

RED GIANT

By

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Sponsor: Peggy Stafford

Second Reader: Dr. B Lee Aultman

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

MOTHER LUCK -

Protagonist, business owner, artistic director. Big woman, beautiful woman, robust in every sense of the word. Her legal name is Beatrice "Birdie" Luciano. She is played by two different actors, one in her mid twenties and one towards her late fifties.

HARRISON

Mother Luck's husband. A sensible enough man, comes from means, has yet to make much of himself.

SILVIO

Mother Luck's boyfriend. A sweet man, simple man, if a little lacking in backbone.

WANDA

The studio's darling. Model, dancer and young beauty. Mother Luck's best friend and Christian's sister. 21 years old, petite girl with an unconventional beauty.

CHRISTIAN

The studio's photographer and bricoleur for all intents and purposes. Loyal as they come, supportive if not articulate, growing in his abilities without much acknowledgement.

WILSON

Mother Luck and Harrison's son.

ACT IScene 1

The blue lighting scheme indicates a non-reality- a dream, a fear, an imagining. Mother Luck is asleep, having a dream beside her sleeping husband. Their bed is a huge wrought iron affair, draped in burgundy velvet with down piling up to the gods. She sits up with her eyes closed, indicating she's acting out her dream. SILVIO enters, six foot six and thick around most areas. His hair is slick on the sides, his arms full of groceries.

SILVIO:

(sing song)

Good morning my love! My tender love.

She falls back to her pillow and sleeps. He set down the paper bag filled with food and some coffee.

It's nearly noon so I figured you must be...

He turns to her.

Hungry.

He sighs, taking off his jacket and shoes to sit on the bed beside her. He brushes her hair from her face.

MOTHER LUCK:

Get off my bed.

SILVIO:

(leaning in to hear her)

I'm sorry?

MOTHER LUCK:

Get off of my bedddd! Smelling like outside.

He stands, walking behind the bed. She sits up, a comically sleepy beautiful thing, looking around for him before collapsing back in her pillows. He unbuttons his shirt.

SILVIO:

Does outside smell like lox?

MOTHER LUCK:

Yes.

SILVIO:

Lox and scallion cream cheese with tomatoes?
Everything? Lightly toasted?

MOTHER LUCK:

(smiling)

Yeeees.

Silvio strips down to his briefs; he sets her food on the table, her coffee, and comes to lift her from the bed, placing her before her breakfast. When she is settled, he makes a swan dive into her bed.

She contentedly eats. A peaceful moment goes by.

SILVIO:

Ya welcome.

MOTHER LUCK:

You're welcome!

SILVIO:

How did you sleep?

MOTHER LUCK:

Like- a mad woman.

SILVIO:

Comes with the territory, I s'pose.

He sounds like North Jersey. All jibes in jest.

MOTHER LUCK:

I dreamt that we were in an elevator. We three.

Silvio opens one eye.

SILVIO:

We three?

MOTHER LUCK:

(she points to Harrison who remains asleep
in her bed)

We three. You, me, and him. Well, it was youse two standing in an elevator, then I saw you and I go runnin', y'know, because what the fuck? But when I stepped on, somethin just snapped, a cable or

somethin, and all three of us are flyin to our death.
Together!

SILVIO:
To our death.

MOTHER LUCK:
Together. But I was thinkin, on my way down- you know
in dreams, you've got so much time to think in like a
split second- that I remember my brother tellin me if
you jump when you're about to hit the ground that you
won't die when you hit.

SILVIO:
Heard that was a myth.

MOTHER LUCK:
Well it isn't a myth, because it worked, because I
lived and you both died in a bloody pile of rubble.

SILVIO:
Cause it was *your* dream. Somebody can't die in their
own dreams.

He taps her temple.
Ya brain can't conceive of it.

MOTHER LUCK:
You're underestimating my brain. As usual!

SILVIO:
I don't even take elevators. Who takes elevators?

MOTHER LUCK:
I do, sometimes.

SILVIO:
I was born on the ground floor.

MOTHER LUCK:
And watch you die there. I've got elevator
aspirations. That's what my dreams tellin' me.

He playfully grabs at her body.

SILVIO:
There's a weight limit, baby.

MOTHER LUCK:
That's probably why you sandbags had to go.

Silvio sits up in bed, miming himself being stabbed in the tummy. She laughs and flits over to him, hopping on top and pretending to wield a knife over her head. She drops her hands and traces his stomach with her nails.

MOTHER LUCK

You're disappearing. Work too hard to eat?

SILVIO:

We can't all be so well fed. Again, your territory.

He holds her face warmly in his big hands. She all but purs with happiness. He drops his hands, raking his fingers up her body, down it, through the roots of her hair.

The lights of the scene start to change, from the blue hue of the dream state, mixing in red to create a purple state. Mother Luck's head swims, unable to shake the dreaminess and tell if she's awake.

SILVIO:

Yeah, mama. You're all mine, aren't you?

MOTHER LUCK:

In your dreams-

(kiss)

Although,

(kiss)

in fact,

(kiss)

I think you said

(kiss)

your brain can't conceive of it?

He laughs.

SILVIO:

No, I can. I see the end. I know exactly what it's gonna look like.

He sits up suddenly and she laughs. The lights on the stage bleed red.

SILVIO:

Feed me.

He latches his mouth onto her breast, sighing happily and sitting up to cradle her in his

arms.

MOTHER LUCK:
Baby-

SILVIO:
Please, baby girl, I need it. Feed me.

. He sucks her frantically.

MOTHER LUCK:
Wait-

SILVIO:
Come on, come on! Give it to me- this is what I need
you for.

MOTHER LUCK:
Stop-

*He latches harder and she slaps him on the head.
He bites down in response.*

MOTHER LUCK:
STOP- FUCK!

SILVIO:
YOU HAVE NOTHING!

She slaps him hard as fuck.

SILVIO:
NOTHING, THERE'S NOTHING LEFT OF YOU-!

*The lights cut to black. When the bedroom
lighting comes up, he is gone. She writhes in
her sleep.*

An alarm clock sounds.

*Mother Luck wakes with a start, holding her
breasts, soothing herself. The alarm continues
to blare so she switches it to the radio. Sea of
Love by Phil Phillips and the Twilights begins
to play. She sits up and holds her face, swaying
with the music.*

*In a flash she is up, making a mad dash for the
bathroom. Youc an hear her dry heave over and
over; the music reaches its' romantic swell as
she wretches.*

After a particularly heavy heave, she stands up, jumping in a couple circles like an athlete trying to shake off his ailing body. She hocks like a man and spits the rest of her bile in the toilet, flushing with her foot.

She cracks her neck in the mirror, turning on the faucet and touching her toes. She readies a toothbrush and begins really scrubbing her teeth as she whisks back to the kitchen to turn on some coffee.

She grabs a match off her altar and lights a stick of incense. She opens a window and the music changes- I Wonder Why by Dion and the Belmonts- a big change of pace, very doo-wop.

She sits on an ottoman, beginning to brush her teeth with much more vigor. Blood mixed with toothpaste begins to drip down her chin. She gets up and spits in the sink, washing her mouth then immediately grabbing some floss. She goes in on her gums, more blood pooling up in her mouth. Despite her gruesome grooming she bops her hips to the music. She spits it all into the sink. She splashes water into her face as the radio changes to Strange by Patsy Cline.

Now is when she becomes the Birdie we recognize. She picks up a half finished smoke from her ashtray. She drifts around the room, assembling her outfit for the day. She sings out "strange-you're still in all my dreams. Oh, what a funny thing."

She puts on a robe and goes to grab her coffee from the kitchen. As she does so, the set turns around to reveal her office and studio on the other side.

Scene 2

Wanda and Christian are in the studio.

Christian is behind the camera, beneath a black cloak attached to the old camera rig. Wanda is laying childishly, unconvincingly, across a chaise lounge.

Mother Luck breezes out of her office and sizes her up. She rolls up the sleeves of her long,

dark purple dress.

CHRISTIAN

(under sheet, to Mother Luck)
Can you tell her to fix her face?

WANDA

My face?!

MOTHER LUCK

(playful protest)
Awww-

CHRISTIAN

She look-

MOTHER LUCK

She's perfect!

CHRISTIAN

She looks like a kid at a Sears photo center.

MOTHER LUCK

(playful agreement)
Awwwww.

WANDA

That's so helpful, thank you.

CHRISTIAN

Just don't be a grump. Gotta be like this!
(he smiles so big! he points to his
dimples.)
See?

MOTHER LUCK

You look fine. You're just not *in your body*. Loosen
up.

WANDA

Who else would be in my body?

MOTHER LUCK

We just gotta find your *angles*. A picture isn't like
real life, y'know, where all your dimensions make you
appealing. It's just one take. It's gotta mean
something.

WANDA

No pressure.

CHRISTIAN

There shouldn't be! You know you're beautiful.

MOTHER LUCK

Don't oversimplify. She doesn't just have to be pretty- it requires skill.

WANDA

Again, no pressure.

Mother Luck turns to her, shoulders squared.

MOTHER LUCK

Shake the fear out of your shoulders, Wanda. Prosper. Illuminate.

