cancer, uh, born in June, there is something about wanting Jonathan's a cancer wanting that home, right? Yeah. There's something that feels safe about building a home and creating a family.

[00:09:08] And I think with Blake, it was timing. If I'd met him 10 years earlier, he would've been like no way, not because of me necessarily, but where he was at wanting the things that I wanted, cuz he was so deep in his career and pursuing everything and being so ambitious. And I think he, that wouldn't have, we wouldn't have been syncing up, but I think both of us had spent a few years single and you know, not just alone, but starting to feel lonely, you know, truly lonely. And when we met each other, it was a blind date set up, my friend Chelsea. And it really was just, I mean, to use the improv terms, it was a real "yes and" situation, which I'd not had maybe ever, right? I dated. All kinds are wrong. Like if you asked my friend Christy, she'll say every shade of wrong, give me a shade,

[00:09:54] **Dana:** give me a shade.

[00:09:55] **Lauren:** Well, I mean, you know, one of them, but it was about like, let's find somebody who is emotionally unavailable, but who's magnetic and charismatic and let's see if you can get them to love you. Yeah. And if you can, you're totally worth.

[00:10:07] **Dana:** Can I change them? Can I get them to be into

[00:10:09] **Lauren:** me? and I, when I was in my twenties, I had a long term relationship with someone in their fifties.

[00:10:14] And no, most of the time, those are not really unhealthy situations, but because I didn't have, you know, strong. Father figures are felt a little disconnected. You know, in my early early years, I think I was always gonna strive for, and I was gonna look for that relationship. And I just feel so blessed that I found that relationship and that it was healthy.

[00:10:33] Mm-hmm . So we were together for five years and I learned a lot. I learned how to love from this person and he could have taken advantage of me and he didn't. And by the end he said, look, we've gotta break up, cuz you've gotta have more experiences. You've gotta blossom like this isn't right for you. And it was a really eye opening and wonderful relationship.

[00:10:51] I need to be loved like that by somebody who was older, I guess mm-hmm , you know, I was gonna seek that out and I'm just grateful. I found someone who didn't abuse that power dynamic and who genuinely loved me. Did your mom know him? Yes. Uh, she did. She didn't know about the relationship. It was pretty, pretty under wraps the whole time.

[00:11:10] I did tell her about it later and she was, you know, I don't know she was feigning, you know, shock and awe about it, but, you know, it was, it was healthy for me and I have no regrets about it, but yeah, I think for me, that was a really beautiful experience. And I think those are rare in that situation when I wouldn't like recommend people get into that situation.

[00:11:33] But for me, it was really good. He wrote me a letter probably six months ago, even, or sort an email just saying like, "Hey, I'm so glad you're happy and married and have this wonderful baby. And I never stopped loving you, but knew that you needed to have your life and you couldn't blossom in the, this way. Cause I wouldn't be able to give you the things that you wanted."

[00:11:51] Wow. It was really absolutely

[00:11:53] **Dana:** beautiful. But even when I said right now, I said, did your mom know about this guy? Did she know about this situation? Then I, part of me was like, well, she made such complicated choices sometimes in. Like, do we even want, are there times you didn't want your mom's advice because you were like, how could I trust you if you were picking some... well

[00:12:11] **Lauren:** that's right.

[00:12:12] I think, I don't know if she made the connection that the, the reason I had that relationship was because of her choices and it was kind of the first

thing that I had that was just mine. I didn't wanna tell her about it while it was happening. It was none of her business. I felt like this is my own, this was my first time individuating becoming my own person.

[00:12:32] I think it was like me separating from her cuz she and I were incredibly close until I was in my twenties. Mm-hmm we didn't have that teenage angst crunchy time until later.

[00:12:42] **Dana:** Same. Yeah. Same. Oh interesting. Yeah, same, same.

[00:12:46] **Lauren:** Yeah, I think. And her choices, my biological father, the, you know, they separated when I was two months old, my mom kind of ran away. Sounds like he was pretty verbally abusive. And after she died, I found some letters that I thought were, uh, threatening and unkind. And he's just tried to, maybe not, he, he's not doing it, but his current wife is trying to get in touch with me.

[00:13:10] And I'm not quite sure why, and I need to do some more digging as to like what's behind that, you know, through like Facebook

[00:13:15] **Dana:** through

[00:13:16] **Lauren:** letters or she, she found my address somewhere and has sent me articles about my biological father and books. And he's still alive. It seems like. So I'm not sure what's going on.

[00:13:26] Huh? That's weird. And then, you know, my, uh, my mom's last husband was. That was a whole tricky thing, you know, Blake and I were together and, but we were just living together. And in November of 2015, my mom was diagnosed with a bladder cancer and, uh, she was married to a man and they'd only been married, I wanna say two years at that point.

[00:13:53] I remember going to their wedding. I was, you know, I was 33. Hmm. I really needed highlights in my hair, but I couldn't afford them. I had to be like the maid of honor in my mom's wedding for the second time you were the

[00:14:05] **Dana:** maid of honor in your mom's wedding? Oh yeah.

[00:14:07] **Lauren:** Twice, twice when I was 7. And then once when I was 30.

[00:14:09] Whoa, whoa, whoa.

[00:14:10] **Dana:** It's like a record stop. hold. Hold on. What? For real? Yeah. She chose her only child. Uhhuh. She said, you're my maid of honor. Yeah. Mm-hmm what did you, you didn't do a toast at 7. You didn't plan a correct bachelorette

[00:14:25] **Lauren:** party, which they didn't want. She didn't want that at 7, cuz it was her second wedding and it was like, and they were, you know, they met at church and stuff.

[00:14:31] It wasn't particularly like we didn't do all those things. I can't even remember. I don't think I ever knew she went out with girlfriends at that to celebrate or any of that stuff. I don't even think she had that the first time, but the third time. You

[00:14:45] **Dana:** know, for the second, when you did the second time.

[00:14:48] **Lauren:** Yeah. Yes. You know, I was like, yeah, I felt like I was 10 pounds overweight. I needed highlights. I couldn't, I couldn't get a date. I mean, I had dates on OK cupid, but they were terrible and in Wrigleyville and nobody ever asked me for a second date and it was, it was a nightmare. And I was just feeling like pretty low.

