

INSPIRED BY THE HIT MOVIE MOMS' NIGHT OUT

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A NOVELIZATION BY
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SCREENPLAY WRITTEN BY ANDREA NASFELL AND JON ERWIN

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NIGHT
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Written by
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Based on the Screenplay written
by Andrea Nasfell and Jon Erwin



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*[Blessing] Noun. a beneficial thing for which one is grateful;
something that brings well-being.*

CHAPTER ONE

Allyson sat down at her notebook computer, splaying her fingers over the keyboard. She listened closely, and a soft smile lifted her lips. The room echoed quiet, peaceful. Crickets chirped outside, doing what they were designed by God to do best. If only she could have the same feeling of rightness. Of purpose.

The blank computer screen before her was white, clean. The only thing in her home that was. Her fingers clicked on the keys, getting down her thoughts for her blog. Ragged fingernails, desperately in need of polish tried to distract her. So did the Legos scattered on her chevron sculpted rug, but Allyson told herself to focus, focus on her post. She'd promised her husband Sean that she wouldn't give up in dispensing wisdom to the world. A mommy blogger she was not . . . not yet at least. But couldn't a girl dream?

It's 5 a.m. And do you know where your children are? Mine are in bed. I should be in bed. It's Mother's Day. But I'm not. Wanna know why? Because I'm a clean freak! I'm talking Freaky Deaky Dutch.

MOMS' NIGHT OUT

If you were to lock me away in a white room in a straitjacket it would actually feel comforting, as long as the walls were spotless and nobody wore shoes.

I can actually feel the house getting dirty. Like I have nerve endings in the carpet. And it affects me. Wanna know how? First, I feel distracted.

“Dis . . . tr . . .” Allyson typed out the word as she wrote it. She glanced at the Legos again, and the hair clip lying next to it. And the cleaning supplies . . . she’d left them out, hadn’t she?

She shook her head, telling herself not to worry about that now. *What was I typing?*

“Focus, focus,” she mumbled to herself, and then began typing again.

Even as I try to write this, I’m thinking of the cleaning supplies I left out, and how one of the kids is going to get up and drink Clorox. Warning labels stream through my mind.

DANGER
KEEP OUT OF THE REACH OF CHILDREN
HARMFUL IF SWALLOWED
DO NOT INGEST
CAN CAUSE BLINDNESS
AVOID CONTACT WITH MUCAS
MEMBRANES
PARALYSIS IS A POSSIBILITY
CAN CAUSE PREMATURE AGING IN THE
FACIAL REGION

MOMS' NIGHT OUT

YOUR CHILDREN WILL NEVER BE THE
SAME

POISON CONTROL CAN'T HELP YOU
ANYMORE

YOU HAVE FAILED AGAIN

DHR IS ON THE WAY TO TAKE YOUR
CHILDREN AWAY

YOU ARE A FAILURE

My imagination then takes the wheel from there. I can picture it now. I'll end up having to call poison control, and they'll say, "Sorry, Mrs. Field, too many times this month." And take my kids away.

I can honestly picture two men in pressed white shirts, black suits, and ties. The first man looks serious in his black-rimmed glasses. The man standing behind him appears like a retired WWF fighter who isn't too happy about retiring and is actually looking forward to wrangling my children. I shudder as he lifts a pair of handcuffs.

I've played it all out in my mind, which is kind of ~~funny~~, ~~scary~~, morbid. But that is only the beginning. After I feel distracted—from my messy house that taunts me—I feel stressed.

STRESSED!!!

Then I have a "moment."

Picture with me those 1950s black-and-white reels of atomic bombs exploding, mushroom clouds, and the nuclear holocaust that happens in its wake. Not that I'm comparing myself to that—well, sort of.

At least that's what it feels like on the inside. Like just last week.

It was a simple outing, and I was trying to have a simple conversation, with my husband, Sean. If you're one of my 3.7 blog readers (no, not 3.7K, just 3.7), then you will know how utterly sweet and handsome Sean is.

I was trying to have a normal, nothing-earth-shattering conversation with Sean when I felt the hairs on the back of my neck standing on end. The noise in the van was getting to me.

It started with our two-year-old Beck hitting his pinwheel against the minivan window, over and over and over. (Mommy friends, we know that just because something doesn't have an on/off switch or a volume button doesn't mean it's a quiet toy!)

