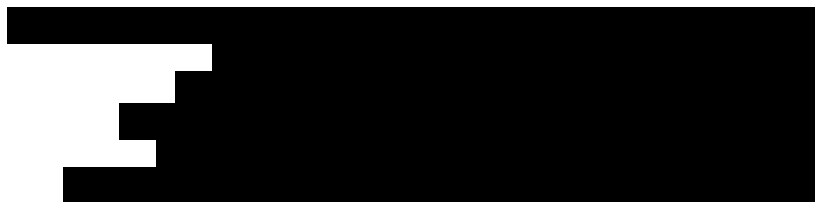


NIGHTBITCH



The MOTHER, 42 and more tired than anyone has ever been, hunches over the sink, sipping a cup of coffee while her 2 year old son plays with trains at her feet - she's a bit of a zombie. She stares ahead - not actively. Everything about her is passive. Outside the light of very early morning peeks through the suburban trees.

MOTHER (V.O.)

You light a fire early in your
girlhood. You stoke it and tend to
it. You protect it at all costs.
You don't let it rage into a
mountain of light because that's
not becoming of a girl.

The mother pulls out a heavy skillet, puts it on the stove. Puts a pat of butter in it and turns on the burner. She opens the freezer and stares in.

MOTHER (V.O.)

You keep it secret. You let it burn
- a white hot light at the center
of yourself.

Her son paws at her leg to come up, so she picks him up, gives him a quick kiss on the head, and continues expertly with one hand. She pulls out a box of frozen hash browns, throws 3 in the pan. She stares at the pan as it begins to sizzle.

MOTHER

(to her son)

Hot!

MOTHER (V.O.)

You look into the eyes of other
girls and see their fires
flickering there, under the
surface.

Her son squirms and then barks.

SON

Woof woof!

MOTHER

Okay, doggie.

So she puts him back down with his trains and his stuffed dog toy.

MOTHER (V.O.)

It's from this point - this fire -
you can create, and fight and push
your way through the world. It's
from this fire that you can birth
something new - a new version of
yourself, or a whole new person who
didn't exist before you squeezed
them into the world.

She looks at her son, smashing trains together.

MOTHER (V.O.)

A person who will one day pee in
your face without blinking.

She sips her coffee again, quietly defeated.

MOMENTS LATER The mother and son sit on tiny colorful chairs
at a tiny colorful table and both shovel hash browns into
their mouths. Silent and content like an old married couple
who has run out of things to say.

3

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - LATER THAT MORNING

3

The Mother and her son walk hand in hand down the street. Slowly. The pace of a two year old.

Moments later, they stand watching a garbage truck slowly making it's way down the street. A garbage man hangs off the back, throwing cans into the back.

MOTHER

Oh, that looks like a heavy bag,
doesn't it? He's strong.

They sit down on the curb to watch the show. The mother waves at the garbage man, who waves back. The mother and son share an excited moment: HE WAVED AT US!

4

INT. LIBRARY - LATER THAT MORNING

4

The mother and son enter the main part of the library quietly. The mother smiles at NORMA, the older librarian behind the counter, who eyes her suspiciously.

MOTHER

(whispered)

Hi Norma.

The mother and the son walk to the back of the library, where the children's section is and spot a circle of kids and caregivers in the corner.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(quietly to herself)

Shit.

(then to son)

Baby, we should go.

SON

No mama! Stay!

She reluctantly gets pulled by him to the circle time across the room. They take a seat on the frayed rug next to all the other toddlers and caregivers. Our mother is not thrilled.

The Book Babies LEADER, a very enthusiastic man with a guitar, sings:

LEADER

(singing)

His tail is a shoe
And he's sitting on water skies
Oh what's up what's up
With that duck that duck
Oh what's up with that duck?

The singing continues.

MOTHER (V.O.)

The problem is I just don't enjoy
the company of moms.

She looks around at the other moms: the mom wiping snot from her kid's nose, the mom singing along with hand gestures, and the mom who's giving her daughter a death glare and mouthing "sit down now".

MOTHER (V.O.)

I feel like beginning a friendship
with another woman simply because
we are both mothers is repugnant.

She looks at one mom, a COOL MOM, well dressed in black, who
glances at her phone sneakily, and seems approachable.

MOTHER (V.O.)

I mean, if I happened to meet a
beautiful, smart, hilarious woman
and we became friends... Someone
who would get wine drunk on a
Tuesday afternoon, for example...

The cool mom wrangles her kid and sneaks out of the room,
with a small 'thank you'. Our mother looks disappointed. The
leader starts a new song.

LEADER

(singing)

It's time to say goodbye. Goodbye
to our friends. Goodbye to Ava.

He points to one of the young kids.

LEADER (CONT'D)

And goodbye to Jack.

The mother glances around and notices JEN, 35 and perfectly
put together with a huge diaper bag organized with snacks and
wipes at the ready, looking right at her smiling. Jen waves
at our mother enthusiastically. The mother looks around,
almost confused then gives a little head nod to say hi. The
leader's song comes around to our son.

LEADER (CONT'D)

And goodbye to -

SON

RUFF!

The mother smiles nervously, leaning in to whisper in her
son's ear, pleading.

LEADER

What's your name little buddy? Can
you sing it?

SON
WOOF WOOF RUFF!

The mother laughs nervously feeling like everyone is looking at her, and they move along.

5

INT. LIBRARY - LATER

5

As Book Babies wraps up, all of the moms and nannies start collecting their belongings. JEN, peppy as can be with kids in matching outfits, approaches our Mother who is trying to leave.

JEN
Do you like paint and sip?

MOTHER
Excuse me?

JEN
You're an artist right?

MOTHER
Did I...tell you that?

JEN
Oh, we chatted at Mommy Baby Yoga!
Just for a sec though. Jen. So do
you paint...or something else?

MOTHER
Oh no. I used to do more immersive
art- sculptures and found
materials.

Two other mothers, the wingmen to Jen, wander closer to this conversation not subtly. MIRIAM, ombre hair and very much a mom, excitedly interjects.

MIRIAM
Like installations?
(then)
Sorry to eavesdrop. I'm a big art
fan.

MOTHER
Oh are you?

MIRIAM
Yeah.

The other lurking mom, LIZ, 30s and a professional mom, visibly pregnant, also joins in.

LIZ

Me too. I used to live in the city
and spent my lunch break at the
modern like every day.

MOTHER

Oh I had work that showed at the
modern once.

The mothers all gasp and "ah". Our Mother smiles, slightly
uncomfortable.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Feels like a lifetime ago.

JEN/MIRIAM/LIZ

Oh totally/yeah/right?

MIRIAM

I used to be a stripper. If you can
believe that.

The other moms all look at her in surprise, nobody knowing
what to say but trying to look non-judgmental.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Just for a little while. But I just
couldn't feel further from that
life now.

JEN

The before times, right?

They all share a knowing laugh, glancing at their children.
Liz pulls out silicone yogurt squeeze packs from her bag.

MOTHER

(to Jen)

Is that yogurt?

JEN

Kefir. Homemade- with chia seeds
and cardamom. Do you want one for
your son?

The mom looks to her son who is growling at the other
children on all fours.

MOTHER

Oh that's ok. I gotta get him home
for his nap.

She grabs for her son, who runs from her grasp. She laughs
nervously, the other mothers all nod in understanding.

JEN

Maybe we'll see you next week?

MOTHER

(very tentatively)

Maybe.

The mother grabs her wiggling son.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(quietly to her son)

Please don't have a tantrum, please
don't have a tantrum.

They head for the door. The other mothers all watch her go,
excited by the prospect of a new friend.

6

INT./EXT. - MORNING SEQUENCE

6

A series of images one after another:
The skillet clunks onto the stovetop.
A pat of butter plops into the skillet and begins to melt.
Hashbrowns dropped into the skillet.
Mother and son sit at the baby table eating silently.
Lie in bed reading 'Goodnight Goodnight Construction Site'
A skillet.
A pat of butter.
Hashbrowns sizzle.
Sitting on the small chairs.
Walk on the street hand in hand. Stop and watch a garbage
truck.
Reading 'Goodnight Goodnight Construction Site'
Staring. A skillet.
A cup of coffee.
A pat of butter.
The mother's ratty t-shirt is suddenly a different color, but
otherwise everything is the same. The son's saggy diaper and
bare chest as he rams trains on the ground. She reaches down
and picks him up and now he has a shirt on.
She looks toward the skillet and now it's mac-n-cheese in a
small saucepan that she stirs. It's evening.
She puts her son down on the ground, and scoops the mac-n-
cheese into two bowls. They sit at the baby table, eating.
The mother sips wine from a real wine glass. She and the boy
cheers.
She lies with the boy in her bed.

7

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING.

7

The boy rolls around on the bed. The mother finishes reading 'Goodnight Goodnight Construction Site'.

MOTHER

Construction site. Turn out the light. Great work today and now goodnight.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Okay, it's time for the quiet game.

SON

No, I don't want to do that.

MOTHER

Let's see who can lie here and be the quietest. I bet I'm gonna win.

She puts her finger to her lips and then lies motionless and soundless while he stares at her. There is a moment of quiet.

SON

I'm gonna talk!

She keeps her eyes closed, trying to not say anything.

MOTHER

Shhh. It's the quiet game. Quiet as a mouse.

The boy laughs poking her and climbing on her.

They lie in bed, the boy babbling to himself. Suddenly the mother starts speaking out loud, not to camera, but it's still just to herself.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(out loud to herself)

It's my fault he doesn't sleep. I shouldn't be mad at him. Everyone said it and I just didn't listen because I liked holding him while he slept on my chest like a little warm heater. But if I had put him down drowsy but awake like all the books said then he would have good sleep habits for his entire life, I would always have a clean kitchen and a good sex life, and everything would be amazing. So now that I fucked that up... now what?

The son starts wailing and flailing. The mother just lies there.

MOTHER (V.O.)

Maybe if I don't move he won't see me.

8 **INT. KITCHEN - ANY MORNING**

8

Skillet. Butter. Hashbrowns. The mother looks around and doesn't see the child.

Suddenly the mother hears something and goes to investigate.

9 **INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS**

9

The mother peers into the bathroom and finds her son drinking from the toilet.

MOTHER

Oh NO!

He looks up startled, but smiling. She can't help but laugh.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

You're drinking from the toilet?

(laughing)

Did that seem like a good idea?

People don't drink from toilet!

Doggies do!

10 **EXT. STREET- ANY AFTERNOON**

10

They walk down the street hand in hand.

11 INT. LIVING ROOM - ANY EVENING

11

The mother lies on the rug on her stomach, exhausted from the day. The son is climbing all over her body, standing on her back, stepping on her head. She barely registers.

SON

Mama! Horsey!

She takes a deep breath and musters her strength. She pushes up onto all four, and he sits on her back like a horse. She starts walking around the living room on all fours, giving her son a ride.

MOTHER

All around the mulberry bush the
something chased the weasel-

The son starts clapping.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Okay! Hold on.

(then)

OW!

The mother twists around to look back, and the son is holding on to her back with tiny fists.

SON

Mama fuzzy!

She's surprised, and tries to look at her lower back but can't see.

MOTHER

No I'm not!

12 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

12

The mother, in her pajamas, locks the door, and tries to examine her lower back in the mirror. She feels the furry peach fuzz on her lower back but she can't get a good angle. She takes in her image in the mirror. Extreme close up of the small hairs poking from her upper lip, her temple, her unibrow. The back of her neck.

MOTHER

Oh goodie. What fresh hell do I
have to look forward to today? New
wrinkles? New grey hair?

She pulls back her upper lip and examines her canine teeth, leaning closer to the mirror. She touches her tooth. It feels sharp.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

What the fuck?

She takes one last look at herself in the mirror.

13

INT. BEDROOM - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

13

The mother and son rock in the chair while she hums quietly to him. She is barely able to stay awake as she rocks.

MOTHER (V.O.)

What if I never sleep through the night ever again?

14

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

14

A small suitcase is in the corner of the room. Dad is home. Our mother stands by the stove, stirring a pot of lentil soup, attempting domesticity.

MOTHER

Baby - show daddy how you balance your trains! He hasn't seen that.

SON

Ruff! Grrrr.

MOTHER

He usually does it.

HUSBAND

So I really shouldn't have bothered
to write out that whole report for
him, because they didn't need it
and didn't even read it.

MOTHER

Oh how annoying.

The husband takes a sip from his beer.

HUSBAND

It really was. Sometimes I swear
they don't realize I have a life
and would rather be home with you
guys than typing up reports at 11pm
on a Thursday from my hotel room.

He reaches down and rubs his son's head.

MOTHER

Well, we had a fine week. We went
to Book Babies.

HUSBAND

I thought you hated Book Babies?

MOTHER

Oh I do. It was an accident, truth
be told, but he loved it.

The cat waddles in, and starts purring around the husband's
ankles. He pets her.

HUSBAND

You're still alive, ya ol' furball?

MOTHER

She is the cat who will never die.
Even though nobody really pays any
attention to her anymore. Baby, no!
Don't chase the cat.

The son and cat go running into the other room.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(then)

Speaking of furballs - I'm like...
I don't know.

HUSBAND

What?

MOTHER

No. I shouldn't have brought it up.
I'm just having some odd side
effects maybe of perimenopause? I'm
not sure. Weird hair sprouting up?

HUSBAND

You talking about your nipples?

MOTHER

No! Lower back. And kind of my toes
too. I don't know. I just feel off.
I feel like I have this heightened
sense of smell - kind of like when
I was pregnant. The cat's butt
smells disgusting to me.

HUSBAND

That's not just you.

MOTHER

And my teeth seem to be getting
sharper. Look!

He approaches her and looks at her barred teeth, examining
them.

HUSBAND

Oh yeah. Definitely. Your teeth
look so weird. This is real and not
in your head.

She hits him playfully.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, but honey you always
think something is wrong with you.

MOTHER

Well, that's the thing about being
a hypochondriac - one day I will be
right! And then you'll be sorry.

He smiles at his wife who he truly enjoys, kisses her on the
cheek.

They all continue on with what they're doing.

15

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

15

The two parents whisper to not wake their child who is asleep
in their bed.

The husband slips on sweats from his drawer, and the mother brushes her teeth in the adjoining bathroom, wearing a ratty t-shirt and sports bra.

MOTHER

(loud whisper)

I can't remember the last time I washed this shirt.

*

HUSBAND

(loud whisper)

I never washed any of my clothes for all of college. You're just like a bachelor.

*

*

MOTHER

(loud whisper)

I mean, it's just like... what's the point? I always hated hard pants. I'm giving in to just a soft-pants lifestyle.

HUSBAND

(loud whisper)

You're living the dream.

MOTHER

(loud whisper)

I'm the housewife I never wanted to be!