Wanda sighs deeply, trying to fall into a naturally sexy position on the couch. Nope. She inhales sharply.

WANDA

What's my angle?

MOTHER LUCK

How're you feeling?

WANDA

Honestly?

MOTHER LUCK

Of course.

WANDA

Just like....
(sinks on couch)
deflated?

MOTHER LUCK

Alright, lay down.

Mother Luck gathers her skirt and lays down flat on the floor.

WANDA

Ugh. C'mon, Birdie-

MOTHER LUCK

It's time to build ourselves up! You, down.

Christian lays on the floor beside Birdie.

CHRISTIAN

How come I have to?

MOTHER LUCK

Cause we're in this together. I'll start.

Wanda gets off the couch and lays down beside Christian.

MOTHER LUCK

We all know about my uhhh... my standards, we'll call them.

(she laughs, they snort.)

My insistence that my own needs be met started as a necessary defense mechanism- during periods of survival, y'know? But it's developed kinda hedonistically- to the point where the only person whose happiness matters to me is my own.

(she cranes her head up to look at them)

Ground floor, baby.

She laughs at herself. She sits up.

WANDA

I hate doing this. It can't possibly be helpful.

MOTHER LUCK

It's the position. You just know yourself like this, y'know? It's something about laying down. The clearest look at yourself is horizontal, I think.

CHRISTIAN

Oh yeah.

WANDA

You go.

CHRISTIAN

I'll go!

MOTHER LUCK

You go.

CHRISTIAN

I always think, practically... there's no one who would really be impacted one way or another if I wasn't here.

(a beat while they consider.)

Nobody relies on me... nobody hates me to the point where they'd be relieved if I decide to call it quits. It's an uncharacteristic belief that I might,

at some point, become crucially important to someone, or something... but it's the only thing really keeping me alive, I think.

WANDA

(with pity)
God.

MOTHER LUCK

(non-nonchalant)
He gets it.

Christian sits up.

CHRISTIAN

(chipper)
You go!

WANDA

I'm thinking.

CHRISTIAN

You want me to go for you?

WANDA

No.

CHRISTIAN

Okay.

A long pause while she overthinks.

WANDA

Okay. I am.... a pretty bad cook.

A beat. They look over at her.

MOTHER LUCK

Yeah?

WANDA

Yeah.

MOTHER LUCK

That's your big reveal?

Wanda sits up.

WANDA

I don't wanna do this, okay? I'm not a compulsive over-sharer like the two of you. It doesn't make me

feel any better and I don't see what it has to do with taking pictures.

MOTHER LUCK

You're not understanding. What you need is vulnerability, Wanda. Nothing else. No makeup, no poses, nothing is going to help if you're hiding yourself. You have to get out of your own way.

WANDA

Vulnerability can't be raked out of a person for the sake of getting what you want, Bird. You're critically mistaking the definition of vulnerability if you think that counts.

Mother Luck raises her eyebrows and looks at Christian, who is doing the same.

CHRISTIAN

Damn.

MOTHER LUCK

Well in that case...

(she lies back down)

Lemme try one more time.

My inclination to coax the emotions or reactions that I'm seeking out of others instead of allowing them to come to me with those they're experiencing naturally has more to do with what I want than about their necessity to grow.

CHRISTIAN

Boom.

Wanda lays back down.

WANDA

My desire to be seen feels like it rests solely on the surface.

(a beat while they consider.)

Think my greatest fear is that one day someone will peer deeply inside me and find nothing at all. I don't know if I'm built to withstand the Mortifying Ordeal of Being Known.

CHRISTIAN

You're made to be a model, baby.

She sits up.

WANDA

Now you go.

CHRISTIAN

I am, ironically enough, a great cook.

MOTHER LUCK

You are.

CHRISTIAN

When I taste my own buttermilk biscuits it makes my heart sing. I feel like there's this notion that we should be cutting the amount of butter we use when we cook, but why would you do that? Don't we love ourselves?

MOTHER LUCK

We do.

CHRISTIAN

When you go to a restaurant and it tastes a thousand times better than when you make it at home? *Butter. Use it.*

He stands up. Mother Luck applauds.

WANDA

His poor arteries.

MOTHER LUCK

His taste buds are what matters. Don't be cheap to your stomach, Wanda, it's the worst thing you can be.

WANDA

The worst thing?

CHRISTIAN

Besides a cop.

MOTHER LUCK

Your turn.

WANDA

You go, I can't think of anything.

MOTHER LUCK

Okay, but you gotta go after me.

WANDA

Okay.

MOTHER LUCK

Okay... Something I find very valuable about myself is my ability to be entertained by life, even the parts that are touch and go, without ever trivializing to the point where frivolity comes before substance... yeah. I like that about myself.

WANDA

How am I supposed to follow *that*?!

MOTHER LUCK

With your answer.

WANDA

You only do this to hear yourself talk, I swear.

MOTHER LUCK

I really don't. It's not for people who already know themselves. It's so you can find that one piece of imperative information, latch onto it, and transmit it to others. Through one still image. I know it's there.

WANDA

Well, I can't find it.

MOTHER LUCK

Let me start.

CHRISTIAN

Can I start?

WANDA

No.

MOTHER LUCK

Sure.

CHRISTIAN

Wanda, your professionalism has most definitely served to grow me as a person. You elevate my attention to detail, and the few times you've been vocally pleased with my work it impacted me in a lasting way. You really make this studio better.

MOTHER LUCK

Oh my god.

WANDA

Stop-

MOTHER LUCK

You're gonna make me cry-

WANDA

That was- really nice.

MOTHER LUCK

What he lacks in work ethic he makes up in earnestness.

CHRISTIAN

Thank you, grazi- your turn!

MOTHER LUCK

Wait, I wanna go!

WANDA

No, noooo-

MOTHER LUCK

Yes, yes! My little noodle. You are irreplacably *different* from everyone I've ever known- and you don't even need to try.

CHRISTIAN

Congratulations!

MOTHER LUCK

Posers live their whole lives in search of the authenticity you naturally possess. Good job.

WANDA

Honestly? I agree.

(she stands.)

Every day I look at the people around me and, internally, I scream for competence. The truth is that the standard I hold myself to is the highest quality I know. Excellence has always been my standard.

(she poses.)

I have no reason to question my abilities.

I outshine.

Christian scrambles to capture her in all her glory. As the camera snaps, the lights cut to black.

When they come up, the studio is arranged for more models and photographers. Wanda is showing a girl how to pose, Christian assembling a tripod. Mother Luck is at her desk wearing glasses, her office door open.

There is a knock on the studio door. Mother Luck drifts into the studio space while Christian opens the door.

Scene 3

Silvio, Mother Luck's boyfriend, appears in the doorway of the studio.

CHRISTIAN

Sil! Been too long!

They hug enthusiastically. They're both such good kids.

MOTHER LUCK

What're you doin' here?

SILVIO:

Well I was supposed to cater a baby shower today, but the customers never came to pick up the food.

CHRISTIAN

You serious? Oh, that blowssss-

SILVIO:

It did. Sittin there peeling potatoes since the ass crack of dawn, and for what? I'm like, what am I supposed to do with six dozen chicken cutlets?

Wanda and Christian's faces light up. Mother Luck starts wagging on the couch like a happy dog.

SILVIO:

Then I think, I must know a couple of starving artists that could use some lunch.

WANDA

YES!

CHRISTIAN

Starving.

SILVIO:

(grinning)
I must, right? I had a hunch.

CHRISTIAN

(dreamy voice)
He takes such good care of us.

SILVIO:

They're in my car, I'll grab em in a minute.

MOTHER LUCK

You caught me at a bad time, I've gotta head to the doctor's this afternoon.

WANDA

Not us!

CHRISTIAN

Great time for us.

SILVIO:

Do you want a ride?

Mother Luck snorts and then catches herself.

MOTHER LUCK

No, no, not this appointment.

SILVIO:

Is everything okay?

MOTHER LUCK

I mean, yeah. Existing in a body isn't ideal, but upkeep is a necessary evil.

SILVIO:

That's right, you always say you-

MOTHER LUCK AND SILVIO:

Never would have elected to be a human by choice-

MOTHER LUCK

-yup.

CHRISTIAN

Why?

SILVIO:

She doesn't like that we have faces.

WANDA

Faces?

MOTHER LUCK

You're phrasing it wrong. I just resent the fact that of every species alive, even the most socially intricate species, we're the only ones with slight facial variations. And those variations dictate everything.

WANDA

That's-

MOTHER LUCK

I'm right.

CHRISTIAN

I don't think that's true.

MOTHER LUCK

I'm right.

WANDA

That's just so sad! No face?! That makes me soooo sad!

MOTHER LUCK

That's because you're attached to your face. Probably because *others* are attached to your face. Which feels very impractical, for a species with such an extraneously long lifespan.

WANDA

It's because faces are *beautiful*! They don't have to be practical, that's what, like, the rest of the body is for!

SILVIO:

(grabs her head)

She wishes she was just a brain on a plate.

