

Family Waiting

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INT. LIVING ROOM- NIGHT

An abstract still-life hangs on the wall of a dimly lit living room. Smoke ascends from burning sage in an abalone shell atop a bookshelf. Calming meditation music plays from a cell phone speaker.

ERIN (mid-20's, female) rests on her couch, reading a copy of bell hook's *All About Love*.

The music is cut short by a shrill ringtone. Erin lurches for the source.

The screen glows and illuminates her face.

It reads: *Mom*.

Erin quickly declines the call, the music returns. She continues to read.

The phone rings loudly again. She reaches for the phone, and once again checks the screen: *Mom*.

For a moment, her thumb hovers over the red "*Decline*" button.

But this time, she answers.

ERIN

What?

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Erin brushes past groups of emergency room personnel and patients as she approaches the revolving turnstile door.

She pushes through.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Erin approaches the nurses station, a short line is formed. WOMAN 1 and WOMAN 2 are talking to the NURSE (male, early-30's) that sits behind the desk.

Erin waits impatiently for WOMAN 1 and WOMAN 2 to step aside.

The Nurse looks back at his computer.

ERIN

Hi, I-

NURSE

One moment.

She watches as he types.

ERIN

My sister's here? Jaimie Andres.

NURSE

Name?

ERIN

Jaimie. Anders.

NURSE

No, your name.

ERIN

Erin. Her sister. O'Brien. We have different last names.

Erin taps her fingers on the counter.

NURSE

You'll have to wait for a parent to get here.

ERIN

Um. Okay.

(beat)

I'm an adult, though.

NURSE

We just need you to wait here until the rest of your family arrives. Please, take a seat.

Erin looks at the empty seats in the waiting room. Her lip tightens, like she's trying not to scream. Her makeupless face looks especially washed out under fluorescent lights.

The door behind the station opens, and a DOCTOR (male, early-50's) emerges.

DOCTOR

Family of Jaimie Anders?

He looks at Erin. She nods quickly.

MOM (O/S)

Erin!

Erin snaps toward the revolving doors, where her MOM (females, 50s) emerges, wearing a pair of baggy cartoon pajamas and slippers.

Just beyond Mom, Erin spots her elderly GRANDMOTHER (female, 80's), in some sort of fuzzy, faux animal frock, now stuck between revolving doors.

Erin exhales, and pushes past her mother.

MOM

Where is she? How is she?

Erin grabs onto her Grandmother and points to the doctor.

He holds the door open.

INT. HALLWAY, HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Erin and Grandmother briskly follow the doctor down the long, white hall, arms linked. Mom follows a few paces behind.

DOCTOR

She's still heavily sedated from the helicopter transit-

Erin shuts her eyes.

DOCTOR (CONTD)

-not yet sure as to the extent of her injuries.

Grandmother looks at the sullen faces of every family member they pass. She mutters a prayer to herself.

DOCTOR (CONTD)

-for now, we just have to be cautious, run a few more tests.

Mom's eyes are closed, arms crossed around her body. She squeezes herself tightly.

The three women stop when the doctor halts in front of a small room. Inside, they see several very uncomfortable chairs, a coffee table littered with, no doubt expired, magazines. The sign outside the door reads: FAMILY WAITING AREA.

Erin shuts her eyes.

DOCTOR
Someone will be by once we have more
information.

With a nod and a doucehy grin, Doctor leaves. Erin, Mom and
Grandmother are still and quiet.

MOM
(beat)
As if it couldn't get much worse,
right?

Grandmother huffs and enters the room. Erin's eyes shut
tighter.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM, FAMILY WAITING AREA- NIGHT

An open notebook sits in Erin's lap. Nothing's on the page.

She stares at her phone screen; a message is composed to
Tommy, but nothing's written.

The three women sit spaced uncomfortably apart from one
another.

Grandmother's wrist watch ticks away. With a pencil, she
scratches over existing numbers in a worn *Sudoku* book.

Mom stares at her own phone's screen, where she types up a
Facebook draft. It includes a photo of JAIMIE (female, young-
20's) from last week, eating a bowl of Ramen.

MOM
I still can't believe you beat me
here.

ERIN
It's not a race you needed to win.

MOM
If you lived in town you would have
hit traffic like we did.

ERIN
I came from seventeen, there's
literally always traffic.

GRANDMOTHER
Do you think Tommy would drop off a
pizza when he comes by?
(To Erin)

He is coming by, right, Erin?

Erin looks up from her phone.

MOM

I don't think I'm hungry.