[00:15:07] And yet here I am going to honor, celebrate, plan festivities for my mom's third wedding. I was, was at a rough spot. My gosh, I had to really pull myself up.

[00:15:18] **Dana:** Could you have said no? Was there a part of you that's like, no, I have to do this. She's asked me. I don't think I ever

[00:15:25] **Lauren:** thought there was a way to say, say no, no, I was.

[00:15:28] And I also didn't didn't know how I felt about him, you know? And also my mom was scared to tell me they were getting married, so she made him do it. And he was saying, I'm calling not to ask for your permission. I'm calling to ask for your blessing instead. Tell me about that call. What did that call feel? Like?

[00:15:44] Tell me about it. It was so weird. He said something like over the phone, not in person, cause I'm in Chicago and they're in California. So it was, you know, I'm, I'm telling you, I'm gonna propose to your mom and I'm not calling to ask for your permission, but I am calling to ask for your blessing. And I was like, okay, well I have some caveats here.

[00:16:00] You know, she's gonna retire in a few years. How old was your mom? Oh, she was. 63. Okay. When they got married, something like that. Yeah. 63. I said, she's never retired in a few years and I just she's really into traveling and I just, please, can you help support that and make that happen? And I would love for her to, I, I need to see her at least twice a year.

[00:16:20] So I don't know if that means, you know, can you make a trip out here and can, or can she at least by herself make it trip out here and, and I'll come to. And he said, okay. And then I said, you know, also, I, I recognize that you're a former police officer, but I would really appreciate it as her daughter, if you would not have a gun in the home.

[00:16:37] Mm. Right. Like that really concerns me and, you know, whatever. And so he promised. He said yes to both of those things, which he never did. Correct. Neither of those things. And then I told... it, it was an interesting moment because she and I actually had one of our most thoughtful and like honest, difficult discussions after that, cuz I told her, I was like, look, I didn't feel comfortable that, that you put me in that position that you had him call me instead of telling me yourself, she knew he was gonna propose and it was, it was thoughtful. She apologized and that really helped us move forward. And then, you know, I thought, oh, I really am gonna have to give a toast. What the... am I gonna say? And. I was at a, at a play. I was at Theo Ubique, watching some Andrew Lloyd Weber show.

[00:17:20] And this song love, love, changes, everything. And it's this huge ballad and it's, uh, so cheesy, but I remember thinking, okay. This is it she's in love and it changes your whole thinking. And if you see it and you didn't think you were gonna get it again, cuz she'd been divorced for 10 years and she'd had this wonderful life she'd curated for herself.

[00:17:42] Mm-hmm and she really thought she'd be single for the rest of her life. And she was actually

[00:17:45] **Dana:** because she was traveling with friends that was her best friend,

[00:17:48] **Lauren:** Ireland. They were going to Portugal. They were like doing all these fun things and she loved her job. You know, use high school librarian. She like, she, she was like paying all the kids high school entrance, I mean, uh, college, uh, application fees.

[00:18:01] And she was like taking them all up to visit schools and she was just in it in her element. It was like the best job. She was very happy and he came along and I thought, okay, she did not, this was out of left field. She wasn't searching for it. And it happened to her and I have to respect that. So I quoted this song.

[00:18:16] Like it changes everything. It makes this, you know, it makes the sky blue, it make it just, it just colors your whole world in a way. And it came to her. Right. So I, I was able to, you know, make that toast in that way to, just to. Hey, I was nervous about this, but I see what's happened, you know, and I wanna respect this love, right.

[00:18:37] So I was able to make a, I was able to behave and to support and to give the toast I needed to give. How did she react to that? I think she really appreciated that I was able to sort of get on board with this,

[00:18:50] **Dana:** even though it was hard for me, I can't believe I did not know this, so, and not to like record, stop it again.

[00:18:56] But then the sad, the sadness of that though, right? It, it did change everything and you were trying to see the positive. Correct. But the love this new relationship. Yeah. Did change everything. I mean, oh

[00:19:08] **Lauren:** yes. Yeah. Unfortunately it really

[00:19:10] **Dana:** did. And this guy turned blue, but then it turned really dark purple again and yeah.

[00:19:15] Or like it just was not,

[00:19:17] **Lauren:** I would say what I've come to realize in therapy is that there was absolutely abuse going on. Not until my mom got sick, though, I would say is the truth. I think the, the one thing he was not comfortable with is her spending time alone with her friends, which is a really red flag.

[00:19:32] So that's abuse of its own. That's like a, that was always the case, emotional abuse, but once she was sick and when she was terminal in part. He had a really hard time letting her be alone. So anyway, so like 2015, she was diagnosed with bladder cancer. I got engaged about eight months later and she was undergoing surgery and we thought, okay, this is, you know, we set a wedding date a year later.

[00:19:53] And so we were actually trying to give her enough time to feel more herself by the time we got married, but it didn't quite work out that way. But she was still like positive. We were getting married in May, January of 2017. She didn't make it to my bridal shower here, which she was supposed to come. And she had found out, where is she living again?

[00:20:12] She's California, California. So Northern California. And then we're, you know, here in Chicago. And she called me after that weekend and said, that doctor said she was terminal, which is why she didn't make it out. Cause she was experiencing, you know, all kinds of symptoms and pain and,

[00:20:28] **Dana:** and you're how many months out, weeks

[00:20:29] **Lauren:** out? Four, we four months out, although they were very optimistic about her making it to the wedding.

[00:20:34] So we, we went, okay, this is what we're dealing with. We know we're gonna lose her, but this could be a great last hurrah, you know? Yeah. She had come out in that October and bought my wedding dress. I probably would've picked anything if she, you know, she'd picked it out right. I shout out to David Bridle, cause that's great for not, not

[00:20:52] **Dana:** expensive.

[00:20:53] Do you remember that trip with

[00:20:54] **Lauren:** her? Yes. It was hard because she was in a lot of pain and ran outta pain meds and there was, you know, and we called, uh, my friend, Jackie who's my mom's age and she helped us figure it out and was with us when we got the dress. So there was like, I think she really needed another support person, her age to understand exactly what she was going through.