And just when the tapping of aluminum on glass had caused my heart to go into palpitations our four-year-old Bailey's voice overshadowed the tapping.

"Mom. Mommy!" Her voice rose to an ear-piercing level, filling the cavern of our van, and echoing in my ears.

Tension tightened in my gut, and then it released—liquid frustration (anger?!), pushing out into my chest, my arms, gaining in speed.

My head whipped around to look to the passenger seat behind Sean, hair flopping around faster than Willow Smith's.

Eyes wide. Mouth snarled. "I am talking to Dad-dy!" My words exited out of my mouth like a spout of hot lava.

Yes, this was me having a “moment” with my daughter. Stress anyone? And the root of it had been those dang carpet fibers crying out with voices of injustice over the mud clots I’ve yet to vacuum from their masses.

There is no such thing as, “Not thinking about the house, the mess, the chores until I get home.” We know, don’t we? We know how we left the house—cleaned-up or not—and it taunts us no matter where we travel or where our journey takes us.

I tried to picture the wild-eyed, red-haired mommy-monster from my children’s eyes, and she wasn’t pretty. Still, she was unleashed, unwilling to be reined in. It felt good to release some steam in a bad sort of way.

Out of the corner of my eye I spotted Sean’s hands tightening on the steering wheel. I glared at him, almost as if I was daring him to say something. You’d think after eight years of marriage that he’d have learned to *not say a word*, but obviously Sean hasn’t learned, for these words proceeded out of his mouth:

“Hey, hon, about the stress level. It’s a little high, and you know that psycho thing you just did . . .”

“Did you just call me psycho?” I huffed. “PSYCHO!” I repeated. My response was brilliant, I know. And my response *was* kind of psycho. But it was just beginning.

If that little mad mommy manifestation wasn’t bad enough it wasn’t five minutes later when

I had another "moment" with some helpless newlyweds.

I couldn't help myself. I saw them in their cute convertible, pulled up so innocently waiting at the stoplight. Maybe it was the fact that I once had a cute convertible just like that. A convertible that we had to sell to buy a "family car" after Brandon, our first child, was born. Could that really be six years ago?

Their convertible was spotless. No ketchup stains on the seats. No smashed juice pouches under the floor mats. "Just married," was written in washable paint on the side of the immaculate car.

With hearts. HEARTS!

Sean's window was rolled down, and I felt myself lunging toward it as if another entity had entered my body. I leaned over Sean, nearly propelling myself on his lap, stretching as close to the open window as I could.

"We just wanted to say congratulations!" I called out, noting the syrupy sweet smiles on their faces. "And savor this moment in your life!"

The couple looked at each other with puppy-dog gazes. Gazes of contentment and trust. I told myself to stop there. Stop with the congratulations . . . but I didn't listen.

When I first started speaking I thought it would help me. But then the words continued faster, like a runaway horse. Clearly my emotions were doing the talking.

"Enjoy the moment," I began again.

"Because you're just going to blink, seriously going to blink, and soon it's going to be over and replaced with just volumes of voices!"

"Mom!" Brandon called trying to get my attention, emphasizing my words.

"Mommy! Mommy!" the other two voices called out.

"Amazing, amazing beautiful volume!" My hands trembled as I called to the newlyweds and looks of horror crossed their faces. *Who is this woman?* their wide eyes seemed to proclaim.

I glanced to the kids in the backseat who were strangely quiet for the first time that day. Maybe because they were enjoying the show of the crazy lady in the front seat was putting on for them.

My words didn't stop there. Although now I wish they would have.

I cleared my throat and a trembling voice emerged. "You can only take so much before you crack!"

The young bride wrinkled her nose and looked up at me as if I'd grown a second head. I could almost read her thoughts. *Crazy woman in a minivan.* But then her shock turned to horror. Horror *is* the best word for it.

The woman in the car looked at me again, only this time it wasn't me she was seeing. The shock there was new, fresh . . . as if she

were peering into her own future. A waking nightmare I supposed.

I bit my lower lip over the look on her face. It was the look of a girl whose fairy tale just ended. I murdered it. I am a fairy tale murderer.

