

Mama

autor:

Eve Mazur

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

ANNA(30) gets off the bus. She puts her suitcase on the ground. She closes her eyes. She takes a deep breath.

The bus pulls away. Anna waits for the sound of the engine to fade. A black cat approaches her. It rubs against her legs. Anna freezes. She opens her eyes. She crouches down next to the cat. She smiles gently. She pets it with one hand.

In her other hand, she holds a flyer with the word "Eden" written on it. The flyer features a photo of joyful women sitting in a circle around a campfire in the middle of nature.

BLANKA (30, looks like Anna) sits on a bench. She looks at Anna with disgust.

BLANKA

You're insane.

ANNA

Something tells me not at all.

BLANKA

Instead of getting rid of the problem, you decided to come here... and create even more problems. You've always been a master at screwing up your life. Look around. We're in the middle of nowhere.

ANNA

Sometimes you have to be in a place like that to understand...

Blanka stands up.

BLANKA

Do you even know where we're supposed to go?

ANNA

Someone was supposed to come pick me up.

BLANKA

Of course.

Anna sits down next to the suitcase. The cat climbs onto her lap. Anna gently pets the cat, feeling its every movement.

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BLANKA

Did you take another test? Maybe it was all for nothing...maybe it's worth going home after all.

Anna suddenly starts vomiting. The frightened cat jumps off her lap. Blanka looks at her with disgust. Anna sighs. She pushes her hair back from her forehead. She breathes heavily.

ANNA

I did.

A rickety off-road vehicle appears on the road. It stops at a bus stop. A smiling woman, EWA (60), steps out. She opens the trunk.

EWA

You must be Anna!

Ewa approaches Anna. She takes her suitcase and quickly throws it into the car. She returns. She holds out her hand to Anna. Anna stands up on her own. Blanka stands beside her. She rolls her eyes. Ewa doesn't see her.

BLANKA

She's some kind of Baba Yaga! She probably drags all these girls into the forest just to eat their babies right after they're born...

EWA

I'm Ewa. You spoke to me on the phone. I'm so glad we're finally getting to know each other. You'll see, these few months with us will do you good...

Ewa ignores Anna. She quickly returns to the car, leaving the passenger door open. She waits.

After a moment's hesitation, Anna gets in. They drive away.

Blanka is furious. She follows the car on foot.

INT. CAR - DAY

Ewa sits behind the wheel. She stares at the road. Anna remains silent. She stares out the window. She watches the trees.

(CONTINUED)

EWA

Remember that you can always come back.

ANNA

I have nothing to go back to.

EWA

There is always something to do.

ANNA

Why aren't you a doctor anymore?

EWA

Still I am. I just changed location.

ANNA

Why?

Ewa sinks into thought. They turn deeper into the forest. Onto a bumpy road. Anna grips the seat. The car rocks. Anna quickly rolls down the window.

EWA

Over the years, I've met hundreds of women. I've helped their children come into the world. I've wiped away tears after losing a child, a life, and a womanhood. I've faced so many problems I couldn't solve. I didn't know how to give a young woman a child her body didn't want. I couldn't convince a distraught pregnant woman that motherhood is beautiful. I didn't know how to restore her faith in life after menopause. I was paralyzed by the pain of not being able to hold the hand of a mother dying in childbirth...surrounded by hospital lights, men, and rules.

ANNA

And now...you can do this?

EWA

Now I know how to guide each of them along their path.

(CONTINUED)

ANNA

Will you take me through too?

Ewa takes Anna's hand. Briefly. Quickly. Fleetingly. Warmly. She smiles gently.

EWA

I swore an oath, first, to do no harm...
If necessary, I will befriend you with life. If necessary, I will befriend you with death.

Anna smiles. She gently runs her hand over her stomach. She looks out the window. The terrifying Blanka appears behind it. She walks wearily along the roadside. Between the trees. She's furious. Terrified, Anna looks away.

EXT. EDEN - DAY

The car enters the village of "Eden." It's nestled in the middle of the forest. It looks like an exclusive glamping site. Children of all ages run happily among the yurts. Smiling women of all ages lie on the grass. Others bustle about--hanging laundry, sweeping, sewing, reading books --

Anna gets out of the car. She stops. She's delighted with the view. Ewa smiles broadly. She pulls out Anna's suitcase.

Suddenly, APRIL (5) runs up to Anna. She laughs loudly and hugs Anna.

KARO (50) appears behind her. He and Ewa exchange meaningful glances.

