

Anita Renfroe
is
PARENTING...



BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY

Anita Randall is a caring, devoted mother who loves her family and wants them to be happy. But if push comes to shove (and it always does with kids), she won't hesitate to go rogue—throw away the rulebook and parent... *by any means necessary.*

ANITA RENFROE PILOT

"Much To Do About Everything"

by

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INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

ANITA RANDALL SITS AT THE TABLE, WRITING. HER HUSBAND **PAUL RANDALL** (40'S, HANDSOME, IMPOSING, BUT A COMPLETE PUSSYCAT) ENTERS. AS THE MINISTER OF A SMALL TOWN, HE UPHOLDS THE MORAL STANDARD OF THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY. DESPITE THIS, OR PERHAPS BECAUSE OF IT, HE TENDS TO BE A LITTLE MORE LAX AT HOME.

PAUL

What ya writing?

ANITA

Just a list of all the mistakes I've made as a mom. (THEN) You think it was wrong to dress up our eight-year-old son in a tutu?

PAUL

Probably. (SHRUGS) It'll make a helluva Christmas card, though.

ANITA

(WRITING) ...and that's number 826.

PAUL

Honey, why are you torturing yourself?

ANITA

Oh, I don't feel bad about it. Job I got, I deserve a big shiny plaque just for making it through the day. Course, that'd just be one more thing to clean. (THEN) No, I'm hoping if I can crack a thousand, maybe they'll send me to Mom jail.

PAUL

Mom Jail? That doesn't sound good.

ANITA'S FANTASY:

ANITA SITS IN A CELL. A SURLY GUARD ENTERS WITH A TRAY OF FOOD.

GUARD

Dinner.

ANITA

Someone made dinner for me?

ANITA GETS UP, BUT SHE CAN'T MOVE-- SHE'S CHAINED TO THE BENCH.

GUARD

Stay there. I'll bring it to you.

ANITA

And it's being brought to me?

GUARD

It's just bread and water.

ANITA

(BEAMS) And I get to lose weight?

BACK TO:

ANITA IS BROUGHT BACK TO REALITY WHEN HER KIDS, RANGING FROM AGES 8-19-- **MICHAEL, DOUG, AND LIBBY**-- RUN IN AND SURROUND HER.

DOUG

Mom, did you wash my uniform?

MICHAEL

Can you make me a snack?

LIBBY

I need the hair dryer-- now!

ANITA SIGHS.

ANITA

Yeah, Paul, you're right. Mom jail would suck.

CUT TO:

BINT. KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - MORNING

MORNING MADNESS. ANITA IS PACKING LUNCHES, FILLING THERMOSES, SIGNING FORMS AND WIPING UP A SPILL-- ALL WHILE PAGING THROUGH THE LOCAL CIRCULAR FOR COUPONS.

ANITA

Cool. I don't know what "Re-Nu-zit" is,
but I'm getting it for fifty cents less.

MEANWHILE, MICHAEL, 8, SHY, SITS AT THE TABLE, QUIETLY EATING CEREAL. PAUL SITS NEXT TO HIM, CONCENTRATING HARD ON BUTTERING SOME TOAST, WHEN... THE PHONE RINGS. NEITHER PAUL NOR MICHAEL MAKE A MOVE TO ANSWER IT. ANITA, STILL MULTI-TASKING FURIOUSLY, LOOKS AT THEM INCREDULOUS, THEN:

ANITA (CONT'D)

I'll get it, I've got a foot free...
(ANSWERS PHONE) Hello?... I'm sorry, this
isn't a good time... What am I doing? I'm
having breakfast with George Clooney and
getting a facial, what do you think I'm--
Yes, I'm being sarcastic... Well don't get
your Maidenform in a mess about it. (HANGS
UP) We've really got to change our number.

PAUL

Solicitors?

ANITA

Your mother.

PAUL

C'mon, you know how sensitive she is. Do
you really have to talk to Cookie like that?

ANITA

(SWEETLY) Oh honey, if you knew all the things I wanted to say but didn't, you'd be so proud of me.

LIBBY, 14, RESTLESS, COMES DOWNSTAIRS, TALKING ON HER HELIO OCEAN.

LIBBY

(INTO PHONE) No way! Well, I heard she got caught behind school with-- (OFF ANITA STARING) Gotta go. (HANGS UP)

ANITA

Libby, you know we don't tolerate gossip in this family. Once more and that fancy phone's mine.

PAUL

Watch out, Lib, she's always wanted a helicopter whatchamacallit.

LIBBY

Helio Ocean. (TO ANITA) And you read "The National Enquirer" at the supermarket.

ANITA

That's different. How am I gonna pray for Brad and Angelina if I don't know what's going on in their lives?

DOUG, 19, WELL-MEANING, COMES TEARING IN FROM THE OTHER ROOM, WEARING A KRISPY KREME SHIRT WITH AN EMPLOYEE NAME TAG.

DOUG

I don't gossip. Can I get a car? I'm sick of taking the bus to work.

PAUL

Why don't you just chopper in on
Libby's phone?

AS DOUG SITS DOWN TO POUR HIMSELF SOME CEREAL, ANITA PACKS
MICHAEL'S LUNCH IN HIS BACKPACK-- AND DISCOVERS A NOTE.

ANITA

What's this? (READS) "Michael's painting
has been chosen to represent his class in
the upcoming art show..." That's awesome!

MICHAEL

(SHRUGS) I guess.

PAUL

'Course it is! Michael, I know you're
modest, but it's okay to celebrate your
accomplishments--

DOUG

(HAND IN CEREAL BOX) Yeah baby-- I
found the prize! Who rocks? I rock!

PAUL

--no matter how small they are.

ANITA

So when do I get to see this masterpiece?

MICHAEL

You have seen it-- it's the one I gave
you for Thanksgiving. Mr. Barnes says
I need to get it back.

ANITA'S EYES GO WIDE-- UH-OH. THEN, QUICKLY COVERING:

ANITA

Okay, time to go. Don't want to be late.

