

SISTER MOTHER AUNTY BABY

by

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'SISTER MOTHER AUNTY BABY'

Swirls of pastel pinks and tiffany blues take shape before us -- round and stretched and vaguely alien.

Over the amorphic blobs is GIDDY CHATTER, CLINKING dishware, and SOFT PEPPY MUSIC. A gleeful ambiance.

Then a DOORBELL RINGS.

INT. FANCY APARTMENT - DAY

Clusters of pink and blue balloon bouquets fill every inch of the crowded apartment. Everything is plush or round or both -- including the extended bellies of more than a few guests.

Women sit on dangerously beige furniture, holding babies, exchanging prim smiles. Everything is aggressively pastel, as if Easter itself decorated.

HOLD ON: a large sign displaying 'Madeline's Baby Shower'

With so many pregnant women, and so many spring dresses, Madeline could be any one of them.

The only distinguishable person in the crowd is the one in a stark black blazer, making a coffee in the corner. This is MAX MENDOZA (36, preternaturally unimpressed).

She finishes pouring her coffee, then surveys the room.

MAX'S POV: A sea of bleached teeth, bobbing babies, and a table overflowing with gifts. We land on a mother who unselfconsciously wipes some spludge from her baby's lips and scoops it with her finger into her own mouth.

Max shudders, turning away. She shakes it off and takes a sip of her coffee when--

PERKY MAMA

Max! You made it!

Max startles, coffee spilling a little. PERKY MAMA (30s, eyes bulging) dangles a BABY on her hip (4 months, mom's eyes).

MAX

Hi, hey. Yes, I did. I can't stay too long though--

PERKY MAMA

Oh that's so wonderful that you made the time! I know how busy you are, I'm sure Madeline will be just thrilled. Have you seen her?

MAX

No, not yet. I was looking for--

PERKY MAMA

Oh she's just over there, talking to Madison.

Max peers beyond some balloons, but her view is blocked by the back of a baby's head. The soft part.

MAX

It's alright. I'll find her later.

Perky Mama smiles at Max with her big, desperate eyes.

PERKY MAMA

So... are you... you're doing well?

MAX

Very. You?

PERKY MAMA

Oh so, so good.

(turns hip and baby)

Cranbrook here is just about 76 weeks old--on Tuesday! He's an absolute dream. He's got such a little personality already.

MAX'S POV: the baby's big-eyed expressionless face.

MAX

Yep. That's a baby.

PERKY MAMA

He's not a great sleeper, but we're working on that--

(to baby)

Aren't we honeybear? Yes, we are!

(to Max)

I'm getting about three hours a night. But it's okay, I nap when he naps. I was never a napper before, but full-body exhaustion sure helps! Oh, but I'm sure you know all about sleep deprivation.

She laughs maniacally, then catches herself.

PERKY MAMA (CONT'D)

I don't suppose...do you think...
Could you prescribe me something?

MAX

No, unfortunately I can't.

PERKY MAMA

No, of course not. Worth a shot! So you are still doing the doctor thing?

MAX

Yep, still very much a doctor.

PERKY MAMA

Remind me what kind?

MAX

(chin high)

Cardiologist.

PERKY MAMA

Look at you! Big brain gal over here! And still no husband?

MAX

(chin drops slightly)

Nope. Too many patients with broken hearts to mend.

PERKY MAMA

Well, that's a shame. I hope you can find some work-life balance, Max. There is truly nothing more rewarding than being a mother.

(tearing up)

I can honestly say my life didn't have purpose until I had Cran.

Max stares into her exhausted, moist, deranged eyes, as--

LOUD MAMA

(calling out)

Hi everyone! I first want to say thank you so much for coming. And, Madeline, on behalf of all of us, congratulations on your bundle of joy. You're going to make such a beautiful mama bear.

Eyes well across the room. A pregnant lady (Madeline?) caresses her enormous belly.

LOUD MAMA (CONT'D)

Now, who's ready for some organised fun!?

CHEERS. And so begins the--

BABY SHOWER MONTAGE:

INT. FANCY APARTMENT - DAY - LATER

Three separate groups of women race to wrap three individual women in toilet paper, mummifying them.

