

I-80

By Natalie Estelle Marsan

MOTHER, 58

DAUGHTER, 24

MALE ANNOUNCER/ RADIO HOST

December 23rd. I-80. A black Honda Accord. Black, worn-in leather seats. The front windshield is home to half a dozen national park membership decals that line its perimeter. The back seat is filled with suitcases, backpacks, pillows, and grocery bags of organic snacks. The front cup holders have big empty coffee cups. Uncomfortably stuffed.

Don't Tell Mama Cabaret Haunt, New York, NY

A dark stage, dimly lit by the rosy red and green glow of Christmas lights strung up a single mic

The stand becomes engulfed in light

A voice is heard from above

MALE ANNOUNCER

Okay folks, thanks again for joining us at our Jingle Belles of the Ball Holiday Spectacular this evening. We have one more performer. If we can find her. She might have left. Oh, I see someone running from the bathroom. I think it's her—

DAUGHTER fast walks up to the mic

DAUGHTER

—Hi. Sorry.

MALE ANNOUNCER

We thought we lost you.

DAUGHTER

Oh. No.

MALE ANNOUNCER

Take a moment to collect yourself. Be present with us. Breathe us in. Where are you from?

DAUGHTER

I live in Brooklyn.

MALE ANNOUNCER

I'm a Brooklynite myself. Whereabouts in Brooklyn?

DAUGHTER

Sorry, I'm not from Brooklyn. I'm—my family lives in Wisconsin.

MALE ANNOUNCER

Wisconsin. So, you're a cheesehead?

DAUGHTER

No. I'm not from there. I went to high school there– well, part of high school there–but I was in Indiana before that, and before that I guess...I am originally from the District of Columbia.

MALE ANNOUNCER

Okay!

Now, correct me if I'm wrong, but you've got some family in the audience tonight, right?

MOTHER

WOO!

MOTHER sits in the front row of the audience

DAUGHTER

My mom is here, yeah.

MALE ANNOUNCER

I saw you two sitting together earlier. You know, I could have sworn you were sisters.

DAUGHTER smiles and nods

MALE ANNOUNCER

Well, this one's for you, Mom.

Take it away.

*A piano backtrack begins playing for "Silent Night"
DAUGHTER takes a deep breath and begins singing*

DAUGHTER

Silent night, holy night

All is calm, all is bright

Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child

Holy Infant so tender and mild

Sleep in heavenly peace

Sleep in heavenly peace

DAUGHTER's singing transitions into Bing Crosby's Silent Night, which continues to play as lights come up on

MILE 0: Brooklyn, New York

MOTHER sits in the driver's seat of the car, waiting for DAUGHTER.

DAUGHTER enters from offstage dragging a large suitcase which she puts it in the backseat of the car. MOTHER is very awake. DAUGHTER is practically sleepwalking.

Bing Crosby's Silent Night fades as we see

MILE 79: East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania

DAUGHTER is sleeping.

MOTHER turns on the radio

Mild static.

MOTHER turns it off.

MILE 167: Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania

DAUGHTER is attempting to sleep.

MOTHER takes a sip of her coffee and turns on the radio.

Loud static.

DAUGHTER opens her eyes and gives MOTHER a look.

MOTHER turns it off.

MILE 210: Mackeyville, Pennsylvania

DAUGHTER looks like she's sleeping again.

MOTHER tries the radio one more time.

Loud static turns into

RADIO HOST

-And that fog should thin out at around 10 this morning. We're looking at a high of 34, but don't let the partly cloudy skies fool you today. You can thank a little lady named Nina for snow later this afternoon, maybe 4-6 inches before it's over-

DAUGHTER aggressively turns off the radio.

DAUGHTER

I'm awake.

MILE 288: DuBois, Pennsylvania

MOTHER and DAUGHTER both look stage left at the oncoming traffic from the street light. MOTHER is hunched over the steering wheel. DAUGHTER curled up against the passenger seat window on her phone.

MOTHER

Right turn signal. Can I turn on red?

DAUGHTER

I think so. Have you ever heard of this? La Nina?

MOTHER

Do I have to wait for the signal?

DAUGHTER

Sorry, La Niña.

MOTHER

I don't want to get a ticket or something.

DAUGHTER

"Weather conditions in the Northeast remain uncertain due to the influence of a La Niña."

You could have gone there.

MOTHER

Do I have to wait for the signal?

DAUGHTER

I don't know. I think you can go.

MOTHER

Okay. The guy behind me went, too.

DAUGHTER

According to weather.gov, "La Niña refers to the periodic cooling of ocean surface temperatures in the central and east-central equatorial Pacific."

MOTHER

It just means it's gonna be a really snowy winter. Where do you want to eat? There's a lot of restaurants over in that little shopping mall right there.

DAUGHTER

(Leans across MOTHER and looks out her window) Ashley Homestore and Lowe's.

MOTHER

I see an Asian restaurant.

DAUGHTER

Mmm—I don't know.

MOTHER

What do you want?

DAUGHTER

Something light.

MOTHER

A salad? What?

DAUGHTER

Well, more than that.

MOTHER

I can't read your mind.

DAUGHTER

I'm not sure I'm hungry.

MOTHER

Oh my god, pick something!

DAUGHTER

I want...a sandwich.

MOTHER

(Looking around for a sandwich shop) Sandwich. Sandwich. I don't see sandwiches.

DAUGHTER looks out her window

DAUGHTER

Imagine being buried in DuBois, Pennsylvania.

MOTHER

I'm gonna be buried in Brookfield, Wisconsin.

DAUGHTER

No, you're not.

MOTHER

As of today, I am.

DAUGHTER

You can be buried in D.C.

MOTHER

No.

DAUGHTER

Get buried in Chicago with Grandma and Papa.

MOTHER

Why can't I be buried with your father?

DAUGHTER

He'll probably want to be buried in Cape Cod. Oh, there you go. You love Cape Cod.

MOTHER

That would be nice. The fantasy version of me lives on the Cape and tends to an herb garden.

DAUGHTER

The real you can rest there for all of eternity. Oh, look, Super Sub & Six Pak.

MOTHER pulls into the parking lot of a restaurant. She turns the ignition off and starts gathering her things.

MOTHER

My keys. My purse. My coat.

DAUGHTER

(Picks up a strand of MOTHER's hair that's landed on her sleeve) Your hair.

MOTHER

How can you tell it's mine?

DAUGHTER

It's half grey.

MOTHER

Ouch.

DAUGHTER

Well..

MOTHER

(Opens her car door, stands up and remembers) I need to fill up my water bottle.

DAUGHTER

Do it now before it's too late. A little lady named Nina is gonna stop us in the middle of nowhere and snow us in and we won't have any water. Only snow.