THE KIDS JUMP UP, GRAB THEIR STUFF. LIBBY GETS HER GUITAR CASE.

LIBBY

Don't forget, my band is rehearsing
after school.

PAUL

Like the Good Book says-- rock on with
thy bad self.

BUT AS LIBBY HEADS OUT THE DOOR, ANITA HOLDS OUT HER JACKET--
A PLAIN BLACK, PERFECTLY NICE (IF NOT STYLISH) COAT.

LIBBY

Mom! You know I hate that coat.
Can't we give it to the charity drive?

PAUL

(LOOKS TO ANITA) It'd be a tax write-off.

ANITA

Paul, that is a brand new, perfectly
acceptable way for me to torture my
daughter every morning. You can't put
a price on that.

LIBBY SIGHS, PUTS ON THE COAT. ALL THE KIDS AD-LIB GOOD-BYES
AND HEAD OUT THE DOOR. ANITA STANDS THERE WAVING.

ANITA (CONT'D)

Bye kids, have a nice day! Mama loves
you! Miss you already!

SHE CLOSES THE DOOR AND EXHALES.

ANITA'S FANTASY:

ANITA, DRESSED LIKE A MARATHON RUNNER WITH A NUMBER PINNED TO
HER CHEST, LUNGES ACROSS THE FINISH LINE, BREAKING THE TAPE,
HER ARMS HELD HIGH IN TRIUMPH. IT STARTS RAINING CONFETTI.

BACK TO:

PAUL

You okay, honey?

ANITA

Oh, I'm more than okay. (STARTS DANCING)

That's right. That's my happy dance.

C'mon, you try.

PAUL GRABS ANITA AND STARTS SLOW DANCING WITH HER.

ANITA (CONT'D)

Wait a minute... that's your "I wanna see you naked" dance.

PAUL

Honey, every dance is my "I wanna see you naked" dance.

THEY LAUGH, THEN START TO CLEAR THE BREAKFAST DISHES.

PAUL (CONT'D)

How about that? Chosen for the art show. This could be really good for Michael-- give him something to get excited about, bring him out of his shell a little.

ANITA

Honey, I know you worry about him. We both do. But you heard him-- he doesn't care about that show, so I wouldn't hang all your hopes on one little painting.

PAUL

Yeah... (THEN) You have no idea where you put it, do you?

ANITA

Oh, I've got a pretty good idea.

PAUL

(OFF HER LOOK) Anita, you don't-- you throw out our kids' paintings?

ANITA

Not all of them. Sometimes I flip'em over and use them for shopping lists, but this one the paint bled all the way through.

(OFF HIS LOOK) Well, did you see that thing? It was just a bunch of brown and yellow squiggles.

PAUL

You're terrible.

ANITA

What am I supposed to do with them? The kids don't want'em. And if they ask, I tell them they're in a box in the attic, buried in the very back, and they're welcome to dig them up. Two seconds later, they're on to something else.

PAUL

You told me my old sermons were in a box in the attic.

ANITA

They are. In the back. You're welcome to dig them up.

AS PAUL CONSIDERS THIS FOR TWO SECONDS, THEN:

PAUL

So what are you going to do about the art show?

ANITA

I'll look around. Maybe I'll find another painting he can submit.

PAUL

I thought you throw them all out.

ANITA

I mean to. I just don't always get around to it. That's one of my many failings as a mother, I'm not organized.

PAUL

Well, I think you're a good mother.

ANITA

No, I'm not. A good mother would have thrown them all out.

CUT TO:

CINT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

THE ROOM IS IN DISARRAY AS ANITA SEARCHES THROUGH CLOSETS, DRAWERS, CABINETS, ETC.

ANITA

There's gotta be one of his old art
scribbly-thingies around here somewhere.

ANITA GETS DOWN TO LOOK UNDER THE SOFA. SHE COMES FACE-TO-FACE WITH A HUGE DUST BUNNY.

ANITA'S FANTASY:

ANITA WEARS AN INDIANA JONES HAT, HOLDS A BULL-WHIP IN ONE HAND, VACUUM CLEANER IN THE OTHER, AND FLEES A GREEN-SCREENED GIANT DUST-BUNNY BOULDER WHICH ROLLS AFTER HER IN A CAVE.

BACK TO:

ANITA'S REVERIE IS INTERRUPTED WHEN **COOKIE RANDALL**, PAUL'S MOTHER, ENTERS THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR, CARRYING SOME FRAMED PORTRAITS. SHE IS IN HER 60'S, IMPERIOUS, TIGHTLY-WOUND. SHE TAKES IN THE MESSY ROOM.

COOKIE

You do know the charity drive is this
week-- people will be stopping by Paul's
house to drop off their donations.

ANITA

I wish you'd stop calling it "Paul's
house"-- I live here too.

COOKIE

(RE: MESS) I can see that. (THEN)
Anyway, with half the congregation
coming through, I figured this place
could use a little sprucing up.

COOKIE TAKES A BIG PICTURE OF ANITA IN HER WEDDING DRESS OFF THE WALL. IN ITS PLACE, SHE HANGS ONE OF THE PICTURES SHE BROUGHT OVER-- A PORTRAIT OF A STERN-LOOKING SAINT CLUTCHING A BIBLE.

ANITA

Hey, I know that face...

COOKIE

You should, it's St. Thomas Moore.

ANITA

No, I mean that's the face you make when you've got a bug up your butt. (OFF COOKIE'S GLARE) Yeah, that one.

PAUL, MICHAEL, AND LIBBY ENTER, MUNCHING ON CHIPS AND CANDY. THEY AD-LIB HELLOS TO COOKIE AND ANITA.

ANITA (CONT'D)

Hey guys, just in time. Wash up, 'cause dinner's almost--

EVERYBODY QUICKLY HIDES THEIR SNACKS-- BUT NOT QUICK ENOUGH.

ANITA (CONT'D)

Paul. Did you guys stop for junk on the way home again?

