

MATRESCENCE

Written by

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1. INT. DELIVERY ROOM. NIGHT

A group of nurses hover around, covering HEATHER, mid-twenties, exhausted and drenched in sweat as she lays in the bed. Heather takes rapid, gasping breaths as she battles labour.

MIDWIFE (O.S.)

Alright, Heather. One more big push.
Are you ready?

Heather closes her eyes in total defeat; she gives a quick nod before slowly manoeuvring herself into position. Heather's knees are pushed up, and she takes a big deep breath. Heather's face scrunches in agony, and she lets out a guttural scream. The cries of a newborn are now heard. Heather's head falls back, her eyes drift closed and her lips bear a relieved grin.

INSERT TITLE SLATE - MATRESCENCE - CUT TO BLACK.

2. INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT

Heather lays in bed wide awake. It's the middle of the night and GEORGE, newborn is crying. She takes a second to get out of bed before walking over to George. Heather picks George up.

HEATHER

(Sleepily.)

Okay, shh shh, It's okay.

Heather lays a fussy George down on the changing table. She grimaces at his soiled clothing and changes him.

CUT TO:

3. EXT. SEAFRONT. EARLY MORNING.

Heather walks along the promenade, George strapped in his baby bjorn. She listens to music as she stops to look out at the sea. Her phone begins to ring, Heather pulls out her phone where the name MUM is lit up. The phone rings a few times before Heather sends it to voicemail. She places the phone back in her pocket and goes back to admiring the crashing waves. She looks down at George, sleeping peacefully against her chest. Heather smiles and looks away.

CUT TO BLACK.

4. INT. BATHROOM. DAY

Heather is in the bath. She leans back and tries to relax. George gurgles loudly from his carseat, Heathers eyes shoot open and she looks over, reassured that George is fine she returns to the the same position but feeling more rigid. Once out of the bath, She brushes her teeth and hair. when she's done, Heather looks at herself in the mirror, unsatisfied with her appearance, though she does nothing to change it, she grabs the car seat and walks out.

5. KITCHEN. DAY

Heather walks around the kitchen, tidies the surfaces and makes herself some tea and toast.

6. LIVING ROOM. DAY

Heather is sitting on the sofa watching an old sitcom on TV, George lying on her chest as she eats her breakfast. The mixture of audience laughter and gurgles from George circulate the room, but it's clear Heather isn't paying attention to either. George coos loudly, which finally catches Heather's attention. Heather moves George and rocks him in her arms. She looks down at George with a tired gaze. George looks back up at Heather, Heather cracks a small smile, then returns to staring into space.

7. KITCHEN. DAY

Heather walks in, holding George, and puts her dirty plate in the sink. She sets the kettle to make another cup of tea, she makes the tea and goes to the fridge to grab the milk. Heather realises there's no more milk. Heather sighs and closes the fridge.

CUT TO:

8. INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT

Heather sits at the table, pushing her dinner around her plate as she breastfeeds George simultaneously. Heather scrapes her leftovers into the bin and puts her plate into the sink, ignoring the plates from earlier and the now ice-cold tea on the side.

9. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Sat in front of the TV, Heather's phone rings again, It's her Mum. Heather hangs up and tosses her phone to the side. Heather looks down at George and moves him onto her chest; she rubs his back lightly while staring at the TV.

HEATHER

Would you ignore my calls?

She looks at George as if she was expecting an answer. She looks back at the TV.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

Wouldn't blame you if you did.

10. BEDROOM. NIGHT

Heather puts George in his crib and walks over to her bed. She lays in bed looking towards the crib. Georges gurgles envelop the room. Heather shifts in bed and looks up at the ceiling.

CUT TO:

11. INT. BEDROOM. DAY

George's quiet fussing has progressed into full cries. Heather is lying in bed actively ignoring George. The doorbell rings. George gets up and leaves a crying George in the room.

12. EXT. FRONT DOOR. DAY

Heather opens the door and sees the POSTMAN, late forties, standing with a few letters in his hand and a large box next to him.

POSTMAN

Delivery for Heather?

HEATHER

(smiles.)

Yes, that's me.

The Postman hands over the letters and his clipboard for Heather to sign. Heather signs and hands it back to the Postman with a smile.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

Thank you.

POSTMAN
Have a nice day miss.

The Postman leaves and Heather drags the box inside.

13. INT. HALLWAY. DAY

Heather drags the box inside. She sets it in the middle of the hallway. She looks through the letters and opens one. It's from Maternity Services, confirming her next home visit. George's cries can still be heard from the bedroom, so Heather puts the post down and makes her way to him.

14. LIVING ROOM. LATER

Heather walks around, rocking an upset George. Heather tries shushing him but to no avail. She sits on the sofa.

HEATHER
Come on, George. Please, what's wrong?

George continues to cry.