MOTHER

We'll be home before that happens. If it happens.

DAUGHTER

It's happening today. 'Weather conditions in the Northeast-

MOTHER

I know all about the weather conditions in the Northeast. I was on I-80 two days ago and those weather reports said the same thing. I didn't see a single flurry.

DAUGHTER

Did they mention Nina?

MOTHER

Don't be scared.

DAUGHTER

I'm not scared. Driving sixteen hours in one day is just crazy. You know that, right?

MOTHER

I didn't have a performance two days before Christmas, you did.

DAUGHTER

There's no way we get home before ten.

MOTHER

It'll be ten thirty if you don't hurry up. Get out of the car.

DAUGHTER

(Opens her car door, stands up and remembers) Damnit. I'm assuming you don't have any period stuff.

MOTHER

I might have a panty liner. I might.

DAUGHTER

Does this place have a pharmacy or something?

MOTHER

You didn't pack stuff?

DAUGHTER

I forgot.

MOTHER

I'm sure it does, but-

DAUGHTER

Good. You can run in.

MOTHER

You can run in.

DAUGHTER

Oh, sure. I'll walk down the aisles with blood dripping down my legs all over the linoleum floors.

MOTHER

(Shuts her car door loudly) You'll need a bathroom in order to put a tampon in.

DAUGHTER

I thought I'd just do it in the passenger seat.

MOTHER

I don't need to see that.

DAUGHTER

You act like you don't have a va-

MOTHER

Grandma went through menopause at 42. I went through menopause at 39. You know the stress of the move-

DAUGHTER

(Shuts her car door loudly) I'm hungry.

MOTHER

You're making fun of me.

DAUGHTER

No, I'm not.

MOTHER

Yes, you are. It's not funny. You're exactly like me.

(Looking at DAUGHTER's hips) You'll go through early menopause, too.

DAUGHTER

Why would you say that? What's wrong with you?

MOTHER

I don't wish for it, but you've got my genes. We'll see what happens.

DAUGHTER

I am not *you*.

MOTHER

You're a mini me.

Do you want to drive after lunch?

DAUGHTER

Not even a little.

MOTHER

You're gonna make me do it?

DAUGHTER

I'm in pain.

MOTHER

That's not very fair.

DAUGHTER

Life's not fair. You should know, you went through menopause at 39.

DAUGHTER walks offstage towards the restaurant

MOTHER takes her water bottle from the front seat, locks the car, and follows DAUGHTER

MILE 292: Super Sub & Six Pak Parking Lot, DuBois, Pennsylvania

DAUGHTER and MOTHER walk back towards the car together. They are both looking stage right.

DAUGHTER

I think they're on a date.

MOTHER

(Opens her car door) Do you think he's cheating on his wife with her? She's way younger than him and they were drinking beer at lunch.

DAUGHTER

(Opens her car door) No one has ever opened the car door for me.

MOTHER

Maybe he's a widower. That would explain the age difference. I could see you with an older man.

DAUGHTER

Really?

MOTHER

Someone who takes care of you. Cooks for you. A provider.

MOTHER sticks the key in the ignition and pulls out of the parking lot

DAUGHTER

I want someone who makes me laugh and is smart and isn't full of himself and is nice. Someone who takes me seriously as an artist and thinks I'm amazing and fun and sexy.

MOTHER

I agree with everything you said except for the last part. Just...remain somewhat chaste.

DAUGHTER

When did you get married again? 24?

MOTHER

Yes, I was 24. I was married.

DAUGHTER

Exactly. At my age, you weren't chaste.

MOTHER

I was married. Just wait until you're married.

DAUGHTER

I can't now.

MOTHER

I'm getting upset.

MOTHER begins nodding her head up and down and side to side.

DAUGHTER

What are you doing?

MOTHER

I'm having shooting pain in my shoulder. When you get to be my age, staying in a hotel for multiple nights in a row really messes with your system.

DAUGHTER

I barely fit in my apartment.

*DAUGHTER reaches behind her seat, pulls a very worn, very flat football-shaped pillow and places it behind
MOTHER's head*

MOTHER

A little higher. Oh..okay. No, a little lower. Right between my shoulder blades– yes. Okay, our last stops will be the pharmacy, maybe gas–wait, definitely gas–and that's it. No more stops. We need to keep moving.

DAUGHTER

Yes, drill sergeant.

MOTHER

Don't make fun of me, please. I'm stressed. The Christmas shopping is done, I hope–your father always leaves the stocking stuffers until the last minute which makes me–Oh, that reminds me, we need more stationary for thank you notes, which you and your sisters are going to do BEFORE New Years because I don't want to be hounding you to finish them. I don't like having to be mean during the holidays.

DAUGHTER

I'll be hungover on January 1st.

MOTHER

I thought you weren't drinking?

DAUGHTER

I wasn't drinking in November, but I'll be drinking in December.

MOTHER

You don't get drunk?

DAUGHTER

I'm a lightweight.

MOTHER

If you nurse one drink all night, you won't get out of control or put yourself in harm's way.

DAUGHTER

Totally.

MOTHER

I know you think I'm a square, but I've-

DAUGHTER

Only gotten drunk twice in my life. On my 21st birthday and while visiting my friend at The University of Dayton.

DAUGHTER grunts

MOTHER

What?

DAUGHTER

(mumbled) Nothing. A cramp.

MOTHER

What?

DAUGHTER

I'm cramping.

MOTHER

Curl up in a little ball. Tomorrow, I'm going to try making meatballs from this recipe I got from Rosa, my coworker Rosa from Sicily/

DAUGHTER

You're making the meatballs?

MOTHER

Yes. Danielle's closed, remember?

DAUGHTER

When?

MOTHER

A couple months ago. It was the only store in Brookfield that I liked.

DAUGHTER

You didn't tell me this.

MOTHER

I called you and told you.

DAUGHTER

I would have remembered if you told me Danielle's closed.

MOTHER

I told you. You must have been selectively hearing me.

DAUGHTER

Why did it close?

MOTHER

I don't know, maybe we were the only customers.

DAUGHTER

That can't be—if I'm not eating Danielle's spaghetti and meatballs on Christmas Day, then I don't want spaghetti and meatballs at all.

MOTHER

That's black and white thinking.

DAUGHTER

No, it's just—I like that Wisconsin tradition. It's our only one.

DAUGHTER turns on the radio, flips through a few channels of static, and end up at

RADIO HOST

—It's moving, and it's moving fast. This storm is pretty much due eastward at about 30, 35 miles per hour. As we head into and through this afternoon, Western Pennsylvania will experience some scattered showers before temperatures begin to drop, and then, snow. Beware of icy road conditions—

MOTHER turns the radio off

DAUGHTER

Worst case scenario, we have to stop and get a hotel.