(then)

You know what's the hardest part? It's like I'm on suicide watch and I can't look away for even a second. Or he might stick a fork into a light socket, or like walk off a cliff. Why does he want to kill himself? It's so much more mentally exhausting than I expected.

HUSBAND

(loud whisper)

It's better than leaving him with those awful ladies at the awful daycare, right?

MOTHER

(whisper)

I guess. That was heartbreaking.

He enters the bathroom, closing the door a little too loudly.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(whispering)

If you wake him up I will rip your throat out.

She spits. The husband ignores this and starts brushing his own teeth. She sits on the toilet to pee.

HUSBAND

I thought this is what you wanted. No more long hours at the gallery and crying while you pumped your boobs in a bathroom.

MOTHER

I did, I do. But maybe I need to find a part-time job or something? So I don't lose my mind.

The husband starts flossing, while she spaces out on the toilet.

HUSBAND

It's just the math doesn't totally add up. The likelihood of you making more than we would have to pay a sitter-

MOTHER

I know. And there aren't really part time gallery jobs. Or part time nannies.

HUSBAND

Right.

MOTHER

Maybe when he starts school.

HUSBAND

Yeah. You just gotta hold on till Kindergarten.

MOTHER

Then I think - how dare I complain? What a gift - to get to be with my baby all day long. I should be grateful- on the scale of people who have things to complain about I'm at the bottom. I'm just a fucking privileged white lady who gets to stay home and make cookies all day.

HUSBAND

Do you make cookies?

MOTHER

Not once.

A shared smile.

HUSBAND

I would kill to get to stay home
with him every day, for what that's
worth.

The mother glares.

MOTHER

(sharply)

You think that. But I can assure
you, you would not.

He exits leaving her on the toilet.

16

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

16

The three family members lie in bed, all asleep. The mother has drifted into a deep sleep, mouth open, drool pooling. Suddenly the son wakes and starts screaming between the two of them. The mother rouses reluctantly. She looks to her husband sleeping soundly. She waits. The son wails. She looks at her husband asleep, rage building in her eyes. He looks so content. A soft sleepy music plays on his shot.

Hard cut back to the mother, punk music blaring on her shot, building, building. From deep in the mother, a "grrrrr" sound builds in her throat.

Back to the husband, sleeping soundly with his soundtrack playing.

The son screams.

Punk music blaring, the mother boils over, pushing her husband hard to wake him.

MOTHER

HEY! His fucking binky! Do you not
hear him?

The husband wakes, totally confused, and she turns her back to them to let him figure it out. He fumbles and puts the binky back in his son's mouth, who quiets. Now the husband lies there awake, and confused.

*
*

17

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

17

The Mother is unloading the dishwasher, and the son is lying on the floor of the living room watching a cartoon. The husband enters in his t-shirt and boxers. There's a small amount of tension.

*

HUSBAND

Did you make coffee?

MOTHER

Not yet - will you do it?

He looks toward the coffee pot, slightly unsure of how to use it.

HUSBAND

Uh... sure. Is it two scoops?

MOTHER

I do three.

He gets the coffee set up, and starts to help her unloading the dishes, without being asked.

HUSBAND

So, last night... you were kind of a-

MOTHER

Bitch?

He laughs lightly.

HUSBAND

You said it not me.

MOTHER

(quickly)

Yep. Night bitch. I am Nightbitch.

They both share a laugh. He is utterly relieved. She is less so. Once again, the mother speaks out loud but nobody can hear her. It's like she's speaking her voice-over, not direct to camera, but very matter of fact. She does the dishes.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I sort of said it like that so that he could see I'm a good sport. I'm not like uptight, or not able to poke fun at myself. But once I said it, I knew the horrible truth. Nightbitch has always been there.

(MORE)

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Not even that far below the
surface.

The mother raises her head from the dishes, and her eyes glow a subtle red, and a deep growl grows from inside. She smiles to herself.

18 **EXT. PARK - DAY**

18

The whole family: Mother, Husband and Son are at the park together. They walk hand in hand along the grass, doing 1-2-3 jump with their son in the middle.

19 **EXT. PARK - FRONTIER PARK - LATER**

19 *

The mother, husband and son take a ride on the train and enjoy the tiny amusement park.

20 **EXT. PARK - PLAYGROUND - LATER**

20

The mother pushes the boy on the swings next to the dad who also swings. She gives him a playful push.

21 **INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT EVENING**

21

The mother is collapsed on the couch. The son is playing on the floor in his diaper. The husband enters with a pep in his step, clapping his hands together.

HUSBAND

What's next?

MOTHER

Bath time.

The husband looks toward the boy.

HUSBAND

I'll do it. Let's go little dude.
BATH TIME!

MOTHER

(genuinely relieved)
Thank you.

The husband scoops up the boy and they leave. The mother stares straight ahead, speaking out loud again.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

He is a good man. He is. He wasn't
always so literal and cut off-

CUT TO:

22

INT. CITY BAR- TEN YEARS AGO

22

Our mother, younger (30) and not a mother yet, and her
boyfriend, not her husband yet, sit huddled at a bar table
lit by candlelight, deep in conversation.

YOUNGER HUSBAND

I want to come to this exhibit.
That's so incredible that you are
doing that.

YOUNGER MOTHER

Okay you can come. But my art is
weird. You need to be ready. I
don't know if you totally get what
you've gotten yourself into.

YOUNGER HUSBAND

I like weird.

YOUNGER MOTHER

Yeah yeah, you think you do.

He pulls from his bag a small notebook.

YOUNGER HUSBAND

This is my little book of weird....

On the cover is a photograph of a bearded woman with her
breasts out, looking very happy.

YOUNGER HUSBAND (CONT'D)

I took that photo in Prague. Look -
I collect things or take pictures
of things I find interesting.

She flips through the notebook. There's a condom wrapper with
"I love you" written on it in lipstick.

YOUNGER MOTHER

Was this yours?

YOUNGER HUSBAND

No I found it on the street in
front of some dorms and thought it
was so romantic.

There's a photo of a cat made out of snow. There's a photo of people dressed up in animal costumes with chaps making out with each other in a very lewd fashion. There are found notes and little scribblings.

She looks to her future husband and sees his innocent delight.

YOUNGER HUSBAND (CONT'D)
Isn't it amazing? Humans are so strange.

She leans over and kisses him.

CUT BACK TO:

23 **INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

23

The husband's voice calls out from the bathroom.

HUSBAND
(OS - yelling)
Hon? Can you get him a piece of toast?

She peels herself up reluctantly from the couch and exits frame.

24 **INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

24

She flops back onto the couch, pulls out her phone to space out.

HUSBAND
(OS - yelling)
He needs a glass of water!

She gets up again.

25 **INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

25

She flops again, closing her eyes this time. Only to be disturbed two seconds later by:

HUSBAND
(OS - yelling)
Can you put his towel in the dryer so it's warmed up?

26

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

26

The Mother enters the bathroom with a warmed up towel. The husband is looking at his phone, sitting on the closed toilet, while the boy plays. She just stands there, seething.

HUSBAND

What?

MOTHER

Nothing.

They both stare at each other.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Need anything else? While I'm up?

The husband looks up to her, annoyed in an exhausted way.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

It's just - when you're gone, I do this by myself every day.

She exits.

27

EXT. FRONT YARD - MORNING

27

The husband is putting his suitcase into the trunk of an Uber. The mother stands on the sidewalk holding the son on her hip. He is happily kissing them both, the previous tiff forgotten.

*

MOTHER

Say 'bye-bye dada'

HUSBAND

(in a silly low voice)

Bye-bye dada!

The mother kisses her husband.

MOTHER

Enjoy getting four full nights of sleep!

He takes her cheek in his hand sweetly.

HUSBAND

Are you going to be okay?

MOTHER

Yeah yeah. I will.

HUSBAND

You really should stop worrying about your weird hair growth or whatever and get on top of your week. Structure you know? I read an article that said structure was the key to mental health.

MOTHER

Uh huh.

HUSBAND

Make a plan ... draw up a schedule. Treat it like it's your job. Happiness is a choice.

She slaps him in the face very hard. He doesn't respond.

Back to reality she stands there on the street still holding her son, no slap has happened.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)

Happiness is a choice.

MOTHER

I'm sure you're right. I'll try.

They kiss and he gets in the car. She turns back toward the house with the boy with a big sigh.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(to boy)

Let's have a good day, okay?

28

INT. KITCHEN - LATER THAT MORNING

28

The mother is taping large pieces of paper down on the floor. She has finger paints out and has carefully squirted blobs of each color onto a plastic plate. She pulls her son's pj shirt off, leaving him just in a diaper.

MOTHER

Today we're going to have an art day! Doesn't that sound fun?

She shows him the colors.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

You can put your fingers in, or your feet!

He looks at her confused so she shows him. Takes a finger and smears red paint on the paper.

The boy dips his fingers and toes in the paint. He smacks them on the paint joyfully. He takes his hand and puts a handprint on the paper.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Yeah! That's right.

She bends down next to him to add to the creation, and he immediately grabs her shirt with his paint filled hands.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Okay okay. On the paper. The paper, okay?

The boy stands up, screaming in excitement, dips his hands again and starts shaking his hands everywhere sprinkling paint all over the kitchen.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Isn't this fun? But on the paper.

He jumps into the paint again and goes running into the living room leaving foot prints on the wood floor as he goes.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
BABY! NO!

As she starts to follow him, the cat runs through the scene getting under her feet. The mother slips, grabbing onto a hanging dishtowel as she falls, and pulls the towel rack off the wall as she hits the ground on her butt hard.

She lies back on her back in genuine pain.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
uhhhhh fuck.

From the other room you can hear the boy repeating:

SON
fuck. fuck!

The mother sprays and scrubs the cabinets for their last remains of paint splatter. She cries lightly to herself.

MOTHER

(trying to convince
herself)

Happiness is a choice. Happiness is
a choice. Happiness is a choice.
*What's up with that duck? What's up
with that duck?* UGH! Fuck. Stop!

She scrubs harder, letting the tears flow.

MOTHER (V.O.)

I need to just enjoy these moments
with him. He's going to grow up and
I will be sad these days are gone.
But I'm lonely. I can't believe how
alone I feel considering I'm never
actually alone.

She sprays and scrubs and cries.

MOTHER (V.O.)

How can I still have dinner, and
bath and books to get through
before this day is over? *What's up
with that duck? What's up with that
duck?*

She lays back on the ground, defeated, closes her eyes.

She takes a deep breath, and then touches her tailbone which
hurts from her fall and she just lets herself cry. There in
the kitchen, with paint all over the walls, she lays on the
floor and sobs.

[illegible]

32 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT 32

She flips on the light, and pulls her sweatpants down enough to examine her tailbone in the mirror which is red and throbbing, like a cyst that's formed at the top of her buttcrack.

MOTHER

Shit.

She takes a washcloth and warms it in hot water, placing it on the red bump. It doesn't help- she winces.

The mother sanitizes a large sewing needle over the flame of a lighter. She grabs her reading glasses from the table and takes the needle and scrapes a hole open in the cyst, screaming out in pain as she does. Blood drips down and the skin opens, revealing something mussed, and hairy.

33 OMIT

33

34 INT. LIVING ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

34

The son is playing with his toy dog on the ground while the mom lies on the couch in pain, icing her backside, on a video call to her husband.

*
*

HUSBAND (ON PHONE)

Wait, you cut it open?

MOTHER

I had to release the pressure. You don't understand.

HUSBAND (ON PHONE)

You need to call a doctor- that's not safe.

MOTHER

I haven't told you the weirdest part.

HUSBAND (ON PHONE)

What?

MOTHER

It had hair. In the cyst. There was hair.

HUSBAND (ON PHONE)

Honey- I...

MOTHER

I know. I know. But I'm telling you... it's like I have a tail - you know those babies who are born with a tail? A fucking-
(then remembering her son)
Sorry, a freakin- tail.

HUSBAND (ON PHONE)
(in a very condescending
tone)
It's not a tail. It's a cyst that
was exacerbated when you fell. And
cysts are known to have hair. It's
not a weird thing. The weird thing
is that you haven't taken yourself
to a doctor.

The mother's face is concerned, she knows he's right but
she's reluctant.

MOTHER
(to herself, aloud)
What I can't tell him is that I
have such a strong urge to wag it.

35

EXT. PARK - DAY

35

The son plays on the playground while the mom looks at her
phone searching "werewolves and mothers" and then "women with
tails". The results are disturbing.

SON
mamamamamama!

She stays staring at her phone.

MOTHER
One second baby.

He runs up to the slide again. She is staring at her phone,
and then startles when she looks up and there is a shaggy
brown dog right next to her staring at her.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Oh my god! Where did you come from?

She looks around to see if this dog is somebody's. She asks
another mother:

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Is she your dog?

The mother shakes her head no. Her son approaches and starts
petting the dog.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Oh baby- wait.

But the dog is mild mannered and takes to her son well. A golden retriever saunters up to her and the boy and the mother laughs in delight.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Look at you! You're so beautiful.
And you smell good. Like fresh
strawberries. Did you just have a
bath?

She pets the golden retriever. And then feels a nudge behind her and a collie has joined in the petting party.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Look at them. Hello sweet one.
(then calling out)
Whose dogs are these?

After a few more good pets, the dogs look to something in the distance and start trotting away. The mother and son look at each other and start running after them. Running as fast as they've ever run.

They run fast toward the pond, and the dogs are too far away, and suddenly they're gone.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Wait! Come back!

SON

DOGGIES!!

MOTHER

We're coming with you!

But the dogs are gone. They collapse on the ground panting from running, laughing and elated, feeling the grass on their backs. The mother kisses her son on the forehead and they stay where they are, nuzzled in the grass, feeling the sun.

36

EXT. SMALL FARM HOUSE - LATE EVENING

36

Our mother, as a YOUNG GIRL (maybe 9), stands on her porch of her modest home, looking out into rural farmland. Opera music blares from a small radio. In the grass, a woman in a light floral dress is lying motionless, eyes closed, barefoot. The young girl approaches, slightly concerned.

YOUNG GIRL

Mama?

Her mother startles from her state, and wipes tears from her eyes.

YOUNG GIRL (CONT'D)
Are you crying?

MOTHER'S MOTHER
(matter-of-fact)
No. I'm not. Go back inside. I'm
okay.

The young girl turns back toward her house.

37

INT. MODEST MENNONITE CHURCH - SUNDAY MORNING

37

The young girl and her FATHER, 40s and a working man, sit in a pew singing along with the chorus, including her mother, who are singing at the front of the Mennonite church. Her mother has a beautiful voice. She stands out.

MOTHER (V.O.)
My mother once told me she almost
become a famous singer in Europe,
but she stayed back and had us
instead.

The young girl watches her mother, closely studying her. She seems so happy as she sings.