[00:21:14] And it's hard because she was in a lot of pain. And so there were moments where she was mean, you know? Yeah. And I think she was really clinging to her faith at this point. Right. She was, you know, I grew up in a pretty Christian household, but like California Christian. So I guess that means, you know, we went to church every Sunday.

[00:21:30] My mom wasn't like evangelical on the way that she's always trying to convert people. I actually really respected her kind of quiet Christianity. She was generous. She was. Yeah, she was into prayer. She was into, you know,

forgiveness, like all the tenants that I think are really positive in religion, most of my life.

[00:21:49] But as she got older, she got more conservative about it, especially because of her husband. Like it, it got a little bit like too, too tight, I guess. Clinging. So, you know, when we chose music for our wedding, she didn't like it. Cause there was no, there were no hymns. There was nothing in there that was gonna be religious cause I was marrying an atheist, right? Mm-hmm this is what's happening. So I think she had a hard time supporting some of the aspects of the wedding. But anyway, the, the main thing is that she was getting sicker and sicker and towards the wedding and her friends called and said. You know, one of her friends said, I really don't think she's up for traveling.

[00:22:25] And I, I, I thought, okay, you know, in so many ways, it's too late for us to push it or change it, right. Go to California. Right. But I was like, you know, what we could do is we could, yeah. We actually could go the month before which we did end up going, but she wouldn't, she wouldn't hear of us holding a mini ceremony.

[00:22:41] She wouldn't. And she cause she just, she needed to have that goal I guess. And I thought, okay, well the second option, she stays home. We, you know, we didn't really deal with Zoom yet, but we were like, we'll FaceTime the whole thing and she can be with her girlfriends. Will all be around her glass champagne and she can see.

[00:22:59] That was sort of the, that would've been what would've been my choice. Yes. Yes. But instead her husband insisted I'm bringing her out as if it was like the last thing he promised her. And that sounds really noble, but it wasn't in her best interest. And she, I, I believe she suffered because of it. So he brought her out here to Illinois.

[00:23:15] She came a week before the wedding. She lasted three days and then ended up in a hospice care facility, which was incredible out in Glenview. But for me, it was just

[00:23:24] **Dana:** a... She wasn't at your actual... no ...ceremony. Does it feel now you're coming to acceptance of it? I

[00:23:32] **Lauren:** think, you know, the unfairness of the world is that couldn't, she have stayed healthy for one more month, right?

[00:23:37] It, which was her anger about it as well. Cuz there were my moments where we could talk about it sort of slipping away. I remember my last real conversation with her was in the hotel room. Her husband had gone to get a rental car or something and we're in Evanston. It was sort of we're laying on the bed and it's like our last, real... if I had known, gosh, if I had known, I think that's the thing people don't realize with cancer is that your person has gone long before they're gone. So there are only glimpses here and there. Right. And so we had some precious time together, but that was, that was truly the last, you know, of course I what'd you talk about, oh, I'm like try to remember.

[00:24:14] I, I kind of don't even remember what I'm grateful for is that I think it was mundane things. Yeah. Which I'm was so happy about maybe the wedding details or something. I, I don't even remember. You know, I have conflicting feelings about it. I feel so bad. I wish I had done more. Like, I feel guilty that that's the way it ended up, but I, but she's telling

[00:24:34] **Dana:** you, no, you can't do a ceremony.

[00:24:36] I won't have it. Right. I won't have it. What are you gonna do? I mean, I

[00:24:39] **Lauren:** guess I wasn't allowed to be in charge of her care and it it's a double edge sword. So I understand that like neither side. Great. But dealing with someone else who knew her for five years, not 36 years. Mm-hmm and to sort of not have the respect or collaboration, I felt like I deserved was really hard for me.

[00:24:56] Yeah. And so she was in this hospice facility and was unwell and not able to come to the wedding and I understand she watched it. I'm like... she watched it correct on FaceTime? Yeah. And I don't know how much she took in at that point. Right. Right. I, you know, the, the big decision was not to visit her that day.

[00:25:14] And my best friend Christie decided it for me. And I still believe that was the right decision. To not see her? Yeah. Because the day before I went in the morning and she was agitated and we waited until she was calm before we left. And we had this big meeting with the doctors about her not being able to come the next day.

[00:25:34] I think Christie was right. If I had gone that day, I would not have been focused on my wedding because apparently the, I don't re I'm kind of blacked out, but apparently our rehearsal day, I was, I mean, I guess other

people would say difficult. I think I was just my memory of it is that Blake was trying to direct the rehearsal and I thought he was being rude to our guests, you know?

[00:25:57] That's probably not what was happening, but in my mind, I was like, you know, but I was quite shell shocked from that, uh, early visit at the hospice. So I think Christie just saw that and went, oh, you'll miss your wedding. You will not be present. I mean, I

[00:26:09] **Dana:** literally ha I have no, I am having a hard time figuring out how you compartmentalized it at all.

[00:26:14] I have no idea.

[00:26:15] **Lauren:** But one, one thing I wish we had done is maybe crept back over to the hospice on our way home after the wedding, even if it was three in the morning. So she never saw you in the dress in person? No. So I feel really bad. She did when we bought it. So she bought it, it for me and all that, but at the same time I had to remind myself, like, what am I, I have gotta focus on the future too.

[00:26:34] Also I felt bad. Like my wonderful, loving husband had been. So, you know, Involved and wrapped up. And this is his

[00:26:42] **Dana:** wedding too. Yes, exactly. It's happening to him as

[00:26:44] **Lauren:** well. Like yeah. So one, one, one sort of kindness I could do was make myself as present as possible for that day. Let that day just be about us. You know?

[00:26:53] I mean, you

[00:26:54] **Dana:** hear a story like that. There's this weird push pull. ..Totally... of like, well, I don't have to compartmentalize what you went through, which is so hard, so hard. But mine's not even there. My mom is not even, she's not in a hotel room. She's not over Zoom. She's not, but she's not there. So how do you honor her?