MOTHER

I am not sleeping in another hotel. We will be home for Christmas Eve, okay?

DAUGHTER

Alright, we'll drive through the storm. I'll do it. I'll drive through the blizzard and scream up to the sky like Lieutenant Dan in Forrest Gump during the hurricane.

(Rolls down her window and sticks her head outside) "YOU CALL THIS A STORM, YOU SON OF A BITCH? I'M RIGHT HERE! COME. AND. GET ME."

DAUGHTER shuts her window, leans over her legs, and groans

MOTHER

It's just a cramp.

DAUGHTER

You haven't had cramps in 20 years. You don't remember what they're like.

MOTHER

They're no worse than childbirth, and I remember what that's like.

DAUGHTER

Yeah, let's talk about you.

MOTHER

I'm just trying to make you feel better. Forgive me.

DAUGHTER

God should give you a gold medal for being such an A+ human being.

MOTHER

You're being a bitch right now.

DAUGHTER

I'm sorry.

MOTHER

You're like a cactus. Very prickly. You've been this way since you were a baby.

DAUGHTER

I get it. I'm sorry.

MOTHER

No, I drove all the way to New York to see you perform and you're not grateful at all. 1500 miles round-trip in four days, just for you, and there's no attitude of gratitude.

DAUGHTER leans over her legs and begins to cry

MOTHER

Oh, honey.

DAUGHTER

I'm fine.

MOTHER

What is it?

DAUGHTER

I just....I feel...empty. Life is....really hard. I have to figure it out all by myself.....but I feel like.....I keep messing everything up.

MOTHER

I think it's normal in your line of work to have these fears, but you simply can't give up. You're smart. You're multifaceted. You just need to have self-discipline and work hard every day and you will reach your goals. I was listening to my podcast that I love with those actors and one of them said something that stuck with me. One of them said that rejection is just redirection. When I was 24, I had no idea what life had in store for me. But I loved your father and I knew we would figure out the rest as we went along, and we did.

And, if I'm being honest with you—I know you're gonna make fun of me for saying this—I think if you started praying again, if you started going to church again, you would find some peace. You have to trust in the plan God has for you. It's the only certainty there is.

MILE 297: Penn Highlands Community Pharmacy, DuBois, Pennsylvania

MOTHER pulls into the parking lot of the pharmacy

MOTHER grabs DAUGHTER's hand and kisses it

MOTHER

In and out, okay?

DAUGHTER gingerly gets out of the car

MOTHER grabs her phone and makes a call

MOTHER

Hey, just calling to update you on our trip. We just stopped for lunch in DuBois, Pennsylvania. We're at the local pharmacy now. Someone forgot her equipment, as you would say. I tried calling you last night after the show. I assume everything's okay. You're probably out running errands or puttering around the house or something. Check in on us sometime today. I miss you.

MOTHER hangs up the phone and flips through some radio stations, and....all loud static.

MOTHER turns the radio off

MILE 299: Route 219, DuBois, Pennsylvania

MOTHER and DAUGHTER are back on the road

DAUGHTER

The little old lady at the cash register was so nice. Her name was RoseMarie. I told her I really liked her name, and she was like "Oh, thank you, sweetie. I've always liked it, too." Then she told me I looked like a princess because of my long neck and high cheekbones.

DAUGHTER pulls out a candy bar out of the pharmacy plastic bag and starts unwrapping it

DAUGHTER

Want some?

MOTHER

No. Why did you buy ultra maxi pads? You don't use them.

DAUGHTER

No more pit stops.

MOTHER tentatively hits the radio button and 'Joy To The World' starts playing

MOTHER: Finally!

"Repeat the sounding joy"

"Repeat the sounding joy"

"Repeeeeeeat, repeeeeat the sounding joy"

Sing with me.

DAUGHTER

I don't feel like it.

MOTHER

Nothing makes me happier than hearing you sing.

DAUGHTER

I don't like this song.

MOTHER

C'mon. It'll make you feel better.

MOTHER turns up the volume

MOTHER

"The glories of His righteousness"

"And Heaven and nature sing

DAUGHTER

(Echoing MOTHER) "And Heaven and nature sing"

MOTHER

"And Heaven and nature sing"

DAUGHTER

"And Heaven and na-"

MOTHER and DAUGHTER

"And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature-"

Very loud static.

DAUGHTER turns it off.

MOTHER

Everytime I try to get in the holiday spirit, the universe takes it away from me.

DAUGHTER

I used to start getting excited for Christmas in July. Everytime I had to take something off of my list, I got really sad. It felt unfair. I would get so nervous to give it to you because I didn't want you or Santa to think I was greedy, but I always ended up with what I wanted.

MOTHER

I remember you sneaking into my closet, finding my Christmas gift hiding spots and ruining a lot of surprises.

DAUGHTER

Being a kid is so good.

MOTHER

When I was five, my father put a lump of coal in my stocking.

DAUGHTER

Seriously?

MOTHER

I'm telling the truth.

DAUGHTER

You punish me with your truth.

MOTHER

You get to tell stories, but I don't?

DAUGHTER

Your stories are depressing. Serious question: Do you have any happy memories?

MOTHER

Not an arsenal of them, no. I'm taking 219 to I-80, right?

DAUGHTER

(looking at her phone) Yep. Oh.

MOTHER

What?

DAUGHTER

I just got one of those Emergency Alerts. Snow Squall Warning till 9:15 PM EST. Sudden whiteouts. Icy roads. Slow down! Now, what the hell is a squall?

MOTHER

What are you doing?

DAUGHTER

What?

MOTHER

This is some sort of scheme?

DAUGHTER

What?

MOTHER

You're sending me some subliminal messaging?

DAUGHTER

Are you okay?

MOTHER

I know you! I *know* you. You're trying to pull one over on me. 'Mom, I got caught passing mean notes in Spanish class so I chewed up my snack and pretended to throw it up on my desk to get sent home instead of the principal's office'.

DAUGHTER

Check your phone. You have the same alert.

MOTHER

What are you hiding?

DAUGHTER

I don't, I—where's your phone?

MOTHER

I don't have it.

DAUGHTER

Where is it? I'll get it for you.

MOTHER

It's in my purse, but—just leave it. I'm going to say this one more time. We are not staying in a hotel, okay?

We are powering through this drive. We're not stopping for more candy or pads. We may or may not even stop to pee. We'll keep assessing that.

DAUGHTER opens all the car vents and turns on the fan

MOTHER

Honey, it's freezing outside. Please don't do that.

DAUGHTER

I'm sweating. I feel sick.

MOTHER

Stop eating chocolate. You just had a meal.

DAUGHTER

I need you to pull over.

MOTHER

Absolutely not.

DAUGHTER

Mom, I am going to throw up. Pull over.