38

INT. STUDIO - LATER THAT DAY

38

Back to the present, our mother looks through a past portfolio of her work as an artist. A cut out from a newspaper article with a photograph of a large scale installation - A pool filled with ocean water- shells, dirty sand, pieces of garbage. Hanging above the pool from the ceiling is an intricate light show, projecting light down on the ocean.

*
*

Yelling pierces in from the other room. She quietly puts the portfolio back in a drawer.

MOTHER
(calling out, not
worried)
I'm coming baby.

She exits and we linger on the walls for a few moments. The office that hasn't been used in a long time, with posters from European art exhibits on the walls, paints in the corner, carefully arranged paintbrushes on the shelves.

Two large monitors sit on top of the desk, with post-its stuck to them with little notes scribbled. A large cork board with a collage of images cut from magazines adorns one wall. It's a beautiful inspiration board of disturbing images. A light layer of dust is on everything.

39 **INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

39

The mother and son sleep deeply in their bed. The sounds of rustling and grunting, snarling and scratching outside the window. The mother stirs just a little then suddenly sits up, alerted. The ominous sounds grow.

40 **INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

40

The mother retrieves a baseball bat from the closet and heads toward the front door.

41 **INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

41

The mother approaches the front door trepidatiously. The sound outside the door has been growing. She flings open the door and slowly steps out.

42 **EXT. PORCH - CONTINUOUS**

42

The mother looks around in awe. The three dogs from the park plus at least twenty others have all gathered on her front lawn under a full moon. As she comes outside the dogs sit and turn toward her, like she's their leader.

MOTHER

What the-

The Brown dog lifts her head as if to beckon her.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

This is a dream. This can't be
real. This is a game.

She slowly puts her bat down, drawn inexplicably to the dogs. Inside her sweatpants we see the faintest indication that her tail is wagging. She bares her teeth, and sniffs the air.

The dogs are all beautiful and majestic. One calls out and they all begin howling.

The mother approaches the pack and before she knows it she's being surrounded by dogs. At first this feels delightful. The retriever nudges her, and she pets the dogs.

Then suddenly feels one of them pulling her arm down toward the ground. She resists.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

No! Don't.

Another dog pulls at her shirt with her mouth, ripping her t-shirt. She swats at the dog, pulling her shirt away. She starts to succumb to the mob, being pulled down, but trying to get back up, screaming out. She kicks a dog, who rips the leg of her sweatpants. Another pulls her down and everything goes black.

43 **OMIT**

43

44 **INT. KITCHEN - MORNING.**

44

Clank. A pat of butter in the skillet. Hashbrowns. But the mother has a smile on her face. Something is different with her - a secret in her eyes.

MOTHER

I had such a weird dream. You want
to eat on the porch this morning?

Her son nods. He toddles away happily. The front door opens.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Don't let the cat out.

Her son enters carrying a dead mouse by the tail.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Oh baby! NO! Where did you get
that? Yucky yucky.

She takes it from him with a paper towel, carrying him to the sink to wash his hands. He leads her to the open front door.

She approaches it and gasps.

45

EXT. PORCH - CONTINUOUS

45

A pile of dead animals - rabbits, squirrels, mice - has been left on the porch in a large heap.

The mother gasps, terrified. Her son points at the animals.

SON

Bunny!

They both stare, looking around but the street and lawn are empty. No sign of another dog. No sign of anyone. It is very eerie.

46

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

46

The mother, son riding in the cart, wheels through the large aisles, a cart filled with piles of red meat, lost in thought. She is very concerned.

MOTHER

(speaking aloud as she
pushes the cart)

I'm hysterical. I'm hormonal and hysterical. I've always thought of myself as like... a smart woman who sometimes got a little upset but was mostly cool to hang out with. But not hysterical. But at this point - I'm hysterical. I need to get my hormone levels checked.

She picks up a wedge of cheese from the fancy cheese aisle and smells it.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Hay, smoke, honey, some fungal musk. Amazing. Could I always smell like this and I just wasn't paying attention? Or... Or.

She throws the cheese in the cart. She throws a bunch of carrots and some celery into her cart.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Yes, vegetables are very civilized. Dogs wouldn't buy vegetables.

She shakes her head at her own thoughts making faces at her son. So silly. Looking around at the other mothers with kids in carts, some with two or three. She gives a faint smile to one of them who doesn't engage.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Are any of these other mothers also
losing their minds while they wheel
through the grocery store buying
crunchy snacks?

(to son)

We need some crunchy snacks, right?

Her son nods.

SON

Cookies! Cookies cookies cookies.

The mother keeps shopping when suddenly from behind her,
SALLY, 30 cute and well rested, appears all giddy with a hug.

SALLY

HEY!

MOTHER

Oh my gosh, Hi Sally! What are you
doing here?

She throws the box into her cart.

SALLY

Visiting my mom for the weekend!

MOTHER

Baby, this is Sally. She took over
at my job at the gallery, after you
were born.

Her son throws a bottle of shampoo on the ground in response.
The mother smiles uneasily.

SALLY

He's super cute. Do you just love
getting to be home with him all the
time? It must be so wonderful.

MOTHER

Um. Great question.

(The mother really
considers this)

It's so complicated, you know?

(MORE)

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I would like to feel content but
instead I feel like I'm stuck
inside a prison of my own creation
where I torment myself endlessly
until I am left binge eating fig
newtons at midnight to keep from
crying.

Sally looks on surprised as the mother speaks as openly and
honestly as she ever has and just does not stop talking.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I feel as though societal norms,
gender expectations, and plain old
biology have forced me to become
this person who I don't recognize.
I am angry all the time - like all
the time. I would one day like to
direct my own artwork toward a
critique of these modern-day
systems which articulates all this
but my brain no longer functions as
it did before the baby and I'm just
really dumb now. I am deeply afraid
I will never be smart or happy or
thin again. Oh and I'm pretty sure
I'm turning into a dog. So.

A beat. We back up in time.

SALLY

Do you just love getting to be home
with him all the time? It must be
so wonderful.

MOTHER

I love it. I love being a mom.

The mother smiles.

47

INT. KITCHEN - LATER THAT DAY

47

The mother is squeezing the packages of meat into the
freezer, and refrigerator and wherever they will fit. She has
left out a steak and pulls out the skillet, plonking it on
the stove and starting the flame. She cuts off two small
slivers from the steak, before throwing it into the skillet.
The flesh is soft in her hands. She smells it lovingly.

MOTHER

(to her son)

Should we do this? Should we be
doggies?

Her son, who has been playing on the floor nods gleefully. She takes her sliver of raw meat and puts it between her teeth and starts growling. She gives her son his piece of meat. He takes it in his hand and barks playfully. She starts chasing him.

She chases him throughout the house, growling and barking the whole time. She finally tackles him down to the rug and starts snarling at his stomach and wrestling him, flinging his body this way and that. He loves every moment of this. She does too.

They eat their meat on the rug, growling and barking at each other as they do. Suddenly she remembers the skillet and rushes to turn off the stove.

48 OMIT 48

49 INT. STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER 49

With one already fixed on her upper lip, the mother lays a wax strip on each of her big toes.

The mother searches under the bed and pulls out a cardboard file box labeled "Nana's house". She pulls out a framed picture of herself as a child, and her grandmother sitting on her little porch in the sunlight. She examines it fondly, looking to her Nana in the photo.

MOTHER
You never seemed to mind your
mustache, Nana.

This makes her laugh to herself.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
I always felt like you knew things-
deep, mysterious things...

From the box, she pulls a raccoon skin, and a copper tea pot, caressing the items.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
My parents told me not to encourage
you. But I loved your hexes and
spells.

CUT TO:

50 **EXT. FIELD - DAY**

50

The young girl (our mother at 9) runs through the tall field grass, a book bag slung on her back. Three young kittens pounce after her. The girl stops and screams at them, although we can't hear what she's saying.

51 **EXT. SMALL COTTAGE - DAY**

51

The young girl sits on the porch of her grandmother's cottage cross-legged while her almost blind NANA plucks the feathers from a dead chicken - she has a kitten in her lap.

YOUNG GIRL

And the kittens keep following me.
No matter what I do. They follow me
all the way to the bus stop. And
mama and papa won't keep them safe.
They won't let them come inside.
They say they're just animals. But
they're my friends. I love them.

NANA

Mmm.

YOUNG GIRL

Can you do anything, Nana?

NANA

Why would I be able to do anything?

They share a sly smile.

YOUNG GIRL

I don't want them to be eaten by
foxes! Please!

Her grandmother gets up and goes inside. The little girl clamors to her feet and follows.

52 **INT. COTTAGE - MOMENTS LATER**

52

The grandmother pulls out a small black bound book with symbols on the front and starts searching for a page. The young girl stands in the corner and watches.

The grandmother finds the page she was looking for and consults as she takes jars off the shelves and starts sprinkling herbs into a pot on the wood burning oven. She reads from the book, mumbling in Pennsylvania Dutch. The pot boils and she keeps adding ingredients.

*
*

The young girl looks around the cluttered one room cottage. There are animal carcasses strung up in the corner drying to become jerky.

She looks back in time to see a dried lizard being lowered into the pot. The young girl looks on, a little scared.

53 **EXT. COTTAGE - LATER**

53

The young girl and her grandmother carry the heavy pot out to the edge of the yard. The girl's house can be seen on the other edge of the property. And then she and girl dump the concoction out onto the lawn, including the dead animal. Nana nods.

*

The young girl hugs her nana around the waist.

54 **EXT. FIELD - THE NEXT DAY**

54

The young girl runs through the field and looks behind her. No kittens are following her. She happily runs toward the road.

55 **INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS**

55

The young girl looks in to see the kittens sleep soundly in their little nest in the barn.

56 **INT. LIBRARY - DAY**

56

The mother searches the shelves of the library. Her son flips through a book at her feet. Norma stands nearby.

NORMA

(loud whisper)

Maybe you can give me more of a
sense of what you're looking for-

She eyes the boy with a bit of a librarian's contempt.

MOTHER

Anything in the women turning into
animals realm: transformations,
metamorphosis. I'm doing a...
project and I was hoping to find
anything from a scientific
perspective, or mythology.

Norma smiles, pulls a book off the shelf called A Field Guide to Magical Women, written by Wanda Wasserstein, PHD.

NORMA

This one is labeled Mythical
Ethnography but it's quite
scientific. A Field Guide to
Magical Women. Have you heard of
it?

The mother takes the book in her hands and examines it. The
book is worn out and dog-eared and the publication date is
1978.

MOTHER

Thank you, Norma.

Norma eyes her son, wearily.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

We're going.

NORMA

Kids have sticky fingers.

The mother hustles out of there, grabbing her son on the way.

57

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

57

The mother is settled into the sofa, nearby the box of her
grandmother's belongings still strewn about. She opens the
Field Guide book.

MOTHER (V.O.)

(reading)

My introduction to this topic came
about serendipitously. I was
interested in the ways that
womanhood manifests on a mythical
level. Particularly the experience
of motherhood and how this
complicates, deepens, or denies
womanhood...

The mother is taken aback. She looks at the end of the book
and reads the author biography briefly.

She skeptically opens to a chapter titled "The Bird Women of
Peru".

MOTHER (V.O.)

(reading)

The bird women of Peru lived in the tall, leafy boughs of the rainforest where they constructed intricate and breathtaking nests from sticks and reeds.

The mother looks at a photograph of an orb like nest high up in a tree that looks like it should be on an inspiration board for Design Within Reach's catalogue.

MOTHER (V.O.)

(still reading)

The story I had heard before entering Peru was that The Bird Women were not born as such but rather sprouted feathers and beaks in their sixties. But only if they had had children who had grown. People in small Peruvian villages often explained the disappearance of older women, with no offspring to care for, as them giving in to "the calling of the birds". The Bird Women spent the later parts of their lives flitting from tree to tree producing the loveliest calls and learning to fly.

The mother's eyes begin to close as she reads.

CUT TO:

58

EXT. NIGHT SKY - NIGHT

58

Blackness. A sharp inhale.

Against the pale sky, the silhouette of a tree top becomes visible, with branches swaying in the wind. The mother's face, deep in meditation as she sways in the tree, sitting atop a branch.

A beautiful bird song calls out from somewhere. The mother opens her mouth and answers the call with a similar bird song. She inhales and suddenly falls backward.

The Mother tumbles through space, tree limbs whizzing by her. She is content and peaceful as she falls, almost like Winnie the Pooh gently bouncing down the honey tree. She somersaults in the air and it turns into a dance of sorts, the leaves and tree branches providing the backdrop for her descent.

Her face is happy and light.

THUD. Blackness again.

59

INT. STUDIO - LATER

59

The boy is standing there holding his own poop in his hand.
The mother's eyes open slowly.

SON

Mama! Poop.

She jumps up.

MOTHER

Oh my-

CUT TO:

60

EXT. PARK - LAWN - DAY

60

The mother and son are playing with a ball on the grass.
Suddenly the mother spots a squirrel. The mother stops,
alert.

MOTHER

Baby! Squirrel! Let's get it.

The two take off sprinting after the squirrel barking and
snarling as they go. They arrive at the bottom of the tree,
where the squirrel escapes and they scratch at the bark.

The mother turns her attention to the ball they left behind.
She grabs her son's hand and they take off running toward the
ball. When they descend on it they pile on top of the ball,
rolling around on the grass playfully, growling and barking
as they do.

In the sunlight the mother looks at her beautiful son, and
his perfect little face. She touches his face and then picks
him up, swinging him around. He giggles in delight.

MOTHER (V.O.)

Maybe it's really this simple. It
just instinct. We're animals. He's
my cub. We eat and play and this is
life.

They wrestle on the grass, totally content, not noticing the three dogs from before, the Brown Dog, the Golden Retriever and the Collie, who are watching from just across the field.

61

INT. GROCERY STORE - LATER

61

The mother and son walk toward the self-serve hot bar. The mother takes a cardboard container and starts piling on meatloaf, chicken fingers, and mac and cheese.

MOTHER
(to her son)
I've never felt this hungry in my
life. Ravenous is the word.
Ravenous, baby.

She just keeps going back to the meatloaf and adding more. Smelling it and salivating as she does. She takes her heavy container to the check out.

The woman behind the counter puts her container on the scale and is shocked to see when it weighs out to \$32.45.

The mother smiles awkwardly.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
I think I'm anemic.

The check-out lady gives a polite smile.

62

INT. GROCERY STORE - TABLES - MOMENTS LATER

62

The mother and son sit at a small table in the market with other mothers and kids nearby, plus businessmen who are on their lunch break, nannies with their charges. The mother globs some mac and cheese on her son's paper plate, licking her fingers as she does.

MOTHER
Mmmm.

She grabs another bite from his chicken strips with her fingers, needing food more than she ever has.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
(mouth full)
Here baby, eat.