It's then, friends, that I realized the truth. The daily-stuff affects the attitude-stuff more than I'd like to admit. Like Tetris blocks, I think I have everything sorted, shuffled, and tucked in its place until I can't move fast enough, and the blocks don't fit as I planned, and the emotions pile up higher and higher until *Bam!*

I am like the Bruce Banner of stay-at-home moms. He doesn't want to turn into the Hulk. It just happens. Which is exactly how I feel.

One minute I'm a normal person. The next minute the large, green monster grows inside me, bursting out in every direction. I grow and transform into something unrecognizable, scary even. Maybe psycho, until I'm so big that not even the ceiling can hold me down. Hold me in.

And even though I've figured out the reason for my hunky, junky alter ego I'm not exactly sure what to do about it. How can I feel okay about my house that I clean but never *STAYS* clean? Or my kids who take pleasure in seeing their crazy-eyed, hair-pulling mama's antics over their littlest mess-ups and misdirections? Can I change? Can I ever fix the thing that seems to be unfixed the most, **namely myself?**

I love my kids. I love my husband, my minivan. My minivan is awesome. I have this incredible life, so why do I feel this way?
Anyone? Anyone?

Allyson read her words over again, fixed a few typos, and then hit “publish” before she could change her mind. Most of the wise and witty blog posts she read had answers, not questions, but she was at a loss. At least she had a few things to look forward to. Today was Mother’s Day, and today Sean would be home after taking a trip for work. His absence often made it harder for her to cope. She smiled thinking of him striding through the front door . . . his arms opened wide for her. Did he realize how much she needed him to hold her up?

She glanced again at the number of page views on her blog from last month: 18. Three for every post she’d written. Sean, her mother, and Izzy (her best friend), no doubt. Although Allyson wasn’t sure if Izzy had read the last post, and her mother had commented that she’d read it twice, pointing out three grammatical errors.

Everyone starts somewhere, her mind consoled her heart. Her worth wasn’t based on page-views, right? At least that’s what she told herself as tension tightened her gut. But if she got her house clean—that was something tangible. She could see the shiny floor. Breathe in the piney scent. It was a small sense of control in her stay-at-home world. It was something she could point to and give herself an imaginary gold star for. It proved she wasn’t wasting her life. That her noisy, overfilled, tiring days had meaning.

She didn't sit too long on that thought. It was time for action. Allyson closed the top of her laptop computer and rose. Within a few minutes a new sound had joined the crickets. The clacking of her sweeper on the floor. The scraping of toys as she swept them into a pile.

There, take that, she thought as her red curls tossed with her effort.

Out of the corner of her eye something caught her attention. The first pinkish light of dawn pushed through the kitchen window and beamed like a spotlight on one pink sock. The sock taunted her. "Do you see me? Are you going to leave me here? There's more mess from where I came from, you know."

She pushed the sweeper with fervor toward the sock. Her eyes widened as she noticed the block behind it. And the Matchbox car. *Swoop.* A dozen crayons, broken and scattered. She pushed them along too. It was as if Hansel and Gretel—or in her case Brandon, Bailey, and Beck had left a trail of bread crumbs, or rather toy box droppings, for her to find.

Happy Mother's Day.

A strand of red hair tumbled from her hasty up-do and curled on her cheek. She puffed her cheeks and blew it out of her face. Her hands tightened around the sweeper handle.

Children are a blessing, she told herself as she barreled forward. She moved to the den, organizing the toys in labeled bins. She moved to the sink next, scrubbed it with vigor. She opened the dishwasher. The lemony scent arose, like a balm to her soul. A clean, fresh scent.

Her hands moved with ninja speed as she tucked cups into the cabinet.

“KEEP CALM AND MOMMY ON,” the mini-poster inside the cabinet door read, and Allyson set her chin in determination.

I want to believe Mommying is a blessing. I try. I really do. She wiped her eyes. But somehow I always end up feeling . . . like there should be something more to life than this. The room around her blurred just slightly.

What does it matter? She thought as she set the sweeper back into its spot in the laundry room. The house was cleaner now. Not perfect, but better.

Still the nagging wouldn't leave Allyson's gut. *Will I ever feel enough? Will it ever be enough?* And the question she'd written on her blog echoed through her soul.

Why do I feel this way?