MOTHER

I can't pull over right this minute.

DAUGHTER

Stop on the shoulder.

MOTHER

No, I'll get arrested.

DAUGHTER

You won't.

MOTHER

I'm not stopping on the side of the road. It's dangerous.

DAUGHTER

Oh..

MOTHER

Find an empty bag.

DAUGHTER

Be quiet for a second.

MOTHER

I'm not an octopus. I can't drive and search- OH. What was that?

DAUGHTER

Oh, shit.

MOTHER

You were distracting me/

DAUGHTER

Did we hit something?/

MOTHER

I didn't see anything. Shit.

MOTHER puts her emergency blinkers on, pulls over, and gets out of the car to check the front wheels

MOTHER

(From outside the car) It was a bunny.

DAUGHTER

(From inside the car) What?

MOTHER

(From outside the car) WE HIT A BUNNY.

DAUGHTER

(From inside the car) A BUNNY?

MOTHER

(From outside the car) YES.

DAUGHTER

(From inside the car) IS IT DEAD?

MOTHER

(From outside the car) YES, WE RAN OVER IT.

DAUGHTER

(From inside the car) YOU RAN IT OVER. I DIDN'T RUN OVER IT.

MOTHER

(From outside the car) ITS YOUR FAULT. YOU WERE DISTRACTING ME.

DAUGHTER throws up on the floor of the car

MOTHER

(From outside the car) WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

DAUGHTER throws up again

MOTHER

(From outside the car) STOP IT.

MOTHER opens DAUGHTER's door

DAUGHTER

It's on my shoes. It's all over the carpet.

MOTHER

Don't touch it.

DAUGHTER

I touched it.

MOTHER

You couldn't find a bag?

DAUGHTER

It was hurting me. I needed to get it out.

MOTHER

You can't just 'get it out' all over someone else's car. This is my car!

DAUGHTER

It was coming. I couldn't stop it.

MOTHER

You could have opened the door at least, I mean—scrape it off the carpet.

DAUGHTER

With what?

MOTHER

Go over there, by those trees. Find a twig. Quickly. Don't be a lazy looker.

DAUGHTER walks off stage right

MOTHER comes around to the front of the car and pulls out her phone to call someone

MOTHER

Answer. Answer the damn phone- Hi. We have a problem. Well, we just ran over a rabbit. No, we aren't back on the highway yet. At least it's not another deer...The car is fine, but...I'm not calling AAA, what are they going to do? We hit the rabbit and then your daughter threw up all over herself in the car. She was eating chocolate right after lunch...she's fine, she just over ate. I told her not to—well, nobody listens to me. I'm so tired. I've done all the driving, and I'm gonna have to do the rest of it. You should be here.

DAUGHTER walks back to the car with a pile of leaves

DAUGHTER

The twigs were frozen to the ground.

DAUGHTER takes the carpet out of the passenger side door and starts scraping it off

MOTHER

You could have taken off work. You chose not to. That's fine, but just know that was a selfish, self-serving thing to do. I don't get to be selfish. I don't get that luxury–

*MOTHER looks over to see DAUGHTER, bent over the mat
The bottom of DAUGHTER's pants is soaked in blood. An alarming amount of blood.*

MOTHER

Oh my god. She's bleeding.

DAUGHTER

What?

MOTHER

I don't know. She's bleeding, she's covered in blood.

DAUGHTER

Oh, no.

MOTHER

We have to go to the ER.

DAUGHTER

No, we don't.

MOTHER

Dad wants me to call 911. I'm putting him on speaker.

DAUGHTER

Don't put him on speaker. It's just my period. It's really heavy.

MOTHER

She's lying to me.

DAUGHTER

Please hang up the phone.

MOTHER

Take off your pants.

DAUGHTER

No, that's weird.

MOTHER

Are you cutting yourself? On your legs?

DAUGHTER

Are you joking?

MOTHER

Tell me the truth.

DAUGHTER

It's my period. That's it. You just don't like that answer.

MOTHER

I gotta go. I'm calling now. I will. Bye.

MOTHER hangs up the phone and begins dialing another number

DAUGHTER

Who are you calling?

MOTHER

911.

DAUGHTER

No, you're not.

MOTHER

The paramedics will tell me the truth.

*DAUGHTER tries to grab MOTHERS phone out of her hand
They struggle for it, but DAUGHTER takes the phone, and ends the call*

DAUGHTER

You weren't calling them. You didn't even dial 911

MOTHER

You just assaulted me.

DAUGHTER

You held the phone up to your ear like you were making a call.

MOTHER

You could go to prison for what you just did to me.

DAUGHTER

You're insane. Like, actually insane.

MOTHER

Give me back my phone.

DAUGHTER

No.

MOTHER

Damnit. I'm not messing around, give it back.

DAUGHTER

No, you might actually call 911.

MOTHER walks back around to the drivers side and gets in the car

DAUGHTER

(From outside the car) What are you doing?

MOTHER

(From inside the car) I'M DRIVING TO THE POLICE STATION.

DAUGHTER

(From outside the car) You're going to leave me here on the side of the road?

MOTHER sticks the keys in the ignition and turns on the car.

DAUGHTER

(From outside the car) How are you getting to the police station without your phone? I HAVE YOUR PHONE.

MOTHER

(From inside the car) I HAVE YOURS.

DAUGHTER feels in her pockets and realizes she left her phone in the car

DAUGHTER places her hands on the hood of the car

DAUGHTER

(From outside the car) STOP.

MOTHER lays on the horn

DAUGHTER

(From outside the car) STOP IT. FUCK. OKAY. I'M HAVING A MISCARRIAGE.

DAUGHTER starts waving her hands, and MOTHER stops

MOTHER

(From inside the car) I couldn't hear that.

DAUGHTER comes around to the passenger side, picks up the carpet, and gets back into the car

DAUGHTER

I already went to the hospital. I'm having a miscarriage.

Silence

MOTHER

Who's the father?

DAUGHTER

He's not a father.

MILE 320: Alaska, Pennsylvania

MOTHER and DAUGHTER stare at the road in silence

DAUGHTER turns on the radio

Loud static, followed by

RADIO HOST

-The National Weather Service in Jefferson County has issued an-

MOTHER turns it off

MILE 339: Turkey City, Pennsylvania

MOTHER has nothing to say.

DAUGHTER has something to say, but all that comes out is

DAUGHTER

Am I in trouble?

MILE 351: Clintonville, Pennsylvania

DAUGHTER scrolls on her phone. Suddenly, she audibly gasps.

DAUGHTER

Guess what?

MOTHER

...

DAUGHTER

Rachel and Connor are getting a divorce.

MOTHER

They just got married.

DAUGHTER

Less than a year. No way.

