

The Things we Inherit

by  
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CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
Maeve	Bull-headed, earnest	17	Girl
Lorraine	Bull-headed, jaded	49	Woman
Leo	Calm, collected, absent	52	Man
Jake	A basic 14 year old	14	Boy

## SCENE 1

A family sits around a dinner table. MAEVE (17) pokes half-heartedly at a glob of undercooked chicken. Beside her, her dad, LEO (52), chews mechanically, much like a cow at a trough. To his left, Maeve's little brother, JAKE (14), does the same, eyes glazed over.

Across from her, Maeve's mom, LORAIN (49), wordlessly slides her phone over to Maeve. Maeve takes it, shooting her a look that says she's definitely not interested - *except she definitely is*.

MAEVE

What's this?

LORAIN

It's a top. For the wedding. What do you think?

The scene freezes. Leo's fork hovers in his mouth. Jake's eyes are locked on his plate, mid-chew. Loraine is still, holding out her phone, eyebrows slightly raised in expectation. Silence fills the room, stretching on unnaturally.

Maeve takes a moment to drink in the scene, then turns to the audience.

MAEVE

(to the audience)

Me and my mom don't really get on. Though she sometimes forgets. One second we're screaming at each other about birth control—*she swears it'll ruin me*—and the next, she's shoving this god-awful Old Navy blouse in my face, asking if I “approve.” It's a trap. She knows I hate it.

Everything continues.

MAEVE

(condescending)

Oh, yeah. It's *cute*.

Lorraine retracts the phone, making an odd clicking sound with the inside of her cheek.

MAEVE  
(annoyed)

What?

LORAINÉ  
You didn't have to say it like that.

MAEVE  
Like WHAT?! Are you serious? I just said it was cute!

LORAINÉ  
(stern)

*Maeve.*

MAEVE  
You knew I didn't like it when you asked!

LORAINÉ  
What could you possibly not like about it?! It's an elegant, chiffon button-down-

MAEVE  
Fine—do you want me to LIE?

LORAINÉ  
I just don't see what could be so distasteful about it?! It's respectable, Maeve! Something you could one day wear to interviews—

MAEVE  
To what interviews, Mom? Like at the DMV? I'm not going to work anywhere that I have to wear something like THAT—

LORAINÉ  
OH! Wow, Maeve! You really are a piece of work! So where's this big interview, then—the strip club?!

MAEVE  
Maybe so! I'd make GOOD TIPS—

LORAINÉ

Great! That should be perfect for you, since you don't seem to like wearing *any clothes at all!* And hey, while we're at it, we can pull you out of school! Since you clearly won't be needing an education! Leo, did you hear that? I can finally retire!

LEO

That's great, honey.

MAEVE

**DAD!?**

Leo freezes, and then slowly blinks,  
checking back into reality.

LEO

Maeve. You have a *very* bright future ahead of you. Your mom was, of course, exaggerating.

LORAINÉ  
(venomous)

Oh, *I* was exaggerating?

LEO

You know what I meant, Loraine. She doesn't like the top. Let her pick something else.

LORAINÉ

Oh, sure! Let me find something black and horrendous—

Again, the scene lurches to a halt, freezing  
just as Loraine is in the middle of shouting,  
her mouth open mid-word.

MAEVE  
(to the audience)

Sometimes, I mindpaint her when she's like this—by that, I mean I lay out all the colors, the lighting, the dramatic framing. She's like a god in my head. Not a cool one. More like one of those fucked-up Greek gods—all glowing and mad, only one second away from turning you into a tree.

Time resumes. Maeve fails to stifle a laugh  
at the visual she's just created.

Jake and Loraine turn to Maeve in unison,  
wearing identical expressions of annoyance.

JAKE  
(annoyed)

What's funny?

LORAINÉ  
Yeah, Maeve. What *is* so funny?

MAEVE  
(to the audience)

Side note: Did you know that Zeus gave birth to Athena through his forehead? I like to imagine my mom gave birth to Jake that way, straight from her mind... like he's a part of her.

Maeve stares at the two of them, frozen in place. She glares, hard. Like she's trying to vaporize them with her mind... *and then...*

The scene transforms. In a flash of light, Loraine is suddenly on the table, now an operating table, the tablecloth draped over her like a surgical sheet. A baby CRIES and then a SPOTLIGHT hits Jake, now "delivered", fully-formed and dead-eyed, standing at the head of the table.

The lights FLICKER again, and the scene snaps back to the dinner table as it was before, everyone unfrozen.

LORAINÉ  
...Look, I know you think I'm old-fashioned, but there's a reason I say these things. If you want people to respect you, you have to show them that *you respect yourself*.

MAEVE  
OH—so dressing like a constipated banker is the only way to show that I respect myself?!

LORAINÉ

*Jesus, Maeve! You're just like my—*

Lorraine freezes. The whole table does.

Maeve inhales deeply, bracing herself, hands white knuckling the table.

MAEVE

(to the audience, pissed)

I can't do this. I really can't do this. If she compares me to her old shitbox Toyota Corolla again, I'm going to flip this table. You don't get it. She always does this. She ALWAYS does it. It's not even WHAT she says, it's the fact that she can't come up with anything better. It's like she only has *two* things she says! One is "respect yourself" and the other is "You're just like my—"

LORAINÉ

Old Toyota Corolla! You go from 0 to 100 faster than the speed of light!

MAEVE

(to the audience, re: the table)

**I'm gonna flip it.**

LORAINÉ

One second, you're driving along just fine—

MAEVE

(to the audience)

**Oh, I'm gonna flip it.**

LORAINÉ

And the second you put on a little gas, you're RACING off, roaring mad—

MAEVE

(to the audience)

**I'm gonna flip it. I swear to god.**

LORAINÉ

It's like you don't even TRY to control yourself—

In one furious motion, Maeve slams her hands on the edge of the table and HEAVES. The table wobbles—barely—teeter tots, then crashes right back down with a pathetic clatter.

Her dad looks over at her, bewildered, a crescent roll stuck half way in transit to his mouth. With a frustrated “RRRGHH!”, she snatches it out of his hand and storms off.

In the distance, a door SLAMS. Leo looks at Loraine, then at Jake, then back at Loraine.

LEO

*(bewildered, hurt)*

She took my bread...

## SCENE 2

Lights up on Maeve’s bedroom. Cluttered. Chaotic. Her walls are plastered with indie movie posters and odd art prints. Clothes drape over every surface, bras tossed on the dresser, curling irons and hair ties tangled on the floor, empty mugs stacked by her bed. In the dim light, Maeve sits curled up on her bed, eyes red and puffy. She looks small, defeated, swallowed up by the mess and her own hurt.

A soft KNOCK echoes from Maeve’s door. Loraine waits a second before letting herself in.

MAEVE

*(to the audience)*

I’ve never understood that. What’s the point of knocking if she’s just going to come in anyways?

Loraine takes in her daughters disheveled state, and responds in the only way she knows how.

LORAINÉ

*Your room is a mess.*

MAEVE

(voice frail, trembling)

*Yeah? That's great, mom.*

LORAINÉ

I'm just saying, you could at least clean up every once in a while...

MAEVE

(voice wavering)

I try, mom. I really do...

Maeve wraps her arms around herself, face falling. She's fighting back tears.

LORAINÉ

Oh, honey...

MAEVE

*What?*

LORAINÉ

I just...

MAEVE

(sniffling)

What mom?

LORAINÉ

You know I love you, right?

MAEVE

(sniffling)

I know.

LORAINÉ

But do you? You know why I say these things, right?

MAEVE

I don't know, I guess.

LORAINÉ

I just want the best for you, honey. I see this light in you, this intelligence, this fire... I just don't want you to butt heads with so many people that they don't listen to you. You have all these ideas, wonderful ideas, and I know that if you can just get your foot in the door, you'll be great, you'll be golden, but honey... *you won't get your foot in the door if you're not likeable.*

A BEAT. Maeve's face crumbles, then begins to tremble.

MAEVE

You don't think I'm... likeable?

LORAINÉ

Maeve, that's not what I—

MAEVE

But it is, it is what you meant—

LORAINÉ

I just meant that—

MAEVE

You know, most people's moms think they're perfect, even if they're not? They build them up, make them feel like they're something special. And *you*... it's like, I don't know. It's like you've made it your job to make me feel small.

LORAINÉ

(incredulous)

...Small? Everything I do is to make sure you *never* have to feel small. I work myself to the bone so you can go to a good school, so you can live somewhere safe, where you don't have to worry about getting mugged, or shot—

MAEVE

(desperate to be heard)

And I'm grateful! I really am! I know, I know what you've done for me! I know it wasn't easy, and I'm grateful mom, I am! Thank you for the roof over my head, for the food, for school! But that's not all there is! That's not all you have to do! Like, every once in a while, you have to tell me I'm nice, or I'm funny, or that I'm smart—

LORAINÉ

I *just* told you that you were smart—

MAEVE

You were just saying something nice so you could say something mean! You don't ever just tell me something you like about me! Something *I* did well!

LORAINÉ

I'm not here to build you up with false praise, Maeve. I'm sorry I'm not some flowery sweet-sweet mom, that tells you you're perfect all the time when you're not. You have flaws, real flaws, just like every human being on planet earth, and they're going to bite you in the ass if you don't fix them. You know those kids? The ones who were always being told that they were perfect? They end up homeless, in ditches, cause no one ever gave them a taste of reality.

MAEVE

But that's *all* you give me, all you give me is reality, all the time—

LORAINÉ

I don't know how else to say it, Maeve. I'm here to help you face the word, I'm not here to be your biggest fan.

A beat. Silence.

MAEVE

(soft, heartbroken)

But you're not even *a* fan.

LORAINÉ

That's not true...

MAEVE

It is...

LORAINÉ

Well, Maeve, it's hard to be when you don't even respect me. Half the things you say to me... my mother would have slapped me for.

MAEVE

(sarcastic)

And you loved *her* so much.

LORAINÉ  
(cold)

I respected her.

MAEVE  
(begging)

...And that's all you want from me? From our relationship? *Respect?*

There's a pause. A heavy, uncomfortable moment settles between them, the words hanging in the air. Maeve searches her mother's eyes for something—anything—that might feel like warmth.

LORAINÉ  
(earnest)

No...

Lorraine reaches out, hesitantly at first, then pulls Maeve into a hug. Maeve's grip tightens, and after a beat, Lorraine pulls her closer.

MAEVE

Me neither...

The dim light softens around them, their figures almost blurred together in the stillness. The space around them fades, leaving just the outline of mother and daughter, holding each other.

**END OF PLAY**