[00:27:16] Not over Zoom, not like her spirit is, but like her spirit do I honor her like memory, you know, and talk about, do we light a candle for her, but then I also believe just like what you said. I don't think my wedding ,cause my

dad's gonna be there. Jonathan's mom, his brother. It isn't my mom's wedding. Yeah. And your grandma's gonna be too.

[00:27:38] My grandma, my 95 year old grandma. Yeah. I'm getting married on the patio of my grandma's nursing home, but yeah, it's not about. Like I wanna honor my mom and we're gonna, the, photographer's gonna take pictures of me holding her, you know, framed photo and shit. But it's about me. It's about Jonathan.

[00:27:57] **Lauren:** It's about your have to though, right?

[00:27:59] You also have to remember like, did you, so you

[00:28:00] **Dana:** tried to do that. You're like, this is about my love of Blake. Like.

[00:28:04] **Lauren:** It felt mean in some ways it felt a little cruel, but at the same time, I was like, you know what? You not feel healthy, even

[00:28:08] **Dana:** though it sounds selfish. That feels like the only way to

[00:28:10] get

[00:28:10] **Lauren:** through it is... well, the things I miss are not the things that would've been a public display.

[00:28:14] Right? So the things I missed were being in the basement, you know, uh, holding her hands and letting her say the prayer that she wanted to say in front of everyone. But privately the things I miss are us looking into each other's eyes and her holding my hands and just saying, I love you. And I'm so proud of you.

[00:28:29] That's what I.

[00:28:31] **Dana:** Did anybody hold your hand that day tell you they're proud of you.

[00:28:34] **Lauren:** Yeah, my best friend, like Christie and like my, one of my other best friends, Christina, like they, you know, and yes, but it's not the same unless it's your mother. And because I knew I was losing her, I was really hoping for that last moment.

[00:28:48] Yeah.

[00:28:49] **Dana:** It's so heightened T.V. Movies. This mythology of our mom at this thing, or we're supposed to even be married, we're supposed to wear white. We're supposed to

[00:28:57] **Lauren:** all of this stuff. It's the private moments I miss, not the public, not the public. Okay. Yeah. A hundred percent. And then, you know, I think when I look back and where I look at my wedding album, I, I just wanna see her.

[00:29:09] Like, I wanna see a bad picture where she's literally, you just see her in the back. Now I wish I could just Photoshop her in. You could ...could.... You could I'll call Joe Maza. uh, I could just Photoshop her in literally in the background as if she was walking away or if she was having, I just wanna see her in a conversation with somebody in, at the reception.

[00:29:29] Right. I just wanna see her sitting at the table. You know, there were, there were empty place cards, you know, if you looked at my family table, there were empty seats because we didn't know until the very end and you

[00:29:40] **Dana:** just left them. I just left. Do you look for her sometimes? Yeah. You look in the photos, you go, maybe this photo see her.

[00:29:48] Yeah,

[00:29:48] **Lauren:** of course. And then we did have a wonderful wedding. I was able to let myself go for that day and have fun cuz I knew she wasn't gonna die that day. Why, how did you know that? I didn't, but for the most part, it sounds good to say. Yeah. Or I was like, yeah, right. Or if she did, they weren't gonna call me till tomorrow, whatever.

[00:30:09] Yeah. But yes, I guess I felt like she's still gonna be dying tomorrow and you only get one wedding and she didn't allow me to push it or pull it. So let's, uh, let's have this day that we planned and worked really hard for, you know, it sounds cliché.

[00:30:21] **Dana:** It sounds cliché to say my mom wouldn't want this like to be canceled as she literally told you don't move it.

[00:30:30] I want you to have a good time. I don't visit me cause I'm not looking good or feeling good. Well, she wouldn't have said that she wouldn't have

[00:30:35] **Lauren:** said that, but

[00:30:36] **Dana:** think, but thinking that her like, just go have fun. Mm-hmm it does seem like a cliché. My mom just wants me to enjoy myself and yet it feels like a, a thing you're telling yourself to give yourself permission to

[00:30:47] **Lauren:** compartmentalize.

[00:30:48] Well, I had to say whether she agrees or not, this is what I need to do. You know, as a good girl who doesn't wanna go against their mom. I think I got sucked into some unhealthy behavior with my mom, cuz she definitely wanted to be my best friend. Right. She was jealous of some of my other friends. Like there never there time was never enough.

[00:31:07] Right. I think maybe that's an only child thing. I'm not sure you were

[00:31:09] **Dana:** maid of honor twice. I was a maid of h-. Oh my God. Did you think about her being your maid of honor? Not now in this time of her life, but I meant was there ever a part of you that was like, she needs to be mine.

[00:31:19] **Lauren:** No like reciprocity. Yeah, absolutely not.

[00:31:22] Never crossed my mind to you saying it right now. Not one bit good. I, I

[00:31:26] **Dana:** don't

[00:31:26] **Lauren:** know. Not one iota. I

[00:31:28] **Dana:** don't know. I mean, yeah. That's no, absolutely not. I think I texted you, this, that I struggle now with like, I'm trying to pick a photographer or I'm trying to look at vendors and there's all this language about, I'll be there for you for that first shot with your, with your husband and ready to take that photo with your mom.

[00:31:47] And I literally wanna email these photographers and say, Hey, you know, check out my podcast. No, but literally say I'm not upset. I'm not trying to be mean or, you know, I'd figure out how to say it, but here's some advice some

of this language is really triggering, right? Mm-hmm . I love your shots. You know, I love what your, your style.

[00:32:09] I'm just never gonna hire you because this whole paragraph,

[00:32:12] **Lauren:** right. It's hard.

[00:32:13] **Dana:** You're not being inclusive and again, not being inclusive. And of course, no, one's trying to do hurt anybody's feelings. That's not why people, people send mother's day emails. You can now opt out of corporations, which is smart asking you for that option.

[00:32:25] Yeah. But everybody throws around. Right. We get, and it's our jobs. It's for me moving around the earth as a motherless child now to, to be able to maneuver through it. But. In this heightened time of your wedding? Yeah. It feels like this mom's mom and I go to weddings. I just was at a wedding and the, the mom's there and everybody's oh, she's so beautiful.

