

[MADELINE is in her kitchen making lemonade - homemade, with a pot of syrup, scraps of lemon nearby and everything. She tastes it. Needs more syrup. She adds more, but notices the mess in the kitchen for the first time, and pauses what she's doing to clean up.

For the record, the rest of her house is impeccably clean, with very mature yet lively decorations. It's almost too clean. Like you don't feel like you could really sit anywhere.

She checks some stuff in the oven or fridge. Looks great. Mid-kitchen-re-tidy, there's a knock at the front door. Now Madeline has to run around and throw the rest of the lemonade together. She tastes it one more time, so quick she spills some down the front of her blouse. There's another knock at the door.]

MADELINE:
Oh no! Hang on!

[She makes it over to the door so fast it startles ABBY, waiting there with a duffel bag.]

MADELINE:
Abby!

ABBY:
I can come back if now's not really-

MADELINE:
No, what, oh god, are you kidding? Come in, please! Come in! Make yourself at home. I'm just finishing up some refreshments.

[Abby walks in, a little dazed. Sit down where? And mess up perfectly coordinated pillows? Everywhere she tries to put down her bag feels wrong.]

ABBY:
Refreshments?

MADELINE:

Well, of course, dear. That's how we do it down in Florida. Or we did back when I was growing up. Things change. You got to have a little something, you must be hungry after that flight.

ABBY:

I really don't want to impose.

MADELINE:

It's actually my pleasure. Since the whole pandemic I haven't had much company. I used to have *dinner parties* if you can believe it. Yes, I was that girl. Woman. Neighbor. I insisted everyone from the food pantry Sunday morning shifts come by for a potluck no less than once a month. And when we could use the leftover messed up veggies from putting donation bags together, well, let's just say, who needs Misfits Market, am I right?

ABBY:

Who needs what?

MADELINE:

Yeah, exactly!

ABBY:

Can I put my bag down?

MADELINE:

Of course, yeah, anywhere!

[She finds somewhere. She finds some corny décor, like one of those signs with stock phrases you can get at Joann's or Target, and obviously doesn't approve, but forces herself to say:]

ABBY:

You have a really nice house.

MADELINE:

Oh, thank you, dear! This is just about as big as a house is gonna get for this price point in Queens, so I do my very best, which is all we can ask for in this world. How are you? God, I haven't seen you since you were in diapers!

ABBY:

Diapers, huh?

[Madeline realizes that's an uncomfortable topic, changes course rather abruptly, maybe messes up something in the kitchen.]

MADELINE:

Yeah. Well, pull-ups.

[Abby doesn't understand what that means. Madeline moves on swiftly.]

MADELINE:

Back then, your auntie lived a lot closer, not so far upstate. I saw her more. Good times. How is she? Have you seen her lately?

ABBY:

Just last Christmas.

MADELINE:

Oh, how wonderful. Glad your family still does Christmas nice and big.

ABBY:

Sure does.

MADELINE:

I just made us some things to snack on while you're here today, and then tonight I'm making lasagna, so don't worry about this being your dinner or anything - want me to make you a plate?

ABBY:

Oh, um, no thank you. I just mean, not quite yet.

MADELINE:

Not hungry yet?

ABBY:

Yeah, I, uh, grabbed something at the airport.

MADELINE:

Are you having symptoms?

ABBY:

Symptoms? Oh, like from the...

MADELINE:

I swear my morning sickness started from minute one. The doctors told me it was probably from something else but I didn't believe them. That's how I found out, actually! Wouldn't have bothered to figure out my period was late if I wasn't getting sick every dang day.

ABBY:

Yeah, I just found out from a test. No exciting story there. You know, the plane ride was just kinda bumpy. I'm fine. I'll have some lemonade.

MADELINE:

You'll like it. Good thing my son isn't here. Danny could guzzle a pitcher of this like water, I swear.

ABBY:

Where is he?

MADELINE:

Oh, you know. He's off at school. Freshman down at Emory, just started, so he's behind you - you're graduating after this year, right?

ABBY:

Right. Full Sail University.

MADELINE:

For film, right?

ABBY:

You got it.

MADELINE:

Well, if that's not the coolest thing I ever heard.

ABBY:

I wanted to come here, actually, but Full Sail's in Orlando... closer to home, saves money... bla bla bla.