PAUL

(MOUTH FULL) No. (SWALLOWS, THEN) But I did get them some new hunger-inducing health treats.

COOKIE

How thoughtful.

ANITA

Yeah, thanks Fun Dad. Don't worry, just leave the responsible parent stuff to me.

MICHAEL

Hey Mom-- did you find my painting for the art show?

ANITA

(QUICKLY) So, who wants cake? (THEN)
Michael, I thought you didn't care about that silly art show.

MICHAEL

I didn't. But then I found out I was the only one of my friends who was picked. So now I think it's pretty cool.

COOKIE

That's wonderful, Michael. Now come help grandma hang this picture of Mother Theresa. You kids could use a positive female role model around here.

AS ANITA FROWNS...

ANITA'S FANTASY:

SAME INDIANA JONES CAVE BACK-DROP, EXCEPT NOW IT'S COOKIE WHO'S GOT THE DUST BUNNY BOULDER ROLLING RIGHT FOR HER. IT TAKES HER OUT LIKE A BOWLING PIN.

BACK TO:

AS THE KIDS FOLLOW COOKIE OUT OF THE ROOM...

PAUL

What are we going to do about Michael?

ANITA

Well, now that he's got his heart set on that art show, I guess I'll have to think of something.

PAUL

I don't know, hon-- I think we should tell him the truth.

ANITA

Well, that's dumb.

PAUL

Excuse me?

ANITA

I don't want to disappoint him. Besides, you yourself said it'd be good to get him excited about something. Who knows, maybe this will spark his interest in painting. Better than those Pokemon cards or expensive sneakers. I don't know who's teaching these kids to be so materialistic--

JUST THEN, DOUG ENTERS, WITH A PAIR OF JEANS-- THEY ARE COMPLETELY SPOTTED WITH BLEACH STAINS.

ANITA (CONT'D)

My favorite jeans!

DOUG

The good news is, you know how you're always telling me to pitch in-- well, I did the wash. Can I get a car?

ANITA

I can't believe you ruined my magic jeans.

DOUG

They're magic?

ANITA

Yes, they're magic-- they have amazing
booty-shrinking powers not explainable
by heaven nor earth!

ANITA'S FANTASY:

AN "US WEEKLY" LAYOUT-- "HOT OR NOT?" ON ONE SIDE IS PARIS HILTON, IN A SEXY OUTFIT. ON THE OTHER, IT'S ANITA, IN A T-SHIRT AND JEANS (HER HAIR IS IN CURLERS). "MAGIC JEANS" IS WRITTEN ON THE PICTURE WITH AN ARROW POINTING TO HER BUTT.

THE TALLY: ANITA - 85% HOT. PARIS - 15% HOT. PULL BACK TO REVEAL THAT BRAD PITT IS LOOKING AT THE SPREAD, IMPRESSED.

BACK TO:

AS ANITA MARCHES INTO THE MUD ROOM, SHE GRABS A SPRAY CAN OFF THE TABLE...

ANITA (CONT'D)

(MUTTERING) I don't know what this Re-
Nu-Zit does but please, Lord, let it
work miracles on bleach stains.

RESET TO:

INT. MUD ROOM - CONTINUOUS
(PAUL, ANITA)

ANITA FRANTICALLY PULLS HER CLOTHES OUT OF THE WASHING MACHINE, SURVEYING THE DAMAGE TO THE REST OF HER WARDROBE. PAUL ENTERS.

PAUL

Um... this a good time?

ANITA

(HOLDS IT UP) Not for this blouse.

PAUL

Hon, I know you don't want to
disappoint Michael... but I really
think we should be honest with him.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

It's the only way our kids'll know
they can trust us.

ANITA

Right... 'cause it says that in the Parent
Handbook, doesn't it? Gee I wish I could
follow those rules, but I can't-- I've
never actually had time to sit down and
read them. Seems I'm too busy actually
getting things done around here instead!
Now if you don't mind--

ANITA TRIPS OVER A DUFFLE BAG.

ANITA (CONT'D)

Libby's. How many times have I told her--

SHE PICKS UP THE BAG AND A T-SHIRT FALLS OUT. ANITA AND PAUL
LOOK AT THE SHIRT-- ON IT IS THE WORD "GOD" IN A CIRCLE WITH
A SLASH THROUGH IT (THE GHOSTBUSTERS SYMBOL).

ANITA (CONT'D)

--not to leave her anti-God t-shirts
lying around. (THEN) Wow.

PAUL

I'll say. Looks like she took that "Rock
on with thy bad self" to a whole 'nother
level.

AS THEY BOTH STARE IN DISBELIEF AT THE SHIRT, WE:

END ACT ONE

ACT TWODINT. MUD ROOM - CONTINUOUS

(PAUL, ANITA)

PAUL AND ANITA STARE AT LIBBY'S ANTI-GOD T-SHIRT.

PAUL

Well, we better go talk to her about it.

PAUL STARTS TO LEAVE, BUT ANITA STOPS HIM.

ANITA

Paul, she's a teenage girl, remember?

PAUL

Fine, we'll text her about it.

ANITA

Don't you get it? Flat-out telling her what to do will just make her do the opposite. You have to make her think it's her idea not to wear the shirt-- give her the illusion she's in control.

PAUL

You mean trick her? Like you do with me?

ANITA

Aw, sweetie-- to deceive you is to love you.

CUT TO:

EINT. KITCHEN - LATER

(ANITA, LIBBY, MICHAEL, DOUG, PAUL)

ANITA, PAUL, MICHAEL, LIBBY AND DOUG SIT AT THE DINNER TABLE.

ANITA

I think I'd like to say grace tonight.

(BOWS HEAD) Thank you, God, for our food
and our family and let us not forget
those less fortunate than we are. Amen.

THE KIDS START TO PICK UP THEIR FORKS, UNTIL...

ANITA (CONT'D)

And God, thank you for, well, just being
there. I mean, without you we'd all be
much worse off. For one thing, Paul
wouldn't have a job and he'd just be
under foot all day. Also, without you,
we'd have no one to worship, and I'd
have to watch football the entire day on
Sunday instead of just after church.

