

Izadora Amaris Lopez McGawley

Indira Hood-Esparza

Pod 2

Getting Home

TITLE SLIDE

BREATHE & APPLY STAGE MAKEUP

FIRST SLIDE

The sensation <*slithers*> around my small body, <*suffocating me*> like a boa constrictor does it's prey. My muscles **tense** behind my <ears?>, on the <fleshy parts of my **shoulders**?>, and in a circle around my <**chubby?, 4 year old, waist** ~>. Pressure **builds up** in my forehead~||| and without thought?, I feel a few, warm tears <*cascade* down my cheeks>. I **shake**, regardless of my intention to remain *as still as possible*.

<close eyes> If you don't move ||| maybe he'll **stop yelling** and *just drive normal*.

SLIDE

The attention isn't on me☹. <motion w hands> It's like watching a **storm, through a foggy window**; ||| There is something **surreal** about it that makes you feel? like you're not quite awake~. <cry annoyed voice> They *always* play the same scene. Dad will open his mouth, ||| out falling a *slurred argument* and a <wave of **toxic stench**> →. Mama will follow☹, first with <dainty hands> **eloquent, rational, statements**, but eventually~ all reason will be lost ^ under the sound ^ of her sobs ^ ~. <calm and push> She gets louder and so does he. <I cup my *small hands* around my ears> →. <close eyes> If I **hold tightly enough**, it sounds like the ocean ~.

<look at hands> My hands are bigger now. I'm still sitting, ||| trying to hear the waves☺, but the thunder has gotten louder☺ and the window has disappeared☺.

“Tell me why you're crying Iza.” My mom <pulls my fingers from the sides of my head> and tells me to **look at her** ☹. I <look around>, coming **back** to the current reality. The **evening sun glows** through the **clouds, blinding** me through the *rearview mirror*. I'm **sitting** with her in the car, my dad got out a few minutes ago☺, angry☹. My **mom** took his place in the driver's seat after I called her, **voice quivering**, and told her that I didn't? want to be at home with him. I didn't want to be **anywhere** with him. We are on the way to my grandma's house.

“It happened again.” I <mumble>

“What happened again?”

“We **fought**. I got **mad** at him, I don't really know why, he was just annoying me. Either way, I snapped and told him to leave, so he did. It took him a while, but after about an hour he came back. He was mad.”

“You should have called me, you know you shouldn't get in the car with him when he's like that.”

I *shudder* as I recall what **led me here**.

SLIDE

“Get in the front seat.” He orders

My **empty** stomach somehow? manages to feel as though it *might? overflow*. I know exactly what is going to happen☺, but I do what he says anyway. You'll be fine. I say to myself. You just need to get home.

I sit down with my arms **crossed** in a protective shield. His breath is **warm** and the smell of alcohol,||| moist, saliva mixed alcohol, ||| *catches in the back of my throat.*

“You’re such an **entitled brat.**”

He turns the key in the ignition.

My mom grabs my **hand** to stop it from shaking☹.

“It’s my? **fault.** ||| I shouldn’t have been so **mean** to him. He was *smothering* me, but it’s not ☹ like he meant any harm☹.”

SLIDE

*He can change **so quickly.***

Just this morning☹, he took me out to breakfast and told me how **proud of me he was.** He **wouldn’t even take a bite?** of the pancakes we ordered to share, saying *I deserved the whole plate.* He’s one of my best friends. We have **so much fun** together. <list voice> Teasing my mom, going to the beach, trying to find **all** the best ways to **beat boredom** in San Diego. **Some days,** the **only** thing that he wants to do is to **spend time with me.**

Today, I wish he didn’t...

and I wish he never had.

<BREATHE>

It just makes it **even harder** when that seemingly **indestructible** love takes a back seat to all of his frustrations. |||

A few days ago, he got a **call** from **work,** ||never a good start||, and as usual? took out his anger on **my brother.** This time though, Gregory decided he was **done,** the same way my **other**

brother, **Forrest**, did a few years ago. So he left. and after I snapped at him earlier?, my dad decided it was the **perfect opportunity** to fall **back** into his **bad habit**.

“Don’t blame yourself mija. He shouldn’t have put you in danger.” I tear up again.

“But I shouldn’t have told him to leave. I just hurt his feelings.”

“His feelings have been hurt *for a long time* now Iza. Your dad has suffered **a lot** in his lifetime, but that **doesn’t** mean that it’s okay that **we suffer too**.”

I can feel☹ my conflicted emotions <*scratching*> at the **walls** of my **stomach**.

She is right.

<Angry> I feel my **sadness?** ||| turning into adrenaline.||| I let out a **desperate wail** as I go from wiping my tears, to <pressing my fingernails into my palms.>

<BREATHE>

I close my eyes and wander back into my mind. I am **always** reminded of that **one day**. The boa constrictor <*wraps*> back around my body and the **thunder storm continues**. Once again I *slip* into my **earliest memory**.

“Mom?, do you **remember** that **time** when I was little?”

SLIDE

I feel **completely powerless**. I am **sitting** in the **back** of his work truck. It’s **oversized** to fit all the tools he needs for the construction site, and **in it**, I seem to <shrink>. I **look out** of the window, <stretching my neck> to see the **road** beneath us. *I wonder how bad it would hurt to jump.* My mom tries to control the car from the passenger seat.

“**Get your hands off the wheel!**” My dad **demands**.

He always spoke with an **intensity** that made you feel... unsafe. <shake head hands up>

He has never laid a finger on any of us♫, but in moments like now, I *can't help* but **feel** like he **might**.

SLIDE

I am *strapped into a booster seat, holding my brother's hand*, ||| like always, never. saying. a word.

I just watch.

