

THE CHILDREN

Episode 1: "Disheveled Older Woman"

written by

Aled Roberts

October 2, 2023
Second Draft

PATRICIA LOWRY (50s, wild-hair, big-coat and searching eyes) regards, in some despair, the wall of children's books at the supermarket. All of them are by celebrity authors. Strewn on the bottom shelf are children's books not written by celebrities.

A CHILD (5) plonks himself down at Patricia's feet. He picks up one of the non-celebrity books and points to the word "hippopotamus".

CHILD

What's that?

Patricia looks around the aisle for a parent, but sees nobody.

PATRICIA

That is a big word. But I have a trick.

(Kneels)

You can break the big words up.

Patricia covers the "-popotaumus" with her fingers.

PATRICIA

Hip ...

The Child yanks the page over. He points a sticky finger at the word "flamingo" on the next page. Patricia scowls but marshals her patience.

CHILD

What's that?

PATRICIA

Well ... we can break that word up too.

Patrica covers "-mingo" with her fingers.

PATRICIA

Fla-

Child stares blankly at Patrica.

PATRICIA

-min-

CHILD

Which one has a bigger willy?

PATRICIA

Pardon me?

MOTHER (O.S.)

Zachary!

Patricia looks up to see Child's MOTHER (30s, granola-ish) looking down, smiling fondly at her son.

MOTHER

That's all he wants to know. He's obsessed. He's at that stage.

PATRICA

What's that, Key Stage 2?

MOTHER

Excuse me?

CHILD

Which one has the bigger willy?!

Mother continues to grin fondly at Child, then at Patricia. Patricia, darkly, gleans that Mother expects her to answer Zachary.

PATRICIA

Well, what do you think, Zachary?

Child ponders, then pokes a sticky finger at the flamingo.

PATRICIA

OK. Very good.

Patricia stands, departing.

MOTHER

Well, no. I think Mr. Hippo probably has a bigger willy, darling.

CHILD

The lady lied.

MOTHER

The lady was just being silly.

CHILD

(To Patricia)

Liar!

PATRICIA

(Turning)

I beg your pardon?

MOTHER

Zachary, don't be rude, darling.

(Approaches Patricia)

It's just we don't really lie to him. Especially about sex.

PATRICIA

(Smiling, acidicly)

What an inspiring attitude you have.

(Kneeling to Zachary)

Zachary, Mr. Flamingo is a bird. So he doesn't have a willy. He has a *cloaca*. In Latin, that means "shithouse". That's because they have one hole for pooing, peeing and having sex. When Mr. Flamingo wants to have sex with Mrs. Flamingo, he jumps on top of her and spits his semen from his *cloaca* into hers.

Mother's mouth is agape.

ZACHARY

That's disgusting.

PATRICIA

Let me tell you, Zachary, willies are no picnic either.

Mother hammers on the Assistance button repeatedly.

Patricia takes a twenty pound note from her coat and gives it to Zachary.

PATRICIA

I want you to buy this book, Zachary.

Mother swoops in and pulls Zachary away, trying unsuccessfully to tug the twenty pound note from his sticky hand.

PATRICIA

Read, Zachary! Read all you can. Because your mother is a nincompoop.

TITLE: THE CHILDREN

2

INT. SUPERMARKET - CHECKOUT - DAY

2

Patricia's pasta pot wobbles along the checkout conveyer. The CHECKOUT OPERATOR (20s, on phone) beeps the pasta, throws it down the chute and returns to their mobile phone.

Patricia glares as she taps her card. The till makes a blurp of denial.

CHECKOUT OPERATOR

Denied.

Patricia, feeling the glare of the queue, pats her coat pockets.

PATRICIA
I had money, but I spent it all
making a point.

CHECKOUT OPERATOR
If you can't pay for it you'll
have to take it back.

Patricia, mortified but indignant, tries to shuffle back down
the unmoving, uncaring queue.

PATRICIA
(To Checkout Operator)
You know, it should be "five
items or fewer". Not "five items
or less". If you read something
other than your phone every now
and ag-

Patricia's phone starts ringing. Checkout Operator smirks.

PATRICIA
Of course.