[00:32:44] And let's get photos with the mom and Dana, have you met the mom? And I'm like, she's beautiful. Like, yeah, can't wait to meet your mom. And, um, and I love moms. I built the whole, I'm building a whole business around moms. I really do love moms. And yet I'm just like, must be nice. At this wedding, I was, that's be nice for a photographer to get those shots, you know?

[00:33:00] **Lauren:** Before... I mean, I didn't notice any of that language on websites or whatever, but I, we did have meetings with our vendors before and we let them know so that they would be sensitive. You did. So we met with the DJ and we told her what the situation was. I said, it's gonna go one of two ways, right. She's gonna be there and she's gonna be in a wheelchair and she's gonna be there really quickly, you know, probably just for the ceremony as what we thought or very quickly after she'll need to rest. And this is, I said, this is how I'm feeling about it. And this is, what's hard about this wedding. And then we talked to our photographer, who's a theater guy, Joe Maza. And we said, what was going on? He was so sensitive. Yeah, he, he was amazing because he had to send pictures of everyone that we like all of our family.

[00:33:42] And he freaking memorized who was, who. So he walked up to my sister-in-law said oh, Shannon, you know, you're wow. Right. Blake's sister-in-law right. I mean, he was kind of insane, like, oh, you're Lauren's dad. Like, I mean, it was wild. I think the other thing is like, I wanted both my parents to walk me down the aisle and that felt like a really like feminist and important thing.

[00:34:01] And so having together, you wanted them? I would've. Yeah. Having to just choose or having to just go with my dad felt like kind of antiquated. And I was like, I'm I'm more feminist than that. This is wrong.

[00:34:14] **Dana:** Yeah. I don't. I, yeah. And I don't want my dad to give me away and he can verbally do it, but he's not gonna walk me down the nursing home patio.

[00:34:22] There's no aisle. It wouldn't be an aisle. We'd make it up with like chairs. Yeah, I don't want that, but I do want my mom. I want my mom to be mentioned in this speech, but I also can't make the whole night that's I'm trying say totally. And, and you don't wanna, she wouldn't want, well, she would kind of want it.

[00:34:40] Yeah. So mom would see it sound funny. Gimme a little energy. Give me a little focus. Give me a little spotlight. No, we have an amazing photographer coming in from Nashville and, and she's already, already love her and she's been like totally into wanting to honor my mom through photography, but not make it model and not make it nostalgic, but give it this.

[00:34:58] She gets it. Mm-hmm and gets the whole moment between my grandma seeing me for the first time, which is gonna be, oh my God, my God. I have

[00:35:05] **Lauren:** the same relationship with my, or very similar obviously relationship to my grandmother as you do with yours. And she didn't live quite as long, but she was like a second mother to me and I, but I think you have such an interesting story and that you've lost your mom, but still have your grandmother.

[00:35:19] Like that is an interesting...

[00:35:20] **Dana:** yeah. And I asked her recently, I said, I, I think I shared it on Instagram. Like I said, what do you have any advice for me? I looked at my grandma and I said, you know, do you have any advice for me as I get ready to get married? You know? And she looked right at me. And said, no, cuz you're, you're old enough.

[00:35:34] Like you're grown, you know what you're doing? You know what you're doing? And I thought, how dare you? How dare you? How dare you? You got nothing. You have nothing about, you know, love and commitment and

owning a house and respect and laughing together and listening to each other. and she just was like, no, you you're, you're grown.

[00:35:53] You know? And then later emailed me and said, cause my grandma still emails. That's right. Oh, that's amazing. 95. She can't open attachments that. That's that's

[00:36:02] **Lauren:** difficult. I don't like opening in session

[00:36:03] **Dana:** either. same, but she goes, I'm so sorry. I didn't answer your question. Oh, you I'm still thinking about it. Oh, so maybe on the day she'll turn to me in second.

[00:36:12] I'll offer you something. It's all about dinner. I don't know. Her advice would be like, don't let 'em cook you broccoli. I don't know what it's gonna be, but she said I'm gonna keep thinking. And I said to her, and I've asked her, like, tell me about my mom on her wedding day. And she said, oh, she wasn't difficult.

[00:36:29] She was not a diva. She kind of described a little of that, you know, saying that's your mom was great. She was, there was no drama. And. I was

[00:36:37] **Lauren:** like, okay. I just think like honoring your mom kind of in the moments before. Okay. Might be, might feel that would be my, I need your advice. I need your, that would be my advice is like, there's a moment of communion with her.

[00:36:48] Maybe just thinking about her or maybe looking at her pictures of her and her wedding day. I think that's. You're jumping into the future. Really the choices you make are very, it is very optimistic to get married. Mm-hmm and speaking as someone who, you know, at time, various times in my life have been quite a, a realist or a, maybe even a cynic.

[00:37:07] And so having well, having a baby is the ultimate an optimism, but getting married is the same. Right. And allow yourself to take a step forward. You know, unfortunately like though she's with you in spirit, she is part of your past, right. And. Yeah, don't let it be about her. This is about you and Jonathan, right.

[00:37:26] And she's already, you're her daughter. That's the other thing I thought on my wedding day, everything, you know, so much about me is her. So she's still here. Yeah.

[00:37:33] **Dana:** You know, she's here, she's walking around. She's here. Yeah. Her DNA is all bleeding. Yeah. In it clearly. Now you're becoming you, like you said, you're becoming her and you're well, I, I wouldn't know.

[00:37:41] I

[00:37:42] **Lauren:** would like pause before you say, okay, sorry. Sorry.

[00:37:44] **Dana:** You're bec- you are more similar. Whoa. There are more similarities,

[00:37:48] **Lauren:** now. Yes, that I wish I could ask her about, I guess. Right. Yeah. I wish I could ask her about what it's like to have a full-time job and a little kid, you know, I wish I could talk to her about yeah, just that early family life also.

