

A MOTHER'S LOVE

by

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HANNAH (28) hurries toward the dairy section, little MAX (5) close on her heels.

Hannah was young once, maybe even pretty. Now she looks like a used up junkie-whore.

Max, though, is still young. He doesn't care what she looks like. All he sees is his mom.

MAX

Mommy, can I have-

HANNAH

No.

The CASHIER ignores them, his nose buried in a magazine.

A MAN watches them from near the door. Max smiles at him.

Hannah stops in front of a cooler. She digs into her purse and pulls out a few crumpled bills. Her eyes move from one price tag to the next.

HANNAH

Shit.

She goes back to the purse, digging for change.

MAX

Are we gonna have scrambled eggs  
for dinner?

HANNAH

Quiet, Max. I need to think.

MAX

Because scrambled eggs are my fav-

HANNAH

Max!

She's angrier than she meant to be, but her exasperation forestalls an apology.

Max shuts up.

Hannah does the math on her fingers. Her eyes light up. She grabs a half-dozen eggs and a half-gallon of milk, and a small pack of store brand shredded cheddar cheese.

HANNAH

There. Let's go, Max.

Hannah and Max move the register. The cashier gives her a look when she pays, guessing at where she got the money. He doesn't notice Max.

Hannah gives him a "fuck you" look back, grabs the groceries, leaves with her son.

2 EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

2

Hannah moves with purpose down the sidewalk. She stops at the edge of an alley.

In the darkness, a PINPOINT OF ORANGE LIGHT: the tip of lit cigarette.

Hannah shoves the groceries into Max's hands.

HANNAH

Wait here.

Hannah disappears into the alley, leaving Max alone on the sidewalk.

3 EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

3

Hannah approaches the PUSHER.

PUSHER

Hannah, baby. Is it Tuesday already?

Hannah doesn't reply. The pusher produces a small baggie containing a fine brown powder: HEROIN.

Hannah reaches for it, but he dangles it above her head.

PUSHER

Money first.

Hannah fidgets.

HANNAH

I don't get paid til Friday.

PUSHER

I get paid today.

He gives her a look, tugs at her low cut collar.

PUSHER

One way or another.

Hannah throws a look toward Max at the end of the alley. She pulls the pusher behind a dumpster, out of sight.

4 EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

4

Hannah emerges from the alley, adjusting her clothes. She tucks the baggie of heroin into her bra.

HANNAH

Come on, Max. Let's go.

But Max isn't there. The groceries lie on the ground, abandoned.

HANNAH

Max?

Hannah picks up the groceries.

She scans up and down the sidewalk, but he's nowhere to be seen. As she hurries toward the store, panic sets in.

5 INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

5

Hannah rushes through the store.

HANNAH

Max! Max!

He's not here either. She runs back outside.

Sensing trouble, the cashier follows close on her heels.

6 EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

6

Hannah stops just outside the door, confused. What should she do? Where should she go? She's paralyzed by indecision.

Hannah falls to her knees, crying. Her groceries spill from her arms. The EGGS spill from their carton and break on the sidewalk.

The cashier stands over her. He kneels down and calls over his shoulder to a GAWKING PASSERBY.

(CONTINUED)

CASHIER  
Call the police.

The passerby produces a cell phone as the cashier tries in vain to comfort Hannah.

7 INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

7

Hannah sits in an uncomfortable metal chair beside a desk, nursing a cup of coffee. Dregs and cops mill about behind her. At every desk, another story.

FRANK (early 50's) leans on his desk and goes over her police record. Her multiple arrests seem to leap from the page, as do the words CHILD WELFARE SERVICES.

He could give two shits about Hannah. He affords her the same respect she has for herself.

FRANK  
It says here you have full custody  
of the kid. No father in the  
picture?

Hannah shakes her head.

FRANK  
You didn't see anyone nearby,  
watching the two of you?

Hannah shakes her head again.