THE KIDS, A LITTLE CONFUSED, LOOK UP AT ANITA TO SEE IF SHE'S
DONE. BUT JUST WHEN THEY GO FOR THEIR FORKS...

ANITA (CONT'D)

Oh, and God, I'm not sure if this is
your area of expertise, but-- do they
wear t-shirts in hell?

LIBBY

All right, I get it-- you found the shirt.

ANITA

Well, I wasn't gonna mention it, but since you brought it up...

MICHAEL

What shirt?

LIBBY

It's just a shirt that has God's name with a slash through it.

DOUG

Cool. Thanks for taking the heat off me for Mom's jeans.

PAUL

Libby, why would you wear that? If there's something bothering you--

LIBBY

My band just decided we'd all wear controversial shirts to our next gig, that's all... Okay, go ahead, get all mad and self-righteous, both of you. That's why I never tell you anything.

ANITA

Actually, I think you're old enough that you're your own person, and you should be able to decide these things for yourself.

LIBBY

Really?

ANITA

That's right.

ANITA TOSSES THE T-SHIRT TO LIBBY.

ANITA (CONT'D)

Your father and I raised you well
enough that I'm confident after you
think about what the shirt says, really
think about what it means to me and
your father and how much we love you,
that you'll make the right decision.

LIBBY

Oh. (BEAT) Okay.

LIBBY PUTS ON THE SHIRT. ANITA AND PAUL LOOK AT ONE ANOTHER.

ANITA

That was only about three seconds of
thinking. Remember, we really love you.
And we gave you all those extra ballet
lessons even though you're a total spaz and
we knew it wouldn't help. You might want
to think a little harder.

LIBBY

I'm good.

DOUG

I don't have a devil's t-shirt. Will
you buy me a car?

PAUL

So that's it? You're just gonna sit
there and wear that at the table?!

LIBBY

I'm also gonna wear it to my gig.

ANITA

(LOSING IT) No, you're gonna wear it to your room! And stay there until you've changed your mind! Or... until you've changed your mind!

LIBBY

But you said--

ANITA

Right now! Go!

LIBBY

I knew this would happen. You always say I should think for myself and be my own person, but everything I do has to conform with some precious image.

I hate being the preacher's daughter!

LIBBY GETS UP AND STORMS OUT OF THE ROOM. AFTER A BEAT:

PAUL

Good thing we did that your way,
'cause mine would've been a disaster.

CUT TO:

HINT. ART ROOM - AFTERNOON

ANITA SITS WITH **MR. BARNES**, MICHAEL'S ART TEACHER, AN ENTHUSIASTIC MAN IN HIS 30'S. SHE HAS SPREAD A BUNCH OF MICHAEL'S OLD ARTWORK OUT ON THE TABLE-- STICK FIGURE DRAWINGS, A COLLAGE MADE OF MACARONI, ETC.

ANITA

I thought you might like to see some of Michael's other work. Go ahead, take any one you want. Heck, take'em all. Please.

MR. BARNES

Well, these are, uh... nice...

ANITA

Great. So I'll just leave'em in Michael's cubby, and--

MR. BARNES

But there's one painting Michael did this year... a fall-themed abstract with wonderful swirling brush strokes. That's the one I want for the art show. As you can see, it beat out some pretty stiff competition.

MR. BARNES INDICATES HIS CLASSROOM-- THERE'S KIDS ARTWORK HANGING EVERYWHERE, MOST OF IT PRETTY BAD.

ANITA'S FANTASY:

ANITA, WEARING A HARD-HAT, BACKS UP A DUMP TRUCK OVERFLOWING WITH HUNDREDS OF KIDS PAINTINGS AND DUMPS THEM INTO A LANDFILL. A GROUP OF MOMS STAND THERE CHEERING THEIR APPROVAL.

BACK TO:

ANITA

The problem is, I can't really get that particular painting. See, I kinda threw it-- (OFF HIS LOOK, COVERING) in a box in the attic.

MR. BARNES

I'm sorry, Mrs. Randall, if I can't have that painting I'll just have to pick someone else's.

ANITA

But Michael will be devastated. (THINKS, THEN) Y'know what? Let me look again. I'll bet I can... find that painting after all.

SFX: SCHOOL BELL RINGS

MR. BARNES

Well, my next class is starting. Good luck with the painting.

ANITA

It's an abstract, how hard could it-- oh, right, finding it.

AS MR. BARNES TURNS AWAY, ANITA GRABS SOME PAINT BRUSHES OUT OF MICHAEL'S CUBBY AND HEADS OUT.

CUT TO:

JINT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

ANITA SITS, SLEEVES ROLLED UP, PAINT ALL OVER HER, MAKING AN ATTEMPT AT A FALL-THEMED ABSTRACT WITH SWIRLED BRUSH STROKES. PAUL LOOKS ON, SKEPTICAL.

ANITA

What do you think?

PAUL

I think you're doing what you think is best. Now if it were up to me...

ANITA

Got it. Change the channel. I mean, do you think Michael's gonna believe he painted it?

PAUL

Honestly? It looks like a three-year-old did it.

ANITA STUDIES THE PAINTING.

ANITA

You're right. Too good.

AS SHE CRUMPLES IT UP AND STARTS AGAIN...

END ACT TWO

ACT THREEKINT. KITCHEN - MORNING

(ROXANNE, ANITA, PAUL, MICHAEL)

ANITA IS AT THE TABLE WITH **ROXANNE**, 30 AND HOLDING FOR ABOUT THE PAST 12 YEARS. THEY'RE SCOPING OUT ADS IN THE NEWSPAPER.

ROXANNE

Ooh, Macy's is having a sale. Maybe they have your magic jeans.

ANITA

Went there already-- and who'd I run into but Marlene Watts, you know the one with that twitch? Turns out she was buying the very last pair of magic jeans in size fourteen.

