

The Bed She Made
(First 15 Pages)

by
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Based on a True Story

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FADE IN:

EXT. MEXICAN VILLAGE FUNERAL PROCESSION - DAY

Harsh summer sun streaks across palm-thatched roofs. Shuffling leather sandals fill a rural street with dust.

An OLD WOMAN, head covered in a black shawl, follows a shoulder-carried coffin. She brings both feet together between each step - crossing herself.

Behind her, a marching brass band plays a funeral dirge. Each instrument bleats out its own beat - mechanical wailing.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO MIDDLE CLASS LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A portable projection screen tilts forward on a metal tripod.

A potluck assortment of people in their sixties sit along the edges of the darkened room, while others sit cross-legged on pile carpeting.

TESS, 27, with yoga-sculpted arms snuggles into the lap of JAKE, 30, who rests his just-shaved chin on her tousled hair.

TESS

Friends and neighbors, I give you fair warning. There is not a scene in all of Mexico that my father-the-mighty-explorer has not documented. He'll milk this all night long.

Good-natured groans escape from the shadows. A slide of a beach scene pops up on the screen, upside down.

TESS (CONT'D)

He dragged this slide show to every social studies class I ever suffered through as a kid.

JAKE

Oh you loved it. That's why you married a photographer.

Squirming on the carpet are four-year-old twins - ALEX and ALICIA - untangled by their mother MARIA, a 25-year-old woman with the single-mom weariness of someone twice her age.

MARIA

Dad, get this show on the road. We're losing our kid window here.

She's talking to the man behind the projector, MAC, late 50s, whose larger-than-life grin is blue from the reflection of the slide carousel bulb.

MAC

Heard and understood. I've got it working now. Drumroll please.

His voice drowns out the whirl of the carousel motor.

MAC

Here's the property where we're going to build.

The screen fills with a graceful, willowy woman with blonde-grey hair, LIZZY, standing in front of stubby palm trees.

MAC

That's Lizzy, for scale. Those palms will be 20 feet tall by the time Al and Alex are old enough to pick coconuts for my piña coladas.

The grandkids stop squirming and look to Lizzy for confirmation. Even more ethereal in person, their young grandmother blows them a kiss from the side of the room.

Another shot fills the screen. A higher angle on the homesite -- it's a cleared lot in the middle of scrub jungle.

MAC

No-one around for miles.

A man with a faded 49ers baseball cap, LEN, interrupts.

LEN

You got a problem with neighbors Mac, or just trying to make us more green with envy than we already are?

Mac throws his head back and guffaws.

MAC

Mi casa will be su casa Len. Come and visit anytime. But it's BYOB.

He clicks the advance. The screen fills with an older image, faded colors. It's a younger Mac, holding the hand of a tiny Tess as she tiptoes along the handrail of a bandstand in the middle of a village square.

MAC

This family and Mexico go way back.
Tess always loved the town squares:
zocalos.

Little Alicia stands and points to the screen, her finger a long shadow.

ALICIA

Wasn't you scared Auntie Tess?

TESS

No silly. Look who's holding my hand? That's grandpa.

Laughs from the shadows.

LEN

Kid doesn't recognize you Mac. You used to be handsome. What happened?

Mac laughs and clicks through a series of dreamy slides:

-- TESS, MARIA AND LIZZY SITTING INSIDE A VINTAGE CAMPER VAN

-- TESS TENTATIVELY PETTING A BEDRAGGLED BURRO IN A MARKET

-- TESS PICKING OUT SWEET ROLLS WITH HUGE METAL TONGS

TESS

The origins of my panaderia obsession. Gracias dad. From my thighs, twenty years later.

-- THE CAMPER VAN PARKED ON THE SAND OF A PALM-LINED BEACH

-- LIZZY, IN WAIST DEEP WATER, CLUTCHING HER GIRLS

MAC

Dizzy never did take to the water like the girls. So this time ...

The next slide is modern day -- a huge pit in the ground.

MAC

We're building a pool!

Lizzy flicks on the light, revealing a room full of packing boxes and faded squares on walls where photos used to hang.

LIZZY

All right Mac. Now you're just showing off. Who wants coffee?

The whole room bustles with laughter as the guests fold up the lawn chairs they brought in with them.

EXT. WORKING CLASS SAN FRANCISCO SUBURB STREET - DAY

Jake fiddles with the focus of a video camera, zooming in on Tess sprinting after a 4x4 pickup truck.

TESS

Wait up!

The truck is towing the vintage camper van, stuffed full of clothes and boxes. Neighbors line the street, waving goodbye.

Little fingers have printed "Adios Granny" in the dust of the camper van's rear window.

TESS

Dad! Wait!

Tess hops onto the truck's running board, grabbing Mac's forearm with it's tatoos of a naked woman's torso.

MAC

Can't keep up with your old man anymore?

Panting, Tess drops a lunch pail on his lap.

TESS

You forgot the survival kit. First signs of dementia, Compadre.

I/E. CAB OF THE TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

MAC opens the lunch pail. It's full of brownies. He inhales the aroma, clearly stalling.

MAC

Always got my back, right Compadre?

Lizzy leans over to smell the brownies.

LIZZY
Mmmmm...daddy's favorite.

A strand of gray hair falls from behind Lizzy's ears and Tess leans in to brush it out of her mother's face.

A puppy on Lizzy's lap, SWEET PEA, growls protectively.

Mac growls back, leaning down into the cowering puppy's face.

MAC
My bite's worse, pip squeak.

Tess laughs.

TESS
I'll take them back if you don't promise to share.

MAC
There's only enough here for me!

TESS
And don't eat them all at once.
It's three days just to Mazatlan -
four if you drive the speed limit.

MAC
Can't you retire with us? I'm gonna starve without you.

Lizzy fidgets with the puppy squirming on her lap. She talks to it in baby voice, moving its paws like a wave.

LIZZY
Sweet Pea. Say ahhh-deee-ohz.

She mangles the pronunciation.

Mac and Tess roll their eyes.

TESS
Keep practising mom. It'll come.

MAC
Hasta luego, amoracita!

The truck pulls away just as Jake catches up to his wife. A close-up, through the camera lens, catches the tears in her eyes as she blows kisses.

TESS
Take good care of her.

A square-jawed woman in her mid 70s, IDA, marches up from behind and wraps her arm around Tess's waist.

IDA
Give me a kiss too. I've got a
check card rally I should've been
at already.

JAKE
(teasing)
Our own Don Quixote. Might as well
catch up with Mac and Lizzy and
start union organizing in Mexico.

TESS
(wiping runny mascara)
Don't listen to him Gran. Give 'em
hell.

IDA
Somebody's got to. You holding up?

Ida reaches for car keys, hesitating.

TESS
Go on - I'll be fine.

IDA
Stop worrying. She has enough
romance novels to last her at least
a year.

TESS
I'm not worrying.

Ida raises one eyebrow. Then she moves Tess's bra strap back in place, under her tank top.

IDA
Like hell. You always worry. Waste
of energy.

TESS
It's just... Mom can't even speak
Spanish.

IDA
Hey you are not the parent here. We
all live with the choices we make.

THREE MONTHS
LATER...

INT. MARIA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Maria fiddles with a Skype connection on a PC as Alex and Alicia fight for position on her lap.

ALEX
Where is she?

MARIA
Grandma's retired in Mexico.

Alex's lip starts to quiver.

ALICIA
Why is she really tired?

MARIA
(smiling)
Not really tired. Retired. She's
lives in Mexico now, remember?

INT. UNDER CONSTRUCTION MEXICAN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mac's face appears on the monitor. He's uncertain of the technology, leaning grotesquely close to his I-Pad's camera.

MAC
Maria? Is this thing on?

INTERCUT - SKYPE CONVERSATION - CONTINUOUS

MARIA (O.S.)
Whoa, back up. I'm seeing nose
hair.

Mac flicks his laptop, irritated.

MAC
Can't see shit on here...

MARIA
Dad, dad, little ears here. They
want to see their abuela.

MAC
Lizzy's getting food ready for the
party. We've got company coming any
minute. Did you and Tess get the
shoulder bags I bought all my
girls? Lizzy said you'd like them.

Maria lifts up a bright pink woven bag from beside her keyboard. The patterns are intricate and geometric, but feminine.

MARIA

Right here dad. They're beautiful.
Put mom on so I can thank her.

Mac turns away from the laptop and yells, blasting the speakers.

MAC

Dizzy! The girls like the bags.
(back to the camera)
Now how about a tour of the new house? Wait'll you see the pool, kids. Better start swimming lessons so you can keep up with grandma.

Mac turns his I-PAD around and begins to walk, with it, through the rooms of an almost-finished adobe house.

Construction lights string together with extension cords, illuminating a work in progress.

Masks - hairy and horned - decorate the hallway. The kids pull back, a little frightened. They say nothing.

MARIA

Jesus dad. Those are hideous. How about some of mom's watercolors?

MAC

(laughing)
Gotta go native. Appreciate the local culture. We're off the grid. On our own. Starting over.

The I-Pad emerges into bright sunlight where two fat hoses slowly fill an in-ground swimming pool.

MARIA

That's roughing it alright.

Lizzy slips into the picture, dusting her hands on an apron and waving to the camera.

LIZZY

It is you. Hi there sweethearts.
Grammy misses...

Mac cuts her off.

MAC

Good timing! Go get the ladder and climb down in the pool. They can't tell how deep it is.

Lizzy's pale hand reaches up to twist a bra strap.

LIZZY

Mac it's a long way down. And there's water at the bottom.

MAC

Oh for Christ's sake. I'd hop down myself, but you still can't work this computer thing.

Suddenly the camera swooshes away from the pool and back toward the adobe-house. Mac's heard something.

MAC

That must be our guests. I'm gonna have to sign off for now. How the hell do you unplug...

The connection breaks and the screen goes black.

MARIA

Wait! Damn.

Both kids begin to tear up.

MARIA

Isn't that a neat pool? We'll talk to grandma next time, okay?

They nod. Sad little faces.

INT. MEXICAN HOUSE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lizzy rearranges serving platters on a table made from plywood and sawhorses. Enough food for an army.

LIZZY

(apologetically)

Mac I thought you said you were inviting a bunch of neighbors.

MAC

Well there'll be enough leftovers to last until any neighbors ever do move in. If they do. Why spoil our own private paradise, right Dizzy?

Mac wraps his arm around Lizzy's waist and turns her to face the guests: a cop and two blue-collar working men holding out empty, blue-rimmed shot glasses.

MAC

Oh - I'm sorry. Here you go.

Mac pours tequilas with a flourish.

MAC

Lopez. Garcia. Helluva job on the brick work. Really. Dig in. Salud!

He knocks one back and puckers so much the workers laugh.

The policeman seems to hold back, looking at Lizzy.

MAC

Oh don't wait on her. She never touches the stuff. Lizzy, Manuel here is one of Mexico's finest. Keeper of Napoleonic law.

LIZZY

What?

MAC

Down here we're all guilty until proven innocent, right Manuel?

Manuel seems to laugh, although it could be a sneer.

INT. TESS AND JAKE'S MISSION DISTRICT ROWHOUSE - EVENING

Take-out boxes clutter a kitchen table as Jake helps Tess build a pinata. A wire-frame skull balances next to a macabre portrait of Frida Kahlo.

JAKE

You sure this won't scare third graders?

TESS

Only INS scares my kids. Frida Kahlo is practically Mrs. Claus.

Jake stands behind Tess, wrapping his arms around hers. Making her make a mess.

JAKE

Why don't we just have Mac send one up from Mexico?

Tess wiggles free.

TESS
Slacker. Since when do I do things
the easy way? Remember, I am my
father's daughter.

Tess slops a strip of pasty newspaper across Jake's chest.

JAKE
You schoolin' me, teacher lady?

With one hand, Jake wads up a strip of newspaper and dunks it deep in the pail of paste, eyeing Tess and laughing.

JAKE
This is going to get messy...

Tess peels her clingy tank top away from her shoulder.

TESS
So you want something moist and
sweet?

Jake lifts Tess onto the newspaper covered table.

Just as she leans back, Tess kisses him, grabs the pail of paste and dumps it over his back.

INT. IDA'S HOUSE - DAY

Tess watches as IDA spreads out poster board and giant markers on a Formica kitchen counter island.