MOTHER LUCK

You laugh, but that's essentially what I am. When you don't have *the face* or *the body* that's what you're treated like, anyway. Might as well do away with the need for drapings and hygiene... imagine how much more efficient I could be, if I could just metaphysically beam my ideas from my brain to yours.

(odd silence from everybody)

It could all be so simple.

WANDA

You creep me out.

Mother Luck grabs Silvio's hand and starts pulling him towards her office.

WANDA

Hey! Feed me!

MOTHER LUCK

You little vermin- we'll feed you when we feed you!

WANDA

(as the door to her office shuts)
I was promised!

Scene 4

The lights dim on the studio set and come up on Mother Luck's office.

MOTHER LUCK

I wish you could stay, but I do have a lot to do today.

SILVIO:

You sure you don't want a ride?

MOTHER LUCK

Am I the kind of girl you'd have to ask twice?

He comes up, kissing her long and happy, then starts playing with her hair.

SILVIO:

I miss you. It's been too long.

MOTHER LUCK

It's funny, I feel like I just saw you. Probably just my dreams.

SILVIO:

Good dreams?

MOTHER LUCK

(lying, joking about it)
Nyeeeeesss? Sure?

SILVIO:

You haven't come by the store.

MOTHER LUCK

Been a busy girl. This place wont run itself,
clearly.

SILVIO:

(nuzzling in her neck)
Yeah, well, don't forget about me.

*An intimate moment begins to form, which she
puts to an end.*

MOTHER LUCK

We should probably talk about something, before I
head out.

SILVIO:

When is your appointment?

MOTHER LUCK

Soon, but it's important.

SILVIO:

Sure thing. Do you want a drink?

MOTHER LUCK

No. I mean, yes, but no. But help yourself.

SILVIO:

I'm all set, thanks.

*Mother Luck sits on her couch, hugging a throw
pillow to her chest.*

SILVIO:

What's the matter, pretty bird?

MOTHER LUCK

You know how much I appreciate you, right?

SILVIO:

(sus)
Uhhhhh.

MOTHER LUCK

I mean, you know you're like, the most grounding
presence in my life.

He's not sold.

SILVIO:

Sure. Why does that not feel like what you wanted to

say?

MOTHER LUCK

Cause it's not. I mean, it is, but it's not.

SILVIO:

Don't gild the lily, Bird. I'm a big boy.

MOTHER LUCK

I'm just trying to figure out how to phrase this.

SILVIO:

You? That's outta character.

MOTHER LUCK

Why does everyone say that?

SILVIO

Just start with the obvious.

MOTHER LUCK

Well... I'm married.

SILVIO

Yes. Against your better judgement, but yes.

MOTHER LUCK

Well, that's not really your call-?

SILVIO

Just say what you're trying to say, Bird.

MOTHER LUCK

I think that, with the way my life is going, I can't keep all the plates spinning. Something is going to drop.

SILVIO

Right.

(painful silence)

Well, that sounds like my cue.

MOTHER LUCK

You don't wanna talk?

SILVIO

It sounds like you don't wanna talk. You want me to leave. Right?

MOTHER LUCK

I don't know what I- I mean, I know what I want, but

I can't just... do anything I want... for the rest of my life. It's not fair.

He laughs sadly.

SILVIO

To who?

MOTHER LUCK

I have other people to think about now.

SILVIO

People?

She grabs his hand for comfort.

MOTHER LUCK

Darling-

SILVIO

(pulling away)

Stop. Please stop. I'm gonna go- I really shouldn't have came.

As he goes to leave, she hangs over the back of the couch, the most compromised we've seen her look.

MOTHER LUCK

Am I gonna see you again?

He turns.

SILVIO

What? What did you JUST tell me, Bird?

MOTHER LUCK

I don't know, I'm trying- I'm trying to do the right thing. I don't really know what that is.

SILVIO

Let me give you a clue. Keeping me on your line while you build a life with a man that believes you're all his- that's not it.

(sad laugh #2)

But you knew that already.

MOTHER LUCK

(shame?)

Guess not.

SILVIO

You're so funny- you love this, you LOVE when other people have to be held to account. Where is that energy for yourself?

(silence)

What, am I scaring you now? Does that make you panic?

MOTHER LUCK

No.

SILVIO

Well you scare me. You scare the fuck out of me, with your selective righteousness, and your selective warmth, and with your inability to say sorry. I'm honestly glad.

(he grabs his coat)

I'm glad you did this, because God knows I wouldn't have known when to stop.

MOTHER LUCK

You never saw this coming?

SILVIO

Oh, I did. Absolutely, I did. I always knew that if you were gonna pick me you'd have done it already. But yes, I knew. I knew from the beginning. You were never gonna keep me.

MOTHER LUCK

Keep you? You're not my pet.

SILVIO

I knew that someone like me would never stick in your life.

MOTHER LUCK

How come?

He filters through a series of faces and word choices.

SILVIO

I don't know. I can't figure out how to say it.

MOTHER LUCK

Of course.

SILVIO:

Yeah, that's it. That's exactly why- you're such a complicated woman. Beautiful woman.

He turns to her, finally. His mood shifts.
I don't know anybody so intricate.

MOTHER LUCK
Everybody is. That's just people.

SILVIO
No, see, it's you. You've got this *thing*. You're so much to consider.
(he laughs)
You make me look like Joey Bag-of-Donuts.

He wanders back to the couch and she affectionately holds his cheek.

SILVIO
I think that... you wouldn't keep somebody in your life that can't explain you to yourself.
(beat)
I know how much you like when people describe you.

MOTHER LUCK
Then what are you doing right now?

SILVIO
Not a good job, I can tell. I know what I'm not good at.
(sad silence)

MOTHER LUCK
Guess what you are good at?

SILVIO
What?

MOTHER LUCK
I said guess!

SILVIO
Good at bein' a schmuck. World's most talented second fiddle.

MOTHER LUCK
Stop :(

SILVIO
(good humored)
Sorry. Mmmm, okay, I'm best at....I mean, when I'm happiest is when I do something for somebody else. When I do my best at something, and then someone really appreciates it. That's like, my favorite

thing.

MOTHER LUCK

You're such a little mush!

SILVIO

That's why I love the kitchen, y'know? How could you not love puttin a smile on somebody's face?

MOTHER LUCK

You're so good at that.

SILVIO

When I was growing up, we'd be so busy in the back, Sunday mornings, Christmas Eve- but my uncles always made sure they handled the front end. Their regulars needed to see their face so they'd knew they were gonna get what they wanted. That's a warm feeling, y'know? For the both of them.

MOTHER LUCK

Yeah. You're really good at that.

They're smiling wistfully at each other now.

SILVIO

The very first time your little head popped over my counter, I just knew- I knew I wanted to make you happy. Half a pound of thin sliced hot cap, she says! Half pound THICK cut prosciutto! THICK. I says, this is a woman that knows what she wants.

(bittersweet beat)

Less so now.

MOTHER LUCK

You're making this hard.

SILVIO

And what are you doing?

MOTHER LUCK

I'm making a choice, Sil. It's a choice I should have made a long time ago. A choice to stop being selfish.

SILVIO

(jokingly. knowingly.)

mmmmhmmm/yeah/okay.

MOTHER LUCK

What?

SILVIO

A leopard doesn't change her stripes, mama.

MOTHER LUCK

Leopards don't have stripes.

SILVIO

Little birdies don't change their ways. Because they work.

A long moment goes by.

MOTHER LUCK

Could you put something on? I hate this silence.

He wanders over to her record player, thumbing through the stacks absentmindedly. When she looks to see what's taking him so long, his gaze wanders up.

HARRISON

I can't think of anything to put on. Anything that would fit this moment.

From outside her office door, a FIRE ALARM begins to blare from inside the studio. Mother Luck hauls herself up with a groan, banging on the door before grabbing a bat from under her desk.

She steps outside and you hear a loud WHACK, after which the alarm stops blaring. The sound of the device being destroyed and the clatter of the bat to the floor are heard from inside. Silvio can barely pay attention through it all. She re enters.

SILVIO

(half a brain)
Hungry?

MOTHER LUCK

It can wait.
(she drops the bat.)
Are you okay?

He nods. He prepares to finally take his leave. She sinks sadly into the couch.

SILVIO

Hey, Bird?

MOTHER LUCK

(hope?)
Yeah?

SILVIO

Don't call me anymore.

MOTHER LUCK

(snot crying/upbeat voice)
Uhhh, yeah! Sure, are you... are you sure?

SILVIO

Yeah. Don't come to the store. For me.

She is suffering.

MOTHER LUCK

Don't tell me I need to find a new butcher.

This pains him. He forces a polite smile.

SILVIO

Can't say I'll miss serving you.

She folds up in grief.

SILVIO

Have a good one, Birdie.

He shuts the door gently behind him. When he leaves the studio past Wanda and Christian, Christian hurls her office door open. Her head lifts, thinking it'd be Silvio.

CHRISTIAN

Where's my food?!

Immediately, she grabs a small statue off her end table and throws it at Christian's head, missing him by an inch. They both scream. She charges to the door and slams it in his face. She collapses on her couch in sobs as the lights go out. The set is turned back to Mother Luck's apartment once more.