MADELINE:

Right, I remember Mel mentioning when you were picking colleges. Too bad about that. We could have been friends all along!

ABBY:

Right. Too bad.

[Another uncomfortable moment. Abby hasn't touched her lemonade.]

ABBY:

I mean, probably just because it's always just been you and your son. Right? Just you two?

MADELINE:

Right, I mean, I crave a little feminine energy now and then, and that stereotypical bit about him leaving the damn toilet

seat up is no joke, I tell you! But we're very close. Two musketeers.

ABBY:

That makes sense. But I always used to think when I was younger that if I got to pick, I'd want a daughter, you know? Like I'd want to show her the ropes, tell her everything I know, make her the strongest woman possible.

MADELINE:

That's so nice! I totally understand. I figured maybe I could do the same with a boy... I could make sure he's strong, and treats all the women in his life right.

ABBY:

Yeah, exactly, that's great!

MADELINE:

What about now?

ABBY:

What about what now?

MADELINE:

You said you thought that way when you were younger. What would you want now? Would you still want a daughter?

ABBY:

I guess I wouldn't want anything.

[Another awkward silence. Abby forces herself to drink some lemonade. They speak at the same time:]

ABBY *[overlapping]*:

This is really good--

MADELINE *[overlapping]*:

So how's your dad--

ABBY:

Oh, sorry, what?

MADELINE:

I was just asking how your dad was. I was always closer to your aunt, we were in the same grade and all growing up, and I don't think your dad has a Facebook or anything--

ABBY:

Him? No way.

MADELINE:

So I was just wondering how he was.

ABBY:

Oh, he's fine. Still at the same old commercial real estate place.

MADELINE:

Wow, still. That's great. Yeah.

ABBY:

Otherwise. Same guy you remember, probably.

MADELINE:

Where does he think you are right now, if you don't mind my asking? And your mom? What did you tell them?

ABBY:

I told them I got some sort of two-day intensive to study new directing methods with local New York indie filmmakers. And that the Duplass brothers sponsored it. Young Filmmakers Forum, it's called. Totally free, housing included, meals, all that.

MADELINE:

What? Abby! That's amazing!

ABBY:

Sure is. I was totally fantasizing when I thought of it.

MADELINE:

Oh, you... I see.

ABBY:

Yeah, I made the whole thing up. Really dove deep. No, I couldn't possibly do that - when would I have time, between the D and the C? *[She laughs a little bit at her own joke. It very quickly becomes uncomfortable.]* I went into detail to make sure they'd believe it.

MADELINE:

What if they look it up?

ABBY:

See, exactly, that's why it's so good. They don't know anything about my major, they don't know this doesn't exist. And they'd never bother to look it up. Especially if it seems like I got my shit together for the time being. I know how to make it seem like I have my shit together in front of my parents at this point. Like my major is film, but it's really B.S.ing parents,

you know? [*She senses this is not sitting well with Madeline.*]
Which is just acting, I guess. Right? I guess I could major in acting. I don't really like acting though. Um, didn't you major in that? Acting? You studied theatre in college?

MADELINE:

Yes, I did. I studied musical theatre.

ABBY:

Do you still study? Or I guess, I mean, do you do that?

MADELINE:

In a way, both. I don't think we ever really stop studying. But I don't act much these days.

ABBY:

Why not?

MADELINE:

It's just too hard if you're not still in love with it. I teach now. Vocal lessons. To a lot of actors, actually.

ABBY [*forcing it*]:

That's so cool!

MADELINE:

I do my best.

ABBY:

Did you want to act though? Is that okay, can I ask that?

[At some point, Madeline puts a plate in front of her, but for a while Abby barely picks at it.]

MADELINE:

Oh, of course. To both. I'm every cliché, I moved to New York, thought I'd make it big as an actor. But like I said, it was just too hard, and I didn't want it bad enough.

ABBY:

My aunt and uncle said you were amazing, though.

MADELINE:

And now I'm an amazing voice teacher. What kinds of films are you into?

ABBY:

Oh wow, I mean, all kinds.

MADELINE:

Seen anything great lately?

ABBY:

Yes, definitely. I finally got around to watching *Nomadland*. Did you see that? Chloe Zhao? It was so amazing.

MADELINE:

Oh, no. It looked so sad. But why? Should I watch it?