MOTHER

We bought them that really expensive standing mixer. Maybe they can get the marriage annulled.

DAUGHTER

Maybe she cheated.

MOTHER

That's awful.

DAUGHTER

Women cheat, too.

MOTHER

The divorce.

DAUGHTER

Oh, I know.

MOTHER

How old is she?

DAUGHTER

A year younger than me.

MOTHER

Their families must be devastated.

DAUGHTER

They probably just fell out of love with each other.

MOTHER

Love is a verb. It's an action, not a feeling. When you marry someone, you are choosing to love them everyday. Not *like* them everyday; love them. I think people your age want to rush into everything.

DAUGHTER

They've been together since high school.

MOTHER

They clearly weren't prepared for marriage.

DAUGHTER

Were you prepared for marriage?

MOTHER

I was willing to make the sacrifices necessary to keep my marriage together.

DAUGHTER

So, no.

MOTHER

Well, no, I just put in the hard work over time to build that mutual love and respect on top of our very strong foundation of friendship.

DAUGHTER

Yeah, so no.

At least they don't have kids.

MOTHER

That's funny to you?

DAUGHTER

It's a little funny.

MOTHER

I don't find that funny at all.

DAUGHTER

I'm on edge.

MOTHER

Miscarriages are not funny.

DAUGHTER

I know.

MOTHER

My college roommate delivered a dead baby at eight months and could never get pregnant again. It's a tragedy. It should never be taken lightly.

You know what else isn't funny? Having unprotected sex and becoming a single mom. What did you think? You were going to have a baby, and I wouldn't know?

DAUGHTER

I didn't—we weren't together for very long. I didn't tell him. I didn't tell anyone.

MOTHER

You don't look like you've gained any weight.

DAUGHTER

Thank you.

MOTHER

Tall women like us, we do carry pregnancies elegantly.

Why were you sleeping with this guy so early on in the relationship? I mean, no wonder it didn't last, you gave him exactly what he wanted.

DAUGHTER

Yeah, I did. Do you feel better now?

MOTHER

I'm processing—

DAUGHTER

Take your time. Spare me the gut punches though, you're too late.

MOTHER

Oh, God.

DAUGHTER

How about "Are you okay?" or "I'm sorry for your loss."?

MOTHER

I'm at a loss.

MOTHER notices the gas light is on

MOTHER

Did we forget to fill up the tank?

DAUGHTER

I guess.

MOTHER

Goddamnit.

DAUGHTER

It's okay.

MOTHER

No, it's not. We have to stop again. We keep losing momentum.

DAUGHTER

We need gas. Plus, we're never going to outmaneuver a snowstorm.

MOTHER

A potential snowstorm.

DAUGHTER

It's real, Mom.

MOTHER

I don't know..I just don't know. I'm exhausted. I took the first shift driving because you were having outrageous psychosomatic period pain-

DAUGHTER

Psychosomatic?

MOTHER

I assumed you were trying to get out of driving. I was wrong, okay? I admit it. I was wrong. You lied to me, and I believed you.

DAUGHTER

Let me explain–

MOTHER

You make me feel like an idiot, and then you look at me like I'm crazy for being upset. Gaslighter! You are gaslighting me. You think I don't know what that means, but I do. So, no, I don't want to hear anything else from you.

MILE 394: Speedway Gas Station, Youngstown, OH

MOTHER stands outside of the car, which is parked at a gas pump. She talks on the phone, pacing back and forth.

DAUGHTER is inside of the gas station cleaning up.

MOTHER

You could have offered to come with me, but it would have been an inconvenience for you. I don't expect anything different, it's been 35 years. It won't be the next 35 years, I'm telling you that right now. The bottom line is—you didn't care enough to do what I needed this time. I follow you around the country! You want a new job in a new city? I uproot my life for you a dozen times, but you can't give up one long weekend? What the hell, you know? When you do things like this, you hurt me. Call me when you get this.

DAUGHTER walks towards the car carrying a plastic bag of bloody clothes and a newly washed carpet

DAUGHTER

It's still pretty wet.

MOTHER

Put it on the hood for a second.

DAUGHTER puts the the plastic bag of clothes in the backseat and lays the carpet on the hood of the car

MOTHER

The tank is full.

DAUGHTER

Good.

MOTHER

Did you brush your teeth?

DAUGHTER

No.

MOTHER makes a face

DAUGHTER

What?

MOTHER

That's gross.

DAUGHTER

Where are we? Close to Cleveland?

MOTHER

An hour and fifteen minutes away.

DAUGHTER

Remember when you took me to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame?

MOTHER

I remember.

DAUGHTER

I can't picture the museum, but I remember we went to a Browns game afterwards and that's where I tried a hotdog for the first and last time. Disgusting.

MOTHER

I believe I scheduled a guided tour for you so you could learn about the musicians and the history of rock and roll.

DAUGHTER

You probably did.

MOTHER

'Thank you for always finding cool ways to foster my creativity, Mom.'

'Thank you for driving out to see my performance, Mom.'

'Thank you for all the voice lessons, Mom!'

DAUGHTER

Can I show you what I've been learning?

MOTHER

No, we need to get on the road.

DAUGHTER

C'mon. Super quick, I promise. It'll make you feel better.

DAUGHTER comes beside MOTHER, takes her chin and opens her jaw

MOTHER

I have to do it?

DAUGHTER

I'll show you the way my voice teacher shows me. Relax your tongue and your facial muscles. Good. Now, match my pitch.

DAUGHTER sings a note

MOTHER attempts to make a sound, but just giggles

DAUGHTER

Do it! Actually try!

MOTHER

Hold on.

MOTHER is trying to keep a straight face

She collects herself and opens her mouth

MOTHER

Ahh

DAUGHTER gently takes the back of MOTHER's neck and lengthens it.

DAUGHTER

Stand up straight. You're collapsing through the back of your neck. Try again.

MOTHER

AHHHHHHHHHHH

MOTHER and DAUGHTER break out in fits of laughter

MOTHER

I'm not a singer!

DAUGHTER

You weren't breathing!

MOTHER

I don't like being touched.

DAUGHTER

You're very stiff.

MOTHER

I'll leave the singing to you.

DAUGHTER

I know something that would make you feel nice and loose/

MOTHER

Chiropractors are not real doctors.

DAUGHTER

Yes they are. They just get a different certification.

MOTHER

I've read countless articles about those neck adjustments. People have been permanently injured. Paralyzed. Do you want that?

DAUGHTER

You said you would get adjusted when I get nominated for a Grammy.

MOTHER

I never said that. I think you've imagined me saying that-

DAUGHTER

Yes you did. You said we could go together.

MOTHER

If you win a Grammy, I'll go with you. But I'm not doing the neck ones.