ERIN

Tommy and I broke up, Gram.

Grandmother folds the *Sudoku* book to her chest.

GRANDMOTHER

Oh. Honey. You must be devastated.

(to Mom)

You didn't know this?

Mom lowers her phone slightly, but keeps typing.

MOM

She don't tell me nothing.

ERIN

I told her weeks ago. We had a fight.

He moved out.

GRANDMOTHER

Tommy moved out?

ERIN

Yes.

GRANDMOTHER

He's gone?

ERIN

Entirely.

GRANDMOTHER

He must have been a schmuck.

ERIN

He didn't even have the decency to cover up any of the holes his stupid band posters.

MOM

Good thing we're in a hospital.

Erin looks at her mother.

MOM

Lot of rich doctors 'round here.

ERIN

Yeah, I really noticed.

Erin shuts her notebook.

Grandmother postures and peers out of the window behind her and into the hallway, watching PEOPLE pass.

GRANDMOTHER

It's like the girls and I always talk about at the club. A man will always need to be taken care of.

Erin's head quirks.

GRANDMOTHER (CONTD)

It's why most of them are back to dating about two months after their wives' pass. Even some of the ones that were married for over 50 years.

ERIN

So Tommy's dating someone already?

GRANDMOTHER

Enough about him. The doctor was cute.

MOM

No.

GRANDMOTHER

You don't think so?

MOM

He was fat.

ERIN

He was a douche-bag.

GRANDMOTHER

The one at the desk.

MOM

The nurse?

GRANDMOTHER

Nurse? No, the one behind the desk. When we first walked in.

MOM

The nurse.

Mom returns to her phone.

Grandmother postures.

GRANDMOTHER

Oh.

(beat)

You could give him your email before you leave. Though he doesn't make much money.

MOM

Let her be single. She's she needs it.

GRANDMOTHER

I remember saying the same thing to you, but you're on husband number three.

Mom glares at Grandmother from over her phone. She returns to her draft. Grandmother returns to her *Sudoku*.

The light bulbs buzz from overhead. Erin sinks into her seat.

MOM

I'm sure Tommy doesn't even know. He'd text you.

ERIN

I'm sure he's seen one of your many Facebook posts about it.

GRANDMOTHER

I'm sure you had a good reason for breaking up with him.

ERIN

How do you know I broke up with him? Was it on Facebook?

Grandmother laughs to herself, like she's in on a joke.

MOM

A Facebook post is how I knew your sister was here.

ERIN

Give me a break.

MOM
Let me find it.

Mom begins to scroll through her phone.

MOM (CONTD)
The front door of her car was ripped
right off. It doesn't even look like
anyone's alive in there.

Erin's hands go up.

ERIN
Really don't want to see photos of my
sister's wrecked car.

Grandmother huffs. Mom's phone chimes, breaking the silence—
a *Candy Crush* tone.

She instinctively tends to the notification. Erin shakes her
head.

ERIN
Did you call her father?

MOM
Ugh.

She ignores her daughter.

ERIN
Maybe that would be a better use of
time. Instead of playing games.

MOM
Why should I? He don't care.

Mom shakes her head and bites her lip. Her left knee begins
to pop up and down.

ERIN
It's your decision. If it were my kid,
I'd want to know.

Erin postures in her seat.

GRANDMOTHER
Erin, not everything is about you.

Grandmother leans back in hers, to continue her *Sudoku*.

Erin peers up at Mom, checking for a reaction. But Mom only stares straight ahead, unblinking.

MOM

She wouldn't let me leave the house
without her.

Mom looks to Erin, face remaining serious.

After a beat, Erin snorts.

A SOFT KNOCK at the door interrupts them. They stand and face the doorway where DOCTOR #2 (male, 30's), waits.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

The room is quiet, large. Curtain panels separate the space into sections. In the center, a hospital bed sits silhouetted via spotlight.

Jaimie is laying lifeless in the bed, swallowing a breathing tub. Her head is caged in a neck brace, beeping monitors surround her along with the three generations of women.

Each beep strikes a nerve. Erin silently scans her sister's face and body, and watches as Jaimie's chest moves up and down with the help of a machine.

Dried up spots of blood speckle Jaimie's face, covering holes where piercings have recently been torn out.

FLASH TO:

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

A piercing needle is ready pressed against Jaimie's ear.

JAIMIE

You sure you can do this?

ERIN

I watched a YouTube video.

Jaimie fidgets in her seat while Erin steadies her fingers.

ERIN (CONTD)

Hold still!