Scene 4

Harrison slips into the apartment while Mother Luck is resting on the couch. He drops his stuff, takes off his jacket and comes to wrap her up. She stirs.

MOTHER LUCK
Mmmm, hellooo.

He gives her a warm kiss on the head and cheeks.

HARRISON
Good morning, my love.

MOTHER LUCK
(sleepy)
Morning, daddy.

He gasps a little, having a seat beside her underneath the blanket.

HARRISON
How was your afternoon?

MOTHER LUCK
Uneventful.

HARRISON
(lil miffed)
Oh yeah?

MOTHER LUCK
Yeah.

HARRISON
Nothing you think you wanna tell me?

MOTHER LUCK
You want the play by play? Vision: me, 8 am, first pee of the day. Not lookin great, I don't drink enough water-

HARRISON
Sorry, Birdie, I just- could you just be serious for a second?

MOTHER LUCK
Bout what?

HARRISON
Please, don't kid.

MOTHER LUCK
No, I noticed. You're freaked out. You hold it all in ya neck.

She scrunches her shoulders up towards her ears

and laughs at him.

HARRISON

(insecure)

Stooooop.

MOTHER LUCK

(warm but definitely not serious)

Sexy.

HARRISON

The doctor, Bird. How was the doctor?

MOTHER LUCK

I was in there for 40 minutes and he smoked a Parliament for every second of it.

She gets up and starts to move about the apartment.

HARRISON

You're kidding!?

MOTHER LUCK

You told me not to kid.

HARRISON

Who? Which doctor did you go to?

MOTHER LUCK

(pouring coffee)

The office was the address that you gave me, but I think the doctor was a new guy. Seemed young.

HARRISON

Who?

MOTHER LUCK

Little Argentinean fellow. Cold hands! Tiny, cold little hands. Unwashed Parliament fingers.

HARRISON

That can't be. Dr. DiGiacamo has always been our doctor.

MOTHER LUCK

Our doctor?

HARRISON

Mom's doctor. He had me, and all my brothers. They couldn't just replace him after sixty years.

MOTHER LUCK

Sixty years? That was probably for the best, no? You think he could tell an embryo from an elbow at that age?

(she snorts)

Imagine your eyes? Imagine how shot they'll be in sixty years?

HARRISON

Do you think you should see another doctor?

MOTHER LUCK

Are you hungry?

HARRISON

(momentarily disarmed)

Nnnnah- thank you.

MOTHER LUCK

I'm hungry.

HARRISON

Right, I could eat.

Mother Luck nods, tucks herself back into the couch. Harrison stands, a bit unsteadily.

HARRISON

But everything's good, right?

MOTHER LUCK

Yes.

HARRISON

Right. I just wish I knew what he said.

MOTHER LUCK

You shoulda come with me.

HARRISON

I know- but today was no good, I really had to meet dad in Midtown.

MOTHER LUCK

How is Milton?

HARRISON

He's good. He sends his best.

MOTHER LUCK

(wry)
Right!

HARRISON

He says that I can start management training at the beginning of next month, and once he sees how I take to the company, he's gonna find good place for me.

MOTHER LUCK

The first born son, finally taking his place.
(weird pause because he can't gauge her tone)
Congratulations.

HARRISON

Thanks. He's excited for us.

MOTHER LUCK

I'm glad.

HARRISON

Are you okay?

MOTHER LUCK

Sure. Just hungry.

HARRISON

Right! I can run out, or if you want me to stay I can make something.

MOTHER LUCK

It's okay, I should head back to the studio anyway. It's Thursday, so we're doing the master class for the amateurs. I'll just run out and grab something during tea.

HARRISON

Are you sure? What do you wanna get?

MOTHER LUCK

I passed by a cart on the way home and ever since then I've just wanted lamb.

HARRISON

(wary)
Yeeeeeah?

MOTHER LUCK

(annoyed)
...yeah.

HARRISON

It sounds good, I just... is it a good idea to eat street meat while you're pregnant?

MOTHER LUCK

(finger up)

Ooop! Let me stop ya right there. Because I didn't ask.

HARRISON

I know, and you know I'm not usually like this, Birdie.

MOTHER LUCK

You're not? You're not usually someone who can't stay in their lane?

HARRISON

I just...

MOTHER LUCK

What?

He gets a lil dreamy.

HARRISON

I just can't believe this is happening. Truly.

My mind is racing and my bones are singing and the hairs on my arms are standing straight up.

MOTHER LUCK

Mmmm.

HARRISON

I just want everything to go as smoothly as possible, okay? There's still so much I don't know, and I just want everybody to be safe.

She nods. Odd pause.

HARRISON

You wanna see something?

MOTHER LUCK

Sure.

(he goes into the hall closet and grabs two cans of paint, bringing them over to her.)

HARRISON

I thought maybe we could paint the nursery this weekend.

MOTHER LUCK

You bought the paint?

HARRISON

I figured since you've been so busy I'd make the trip over to the hardware store. Do you like it?

MOTHER LUCK

Fire engine red?

HARRISON

I was thinking... bold. And gender neutral.

MOTHER LUCK

I don't think a baby should be living in a bright red room. Isn't that like, the least soothing color there is?

HARRISON

Why does it need to be soothing?

MOTHER LUCK

Because it's... a baby?

HARRISON

Right.

He melodramatically begins to put the paint back in the closet.

MOTHER LUCK

I don't even care. Paint it what you want.

HARRISON

Well it sounds like you do.

MOTHER LUCK

Well I don't, because I wasn't given the chance to- if you included me in the decision process I might have, but now that the choice has been made I don't care one way or another.

He sits back down on the couch and folds his arms.

HARRISON

Right.

MOTHER LUCK

So you don't wanna talk to me now?

HARRISON

I'm talking.

MOTHER LUCK

Look at me right now.

He does.

MOTHER LUCK

Are you fucking ready for this?

HARRISON

What?

MOTHER LUCK

I need to know right now if you think you're ready to be a father. Because if I can't talk to you right now, how am I gonna talk to you when I need you?

HARRISON

I'm ready. You can count on me, Bird. I'm ready.

MOTHER LUCK

I hope you are. I hope you can handle this, because I have my own life going on. I can't be taking care of everybody.

HARRISON

Like what?

She balks.

MOTHER LUCK

Like my studio? Are you serious right now??

HARRISON

Right. I was just thinking that when you had a family, you might reevaluate your priorities.

MOTHER LUCK

Why would that happen? My priorities are in order, okay? This is my work. I know you might not understand that but I take a lot of pride in it-

HARRISON

Stop-

MOTHER LUCK

Stop??

HARRISON
Sorry.

MOTHER LUCK
(sarcastic)
Sorry.

It took me so much *work*, it's like my full time thing. I don't even know if I wanna do two full time things.

HARRISON
But you have me to help you! At home, and I can help you here.

MOTHER LUCK
No thank you.

HARRISON
Wow... okay.

MOTHER LUCK
I'm sorry! That sounded meaner than I meant it.

HARRISON
Well it just came right outta ya.

MOTHER LUCK
Mmmmaybe it did.
(she laughs)
I don't know! I'm not asking for your help with this. This is what I know I should be doing. I don't even know what it is yet, really, but it feels kinda like a culmination of everything I've built throughout my life so far. All my skills and my people and my energy. I love it there.
(deep sigh)
I just think I'm feeling spread so thin right now, y'know?

He smiles stiffly in reply to the first part of her sentence, but breathes through his nose to not get freaked out by how un-assuring shes being.

MOTHER LUCK
(a lighter tone)
I mean- how am I supposed to follow through on all the promise this studio has when I've got two boys to take care of? Am I right?

She taps his nose. Now, he balks.

HARRISON
Boys?

She shrugs.

HARRISON
He could tell what he was? How far along are we?

MOTHER LUCK
Second trimester. He couldn't tell, but I just know.

He starts crying a little, like a kid that can't hide how scared they're getting. She starts to cradle his head.

HARRISON
Birdie, oh my god-

MOTHER LUCK
Stop stop stop, come here.

HARRISON
(blubbery Italian baby)
You're scarin' me, Bird.

MOTHER LUCK
Shhh shhh shhhhh, I'm sorry. I'm a little scared too.
It's okay.

HARRISON
What's a matter, mama? Talk to me.

MOTHER LUCK
Nothin, nothin. It's okay. We're okay.

HARRISON
No no no, please, baby, don't shut me out. We need to open up about this.
(he kisses her cheeks)
Please, baby.

They keep eye contact for as long as their tears allow.

MOTHER LUCK
Do you think I'm gonna be a good mom?

She takes her face out of his hands in embarrassment as she sobs.

HARRISON

Are you kiddin? Come here-

He tucks her into his chest.

Shhh, pretty girl, come here. Of course I do.

Look at me.

She shakes her head against his chest. He slides to his knees so his face beams up at hers.

HARRISON

Absolutely, I do. You are everything- everything I need. You're always going to be enough for us. I chose you for a reason. We're ready.

He kisses her stomach over and over.

HARRISON

We're ready, we're ready for you.

He cries openly. Happily. She cries to herself, her face twisted, trying to keep her stomach from trembling. The lights go black.

