

MOM

...Did you steal that makeup from my drawer?

GABRIEL

No, MOM!

MOM

You do look... pretty, GABRIEL.

GABRIEL

(shocked)

...Thanks MOM.

He's considering. This is an opening in the conversation to talk about the elephant in the room. The big gay elephant.

Saved by the bell, his phone buzzes.

MOM

(earnestly)

Answer it, answer it, GABRIEL.

GABRIEL reads it. He can't help but smile, a big smile.

MOM

Is everything okay, GABE?

GABRIEL

(calmly)

Yeah, MOM. Everything's okay.

MOM

Who was it?

GABRIEL

...A friend.

MOM

Important friend, no?

GABRIEL

Why do you say so?

MOM

You smiled.

GABRIEL

Yeah, close friend.

He's spinning a story. A way to talk around it and about it.

So is MOM.

MOM

I'm so happy you have people important to you GABE. Teaches you care.

GABRIEL

Yeah. I care about this person a lot.

MOM

That's so good, GABRIEL! You deserve special people in your life. Not just mommy and daddy.

GABRIEL

Yeah I guess so MOM.

MOM

You have someone very special?

GABRIEL

Very special? That's a big state-

MOM

Don't be afraid of big love, big commitment. It's good, especially when you're so young.

GABRIEL

I guess so. What kind of person do you think... I don't know, would be good for me? Special for me?

MOM

Someone who opens up your heart. GABE, you are so quiet and secretive. It's not a bad thing, but I want you to trust. And love someone you trust. Openly. So you can share what's on your bright mind.

GABRIEL

Okay, MOM.

MOM

Your daddy and I are so happy for you growing up. You are becoming a real man. Family man, too?

GABRIEL

Maybe someday. I don't know. We'll see, I guess. Thanks. Thank you MOM. Really.

He's about ready. He's building up courage to say something.

...MOM, so I've been meaning to...

MOM

When you find her you'll know, I think, yeah?

Everything deflates. GABRIEL recedes.

A beat.

GABRIEL
Maybe.

A beat. MOM suspects she made a wrong turn. They eat a little, then GABRIEL gets out his phone.

MOM
(a little dejected?)
What's your phone got that I don't?

GABRIEL smiles half-heartedly at his MOM. He composes a text. He pockets his phone. MOM is on her phone too.

GABRIEL
What's your phone got that I don't?

MOM
A husband.

GABRIEL
No kidding...

So that's DAD?

MOM
Uh (as in "yes").

GABRIEL
What's he say?

MOM
Nosy... He's on his way home.

GABRIEL
Now?

MOM
Uh.

Silence. It's now or never.

GABRIEL
(with a new sense of urgency)
MOM, it's not gonna be-

She puts her phone away.

MOM

(interrupting)

I told him you are in a strange mood tonight.

GABRIEL

MOM, that's. That's just unfair.

MOM

Is something the matter or not GABRIEL, you're not eating.

GABRIEL

It's really good though.

MOM

You are not telling me something.

GABRIEL

No, I guess I'm not. I haven't.

MOM

Why not?

GABRIEL

Well, because it's complicated-

MOM

You are not in trouble are you?

GABRIEL

No I'm not.

MOM

You have to tell me if you're in trouble, GABRIEL.

GABRIEL

MOM, I'm not in trou-

MOM

(escalating)

Not because we want to punish you, GABRIEL, but because we can help you. It'll only get worse if you don't tell us.

GABRIEL

(snapping back)

Okay, I understand that but I'm not in trouble!

MOM

It's not drugs, right?

GABRIEL

What?

MOM
Drugs?

GABRIEL
MOM, no.

MOM
You're not failing school?

GABRIEL
No!

MOM
GABRIEL!

GABRIEL
I'm trying to tell you?

MOM
So why aren't you telling?

GABRIEL
(on another level)
MOM!

Things fall silent.

MOM
(calmly)
If you don't want to tell me, I don't want to know GABRIEL.

GABRIEL
I want to tell you. I have to tell you.

MOM
You've always kept to yourself, taken care of your own
business, it's fine. You have your secrets, it's ok-

GABRIEL
Where did this whole thing about me being lonely all the
time come from?

MOM
I'm sorry that we're concerned about you!

GABRIEL
Don't try and guilt me about this. I'm not some weird
antisocial loner, okay?

MOM

You never talk about your friends, you never tell us where you're going out, but when you do you have this makeup, these shirts, and we don't know...

GABRIEL
Don't know what?

MOM
We're scared people see this and talk about you.

GABRIEL
Oh my god.

MOM
And maybe they think our son is weird, or strange.

GABRIEL
Oh, so this is about how people see *your* son? Can't have people talking about our family like that.

MOM
That's not what I meant, GABRIEL. Do not twist my words around!

GABRIEL
Then please explain, UMMA.

MOM
(stuttering, she is struggling with her English)
GABRIEL, I am trying to. Is not easy for me to...

GABRIEL
Why can't I just be myself, MOM?

MOM
(still stuttering)
I am asking you... I am not asking you... I don't want you to not be yourself, GABE.

GABRIEL
You don't understand.

MOM
말해봐! 제발! (Explain please!)

GABRIEL
Oh my god, MOM! Please, just speak to me in English!