FLASH BACK:

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Mom looks at Jaimie's swollen face, to puffy crescent eyelids where the smallest bit of watery iris peeks out.

FLASH TO:

EXT. PARK - DAY

Jaimie's green eyes light up in the sunlight, and curve into a crescent as she laughs.

FLASH BACK:

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Grandmother looks at Jaimie's still, gangly limbs covered in a colorful sleeve of tattoos and fresh purple and yellow bruising. Beneath the discoloration, old self-harm scars.

She looks over her youngest granddaughter's body. She wears an old *Stray Cats* band shirt, now torn and stained with blood.

FLASH TO:

INT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

Wearing that same (but in tact) *Stray Cats* shirt, Jaimie forces a smile and waits for Grandmother to take a photo with her bulky iPad.

She stands between Mom and Erin.

ERIN

I think we're good on photos.

Immediately after the camera flashes, Jaimie frowns and drops her arms back to her side.

Mom heads to Grandmother's side, and squints into the screen to study the pic. She looks to Jaimie.

MOM

Are you wearing my shirt?

FLASH BACK:

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Mom slips her baby's hand in hers, and strokes Jaimie's

wrist. She twitches, and Mom squeezes tighter, nearly losing her own balance.

Mom notices what Jaimie's wearing...pieces of a torn *Stray Cats* shirt.

She looks down at pieces of bloody gauze, tangled with strips of torn clothing, on the floor beneath the bed.

MOM

She ruined my favorite shirt.

Erin shuts her eyes. A monitor begins to beep rapidly.

They shoot back open; Erin nervously looks around.

The nurses do not come rushing in, like she expects. Erin tries to make sense of the monitors, but all she sees are wiggly lines and flashing lights.

ERIN

(to no one)

Excuse me?

NURSE #2 (male, 20's) leisurely walks toward them, slipping on some rubber gloves in the process.

He parks herself in front of the monitors, and calmly looks for something on the screen. He presses a button. The beeping subsides.

Erin looks to her mother and grandmother, both pale. She looks back to her sleeping sister.

DOCTOR #2 (V/O)

I'd say she's getting off lucky. No serious breaks or bleeding. Other than the stitches on her knee and of course, the concussion. INT. EMERGENCY ROOM, ICU ROOM 224 - Day

Grandmother is seated in the visitor's chair, holding a stack of *UNO* cards. Jaimie rests in her bed, still hooked up to monitors but sans breathing tube and neck brace. Her eyes remain closed.

Erin and Mom stand over Jaimie, holding a stack of cards at their side. They watch DOCTOR #2 (male, young-30's), as he speaks.

DOCTOR #2

The brain is all we really need to monitor for now. The M.R.I does show a bit more bleeding than we feel comfortable with.

Erin looks to Mom; Mom looks at Erin and just stares back.

ERIN

(to Doctor)

So what does that mean?

GRANDMOTHER

How long will she be like this?

Erin looks back to her sister, sleeping in bed.

DOCTOR #2

She'll have to stay here for a few more days to rest and so we can keep an eye on her.

Erin looks to Jaimie, who's still asleep in the hospital bed.

DOCTOR #2 (CONTD)

We'll know more over time.

With a nod and plastered smile, Doctor #2 exits. The women are still.

GRANDMOTHER

What do we even know now?

ERIN

Is it me or are the Doctor's getting douchier?

MOM

They're here to monitor and make sure things are getting better and not worse.

They sit in the silence, monitors continue to BEEP. Grandmother swallows.

GRANDMOTHER

Thank you for asking any important questions.

MOM

You could ask him whatever you want.

GRANDMOTHER
No one wants to hear from an old
woman.

ERIN
He just leaves?

Mom and Erin slowly return to their seats on the floor. Erin
returns to her phone.

MOM
Men.

GRANDMOTHER
Typical.

Mom picks up the UNO cards on the side table in front of
here. She flips one over: *Reverse*.

MOM
(to Erin)
Your turn.

Erin remains hypnotized by her phone.

MOM
Erin.

GRANDMOTHER
Maybe you should go after him and find
out more.

MOM
He don't know anymore.

GRANDMOTHER
Or one of the other doctors. For the
amount of doctors she has, you'd think
one of them would know something.

DOCTOR #3 (male, 30's) knocks at the door. Nurse #2 appears
next to him, holding a clipboard.

DOCTOR #3
Now a good time?

GRANDMOTHER
If we said no?

Doctor #3 enters the room, and Nurse #2 follows.

DOCTOR #3

We just have some questions about the accident. Is it alright if I ask?