DAUGHTER

I think if the doctor just went-

DAUGHTER makes loud cracking noises and motions with her hands

DAUGHTER

-You wouldn't be so uptight.

Beat

MOTHER

Well, I learned at a young age how to suck it up and do things that I don't want to do. I'm better at that than other people. I constantly *force* myself to do the things that make life good for everybody else. Not for me.

MOTHER feels a couple snow flurries hit her cheek

MOTHER walks towards the passenger side and takes the carpet off of the hood

MOTHER

This still smells.

DAUGHTER

Do you want me to drive?

MOTHER

Can you drive?

DAUGHTER

I can if you want me to.

*MOTHER gets in the car, followed by DAUGHTER
DAUGHTER puts the car in drive and pulls out of the gas station
MOTHER turns on the radio and "The Twelve Days of Christmas" is playing*

*On the third day of Christmas
my true love gave to me
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves,
And a partridge in a pear tree
On the fourth day of Christmas
my true love gave to me
Four calling birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves,
And a partridge in a pear tree
On the fifth day of Christmas
my true love gave to me*

MOTHER

FIVE GOLDEN RINGS

*MOTHER looks over and sees DAUGHTER laughing
MOTHER immediately turns the song off*

DAUGHTER

You don't have to turn it off.

MOTHER

What's wrong with that song? You don't like it because I like it.

DAUGHTER

We can listen to it.

MOTHER

I don't want to be made fun of.

DAUGHTER

I'm not—I think you're funny.

MOTHER

I'm not trying to be funny. Your father says I have an underrated sense of humor.

DAUGHTER

You believe him and not me?

MOTHER

I don't believe either of you.

DAUGHTER

Why?

MOTHER

You both tell me what I want to hear, and then you do whatever you want to do.

DAUGHTER

I'm sorry I lied to you.

MOTHER

I want a four part apology.

DAUGHTER

I don't remember how to do that.

MOTHER

Yes, you do.

DAUGHTER

Mom, I'm sorry I lied to you about dating someone, getting pregnant, and having a miscarriage. It was wrong because it hurt your feelings. In the future, I will tell you I'm dating someone, that I'm pregnant, and that I'm having a miscarriage. Will you forgive me?

MOTHER

That was weak.

DAUGHTER

I'm not six years old anymore. I didn't want to tell you.

MOTHER

You knew you were doing something bad.

DAUGHTER

I don't want you to know everything about me. Especially my sex life.

MOTHER

You're right. I don't want to know about your sex life, just like you don't want to know about mine.

DAUGHTER

You don't have a sex life.

MOTHER gives DAUGHTER a look

DAUGHTER

To me. You don't have a sex life to me.

You had sex three times, had three kids, and that's it. There's no life.

MOTHER

I know I set a good example for you and your sisters. If I said I was going to do something for you, I did it.

I was at every school pick up and drop off, every dance recital, every swim meet, every dentist appointment. I was there. I showed up. I'm a good mom. I work hard. I don't drink. I don't smoke. I don't cheat, and I don't lie.

DAUGHTER

Have you ever heard of the shadow self?

MOTHER

No.

DAUGHTER

It's actually a psychological term, a Jungian term. You know, Carl Jung? Anyhoo, the shadow self is the most repressed part of your psyche. It's basically where you unconsciously put all the parts of yourself that you don't like or you're embarrassed of. So, sometimes it works and those parts really do stay repressed, but the issue with the shadow self is that it always ends up coming out in our shadow behavior—

MOTHER

You're blaming your lies on a shadow? Do you hear yourself?

DAUGHTER

Just listen. It comes out in our shadow behaviors, our automatic negative responses to someone or something, a situation, maybe. They're involuntary, knee-jerk reactions. But, they're super revealing because they can show us the things that we try to hide about ourselves, and once we know what we're hiding, we can try to change the way we think and act and feel.

MOTHER

That all sounds..like bullshit.

DAUGHTER

Maybe it is. But you can't stand lying. You have an automatic, knee-jerk negative response to it.

MOTHER

No one likes being lied to.

DAUGHTER

But your reaction and your rumination..I don't know. I would be interested to know what your shadow self is hiding.

MOTHER

You have this deep-seated anger towards me. Not towards your father. Only towards me.

DAUGHTER

He leaves me alone. He doesn't judge me.

MOTHER

Maybe not to your face.

DAUGHTER

What does that mean?

MOTHER

He's not here. He didn't rearrange his schedule to see you perform. He didn't want to. I asked him to come with me, and he said no.

DAUGHTER

I didn't expect him to come.

MOTHER

You begged me to come! I drove for two days. I stayed in a hotel. Obviously, none of it is appreciated.

DAUGHTER

I'm sorry, I was a little distracted during your visit. Cut me some slack.

MOTHER

Grow up. Life's hard. Start taking responsibility for yourself. Stop making dangerous decisions.

MOTHER checks the speedometer

MOTHER

You're speeding. You're going 70 in a 65.

DAUGHTER

It's fine.

MOTHER

You're being reckless.

DAUGHTER

You're side seat driving.

MOTHER

Slow down.

DAUGHTER

I'm driving at the speed of traffic.

MOTHER

Drive the speed limit.

DAUGHTER hits a patch of ice and swerves

MOTHER

Watch out!

DAUGHTER

Stop-

DAUGHTER accidentally hits the radio and "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" starts playing

MOTHER

Turn it off! What are you doing?

DAUGHTER

I didn't mean to.

MOTHER

Turn it off turn it off-

DAUGHTER

I can't think-

God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen

Let nothing you dismay

Remember Christ our Savior

Was born on Christmas Day

To save us all-

MOTHER

Slow down!

DAUGHTER

I'm pulling over.

MOTHER

Don't you dare.

DAUGHTER

I'M DRIVING, AND I'M PULLING OVER.

DAUGHTER turns off the radio and regains control of the car

MILE 413: Holiday Inn Express, Newtown Falls, Ohio

DAUGHTER sits in their car under the hotel's port cochere. MOTHER comes back into the car from inside the hotel. It's snowing heavily.

DAUGHTER

So? Did you pee?

MOTHER

I said I was an IHG rewards member, and they let me right in.

DAUGHTER

Aren't you glad I stopped?

MOTHER

I said we would assess the pee break situation.

DAUGHTER

No, I mean—look at the squall.

MOTHER

(Checks her watch) It's only 4. We can still make it home by midnight.

DAUGHTER

Why do you need to get home tonight? Am I missing something?

MOTHER

Tomorrow is our Christmas day.

DAUGHTER

What?

MOTHER

Your father was invited to speak on an executive panel in Seoul on the 27th. He has to leave on Christmas Day. So, tomorrow is going to be our Christmas Day.

DAUGHTER

Seoul. As in, South Korea?