ROXANNE

You're a fourteen?

ANITA

Ever since Michael. It used to bother me, but then I read the average American woman is a size fourteen, and I thought-- who'd ever want to be below average?

ROXANNE

(SNORTS) I don't know what Marlene's gonna do with them. Ain't enough magic in the world to make that butt look good. I woulda told her so, too.

DURING THE ABOVE, PAUL ENTERS.

PAUL

Not very Christian of you, Roxanne.

ANITA

That's right, Roxanne! (THEN, SOTTO) I tried to guilt her into putting'em back with the whole "Wouldn't you feel better giving that money to charity" blah blah blah-- but she didn't fall for it.

ROXANNE

That woman has no conscience.

PAUL

(KISSES ANITA) I think you look hot no matter what you wear.

ANITA

Maybe if I was born five hundred years ago. Body like this, I'd have been a super-model in the Renaissance.

ANITA'S FANTASY:

AN "US WEEKLY"-STYLE LAYOUT (ON PAPYRUS)-- ON ONE SIDE IS THE ARM-LESS VENUS DE MILO. ON THE OTHER, IT'S ANITA, IN STATUE-FORM. THE TALLY: ANITA - 85% COMELY. VENUS - 15%. PULL BACK TO REVEAL HENRY VIII, IN A TUNIC AND FRILLY COLLAR, STARING AT THE SPREAD. HE NODS HIS HEAD, IMPRESSED-- THEN LUSTILY TAKES A BITE OUT OF A WHOLE CHICKEN.

BACK TO:

MICHAEL ENTERS, CARRYING AN ARMFUL OF TOY TRAINS.

MICHAEL

I went through my toys for the charity drive. I know I don't play with trains anymore but do I really have to...

(NOTICES) Roxanne, hi.

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I didn't know you were here... I'm just getting rid of this baby stuff.

MICHAEL DUMPS THE TOYS INTO A BOX MARKED "CHARITY DRIVE."

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You look beautiful.

ROXANNE

I do, don't I sugar?

SHE KISSES HIS CHEEK. HE TOUCHES IT AS IF IT'S BEEN BRUSHED BY GOLD.

ANITA

Hey Michael. Look what I found.

SHE HOLDS UP "HIS" PAINTING.

MICHAEL

Huh. It looks... different. It's better than I remember.

PAUL SHOOTS ANITA A LOOK.

ANITA

C'mon, it's not that good. It looks just like something you would've done.

MICHAEL STARES AT IT, UNSURE. ANITA LOOKS AT ROXANNE-- "HELP."

ROXANNE

Oooh, Michael, this is wonderful. You really did this all by yourself?

MICHAEL

(SWELLING WITH PRIDE) I sure did.

ANITA MOUTHS "THANK YOU" TO ROXANNE, AND WE...

CUT TO:

LINT. ART SHOW - EVENING

PARENTS AND TEACHERS MILL ABOUT THE ROOM CHATTING AND LOOKING AT THE ARTWORK. MICHAEL IS NEAR THE SNACK TABLE HANGING WITH HIS FRIENDS. PAUL AND ANITA ADMIRE MICHAEL/ANITA'S PAINTING.

ANITA

You gotta admit it's kinda cool, seeing Michael's name up there.

PAUL

(CHIDING) Yeah, his technique's coming along nicely.

ANITA

Hey, he's here fair and square. Mr. Barnes picked Michael's painting in the first place because he thought it was good-- and he oughtta know. They don't let just anybody teach art, gym and remedial spelling to eight-year-olds.

A WOMAN COMES OVER TO LOOK AT MICHAEL'S PAINTING.

WOMAN

Wow. This painting is good.

ANITA

Thank you. (QUICKLY) My son thanks you.

WOMAN

Really good... In fact, this really doesn't look like the work of an eight year old at all.

ANITA

What? Yes it does.

THE WOMAN HEADS OVER TO MR. BARNES AND STARTS TALKING TO HIM.

ANITA (CONT'D)

(CALLS AFTER HER) It's just a bunch of stupid squiggles! (TO PAUL) What's she doing? You think she suspects? I'll bet she's just mad cause her kid didn't make it into the show. She's probably one of those moms who (MOCKING) keeps her kid's art.

MR. BARNES CALLS OVER A FEW OTHER TEACHERS, WHO LOOK SERIOUS AND NOD THEIR HEADS AS HE CONSULTS WITH THEM.

ANITA (CONT'D)

Paul, they know. What am I going to do?

PAUL

Well, if you start now, you should be able to make the border by sunrise.

ANITA

I'm serious. Now everybody's gonna think he's a cheater. And he's gonna think his mother's a cheater. Why didn't I listen to you and just tell him the truth?

PAUL

Are you saying I was right? You usually find some way to make these things my fau--

ANITA

Why didn't you make me listen to you?!

PAUL

Y'know, it's not too late to be honest.
At least you can break it to him gently,
before he hears it from anyone else.

ANITA

Right. And that way I can spin it so that--
(OFF PAUL'S LOOK) Got it. The truth.

ANITA GOES OVER TO MICHAEL, WHO'S TALKING WITH HIS FRIENDS.

ANITA (CONT'D)

Michael, I have to tell you something--
BUT ANITA SEES MR. BARNES HEADING RIGHT TOWARD THEM.

ANITA (CONT'D)

You don't get enough exercise. Let's walk.

SHE GRABS MICHAEL BY THE ARM AND PULLS HIM AWAY. DURING THE FOLLOWING, ANITA DUCKS AND WEAVES THROUGH THE CROWD, TRYING TO STAY ONE STEP AHEAD OF MR. BARNES.

ANITA (CONT'D)

So now that we're alone-- (BUMPS INTO
SOMEONE) Excuse me. I have something to
say-- (ANOTHER PERSON) pardon us-- Well,
look, you know how important it is to tell
the truth-- (TO GROUP OF PEOPLE) I got a
sick kid trying to get through here!--
Well, the truth is, Michael, your painting--
BUT THEY RUN RIGHT INTO MR. BARNES, WHO HAS CIRCLED AROUND.