He <pries> off her fingers *one by one* to regain control of the car.

My mom yells back at him. “You’re swerving all over the road! PULL

OVER!”

“Diana, will you stop!” he says.

“No, you are going to kill us!”

“We’re fine”

We **swerve** left into the next lane. The car next to us **grabs** onto their horn, letting out a *prolonged* honk. I **whimper** and break into a **loud, snot filled cry**. My brother <squeezes> my hand, **trying** to help me **catch** my breath.

“Ed! Slow down! You almost hit that truck!”

“But did I?” He *slurs*.

“No but-”

He **cuts** her off before she can finish, “I didn’t think so.”

“But you might hit the next one! Get off of the freeway. Please, your daughter and son are sitting right behind you. Look! You made your toddler cry. Just think about them. Please!”

“I can make my own decisions Diana, just sit back!”

My **mom** reaches her hand toward the back seat and grabs a **hold** of my foot, so little ☹ that it fits in her palm.

She turns her attention toward me. “It’s going to be okay mijita”

SLIDE

I exhale in **short bursts**. My fear **escapes** in loud gasps, but I know I **need** to regain my composure. My diaphragm **contracts** and my lungs open up for a <full breath>. Air **fills my body** and my **headache**, still <pulsating> from the tension of holding back my screams, <fades away>. There is a burning sensation on the <tender skin below my eyes>. <I touch my icy fingertips against it>, and even though it’s only **momentary**, the **bit** of relief helps me to calm down. I come to a steady rhythm. **Breathe in....2....3....4. Hold....2....3....4. Breathe out....2....3....4....5....6.... Repeat.** My mom taught me how to do this a long time ago. She always told me, “No one can focus on their bad feelings while they’re counting their breath. There **isn’t enough room in your brain to do both.**” So it became my routine.

All we need to do is get home

Finally, we pull over into a parking lot ☹ near the side of the freeway so that my dad can drop us off. The 5:00 *sunlight* and the *exhaustion* from so much crying have me practically asleep. I hear them arguing like a soft rumble in the distance. **White noise.**

“Come on Iza.”

My brother's hand **releases** my own and I wake up, **startled**. **I'm defenseless**.

I hear my dad yelling.

"She is my daughter! You **can't** take her away from me!"

"Come on Iza. Get **out of the car**." my mom motions.

I remember that my **brother and I** used to do this with the **dog**☺. We would sit him in between us and **call**☺ him. <list voice & motions> We'd pat our **laps**, click our **tongues**, and make kissing sounds to **try** and get him to come **our** way. We wanted to **prove** to the other sibling that the **dog liked us more**. He always took a little while. He'd look us **both** in the eye and wag his tail. He'd keep turning **around. and around**. trying to figure out the **best decision**.

SLIDE

I keep **sitting** in my car seat, **looking** at my parents, just like my dog used to do. Even though I **know** that when he is **bad dad**, he does things that make me **scared**|| and make mama **cry?**, I also know that I **love him**. <genuine voice> He's **just sad right now** and he'll **get better**. *I imagine how warm he is, his strong cologne and how he makes me laugh.* He **doesn't** tell me what to do **like mom does**. **No**, he **pushes me** on the swingset☺ or he reads **funny poems** to me before bed☺, <sentimental laugh> like the one about the king who eats a peanut butter sandwich and can't speak because it's **too sticky**. He always gives me **candy** and helps☺ me brush my teeth after I eat it☺. When I get tired of walking <close eyes> he'll carry me on his shoulders.

He will go back to good dad.

Just like he always does.

<sad look> But I love my mama too☹?. She smells like **fresh laundry** and **flower petals**, she **yells at me** || but **never... scares me, she takes. good. care of me.** I'd *never* choose one over the other. ***I want to be with both of them.***

I **stay** in my car seat, my mom still **calling** me. She <reaches> her arms to get me out of the back of the truck, **too tall** for me to climb out of without help. **My brother** is holding **on** to her waist, **staring at me** with a blank expression. I **wonder** why my dad **isn't** fighting over **him**? My mom holds me in her arms. I **wrap** myself around her and **hide my face** in her sweater.

“Really?” He says, looking at my mom in **utter disbelief**. ||| “**Fuck you.**” A **cloud** of exhaust **catches** in the back of my throat as he **drives** away... **full speed**.

SLIDE

<PAUSE, BREATHE>

The sky is **grey** and I <shiver>. **Light sprinkles** *tickle* my skin; I wonder if it will rain soon? My mom? asks a woman if she can make a call. She dials <**3 numbers**>. I **hear** the lady telling the **person** on the phone about a **drunk driver** on the freeway. At the same time, **my** mom calls **her own** mom.

We spend the next week at my grandma's house.

I **look** out of the **passenger seat** window, **now tall enough** to do so **without stretching**. My **grandma's house** looks *exactly* the same as it did when I was **four years old**.

“Oh <sigh>... I remember that time.” My **mom** grabs☹ my hand and tries to comfort me☹.

“I just **don’t know** why he **keeps** doing this. He cried **so much** when he finally **apologized**. *He always does.*

He said he’d **never do it again**, but *he did*. He said he’d **never drink again**, but *he did*. He said he’d **never hurt us** or **put us in danger**, *but. he. did.*”

She looks down and sighs. “I know sweetheart |||, and he’ll get better☹ just as **soon** as his job starts **paying** him again.”

“Mom, ou’ve been **saying** that for **10 years**.”

She frowns. “*I know*”

||We sit in silence.||

“Do you think I should ask him to leave?” She says.

“I don’t know mom. <BREATHE> I just want this to be **over**.”

I lean over and give her a hug, **laying my head** on her **sweater**. It looks like it might rain ☹.

“*So do I.*”