Anna gently hugs April. She crouches down and looks the girl in the eye.

ANNA

Hi.

APRIL

Hi. I'm April.

ANNA

I'm Anna. Nice to meet you April.

APRIL

Anna? Like a princess?

Anna laughs.

(CONTINUED)

ANNA

Like so many princesses.

EWA

April, at least let our guest unpack.

APRIL

Where will she live?

EWA

Do you remember which yurt became available recently?

APRIL

Yes.

April grabs Anna's hand. She doesn't ask questions. She doesn't care. She runs toward the yurt. Anna obediently follows her.

KARO

What are you going to do about it?

EWA

Wait.

KARO

April just chosen.

EWA

I know it.

KARO

Is this what she came here for?

Ewa shakes her head sadly.

EWA

Not this time.

Ewa silently follows Anna and April. Karo returns to her work.

INT.ANNA'S YURT - DAY

Blanka sits on the bed in the yurt, looking offended. She stares indignantly at Anna standing in the doorway.

No one pays her any attention. She's invisible to them.

The yurt is much more modern than Anna expected. She closes the door behind her. She admires every detail of the decor.

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EWA

You don't have to worry about anything. Food will be served right under your nose. Your task is to rest and create new life.

ANNA

And yet you talk like an old woman.

EWA

I am an old woman.

ANNA

I don't know if my most important task in life is... creating children...

EWA

What else do you have to do today?

Anna opens the wardrobe. She walks around the yurt. She peeks into the bathroom. She's still filled with admiration. Ewa watches her silently, a warm smile on her face.

INT.ANNA'S YURT - MOMENT LATER

Anna vomits in the bathroom.

Knock-knock. Knock-knock.

Louder and louder.

Anna flushes the toilet. She sighs. She smooths her hair. She stands up. Slowly. Holding onto the toilet, the wall, the bathtub, she rinses her mouth in the sink.

Knock - knock.

Anna reluctantly walks to the yurt's entrance. She passes Blanka lying on the bed. She ignores her gaze and opens the door.

HANNAH (20), heavily pregnant, stands on the doorstep. Smiling. She's holding a package. Anna notices MARY (4) clinging to her dress. Hanka presses the package into Anna's hands.

HANNAH

You'll need it. I'm Hannah. This is Mary...it's great to have you among us.

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Anna grimaces. She takes a step back. She opens the package. Ginger, raspberry leaves, mint, almonds... Anna looks at Hannah questioningly.

HANNAH

For nausea. Besides, you know what else is good?

ANNA

Death?

HANNAH

Fresh air! Come join us.

Anna tries to protest. Hannah is quick. She grabs Anna's hand and pulls her out of the yurt.

EXT. EDEN - DAY

Anna tries to keep up with Hannah. But she quickly loses her breath. She stops. In the distance, a group of women on yoga mats can be seen. They sit with their faces turned to the sun. They look exceptionally relaxed. Blanka appears next to Anna.

BLANKA

They'll have a stroke. They're probably sitting around "bonding with their children." You know, it's insane. This whole thing is crazy. Since you didn't go to the abortion clinic, at least you could have stayed home. Worked like any normal woman. Like any mother in your family...

Anna stops. She sits down on the grass. She buries her face between her knees. She breathes quickly. Hannah sits down next to her. As gracefully as one can sit on the ground with a pregnant belly.

HANNAH

Slower. One, two, one, two... Slowly. Feel the air entering your lungs... dissipating through your bloodstream. It will pass soon.

Anna looks at her in despair. Hannah smiles gently. She stands up. She helps Anna up.

(CONTINUED)

ANNA
Will it always be like this?

HANNAH
It'll go away in a few weeks. And
then it'll come back. Along with
heartburn, stretch marks...

ANNA
There is nothing like a blessed
state.

Hannah bursts out laughing. They slowly walk toward the
women practicing yoga.

EXT. EDEN/MEADOW - DAY

Hannah unfolds her mat. The women smile serenely. They pause
for a moment. They approach Anna: Sophia, Mia, Amelia.

SOPHIA
Hi. I'm Sophia.

MIA
How wonderful to see you! I'm Mia.

AMELIA
Amelia.

ANNA
I'm Anna. Nice to meet you...

They hug Anna in greeting, one by one. Anna freezes. She's
uncomfortable with this display of affection. After a
moment, she leaves.

ANNA
Is everyone here pregnant?

HANNAH
No.

ANNA
I thought this was a place for
girls like me.