3 EXT. SUPERMARKET - ENTRANCE - DAY

3

Patricia, still holding the pasta pot, digs her phone out her
coat pocket and loiters near the entrance, pretending to
browse.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
Please hold for Neil.

Musak swells in Patricia's phone.

PATRICIA
Hello?

As the muzak chirps, Patricia keeps an eye on the SECURITY
GUARD. She slips the pasta pot in her coat pocket while he
looks the other way.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
Patricia?

PATRICIA
Yes.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
Neil's not available right now.

PATRICIA
You called me.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
He wants to know if you can come
in today?

PATRICIA
That depends, who's Neil?

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
Neil Sturgess, your agent.

PATRICIA
Oh! He wants me to come in?

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
Five o'clock ok?

PATRICIA
Oh, no. No. I can't. I have a
commitment. It's a birthday
party. But it's my
granddaughter's birthday party-

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
-please hold.

Musak swells in her ear as Patricia notices a large crowd of people moving towards the entrance. She follows them, hiding behind them so the Security Guard can't see her.

When she passes the door, the security alarm blares.

Patricia pushes through the crowd and runs as fast as she can.

4 EXT. STREET - DAY

4

Pamela runs. Phone to her ear, muzak still playing. She pushes through the crowded street. Security Guard runs hobblingly in the background, shouting for a POLICE OFFICER.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
Patricia?

PATRICIA
(Wheezing)
Yes.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
Neil's asking if you can come in
now?

PATRICIA
(Wheezing)
Now?

Pamela ducks down an iron staircase for a basement flat.

5 EXT. BASEMENT FLAT STAIRCASE - DAY

5

Patricia ducks down, hiding underneath the iron staircase.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
We'll see you shortly, then?

PATRICIA
(Wheezing, whispering)
Am I in trouble?

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
Thanks, Patricia.

Phone goes dead. Patricia peers up through the staircase, worried. She looks at her phone, more worried.

6 INT. LITERARY AGENCY - OFFICES - DAY

6

Patricia sits, disheveled, on an asymmetrical bench in the foyer of Sturgess and Kettering. The office is sterile-casual - exposed brick, pine surfaces, frosted windows. Patricia, fiddling with her empty pasta pot, is an uneasy fit here.

NEIL STURGESS (30s, thinning hair, woolen waistcoat, all confidence) ushers PAMELA JAGER (40s, sylvan, expensively under-dressed) from his frost-windowed office.

NEIL
Patricia, this is Pamela Jager.

Pamela smiles but eyes Patricia's empty pasta pot.

PATRICIA
(To Pamela)
I was going to throw it away. But I couldn't find a bin.
(Beat)
All the terrorists, I suppose.
(Beat)
I did find one bin, actually. But it had a wasp-

PAMELA
-nice to meet you, Patricia. And you, Neil, always a pleasure.

Neil smiles as he watches Pamela go, turns to Patricia and sighs, gesturing into his frosted chambers.

NEIL
Patricia.

Ne'ery a book or manuscript in Neil Sturgess' immaculate nest of chrome, glass and pine. Patricia perches herself awkwardly in a womb chair.

NEIL

That was Pamela Jager.

PATRICIA

So you keep saying.

NEIL

She's a big swinging dick down at CBeebies.

PATRICIA

I she? You should have promoted me?

NEIL

I would have but you started talking about wasps and terrorists.

PATRICIA

There *are* wasps and terrorists, Neil. We can't coddle Pamela any more.

Neil sits in his egg chair.

NEIL

How are you, Patricia?

PATRICIA

You're dropping me then?

NEIL

No!

PATRICIA

Well, you can't have sold a book.

NEIL

Nooo ...

Neil tents his fingers and lets a big, creepy smile unfurl.

PATRICIA

Why are you looking at me like that? Stop it! I feel like you're about to ask me for a kidney.

NEIL

Kerri Deane.

Neil lets the name land. Patricia shrugs, none-the-wiser.

NEIL
Kerri Deane?

PATRICIA
Is she another swinging dick at
CBeebies?

NEIL
She's bigger than CBeebies.

PATRICIA
Don't be ridiculous, that's
impossible.

NEIL
Kerri Deane! She's ... *Divorcee
Towers, Green Green WAGs of Home,*
she was on *Celebrity*, she helped
Pat Buchanan with his vertigo ...
*Kerri and Zane: What's Love Got
to Do With It?* Kerri Deane?!