MR. BARNES

There you are! Michael, we've decided to
award your painting first place. In the
entire show!

ANITA

What do you know, Michael-- he beat me
to it.

MR. BARNES

Michael, will you come with me for the
announcement?

AS MR. BARNES LEADS MICHAEL AWAY, PAUL COMES OVER.

PAUL

So how did he take it?

AS MICHAEL PASSES HIS FRIENDS...

MICHAEL

I beat all of you losers! In your
face!

ANITA

Well, I think he might be coming out of
that shell...

CUT TO:

MEXT. CHURCH - MORNING

(PAUL, ANITA, MRS. MILLER, LIBBY, MICHAEL, COOKIE)

ANITA, PAUL, LIBBY, MICHAEL AND DOUG GREET PEOPLE AS THEY ENTER CHURCH. EVERYONE MAKES AN EFFORT TO BE CHEERFUL, EXCEPT FOR LIBBY WHO SULKS.

PAUL

Hello, Evelyn. You look well this morning, James.

ANITA

Glad to see you, Marie. (NUDGES LIBBY)
Buck up, Libs. The way you act out here reflects on your father, y'know.

AN ELDERLY WOMAN, MRS. MILLER, APPROACHES.

MRS. MILLER

Good morning, pastor. Libby, what a beautiful dress.

LIBBY

(EXTRA CHEERFUL) Thanks, Mrs. Miller. My mother approved it. Did you know she has to approve all my clothes? She doesn't want me to have a life. So I quit my band, and now I don't!

PAUL

What?

MRS. MILLER

Such a lovely girl.

SHE HEADS OFF INTO THE CHURCH. AS ANITA SMILES AND WAVES...

ANITA

You quit your band? You love that band.

PAUL

And you guys are good.

MICHAEL

Not that good-- it's not like they
ever won first place in anything.

LIBBY

Shut up, dirt pile. (THEN) I quit
because I was too humiliated to tell
my friends I couldn't wear the shirt,
okay? Besides, it was just a matter
of time before you decided my rock
band doesn't fit into this family's
stupid fake wholesome image.

PAUL

It's not a fake image. (HUGE SMILE)
Mr. Simms, hello!

PAUL GOES OFF TO TALK TO MR. SIMMS.

ANITA

(TO LIBBY) Maybe we just like to smile
a lot, ever think of that?

MICHAEL

I think you made the right choice
quitting, Libby-- not everyone in the
family was born with my kind of talent.

LIBBY

How talented are you at getting punched?

LIBBY DRAGS MICHAEL AWAY. ANITA STARTS AFTER THEM, BUT SPOTS A CONFUSED-LOOKING OLDER MAN, MR. COHEN.

ANITA

Mr. Cohen, hello-- got lost again, eh?

ADDLED MR. COHEN LOOKS AROUND, REALIZES WHERE HE IS AND WALKS OFF. COOKIE APPROACHES AND HANDS ANITA AN ENVELOPE.

COOKIE

Anita, dear, this is for Michael-- it's money to buy him art supplies. He said someone stole his brushes at school.

ANITA

(RE: MONEY) That's not really necessary--

COOKIE

Sure it is. Let's face it-- someone has to nurture these children properly.

COOKIE GESTURES TO LIBBY AND MICHAEL-- WHO HAVE STARTED FIGHTING IN THE BACKGROUND-- THEN SHE HEADS INTO CHURCH.

ANITA

(YELLS AFTER HER) You think three's easy?! You only had one-- and you beat the fight out of him early.

We're not allowed to do that anymore!

PAUL COMES OVER.

PAUL

Honey, why are you yelling at my mother in front of half the congregation?

ANITA

'Cause I couldn't wait for the whole group to show up?

PAUL

Anita, is this really the time for jokes? I mean, c'mon, look at this family-- look at our kids... Honey, I respect you-- and I respect that you have your own way of doing things. But right now, well-- your way doesn't seem to be working.

ANITA

Really? Well, I think my way's working just-- (CALLS) Libby, no hair pulling! (TO PAUL) There's nothing wrong with these kids that-- (CALLS) Michael, stop biting your sister, or I swear, I'll...! (TO PAUL) What was I saying?

PAUL

I'm not sure. But I don't think even you believed it.

ANITA

Oh, I believed it. You know me, I'm not one to mince words. If I say something, I mean it. (BIG SMILE) Love the bangs, Marybeth! Better than Botox, right?

AND WE:

END ACT THREE

ACT FOURPINT. CHURCH - LATER

THE SANCTUARY IS PACKED. ANITA SITS IN A PEW WITH THE KIDS,
AS PAUL ADDRESSES THE CONGREGATION.

PAUL

...but before we go, I'd just like to say
a few words about how important charity
is to any community. As you know, we've
been having a drive this week...

AS PAUL CONTINUES ON IN THE BACKGROUND...

ANITA (V.O.)

Hey, God. I really need to talk to
you about this whole motherhood thing.
I figure if anyone understands what
being a mother's like, it's you. I
mean, you pretty much wrote the book
on multi-tasking, what with the whole
universe to look after. All I got is--

ANITA LEANS OVER TO DOUG AND MICHAEL, WHO ARE WHISPERING.

ANITA (CONT'D)

Pay attention-- your father's talking!

ANITA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Sorry, God. Where was I? Point is, whether
it's Michael's painting or Libby's shirt--
well, there's always so much to deal with,
never mind getting it all right... and
everybody expects you to be perfect.

(MORE)

ANITA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Course you know what that's like... So I'm just wondering-- you think Cookie's got a point? Maybe her and Paul are right, maybe I'm just not going about this whole Mom thing the right way... Anyway, I know you're busy with a few ba-zillion other things. I just like to throw it all up there for you and-- (NOTICING) Well, that's just great. Paul's fly is down.

ANITA SUBTLY TRIES TO SIGNAL PAUL, TELLING HIM TO PULL UP HIS ZIPPER. HE DOESN'T SEE HER.