INT. FANCY APARTMENT - DAY - LATER

The guests watch as someone rolls a 'diaper ball' into rows of bottles set up like bowling pins.

She knocks a couple down. The room erupts into CHEERS.

INT. FANCY APARTMENT - DAY - LATER

The women are separated into groups again, and the non-pregnant ones have balloons tucked under their shirts.

They hurl their bodies into each other in an attempt to pop the balloons. When they do: more CHEERS.

INT. FANCY APARTMENT - DAY - LATER

Three guests concentrate as they race to wrap teddy bears in diapers. The ultimate proof they are THE BEST MAMA.

Perky Mama wins, and CHEERS a little too hard.

INT. FANCY APARTMENT - DAY - LATER

Six diapers are splayed on the coffee table, each dolloped with a distinct brown goop (melted chocolate). A heavily pregnant woman (MADELINE!) leans over the table, analysing. She dips her finger into one, and tastes.

Max looks on, horrified.

Madeline lifts a Butterfingers. CHEERS.

Max watches it all horrified.

MONTAGE ENDS.

INT. FANCY APARTMENT - DAY - LATER

With the games over, Max loiters near the finger food. She grabs a devilled egg and pops it into her mouth.

Another guest approaches.

FRIENDLY MAMA

Hi there!

MAX

(mouth full)

Mmm, mhi.

FRIENDLY MAMA

Sorry! I'm notorious for my bad timing.

MAX

(swallows)

No, no. Sorry. Hi back at you.

FRIENDLY MAMA

I'm Gracie.

MAX

Max.

GRACIE

How do you know Madeline?

MAX

We're neighbours, actually. I'm three floors up.

GRACIE

That's amazing! She'll need people close by when the baby comes. It really does take a village.

Another woman, armed with a baby, joins them.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

(to new mom)

Oh he--she? She's so sweet.

NEW MAMA

This is Fran! Wanna hold her?

GRACIE

(melting)

May I?

Max watches, chewing, as Gracie expertly takes the baby.

NEW MAMA

She likes you!

A moment as they both coo over the baby. Max's eyes drift to the snacks, assessing. Then she turns and startles. The baby is staring at her. Intently.

Max stares back, studying. The women resume chatting, their voices fading into a dull drone beneath the ambient noise. The room blurs at the edges as Max fixates on Fran. Her chubby legs, tiny fingers, wisp of hair.

A suspended, trance-like beat, then Max snaps back--

NEW MAMA (CONT'D)
--actually had her via surrogate.

Surrogate. A flicker of an idea across Max's face.

NEW MAMA (CONT'D)
(to Max)
Would you also like to hold her?

MAX
Oh, no thank you.

Max holds out her hands in protest, like she's just been offered a hunk of Blue Stilton. Reaches for a carrot instead.

Max takes a bite. Chews. Audible CRUNCHES. Fran SQUEALS.

Max checks her watch.

MAX (CONT'D)
I actually have to head. It was lovely to meet you both.
(looks at baby)
All.

She turns and weaves her way towards Madeline.

MAX (CONT'D)
Hey! Congratulations, Maddie--

MADELINE
Oh Max, thank you so much for coming. I know how busy you are.
(in her feelings)
Can you believe I'm almost a mom?!

MAX
(points to belly;
sarcastic)
Is that what that means?

MADELINE
Good thing you're not an ob-gyn!

MAX
Speaking of, I'm so sorry, but I do need to dash.

MADELINE

Dr. Mendoza, never off duty!

MAX

(pun intended)

Always testing my patients!

They hug, but it's far from smooth, partly because Madeline is heavily pregnant, but also because Max is Max.

MADELINE

I'll see you soon, yeah?

MAX

Of course. Good luck with... the birth... and all that. Hope you don't shit on the table!

INT. FANCY APARTMENT - ELEVATOR - DAY

Max stands deep in thought as the elevator descends, her serious expression multiplying in the mirrored walls.

EXT. FANCY APARTMENT/CITY STREETS - DAY

She steps out of the sleek high-rise and into the Saturday buzz -- patios clinking with mimosas, shoppers weaving past with glossy bags.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Above ground again, she rounds a corner.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

An imposing, grey building. Sprawling and soulless and eight stories high. Ambulances parked out front.

