

Mom is Good

By Armando Simón

I'll admit to being snobbish when it comes to television. As a result, I have missed some good TV shows. I have seen some which were good, but short-lived (*Samantha [Who?](#)* and, *[Pushing Daisies](#)*). Others had a longer duration (*[Barney Miller](#)*, and, *My [Name](#) is Earl*).

Another one of long duration (8 seasons) was *Mom*. I missed it when it first came out, but then discovered it on Netflix and binged on it. It is a comedy focused on a mother (Bonnie) and her grown daughter (Christy), both of whom are dysfunctional and are former substance abusers who are now desperately trying to be clean and sober while struggling to live a normal life.



It is very realistic. Yet funny throughout.

The show maintained a superb balancing act between stark realism and hilarious comedy, like when we are presented with a flashback to decades earlier: Christy is trying to enter home from school, but a wild-eyed, disheveled, paranoid Bonnie refuses to open the door, as we glimpse their apartment to be

a pigsty.

At one point, Bonnie is informed that her mother is dying and wants to see Bonnie and reconcile. Bonnie was abandoned at four years of age and views her abandonment as the root of her own life's serial disasters, so she refuses. Her AA friends convince her to meet her and to forgive her mother as part of her own recovery instead of letting her anger continue festering. Bonnie reluctantly does meet her mother and stoically informs her that she forgives her. The mother then tells Bonnie she would like to continue seeing her until she dies, but Bonnie refuses, refuses to hug, and walks out without dramatics. We see her walking silently down the corridor and expect her to run back. But she does not.

Christy likewise harbors justifiable resentment towards her mother for making her childhood hell, but she tries to work through her anger; nonetheless, resentment flares up over past episodes of her life. It does not help that she calls out her mother whenever the latter engages in shoplifting, lying, and being manipulative or rude, all of it portrayed in a comedic manner. The intergenerational trauma is evident.

Throughout, AA serves as an anchor point for them, as well as a group of friends who get together to eat after each meeting. Again, the realism: they are not all models, but regular looking people. Wendy is overweight and has deep bags under her eyes. Tammy is obese and manic. Jill is rich and beautiful. Bonnie is a gangly giantess; one of her boyfriends is in a wheelchair. Marjorie is the calm, elderly matriarch, the lodestone that urges calm and rationality on everyone and keeps insisting that they "work the program" in order to resolve their difficulties. Although it is top heavy with females, *Mom* is most definitely not one of those syrupy sweet chick flicks that can make men rush to the bathroom to vomit but is very engaging.

It has been many years since I worked in a rehab center. I

have wondered if the residents were required to view the show. I suspect so. In fact, I am fairly certain that everyone who has attended AA meetings has done so.

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