[00:37:59] I would love to just say thanks because I know she was a single mom when I was, you know, the age my kid is now and it's really hard. Mm-hmm , you know, as much as I love it. It is a hundred times harder than I thought it was gonna be. And she did it Withnell and she did it with her mother essentially, I guess, in the beginning, but really on her own.

[00:38:16] And I would love to sort of say, oh, I recognize how hard that must have been. And I am so grateful for what a, like a loving and like tactile and effusive mother. You were like, I'm really grateful

[00:38:29] **Dana:** for that. Do you say that to her in the dark of night? Sometimes? Yeah, sure. I say stuff in my bed. I say stuff walking.

[00:38:35] I say stuff in the shower. I just need to say it. And I'm saying it to myself, some of the things, some of the forgiveness I'm saying to myself and how I forgive you and this and that. But I, I talk to her out loud. I don't know if that helps you. I don't do it like in front of other people. Right. But I try do it privately.

[00:38:51] It'd be weird if I just did it on like the CTA train, but.

[00:38:54] **Lauren:** Well, now I'm at a place of like, how do I honor her with my kid? Right? Sure. So like yeah. Through your son. Yeah. I mean, to finish the, like, excruciating part of the story, she died two weeks after the wedding, in this hospice in Illinois and her husband,

[00:39:08] **Dana:** you didn't have a honeymoon, right?

[00:39:10] You did not have anything planned

[00:39:11] **Lauren:** or you, we did have it planned for six months later. Oh, okay. Okay. So because of, I couldn't remember, you know, because we knew, well, I think in general we would've cuz weddings are expensive. So we were like, mm, okay. We don't have

[00:39:20] **Dana:** one. We are like, we'll go someday. Even though we're not having a huge wedding, we're still like, but you're also moving.

[00:39:26] We have to move by a house and all this. So its like, we'll go to Europe later, someday in our lives... totally... and make out there.

[00:39:34] **Lauren:** So we were with her, you know, Blake and I, that was the first two weeks of our marriage is like watching her slip away. Right. And her husband, you know, in hindsight... he stayed the whole time.

[00:39:45] We got him to leave the weekend before she died, which was to take a break because he had been away from his home for almost a month and, you know, and he needed to go handle some things. And he, you know, and, and the doctors thought it would be a little bit longer, but she took quite a turn that weekend. But I got to spend the last weekend with her alone and I appreciate that.

[00:40:04] I'm just so grateful for that. So anyway, she passed away two weeks after, and then, you know, her husband, I, this is my belief and there's, you know, I don't, I don't know if I could prove it in court of law, but I just think he had already made plans in his mind for his after life. Right. Is after her passing and he, you know, eight months to the day she died married, uh, a friend from high school moved back here to Illinois, made it very difficult for me to obtain her things was very like cagey about, you know, all the business dealings around her, I felt made her Memorial service so much about him.

[00:40:41] It was really challenging. There was a lot of really challenging things around that, but I also sort of never had the big blow up with him, you know? I think I said to him, I just no longer trust you. And then just cut off communication after her service Memorial service. And then I felt like he just didn't do me right in her inheritance, like in my inheritance and all that.

[00:41:02] Right. Right. And I just felt like he could have handled a different. And she had given me like some of the jewelry things be way before she died. Cause I think she knew, you know, we, we had, we had had a conversation cause she changed her trust after she was terminal, which is very there... there's something very suspect about that.

[00:41:20] And I remember saying to her, I was like, I don't need you to leave me anything. I really don't. I love you. But if you think that this person that you're married to is going to take care of me and going to do right by me and by you, I think you're mistaken. What did she say to that? She said, I think you're right.

[00:41:36] I'm sorry, but it's too late, you know? Yeah. It was brutal. It was brutal. So all that to say the, the thing, I think I've learned almost five years out. Is that the end of her life was the hardest and most painful thing to get over. And now at almost five years, I'm finally getting back to the joy, the love, the memories that have nothing to do with this other, this last husband that have to do with family that have to do with every, that the relationship solely between the two of us. Mm-hmm

[00:42:18] And I do wonder though how to present her to my son. And like, and how to keep that alive. There's a photo and he can see that's, you know, he's two, he can see that's mommy's mommy. Mm-hmm right. And I, but how can I, you know, we live here in Illinois, like we've lived close to my in-laws, you know, how do we keep that alive?

[00:42:37] And just recently, my mother-in-law passed a month ago and you know, he, he got to know her for the first two years of his life. Yeah. And yeah. I'm watching my partner go through this and which is hard. It was so hard. It's so hard. I knew once my mom died, though, that I would be better equipped to be, you know, to help him through this time.

[00:42:58] So, and I hope that's true. I hope he thinks that's true as well, but we also are like trying to keep hi, you know, how do we keep his moms been real alive for our child? You know, he's an atheist and I am agnostic. And how do we present? The only thing that I've come up with so far is that I, I wanna be honest with Bodie and say, you know, Grammy's body stopped working, and she died and now she's up in the stars watching over us. You know, that's like, I don't wanna use the terminology of heaven, but I do. He loves the moon. And he loves the stars and it's something that he's, you know, at this point in his life is really interested in and it's a concept he seems to be able to grasp.

[00:43:37] **Dana:** Yeah. What if the moon is Blake's your husband's mom and the stars are your mom? Yeah. Maybe

[00:43:43] **Lauren:** like, right. I have a friend who is in the same situation, but her kids are she's farther along in the path. And she said, definitely her kid, your three year old was like one day, or maybe he was two and a half said to her like, "oh, Did you have a mom?"

[00:43:57] Mm, right. Like it occurred to him. He'd never. Hmm. Oh, what about yours? Right. And she was able to kind of introduce the conversation. Yeah. So maybe that will be the case for

[00:44:07] **Dana:** us, but is it, I mean, is it, how do you, how do we keep them alive? Is it through stories? Photos? Every Sunday is a story about grandma? I don't know.

[00:44:17] Or is it literally. How cause you just said your mom is here, cause she's in you. She's moving through the world. You're raising an only child as an educator. She was an educator mm-hmm and she had raised an only child. Or you make good choices in your life in terms of men you love, and maybe it's like rewriting the wrongs, but coming back to the, you know, the core of who your mom was with you, like, well, I think the blessing in so many ways, is it just how you move?