HANNAH
And you thought right.

Hannah sits down on the mat. Anna sits next to her. She
doesn't understand anything.

(CONTINUED)

HANNAH

Sophia has probably been here the longest. Not counting Eva and Caro.

ANNA

So you can stay here longer than 9 months?

HANNAH

It should even...be coming back. Ewa found her in a terrible state. She had worked beyond her strength. She had completely forgotten herself. Her body rebelled in every possible way. Until it slowly began to shut down.

ANNA

She doesn't look old.

HANNAH

And she's not. She'll be 40 in a few months. She's found meaning in life here and decided to stay. Apparently, the meadow and yurts are better for her than the metal walls of corporate skyscrapers.

ANNA

Has she children?

HANNAH

All the children whose mothers, for whatever reason, couldn't care for them, are hers. Although she never gave birth, she is the mother of the entire village. And if one of them finds the mother destined for their future years... she releases them from the nest. That's her mission. To give them a chance to start, and then give them back to the world. Because we don't give birth to children for ourselves... we give birth to them for the world.

ANNA

I don't want it for myself or for the world.

(CONTINUED)

HANNAH

Are you sure these are your words?

Anna closes her eyes.

ANNA

The world isn't made for children.
I'm not made for this. I can't
afford it. No one will help me.

HANNAH

Each of us carries the history of
our family. Each of us carries on
her shoulders all the hardships of
our great-grandmothers,
grandmothers, and mothers. The
knowledge, passed down from
generation to generation, of how
difficult it is to be a woman. The
knowledge that we can't cope
without men, or quite the
opposite... that we can never count
on them. My grandmother had to flee
with her three young daughters
during the war. Right after her
husband died in an explosion...
right outside our home. My other
grandmother packed up all her
belongings and left for a foreign
country, in a cattle wagon, with a
husband with an extremely difficult
personality and an equally
difficult child. My husband left
for his father's wife. As difficult
as that sounds... I am a mother of
four. But I am not alone.

ANNA

Did you find a husband who wanted
you with so many children?

HANNAH

Yes and no. He died a few months
ago. I have a whole village here.
I'll never be alone. And neither
will you.

Anna looks as if a warm thought has entered her head. She
relaxes her shoulders. She stares at Hannah in admiration.
After a moment, she hugs her tightly. Suddenly, she begins
to shake. She shivers. She stares at her trembling hands.
Tears stream down her cheeks. Instinctively, she buries her
hands in the grass. She takes a few deep breaths.

(CONTINUED)

ANNA

They drowned children. They threw them in the mud to be eaten by rats...it hurt. Being forced to give birth hurt. The prohibitions and commandments hurt...and marrying early to have a child at twenty...

Anna cries. She doesn't notice as all the women gathered approach her. They stop their exercises. They surround Anna in an increasingly tight circle. They hug her, Hannah, each other. Some of them cry. Some close their eyes. They hum melodies. They say silent prayers. A magical moment. Anna lies down on the grass. She cries. She cries her tears into the ground.

Day turns to night.

EXT. FIREPLACE - NIGHT

The women sit in a circle around the fire. Mia and Sophia pour something from jugs into cups. They hand the cups out to the women. Hannah hugs the children. She stares into the fire. Ewa looks like an Elder in a Native American tribe. She holds a carved stick in her hands. Amelia plays the guitar. Someone joins in the singing. SEPHORA dances by the fire, along with a group of laughing children.

EWA

Another magical night has arrived. Tonight I feel something extraordinary is about to happen. It's a full moon. Whoever needs it can go gather herbs. Whoever needs rituals can do them. I'm so grateful for us, Eden...for being here...Sending you all as much love as I can...

Sephora stands in front of Ewa. She takes the stick from her hand. She smiles gently. She turns to face the others.

SEPHORA

I wanted to tell you how amazing you are. Just a few weeks ago, I was convinced that women were at each other's throats...out of jealousy for a better life, for men, for jobs...for the mere fact that another female was in their territory. Today, I feel like we're

(MORE)

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SEPHORA (cont'd)
like lionesses. We form a unique
pride. I couldn't have managed
anything without you. I can't
imagine caring for a newborn
without you. I simply say thank
you.

Applause.

Anna stares at everything in amazement. She claps her hands
along with the others. The stick moves to the next woman.

Hannah stands up. Quietly. The children are asleep at her
feet. She silently approaches the fire. She begins to sway.
She closes her eyes. She dances slowly, sensually, murmuring
to herself. Suddenly, silence falls. Pleasant. Mystical.
Absorbing everything around her.