During the break between Act 1 and 2, SUMMERTIME by Sam Cooke plays.

They seem to travel through decades together- at the discretion of the director, indicate through a physical action montage how twenty years of time is passing through their parenthood. They start their journey hopeful. Show the repetition of infancy- no sleep, constant breastfeeding. See Harrison start to be less physically active in the movements (child rearing.)

Watch Birdie begin to crack- withdrawing from Harrison within the physical space. He has a seat in the dim lit back of the stage.

He mouths something to her as the song concludes- whatever it is strikes a nerve. She grabs whatever's closest to her and when she lobs it at him, the lights on his seat cut to black.

However, she stomps back into the dark and grabs him by the collar, dragging him out of the apartment as he laughs at her, still silently

verbally arguing.

When she slams the door on him, she psychically kicks it multiple times before sliding down it, crying with pain. Cut to Black.

End of Act 1.

Act II

(Scene 1)

Wilson's apartment. Twenty two years, later, 1980. The stage is a new home, a new bedroom, a dingy vibe unlike the previous maximalist dressing of Mother Luck's apartment.

The wallpaper a little peely, fireplace cold and empty, bedspread a little scratchy. A wood desk and chair maybe. None of the personal touches of a room well lived-in, just personal items and clothes strewn without care.

Wilson, 22 years old, is sleeping, restlessly.

KNOCK KNOCK. He winces under the covers, broken from a tense dream.

He hauls himself up with the second set of bangs on his door. When he opens it, Harrison enters without hesitation, having been there on stage since Birdie put him out last scene/twenty years ago.

HARRISON
Gotmewaitinouthere like amoron-

WILSON
Dad-

HARRISON
Watcha doin, you sleepin? Were you asleep?

WILSON
Shhh shhh shh! I was, I was sleeping, like my infant child and wife are sleeping-

HARRISON WILSON

(overlapping)
What time is it?

I'm up, he says.

WILSON

(tired. grouchy.)
Why you gotta be like this the second you walk
through my door? Can I getta good morning?

HARRISON

(kissing his cheek)
Good morning. Thanksgiving.

WILSON

(kisses- much more natural for him)
Happy thanksgiving, pop.
(shuts door, heading for kitchen)
You want some coffee?

HARRISON

No coffee, we don't have time. We gotta go get your
mother.

WILSON

(brewing some anyway)
I thought you were gonna pick her up at noon?

HARRISON

What, you can't come with me? We gotta go to the
store.

WILSON

What do we need?

HARRISON

What, what, what, it's a million questions always
with you, we're gonna get your mother and pick up the
porchetta.

WILSON

I got it, pop, I got it-

HARRISON

You got it? You kept it in the fridge for two days?

WILSON

Two days.

HARRISON

Didja let it sit out? You know it's gotta be room

temp, you gotta let it sit for two hours-

WILSON

Well you know how it's 9am?

HARRISON

Don't start-

WILSON

I thought I would take it out at noon, since we are..

HARRISON

Stop.

WILSON

Having dinner at 2. Have a seat, dad.

Harrison has a seat at the table. Wilson comes and rubs his shoulders with a sweet, teasing smile.

WILSON

Whatsa matter old man? It's thanksgiving.

HARRISON

That's all, it's thanksgiving. When everybody gets together, y'know, it's-

WILSON

(interrupting his pessimism)
You excited?

HARRISON

(after a moment)
It's my first holiday as a pop pop.

He smiles his first smile.

Wilson kisses his head and moves back to the kitchen.

WILSON

I'm excited to see mom.

HARRISON

You wanna go get her?

WILSON

You don't wanna go?

HARRISON

I'll go.

WILSON

I just had a dream about her, actually.

HARRISON

You still get those crazy dreams??

WILSON

Ever since I got sober. Mom's *convinced* they're because of my birthday. She says late season Cancers-

HARRISON

I can't stand that.

Wilson makes a little 'okay then' face at his dad's attitude. Harrison realizes he has been short with his son.

HARRISON

What was your dream?

WILSON

(laughing)

Mom was the size of Godzilla and she was just *completely* destroying the city. Stomping and sweeping her arms and splashing in the East and Hudson. And I had to get up to the tip of the Empire State Building so she could see me and I could get her to stop.

HARRISON

Uhhhh...

WILSON

(still good humored)

And when she saw me up there, she picked me up and I was glad because everybody was gonna be safe. But she put me on her palm and flicked me outta the tri-state area. I was flying to the ground like a meteor and then I woke up.

His dad is quiet- a little annoyed, but mostly. Wilson laughs.

WILSON

It's thanksgiving! Am I right?

Harrison is not very amused. Wilson goes back to brewing the coffee.

HARRISON

You get that from her, you know.

WILSON

Bad dreams?

HARRISON

It is so like her to wake up and make her dreams everybody else's problem. When she was pregnant with you? Forget it. Slamming all the doors in the morning because I was a prick in her dreams. Drives me nuts.

Wilson laughs warmly about his mother.

WILSON

That's too funny. Welp, not your problem anymore, right?

A weird silence falls between the two of them.

WILSON

Whatsamatteryou? You've got the longest face, talk to me.

HARRISON

Would you stop? I says I'm fine, I'm fine. I just wanna get today over with.

Wilson puts a hand on his dad's shoulder.

WILSON

I appreciacte you doin this, pop. Means the world to me, for the girls.

He kisses his cheek.

Maybe you can grab some flowers for her on your way over.

HARRISON

Flowers?

(humphs)

Maybe a cactus.

Scene 2

Lights up on Silvio and Birdie on thanksgiving morning, in her apartment kitchen. Her kitchen is tiny but it brims with life- produce baskets

hang in front of the window, three copper pots are hung above the stove, there is a magnetic knife strip on the wall by the sink, where she is sharpening a blade on a long, textured strap. The record player is on, Forever by Pete Drake.

The espresso machine is on, and as the lights come up, birdie crosses over to where Silvio is sitting with his cappuccino. The way he's aged is a sweet contradiction- when he was young and strapping he always looked so grown, but with his age he's kept the youthfulness in his face. Still hairy everywhere. Birdie sits on his lap with one leg on either side, getting ready to shave his foamy prepared face.

SILVIO

Is she smooth?

MOTHER LUCK

Like buttah.

He comfortably places his hands on her body. They are young together. He closes his eyes and hums as she shaves him, starting with the neck. He hangs on her every stroke and when she finishes, she wipes him clean and lays herself against his shoulder, his long body cradling hers. This scene should definitely be a long glimpse into their bliss and it can last as long as it needs to.

MOTHER LUCK

I feel like I'm having deja vu.

SILVIO

Yeah?

MOTHER LUCK

Yeah- but it always goes away right when you say 'deja vu'.

SILVIO

Yeah.

MOTHER LUCK

(smirking)

Yeah.

SILVIO
Not me, this feels brand new.

MOTHER LUCK
Oh yeah?

SILVIO
Yeah. This is the best Thanksgiving I've ever had.

She laughs as she stands and crosses back tot he kitchen.

MOTHER LUCK
Get outta town.

SILVIO
I'm dead serious! It's pure bliss when you don't have to cook.

MOTHER LUCK
Yeah, that's true.

A moment passes as she stirs her coffee.

SILVIO
You know who I saw yesterday?

MOTHER LUCK
Who?

SILVIO
My old pal, Brian.

She tries, but doesn't remember him.

MOTHER LUCK
From where?

SILVIO
From when I was a kid.

She doesn't remember, so she says:

MOTHER LUCK
That's nice!

Because if she did remember, she would not have picked that word. Sil half frowns.

SILVIO

Yeah, I saw him at the shop. I had no idea he even still lived around here. Well, when we were kids he lived in Sheepshead Bay, but his family would always come to the store.

MOTHER LUCK

How long has it been?

SILVIO

Gotta be 30 years now at this point.

MOTHER LUCK

Wow.

SILVIO

But the second I seen him, I says my god, I mean, he looked exactly the same. I mean... completely different, but just, unmistakable. Y'know?

He seems troubled. She puts a hand on his cheek.

MOTHER LUCK

Whatsa matter, you?

SILVIO

You remember the story I told you about us?

MOTHER LUCK

About you and him?

SILVIO

Yeah.

MOTHER LUCK

I don't think so, why? What was it?

SILVIO

It's alright, it doesn't matter now.

MOTHER LUCK

What, I wanna know now-

SILVIO

I told you twice already.

MOTHER LUCK

Yeah, so?

Silence.

MOTHER LUCK
So?

SILVIO
It's fine-

MOTHER LUCK
What? I gotta bad memory-

SILVIO
I know-

MOTHER LUCK
So??

SILVIO
So I'm not saying anything, would you relax?

MOTHER LUCK
Fine.

She walks back to the kitchen, in brat mode but unjustifiably so, starting to wash the sink in the absence of dishes or something to do with her hands. He lights a cigarette.

She grows antsy with the silence, turning to look at him, noticing he looks a little guilty, lil sad. She drags her slippers across the floor back to him, tapping him on the shoulder like a petulant girl.

MOTHER LUCK
I'm sorry.

SILVIO
It's okay.