[00:44:42] Is it, you just, she just said a good example and then that, and that's how you keep her alive, but, but I want him to

[00:44:47] **Lauren:** know specifics to, you know, right, right. And I think I, I was. Maybe, I don't know if I was even bummed. I think maybe in some respects, I was very relieved to have a son and not a daughter because you know, that the mother-daughter relationship is so challenging and maybe we, it was okay to end the martyrdom, you know, there's I come from a long line of martyrs.

[00:45:08] Mm-hmm um, I think maybe it was good to sort of break that chain a little bit, but I want him to know details about. I don't wanna participate in cultural appropriation, but I do love the concept of day of the dead. I think that is mm-hmm, like a lovely way of, and maybe that will be on her. We should do that on her birthday.

[00:45:25] Like every January 12th, we should do. Altars...

[00:45:27] **Dana:** I've been, I've been getting into altars as well. I think that's really cool. Yeah. Same like making you put anything on it. There's no rules. Yeah. I mean, there are, there are, depending on your religion and like, there are rules about it, right. But it can be anything.

[00:45:38] It can be... right now to Lauren's left in this. There's pictures of her mom and this baby book from her, her son's baby book. Right? Or is this a favorite?

[00:45:48] **Lauren:** Yeah, it's a fa- one of his favorites about, and a mother who loves their child, no matter what, mommy, what if I become, you know, a monster? Oh, I will, you know, bring you hamburgers to eat.

[00:45:58] Right. Or what if I become an alien? Oh, I'll you know, who wants to eat bugs instead of peanut butter. Oh, great. I'll pack your lunch with bugs instead of peanut butter, right? I mean, it's just, is just about this mom, who's I'm gonna love you no matter what, right. And that's. I think my mom did project that a lot.

[00:46:14] There were things that she made difficult for me. I don't, you know, I, I don't think she ever was quite supportive of me as an actor writer as a performer. I don't think she could see me perform and feel the joy that I hope to feel when I see my kid, you know, fart on stage and then I'm weeping. You know, I want that.

[00:46:30] I hope to be that kind of mom. I think it just was all coming from a place of fear. Yeah. And a little bit of a place of jealousy with her because I was brave. The difference in our personalities, I think was my mom liked living in a small town where she'd go to the grocery store and run into every freaking person she's ever met and have these wonderful conversations.

[00:46:50] That's a nightmare. I, I panic. I saw you in the grocery store and I had a like , oh my God,

[00:46:55] **Dana:** that's my dream. I'm literally like, how do I get to a small town? How do I get out of Chicago? So I can be the mayor of this town? Oh my God. You're know everyone there. That's hilarious. But then within, well, I say this, but then within a month I'll be like, oh my gosh, I cannot be anonymous here.

[00:47:07] They're gonna know all my business.

[00:47:08] **Lauren:** right. But I would want to be on stage where people are watching me. Yeah. And then I, the

[00:47:12] **Dana:** attention of

[00:47:13] **Lauren:** the, well, I love that. And you love that rush, that relationship between the audience, but, but in this, but in a professional capacity and then you leave, we don't have to talk.

[00:47:21] Yeah. That's I just up outside door

[00:47:23] **Dana:** and I, and I wanna go to the lobby. Oh, you're so funny. Yeah. I wanna hug

[00:47:26] **Lauren:** people. I wanna, I wanna do that really fast and then walk out the door. I wanna thank them, cause I don't wanna be, I don't wanna have like ingratitude or whatever. Right, right, right. But I also don't want to have to stand there where they have to say something about it.

[00:47:38] yeah,

[00:47:38] I

[00:47:38] **Dana:** wanna, and she might have been jealous of that because. Of

[00:47:41] **Lauren:** why? Well, I think she was jealous of my courage, right? Like I think, oh, courage. Sure. I think to do, to put myself in that position being brave, you said that, but also scared of my, you know, would I fail and would I, you know, thinking about your child going through that, I think is a lot, I, I think I have a little bit more understanding, but you know, there were times definitely.

[00:48:01] I was in a show, you know, in grad school that she came to see. And I remember thinking like, after my good amount of therapy, You know, talking with her after the show and she'd go, oh, your friend Derek was so good, which was her whole jam. Mm-hmm, you know, if we were in a show, she'd be like your friend Dana.

[00:48:15] Well, she was excellent. And I said, mom, I think this is the opportunity where you could tell me that I was also good that I was also good. And you know, she said, oh, it was a really hard part. Yeah.

[00:48:24] **Dana:** It was a really hard part. You had a

[00:48:25] **Lauren:** lot of lines to learn. Yeah. A lot of lines. So it was like, that was the best I could get.

[00:48:30] But then I did a, a one woman show that she thought was hilarious, right. Theresa Rebeck it was like her jam, you know, and that she was most proud of that I think, which was maybe even the last thing she saw. So that's, but it

[00:48:42] **Dana:** makes sense that the different to being cautious or nervous, she was jealous of your bravery, but also nervous for your success.

[00:48:48] Like nervous knowing like you're so good, but the world is, is hard and this industry is hard. You know, it's coming. Right? What, what you ready? What? I think I'm still gonna do it. What are you gonna do? I think I'm still gonna ask you, tell me your mom's name.

[00:49:05] **Lauren:** Oh yes. Oh, I, oh gosh. I didn't

[00:49:07] **Dana:** even think of that.

[00:49:07] I didn't either until right now I said, am I gonna keep doing this beautiful question? And I think I

[00:49:12] **Lauren:** should a hundred percent. I, I think that it is the thing I am. You know, some in some ways, so sad to lose, right? I think when you, when your mom has passed on people, don't ask because they don't wanna stir something up in you, but the saddest part is not being asked.

[00:49:30] And then when you lose people, you, you, no, you don't ever get to say their name anymore, right?

[00:49:37] **Dana:** No one ever, no one really asks her her name. They might ask about her. Right. And does it matter, then you go, oh, well, does it really matter? I mean, you could look up her name online or late or whatever if you really care, but it does matter.