FRANK  
And you're sure you didn't just  
forget where you left him?

That brings her around.

HANNAH  
(furious)  
I am not fucking high!

All activity around them comes to a stop. Frank sets down his pad and leans close.

FRANK  
You're not fucking high now, or you  
weren't fucking high when it  
happened?

Hannah falters, trembling with emotion.

(CONTINUED)

Frank clicks his ballpoint pen, ready to record the next words that come out of her mouth.

HANNAH

(subdued)

This ain't about me. This is about my son.

NAOMI (O.S.)

Hannah!

NAOMI (mid 20's) hurries toward the detective's desk. The detective rises to greet her.

FRANK

Detective Frank Gray.

NAOMI

Naomi Walker. I'm Hannah's sister  
(beat) What's going on?

Frank adopts a practiced, sympathetic expression

FRANK

According to her story, she was out late at a convenience store with her son, your nephew, and the boy was kidnapped. The cashier doesn't remember seeing anyone with her, and the store's surveillance camera was on the fritz. We're trying to get something out of her that can help us find the kid.

Naomi's expression shifts from horrified to piteous. She pulls Frank aside and has a private conversation with the detective, out of Hannah's earshot.

Hannah stares daggers at the both of them.

The conversation ends. Frank glances over his shoulder at Hannah, moves back to his desk, and tosses the legal pad down.

Naomi moves to her sister, extending a hand.

NAOMI

Come on. I'll take you home.

Hannah accepts her sister's hand and stands, wary. Her eyes dart back and forth between Naomi and Frank.

(CONTINUED)

HANNAH

What about Max?

The busies himself with paperwork, ignores her.

HANNAH

Naomi, what about Max? What about  
my son?

Naomi leads Hannah toward the exit. Hannah shouts the entire way, trying to get someone, anyone to pay attention to her.

HANNAH

What about my son? What about my  
son?

Her cries fall on deaf ears.

8

INT. HANNAH'S APARTMENT - MORNING

8

The apartment is tiny and uncomfortable. The mess is prevalent, almost overpowering.

Hannah sits at the table in the tiny kitchen, still wearing her jacket. A cigarette burns down between her trembling fingers. Her other hand caresses a beer bottle on the table.

Naomi is at the stove, making breakfast. She cracks an egg into the skillet.

Hannah thinks back to the convenience store, to the broken eggs on the sidewalk. She see's Max in her mind's eye, standing alone at the end of the alley.

HANNAH

(distant)

We were going to have scrambled  
eggs for dinner. Brinner. That's  
what he called it. Breakfast for  
dinner.

Hannah laughs, a lifeless sound. Naomi pours in a little milk, sprinkles in some shredded cheese.

HANNAH

It's his favorite.

NAOMI

I know.

Hannah drags on the cigarette and lets the smoke seep out. She takes a deep drink from the beer bottle.

(CONTINUED)

HANNAH  
I have to find him.

NAOMI  
Hannah...

HANNAH  
I have to-

NAOMI  
Max is gone.

Hannah looks at Naomi, confused.

HANNAH  
What?

NAOMI  
He's dead, Hannah. Dead. He died  
six months ago.

Hannah stares at Naomi, uncomprehending.

HANNAH  
Naomi, Max isn't-

NAOMI  
He was hit by a car. He died in the  
middle of the street while you were  
so strung out that-

Naomi's voice cracks. Words fail her.

Hannah is stunned. She thinks back to the eggs. The memory shifts to one of Max lying in street in a puddle of his own blood.

HANNAH  
(confused)  
I don't... Max isn't dead. Why  
would you say that?

NAOMI  
God dammit, Hannah! Stop it!

Naomi throws the skillet across the tiny kitchen. It bounces off the wall with a loud CLANG!

Naomi rips open cupboards and drawers, throwing the contents everywhere. Hannah jumps to her feet.

HANNAH

What are you doing?