MOTHER

Yes. South Korea.

DAUGHTER

Is he winning an award?

MOTHER

No, he's speaking on a panel.

DAUGHTER

I see. Will this panel be discussing how to end the totalitarian regime in North Korea and unite the two countries once again?

MOTHER

No.

DAUGHTER

Oh, okay.

MOTHER

I guess...very few American executives get invited to speak at this particular panel. It's a big deal.

DAUGHTER

It sounds like a big deal.

MOTHER

He wants to celebrate with you and your sisters before he leaves.

DAUGHTER

He wants to, or you want us to?

MOTHER

Both.

DAUGHTER

You're so—

MOTHER

Accommodating?

DAUGHTER

Hypocritical. You lied to me.

MOTHER

I didn't ruin Christmas, he did. I told him that he had to tell you.

DAUGHTER

But, you've known this whole time.

MOTHER

I've barely seen you in the last two days. You never came by the hotel. I just sat around waiting to see you perform. How do you think that made me feel?

DAUGHTER

I was sitting on the toilet bleeding. I—No, I'm not defending myself. He's an asshole, and he walks all over you.

MOTHER

Excuse me?

DAUGHTER

You were right, he just does whatever he wants and he doesn't care.

MOTHER

He does care. He loves you.

DAUGHTER

He loves money. He lovveeeessss money. He's obsessed. He would rather make money than be with us on Christmas Day. It's embarrassing and pathetic. I feel bad for him.

MOTHER

That's mean.

DAUGHTER

It's true. He'll follow the money anywhere. Indiana. Wisconsin. Korea. He's an addict, and you're an enabler. You chewed me out for lying to you about the miscarriage, and you were lying for him this entire time.

MOTHER

What would you like me to do? Divorce him?

DAUGHTER

Maybe. You said it to him on the phone: he's selfish and self-serving and he doesn't support you. He doesn't support anyone.

MOTHER

I was angry at him.

DAUGHTER

Stay angry! Stay mad. Fan that fire inside. It's real.

MOTHER

When you're married for as long as we've been married, you'll understand.

DAUGHTER

I'm never getting married.

MOTHER

That's very dramatic.

DAUGHTER

I'm serious. I could never be you. Married to a workaholic man who forces me to move all over the country and makes me miserable.

Silence

DAUGHTER

That was mean. I'm just saying, you've cried a lot of tears at his expense. Is it worth it? In my experience, nope.

MOTHER

What is your experience? How did all of this happen? I mean, I didn't even know you were dating someone.

DAUGHTER

It doesn't matter. It's over.

MOTHER

Well, it does matter, because this man clearly hurt your self-esteem and made you think you're not cut out for marriage. If a guy doesn't see how great you are, screw him.

MOTHER

He didn't—he wasn't the problem, it was me. I'm so stupid.

MOTHER

You're not stupid. You're figuring it out.

DAUGHTER

We would go on dates, and he would look at me, and I would lose the ability to speak. I liked him so much my thoughts stopped coming. I liked touching his arms. He felt like a man. I liked when he wrapped his arms around me.

MOTHER

I'm trying to be understanding, but I can't hear this part.

DAUGHTER

Why? Why is it bad to like how someone feels?

MOTHER

It's fleeting and it's vulnerable, and guys can take advantage of you.

DAUGHTER

I wanted to have sex with him.

MOTHER

You wanted to be in love with him. Sex is not love.

DAUGHTER

What's love to you? Being miserable with someone?

MOTHER

Sometimes, yeah.

DAUGHTER

I don't want *that*.

MOTHER

Then, you're going to be alone for a very long time.

DAUGHTER

He told me he loved me.

But I couldn't say it back. I could see the words in my head, but I couldn't form them in my mouth. I just stared at his sad smile. We weren't the same after that. He stopped texting me, stopped planning dates, so I broke up with him. I said we wanted different things. But, we didn't. We want the same things. I just couldn't say three words and then I couldn't stand the silence so I ran away and I didn't tell him what was actually going on.

MOTHER

That you were pregnant?

DAUGHTER

Yeah, fuck him. He didn't fight for me. His words meant nothing. Besides, he would have thought I was trying to trap him into a relationship. Which I wasn't. I couldn't think straight—I just had your voice in the back of my head: "If you ever get pregnant out of wedlock, don't kill your baby. A baby is a gift from God." It didn't feel like a gift. I mean, I did start going back to church. I would go to Mass, but I would pray that one day I'd wake up and I wouldn't be pregnant anymore. I prayed at night, too. I prayed for a miscarriage every night before I went to bed. I didn't think it was going to work. It's a real life miracle. I should become a nun.

MOTHER

Maybe it's good you didn't tell this guy. What's his name?

DAUGHTER

Evan.

MOTHER

How far along were you?

DAUGHTER

11 weeks. When I was at the hospital, I wanted to call him. I just wanted someone with me. I thought maybe he would come, since it was his—mess. But I talked myself out of it.

MOTHER

When did you go to the hospital?

DAUGHTER

Tuesday. I was at rehearsal and I went to the bathroom, and I saw blood. I went to the emergency room at Mount Sinai. It's a good hospital. I had to wait like an hour.

They did an ultrasound, and there was no heartbeat. It's called a missed miscarriage. My body didn't know it was dead.

The doctor told me I could either wait, take a pill, or have surgery to get the rest of it out. The leftover tissue.

I didn't want to be bedridden. I had a performance in three days.

I'm waiting it out. I couldn't do anything else.

I'll bleed for the next week or so and then...we can pretend it never happened. No one needs to know, including Dad. Especially Dad. I can't have him watching me open my presents on fake Christmas morning knowing that I have sex.

MOTHER

We can't keep this from him.

DAUGHTER

He judges me behind my back.

MOTHER

A miscarriage is a big deal.

DAUGHTER

It's not a baby.

MOTHER

It's a major medical condition.

DAUGHTER

It goes away.

MOTHER

You have to disclose it on your medical paperwork for the rest of your life.

DAUGHTER

He's not gonna be looking over my shoulder while I fill out my paperwork.

MOTHER

He'll be getting a statement from our insurance with your ER visit on it. You're on our insurance until you're 26.

DAUGHTER

Oh.

Wow, I completely forgot about that.

MOTHER

You were gonna have a baby and raise it in your studio apartment?

DAUGHTER

I wasn't thinking that far in advance

MOTHER

You would have needed us. Me and your father.

DAUGHTER

I would have needed you.

MOTHER

You're so stubborn.

DAUGHTER

I don't trust him.

Silence

MOTHER

I remember the day you were born. You were a week late.