Next she turns her attention to her meatloaf. She takes her eco-plastic silverware and attempts to cut the meatloaf, but the knife immediately breaks - she tosses it aside. She uses the fork to try to cut a bite but it's just not working. She ditches that too. She grabs the meatloaf with her hands, ripping a piece off and shoving it into her mouth. It's delicious. She closes her eyes, feeling the meat in her mouth, piling in another bite and then another. Enjoying every chew. She leans down to smell her meal even more, and without thinking starts eating right out of the container. The boy looks on amused and then bends down and starts eating his food in the same manner. Like two dogs eating out of their bowls.

The two of them scarf everything they can - in a fugue state of sorts. The mother looks at her son and ruffs like a dog. He barks back. She sits up, food covering her entire face to realize everyone is watching her - the moms, the kids, the businessmen. One such businessman, alone eating at the next table makes eye contact with her.

MAN

Hungry?

He nods to her, and she wipes her face, suddenly aware of where she is. She turns to her son.

MOTHER

(covering her tracks)

We're doggies, right?

Her son nods and barks. She is quietly so embarrassed.

MOTHER (V.O.)

It's just a game. Doggy games. I'm just a good mother playing with my son. Everyone can see that.

The son goes back to eating and the mother takes a sip of her water, self-consciously. Just then Norma, beautiful with her silver hair down her back, who is passing their table, stops and puts her hand on the mother's shoulder.

NORMA

What fun it is to have a boy, right?

The mother nods and smiles, caught off guard seeing Norma out of the library.

MOTHER

Oh! Norma! It's you.

NORMA

And what a mother you are. What a wonderful mother. To have such fun with your child. I remember the days.

MOTHER

(genuinely touched)

Oh. Thank you!

NORMA

We used to play dogs too. My son and I. It was so fun and he just loved it.

(then to the boy)

ERRRRR.

She bares her teeth at the boy who giggles. She wags her head back and forth and laughs a hearty and genuine laugh.

MOTHER

You did? I didn't know you had kids.

Norma pats her on the shoulder again and walks on disappearing down the street. The mother looks on longingly.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(calling after her
although nobody responds)

Oh please don't go, Norma. Can you tell me what your relationship with your son is like now? Did you work when he was little?

(Calling louder)

Did you make the right choices?
What would you have done differently? Can you please tell me the secrets? Tell me your secrets!

Of course Norma is gone and our mother is left alone with her son.

63

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

63

The mother is looking through the Field Guide book again.

MOTHER (V.O.)

In Hindu mythology, Sarama is a she-dog serving the warrior-god Indra.

The mother looks to a sketch of Sarama.

MOTHER (V.O.)

She is the mother to all clawed
creatures.

She flips the pages and finds a sketch of Chimera.

MOTHER (V.O.)

In Greek Mythology, we can point to
Chimera, referenced in Theogony,
and Homer's The Illiad. A
lion/goat/serpent triad of a beast,
definitely female, who breathes
fire, and terrorizes the people of
Lycia. What is pertinent to my
study, was that Chimera embodied
all things domestic and motherly -
a goat who nurses young and cares
for the homefront - and
simultaneously possesses the
qualities of a beast - sharp teeth
and the ability to light the world
on fire.

The mother closes the book, it is hitting a little close to
home. She turns her attention toward the art hanging on the
walls, and starts to pull out her old supplies.

MOTHER (V.O.)

If my mother were still alive I
would have some serious questions
for her.

She touches some paint brushes, crusted over with dried
paint.

MOTHER (V.O.)

I'd ask her if she ever hated my
father? How did she deal with the
anger? The resentment for all that
she didn't do? And all he got to do
with his life?

(MORE)

MOTHER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

How many women have delayed their
greatness while the men around them
didn't know what to do with theirs?

She looks toward her artwork hanging on the walls.

MOTHER (V.O.)

I'd ask her if her body ever
returned to normal? Or her mind?
I'd ask her if she ever regretted
becoming a mother? But I can't ask
her that. I'd give anything to be
able to ask her.

64

EXT. PORCH - EVENING

64

The mother and son wait on the porch. The mother is looking through the Field Guide book again, while the boy looks through his own book. Just then her husband's Uber pulls up. He gets out of the back, and the son runs up and greets him. The mother waits on the porch smiling dimly.

*

65

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

65

The mother comes into the bathroom. She closes the door behind her, the sound of her son and husband still audible in the other room. What a luxury.

She turns the water on in the shower. She peels off her shirt, and catches her reflection in the mirror in her sports bra. She looks down to examine her stomach: the tiny hairs around her bellybutton, the wrinkle above her waist. And then she notices: Six small pink raised dots have appeared on her torso. They all line up below her breasts. She looks at herself in the mirror in disbelief and awe.

She twists one of the new formed nipples between her fingers, scared and also weirdly excited.

66

INT. SHOWER - MOMENTS LATER

66

She lathers her hair with shampoo, enjoying this moment of peace with the water rushing over her. Just then her husband barges into the bathroom, accusatorially:

HUSBAND

We're out of milk.

The mother closes her eyes, trying to remain calm, keeping her back to him carefully.

MOTHER

Are we?

HUSBAND

We have twenty pounds of raw meat,
but no milk.

She can hear her son screaming from the other room. Her husband leaves to tend to him, leaving the door open.

MOTHER

(calling out)

Can you please close the door?

The screaming gets worse as she rinses her hair. The husband returns holding an empty sippy cup.

HUSBAND

How can we be out of milk?

MOTHER

Because he drank it.

HUSBAND

But did you know?

MOTHER

Did I know?

She squeezes out some conditioner into her hand.

HUSBAND

Did you know we were out?

MOTHER

I don't know.

HUSBAND

What does that mean?

The mother takes a deep breath then goes in hard.

MOTHER

This is the first shower I have had
this week. I've been to the
supermarket three times, but I
haven't gotten to wash my body in
at least four days. So clearly I
didn't realize that we were out of
milk or I would have gotten some.

(MORE)

MOTHER (CONT'D)

You are free to go to the market with our son and pick some up if you want. And while you're there get me some tampons, ok? I'm about to start bleeding and I have a feeling this one is going to be a doozy!

She goes back to washing her hair. He is taken aback and walks out of the bathroom, closing the door behind him. She smiles in the shower, a small victory. She looks down at her feet and blood is drooling down her leg, pooling at the drain.

The mother lets out a guttural grunt at the sight - half roar half groan.

67

INT. BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

67

The mother lies with the son trying to put him to sleep finishing Goodnight Goodnight Construction Site, curling her body in pain next to him in the bed, with a hot water bottle on her belly.

MOTHER

Okay, that's the end of the book. I don't suppose you want to just lie down and go right to sleep do you?

SON

Nope.

68

OMIT

68

69

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

69

The mother, water bottle held to her belly, enters to find her husband playing video games on the TV, oblivious.

She stares at him, seething, for a moment, without him realizing. A low growl builds within her. Her eyes flash red beneath the surface.

HUSBAND
(to himself re: video
game)
No, no no. Go-

Suddenly the mother lunges, arms up in attack mode, eyes red, screeching toward her husband to kill him and when she's mid-air:

The husband sees her standing by the door, watching him.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)
He out?

MOTHER
No. It's your turn.

HUSBAND
What? He doesn't want me.

MOTHER
I don't care that he doesn't want you. I have been doing night nights every night of every day for two hundred years and they are fucking killing me. You have to do night night. IT'S YOUR NIGHT NIGHT TURN!

He looks at her surprised, and gets up realizing she's serious.

HUSBAND
Okay. But for the record I really don't like the term "night night".

She growls at him as he exits the room, and plops on the couch to watch some stupid tv. The cat jumps up on the couch to lie with her, and starts rubbing on her. She pushes the cat off the couch, a little too hard.

MOTHER
Nooooo.

Then feels guilty.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
(to cat)
I just... don't want one more thing needing me or touching me.

She lies back on the couch, in agony, but having spoken her truth. She looks down to the floor and notices the red cat paw marks are still on the wood floor.

70

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

70

The mother and husband sit next to each other watching tv, she has the hot water bottle still on her midsection. He rubs her foot a little.

HUSBAND

You wanna...?

He raises his eyebrows.

MOTHER

(immediately)

God, no.

He pulls his hand away from her foot, offended.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I didn't mean that. I just meant -

HUSBAND

Uh huh. Pretty harsh.

MOTHER

I'm sorry, I'm just in so much
fucking pain, you have no idea.

This softens him.

HUSBAND

Oh, gotcha. Sorry.

He rubs her feet a little bit more and they keep watching tv.

MOTHER

Also I have eight nipples now and
fear you'd be repulsed.

She lets her eyes dart to her husband, who hasn't heard her.

71

EXT. PORCH - MORNING

71

Birds chirp. The sun shines. It's a new day. The husband is leaving again. The Mother and Son wave bye-bye, then look at each other with a mischievous twinkle in their eyes.

72

INT./EXT. DOG SEQUENCE

72

The mother and son at the park, barking and running. Being dogs.

Eating dinner on the porch: mac n' cheese out of dog bowls, no spoons, laughing as they plunge their faces into the bowls.

The mother walking down the street on all fours. Smiling and barking at neighbors watering their lawns. One such NEIGHBOR, an older white man with a perfectly manicured lawn with a small sign that has an image of a dog pooping with a red circle around it and a line through it, is disgusted. The mother just smiles wider.

A big bubble bath. The mother sits at the edge of the bath which is filled with a comical amount of bubbles. The mother and son throw the bubbles in the air. The mother puts some on her face as a beard. The son giggles. She growls like a dog and pretends to eat the bubbles.

73

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

73

The mother and son enter the room, the boy dressed in pajamas.

MOTHER

It's under the bed! You wanna see
what I got you?

He jumps up and down in excited anticipation.

The mother pulls out an extra large plush dog bed from under the bed.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Now baby. Doggies go to night night
in their beds right?

He nods, a little skeptically.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

And do doggies use binkies? Noooo.

He shakes his head. She places the bed in the corner, and her son climbs onto it. She licks his head and ear affectionately, pulls a small blanket over him and tucks him in.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Night night doggie.

She walks out of the room, and leaves the door open a crack. She watches in amazement as her son stays in the bed.

74 **INT. BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT**

74

The mother is stretched out over the entire bed enjoying her sleep while the boy sleeps soundly in his doggie bed. Suddenly in her sleep her leg starts to twitch. Then it kicks, again and again. Just like a sleeping dog.

75 **INT./EXT. CAR - LIBRARY PARKING LOT - MORNING**

75

The mother, with her son in his carseat, swings the car into a spot in the parking lot, blasting the song "Dare to Be Stupid" by Weird Al. The windows are down so all the other parents can hear this mom singing along loudly:

MOTHER

(singing)

Dare to be stupid, dare to be
stupid. What did I say? Dare to be
stupid. Tell me, what did I say?
Dare to be stupid. It's alright.
Dare to be stupid. We can be stupid
all night.

She doesn't even notice the looks she's getting, just finishes the verse before turning off the car.

76 **INT. LIBRARY - MORNING**

76

The mother, hair disheveled but down, saunters past Norma who is quietly working behind the desk.

MOTHER

NORMA! Look baby, it's Norma.

NORMA

(whispering)

Shh. This is a quiet floor.

MOTHER

(whispering but still
with a pep)

Thank you for that book
recommendation. I have to say it
was exactly what I was looking for.

Norma smiles, but doesn't want to talk.

NORMA
Just doing my job.

The mother wants to keep talking but her son starts barking.
She keeps moving.

77

INT. LIBRARY - CHILDREN'S CORNER - CONTINUOUS

77

She and her son saunter into Book Babies before it's begun.
Her son has on a collar with dog tags. And she doesn't mind.
Jen spots her and waves.

JEN
Well, look what the cat dragged in!

MOTHER
Hi ladies!

Her son barks. The mother doesn't flinch.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
He's a dog today.

Everyone takes their seats with their children. The leader
starts a peppy round of Wheels on the Bus. Much to everyone's
surprise our mother sings along at full voice. She's not the
best singer in the room, but she just doesn't give a fuck.

78

INT. LIBRARY - LATER

78

The caregivers and children mill about after the class.
Miriam, Liz and Jen surround our mother who is enjoying the
attention. The kids play in the background.

LIZ
I'm loving your hair. It's so wild.

MOTHER
Oh thanks. I guess that's what
washing it will do.

They all laugh a little too much.

MIRIAM
And your sweater is cool too.

Everyone looks at her surprised. One step too far.

JEN

You should join us for our Friday morning hike!

The mother looks skeptical.

MOTHER

Oh I don't really hike.

JEN

(laughing)

Oh don't worry. We don't do anything too major. A few miles early in the morning before it gets too hot.

MOTHER

Sounds awful.

The mothers all laugh hard, not taking this seriously. Miriam laughs REALLY hard.

MIRIAM

You're so funny.

Liz touches her growing belly.

LIZ

I can't hike very far these days.

JEN

Yeah, how are you feeling? Can I?

She motions to touching Liz's belly, who nods. They all lean in to touch her belly, including Mother. As the Mother gets close to Jen, she takes a deep sniff of her hair.

MOTHER

Strawberry shampoo.

JEN

Oh. What was that?

MOTHER

Sorry. My sense of smell is so strong right now.

She looks Jen up and down, feeling like something is weird.

LIZ

Tell me about it. I threw up from the smell of the trash this morning.

MOTHER

Of course - you're pregnant. That's when it starts. It's like a change in the genetic make-up. We don't talk about the cellular change that happens to us when we become mothers.

MIRIAM

That is so right on. We don't. Nobody tells you that you won't ever get to jump on a trampoline again.

They all giggle, then the mother takes it too far:

MOTHER

Not to mention that the whole concept of motherhood that we are sold is such bullshit - you're going to be expected to figure this whole thing out alone without any village to speak of, you're going to get no maternal benefits from the government, you're going to be mocked in popular culture, and there's basically a billion dollar industry that's designing products made to make you feel like you're a terrible mother!

(then, to Liz who is shocked)

But seriously, congratulations.

Everyone waits to see how Liz will respond.

LIZ

I mean, you're totally right. My sister who lives in Berlin now got two years paid maternity leave.

They all respond with their understandable frustration.

LIZ (CONT'D)

I can't believe I'm going to go through that all again. Birth.

MIRIAM

It's so fucking intense.

JEN

How do you think Daniel will do?

LIZ

I don't know - it's kind of hard for the men to see us like that. He loves telling the story of my first birth. And how the doctor turned to me and said "it's time to get that baby out" and a vein started popping in my forehead and I turned into like a wild animal. I know he was impressed.

MOTHER

(a little light goes off for her)

A wild animal?

The mother starts to notice the features of Jen, Miriam and Liz - how they twitch their noses, and the droop of their mouths.

JEN

Oh my god yes. My husband says the same thing. That the sounds coming out of me were pure animal. He almost passed out. But he's not good with blood.

MOTHER

Do you ever feel like the big secret is that we are gods?

The other three moms turn to her.

JEN

What?

MOTHER

Mothers. We fucking create life. We make life.

MIRIAM

WHOOAAA. You are blowing my freakin' mind.

MOTHER

We're so powerful. Men must be terrified of us. Look at you! You're a fucking miraculous goddess who is growing bones.

LIZ

I am pretty powerful.

The mother smiles as do the other moms.

79

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

79

The mother is cooking steaks, with her husband nearby, suitcase in the corner. She is unfazed by his questioning.

HUSBAND

I don't totally understand I guess.

MOTHER

It's just a game. We play dogs. And he loves it!

HUSBAND

Okay. And he's eating out of a dog bowl?

He looks to two silver dog bowls in the drying rack.

MOTHER

Sometimes. Yes. Sometimes we eat out of perfectly new, never-been-used-by-a-real-dog dog bowls. For fun.

She smiles knowing how silly this sounds.

HUSBAND

And he has a collar?

MOTHER

Yes. He wanted to be domesticated. I was against that.

The husband sips from his beer, trying to assess this all. His wife is happy. But something is weird.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Oh, and he sleeps in a dog bed.

HUSBAND

What now?

She turns and goes to him.

MOTHER

But I haven't had to lie with him for hours on end to get him to fall asleep - I just give a little growl and he goes to bed on his own. Without a B.I.N.K.Y. It's like a miracle.

She kisses him on the lips, and goes back to her cooking. Perfectly content.

HUSBAND

I don't want to criticize. It's just maybe a little confusing for him is all.

MOTHER

For him? Or for you?

HUSBAND

You have to see how weird this is!

MOTHER

No I don't. What's the problem? He's sleeping, which means I'm sleeping for the first time in two fucking years. We are getting so much exercise - I'm not waking up with pain in my back anymore. We're having fun. When did you become so uptight?

The husband looks hurt, and the mother doesn't really care.

80 **OMIT**

80

81 **INT. STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER**

81

The mother lies on her sofa reading from the Field Guide book *

illuminated by a small lamp.

MOTHER (V.O.)

(reading)

A woman, when pushed to her limit, will call on all her faculties to care for her young.

(MORE)

MOTHER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

For the mother - especially the mother of infants and very small children - occupies that peculiar space of in-between - not fully human nor fully animal - and it is in this liminal otherworld where we find many of the most compelling magical women.

A dog howls somewhere far away. She sits up. Driven by something within her, something she read. She walks out of the room in her pajamas.

82 INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

82

The mother walks toward the front door, opening it and walking out without closing it into the night as though in a trance.

83 EXT. FRONT YARD - NIGHT

83

The mother goes to a dark patch of dirt in the corner of the yard and starts rolling around in it, pushing her nose deep into the dirt, scratching her back in satisfying ways against the cold ground. She grabs a pile of mud and smears it across her chin and neck. Stretching her nose forward and sniffing the air. Her face subtly elongates becoming more snout-like as she sniffs.

The mother's POV: The moonlight shines on the tree tops. The trill from night birds reverberates the air, which is almost visible like water rippling in the sky. Critters move on the grass and pull her attention. Her senses are awake.

She starts digging in the dirt with her hands and feet, clawing at the earth, a tail sprouting from her backside between her coccyx. As she paws at the earth, her legs seem to bulge, becoming more muscular, and hind-leg-like with fur slowly covering everything. Her feet morph into large paws.

She rips off her shirt revealing a hairy trunk of her body, eight nipples and strong front paws. With each scratch and dig in the dirt, her body transforms more fully into a large wolf-like dog, silver and menacing - a large shadow in the corner of the yard.

The fully formed dog puffs its chest out, smelling the air and dashes across the yard leaping over the fence gracefully.

84 EXT. NEIGHBOR'S YARD - NIGHT

84

The dog, Nightbitch, arrives on the pristine lawn of the uptight neighbor and starts digging and scratching, digging up parts of the grass. She takes a large shit on the grass. And seems to be smiling to herself. She bounds away.

85 **EXT. STREETS - CONTINUOUS**

85

Nightbitch's POV: The street from down low. Darkness illuminated by street lamps. The sound of her heart beating in her chest as she runs. She looks up and sees a bird startled in a tree, as it flies away the air around it moves.

The sounds of the night are vibrant and alive.

MOTHER (V.O.)
(panting)
huuuuh huuuuuhh huuuuuuh.

She bounds forward, feeling her body.

MOTHER (V.O.)
Yeaaaaahhhhhhhh!!!!

86 **OMIT**

86

87 EXT. SMALL PARK - MOMENTS LATER

87

Nightbitch enters a small park and sniffs the air.

MOTHER (V.O.)
The body odor of men on the
benches. Alcohol and sweat,
dandruff and rotting teeth.

She smells the benches as she passes.

She bounds into the grass where she stops suddenly, in stalk position.

Across the grass we see what she sees, a small rabbit, frozen in fear, it's ears twitching.

In a flash Nightbitch pounces, clamping the rabbit in her jaws and swinging it back and forth.

Her eyes blaze with the taste of blood.

88 **EXT. FRONT YARD - LATER THAT NIGHT**

88

Nightbitch saunters back into her yard, rabbit in mouth. She smells the grass.

MOTHER (V.O.)
This is where my son rolled in the
grass -sweet hot breath, little
banana cream breath. And mine. Mine
when I was... human.

Nightbitch drops the rabbit in the hole she dug earlier,
covering her prize in the dirt.

As she moves toward the house.

89 **INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

89

The mother gets into the shower, hair filled with mud, hands
covered in dirt like she'd been gardening, bits of twigs
stuck to her legs which are covered in small scratches.
As the water washes over her she smiles.

MOTHER (V.O.)
I knew it!

Dirt and bits of hair pool under her feet as she washes.
Suddenly her husband appears at the door of the bathroom.
He's sleepy, and not confrontational.

HUSBAND
Where'd you go?

MOTHER
I went for a run. I needed to clear
my head.

He opens the shower door and examines her body with a playful
excitement, a trance like excitement.

HUSBAND
Did you run barefoot?

The mother nods mischievously letting him look.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)
You're so dirty.

The mother smiles.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)
Can I get in?

MOTHER
Sure.

He peels off his clothes and joins her in the shower. He grabs the back of her neck, getting a fistful of hair.

HUSBAND
Oh.

MOTHER
I told you.

He kisses her neck and they start to make out right there in the shower, one thing leading to another.

90

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

90

The mother and her husband and her son all sit at the small table on the small chairs eating piles of bacon, scrambled eggs and pancakes - a feast.

SON
Grrrrr.

The mother holds a piece of bacon in the air in front of her son's nose.

MOTHER
Speak!

SON
ARF! ARF!

She looks at her husband with a little smile.

MOTHER
Just a lil' party trick we've been working on.

She drops the bacon in her son's mouth and he gobbles it up without hands.

HUSBAND
(unsure)
Right. The doggie thing.

He shakes his head.

MOTHER

Oh honey - do you feel left out?

She holds a piece of bacon up for him, wagging it in front of his face.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Now, beg!

He laughs, giving her pleading eyes and she drops the bacon in his mouth. They kiss. Enjoying this family moment.

Just then the cat wanders by, meowling, interrupting the kiss.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Shut up! We fed you, you stupid animal.

The husband pulls the cat onto his lap, petting her.

HUSBAND

(in a very pleasant tone)

Kitty! I'm going to throw you onto the roof and let you starve to death up there.

The mother laughs. A familiar game. She reaches over and pets her head.

MOTHER

(Also pleasant)

Maybe a chicken hawk will swoop down and grab her with its talons while she's up there.

The husband nods approvingly.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(like a fairytale)

Then take her up into the sky and drop her from a great height into a deep quarry where heaving mining equipment with caterpillar treads will repeatedly run over her broken corpse.

HUSBAND

Wow. Specific.

MOTHER

Thanks.

91

INT. NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM - LATER THAT DAY

91

The husband pushes the son in a stroller while the mom trails next to them.

HUSBAND

Which way? Mammals?

MOTHER

Sure!

From behind them comes Jen, pushing her personal double stroller, each kid with a dinosaur hat on, and big smiles.

JEN

I can't believe it! Here you are!

MOTHER

Jen! Wow - hi. It's weird to see you in the wild - out of context.

Both mothers are bashful, happy to see each other but trying to not come on too strong.

JEN

(sotto - not noticing the husband)

I've been thinking about that conversation in the library non-stop.

MOTHER

You have?

JEN

Yes. That thing you said about how mothers are mocked in popular culture -

She realizes that the mother's husband is looking on.

JEN (CONT'D)

Sorry - I'm Jen. It's nice to meet you.

HUSBAND

Hi, Jen.

JEN

Your wife is amazing. We're all trying to get her in our crew!

The husband looks at his wife with a small smirk.

HUSBAND

Oh yeah?

The mother shrugs.

MOTHER

I'm a catch.

JEN

(to the mother)

Are you coming to baby yoga or tyke
hike this week?

MOTHER

Another time. I promise.

JEN

Oh poo. Next time. Come on, kiddos!
Let's go see the dinosaur bones!
ROWRRRRR!

Her babies roar back. The mother looks on a bit surprised at
the ferocity of Jen's roar. Something is up with her.

HUSBAND

What was that about?

MOTHER

Nothing. She's a new friend.

He looks on confused.

HUSBAND

She is?

The mother cozies up next to her husband as they walk.

MOTHER

I think I'm having a bit of a realization. Maybe it's all the dead animals everywhere I look—makes you think about your mortality.

HUSBAND

What's the realization?

MOTHER

I don't think I'm an artist anymore.

As she says it her voice catches in her throat.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(surprised by the emotion)

It's, like, a hard thing to admit I guess. I don't know why I'm getting upset about it. I'm not upset.

She takes a breath, trying to convince herself. The husband looks at her as they walk, a little concerned.

HUSBAND

No, you don't seem upset at all.

They stop and sit on a bench, and he puts his arm around her, surrounded by the dioramas of deceased animals.

MOTHER

Because... I have this running list of all the things I'm not doing every day — all the ways I'm falling behind as an artist. And I feel like if I could just focus on what I AM doing I would be much happier.

HUSBAND

I could see that.

MOTHER

I am just a mom now. I should focus
on being the best mom I can be -
enjoying these moments with him,
because this isn't going to last.
He's growing up so fast.

She's tearing up at the thought.

HUSBAND

That's true.

MOTHER

And being an artist is such a
silly, self-absorbed thing to be.
It's truly an embarrassing job to
say out loud. What am I, six?
Picking between an artist or a
princess?

The husband laughs kindly.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I think there's sort of a relief in
just letting it all go, you know?
And being in this moment, with him.
And letting that be my goal for
now.

HUSBAND

Okay. If that's what you want.

He isn't sure he believes her, but he kisses her on her head.

MOTHER

That's what I want.

The mother nods, convincingly, and collapses into her
husband's embrace.

92

INT. LIVING ROOM - THAT NIGHT

92

The mother and her husband have quiet but passionate sex on
the couch, doggie-style.

MOTHER

(loud whisper)

Bite my neck.

HUSBAND

What?

MOTHER

Bite my neck, hard.

He does. She howls out a little in pleasure.

93

INT. BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

93

The mother and husband lie in bed, the son asleep in his doggie bed. The husband snores while the mother stares up at the ceiling, thinking.

MOTHER (V.O.)

Maybe that's what all mothers secretly need. One night of violence to get it out of our systems. I do feel better now. Lighter. And it's done. I'm me again.

She rolls over to contentedly go to sleep.

CUT TO:

Flashes from the park. Panting. Digging. The POV of a dog seeing the flesh of a newly killed rabbit. Growling, and teeth.

Heart pounding. Frantic digging. Howling.

CUT BACK TO:

The mother wakes covered in flop sweat, unsure where she is.

94

INT. KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

94

The husband comes in, in sweats, to find the mother already mid-project on the table. She is making a large colorful chart for the week, complete with little drawings accompanying each day. The sounds of a story podcast audible from the living room.

MOTHER

I'm taking your advice. I'm making a plan for the week. A schedule for us.

The husband groggily goes for coffee.

HUSBAND

Oh. Good.

MOTHER

See- Monday is gymnastics at the play space. Tuesday is Book Babies at the library- my fave. Wednesday: mommy/baby yoga in the park. Thursday is free day and Friday is Tyke Hike!

HUSBAND

Wow. Okay.

MOTHER

I mean, if I'm gonna do it, I should just commit. Right?

HUSBAND

Right.

MOTHER

And you remember that I said I would meet up with my grad school friends in the city tonight, right?

HUSBAND

Yes. I'm babysitting.

MOTHER

It's not babysitting when it's your own kid.

HUSBAND

Whatever. You know what I mean. I'm on bedtime duty. And you are going to go have a grown up dinner.

MOTHER

Yep. At 9 pm. Four hours later than I usually eat.

95

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

95

The mother comes in to find the husband and son playing trains on the ground. She's dressed very coolly - good jeans that hurt her stomach, and a nice blouse with a real bra and a purse.

HUSBAND

Yowsa. You look nice.

MOTHER

Maybe I shouldn't go. Are you guys going to be alright?

HUSBAND

We got this. We're good, right
little dude?

The son seems to realize in this moment what's happening and runs to his mom's leg screeching:

SON

Mamamamamamamama!

Just then the cat starts mrowling from the laundry room and dragging her butt as she walks past the hallway.

HUSBAND

What is that?

MOTHER

Oh god, she does that when she has
a shit stuck on her butt. This-
(she mouthes the f-word) *fucking*
cat. Someone has to wash her.

The husband looks at her with pleading eyes.

HUSBAND

Not it.

MOTHER

Come on! I can't. I never get to go
out.

The husband tries to pull the son from his mother's leg.

HUSBAND

I'll take care of him, if you'll
take care of the cat.

96

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

96

The mother is leaning over the tub with rubber gloves on sudsing the backside of the cat, mumbling to herself.

MOTHER

Nobody in this fucking family can
clean their own butts.

From the other room the sound of her screaming son pierces through and she winces.

97 OMIT 97

98 OMIT 98

99 INT. BUS - EVENING 99 *

The Mother sits on the bus. She looks out the window at the city, taking a deep breath. Nervous.

MOTHER (V.O.)
I used to do this. Go out and see
people. Talk about grown up things.
I can do this.

Her stomach growls. She touches it instinctively.

100 INT. HIP CITY RESTAURANT - NIGHT 100

The Mother walks in to find seven of her grad-school friends already crowding around their beautiful table in the crowded restaurant. Some are standing with their cocktails, some are seated lost in heated conversation. The mother enters without anyone noticing. She has to tap one of her friends, NAYA, 40 but doesn't look it and intimidatingly cool, on the shoulder, who wheels around.