Max passes a sign displaying: ROYAL ALEXANDRA HOSPITAL

She enters with purpose.

INT. HOSPITAL - GYNO HALLWAY - DAY

The gynecology ward. Someone has worked hard to make it feel less clinical: soft palettes, tasteful canvases.

NURSE

Oh, Dr. Mendoza! Should I grab--

MAX

No, no. I'm just checking in.

She pushes open a door without knocking.

The nurse frantically types into the hospital TABLET.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

In the hospital bed lays GABRIELA 'GABI' (39; emotional wreck), stirring at the sound of the door clicking shut.

Max grabs her chart and begins to read. Gabi groans.

MAX
(eyes flick to Gabi)
You look like hot trash.

GABI
(croaky)
Fuck you.

While Max reads, Gabi pushes herself upright with effort. Then she looks Max up and down.

GABI (CONT'D)
Why do you look like you came from
a sexy funeral?

MAX
Baby shower.

GABI
That's not what you wear to a baby
shower.

MAX
How's your abdominal pain? Scale
from one to ten.

GABI
Four.

MAX
Any bleeding since surgery?

GABI
I don't know. I just woke up.

MAX
Gabi.

GABI
No?

MAX
It was Madeline's.

GABI
 (thinking)
 Madeline... Beige Neighbor?

Max nods, her gaze intently focused on Gabi's reaction.

Gabi's expression contorts through deeply mixed emotions.

GABI (CONT'D)
 (sees Max watching)
 That's... nice. I'm happy for her.
 (covering)
 Hope you gifted her stain remover.

MAX
 Look, Gabs. I wanted to talk to you
 about something.

GABI
 Ew. You sound serious.

MAX
 I am serious. This is serious.

GABI
 Max, *por favor*, I just had surgery

MAX
 Exactly. Serious.

Max watches as Gabi rubs her eyes, exhales.

GABI
 Okay, what.

MAX
 It's just an idea--

The door swings open and DR. TIN (40s; charming in a dorky
 dad kind of way) enters.

DR. TIN
 Put down the chart please, Max.

MAX
 You mean *Doctor Mendoza*, thank you
 very much.

DR. TIN
 Not right now you're not.

Max glares.

DR. TIN (CONT'D)
 (re: black blazer)
 Snazzy lab coat.

Max hands him the chart.

MAX
 Patient's doing well. Slight
 tenderness in the lower abdomen,
 but otherwise stable and as
 expected 22 hours post-op.

DR. TIN
 Next time a family member needs
 surgery, please go to a different
 hospital. I beg you.
 (checks chart; to Gabi)
 Everything looks super duper. Your
 vitals are normal, your labs are
 fine. Did you sign the consent for
 the hospital to keep your ovaries
 for educational purposes?

Gabi nods.

DR. TIN (CONT'D)
 (to Max)
 It was unlike anything I've ever
 seen. Pollops everywhere. Massive.
 I honestly don't know how she was
 walking--
 (to Gabi)
 I don't know how you were walking.

MAX
 Dr. Tin, I was actually just in the
 middle of--

DOCTOR TIN
 Do you wanna see a picture?

MAX
 I... what?

DOCTOR TIN
 Of her ovaries?

MAX
 I was just--yeah, I really do.

He whips out his phone. Max sidles up to him, peering.

MAX (CONT'D)
 Jesus Christ! Gabs--

GABI
I know. I should have come sooner--

MAX (CONT'D)
You must have been in so much pain?!

GABI (CONT'D)
I don't know. I got used to it.

MAX
Right, so here's the thing. And this is totally up to you and no one else...

They both turn their heads to face Doctor Tin who is standing idly by, watching them.

DR. TIN
Sorry, I need to check her--your--bandages. See how the incision is healing.

MAX
(moving to bedside)
Oh, I can do that--

He gives her a look. She rolls her eyes and backs away. Max watches Dr. Tin expertly check the wound.

GABI
(to Max)
Just tell me.

DR. TIN
Now that is some fine stitching--

MAX
Okay, but you really must consider this as a viable option...

GABI
I hate when you do your Dr. voice.

DR. TIN
No pus!

MAX
If you still want to be a mom...
(earnest)
I'll... I can be your surrogate.

Doctor Tin freezes. Gabi bursts into laughter.