DAUGHTER

Mom-

MOTHER

I don't remember anything weird from your gestation. You were happy inside my womb/

DAUGHTER

/Why do you say things like that/

MOTHER

/It was a Monday morning. I got up and your father came with me on a walk- we walked every day of my pregnancy with you, at least two miles- and I started having contractions. We made an appointment and the doctor took one look at me and said 'You're having this baby today'. So, we went straight to the hospital, and everything was going smoothly /

DAUGHTER

/Why are you doing this?/

MOTHER

/Until you got stuck. You were sunny-side-up actually, you know, head down and face up. They tried, but

they couldn't flip you. All of a sudden, people came flying out of everywhere. It was very dramatic. You made an entrance. They put a little vacuum on the top of your head, sucked you out, and then whisked you away from me. We didn't hear you cry right away. Your father was squeezing my hand so tightly. But then, you started screaming. Screaming and screaming. We should have known you would be a singer. Eventually, they put you in my arms—the nurses put a little hat on you to cover up the big suction bruise on your conehead—and that was the happiest I have ever felt in my life. That's my happiest memory. Your father's, too. We've talked about it.

MOTHER starts rubbing up and down DAUGHTER'S spine

MOTHER

You were so bad at nursing. You would fall asleep before you were supposed to and then wake up an hour later screaming for more. You drove me bananas. The start of our battle of wills. I would rub up and down your spine to help you burp. Are you gonna burp?

DAUGHTER

No, I'm not.

MOTHER

(as if she were speaking to newborn DAUGHTER) C'mon, give Mommy a little burp.

DAUGHTER

WHAT.

MOTHER

You want to smile.

DAUGHTER

No.

MOTHER

Yes.

DAUGHTER

I–

DAUGHTER smiles

MOTHER

Every bone, every fiber, every cell of my being loves you.

There is nothing you could do that would make me stop loving you.

I love you.

I'll say it until I'm blue in the face.

I love you.

I love you–

DAUGHTER

You love me.

MOTHER

I love you **and** I'm not miserable in my marriage. Your father has a selfish streak, we know that. He has to have his own needs met first, and then he's super attentive. So, I accommodate that. He's my best friend. He's the love of my life. I've known him for longer than I haven't. 35 years of marriage is not easy. There's a lot of conflict, like when your husband moves you to Indianapolis against your will and you go through menopause at 39 from the stress of it all. I also knew we were going to have to move again. I said it from day one, you are putting us on a path where we're just going to have to move again, which is exactly what happened with Wisconsin. Your father would admit now that we shouldn't have done it. But, I made the vow "for better or worse". I'm committed to loving him, and he's committed to loving me. We make it work because we share the same values. That's the magic recipe: Marry your best friend who shares the same values as you.

DAUGHTER

How did you know he was the one?

MOTHER

He was my best friend.

DAUGHTER

No–Before that. How did you know you wanted to become best friends with him?

MOTHER

He was the most handsome man I'd ever met.

DAUGHTER

Okay. On the timeline between 'handsome man' and 'best friend', when?

MOTHER

I don't know. We never ran out of things to talk about. We took things slow. We took everything slow.

DAUGHTER

Everything?

MOTHER

Everything.

DAUGHTER

...Everything?

MOTHER

Yes, everything.

DAUGHTER

Yeah, okay.

MOTHER

I wasn't in a rush.

DAUGHTER

You didn't want to?

MOTHER

I didn't say that.

I never dreamt about my husband or my wedding. I didn't have an idea in my head of what I wanted or what I expected it all to look like.

DAUGHTER

Then how-how did you know he was the right guy for you?

MOTHER

I just did.

DAUGHTER

I hate when people say that.

MOTHER

It's true. I couldn't imagine my life without him in it.

DAUGHTER

You had no doubts? He had no doubts?

MOTHER

I didn't.

DAUGHTER

He did?

MOTHER

Yes.

DAUGHTER

Why? What happened?

MOTHER

He...broke up with me. He left me.

DAUGHTER

When?

MOTHER

When I moved to D.C. after grad school, which he begged me to do, ironically. "If you love me, you'll move to D.C. to be with me." I was 22. Papa was so mad at me. He didn't talk to me for six months. You can imagine his reaction when your father broke up with me because he needed space.

DAUGHTER

Why didn't you tell me this?

MOTHER

I'm still embarrassed.

DAUGHTER

When did you get back together?

MOTHER

Three months later, he showed up at my door. I was coming home from work, and he was sitting on my front stoop. He was crying. He told me he was an idiot and had made a huge mistake, and he wanted to be with me.

DAUGHTER

You took him back.

MOTHER

He had to earn back my trust over time, but yes. I did.

DAUGHTER

Selfish prick. I would have kicked him off my stoop.

MOTHER

If a guy ever does that to you, do not take him back. You should kick him off your stoop.

DAUGHTER

There's a world where I wouldn't be here. Why are you telling me this now?

MOTHER

When someone is the right person for you, you'll just know.

DAUGHTER

But, he hurt you.

MOTHER

He fought for me. It's the people you love the most that can hurt you the most.

DAUGHTER starts breathing deeply

DAUGHTER

Thank God you pulled over.

DAUGHTER

I'm okay. It's just a cramp.

MOTHER

You shouldn't be driving. I don't know what I was thinking.

DAUGHTER

It was a good distraction for a while.

MOTHER

Are you going to be sick?

DAUGHTER

Mmmm...no.

MOTHER

Are you gonna burp?

DAUGHTER

No, but I do have to pee.

MOTHER

Tell the woman at the front desk that your mom is an IHG member.

DAUGHTER laughs and gets out of the car.

MOTHER grabs the remainder of the candy bar out of the plastic bag at her feet and eats it.

As she eats, she flips through radio channels of the static until

RADIO HOST

-Remember that we do expect those winter storm warnings to expire, but we might still see some snowfall late into the evening. Right now, we've got a little bit of wind, but we've got clear visibility. Everything's fine downtown, and it's fine across Northeast Ohio-

MOTHER turns the radio off

MOTHER exits the passenger side. As she walks around the car, her phone starts buzzing in her pocket.

MOTHER

You got my message? And? Well, you're an ass. You know you are....I accept your apology. We stopped again. We did get caught in some snow, which appears to be slowing down...My guess is midnight. I told

her what's happening tomorrow...She's upset, of course she is...she thinks you don't love her...she knows I do.

DAUGHTER walks back towards the car

MOTHER

Someone wants to say hi.

DAUGHTER

Dad?

MOTHER

Yeah.

DAUGHTER

I don't want to.

MOTHER

He has something he wants to say to you.

DAUGHTER

You told him?

MOTHER

Just take the phone.

DAUGHTER hesitantly takes the phone

DAUGHTER

Hi.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Yes.

Yes.

Long silence.

DAUGHTER listens as her father talks.

She leans against the hood of the car.

DAUGHTER

I love you, too.

END OF PLAY