ANITA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Wait a minute-- is that a sign? Is Paul's zipper being down your way of telling me that nobody's perfect, that it's okay, we're all flawed in some way and I should just do my best? (BEAT) Unless... are you just trying to tell me that I'm as bad a wife as I am a mother for letting Paul go up there in front of the whole community with his business hanging out?

ANITA GESTURES MORE FRANTICALLY TO PAUL. A MAN LOOKS AT HER-- SHE PRETENDS THAT SHE'S SMOOTHING HER BLOUSE.

ANITA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I don't mean to be greedy, God, but if that is a sign-- which would mean you are listening, and apparently have time to send me signs-- could you send me another sign, clarifying the first sign?

(MORE)

ANITA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And, y'know, confirming that it was a sign
that nobody's perfect and that's okay?

A BEAT-- NOTHING HAPPENS.

ANITA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Take your time-- you know my husband, I'm
gonna be here for a while... (LOOKS AROUND)
Come on, Paul, wrap it up, you're losing
them. Seamus is on his Blackberry, Alice
is scratching off her Lucky Seven ticket...
even Cookie's asleep. (THEN) Even Cookie.
(SMILES TO HERSELF) Thanks, God...

MEANWHILE...

PAUL

Well, that's it for today. Remember, if
you couldn't make it to my place this
week, there's a box in the back for any
last-minute donations. God bless.

EVERYONE GETS UP AND STARTS TO FILE OUT.

ANITA (V.O.)

(SMILING) Y'know, I don't know why I
ever doubted myself, God, because when
life gets challenging, I should know
it's just You testing me-- and You
never give me anything You don't think
I can handle.

AS THEY'RE LEAVING, MARLENE COMES UP TO ANITA.

ANITA (CONT'D)

Marlene, hi.

MARLENE

Anita, I thought about it, and you were right. (TWITCHES) I didn't need those jeans. So I'm giving them to you.

MARLENE HOLDS OUT THE BRAND-NEW PAIR OF MAGIC JEANS TO ANITA.

ANITA'S FANTASY:

ROMANTIC MUSIC SWELLS. IN SLOW-MOTION, ANITA RUNS ACROSS A FIELD TOWARD... THE MAGIC JEANS, WHICH RUN TOWARD HER. JUST AS SHE'S ABOUT TO REACH THEM...

BACK TO:

MARLENE (CONT'D)

...for the charity drive. I'm sure they'll make some poor, underprivileged woman very happy. Could you drop them in the box for me?

ANITA

Right. Sure.

ANITA TAKES THE MAGIC JEANS OVER TO THE BOX. SHE LOOKS AT THEM LONGINGLY FOR A BEAT.

ANITA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Okay, this isn't a test. This is just cruel.

FINALLY SHE SIGHS AND DROPS THE JEANS INTO THE BOX. AND WE...

CUT TO:

S

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING
(ANITA, LIBBY, PAUL, MICHAEL)

LIBBY IS ON THE SOFA, TEXTING AWAY. ANITA ENTERS, HOLDING A BAG.

ANITA

Come on, Libs, how long you gonna sit
around sulking like this?

BUT LIBBY DOESN'T EVEN LOOK UP, JUST KEEPS TEXTING.

ANITA (CONT'D)

I know-- you don't wanna talk about it.

ANITA TAKES A CELL PHONE OUT OF HER POCKET AND QUICKLY TYPES
SOMETHING IN. AFTER A BEAT, LIBBY LOOKS UP, SURPRISED.

ANITA (CONT'D)

That's right. Mama's got thumbs too.

LIBBY ANGRILY TYPES SOMETHING INTO HER PHONE, HITS SEND.

ANITA (CONT'D)

I don't think I like your tone, young
lady! (THEN) Or your spelling.

LIBBY GLARES AT HER, STARTS TO TEXT SOMETHING.

ANITA (CONT'D)

Careful-- don't make me wash your thumbs
off with soap! (THEN) Okay, look, I didn't
come in here to fight. It just breaks my
heart seeing you sit there when your band
is performing tonight. I keep thinking,
what kinda mother would I be if I made you
quit something you love? So, here...

SHE TAKES THE ANTI-GOD T-SHIRT OUT OF THE BAG, HANDS IT TO LIBBY.

LIBBY

You're kidding, right? You're gonna
let me wear this to my gig tonight?

ANITA

If that's what you want. Even though it's
in horrible taste and goes against
everything we've ever taught you.

LIBBY

That's just what I wanted to hear! Thanks,
Mom.

LIBBY JUMPS UP AND HUGS ANITA. AS SHE GOES TO THE CLOSET TO
GET HER GUITAR AND COAT...

ANITA

(CALLS OUT) Okay, guys. Ready to go?

LIBBY

Where are you going?

ANITA

To watch your show.

PAUL, MICHAEL, AND DOUG COME DOWNSTAIRS. THEY ARE ALL WEARING
THE SAME CIRCLE-SLASH-GOD T-SHIRTS. LIBBY'S JAW DROPS.

PAUL

What's wrong honey? We're our own
people, too. We can wear what we want.

LIBBY

You're bluffing. There's no way you'd
wear that shirt.

ANITA

Why not? You were right about our
image being too wholesome, Libs.

ANITA TAKES ANOTHER T-SHIRT OUT OF THE BAG FOR HERSELF.

PAUL

Yeah, no reason we can't be cool, too.

(THEN) Let's hurry, guys-- we wanna sit up front where everyone can see us.

PAUL OPENS THE DOOR. THEY ALL START TO FILE OUT.

LIBBY

But you can't just... I can't be seen wearing the same... Okay, fine! If I don't wear the shirt do you promise to stay home?

ANITA

Well, as long as you understand it's your choice not to wear it. I'd hate for you to feel like we were telling you what to do.

LIBBY GRUNTS, TOSSES THE T-SHIRT ONTO THE COUCH, GRABS HER GUITAR AND WALKS OUT, SLAMMING THE DOOR BEHIND HER. PAUL, DOUG AND MICHAEL TAKE THEIR T-SHIRTS OFF AND GIVE THEM TO ANITA.