Mom nods and shrugs. Nurse #2 readies his pen.

She puts one of her cards into the pile.

MOM

Uno!

Grandmother checks her cards.

GRANDMOTHER

(to Mom)

Oh! You're cheating.

MOM

How?

ERIN

(to Doctor #3)

Yeah, go ahead.

DOCTOR #3

We're aware this was an auto accident. She was driving home from work?

ERIN

Yeah.

GRANDMOTHER

(to Mom)

You never play by the rules.

DOCTOR #3

Is it true she drove her car into a wall?

Grandmother freezes as she places a wild card into the pile.

ERIN

What?

DOCTOR #3

Now, I noticed she has some self-inflicted scarring on her right arm.

ERIN

Where did you hear that?

DOCTOR #3
It's part of our protocol to check on
a few things.

ERIN
That's not at all what happened. The
police specifically told us she was
hit head on by another car.

DOCTOR #3
Oh.
(beat)
We just wanted to check that we
received the right information.

GRANDMOTHER
You and your team noticed a few scars
on the girls' arm, and you peg her as
a suicide risk? What else are you
assuming about her from your ill-
perceived judgements?

Nurse #2 lowers his clipboard. He looks at Doctor #3, who's
watches Grandmother, carefully and quietly.

GRANDMOTHER (CONTD)
Surely a medical professional such as
yourself would have a little more
appropriate bedside manner. But
judging by your baby face, I'd say
you've only been out of school a year
or so. Did you even pass your courses
or do you have some sort of connection
with the hiring manager?

Grandmother sits up in her seat. Doctor #3 heads toward the
doorway.

DOCTOR #3
Something as stressful and tense as a
situation like this is sure to elevate
certain emotions -

GRANDMOTHER
Son, are you going to say anything
helpful about my granddaughter's
condition or are you going to go on
babbling like an idiot?

The doctor pauses.

NURSE #2
I can have these filled out for you
when you're finished with the rounds.

DOCTOR #3
Thanks.

The doctor cracks a fragile smile.

DOCTOR #3
I'll be back to check on you guys in a
half-hour or so.

He exits the room. The nurse turns to the women.

MOM
It is never a half-hour.

NURSE #2
I'm just going to put these down here.
We can make him wait.

The nurse smiles at the women, and exits. Grandmother shakes
her head, and returns to the Uno game.

GRANDMOTHER
I should have done a better job
raising you.

Mom throws her cards to her side and stands up. She walks
toward the bathroom and enters.

MOM
Because I can never be good enough.

Erin watches the door slam, then looks to Grandmother, who
tilts her head to the floor.

ERIN
Grandma, that's really not fair. We're
all trying the best we can.

MOM (O/S)
Erin!

Erin's head perks up, she scrambles toward the bathroom door.

She pushes it open a crack, enough to see Mom looking up at
her from the toilet.

MOM

Can you get me a pad?

ERIN

Mom, really? Now I'm going to get mine.

Erin looks to the counter where Mom's purse sits.

She rummages through until she finds a single pad. Erin passes it through the door's cracked opening.

Mom shuts the door.

Erin rejoins the game with Grandmother. She sits again and picks up her cards.

FLUSHING is heard from the bathroom. Then, a GRUNTING noise is heard from the hospital bed.

Erin looks to the bed, when Jaimie shoots up like an 80's zombie rising from the dead.

Half-consciously, Jaimie sits up and swings her legs over to the side of the bed. She looks absently from Grandmother and Erin.

Her smile is soft; an empty recollection.

Grandmother and Erin watch, wide-eyed, as Jaimie tries to stand. Erin springs for the bed.

ERIN

Mom!

Mom emerges from the bathroom, pants half around her ankles. She shuffles to the bed.

Jaimie's woolly, pale noodle-legs drop to the floor. Mom grabs onto her daughter's bruised arms.

Erin grabs the rolling monitors connected to her sister, who takes off toward the door. Erin tries to untangle the mess of fluid tube and wire while she clumsily follows.

GRANDMOTHER

No! Sandra, get her, she has to sit!

MOM

What do you think I'm doing, Mom?

MOM (CONTD)

No, no, no!

GRANDMOTHER

Not in there!

Grandmother watches in horror as Jaimie turns her body and squeezes into the small closet at the front of the room.

Erin and Mom each grab an arm and try to steady her. Jaimie starts to squat, bending over the garbage can. She starts to slide her underwear off.

MOM

No, no, this is a closet!

Mom yanks Jaimie out of the closet and pulls her toward the bathroom with her mom-strength. Jaimie GROANS in response.

Erin is two steps ahead. She's got Jaimie by the hand and steadily helps to pull her and the attached monitor toward the bathroom.

Erin pushes the heavy door open with her back leg, then hits on the light. From her seat, Grandmother extends her foot and uses it to push the rolling monitor toward them.

INT. BATHROOM, ICU ROOM 224 - DAY

Jaimie sits on the toilet obediently. She yawns.

MOM

Well I officially hate it here.

GRANDMOTHER (V/O)

Better get used to it. One day, you'll be visiting me here.

Mom and Erin sit on the opposite sides of her, and exchange a look.

GRANDMOTHER (V/O) (CONTD)

Everything okay?

MOM

(slowly, to Jaimie)
How are you feeling?

Jaimie takes a minute to register the question. She squints her face. She prepares to speak, lips and mouth cracking as she opens.

JAIME

Um.

(beat)

Uh. Shit.

She stops herself. Jaimie's expression changes again; she lowers her head and GROANS more. Her body begins writhe. She shakes her head.

MOM

What's the matter, Jaimie?

Erin's hand immediately finds her sisters back, and she begins to rub small, delicate soothing circles. The GROANING stops.

MOM (CONTD)

Are you okay?

The questioning seems to agitate both girls. Erin moves her face close into her sisters, speaking at a low, soft volume.

ERIN

You're okay.

Mom watches her girls. Jaimie stops moving and becomes very still, eyes fixed at the ground. She nods.

Erin continues rubbing her back.

MOM

Thank goodness you're here.

Erin hugs herself into her sister, tightly and carefully. Jaimie looks back at her sister, and then at Mom. She places a hand on Erin's back.

Erin smiles.

ERIN

(to Jaimie)

Let's wash your hands.

Jaimie nods, then yawns. Erin jerks her face away.

ERIN (CONTD)

And get those teeth brushed.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM, ICU ROOM 224 - NIGHT

Erin is helping Jaimie eat from a soggy tray of hospital

food. She chews on the soft sponge-like sustenance, eyes half closed.

Erin checks her phone again. No messages. She looks at her sister. Jaimie's passed out again.

Grandmother removes the tray table.

GRANDMOTHER

Why did you break up with the boy,
Erin?

Erin looks at her grandmother.

ERIN

I don't know.

GRANDMOTHER

You miss him, so why don't you call
him.

Erin tucks her phone back into her bag.

ERIN

I don't want that.

GRANDMOTHER

Why not?

Erin pauses. She looks at Jaimie in the hospital bed.

ERIN

I don't like who I am in a
relationship. I get controlling and
insecure and needy.

MOM (O/S)

You're still needy.

Erin turns her attention toward the cracked bathroom door.

MOM (O/S) (CONTD)

Bitter now, too.

The toilet FLUSHES. Mom emerges from the bathroom and sits in the seat opposite her mother's, at Jaimie's side.

MOM (CONTD)

You get that from me.

Erin laughs.

ERIN

Sure.

Mom pushes the hair out of Jaimie's sweaty, drooling face.

ERIN (CONTD)

I don't want to feel like I'm living
for someone else.

MOM

Why not? You like that. You're good at
it.

Erin dabs the drool on Jaimie's face with the dinner napkin.

GRANDMOTHER

All that means is you haven't found
the right one yet.

ERIN

Is there a "one," Gram? You were
married twice. Mom's had three, and of
the two that should be here right now,
I see a room full of women.

GRANDMOTHER

That's because she hasn't called.

MOM

Ted is working. And I did call him.

ERIN

You did?

MOM

Yeah. Says he'll be here tomorrow as
soon as he can get off of work.

Mom takes a seat across from Grandmother, next to Erin.

MOM (CONTD)

Now I have to spend these next few
days in my literal hell listening to
the jerk-off tell me how this is all
my fault.

Jaimie begins to snore. Erin smiles.

ERIN

I'll be back again tomorrow.

MOM
You don't need to.

ERIN
(to Mom)
Between Grandma, *Frankenstein* here and
her Dad, you'll need all the help you
can get.

Grandmother glances at Erin from out of the corner of her
eye.

MOM
Frankenstein is the doctor.

Erin's eyes are mid-roll. Mom lets out an exhausted, very
genuine fit of giggles.

The laughter is contagious, and they all begin laughing,
until the tears come.

Mom cracks a smile, and places her hand on Jaimie's. She nods
at Erin. Grandmother grabs onto Mom's hand, and Erin smiles
softly back at them both.

The three women hover around the hospital bed.