NAYA
You made it!
(then to everyone)
Look who traveled into the big
city!

Everyone laughs and exchange hugs and hellos. The mother is the least hip of the group by a lot.

101

INT. HIP CITY RESTAURANT - LATER

101

Everyone is seated now at the table and the mother's end of the table is engaged in conversation with each other, menus in front of them, cocktails and wine in hand. Naya, LEMUEL, 40 gay and gorgeous, the mother, and FREIDA, 45 with an intense angry energy. Nobody touches the bread, except the mother, who is starving and digs in. She watches as the friends talk, like a ping pong match.

FREIDA

It's got like an ironic wink to it.

LEMUEL

I didn't get that. I feel like you have to come from a certain background to feel that irony.

MOTHER

Right.

Nobody registers the mother who is trying to engage.

FREIDA

You know work that is examining social media - like my piece- is tricky. We've lost some objectivity.

MOTHER

(trying to be part of the conversation)

Uh huh.

FREIDA

I'm working on a video piece about one woman's day, taken over 24 hours side by side with an actress who is acting out that same day in that very same space. Masturbating, shitting. All of it.

LEMUEL

But how will you know which woman is the woman.

FREIDA

Exactly. That's the genius of it. It's a meditation on our culture right now, cam girls- what it is to be watched. Is anyone NOT watched?

MOTHER

Wow. Sounds interesting.

Finally both Freida and Lemuel look to the mother sharply.

FREIDA

Are you working on anything?

MOTHER

Me? Um. No. I'm not working on anything. Nope.

Just then the SERVER, 20s male model good looks, comes up to take their order.

SERVER

We have a beautiful seabass tonight served in a white wine reduction, as well as a homemade cavatelli with chanterelles and fiddlehead ferns.

Everyone 'mmm's' and 'ahh's'. The mother laughs to herself and Naya looks at her questioningly.

NAYA

What's funny?

MOTHER

Oh, my kid and I have this joke about fiddlehead ferns.

She laughs to herself.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

It's like - we call them FEEEDLE DEE DEE ferns.

She looks around at everyone and realizes this isn't going over the way she expected.

MOTHER (V.O.)

Stop talking! Abort. Abort.

But for some reason instead of stopping she keeps talking, just more self-consciously.

MOTHER

You probably have to be there. He has this little two year old accent. It's like a lisp. 'feeedle dee dee'.

The server stares. The table stares. After a beat Lemuel chimes in.

LEMUEL

Could I have the cavatelli but
without the chantrelles?

The mother looks down, sound resumes, as everyone continues to order. When the server gets to her she looks up, sheepishly.

MOTHER

The kale salad please.

SERVER

What?

MOTHER

The Kale salad?

SERVER

What?

MOTHER

I SAID THE KALE SALAD!

SERVER

No worries.

MOTHER

AND A MANHATTAN! Please.

He nods and writes this down. She grabs for another piece of bread, shoving it in her mouth, while talking.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

So, Naya, how's Liliana? What is
she six now?

NAYA

Yes she's six. She's amazing. She's
in first grade at a music academy.
She is really getting into the
cello now, as well as the violin.
It's just beautiful to see her
blossom, you know?

MOTHER

Wow! Is it ever hard for you to
balance with your work? Like
motherhood and art? How's that all
going?

NAYA

Not really. I mean, listen, thank
god for Kristy. I couldn't do it
without my nanny. Of course.

(MORE)

NAYA (CONT'D)

But for me, it's like I'm a better mom because I have my work, I haven't lost myself, you know?

The mother looks like she may cry, but instead goes for another bite of bread.

MOTHER

Uh huh.

Suddenly, Naya yells down to the other end of the table.

NAYA

Oh Freida! Your application for the founders grant - did you do it?

FREIDA

Barely! I turned it in at like two am. I'm such a fucking idiot. You?

NAYA

Oh I turned it in weeks ago. Now we wait.

The mother swallows and starts speaking to herself almost, half joking.

MOTHER

I didn't get my application in yet. What am I going to do?

She takes a sip of her drink, kind of loopy and jokey.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I'm sure they're wondering where my application is.

Nobody hears her.

SERVER

(totally nonchalant)

Big Kale for you, Ma'am.

He places down a comically large bowl of kale in front of the mother, and gives Lemuel his beautiful pasta.

MOTHER

I hate it when they call me Ma'am.

She smiles, but nobody is paying attention to her. The mother starts eating the endless kale while the other people at her table continue to talk but their words have lost all meaning. There is a circus-like quality creeping in.

FREIDA
(gibberish)
It's like a critique of-

NAYA
(gibberish)
It's more of a meditation on -

LEMUEL
(gibberish)
Let's call a spade a spade - the
show was the most important
artistic event of our lifetime.

They all nod in agreement. The mother takes a bite of kale
and chews, chews, chews, the sound of the restaurant fading
out and the sounds of a meadow chiming in.

MOTHER (V.O.)
I'm a cow. I'm a zen cow in a
soothing green field.

The server drops her manhattan off at the table.

MOTHER
Oh could I-

He walks away totally ignoring her. She takes a large guzzle
of her manhattan. And then burps like something wants to come
up. All the sound in the restaurant has cut out now. Everyone
is talking but there is no sound. The mother is in her own
world.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Oop. This kale.
(then)
It's just pushing it down further:
all my rage and disappointment. I
thought I had digested it. But it's
still down there.

She massages her midsection -

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Burning a hole in me. And the woman
I used to be - the talented and
plucky young woman with big ideas-

She rubs her belly.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

She's down there also. In my
intestines, buried in kale, biding
her time. Or maybe she's dead.
Suffocated.

She looks around. Looking around at the beautiful restaurant.
Nobody paying attention to her.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

And here I am. Up here. In the
beautiful lighting of this
beautiful fucking restaurant. Just
a middle aged saggy mom without a
single intelligent comment to add
to the conversation. Insignificant.
Oh.

As she says it, it feels so real. Her friends voices fade
back in.

FREIDA

Did you make it to the Simiac
exhibit at the AFA gallery?

NAYA

Have you been to Jermaine's
installation at the Frick?

LEMUEL

I'm dying to get to the nighttime
exhibit at the Rubin!

She takes another enormous bite of kale.

One of her friends turns her chair toward the other, blocking
the mother out of the conversation - everyone is talking to
someone at the table except her.

MOTHER

Insignificant. Oh, this kale is not
sitting well.

She burps. Maybe she will throw up?

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Oh no. Here it comes.

She leans down to grab her purse from the ground, and as she
stands back up she knocks the table, clattering the
silverware and knocking over a glass of water, and suddenly
everyone is aware of the mother again.

FREIDA

What the fuck.

The mother stands with a great fury and barks. She barks loudly and ferociously – a dog bark coming out of her human mouth. Her friends all stare totally freaked out.

MOTHER

(yelling to nobody and everyone)

I could crush a walnut with my vagina!

Everyone in the restaurant is turning to stare.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

What're you looking at?

She reaches over and grabs a half-eaten burger from a nearby table, whose recipient, a young woman on a date, screams. The mother takes an enormous bite as she grabs her bag and lumbers toward the door, leaving a corridor of stares in her wake, and taking the burger with her.

102 **INT. HIP CITY RESTAURANT BAR- MOMENTS LATER**

102

The mother, agile and wild, runs toward the street, pushes past the crowds waiting for a table, devouring the burger. She disappears into the night.

*

103 **EXT. CITY STREET - MOMENTS LATER**

103

Nightbitch, the dog, races down the city street, with cars all around her. She bounds around a corner being swallowed up by the big city. Horns honk, the city roars with noise which suddenly cuts out.

104 **EXT. SMALL FARMHOUSE - NIGHT**

104

Nightbitch runs through the field in the yard of the small farmhouse and finds the mother's mother, lying in the grass listening to her opera.

Nightbitch, the dog, lies down in the grass next to her human mother who seems unphased. The dog curls up. The mother, without noticing, pets the dog.

MOTHER (V.O.)

I see you, mom. I'm beginning to understand.

(MORE)

MOTHER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

All these years, all the things
I've given up and what do I have
to show for it?

The dog and the mother lie in the grass, sleeping together.

MOTHER (V.O.)

And the worst part is I sacrificed
everything for this kid and I'm not
sure I'm even a good mother.

105 **INT. LIVING ROOM - DAWN**

105

A dirty and disheveled Mother enters the front door as quietly as possible. Her hands are dirty and scratched, her beautiful top is crumpled and a mess. She is doing some version of a walk of shame, with tears running down her face.

106 **OMIT**

106

107 **INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER - EARLY MORNING**

107

The mother slinks into the bedroom as quietly as possible, in her sweatpants now, with a washed face. She slips into the bed next to her sleeping child and husband. She closes her eyes. Her husband opens his, and looks over to her quietly concerned.

108 **INT. KITCHEN - AN HOUR LATER**

108

The husband is making coffee, when the mother staggers in, eyes swollen.

HUSBAND

Late night?

MOTHER

(caught)

Oh, yeah I slept on Naya's couch.
It was easier to just stay in the
city.

HUSBAND

Why didn't you text me?

MOTHER

I didn't want to wake you up.

HUSBAND

You know I have my phone on silent
at night.

He looks to her concerned.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)

Is there something you want to tell me?

MOTHER

What do you mean?

The husband shrugs.

HUSBAND

I don't know.

The mother pours her coffee, sipping it slowly, thinking of how to respond.

MOTHER

Okay, fine - I got a little drunk. It was really weird seeing all those people again after all this time. It made me feel like shit. So I drank my dinner and missed the last bus. I'm sorry.

*
*

HUSBAND

Why did it make you feel like shit? It was supposed to be your fun night out.

MOTHER

Because I'm not doing anything with my life. Because they think I'm just a mother now. Which I am. I mean, I know I am. But they think it's pathetic and it made me feel pathetic.

HUSBAND

They don't have any clue. They don't have kids. They don't know what they're missing.

MOTHER

Naya does. She has a kid. And she works all the time. And she's successful and happy and I don't understand how she is able to do all that.

HUSBAND

Her husband is super rich.

MOTHER

Right. That's true.

The mother flops down at the table and puts her head down.
The husband is not exactly sympathetic to this hang-over.

HUSBAND

At some point you're going to have
to start accepting that we've made
some choices over the years that
landed us here.

(then very pointed)

I don't know about you, but I
wouldn't trade those choices for
the world.

He exits, leaving her watching after him, knowing he's right.

109 **INT. KITCHEN - MORNING**

109

Outside the window, her husband gets into an Uber without
anyone seeing him off. *

Heavy skillet on the stove. Pat of butter. Bacon and more
bacon are dropped into the pan and begin to sizzle. The
mother watches while her son plays with trains by her feet.

The cat comes purring around the Mother's ankles.

MOTHER

Don't.

She kicks the cat a little out of the way, then realizing the
cat is hungry, she goes to the cabinet and pulls out a can of
cat food, opening it, and almost gagging from the smell.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

This is what you want? I'm gonna
throw up.

She scoops it into the cat's dish, growling lightly under her
breath as she does.

110 **INT. KITCHEN - EVENING**

110

The TV plays cartoons in the other room, and the mother
drinks from a glass of wine, sitting alone at the table.
Water boils in a pot on the stove but she doesn't move.

111 **INT. BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT**

111

The mother sits up in bed with a start, sniffs the air.

MOTHER (V.O.)
Blood. Flesh. Rot.

We hear snarling, and grunting from somewhere outside.

She looks to her son asleep in his dog bed.

CUT TO:

112 **EXT. FRONT YARD - MOMENTS LATER**

112

Nightbitch stands on the porch looking at a huge pack of dogs, including the main three. All the dogs face her and then the Brown Dog, and the collie bring up dead animals - a raccoon and a rabbit and drop them at her feet. Nightbitch assumes a dominant position: ears straight up, tail up and head held high. She stares at the two other dogs who curl their tails under them and submit. She growls and bites their necks a bit.

She descends the steps to the pack of dogs and they start wrestling, engulfing her in some sort of ritualistic dog behavior: howling and wrestling, tousling each other's bodies, biting and pawing each other.

From the open door to the kitchen there is a loud meowl from the cat. Nightbitch snarls. The cat yowls again, and Nightbitch leaps.

113 **EXT. PORCH - CONTINUOUS**

113

Nightbitch lunges at the cat grabbing it in her jaws. She shakes her prey from side to side, smashing the cat's bones in her tight jaw. She flings the lifeless, bloody cat down on the floor and pants, suddenly aware of what she has done.

114 **INT. BEDROOM - MORNING**

114

The mother wakes in her bed. Her son is asleep next to her. Like a hangover, she is trying to recall the episode of the night before, but it's hazy. She rises from the bed and tentatively leaves the room.

CUT TO:

115 **INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING**

115

Bright morning light. Stillness. The mother enters to find the front door wide open, the porch smeared with blood, the lifeless cat lying there, flies buzzing around her body.

MOTHER

Oh fuck oh fuck oh fuck.

Just then her son appears behind her, wrapping his arms around her legs.

SON

Kitty!

MOTHER

Oh honey.

SON

Eat the kitty?

The mother is horrified. She kneels down, turning her son away from the scene staring into his eyes.

MOTHER

Oh, honey no. We would never eat the kitty. No. I think maybe our doggie games have gone too far.

(then)

Poor kitty died. But we didn't want her to die. This was a terrible accident.

She picks up her son.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I need you to watch a cartoon while I clean up and then we will have a funeral for kitty, okay?

She whisks him away.

116 **EXT. BACKYARD - LATER THAT DAY**

116

The mother and son finish piling dirt on the kitty's tiny grave. The mother sobs to herself. And the son starts running around the yard, not worried about this funeral, barking like a dog.

MOTHER

(touching the grave)

I'm really sorry cat. I'm really sorry.

117 **EXT. PARK - MORNING**

117

The mother and son wander toward the playground.

MOTHER (V.O.)

I'm so fucked up. I'm so fucked up.

The son runs toward the slide. The mother paces.

MOTHER (V.O.)

This has gone too far. Get it together.

Suddenly the mom looks up and can't see her son. Anywhere.

MOTHER

Baby? BABY!

She takes off running, making her way around the play structure, looking for her son frantically. She can't find him. She turns to the one nanny in the park.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Have you seen a little blond boy?

Suddenly she spots him wandering over a hill in the meadow. She runs to him and scoops him up, sobbing. Hugging him and not letting him go.

118

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

118

The mother enters the library pushing her stroller with her son asleep in it. She struggles to get inside without waking him, but manages. She beelines for the counter, where Norma is organizing books. She clunks the book The Field Guide to Magical Women down on the counter.