MOTHER LUCK
Really, I'm very sorry. I don't want you to think I'm not listening to you. I do listen.

SILVIO
I know.

MOTHER LUCK
But I should pay more attention.

SILVIO

I know.

MOTHER LUCK

Will you still tell me the story?

SILVIO

It's sad, really- it's not even a good one.

MOTHER LUCK

I wanna hear it.

He holds his arms open for her to come sit.

SILVIO

We met when we were little, at Breezy Point yacht club. His family lived in Sheepshead bay and we lived in marine park so sometimes we would ride out together in the summer. We spent so much time together because our dads would be out till three, four in the morning. We didn't go to the same school but we kinda grew up together.

MOTHER LUCK

That's sweet!

She kisses his cheek and takes a seat in the kitchen chair.

SILVIO

Yeah. I still have this old picture of us, we were maybe 7 and 8 at the time, fast asleep on a big pile of towels, waitin for the bartender to say last call.

MOTHER LUCK

When was the last time you saw him?

SILVIO

We were 14, maybe.

MOTHER LUCK

What happened?

SILVIO

His dad was a real piece of shit. He hated his dad- and I hated him too, but it was deeper with the two of them; like anything good in Brian's life was hated by his dad. Just a real drunken prick.

MOTHER LUCK

So you didn't go over because of him?

SILVIO

Last time we saw each other it was pretty bad.

MOTHER LUCK

Yeah?

SILVIO

Yeah. I was sleeping over his house, he had a finished basement at the time, and we were clownin around- kinda late at night I guess because his dad must have been sleeping. Brian and I were tossing each other around and he threw me into a tray table and we both fell over. It didn't break, but it made a loud crashing noise and we heard his dad start screaming. We were both scared as fuck, but he went to the bottom of the stairs to go face the music and his dad throws the door open, grabs a picture frame off the wall and lobbed it right at his head. It broke everywhere, right off his forehead.

MOTHER LUCK

Are you serious?

SILVIO

Dead serious- I couldn't believe it, I thought he was going to kill us both. He was a real fuckin stugot. But he just slammed the door.

MOTHER LUCK

So what happened?

SILVIO

Nothing that night. We promised that if I could sleepover then I would go to church with them the next day, so he wakes us up real early and we go to leave, just them and I, no mom. But when we're puttin on our seatbelts, his dad goes in the backyard and gets Rusty.

MOTHER LUCK

Who's Rusty?

SILVIO

Their dog.

MOTHER LUCK

Right, that makes sense... you took the dog to church?

SILVIO

We're both confused and Brian's kinda upset, he's asking if the dog is coming and the dad's just being kinda silent. The kid clutches his dog the whole way there. We get off the highway and turn off to the airport field past the Oakdale merge. And in my head I'm like... this dude is gonna kill us.

MOTHER LUCK

So what happened???

SILVIO

He pulled up to the empty field, opened the door and let Rusty run outside. He was thrilled, jumpin all in the grass, y'know, he was this kinda old golden retriever, y'know the postcard family dog. He had him as long as I knew him.

A small silence.

And then he just drove away.

MOTHER LUCK

What?

SILVIO

Yeah, his dad slammed the door and just started the car and left. Brian was screaming and crying and beating on the windows. Rusty chased the car for as long as we kept him in eyeshot, but eventually his legs just gave up.

MOTHER LUCK

Are you fuckin kidding me??

SILVIO

I'm serious, Bird. And then we still went to church.

MOTHER LUCK

What!

SILVIO

We went and Brian cried to himself the whole time, completely silent. I actually held his hand at one point so he knew I was there. I never seen someone so broke before. I actually don't know if I ever have since.

MOTHER LUCK

Baby, that is...unspeakable.

SILVIO

And it troubled me for years, but our friendship really fell apart after that. When you watch someone just get completely, baselessly devastated it really changes the way you feel about each other.

There is like, the worst silence.

SILVIO

I'm sorry.

MOTHER LUCK

No-

SILVIO

I'm so sorry-

MOTHER LUCK

No no no-

SILVIO

This is the worst story you could tell on thanksgiving-

MOTHER LUCK

It's okay!

SILVIO

It's just that when I saw him again, all I saw was his eyes- he always had the kindest face when he was a boy, and seeing him now makes me realize it was his eyes. He's got these forgiving eyes. And they just strike me, y'know, because I know what he's been through.

*He affectionately holds her cheek.
The strongest people have the kindest eyes.*

She bursts into tears- like, all in one second.

SILVIO

Woahwoahwoah!

MOTHER LUCK

I'm sorry-!

He pulls her in tight.

SILVIO

Pretty baby what happened!

She laughs once- it is clear she's crying from being overwhelmed and not exceedingly sad.

MOTHER LUCK

It's just that, Sil, you're so kind-

He laughs as he holds her blubbering body.
Don't laugh I'm serious! You're the sweetest person alive, I can't believe I ever found someone like you. I can't believe you stick around for someone like me.

Silvio coos and strokes her hair.

SILVIO

Cause you so pretttyyyy.

MOTHER LUCK

I'm ... a sea witch.

They laugh.

MOTHER LUCK

Really, Sil, you're the most compassionate person I ever met. It doesn't make sense for you to love me.

SILVIO

Why?

He gives her a second to come up with something.

SILVIO

Really, why?

MOTHER LUCK

I feel this, almost... penchant for cruelty, which alone might be bad- though it seems more situational- but chronically, I am selfish. I ended up with the most giving man I ever met, and you got stuck with a huge brat.

SILVIO

You're too hard on yourself.

That's all he says.

MOTHER LUCK

Really?

SILVIO

You are. Nobody else thinks you the headache you think yourself. Especially not me. You know I love you right?

She laughs sheepishly.

No, really, you know I love you more than anyone alive and that you'll never convince me that you're something that you're not?

She begins to tear again.

You always act like you're hiding the real Birdie, who isn't beautiful and life changing, like she's gonna come out eventually and make us all sorry. That isn't gonna happen. I loved you since before i knew what that meant, and I've never seen it happen.

He kisses her face.

We have each other now. You can let your guard down. You're my very best friend. You're never gonna go away.

There is an unexpected couple of KNOCKS at the front door. It makes Birdie jump, still stewing with emotions. Sil goes to grab the door.

It's Harrison. Big yikes.

Scene 3

MOTHER LUCK

(seeing Harrison)

Oh, good morning! You're early!

Silvio extends his hand to shake, a beacon of politeness always.

SILVIO

Happy Thanksgiving, boss.

HARRISON

Happy Thanksgiving. I hope I'm not too early.

MOTHER LUCK

Not at all, just surprised, you're usually-
(laughs)

you're like, chronically late.

HARRISON
(grumpy)
Yeah, well.

MOTHER LUCK
It's thanksgiving!

HARRISON & MOTHER LUCK
(opposite tones)
Happy Thanksgiving.

*Mother Luck heads over to a wardrobe, grabbing
some stockings and socks.*

MOTHER LUCK
How's the kid?

HARRISON
He's fine.

MOTHER LUCK
(amused when he is not verbose)
Fine, huh?

HARRISON
He's great. He's excited. It's thanksgiving.

MOTHER LUCK
Yuuup.

She rifles, looking for a long sweater.

HARRISON
He's excited for you to meet the little girl.

She spins.

MOTHER LUCK
That's riiiigghhhttt- oh my god, and her mother! Her
name is..

HARRISON
Polly.

MOTHER LUCK
Is it really Polly?

HARRISON
Yeah. You met her, remember?

MOTHER LUCK

That's what her mother named her? Polly?

HARRISON

I don't know. I never asked her.

MOTHER LUCK

You guys spend time with her?

HARRISON

Yeah, they're over all the time. More recently.

MOTHER LUCK

What's she like?

HARRISON

I don't understand, you met her last June-

MOTHER LUCK

I met her once, you know somebody very well you meet one time?

HARRISON

She's uhhh. She's got big... yeah, she's big. Big personality.

MOTHER LUCK

(smirks)
Lovely. She sounds perfect.

HARRISON

They're cookin right now.

MOTHER LUCK

Never in my LIFE! Never did I think I'd see the day that kid roasts a turkey.

(quickfire Italian mama questions)
Does he know it cooks at 325?

HARRISON

I'm sure he knows.

MOTHER LUCK

Did you know?

HARRISON

Now I do.

MOTHER LUCK

He likes the skin crispy, did you tell him 350 for skin crispy?

HARRISON

You can tell him when you get there.

MOTHER LUCK

Okay. But I can't stay for dessert.

HARRISON

Why?

MOTHER LUCK

I told Wilson, I've got an appointment at 6.

HARRISON

Seriously?

MOTHER LUCK

Ew, don't start.

Silvio heads into the bathroom, giving them a moment of privacy.

HARRISON

It's Thanksgiving.

MOTHER LUCK

It's Thursday. Thursday is the studio's busiest day.

HARRISON

Come on. Get dressed.

She starts to put on her stockings. He mutters to himself.

Can't be bothered to spend one whole day with her family.

MOTHER LUCK

Get out.

HARRISON

What?

She peels the stocking off her calf.

MOTHER LUCK

Just go home. I don't wanna deal with your self-flagellation today. I was having a good day till you showed up.

HARRISON

Are you fucking- Birdie-

MOTHER LUCK

Yeah, it really makes me wanna stop what I was doing so I can sit across from your smug fuckin face-

HARRISON

I knew you would-

MOTHER LUCK

Weak ass chin-

HARRISON

I forgot that this is your favorite game, you hold it against me for reminding you that you have a family to attend to.

MOTHER LUCK

Imagine we could have a conversation about anything besides what we owe each other?

HARRISON

Right.

MOTHER LUCK

Really, that's what this is- you're so entitled to my time, I'm sick of it. I don't have to appease it anymore.

HARRISON

But it's not about YOU-

MOTHER LUCK

Yes it is!

HARRISON

It's not about you- you have a son. You promised. You promised you would finally come home. You can't do this to him.

MOTHER LUCK

My relationship with my son is my relationship with my son.

HARRISON

You're so fucking selfish, y'know that? You're somebody's mother- you're not just supposed to raise the kid till it can walk and bath and dress itself, you gotta love it, his whole life-

MOTHER LUCK

I'm sure that mama's boys feel that way.

HARRISON

Don't be cruel.

MOTHER LUCK

No, really, I am sure that you think it's the responsibility of a mother to love a child, endlessly. To never reveal to him that being a mother can kill you, to shelter them from reality-

HARRISON

You didn't shelter him from reality-

MOTHER LUCK

Well I never told him the truth. Raising him was the gift that keeps on taking.

He has had enough. He gathers his jacket.
Love isn't some renewable resource, *darling*, it needs to be replaced when it's drained from someone. Whose job was that? Mine as well?

HARRISON

It was my job. It was. I was supposed to love you and take care of you for the rest of our lives.

(sad beat)

And you fucked him.

MOTHER LUCK

Because I felt so loved.

HARRISON

That's not on me. You're cute to try to make it so- but that self-destructiveness is patented Birdie. It's not my fault you fucked him.

MOTHER LUCK

Alright, no problem. You didn't do it for me. I couldn't give you what you want. Couldn't promise safety, continuity, self-traction. Couldn't build you a family. Didn't happen. Y'know why?

HARRISON

Because you have an arctic heart?

MOTHER LUCK

Because that's your job. Not your mother's, and not mine.

(the silence hangs)

If I didn't have the ability to tell you that at 22 years old then I'm sorry, but that's the truth.

HARRISON

I don't even care about us anymore. Somebody else had to suffer because of you, someone who didn't do anything wrong.

When she doesn't immediately respond, he declares:

If you didn't think you had the capability of being a good mother then you should have fucking said so.

This actually brings her to tears.

MOTHER LUCK

Did anybody ask? Did you?

HARRISON

I didn't know I needed to. Now it's too late.

MOTHER LUCK

Well maybe there wasn't a fucking blueprint to this monumental task- especially not one laid forth by your very dead, immortally righteous mother.

HARRISON

I love this. I love being degraded for reminding you of the life that you chose.

MOTHER LUCK

(screaming through tears)

I chose to be a mother! I didn't choose *this*! I followed the path of life that was set out for me by *others*- by you, and by the society that reproduces you. But did I *choose* to have my life derailed by a force that's beyond my ability to control? To give up whatever path of life I had set out for *myself* to become a vessel for the perpetuation of entitlement? Give up the life *I chose first*?

They're just heaving breaths at each other now. No. I don't believe I signed up for that. It goes without saying that I wouldn't have fucking chosen that.

HARRISON

Well I'm sorry our family was such a goddamn devastation to you.

MOTHER LUCK

No you aren't. No you fucking aren't- because you

come here and you lord yourselves over me with your smug, sarcastic, shit eating face without ever having made ONE attempt to heal what was devastating to me. You're not sorry.

She flings opens her office door.
Instead of asking me if I wasn't ready to be a mother, ask yourself when you'll be ready to be a fucking man. And get out of my fucking face.

He begins to leave.

HARRISON

I hope this made you feel better. You like using words as weapons? You think that's gonna heal you?

He crosses through the door.

MOTHER LUCK

It heals me of all the years I wasted projecting meaning onto your baseless, dogshit analysis of me. You don't understand me. You fucking wish.

She slams the door behind him.

Scene 4

Lights come up on the Mother Luck's studio. Christian, somehow a little skinnier than he was at 21, is positioned behind a massive camera on legs, boxy and old fashioned, with a thick cape hanging off the back. Wanda is seated before him, dressed in period clothing- thick, woolen black dress, bonnet, petticoat. Behind her is a makeshift coffin- overflowing with flowers and ribbons and generally dissonant items. Her face has aged considerably. She sighs loudly.

Mother Luck enters on the scene, seeing that everything is already set up.

MOTHER LUCK

Am I late?

CHRISTIAN

Nope! Right on time. Come on over, let me show you this.

MOTHER LUCK

(impressed)
God, Christian, this is no joke!

CHRISTIAN

This is a Scoville Peerless. It's what they used to shoot tin types in my grandparents day.

MOTHER LUCK

When is this from?

CHRISTIAN

This one was made in the 1860s.

MOTHER LUCK

God damn.

WANDA

What about this dress, huh? I can still smell its previous owner.

CHRISTIAN

Not much I can do about that.

*Mother Luck goes to have a seat beside Wanda.
She paces her hand tenderly on her cheek.*

MOTHER LUCK

How are you holding up?

WANDA

(half-hearted)
Strong, like bull.

Mother Luck hugs her tight.

MOTHER LUCK

Happy thanksgiving.
(pulling away)
God, you smell like arsenic.

CHRISTIAN

Right now I have to pre-set everything, because the whole thing has to happen while the plate is wet. I only have about ten minutes to shoot and develop the plate before it dries.

MOTHER LUCK

Can I see one? I've never even looked at a tin type.

CHRISTIAN

They're not common anymore. Mostly heirlooms. This is one of my mother and grandmother.

He passes her a postcard-sized metal sheet.

MOTHER LUCK

They're next to his coffin?

CHRISTIAN

Yup. These photos really meant something, y'know; for some families this is the only picture they ever got of that family member.

MOTHER LUCK

Their corpse photo??

CHRISTIAN

Their families loved that corpse photo.

WANDA

How is it manufactured?

CHRISTIAN

The image is printed directly onto a metal sheet through hand poured chemistry. I wasn't able to do them before because we didn't have a dark room on site until now. Feels more like Christmas than Thanksgiving!

Mother Luck smiles with a hint of pride, moving over to the door of their newly refurbished dark room. She enters and thumbs through his materials.

MOTHER LUCK

Smells gluey.

CHRISTIAN

Good nose! They used collodion in the civil war to mend human flesh. Kinda like liquid skin.

Wanda makes a fake dry heaving noise.

WANDA

Please don't say liquid skin.

He sits down next to her, in full creative director mode.

CHRISTIAN

19th century postmortem tin types, nine times out of ten, they were stills of women in the throes of their grief. Women were- are?- the moral centers of their homes. Their grieving needed to be much longer and much more visible than men.

Wanda looks down, looking particularly struck due to her costume. Mother Luck pops back out of the dark room.

CHRISTIAN

If you feel like you can't do this, or you don't want to do this, you just let me know.

MOTHER LUCK

She can do it-

CHRISTIAN

Don't speak for her. It's up to her if she can.

WANDA

I can. I'm not sweating like a pig under these lights for nothing.

Christian stands, returning to adjust the camera.

CHRISTIAN

I know, I'm sorry. These cameras are orthochromatic, so they need a lot of light indoors if you're gonna catch any depth of field.

WANDA

What is orthochromatic?

CHRISTIAN

It's gonna make your blue eyes look completely white. I'm wondering a bit about the eyes, actually.

MOTHER LUCK

What about them?

He grabs a handkerchief and sits beside Wanda.

CHRISTIAN

Usually in these tin types, the women sit like this-
(buries face in handkerchief)
kind of collapsed with no visible facial expression.
I don't know if I want that.

WANDA

How come?

CHRISTIAN

I just think grief is more powerful when it's stark.
It doesn't have to be hidden.

Wanda nods. Mother Luck smiles.

MOTHER LUCK

You have great instincts.

He beams. He stands.

CHRISTIAN

I have to go sensitize the plate. Silver nitrate for
three minutes.

*When Christian steps away, Mother Luck arranges
Wanda's body to a position of defeat, trying
different possible poses. When she settle son
one she puts the handkerchief in her hand. She
doesn't cover her face. Christian emerges.*

CHRISTIAN

You look perfect.

MOTHER LUCK

We finally found your medium!

Wanda snorts.

CHRISTIAN

But no laughing, okay? I need you to stay still for
sixty whole seconds.

WANDA

Jesus.

MOTHER LUCK

What! It's only one minute. You'll live.

CHRISTIAN

I really have to nail this in one shot, so we have to
pay attention to everything. The framing, the
lighting, the focus... we have one shot.

MOTHER LUCK

I got it.

WANDA

Got it.

Christian takes his position at the camera.

CHRISTIAN

Now I have to expose the plate. We have to act quickly before it starts to dry.

Mother Luck stands to move out of the shot.