ABBY:

Well, yeah, for sure, but what about like—oh, let's see—

MADELINE:

I saw *West Side Story*.

ABBY:

Yeah, I'm not like the biggest Spielberg person, I mean, massive respect, but, yeah, musicals aren't super my thing.

MADELINE:

What is super your thing?

ABBY:

I don't really know.

MADELINE:

No, if you could snap your fingers tomorrow and be able to make whatever you want, what would it be?

ABBY:

Mockumentaries, for sure.

[As Abby gets chatty, she also finally starts picking at the snacks.]

MADELINE:

What's that?

ABBY:

Like a fake documentary.

MADELINE:

That makes sense. That sounds neat. And difficult!

ABBY:

Yeah, I mean, it's difficult to get right, but it's so cool when people do. Have you ever seen *Documentary Now*?

MADELINE:

Can't say I have. What is it?

ABBY:

It's mockumentaries, but it's a whole series. Every episode is an entirely different style spoofing a famous documentary.

MADELINE:

Wow! Every episode?

ABBY:

I know, right? I don't know how they think of so many! It's by Fred Armisen and Bill Hader.

MADELINE:

Oh, Bill Hader, from Saturday Night Live? I love him!

ABBY:

I know, right?! If I could be even half as funny-

MADELINE:

I'm sure you are!

ABBY:

Got to work on it for- for, like, ever.

MADELINE:

What do you want to make it about?

ABBY:

Social justice stuff. Like I want to make social issues more approachable to try to get people to the right side. Like, for instance, I'm super into voters' rights, and it would be a mockumentary about how easy it is to vote in like, rural Georgia. I would say that's what it's about. But then you'd watch it, and it'd be like, oh, it's not easy at all!

MADELINE:

Abby, that's an incredible idea.

ABBY:

I mean, it is if I can also make it kinda funny somehow. It doesn't need to be laugh-out-loud funny to everyone to be effective. But also people still need to get that it's satire.

MADELINE:

Yeah, or the message won't land.

ABBY:

Exactly!

MADELINE:

You could use, well... lived experience, too. And make it about... this situation. You know?

[Abby looks shocked. Just before Madeline starts apologizing:]

ABBY:

That's SO crazy, I had the same exact idea on the plane ride over here!

MADELINE:

Get out!

ABBY:

I'm serious! I was like, well, I can't even get an appointment at somewhere that's not a fake ass religious "clinic" where I'm at, I have to fly to fucking Queens to get this done, I might as well make some art out of it! And I started writing down ideas!

[She goes to her bag for her notebook, knocking things around out of it and onto the ground. She leaves her phone behind, not noticing it light up with a call. Madeline doesn't mind the mess; she's enjoying this side of Abby.]

ABBY:

Like, maybe pro-life people will actually listen if we can make it digestible and kinda funny. And it would be totally affordable, it could be my senior thesis project, I could even just make it like a video diary mostly on my phone. And ohmygod! You act! You could be in it! I totally wrote down this idea of a woman who needs to host someone like me but the girl she hosts is a total pain in the ass and at the end of the day even like, bleeds on her couch and whatever—

MADELINE:

Oh, that's hardly a big deal—

ABBY:

Yeah, but see, you could act like it's a big deal! Madeline, you're gonna make your comeback!

MADELINE:

Abby, you have no idea how little you need me. But whatever help you need, just say the word. I think this is an incredible idea.

ABBY:

Thank you! If I could make it work somehow, it could be huge. And like I said, the budget would be super low. We just need everyone to be down to help, like a whole cast and crew of super cool people. Like you!

[Madeline can't help but be flattered. She fills up the plate with more snacks. ABBY goes to her phone.]

ABBY:

I gotta make a to-do list in my phone. I bet I can get a whole storyboard up tomorrow while I'm resting after the procedure. Because I read online you can totally...

[She reads something on her phone. Every bit of her good mood drops into pure anxiety.]

MADELINE:

Well, it depends on what kind of medicine they're using these days. I think if they put you under general anesthesia, you're not gonna really feel like writing. And you should take it easy anyway. If your flight back isn't until Friday, then you should spend all of tomorrow just relaxing. Abby, honey? What's wrong?

ABBY:

My parents.

MADELINE:

... They looked it up, didn't they?

ABBY:

Yeah.

MADELINE:

How much do they know?