ANITA (CONT'D)

Thanks for the help, guys. (RE SHIRTS)
Guess I'll burn these-- unless, Doug, you just wanna wash' em real good.

PAUL GOES OVER TO A BIG STACK OF BOXES MARKED "CHARITY DRIVE."

PAUL

Guys, can you give me a hand taping up these boxes? The truck's coming in the morning to pick'em up.

MICHAEL

Sorry, Dad. I'm an artist-- my hands are my life. In fact, Grandma says--

ANITA GRABS HIM BY THE FINGER AND PULLS HIM ASIDE.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Owww!!

ANITA

We gotta talk. First of all, you gotta cut this prima donna stuff out. If Mama don't get to be a diva, you can be darn sure no one else does.

MICHAEL

Okay.

ANITA

Michael, look, I'm not saying you don't have talent, 'cause you do, but the truth is... that wasn't your painting that won first prize. See, Mama couldn't find your painting, and rather than tell you, I just painted a new version.

MICHAEL

I know.

ANITA

You do? Why didn't you say something?

MICHAEL

Yours was better. It won, didn't it?

ANITA

Yeah, but see, that's deceitful.

MICHAEL

But you were deceitful.

ANITA

You're right. And I'm very sorry for that. I shouldn't have lied to you, baby. I know better, and I know you do, too.

MICHAEL

So does that mean you're a-- what's that word? Hip-uh, hip-uh...

ANITA

Hippopotamus? Yeah, without Mama's magic jeans, I can see how you'd think that.

MICHAEL

No, a hip-uh-crit. Where you say one thing, but you do another.

ANITA

Sorta. See, it's just sometimes your Mama gets so overwhelmed with stuff she has to take a shortcut here and there to get it all done. But that doesn't mean you're allowed to. You gotta prove you know the rules before you can break them.

MICHAEL

How do you prove that? Is there some kinda test you take?

ANITA

Yeah. When you're a grown-up, they give you this really hard test-- called having children. And y'know the hardest part about the test? There's no right answers.

MICHAEL

Then how do you know how you did?

ANITA

Well... I guess you tell me. So how
am I doing?

MICHAEL

You mean, what grade would I give you?

ANITA

Oh no. No grades for me. I'm taking
this thing pass-fail.

MICHAEL

Oh. Well, so far.... (THINKS) Can I
have ice cream for breakfast tomorrow?

ANITA'S FANTASY:

ANITA PILES SCOOPS OF ICE CREAM HIGH INTO MICHAEL'S CEREAL BOWL.
LIBBY COMES DOWNSTAIRS, DRESSED IN A SHOCKINGLY REVEALING OUTFIT.

LIBBY

Thanks for letting me go on a date
with a twenty-seven-year-old, Mom.

DOUG DRIVES THROUGH THE ROOM ON A MOTORCYCLE, KNOCKING STUFF
OVER LEFT AND RIGHT. ANITA GIVES HIM THE THUMBS UP.

ANITA

Who's the coolest mom in the world?

BACK TO:

ANITA (CONT'D)

No. No ice cream for breakfast.

MICHAEL

Then fail.

ANITA

(LAUGHS) Told you it was hard.

MICHAEL

I'll bet Dad would let me. I want Dad to
make us breakfast.

ANITA

Michael, if you're gonna ask God for a
miracle, least you can do is bow your head.

MICHAEL DOES, AND WE:

DISSOLVE TO:

TINT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT
(PAUL, ANITA)

ANITA STRAIGHTENS UP THE DAY'S MESS. PAUL COMES OVER TO HER.

PAUL

Ready for bed?

ANITA

You mean this day has an end? I was just starting to feel like one of those lucky Alaskan moms blessed with twenty-four hours of sunlight. They don't shoot moose for sport, y'know. They do it so there's no pellets left in that shotgun when their family gets home.

ANITA PICKS UP SOME CLOTHES THAT HAVE BEEN LEFT ON THE FLOOR.

PAUL

Hey, I'm sorry about what I said before. Turns out your way does work some of... most of the time.

ANITA

It does, doesn't it? I just wish it wasn't so darn exhausting.

ANITA PLOPS ONTO THE COUCH. PAUL COMES UP BEHIND HER AND STARTS RUBBING HER SHOULDERS.

ANITA (CONT'D)

I could really use me some Mom Jail right about now. Be a dear and call the authorities on me, would ya?

PAUL

No chance. I couldn't do it without you,
Anita.

ANITA

(DUH) Well, yeah... But I'm sure Cookie
would be glad to move in.

PAUL

You got room in that Mom Jail for two?
(THEY LAUGH) C'mon, let's go to bed. I
think I see a foot massage in your future.

ANITA

Okay-- long as you don't make me do
your neck, too.

PAUL HEADS UPSTAIRS. AFTER A BEAT, ANITA GETS UP TO FOLLOW HIM, BUT FIRST GOES OVER TO ONE OF THE CHARITY BOXES, RIPS THE TAPE OFF-- AND THERE ARE THE MAGIC JEANS. SHE TAKES THEM OUT, THEN GOES TO GET MONEY FROM HER WALLET-- BUT THERE'S ONLY A FEW BUCKS.

ANITA CONSIDERS FOR A MOMENT, THEN TAKES THE ENVELOPE COOKIE GAVE HER FOR MICHAEL, RIPS IT OPEN AND TOSSES THAT MONEY IN THE BOX, TOO.

FINALLY SHE PULLS THE JEANS ON UNDER HER SKIRT, WHICH SHE THEN SLIPS OFF. FEELING CONFIDENT AND SEXY, ANITA HEADS OFF TO JOIN PAUL.

ANITA (CONT'D)

(CALLS) Hey, Paul, guess what kind of
dance I'm doing?

AND AS SHE SLOW-DANCES HER WAY UP THE STAIRS, WE:

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW