

Mae's Monologue

An excerpt from HEIFER

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SCENE 1

Mae enters and takes her place in the leather chair.

MAE

You know, I always thought that a good mother was someone who fostered her child's growth. Someone who gave them all that they need for growth. After a while, everything needs to have some room to call its own. You know? Men need to stretch a bit, grow a bit. A-As they got older, I let them do that. I wanted to let them know they could stand solidly, but I'd be here if they ever needed rest.

I would watch them wander the town, proud. That my boys were explorers.

(Beat.)

Y'know, I never forgot where I came from. Because one thing I was taught was gratitude. To say thank you God, Thank you Cera, thank you to my sons for making me want to *be* better.

So, every Wednesday, after afternoon Bible study, I would do just that. I'd take some seedlings and I would just walk to where I used to go, where I used to be. I'd even put on *pants* like I was a young girl again, all light-hearted. I'd take my baby plants to that old mobile home and just sow something pretty there. A thank you.

Her face tightens.

MAE

(to herself)

Put more growth down. Make some pretty things there.

(Pause.)

MAE

On this day I heard voices.

Mae leans towards the audience; her body beseeching.

MAE

So, I walk towards the little mobile home. Peek in the window and all I see is an arm. (*Full of horror at the memory*). A little arm flailing. A little girl arm, those skinny ones that so many of us had so long ago. I see it, and I see all these men and I...I don't know what to do. But I scream and I rage and shout--Lord!--

MAE

Until I hear the back door open. Hear them scatter like cockroaches. And I don't even think to check for faces or names. Don't even look their way.

Anyway. I see *her*.

There is a lash in her voice.

MAE

Poor thing. Just half-dead-looking like.

She walks over to the Girl as she continues narrating. Mae gathers the Girl into her arms.

MAE

Don't want to scare her anymore than she already has been. Poor girl is twitching like a cornered animal. An-And I say "Shhh...It's all right. You're safe now. You're amongst a friend."

The Girl is limp in Mae's arms: a doll baby.

MAE

I set her up and let her cry. You know, boil some water, clean the girl up. Sneak her out so no one sees her there.

Mae walks the GIRL to her section of the stage.

MAE

Take her home, get her some clothes- found a little dress. Haven't worn since I was a girl. And she-

Mae smiles, her eyes teary, her mouth lithe.

MAE

Looked so nice, like a little baby doll. A little thin baby-doll. So I said, "Child you are so skinny, let me feed you up a bit." Cause I honestly think that nothing but a good meal can make a girl feel better, you know?

Mae 'feeds' the Girl like a child feeds her
favorite doll, jabbing at her sealed mouth.

MAE

And while we're eating, I'm talkin-

(Beat.)

MAE

She don't say much or eat much. I put the girl, in my lap and mashed the beans together.
Spoon fed her. Just when it looked she was coming round, I thought- "You know... this
child just needs someone in her life. I can help her, I can make her grow."

Her face grows still.

MAE

And then my son comes home. My oldest, you know.
He looks at her and he is frozen stiff in the doorway.
She is a board in my arms.
I realize the only thing skinny about this girl is her arms.

She drops the doll, transformed into a grown
woman suddenly. The Girl scrambles back to her
side of the courtroom. Mae's face is alive with
savagery.

MAE

That the rest of her is all woman.
She has to go.
She has to go.
I've worked too hard on my garden,
I've worked too hard at my seeds,
I won't let no weed come and take that away from me.