MOM

You think I don't want to understand GABRIEL?

GABRIEL

No, obviously you couldn't!

MOM

I can't if you don't tell me.

GABRIEL

There's no point in even trying with you.

MOM

Why not?

GABRIEL

Because you're an FOB!

A heavy, heavy beat. He can't take that back.

GABRIEL

(scrambling to save face, through tears, regret)
So, so stop trying to... pressure me into sharing when you
couldn't even understand, okay?

MOM

GABRIEL...

GABRIEL

I don't want to talk about it.

She takes a moment to compose herself.

MOM

You don't have to. It is not fair for me to ask you. But
please, GABRIEL. Let me share with you. I cannot ask you to
share your life, if I do not share with you mine, okay?

She waits for confirmation. He nods.

MOM

And it is not easy for me to tell you these things. Because
this is a life I chose. Not you. So I choose to do it
without hurting you. But GABRIEL, UMMA feels hurt too.

GABRIEL

Please don't make this about you.

MOM

You can make fun of your silly MOM and the funny way she
talks. It's okay, I know it's because you love me. You
always say you love how silly I am.

But do you think my classmates say the same when I was old FOB in school with college kids? Or my boss thinks my bad English is a good thing when he interviews me for my first job in America? No, GABRIEL. It was not easy being an immigrant. It was *lonely*. When you're alone like that, when you don't know how to talk—when you know all you have to do to stop being lonely is talk to the person next to you but your words coming out doesn't make any sense. That person looks so confused at you, and you can't even explain why that breaks your heart.

I learn to deal with it. I keep my head down, do the hard work, I study English until I can't stay awake, because I know I am making something better.

GABRIEL

MOM, I didn't mean anything by—

MOM

Better for my son. I want better for my son. I don't think I ask too much of you. So when I ask about if you have friends, girlfriends, if people think you are weird, if you are lonely. It is not because I think you are weird. Or I think you are alone. It is because your UMMA was. And your UMMA reads scary things about the world today. Everything is changing, but somehow is still the same. And I wonder if things are so the same that they still think you are weird like I was, that you are less. I don't want that for you.

GABRIEL

UMMA, I'm sorry.

MOM

You don't have to be sorry.

GABRIEL

After all you sacrificed, maybe this is my sacrifice I have to make too.

MOM

You don't have to sacrifice.

GABRIEL

It wouldn't be fair, it wouldn't be fair, not after everything you two have done, for me to do this to you.

MOM

We can do this together.

GABRIEL

It's just going to hurt you, and dad, and our family, and I'm not going to put you through this! I can't, I'll just—

MOM
GABRIEL.

He stops. She reaches over with a napkin.

MOM
Your makeup, GABRIEL.

GABRIEL
UMMA.

MOM
GABRIEL.

GABRIEL
Yes, UMMA?

MOM
It is your turn.

A beat.

MOM
It is your turn, GABRIEL.

GABRIEL
I'm not alone. I've been so scared to talk about it to you, because... Because I'm afraid what you'll think of me. If I tell you about them, then... If I tell you, then you'll think...

MOM
I'm listening, GABRIEL.

GABRIEL
That I'm...

It's not "her." I'm never going to find "her." The person I'm texting, the special person, well, that person is a...

His name is MATTHEW.

MOM's head goes down. Something between prayer and defeat.

GABRIEL
He is special. He is special. I'm dating MATTHEW. I'm dating a boy. He's not a girl. He's not Korean. And I'm dating him. And maybe I love him. Maybe I don't, or maybe it really doesn't matter because I don't know if I could ever bring him to family events with halmooni (grandma) or harabuji (grandpa), or DAD or even you for that matter.

Hell, I might not even date him long enough for it to be important at all. But even if I broke up with him tomorrow, there's still no dress at my wedding. There's no daughter in law, no normal family. It's just gonna be me... and *him*.

And being with him, having him is like having a family. Having something special and bigger I belong to. Because there are days when it is so, so hard. So hard to be Korean, so hard to be... to be gay. To be me. And on those days, I need him. I need my family. I need those people that are like me. But I need... I need to still have you.

I've wanted to tell you for so long. I've had to tell you, but this just wasn't how I practiced it. It wasn't the right time, it's *never* the right time and then I just considered you know maybe I can keep this from UMMA. Maybe she never has to know. Maybe she won't have another reason to be disappointed in her son. If I could fucking forget about it and just pretend and pretend and pretend so my MOM doesn't have to be ashamed she came all the way to America just to raise a f--.

MOM's head darts up. Her look says "don't you dare say it." GABE catches her eyes. He takes a breath before continuing...

GABRIEL

But I'm still the same son, MOM. I'm still your son.

He looks to her, as if waiting for her to confirm this, but her head has fallen back down.

GABRIEL

You've done so much for me, I just want to make you proud and I don't know how. I don't think I can. My turn's over now, MOM. It's your turn now MOM. Please say something.

Something hangs in the air. Uncertainty, fear...

GABRIEL

(with his last, last ounce of courage)

MOM. UMMA.

...most importantly love. A beat before MOM looks up at GABRIEL. She gives him a tired, uncertain, but true smile. GABRIEL smiles back, relieved. Feeling loved.

MOM

GABRIEL. 사랑해 아들 (I love you).

Lights down. End.