Naomi pauses long enough to throw an icy look at Hannah, and then resumes her search. It doesn't take her long to find what she's looking for.

She produces a SMALL BLACK POUCH. She unzips it, revealing it's contents: bent spoon, syringe, needle, lighter, rubber tube, citric acid, and small vial of water.

She throws it at Hannah, the contents spilling to the floor. Hannah scrambles to pick up the paraphernalia, stuffing it back into the pouch.

Hannah clutches it to her breast with a mother's love.

The two women stare at one another for a span of heartbeats, their breathing the only audible sound.

HANNAH

I'm going to find my son.

Hannah's expression shifts from angry and accusing to frightened and worried. Naomi's hard stare doesn't waver.

Hannah spins and leaves the kitchen. Naomi remains rigid until she hears the SLAM of the front door.

9

EXT. NAOMI'S APARTMENT - MORNING

9

Hannah storms out of her apartment building. She looks left and right, indecisive.

A minute ago, she was dead set on finding her son. Now that she's standing outside, she has absolutely no idea what to do next.

She drifts in one direction and starts walking, letting her instincts choose for her.

She never notices the MAN across the street, the one from the convenience store, watching her like a silent sentinel.

10

EXT. PARK - MORNING

10

Children run about, squealing with delight. Mothers watch from benches, smiling wide, enjoying the sun and the sight of their children at play.

Hannah sits in a swing, alone. Her feet drag across the mulch at her feet, exposing the hard ground beneath.

(CONTINUED)

In the swing beside her, she sees Max, but only for an instant. One second he's there, the next he's gone.

Images play across Hannah's mind:

Dragging Max through the grocery store. Max running out into the street.

Broken eggs on the sidewalk. Max's broken body on the asphalt.

Eggs frying in pan. Heroin boiling in a spoon as a lighter's flame flickers beneath.

Hannah comes back to herself. Almost. Tears streak down her face. She runs her hands through her air, shaking her head in denial.

That's when she notices the man watching her from across the park. She knows him from somewhere...

She grapples for clarity, refusing to let go.

Then it clicks.

She walked by him in the convenience store. He was watching her. Watching Max.

Hannah jumps from the swing and races toward the man. He turns and starts walking away. He's far enough away that he doesn't need to hurry.

Hannah runs after the man, but she can never seem to catch up. She loses him, finds him, loses him again.

The man disappears into a tunnel beneath a small bridge. Hannah follows him, convinced that she's finally caught up with him.

11 EXT. TUNNEL - DAY

11

When she enters the tunnel, he's not there.

That settles it. She's officially crazy.

Hannah paces about, muttering to herself. She can't handle this. She has to do something.

Unconsciously, she reached into her jacket and withdraws the small BLACK POUCH. She leans against one of the tunnel walls and slides down to the ground, unzipping the pouch.

The answer to all of her problems is inside.

(CONTINUED)

She reaches into her bra. Her hand emerges, clutching the heroin.

With practiced, fluid movements, Hannah surrenders.

12 EXT. CITY STREETS - MORNING 12

The man exits the park, his hands in his pockets. A CAR rolls up beside him, stops.

He opens the passenger door and climbs in.

13 INT. CAR - MORNING 13

The man stares at the side-view mirror. He can see the tunnel in the distance, just enough to make out Hannah's form slumped against the wall.

MAN

I'm worried about her. Are you sure we're doing the right thing?

He turns to look at the driver.

Naomi is behind the wheel. She leans in, kisses him, pulls back just a bit.

NAOMI

We had to do something.

MAX (O.S.)

Aunt Naomi?

Naomi looks in the rear view mirror, makes eye contact with her nephew in the back seat.

NAOMI

Yes, Max?

MAX

I'm hungry. When we get to your house, can you make me some scrambled eggs?

Naomi smiles, her eyes wet with unshed tears.

NAOMI

Sure thing, honey. Sure thing.

Naomi eases the car into gear and drives away.

FADE TO BLACK