IDA
All right. Who wants to help your
great granny stick it the man?

Alex and Alicia spin on vinyl covered bar stools while Maria swats away a stray fern spurting from a macrame plant hanger.

ALEX
Yeah. Stick it to the man.

ALICIA
We wanna go pickering too.

Tess hugs Alicia from behind, then gives her another spin.

TESS
Picketing Al.
(MORE)

TESS (CONT'D)

Great granny is making picket signs to wave around and stir up lots of trouble. Definitely not age-appropriate.

Ida picks a stub of a cigarette out of a plastic ashtray and puffs as she speaks.

IDA

They can help me instigate. I mean decorate. Who here can draw a nice fat diagonal line?

MARIA

Gran. They just turned four. They can draw happy faces. If you use your imagination.

Ida laughs, then draws a circle with dots for eyes and nose.

IDA

Okay then. Just like this, only you make an upside down smile. There are no happy workers on strike.

Her great-grandchildren grab markers and try to copy Ida.

MARIA

(half-joking)

Well look at this. A celebrated union organizer using my kids as child labor. Exploited by one generation, ignored by another.

TESS

What do you mean?

Maria glances sideways at the kids.

MARIA

Hey how about singing the "Row Your Boat" song?

ALEX

Okay. Row row row your boat.

Alicia joins in. Top of her lungs.

MARIA

(to Tess and Ida)

Mom didn't even call on their birthday.

Tess looks surprised.

TESS

I bet dad's got something up his sleeve. He probably built them something amazing and it's just stuck in snail mail.

MARIA

I'm not talking about dad. Can't mom ever pick up a phone?

TESS

Give her time Maria. She's overwhelmed, doesn't know anybody. She doesn't even speak Spanish. Maybe I should've gone down there to help for a few weeks...

IDA

And risk your job? With benefits and a pension plan? Tess we all make choices and ...

Both Tess and Maria roll their eyes at the same time.

TESS AND MARIA

(in unison)

We all live with the choices we make.

INT. TESS'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Five students read aloud to Tess in the middle of what looks like a Mexican Zocalo bandstand filled with little desks.

A half-smashed Frida skull hangs from the rafters.

LATIN GIRL

(struggling)

...then Her...mmm...ee

TESS

Hermione - long i sound - like ice cream

A distorted intercom announces an urgent call for Tess and she reaches over the bandstand hand rail to answer it.

INT. MEXICAN HOUSE - DAY

Lizzy clutches a cell phone to her ear. She's pacing alongside the pool.

LIZZY
Princess, it's me - mommy.

INT. TESS'S CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS/INTERCUT

Tess twists the curling cord between her fingers, irritated.

TESS
Mom, you have to learn to use the
computer for personal calls. The
school number is only for
emergencies.

LIZZY
This is an emergency.

TESS
(covering her other ear)
Slow down, I didn't catch that.

LIZZY
I don't have time. He could be back
any minute.

TESS
(alarmed now)
Jesus mom, is somebody breaking in?
Where's dad?

LIZZY
In Mazatlan ...

TESS
Have you called him? No wait! Hang
up. You hide. I'll call dad's cell.

Tess's urgency frightens the students; they close their books
and slouch down in their desks.

LIZZY
No don't! He'll kill me.

TESS
Is someone in the house? Can he
hear you? Get in a closet. Keep the
phone with you. I'll get dad. Don't
make a sound.

LIZZY
Listen to me. He's the one hurting
me.

TESS

What are you saying mom? Who's hurting you?

LIZZY

Your father.

Tess turns white and sinks to her knees as her mother pleads.

LIZZY

You have to come help me. He'll stop, for you.

TESS

Stop what? Mom are you saying dad is physically hurting you?

LIZZY

Please. Just come. Tonight.

TESS

I'm at work. I can't just fly to Mexico. Please, mom, talk to dad, this has to be a mistake. You mean he's hurting your feelings, right? You have to communicate, talk this stuff out.

LIZZY

I hear his truck. I'm begging you. Don't warn him. Just get me out of here. You're the only one who can.

The calls cuts off and the room swirls around a crumpled, disbelieving Tess.