MOTHER LUCK

You ready?

WANDA

Ready.

CHRISTIAN

Okay, don't move. I'm going to remove the lens cap and keep that position until I say stop.

Wanda nods. She settles into the broken posture she set with Mother Luck, holding her handkerchief to her cheekbone. Christian removed the big square lens cap.

It's hard to breathe. The atmosphere is so heavy. Mother Luck whispers 'beautiful', but not loud enough for anyone to hear. Wanda's eyes begin to cloud with emotion. Her neckbones sharpen as she struggles not to move a muscle.

CHRISTIAN

You're amazing. You're almost done.

This makes it even harder to handle. Two big, fat tears well up in a second and spill onto her face, caught by the handkerchief. Her expression remains fierce. She's trying so hard.

MOTHER LUCK

Five more seconds.

CHRISTIAN

And-

(replaces lens cap)

we're finished!

All at once, Wanda crumbles into belly sobs, Mother Luck rushes to her side and Christian picks up the entire camera set up, hustling to

the dark room and shutting the door. Mother Luck sways her back and forth, shushing her like a panicking child.

MOTHER LUCK

I love you. I love you. I'm sorry.

She breathes through her sobs as Mother Luck coos to make her feel better. A long moment passes where they all just sit in their grief.

MOTHER LUCK

Christian, where did you go?

CHRISTIAN

I have to rinse off the chemistry. I'll be right out.

There is a knock on the door of the studio. Mother Luck and Wanda both whip their heads around, not expecting company. Mother Luck goes and answers the door.

It's her son.

Scene 5

They greet in the hustled, polite way family members do.

WILSON

Hey ma-

(kiss)

MOTHER LUCK

Hi, I didn't know you were on your way-

WILSON

I know, I ran out, I had to grab some last minute provisions so I figured I'd stop by, see if you were still here.

(glances)

Hello, my Wanda.

Wanda bows, still in her mourning outfit.

WANDA

Wilson, happy Thanksgiving.

WILSON

You look different. Darker, somehow.

WANDA

Yeah, imagine this, immortal.

From the dark room:

CHRISTIAN

Hey, buddy, I'll be out in ten!

WILSON

No problem, brother, happy Thanksgiving.

He turns to his mother, walking her towards her office for some privacy.

WILSON

Whatsa matter? You don't wanna come over anymore?

MOTHER LUCK

Of course I wanted to come, you think I don't wanna come? It's Thanksgiving!

WILSON

That's what I thought-

MOTHER LUCK

You know how we planned, every week, how we thought of things we could make together and how nice it was gonna be. You know that's what I wanted to do-

WILSON

So what happened? You gonna let him ruin it? Why do you do that, why do you let him get to you-

MOTHER LUCK

Hey-

WILSON

I swear, it's like I ask you for one day- you guys can't put it aside for one day? Can't you just do what you said you were gonna do?

MOTHER LUCK

Look at me: I am trying- against every instinct and desire I have, I'm trying to mend things, to make things easier for everyone else. That's what I do. It's who I am. It's what he made me.

Wilson scoffs, sitting at the banch in front of her office.

No, listen to me: you're old enough now, and I can

tell you with complete honest that as my son, if you ever spend as long as I have working at something that is unequivocally wrong for you, just undeniably incompatible with who you are, then I have failed you as a parent.

He doesn't engage.

MOTHER LUCK

I swear to God. That's what I'll never get over.

WILSON

Would you stop?

MOTHER LUCK

Really, I mean the only job you have as a parent is to set a good example for your kids. If you followed my example, if you gave your life to someone who was to you what he is to me, I would never forgive myself. I would have myself to blame and I couldn't live with the guilt.

There's a heavy silence. She sits beside him.

MOTHER LUCK

Which brings me to my point, something I fully understand now, which is that being a mother... it isn't for someone who's so emotionally sunk in other people. Every since you were born, I could feel everything through you.

(she tucks his hair behind his ear)

You were my guiding light. You were my reason to continue living. Nobody deserves that, though.

He slouches from the weight of the conversation. Really, baby, nobody deserves to have the weight of the world on their shoulders. Especially at that age, you should've just been young and frivolous and you should've been the one growing up.

WILSON

Can I tell you something?

MOTHER LUCK

What?

WILSON

The older I get, the more I understand why things turned out the way they did.

MOTHER LUCK
You think so?

WILSON
Truly. I look at the way your relationship functioned, or didn't function, and I try to imagine how I could've parented through that, and I realize that I ultimately wouldn't have made very different decisions. There weren't many choices, really.

MOTHER LUCK
No, see, that's what tears me up. I don't want you to do what we did.

WILSON
I don't see it turning out like that.

MOTHER LUCK
I see in you... the person I could have become if I had trusted myself. If I didn't go against my instincts. It paralyzes me thinking that you might have given that up.

WILSON
What, because I'm a father?

MOTHER LUCK
Because you're so young, and your life isn't your own anymore.

WILSON
I think that we want different things.

MOTHER LUCK
Do you?

WILSON
I do. I wanted this. You can lay your fears to rest, or stop projecting- knowing that just because you weren't ready for a baby, doesn't mean I wasn't.

She's taken aback.
Seriously, I'm not saying that to be cold- I'm saying that to reassure you that my life is tuning out exactly how I wanted it to. You don't have to live in guilt.

She's lightly crying, but lively in conversation.

MOTHER LUCK

You have a baby now... everything just changed. Watching you go through what completely altered my life, it has me...stirred up. I'm not trying to pull away. I'm just not trying to cloud your joy while I take the time to process.

WILSON

I respect that. But you know what I'd appreciate, though, is if you just listened to me.

MOTHER LUCK

I'm listening.

He's getting worked up.

WILSON

If you listened to me all along you'd know, you'd know that having you around is more important to me than whatever company you feel like you're bringing to the table, okay? I just need you there.

MOTHER LUCK

I know-

WILSON

It's so important to me, ma, it's so important that I have you cause I always just felt like-

MOTHER LUCK

Come here-

They hug. He's crying and talking through his breaths like a kid.

WILSON

I feel like I needed you, a lot closer, and you felt far away from me. You still do. And I need you now.

MOTHER LUCK

I know.

WILSON

I really need you.

MOTHER LUCK

I know, I'm sorry.

WILSON

I'm sorry-

MOTHER LUCK

No no no- my baby. Don't say sorry.

She soothes him for a minute. He pulls away, wiping his eyes and laughing in embarrassment, in security.

WILSON

Hey, look- I know. I know he doesn't make it easy.

MOTHER LUCK

What? Oh, no, that's not-

WILSON

No, really, I know that dad doesn't make it easy. I struggle with him myself.

(she nods)

It means a lot to me to hear you say you were wrong. I don't know if I'm ever gonna get that from him.

MOTHER LUCK

You know what disappoints me?

WILSON

What?

MOTHER LUCK

There's a million and a half shitty men out there. I could've given you one good one to look up to. That really disappoints me.

WILSON

That isn't your responsibility.

MOTHER LUCK

I know.

WILSON

You're only responsible for the men you raise.

She snorts.

MOTHER LUCK

Right.

WILSON

How do you rate yourself?

MOTHER LUCK
Honestly?

WILSON
Uhh, yes!

MOTHER LUCK
I honestly don't feel comfortable taking credit for how wonderful you turned out. I mean, absolutely wonderful.

WILSON
Ohhh, stopppp-

MOTHER LUCK
I'm not even kidding, you know I wouldn't lie- ever since you were kid, you've always been a sponge. So quick to learn and love and adapt and create. I can't take credit for what just turned out to be a reeally special kid.

He nuzzles her shoulder.

WILSON
I love you.

MOTHER LUCK
I love you, honey boy.

WILSON
Come over.

MOTHER LUCK
Ehhh-

WILSON
No, come over, I sent dad home.

MOTHER LUCK
You did? You didn't have to do that-

WILSON
It's fine. He'll get Christmas. We'll find a way to work it out.
(he stands)
There's somebody who's dying to see you, nonna!

Her eyes well up with tears.

MOTHER LUCK
Really?

WILSON

Yes! Yes. Come on. You'll catch her before her
dessert nap.

MOTHER LUCK

Ohhh, I bet she's so small. Like a little gnocci.

WILSON

You have no idea.

He kisses her cheek.

WILSON

Thank you. Really, thank you. I'll go get the car.

MOTHER LUCK

Okay.

*He grabs his jacket, the bag of groceries he
entered with and gives Wanda a quick kiss on the
way out.*

*Mother Luck is brimming with emotion. She
doubles over on the bench. Wanda looks on for a
moment, moved.*

*Wanda goes to the dark room, giving the door a
tap. Christian slides out and she points him to
the camera. He takes his spot. She walks over to
Mother Luck, putting an arm underneath her and
walking her over to the bench beside the coffin.*

*They have a seat, and Mother Luck curls into her
stomach, being cradled and vulnerable in a way
we've never seen her. She cries in what sounds
like relief.*

*Christian put his head under the blanket and
sticks his hand out, counting three, two, one
down on his fingers.*

*The lights cut to black after they hold the pose
for fifteen seconds.*

The End.