ABBY:

Just that I'm here. Not for a school related project. And I'm staying with you.

MADELINE:

Well, that sounds fine so far. You don't think they know about *why* you're here?

ABBY:

No, but they know something's up. I think they're gonna figure it out. They know I have a boyfriend and they must know that we... you know.

MADELINE:

Let's think of something to tell them. Some reason. Is there anyone else you—

[Suddenly Abby runs away to the bathroom and starts vomiting. Madeline goes to help but the door is shut and locked. Not sure what else to do, Madeline eventually starts going to the bag and picking up the scattered items from before. Abby re-enters.]

MADELINE:

I've got it. We'll tell them you meant to tell them about a different award, and we'll google awards for students that already exist, and send them that website. Or maybe I can make a website in a jif! I made one for my vocal lessons.

ABBY:

I think I'm just gonna reschedule my flight. Like for tonight.

MADELINE:

But your appointment's tomorrow.

ABBY:

They're already mad.

MADELINE:

We can make up a good reason you're in the city though. Something that will make any good Christian parent understand—

ABBY:

No, they're mad that I'm staying with you.

MADELINE:

Oh.

ABBY:

I think they know. About the kind of thing you do. Which, I mean like— I appreciate it. Obviously. But they don't get it. And they're not gonna get it if I just keep avoiding it and lying to them.

[She's packing up the items Madeline picked up.]

MADELINE:

Abby, just take a minute and think about this.

ABBY:

I can afford the new flight. I have plenty of money in my savings account still.

MADELINE:

You should use that for your projects.

ABBY:

Maybe I'll still be able to. Maybe my parents will help with the flight. You know, maybe they'll even want to help with... the rest of it.

MADELINE:

I don't think they will.

ABBY:

They've really gotten better about a lot of things since you knew them—

MADELINE:

But, honey, a lot of things still haven't, I saw your mom's Facebook posts after the Supreme Court decision—

ABBY:

That's just Facebook—

MADELINE:

Abby, I believe if you go back to Florida right now, you will not get the opportunity again to do this.

ABBY:

I can make another appointment for when the semester ends.

MADELINE:

Not easily. This was made a month ago. And we got lucky. I called and was on hold for hours every week—

ABBY:

I'm sorry you had to go through the trouble but I didn't ask for that specifically.

[She picks up her bag, pauses, regretting that last statement a bit.]

ABBY:

We can use it. You know? In the movie? When we do it?

MADELINE:

I'm worried you won't get to do it at all.

ABBY:

Of course I will. Just after finals--

MADELINE:

I had an abortion too, Abby. I know it's scary, no matter which path you take, but the one you're about to take has far fewer options for you.

ABBY:

I thought you had your son...?

MADELINE:

Just before I got pregnant with Daniel, I had an offer to be in a show on Broadway. I had to give it up for him. Just months after he was born, I got pregnant again. Right away. I didn't think it would happen again so fast, and everything was changing so much in my life, I - don't know. I just lost track. I got careless. I don't regret having Daniel, not one bit. But I knew if it happened again, I would have to keep giving parts of myself up. I didn't want to find out what the next part was. I don't want you find out.

ABBY:

I'm going to be fine.

MADELINE:

Your aunt helped me both times - both when I had my son and when I decided to end it. She was there every step of the way. Let me be here for you, for this step. And we'll keep in touch - you can visit - this can be like a- a second home maybe... for when you really do get an intensive, or award, or all the things you're going to get.

ABBY:

I need to go back to school.

MADELINE:

Stay here just a bit longer. And tomorrow I'll make anything for breakfast that you want.

ABBY:

I'm just... not into breakfast.

[Abby does not look at Madeline as she exits out the front door.]

Madeline is overcome with frustration. She tries to distract herself by cleaning up

with ferocious energy, throwing good snacks away, nearly breaking plates. Maybe breaking a couple.

When she reaches the lemonade, she starts to try to wrap it up, put it in the fridge. But it's too much. She throws the pitcher. Lemonade is everywhere.

When she's done, there's a pause. She has no idea what to do next.

There's a knock at the door. Madeline answers it.

Abby is there.]

ABBY:
Even chocolate chip pancakes?

MADELINE:
As many as you can eat.

ABBY:
Need some help cleaning?

MADELINE:
I would love that.

[End of play.]