HEATHER (CONT'D)
Are you hungry? Is that it?

Heather begins to breastfeed George. He latches on, and his cries stop. Heather sighs. Enjoying the silence.

15. INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Later on, while George sleeps, Heather sits on the floor trying to build the baby bouncer delivered to her that morning. She struggles to fit the pieces together, it all becomes too frustrating for Heather as she throws the pieces to the ground. Heather stares at the instructions and pieces scattered across the floor and tears well up in her eyes. The phone rings, startling Heather. She wipes her tears and clears her throat as she picks up the phone, takes a deep breath and answers.

HEATHER (CONT'D)
Hi Mum.

LINDA (V.O.)
(snidely)
So you are alive.

HEATHER
(stressed.)
Yeah, sorry it's been a bit hectic.

LINDA (V.O.)
That's okay. How's my wonderful
grandson?

HEATHER
Yeah George is fine, been crying a
lot though.

LINDA (V.O.)
Well, just let him cry it out.
He'll get over it soon enough.

HEATHER
No, it's fine, he's a baby, babies
cry. Nothing I can do about it. How
are things?

Heather gets up from the floor and walks towards the kitchen.
She checks on George in the cot before leaving the room.

16. KITCHEN. NIGHT

Heather sits down at the table, rubbing the stress off her
face, she picks up the home visit letter and skims through it
as she listens to Linda.

LINDA (V.O.)
Oh same old, same old. Up to my
ears at work, Doris and I have a
boozy brunch planned tomorrow,
which I'm looking forward to. But
most importantly, my children don't
call anymore!

HEATHER
(inattentive.)
That's nice, Yeah, things are okay.
Got my next home visit soon.

Heather looks over at George's cot.

LINDA (V.O.)
That must be exciting! Tell you
what, how 'bout I come grab Georgie
while you have the visit. Give you
some peace.

HEATHER

Huh? No, no, it's fine. I need him here for the appointment.

LINDA (V.O.)

Why's that?

HEATHER

Because Nina needs to check him.

LINDA (V.O.)

He doesn't need to be there, Heather. Come on, let Grandma have a turn.

HEATHER

(bluntly.)

I said no. Mum.

The air is tense; Heather looks extremely annoyed by the conversation. She makes up an excuse to hang up.

LINDA (V.O.)

I just want to help Heather.

HEATHER

(bluntly)

Yeah I don't need it.

Beat.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

I got to go anyway, George needs feeding.

Heather hangs up the phone. She leans back on her chair head resting on the wall. She takes a deep breath.

17. INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT

Heather lays a babbling George in his crib and sits beside him, stroking his tiny hand in her fingers. Heather looks over George with a melancholic gaze. She gets up to walk over to her bed, but it feels much too far from George. She looks back down at the crib before picking George up and taking him over to bed with her. They lay down together. Heather watches over George as she strokes his hair. Tears begin to spill and Heather sobs quietly with George by her side.

CUT TO BLACK.

18. INT. BATHROOM. DAY

A static shot of the bathroom as George's relentless cries take over. Heather, looking dishevelled and filthy, storms in and slams the door behind her. George's muffled cries continue, and Heather sits on the toilet. She buries her face into her hands. A few minutes pass, and Heather is still sitting on the toilet with her head leaning against the wall and her eyes fluttering shut. She hears the landline begin to ring. She doesn't move immediately but slowly begins to drag her body to the door. The ringing ends as Heather opens the door, and the voicemail begins to play.

NINA (V.O.)

(cheerful)

Hi Darling, It's Nina calling. Just letting you know I am on my way, I'll be over in around 20 minutes. See you soon!

Heather curses under her breath as she looks around her untidy house.

19. INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

George is dressed and calm, strapped in his car seat as Heather frantically cleans the room. Once she's satisfied with the living room, she begins to make her way over to the kitchen, only to knock into the large cardboard box the baby bouncer was delivered in. Heather groans as she picks up the box, folding it down as she makes her way to the front door.

20. EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE. DAY

Heather steps outside and unknowingly shuts the door behind her. She walks over to the bin, breaking down the box as she goes. She throws the box away and begins to make her way back to the front door. Heather tries to open the door, but the handle is stiff. The realisation hits Heather quick. She's locked herself out. Heather's panic rises quickly, she rattles the handle, hoping it's just stuck, she frantically searches for the spare key as the sounds of blood rushes through her ears. Laboured breaths and blurry vision bring her to her knees. In the panic, Heather hears a muffled voice and a hand resting lightly on her back.

NINA (O.S.)

Heather? Heather, love, what's the matter?

Heather desperately scrambles to stand up and face NINA, the healthcare worker.

HEATHER
(breathless.)
I was just taking out some
rubbish... And the door... I
can't... Find... Oh God my baby!

Heather begins to panic. Nina tries to calm her.

NINA
(calmly.)
Heather? I need you to tell me
where George is.

Heather fruitlessly takes deep breaths as she rubs tears off her face.

HEATHER
He's in his car seat... In the
living room?

NINA
Okay, so he's safe. Do you have a
spare key?

HEATHER
(cries harder.)
Yeah but I can't find it I looked
everywhere!

As Heather sobs uncontrollably, Nina looks around. Her eyes lock on the doormat. She lifts it to reveal the spare key to Heather.

NINA
I found it!

Heather's bloodshot eyes widen, she rips the key out of Nina's hand and desperately unlocks the door. Heather runs in with Nina following.

21. INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

Heather walks in first and immediately picks up George. Nina walks in and scans the room. Heather may have seen a tidy and organised room, but all Nina sees is a huge mess. She says nothing. Heather turns to face Nina with a wide smile as if she wasn't just falling apart a few minutes ago.

HEATHER
Shall I stick the kettle on?

Nina looks up at Heather with a warm smile.

NINA

That sounds great. I'll check over George while you're busy.

Nina goes to take George from Heather. Heather hesitates slightly before handing him over. Nina sits down on the sofa. Heather walks into the kitchen, not taking her eyes off George.

22. INT. LIVING ROOM. LATER

Heather walks in with two mugs. She sets them down on the coffee table and sits next to Nina, who's strapping George back into his car seat. Nina thanks Heather and picks up her mug.

NINA

He's growing really well.

HEATHER

I hope so, the boy doesn't stop eating.

They both chuckle lightly as they take a sip of their tea. Heather and Nina sit in brief silence as Nina looks at Heather worriedly.

NINA

Are you okay Heather?

Heather looks up at Nina with a childlike gaze. No one's asked her that in a long time.

HEATHER

I'm okay. Yeah. Fine. It's a lot.

Beat.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

He cries so much. You know? At first, I thought I could handle it, I thought 'all the love I have for this boy, nothing could take that love away' I wanted to be everything my mum wasn't. Attentive, loving. But it looks like apple doesn't fall far from the tree. I know I love him, I really do. But a mum who loves her child doesn't ignore them when they cry. She doesn't put them at risk like that.

Nina watches Heather's eyes go glassy; Heather shakes her head and clears her throat in an effort to convince Nina.

HEATHER (CONT'D)
It's Okay. I'm Okay.

Nina isn't convinced. Heather's smile falters.

HEATHER (CONT'D)
(whispering, holding back
tears.)
Promise.

Heather's tears spill out, and she breaks down in Nina's arms, holding her in a tight embrace. Nina sheds her own tears as Heather sobs into her arms.

CUT TO BLACK.

23. INT. BATHROOM. DAY

Heather walks into the bathroom and looks into the mirror, her face displaying a renewed sense of peace. Heather showers, fixes her hair and brushes her teeth.

24. BEDROOM. DAY

Heather gets dressed. Admiring herself in the mirror. She decides she likes her outfit and walks out of the room.

25. INT. NINA'S CAR. DAY

Nina and Heather drive into the car park of the community centre. Heather looks out the window worriedly. She turns to Nina who smiles warmly. Heather nods. She gets out of the car and opens the back door to take George.

26. EXT. COMMUNITY CENTRE. DAY

Nina drives off, leaving Heather standing with George at the entrance. She takes a deep breath and heads inside.

27. INT. COMMUNITY CENTRE. DAY

Heather walks into the foyer, she see's a group of mums walk into another room and shut the door behind them after handing their children to a GROUP WORKER.

Heather slowly walks up to the woman, she smiles gently and Heather reluctantly hands George over to her. Heather walks over to door. Her hand hovers over handle before she pushes it down.

28. INT. MEETING ROOM. DAY

All the mothers are sitting around in a circle. SASHA, early thirties, is sharing an experience.

SASHA

I didn't believe my daughter even liked me, and that made me feel terrible, It made how I felt ten times worse. It made me hate her.

We see each of the MOTHER'S listen intently to what Sasha is saying.

SASHA (CONT'D)

She never cried when I left her with someone else but with me. I accidentally locked her in the car once. Wasn't even thinking, It felt like I couldn't breathe, though. Like someone had knocked all the air out of my lungs.

We land on Heather, tears staining her cheeks listening carefully to Sasha.

SASHA (CONT'D)

I couldn't let out of my sight after that. I needed to prove to everyone I was a good mother. That I could handle it. I needed to prove it to myself. But I was just sinking deeper. Silently dying with a smile on my face.

(Sniffs tears.)

I wish I had reached out sooner, The idea that one day she'll grow up and ask, "What was it like? To have me as a baby." What do I tell her then? I love her so much. I just wish I could've loved her from the start.

Tears roll heavily down Heather's face.

CREDITS ROLL OVER LAST SHOT.