

A MOTHER'S LOVE

by

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HANNAH (28) hurries through the dairy section, little MAX (5) close on her heels. It's late, but there's always a store open somewhere in the city.

Hannah was young once, maybe even pretty, but she misplaced her innocence a lifetime ago. 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.

She doesn't even break stride.

A MAN watches them from one aisle. 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. That, or it could be the drugs still working their way out of her system.

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.

(CONTINUED)

HANNAH  
There. Let's go, Max.

But Max isn't there.

HANNAH  
(a little louder)  
Max?

She scans the immediate area. He's nowhere to be seen.

Hannah jogs from aisle to aisle, searching. The jog gives way to a sprint as her panic sets in.

HANNAH  
Max! Max!

Hannah runs right out the front door. It never even registers that she's carrying an armload of unpaid-for groceries.

The NIGHT MANAGER follows close on her heels.

2

EXT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

2

Hannah stops just outside the door, her eyes darting left and right, searching the entire parking lot.

No Max. Hannah wails.

HANNAH  
Max! Max!

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

The night manager stands over her. He kneels down and calls over his shoulder to a gawking teenage BAG BOY.

NIGHT MANAGER  
Call the police!

The bag boy runs inside as the night manager tries in vain to comfort Hannah.

3

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

3

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, an aging detective, leans on his desk and goes over his notes. He could give two shits about Hannah. He affords her the same respect she has for herself.

FRANK

(impatient)

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

HANNAH

(numb)

No.

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.

The detective 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. Frank clicks his ballpoint pen and leans forward, ready to record the next words that come out of her mouth.

HANNAH

(subdued)

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

NAOMI (O.S.)

Hannah!

NAOMI (26) hurries toward the detective's desk. The detective rises to greet her.

(CONTINUED)

FRANK  
Detective Frank Gray.

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

Frank adopts a practiced, sympathetic expression

FRANK  
She was at the store with her  
son... your nephew... and the boy  
was kidnapped.

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 stand by 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.

HANNAH  
What about Max?

The detective ignores her.

NAOMI  
Come on.

HANNAH  
(shouting)  
What about my son?

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

HANNAH  
(near hysteria)  
What about Max? What about my son?  
What about my son?

Her cries fall on deaf ears.

4

INT. HANNAH'S APARTMENT - MORNING

4

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 grocery store, to the broken eggs on the sidewalk.

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 sips at the beer.

HANNAH

I have to find him.

NAOMI

Hannah...

HANNAH

I have to-

NAOMI

Hannah!

Hannah looks at Naomi, confused.

NAOMI

Max is gone.

(CONTINUED)

HANNAH

No, he isn't

NAOMI

Max died six months ago. You need  
to just... stop.

Hannah stares at Naomi, uncomprehending.

HANNAH

Naomi, Max isn't-

NAOMI

Yes, he is! He was hit by a car. He  
died like a dog in the middle of  
the street, and you were so strung  
out that you...

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.

Her mind flips back to the image of the eggs, a much easier  
image to stomach. But now she's all turned around.

HANNAH

(confused)

I don't... Max isn't dead. Why  
would you say that?

NAOMI

God dammit, Hannah!

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.

Naomi holds up a tiny baggie full of a fine brown powder:  
HEROIN. She throws it in Hannah's face.

Hannah grabs the baggie before it falls to the floor. She  
clutches it to her breast with a mother's love.

(CONTINUED)

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

Hannah pockets the bag of heroin.

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.

5 EXT. NAOMI'S APARTMENT - MORNING

5

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 grocery store, watching her like a silent sentinel.

6 EXT. PARK - MORNING

6

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.

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.

(CONTINUED)

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 grocery 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, and 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.

But 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 a SMALL 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: spoon, syringe, needle, lighter, rubber tube, citric acid, and water.

She reaches into another jacket pocket and pulls out the baggie of heroin.

Then, with practiced, fluid movements, Hannah loses herself once again.

7 EXT. CITY STREETS - MORNING 7

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

He opens the passenger door and climbs in. The car begins to roll away.

8 INT. CAR - MORNING 8

The man stares at the side-view mirror, watching the park disappear into the distance.

MAN

I'm worried about her. Is she gonna be okay?

The driver doesn't answer.

MAN

Are you sure we're doing the right thing?

He turns to look at the driver.

Naomi is behind the wheel, a look of grim determination on her face.

NAOMI

We had to do something.

MAX (O.S.)

Aunt Naomi?

Naomi looks in the rear view mirror, making 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.

FADE TO BLACK