MOTHER

I don't want this anymore.

Norma looks at the book calmly.

NORMA

That's not one of ours.

MOTHER

What? You gave me this book.

NORMA

I don't think so. Look -

She opens the front cover.

NORMA (CONT'D)

No catalogue card. I don't know where this book came from, but we can't take it.

She hands it back to the mother with a bit of a smile, looking toward her son.

NORMA (CONT'D)

I remember when my kids were little. I had a hard time keeping everything straight also. No sleep for years, holding them through ear aches and stomach aches and bad dreams. It's enough for any person to lose their bearings.

MOTHER

You just didn't seem like a mother to me.

NORMA

You didn't recognize it? You look into the eyes of other women, and see that fire flickering behind the eyes-

The mother's eyes widen, realizing she is echoing her own thoughts.

MOTHER

Oh my god.

NORMA

The pain and sacrifice. The shared bond of all you've given up for the continuation of the species.

The mother is taken aback. She is so relieved to be having this almost otherworldly conversation.

MOTHER

It's so much more encompassing than I could have known.

NORMA

It changes you. Connects you to some primal urges.

The mother looks down to realize she and Norma are holding hands across the desk.

NORMA (CONT'D)

Keep the book. You can't unsee it.
It's like the Wizard of Oz. You've
seen life in color now. There's no
going back.

The mother takes this in.

119 **EXT. LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS**

119

The mother wanders out of the library in a daze, book still
in hand.

120 **INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT**

120

The husband and wife are alone in the kitchen, his suitcase
in the hall. It's dark outside. They are sitting at the table
with wine glasses like a barrier between them.

HUSBAND

It just doesn't make sense to me.

MOTHER

I know.

HUSBAND

The cat died and you didn't even
call me?

MOTHER

It was a pretty traumatic morning.
There was blood all over the steps,
and we had to bury her, and-

HUSBAND

I could have helped.

MOTHER

I guess I'm getting used to doing
things by myself.

HUSBAND

Oh.

MOTHER

This has made some things really
clear to me though-

HUSBAND

Like what?

MOTHER

I'm not doing okay. You must see
that. I'm not okay. I'm not happy.

He is quiet. She gets up and moves to the counter, turning
around to face him.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

You were so quick to support me
when I said I didn't want to be an
artist anymore -

HUSBAND

You said that's what you wanted.

She paces, eyes fixed on him.

MOTHER

So quick. No protestations from
you! And I keep running over that
conversation in my head. Because it
would have been so nice for you to
encourage me at least a little bit
not to quit. Tell me that I was
good at what I did, and it would be
a shame to give it up. Say that I
would return to it one day. But you
just smiled.

HUSBAND

No I didn't.

MOTHER

Because somewhere you were getting
what you've always wanted. For me
to be a stay at home mom.

HUSBAND

Now, wait a minute-

MOTHER

Just like your mother. And her mother. A sweet deal for you. You have your job and I have mine. Only my job has no pay and no appreciation and no vacation days and includes washing your underwear.

HUSBAND

I didn't say that. This feels like a trap.

She's right in his face now.

MOTHER

You feel trapped? Do you have any fucking clue how trapped I am? I've found myself in a fucking 1950s marriage somehow and I have no idea who I am anymore and all I do is take care of our son and you and the fucking cat- before I killed her.

He looks at her. Everything is different and they both know it.

HUSBAND

It was your idea to quit your job. I didn't suggest that.

MOTHER

You're right. I agreed to it, but I had no fucking idea what I was agreeing to. I didn't realize I would feel like a single parent who has zero help and has to give up my dreams to take care of everyone! I don't even know who I am anymore!

HUSBAND

I don't know what to say. I didn't know you felt like this.

MOTHER

HOW CAN YOU NOT SEE ME? I'm wilting while you're out succeeding.

She sits back down with a huge sigh, resting her case, and starts sipping her wine. He takes her in. And goes in for the cross examination.

HUSBAND

You think I want it like this? I don't want to be married to my mother. I don't want to feel your resentment the moment I enter my house.

Now it's the mother's turn to be quiet.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)

If you were so fucking unhappy why didn't you tell me? You expect me to read your mind? If you tell me that everything is fine, then I think that everything is fine. If you tell me that you want to quit being an artist and stay home with our son, and I say ok, I think I'm supporting you. That's just some passive-aggressive bullshit.

MOTHER

Okay... but-

HUSBAND

You aren't the person I married either. The person I married let things go that weren't important, and was tough as shit. She was weird and excited about things in the world, like reading books and not just watching reality tv and passing out after her second glass of wine.

MOTHER

(taken off guard)

Oh my fucking god. I can't believe you're saying that to me.

HUSBAND

It's disappointing. For me too. I don't know how we ended up here. You're too worried about what happened at Book Babies to ask about my work or to stay up on current events.

She is seething now.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)

What happened to that girl? The one
I married who made me think about
the world in new and challenging
ways, huh?

MOTHER

She fucking died in childbirth. And
she's not coming back.

She walks out.

CUT TO:

121 **INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT** 121

The couch is made up as a bed and the husband is sleeping on
it.

122 **EXT. FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS** 122

The mother stands on the lawn waiting, looking up at the full
moon. She listens, alert. No sounds.

CUT TO:

123 **INT. SMALL FARM HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT** 123

The young girl, our mother when she was small, sits by a
window looking down toward her front porch. The slam of the
front door. She sees her mother like a flash run out the
front door and into the night. There is something animal-like
about the way she leaves. The daughter watches, scared.

124 **INT. SMALL FARM HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT** 124

The young girl is sleeping in her bed when her mother comes
in, and sits at the foot of her bed.

MOTHER'S MOTHER

I'm sorry to wake you.

YOUNG GIRL

Mama?

MOTHER'S MOTHER

I didn't want you to be scared. I
wanted you to know I'm home.

YOUNG GIRL

Where did you go?

MOTHER'S MOTHER

I needed some space, so I went walking in the woods.

YOUNG GIRL

I thought you weren't going to come back.

MOTHER'S MOTHER

I will always come back. I'm your mama forever, and I will always come back.

She snuggles into her daughter's small bed with her, pulling the covers over both of them.

MOTHER'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

One day, when you're a mommy you're going to understand. But you don't need to worry about it right now.

They snuggle in together. Safe and close.

125 **EXT. FRONT YARD - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS**

125

The mother is still waiting to hear the call of the dogs, but it doesn't come.

126 **INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER**

126

The mother comes inside and sees her husband's back to her, prepared to not talk again. She looks to him and he doesn't turn. She starts to go toward their room, instead she comes and sits down next to him, looking right at him. He is surprised.

MOTHER

Can we talk?

He nods.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(calmly)

I think we need a separation.

HUSBAND

(also calm)

I'm really confused - I don't understand how we got here.

MOTHER

I know you are. Because I haven't been sharing with you everything that's been going on with me. But to be fair, you also haven't been asking.

HUSBAND

Okay.

MOTHER

This agreement we made, that I would stay home and you would go to work isn't working for me anymore. I need... space. I don't even know how to - I don't know who I am or what I need. I need to dig around in the dark and find myself again.

The husband hears this, and asks the question that's been brewing the whole time:

HUSBAND

Do you regret having a kid?

The mother really thinks about this.

MOTHER

No. I don't. But I had no clue what we were actually getting into. If I could go back in time, I would have made us sit down and work out a more equitable way to do this parenting thing.

HUSBAND

I would have been open to that.

They both nod.

MOTHER

I'm sorry.

HUSBAND

Me too.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)

Is it too late?

She looks down, resigned.

127 **INT. BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING** 127

The husband packs up a bag, throwing his clothes into his suitcase, defeated. The mother stands in the doorway looking on, feeling bad but also sure.

128 **INT. KITCHEN - MORNING** 128

The mother looks out the window and sees her husband driving away. She sighs, unsure if this is right.

The heavy skillet onto the stove, pat of butter. Hashbrowns.

The mother stares as her son plays at her feet. Everything is the same. But everything is different. She gets down on the floor with him and plays, silently.

129 **EXT. HIKE - MORNING** 129

The mother, her son and Jen, with her two kids, Liz and her kid, and Miriam and her kid all hike through the beautiful forest. The kids are either in backpacks, or walking themselves. The mother takes in the nature around her.

130 **EXT. MEADOW - LATER THAT MORNING** 130

While the kids and some of the other mothers play, the mother finds herself sitting next to Jen on a rock, grabbing a sip of water.

MOTHER

Thank you for letting us come along. This is so beautiful.

JEN

Yeah. Sometimes you just gotta sweat to feel alive.

MOTHER

So what did you do before you had your kids?

JEN

I was a corporate lawyer.

MOTHER

Really?

JEN

Yeah. Worked 80 hour weeks. I made more money than my husband - I like to remind him of that sometimes. It was too intense though- emails at 2 am, working dinners. The corporate world does not respect mothers. It's not the life for having littles.

MOTHER

How do you like staying home? You seem really good at it. It's totally intimidating.

JEN

Sometimes I like it. A lot of the time I feel like I have nothing to use my brain for. Except organizing our schedule or researching the new strollers. I use my law degree to read the preschool contracts.

This makes the mother laugh.

MOTHER

I thought I would like being a stay at home mom. But it's just not been good for me.

JEN

You're allowed to change your mind.

This lands for the mother.

MOTHER

Can I admit something terrible? I fantasize about running away from it all sometimes. I dream about a faded beach chair and a good book and not talking to anyone for a week.

JEN

That's not terrible at all. Once when I really needed a break I told my husband that I had diarrhea and I locked myself in the bathroom and read magazines in a bubble bath for hours. And I was so fucking happy.

They share a laugh.

JEN (CONT'D)

Hey - some of us are going to order pizza tonight and put on a movie for the kids and drink wine. Want to come?

The mother smiles.

131

INT. SUBURBAN MANSION - NIGHT

131

The moms are all sitting around the comfy overstuffed couches in the main room of Jen's house sipping off wine, and picking from a beautiful cheese platter. Jen comes in from the other room carrying a bottle of wine.

JEN

They're all set up watching a movie. They have nuggets, pizza and carrot sticks and they're happy. Who needs more wine?

MOTHER

Me.

She comes and fills up the mother's glass.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Do you guys do this a lot?

LIZ

Most Fridays. I couldn't parent alone. I need other moms around.

JEN

I need at least one day a week that I don't have to figure out what's for dinner.

All the moms nod in agreement.

MIRIAM

This is why people have sister wives.

Liz and Miriam high five. They all laugh.

MOTHER

I don't have any friends that are moms.

As she says this she realizes it's true.

JEN

We were surprised you finally
joined us.

The mother goes quiet for a beat. And tears form in her eyes.

MOTHER

Well... I guess I've kind of hit a
breaking point. My husband and I
are getting a separation and I
killed our cat this week, and it
just made me realize I'm not doing
so great. Emotionally.

The room goes silent. Did she go too far?

Finally Liz speaks.

LIZ

I let the fish die. Benign neglect.
I didn't want to clean the fucking
bowl. The kids didn't care.

MIRIAM

I accidentally let Percy fly away.

MOTHER

Who's Percy?

MIRIAM

The parakeet. I hated that bird.

The moms all nod in understanding and share a little laugh.

MOTHER

Wow.

JEN

But what happened with your
husband?

The other moms share a look of worry.

MOTHER

We were so stuck in this horrible
dynamic - me being a stay at home
mom, which maybe I'm not cut out
for, him being the worker who gets
to leave and engage with the world.
I had to break out of it before I
totally lost my mind.

MIRIAM

How's it been so far?

MOTHER

I don't know yet; it's really new -
he's staying at the Extended Stay
America.

JEN

Oy.

MOTHER

He wasn't around that much before.
It doesn't feel much different.

LIZ

That's so hard.

MOTHER

He's taking him for the night
tomorrow night - it will be the
first time I've ever been away from
my baby overnight.

LIZ

It will be good. You'll be okay.

The moms all offer her pats on the back and kind looks.

132 **EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY**

132

The mother puts her son into her husband's car, clicking him
into his carseat. She kisses him and watches them drive away.
She turns back to her house, almost confused as to what to do
next.

133 **INT. STUDIO - DAY**

133

The mother, in ratty art clothes, is alone in her office. She
stands on a chair pulling things from the closet she hasn't
seen in years. A film camera, paints, tools, laying
everything out on the floor. She is overwhelmed.

She pulls out her phone. Despite herself, she starts
scrolling through pictures of her son. Him being silly, on
the swings, asleep. She misses him.

She turns her attention back to her art, and tries to get her
focus back.

134 **OMIT** 134

135 **EXT. STREETS - EARLY EVENING** 135

The streetlights are just turning on, as the day turns to evening. The Mother, in her human form, jogs along the street. She pushes her body, running with a purpose. With each step she runs faster, happier.

She runs past other houses with their lights on - parents inside tending to their children. Scenes of life that she ignores as she runs.

136

INT. EXTENDED STAY APARTMENT- EVENING

136

The son sits at a big person table in a chair that is too low for him so he's propped up with a couch pillow, feet swinging. The husband puts a plate of food in front of him - pasta with red sauce from a jar.

HUSBAND

Voila. Dinner is served.

The son immediately sweeps his hand and knocks the pasta to the floor. The plate shatters in a mess of red.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)

NOOOOOOO! Shit!

Suddenly he tracks his son who is about to explore this mess he's made.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)

Wait wait, don't get down. Stay in your chair. There's broken glass. Or porcelain or whatever it is. Hold on. Ah! Hold on. Where are the towels?

He grabs his son in one arm, holding him by the waist, and starts searching the drawers for towels. Finds one, throws it on the mess.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)

How do I do this? Oh my god. Hold on.

He puts his son down on the couch and turns on the tv.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)

Don't move! Do you hear me? Don't move.

He goes to the kitchen, and starts surveying the damage.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)

Okay. Going great. I am killing it.

He grabs a roll of paper towels and gets down on his hands and knees, first picking up the shards of plate, then trying to clean the tomato sauce.

As he's on his hands and knees scrubbing the mess with paper towels, he suddenly hears something - it catches his attention - something far away- a howl - time slows down. He looks toward the window confused and toward his son on the couch. He is skeptical that whatever he heard was real but he's also aware that something is happening.

137 **INT. STUDIO - NIGHT**

137

The mother, covered with paint, has put a huge canvas down on the floor that she's painted a wash of purples and greens. She has a pile of bones, and gold paint. She is laying a gold raccoon skeleton down on the canvas in pieces and trying to decide what should happen next. She is "in the zone".

138 **INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING**

138

The mother opens the door for her husband and son. She is showered, dressed for the day and bright eyed.

MOTHER

There's my baby!!

She hugs her son and kisses him all over. Then hugs her husband, which surprises him a bit.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

How did it go?

They come in and all walk into the kitchen.