Anna stares at Hannah as if hypnotized. The stick reaches
her. She holds it in her hands, but says nothing. She
listens to the women singing. She stares at the dance. She
digs her bare feet into the earth. She delights in the
moment.

MIA
It's your turn.

Anna opens her eyes. Stands up.

ANNA
I? I'm here to find life.

CARO
And you found it?

ANNA
I'm close.

Anna hands back the stick. She joins Hannah. They dance
around the fire. Intuitively. Beautifully. Under the stars.
The circle slowly begins to loosen. The women lead and carry
the children to their yurts. Some disappear into the trees.
Others still linger by the fire.

Hannah approaches Ewa.

HANNAH
It's time.

Anna turns around. Ewa stands up. Slowly. Sensually.
Carefully. With reverence for her body and movement.

(CONTINUED)

EWA

Do you want come with us?

ANNA

Me? For what?

HANNAH

Finding life.

Ewa slowly takes Hannah hand. They walk toward the yurts. Anna follows them.

INT. EWA'S YURT - NIGHT

Hannah undresses. She stands against the wall. She moves intuitively. She breathes. She sways her hips. She looks as if she's meditating--not giving birth.

Anna watches Ewa bustle around the yurt. She takes the heart rate monitor out of the box. She takes the midwife's bag out of the chest. She opens it and takes out the necessary supplies.

ANNA

What can I help you?

EWA

Listen.

Ewa hangs the stethoscope around her neck. She approaches Hannah and holds her hips. Anna prepares the water and gives it to Hannah. She is very moved. She remains silent. She absorbs the magic of the moment. Ewa and Hannah move in unison. Both know what to do. They let themselves be guided by the feeling, the labor, the baby. Every so often, Ewa places the stethoscope against Hannah's belly.

Anna stays off to the side. She observes. She freezes. She loses touch with reality. A scream brings her back to consciousness. She runs to the bathroom. She vomits. She returns with clean towels.

Anna watches Ewa's movements. She trusts her more and more. She begins to trust the process. She admires Hannah. She places a wet towel on Hannah's forehead.

One last time. A scream. Mother's. Child's. Ewa's smile. Anna's breathing.

Anna watches with rapt attention as Hannah cuddles her baby. And she waits for the rest of the labor. The umbilical cord pulsates. The baby closes its eyes against her breast.

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Hannah looks as if she's drifting off. She's happy. Anna has never seen a woman so happy. She holds Hannah's hand. She laughs along with the others.

EWA

And...once again...

Lotus birth.

Ewa glances at Hannah and Anna.

She notices blood running down Anna's legs. She looks at her face. For a moment, she stops smiling. But she doesn't break the moment.

Anna cries. With happiness. With pain. She doesn't know. She lies down next to Hannah. She hugs her tightly. And her newborn.

EXT. EDEN - DAY

Anna sits on the grass among the trees. Her eyes are closed. She tilts her face to the sun. She meditates. She absorbs the moment.

Blanka appears.

BLANKA

We back home.

Anna ignores her.

BLANKA

You can't even carry a pregnancy to term. We're going back! It's all over. You'll never be a mother. You've just wasted your time.

Blanka tugs at Anna. Anna sits still, breathing deeply. A smiling April emerges from the trees. She runs to Anna, stands in front of her, grabs her arms, and pulls her up. Anna bursts out laughing. Blanka is furious.

BLANKA

An adopted child will never be yours. They are someone else's. A foundling. Never...

Anna stands up. She turns to Blanka. She smiles broadly. Warmly. Like Ewa.

She hugs Blanka tightly. For a long time. She waits until Blanka breathes a sigh of relief. Blanka closes her eyes.

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ANNA

I see you. I see and feel all the
pain you brought me. You don't have
to anymore. We don't have to. It's
fine as it is. We're back.

Blanka melts in Anna's arms. She disappears. Anna breathes a
sigh of relief. She turns to April.

April looks at her in astonishment. After a moment, she
begins dancing in place. Anna joins her. They join hands.
They run into the trees.

text:

Women around the world face the loneliness of womanhood, the
pain of childbirth, illnesses they cannot talk about,
depression, postpartum, the death of children, and
menopause... silenced, forced to give birth even when it
puts their health at risk... dying in the silence of
hospital rooms and in their own homes, because of laws that
violate the Hippocratic Oath. We see you. We hear you. We
feel you. We stand with you.