

The 101 to Ojai

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for Ella

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WINDOWS

The Ojai Valley Inn
Bridal Suite

Summer will arrive shortly as the Baby-blue-eyes have arrived in the valley, but for now, it's spring. Anne is distracted by the orange poppies dancing outside the window. Grace is fussing with her wedding dress as she paces in the bridal suite. Anne's daughter is Grace, who doesn't see the same poppies that Anne does.

GRACE

(Awkwardly pulling up the top of her dress.)

Fuck! This dress shrank!

(Grace thinks.)

Shrank? Shrunk? Has shrunk?

(Still not sure.)

Impossible! I haven't eaten a real meal in weeks!

(Anne is calmly focused on the flowers.)

ANNE

Don't say that, sweetie.

GRACE

Say what? "Fuck"?

Mom, I'm 27 years old.

(Grace still fussing.)

It's a bit late to start censoring my language.

(Grace now focuses on her shoes as she awkwardly walks back and forth.)

These shoes don't fit! Did my feet grow?

ANNE

Feet don't grow in your late twenties.

GRACE

Late twenties? Twenty five isn't "late twenties."

(Anne looks at Grace's feet and laughs.)

ANNE

Poor girl, you got your feet from me. I wish I could blame your Dad, but they're unquestionably mine. You'll live a life of shoes not fitting.

(Grace, still pacing and fussing with her dress, works herself into a fit.)

GRACE

It's 2019! I have an Ivy League degree, I'm a junior partner in the firm, but that's still not enough! I guess I'm just an insecure little girl who needs to "*feel pretty*." The only way to validate myself, in the current iteration, is by wearing unpractical and over priced shoes, on feet that are "always going to be too big."

(Grace lifts up her shoes to show Anne, who has gone back to staring at the flowers.)

Walking successfully in *these* proves that miracles aren't just a biblical phenomenon.

(Looking at Anne, lost in her thoughts.)

Mom, are you even listening? What's so interesting outside that window?

| PAUSE |

ANNE

The poppies,

GRACE

What's SO interesting about them?

ANNE

Sometimes they look like they're alone, sometimes they move together. It just depends on the wind.

(Anne refocuses on her daughter.)

Grace, stop obsessing, trying to make everything perfect.

(Grace, who isn't listening, continues the compulsive adjustments.)

GRACE

Is it possible they swapped my dress for another?

ANNE

No. You checked thirty four times before walking out of the store.

What's really going on Grace? It's not those shoes and certainly not that dress.

(Anne laughing)

Maybe it's all the kale ou ate this month?

(Anne gets up and stops Grace from pacing.)

Listen Grace, you look like everyone wishes they did on their wedding day. You know the "Bride to Be" magazines you read in the check out line?

GRACE

(Grace embarrassed to admit.)

That's all I've read the past year.

ANNE

You look like page six! You ARE that girl everyone wants to be.

(Grace walks over to the window.)

You're looking out a window that most people only ever get to stare into.

(A slightly more vulnerable Grace.)

GRACE

Why do girls care so much about this day?

(Comforting, motherly.)

ANNE

Because they've been told *today* is the day their dreams come true.

GRACE

Since they were little girls.

(Grace's energy changes.)

Such bullshit!

ANNE

It *IS*, bul-

(Anne stops herself from cursing.)

GRACE

Yes! Say it!

(Anne smiles.)

ANNE

I raised a modern, independent woman.

(Grace, a bit more vulnerable.)

GRACE

I wish I felt that more today.

How do I know that in 15 years, "Mr. Perfect" won't find a younger, smarter, and prettier girl than me?

ANNE

Well-

GRACE

How do I know that he won't die, leaving me alone for the the rest of my life?

ANNE

Stop Grace.

(Grace, starts to get more worked up again.)

GRACE

Do I even know this guy? Does ANYONE ever really know someone? We're so ill-equipped to make such a huge decision so early in life.

(Looking at Anne for answers.)

He *seems* great, right?

ANNE

He *is* great.

GRACE

Perfect actually-

ANNE

As perfect as guys come.

GRACE

Maybe that's precisely it, maybe he's TOO perfect! Everyone said how handsome and normal Ted Bundy was.

(Anne rolls her eyes and Grace's pacing back and forth gets faster.)

He's an artist, creative, handsome and even comes from money, which is good, because according to YOU I look out of expensive windows!

(Anne laughs out loud.)

What could POSSIBLY be so funny right now?

ANNE

You have no idea how similar you are to Dad. It's scary you two never met.

The sky was always falling for him.

(Grace softens a bit.)

GRACE

What would George say right now?

ANNE

You mean Dad?

GRACE

Mom, you know I think it's weird calling someone I've never met, "Dad."

(Anne ignores Grace's comment.)

ANNE

If Dad were here, he would say, "You're crazy for getting married!"

GRACE

He's probably right!

(Anne and Grace sit.)

ANNE

I can hear him now; *"Do you really know this guy?"*

| PAUSE |

(Simply and peacefully.)

But then in a beautiful and spontaneously intuitive moment, he would smile and and say,

"What the hell kid, you've made it this far, why not take another step?"

(Grace smiles for the first time since putting on her wedding dress. Anne fixes a tiny piece of Grace's hair that has fallen out of place.)

(Anne to her daughter.)

The world is beautiful if you choose to see it that way, Grace. You can find every reason in the world to say "no," you can also find a reason to say "yes." You find what you're out there looking for.

(Grace lays supine on the bed. Anne touches her lips.)

You have his lips.

(Anne stares deeply into Grace's blue eyes.)

After all these years, every time I look into your eyes, George stares back at me. It still takes my breath away, like it did when I first met him.

(Anne kisses Grace's forehead.)

You have *his* brain, which is a challenge but also a gift.

(Anne touches Grace's chest.)

You have MY heart and both of our sense of adventure. There's no reason to doubt things now.

(Change of energy. Anne stands up.)

Plus, I can't get a refund on that dress or those shoes. You might as well enjoy them for a day.

(Grace stands in front of the mirror. Anne is behind her holding Grace's arms.)

You miss Dad, don't you?

(Softly)

GRACE

How can I miss someone I never met? Traditionally, having your dad walk you down the aisle is part of this day, right?

ANNE

When has anything in our life been "traditional?"

(Both still looking in the mirror.)

You know I never actually married your dad.

GRACE

Really?

ANNE

I never had the chance.

| PAUSE |

(Anne trying to change the subject, with a different energy.)

That's a long time ago and another story altogether. Maybe when it's not one hour before your wedding, I'll tell it.

GRACE

What happens if this all doesn't work out, Mom?

(Anne starts helping Grace with the train of her dress. Anne laughing)

ANNE

You're frustrating sometimes. I'm not sure if your tenacity comes from your dad or me.

GRACE

Probably both.

ANNE

He always found something to compulsively worry about, and here his daughter stands, just like him.

GRACE

Mom, I'm about to get married and I realize I know almost nothing about how you and George met, how it all started, my birth.

ANNE

You've never been interested in any of this before.

GRACE

Generally teenagers going off to prom aren't.

| PAUSE |

How did all of this start?

| PAUSE |

(Anne, thinking about that day, 25 years ago and smiles.)

ANNE

Your story started with a VERY nervous "yes," on Rt. 101 to Ojai.

GRACE

Great! We have an hour, lets start there.