[00:49:52] Put

[00:49:52] **Lauren:** a Joe to that face. Yeah, it

[00:49:55] **Dana:** matters. So tell me your mom's name and how you're feeling about her in this, her moment. Yes. All her names in this moment on this

circular rug in Evanston sitting across from me in real time. Oh my God. I, which pictures of your mom and your, and your Oracle cards tear, right?

[00:50:12] How do you feel about her today?

[00:50:13] **Lauren:** I miss her so much. I feel forgiveness. I feel gratitude. I feel. I miss any phone call with any mundane details on a Tuesday, right? I mean, that's, I think at the end of the day, your mom, not for everyone, but I feel so grateful to have a mom who was, you know, my biggest champion, even if with caveats and even with some complications, my mom used to send me a Valentine when I was single every year.

[00:50:52] And I really looked forward to it because she wanted me to feel special and wanted me to know that it's about was about love and not about romantic partnerships. And, you know, and I really appreciated that. And her name was all her names. Anne Beyer Huston Pizzi Comfort.

[00:51:15] **Dana:** Comfort. That was

[00:51:16] **Lauren:** the last one.

[00:51:17] Comfort . Yeah,

[00:51:18] **Dana:** for real. Yeah. Comfort. . Yeah. On that note. That is comfort. Thank you for sharing. I wish you, you can get that tissue. Okay. You can do it in real time. I don't it's let's hear it. Blow it, blow it. There we go. You hear that? Are we getting this ASMR? Are we getting this ASMR?

[00:51:53] When we were working on this episode, I told my editor when in doubt, always go out on laughter because tissue nose blowing ASMR always wins. Thank you, Lauren. Thank you for talking to me on and off the mic. You are a good friend. Thank you for your wisdom, your heart, your humor, your guidance. It's so appreciated.

[00:52:15] Thank you friend. So I did it. I did it. I said, yes, I got married. Yep. On the patio of my Nana's nursing home. On a beautiful Saturday in June, this past June, we had incredible weather. We stood under a pretty tree in front of eight of our immediate family as the entire nursing home cafeteria of residents and the staff watched on.

[00:52:36] And I heard later that many of the residents loved seeing it and that they only wish that they could have heard the vows too. So I guess we should

have streamed it, you know, for the inside crowd. We had pastries. We had a champagne toast afterwards on the patio and my Nana was all smiles. She wore a new shirt from Black and White Market that had butterflies on it.

[00:52:54] She brought out earrings from my friend Isabelle and my grandma got a plus one. Her best friend, Joanie came. She specifically loved my purse, my grandma and I had to remind her that it was originally hers. It was a cream colored beaded box, a handheld purse from the 60's. I pointed out the gold comb in my hair, and I told her that it was Mom's.

[00:53:15] We smiled at each other, an unspoken moment. And Jonathan and I then took photos after the ceremony in this grassy middle area with trees. It's between the independent living area of this facility, where my Nana has lived for over 20 years and the nursing home part where she is now, this facility, this plot of land.

[00:53:32] I have visited so much in my life. I've come here with my mom. I've come here with my dad, boyfriends friends. It's a part of me. And we were running a bit behind schedule after the ceremony. So we had to get to the city for this big reception with friends, but I knew I wanted at least a few more of those glamor Vogue shots.

[00:53:52] You know, the ones where the wind is blowing and I'm looking back at the cameras. We walk away in the grass and no one would ever know this. Isn't a beautiful field on a farm, but it's not where I thought some of my favorite wedding photos would be taken. I also never thought I would get married, but there we were off Manchester road in Wheaton, Illinois, posing in the grass next to my 95 year old Nana's nursing home patio.

[00:54:16] And it all felt right. I remember when we decided to have the ceremony be small and at my Nana's place, my dad made sure to ask us, are you doing this for your Nana or for you? And the answer was both. I knew I needed the ceremony to be about Jonathan and I for us to keep it small and just focus on each other.

[00:54:36] But I also knew I needed my Nana to be a witness. Oh, in that photo that I said I was gonna have the photographer take of me holding a photo of my mom. As I got ready in the hotel room. I never brought a photo of my mom with me that weekend, maybe subconsciously in all the chaos and the packing and getting ready for the big day I forgot.

[00:54:57] But I think I knew, and I think she knew that this wasn't her day. But that morning before all the chaos began at 8:00 AM alone in my hotel room, waiting for my groom to return with a coffee and a croissant. I walked out on the balcony in my robe. I love a good robe, took a deep breath and told my mom, I loved her out loud.

[00:55:21] I then asked her to give me strength and asked her to help me stay present and take it all in. I then pulled an Oracle card by Sarah Greenman. Shout out. I love Oracle cards. They're so fun and pretty to look at. Cause sometimes you gotta get witchy. You know what I mean? Even on your wedding day and the card was called nest. The card said that home need not be a physical place or the location where you currently live.

[00:55:45] It may be a childhood home or a mountain, or simply an idea of a place that dwells within us. This card is calling us to seek the comfort and safety of that home. It's time to turn in and go hearth side. In the early morning light of my wedding day alone, I turned to her, my only mother, it felt intimate and private was just for us.

[00:56:12] And then I turned towards my new husband and all the people waiting to celebrate with us. And I also ate a really good croissant.

[00:56:40] The second season of, I Swear on My Mother's Grave podcast would never be possible without our producer, Amanda Roscoe Mayo. Our music composer, Adam Ollendorff our graphic designer and illustrator Meredith Montgomery, and our copywriter, Rachel Claff thanks as well to Tony Howell and Austin Heller for all their work on the website and to Heather Bode for her emotional, spiritual, social, and physical well for, for all the help.

[00:57:03] Thank you. And to all of you. Thank you for listening, subscribing, reaching out. And just being a part of this community. I'm so grateful you're here. And if you haven't signed up for our newsletter, you can do so at our website, which is danablack.org. You can hear all about this incredible season and some upcoming live events we're curating just for you. I hope you'll come back, come back, come back. Don't leave me like my dead mom. You know what I mean? Come back.

[00:57:30] **Lauren:** Talk to you soon.