139 **INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

139

The kitchen is cleaner than we've ever seen it. The husband clocks this. On the table is orange juice, a stack of pancakes and frozen hash brown cakes all browned and delicious looking.

MOTHER

Come. Have some food.

The husband starts helping himself.

HUSBAND

We had a good night, didn't we, dude? It was hard. I'm not gonna lie. It was... hard. He missed you. And my place is... a little weird. Sterile.

The mother smiles.

MOTHER

Sure. I get it.

HUSBAND

How was your first night alone?

The mother hesitates. But then decides to be honest.

MOTHER

It was really wonderful, actually.
I think I have an idea for a new
project. I'm just really focused.
It's amazing how efficient I can be
now that I never have any time.
Give me an hour and I'm doing more
than I used to do in a week.

The husband nods, a little disappointed.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(to the kid)

You want some hashbrowns, baby?

She starts to make a plate for him. The three of them sit at the little plastic table in small plastic chairs and enjoy their food together.

140

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

140

The mother is walking the husband to the door, while the son plays with trains on the floor in the living room.

MOTHER

So I'll drop him off Friday
morning?

HUSBAND

(sort of dazed)

Okay. Yeah. I need to get some toys
at my place. He was so bored. And
maybe a stuffy or something?

MOTHER

That's a good idea. I'll send you
the link for that dinosaur he
loves. You could get him one for
your place. And I'll pack more for
him too.

HUSBAND

Okay yeah.

The vibe is not tense between them, but a bit awkward.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)

He's really sweet. But he's also not used to me. I kinda felt like he thought he'd been kidnapped.

This makes the mother laugh.

MOTHER

That will change. This is gonna be good for both of you.

The husband nods again, unsure.

HUSBAND

He's like 'who is this weird man living in this sad apartment complex with all the other sad men?' I swear the whole place is newly divorced dads. All these kids at the pool kind of just confused - not a mom in sight.

The mother enjoys this description. He's jovial but dark. The mother doesn't know whether to laugh or cry.

MOTHER

I just picture all the kids getting sunburned because nobody remembers the sunscreen.

This makes the husband laugh now.

HUSBAND

Oh man, I didn't even think of sunscreen.

MOTHER

See you Friday?

HUSBAND

Yep.

She closes the door behind him.

The mother turns toward her son, excited to see him.

MOTHER

Okay! What do we want to do today? I missed you so much.

She smiles so genuinely.

141 **EXT. DOG PARK - LATE AFTERNOON**

141

The mother and son are huddled together in the corner of the dog park, scoping out their favorite dog. They approach an owner who is looking at his phone.

MOTHER

May we pet your dog?

He nods nonchalantly.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

We love dogs!

The mother and son pet the dog lovingly, while the owner is a bit creeped out. Another dog catches their eye, with an owner nearby.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

That one?

The son nods excitedly. The mother taps the dog owner on her shoulder.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

May we chase your dog?

The owner doesn't even look up. So the mother and son start chasing the dogs around the dog park. Having a ball, barking and playing with the dogs without a care in the world.

Suddenly on the other end of the park the mother spots the three dogs she knows, the Brown Dog and the other two. They are in a pack at the end of the park, and seem to be calling to the mother, nudging her with their noses in the air. She looks at them, thinks about it, and then shakes her head sweetly.

The three dogs exit the park and the mother and her son continue running and chasing the dogs, while the sun sets over the park.

142 **INT. MINIATURE TRAIN DISPLAY - DAY**

142

The mother and son make their way through an enormous model train display that is very cool even for adults: hills with tiny windmills, small towns with little houses and their lights on, small scenes of country life with trains chugging along the tracks. The entire thing is lit up with Christmas lights and is spectacular.

The mother and son walk along pointing at different parts of the display oohing and ahing - running after a train as it makes its way along the tracks. She picks him up, so he can see every part of it. He hugs on to her neck, in awe.

MOTHER

It's so cool right?

He nods, happy.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

You know that I love being your mom, right?

She kisses him on his cheek.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

It makes me so happy. You are a wonderful kid.

They hug, her emotion taking over in this moment. She hugs him in her arms, with the other visitors stream around them, not noticing, just hugging her son.

143 **EXT. STREETS - NIGHT**

143

The mother jogs in the middle of her suburban neighborhood. Warm light pools from the other houses.

MOTHER (V.O.)

I want to go back and grab you by the shoulders...

INTERCUT WITH:

144 **EXT. SMALL HOUSE - LATE EVENING**

144

The grass sways in the evening wind. Opera music streams from the small radio.

The mother's mother comes into focus, lying on the grass where we found her before, listening to opera, dreaming of another life.

MOTHER (V.O.)

...And scream at you 'you're amazing! You're my mother!

Close up on the mother's mother's face, lost in thought in the grass, having heard none of this, tears streaming down her face.

MOTHER (V.O.)
Go to Europe. Insist on your joy!
Time is short...

CUT BACK TO:

145 **EXT. STREET - NIGHT**

145

The mother continues to jog past warm windows with scenes inside of families and life.

MOTHER (V.O.)
...Don't just do it for you, do it
for me too!'

As she jogs, from over a neighboring fence, a dog leaps over the fence and starts jogging behind the mother, without her noticing. Then from another backyard comes another dog who seems to burst out from nowhere. And then another. One jumps out of a front door. One bursts through a window.

The mother jogs, and behind her in formation, fifteen large dogs all silently run with her.

CUT TO:

146 **INT. GALLERY - DAY**

146

Our mother is installing her pieces into a large gorgeous gallery with huge ceilings - it's the type of hip chic gallery from her former life. She is the only one there now, on top of a ladder, installing a piece, connecting it to the ceiling. When she lifts her arms you get a glimpse of her unshaved armpit hair.

Her piece is an enormous self portrait - a photograph of herself mostly naked, covered in dirt and leaves with blood on her chin, in a howling position like a giant dog-woman in the woods. There's a majestic quality to the photo and the frame is made of animal bones that have been cleaned and painted gold, with gems added to them.

MOTHER
(speaking to herself
while screwing hooks into
the ceiling)
I always thought motherhood was
sort of a weak state of being -
like very basic and passive. But
motherhood is a far more primal
active thing than that.
(MORE)

MOTHER (CONT'D)

It is probably the most violent
experience a human can have aside
from death itself.

Around the gallery are similar pieces about the other mothers
in her circle - Jen as a tiger, roaring, her body covered in
bloody slash marks like she's been in a fight with another
tiger.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

A child's first act is violence
against the woman who created it.
Yet still the mother loves the
child with the most powerful love
known in this universe.

Miriam is a wild boar, Liz is a moose. And Norma is there as
a wise owl.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

This thing comes from us. It rips
its way out of us, literally tears
us in two, in a wash of blood and
shit and piss.

The mother steps back examining her work, taking it all in.
In between the big pieces of the women are taxidermy animals -
rabbits, and squirrels, laid out like offerings to these
goddesses.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Or it is cut from us with a knife,
our organs taken out only to be put
back in and sewn up. So no -
motherhood is not sunshine and baby
powder, little pastel mints and
lacy frocks. Motherhood is fucking
brutal - and it turns us into
something we weren't before.

She looks to the portrait of herself. She is pleased.

147 **INT. GALLERY - NIGHT**

147

The gallery is teeming with people- hip people, and suburb people all co-mingling.

Spectators holding glasses of wine are making their way through the gallery admiring the mother's work.

Sequence of each of the women next to their pieces. Jen stands next to her piece of her as a tiger, looking proud and majestic. The mother looks on. Miriam, Liz stand by their pieces having similar moments of pride. The mother cheers. This is what she's been working for.

148 **INT. GALLERY - LATER**

148

The mother is chatting with Jen, Miriam and Liz.

LIZ

I feel like everyone is looking at me. I can't get used to it.

MIRIAM

Really? It feels awesome to me.

They all laugh.

JEN

(to the mother)

I'm just really impressed by you.
And feel so honored to be a part of this. I feel really seen. Thank you!

She raises a glass to the mother and they all cheers.

LIZ

Is it true the times is here?

MOTHER

That's what I hear.

MIRIAM

I feel like I should try to talk to
the reporter.

*
*

JEN

I love you but no.

*
*

LIZ

NO!

*
*

They all laugh, just then Naya, Freida and Lemuel approach
the mother, tapping her on the shoulder. She turns her
attention to them.

NAYA

This is pretty fucking cool -
especially for the suburbs.

Lemuel hugs the mother.

LEMUEL

I'm really into this show- like
blown away. It's very provocative.
Very you.

MOTHER

Thank you!

FREIDA

It reminds me a little bit of
Charlotte Gibley's work from last
year, but I mean that in a good
way. Like it's not derivative, it's
in conversation.

The mother sighs, then spots Norma through the crowd heading
toward the door. She doesn't think twice and walks away.

MOTHER

Okay, then.

She weaves her way through the crowd, listening to people hub-
bub about her work. She makes her way to Norma.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

You're here. Thank you so much for
coming.

NORMA

Thank you for listening to the
call.

MOTHER

What?

Norma motions to the work.

NORMA

You did it. You listened. They
called. You answered.

The mother is left a bit speechless. Norma pats her on the
shoulder and walks away, disappearing into the crowd.

Suddenly the Mother sees her husband sitting alone across the
room, staring at one of her pieces. She just watches him. He
doesn't see her. But he's quiet. *

149 **INT. GALLERY - LATER THAT NIGHT**

149

The husband and mother are alone cleaning up from the night. *

The husband sweeps, the mother holds a garbage bag, and picks *

up stray cups and napkins from the floor. *

MOTHER

Did you see Freida? I can't believe
I got her out of the city. *

She laughs a little to herself, and looks to the husband who
is quiet. *

MOTHER (CONT'D)

You ok? *

HUSBAND

Not really. *

She stops what she's doing and looks at him. *

HUSBAND (CONT'D)

I didn't get it.

MOTHER

What? Didn't get what?

HUSBAND

I just - didn't see it. I didn't
see all that you were giving up. *

MOTHER

Right.

HUSBAND

I mean, look at what you fucking
did! I feel like I've been let in
to a whole universe that I was
totally blind to.

He motions to her work.

MOTHER

Oh.

HUSBAND

It's just right in front of my eyes
now - it's here, and it's
beautiful. It's undeniable. All the
things you weren't able to say for
all those years.

MOTHER

Honey -

HUSBAND

I am in fucking awe of you. You are
the giver of life.

She laughs kindly. He falls down to his knees.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)

You are the giver of life to our
son, and I should have been so much
more ... I don't know what. I
should have given that so much more
respect.

She is amazed by this run.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)

I should have told you to not give
this up. I really fucked up. And I
am so sorry.

She is crying, he is crying. She hugs him.

MOTHER

Thank you. Thank you for being
willing to say that.

HUSBAND

And you were right about something.
I think I wanted you to stay home.
(MORE)

HUSBAND (CONT'D)

Because that's what my mom did, I
guess. I didn't realize I was doing
it. I swear. It's some idea that
just seeped into my consciousness
without me even realizing it. But
that was wrong.

*
*
*
*
*
*

She nods. She knew this.

*

HUSBAND (CONT'D)

You can't give this up - you have
too much to say. You're so weird
and I love you.

*
*
*
*

*

MOTHER

I love you.

They share a long passionate kiss.

HUSBAND

I'm gonna go relieve the sitter.

MOTHER

I can go with you.

HUSBAND

No - go meet up with the book
babies moms. They're at the bar
waiting for you.

MOTHER

Really? You sure?

HUSBAND

Are you kidding me? This is your
night. Please go enjoy it. I'm
going to go hug our sleeping child,
and think about what magic it is
that brought him into the world.

She gives him a sweet short kiss on the lips and he walks
toward the door.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)

I'm proud of you.

He leaves. She looks at her work. Complete.

150

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

150

Under a home-made fort. The son, mother and husband are huddled with a flashlight in a sort of magical cave.

MOTHER (V.O.)

There are times when I look to my son and I cannot tell where he begins and I end. He is that much a part of me.

SON

(to his parents)

Be bears.

The mother and husband assume their bear positions- paws up, on their haunches. The mother opens her mouth and a real bear roar comes out - loud and clear.

The husband opens his mouth and another real bear roar comes out.

The mother looks to her husband, smiling.

HUSBAND

(to the son in a bear voice)

Are we hungry?

MOTHER (V.O.)

This must be what it is to be an animal. To look at another and say 'I am so much that other thing that we are part of one another'.

MOTHER

(in a bear voice)

I want blackberries.

HUSBAND

(bear voice)

I want salmon.

SON

(as a bear)

I'll get blackberries and Santa.

The parents both laugh, surprised.

MOTHER

He said salmon not Santa, baby.

But the son has exited the cave. The mother cuddles up to her husband, under the blanket of their bed.

MOTHER (V.O.)

You say 'here is my skin. Here is yours. Beneath the moon we pile inside the warm cave, becoming one creature to save our warmth'.

He caresses her cheek and then their son pops back in the cave, closing the blanket behind him, holding his hands out as though he's carrying a bounty, although they're empty.

SON

Okay I got blackberries and Santa's candy canes... and his head.

The mother and husband burst out laughing and grab their son in a warm embrace.

HUSBAND

What? We've got Santa's head here to eat?

They all pretend to eat their bounty.

MOTHER (V.O.)

This is how it's always been and how it will continue to be.

From outside their blanket cave, we see the warm light of their game, their shadows look like real bears in the cave - the sounds of bear roars fill the warm bedroom, which is now transformed into a forest with trees having sprouted up all around the tent.

MOTHER'S VOICE

AGHHHHHHHH.

CUT TO:

151

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

151

*

Close up on the mother's face. She is sweating, veins popping on her head, guttural sounds coming from her.

MOTHER

AUHHHHHHHHHHH!

Pull out to reveal she is squatting, partially draped in a gown, in very active labor, a huge bulging belly. This is not the labor we tend to see in movies. This is real labor. Blood and guts labor.

She is squatting, leaning against the bed, with her husband holding one of her hands and trying to help.

HUSBAND

Yes yes. You're doing so well.
You're doing great. You're amazing.

The mother shakes her head, tears streaming.

MOTHER

AHHHHH! I can't. I can't do it.

The MIDWIFE, a wonderful older wise woman, stands so the mother is face to face with her, nose to nose. She speaks clearly and seriously.

MIDWIFE

Listen to me. You can do this. You were made to do this. Your mother did this. Her mother did this. It's time to dig deep and find the strength because it's time to meet your daughter. NOW!

The mother cries huge tears, hearing this and knowing it's true, wailing in this moment.

MOTHER

Okay. Okay.

Close on her face: strong, in brutal pain, fully animal. She takes a deep breath and makes a noise like nothing else- part scream, part howl, every part of her animal.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

AGHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!

CUT TO BLACK.