Patricia stares at Neil, like Zachary looking at
"hippopotamus". Neil taps quickly on his keyboard and turns
his enormous monitor towards Patricia: the screen is filled
with glamour, tabloid and candid shots of a reality TV star.

PATRICIA
Do you know what a *cloaca* is,
Neil?.

NEIL
She wants to write a children's
book.

PATRICIA
(Scoffs)
Of course she does.

NEIL
And she wants you to ghostwrite
it.

Patricia's looks genuinely pained by this.

PATRICIA
I'm not a ghostwriter, Neil-

NEIL
-I know-

PATRICIA
-I'm a person. I'm a person-
writer.

NEIL

I know you're a person-writer.
But, in terms of the marketplace
you are, unfortunately Patricia,
quite spectral.

PATRICIA

You know how I feel about
celebrity children's books.

NEIL

I can imagine-

PATRICIA

-it's child abuse!

NEIL

That seems dramatic.

PATRICIA

Have you seen the children, Neil?
Have you actually seen them? The
real ones, not the Village of the
Damned ones, eating muffins in
linen.

(Seeing Neil's family photo
on his desk)

How are Molly and Clarabel?

NEIL

Patricia, I am advising you, in
the strongest possible terms, to
take this meeting with Kerri
Deane.

PATRICIA

Or you're dropping me?

NEIL

I didn't say that.

PATRICIA

But that's what you're saying-

NEIL

-just, write a good book,
Patricia. Kerri Deane's name will
mean that children will actually
read a good book. Isn't that what
matters?

PATRICIA

No. It isn't. Books are supposed
to be the refuge from ... that!

(Points at Neil's screen)

If you hand over books to those
people then you're sacrificing
the children.

(MORE)

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

At least the Aztecs sacrificed children to the sun. You're sacrificing them at the altar of All-Devouring Idiocy.

NEIL

How many of my clients do you think come in here and accuse me of child sacrifice?

PATRICIA

So get them to write Kerri Deane's bloody book.

NEIL

She wants you.

PATRICIA

Why?

NEIL

Because she hasn't met you, I imagine.

(Beat)

And because she's a fan of *The Guttersnipes*.

Beat. Patricia's hot air has dissipated and she looks at Neil imploringly, picking away the label of her pasta pot.

PATRICIA

Don't make me do this, Neil.

NEIL

I'm not making you do anything, Patricia. I'm asking you.

(Beat)

Just meet with her. I think you might like her. She once slapped John Virgo.

8

INT. BOOKSHOP - DAY

8

A cute, independent bookshop. The BOOKSHOP ASSISTANT (20s, nervous, meek) follows the sound banging and muttering at the back of the shop. In the Children's Zone - an enclave with miniature furniture - he finds Patricia rifling through the bookshelves and casting books down in disgust.

BOOKSHOP ASSISTANT

Can I ... help you?

PATRICIA

(Rifling)

Patricia Lowry.

BOOKSHOP ASSISTANT

Sorry?

PATRICIA

(Still rifling)

I'm looking for books by Patricia Lowry.

BOOKSHOP ASSISTANT

I think she'd dead.

Patricia stops rifling. She turns to face the Bookshop Assistant. She softens a little on seeing the nervous young man standing on the edge of the Children's Zone.

PATRICIA

You only stock the living?

BOOKSHOP ASSISTANT

No. It's just ... you're looking in New Releases.

PATRICIA

I see. Where do you keep your books by dead people?

BOOKSHOP ASSISTANT

Children's Classics.

PATRICIA

Any Patricia Lowry there?

BOOKSHOP ASSISTANT

I don't think so.

PATRICIA

Of course.

CUT TO:

Patricia plops down a hardback book at the checkout desk.

PATRICIA

(Nodding at book)

She's not dead you know. Just a drunk.

BOOKSHOP ASSISTANT

That'll be sixteen ninety nine, please.

PATRICIA

Ouch. That'll keep her in schnapps, I suppose.

Patricia takes out a credit card. Puts it back. Takes out another one and gives it to the Bookshop Assistant.

PATRICIA
Airmiles.

The Bookshop Assistant sees the name on the card. He winces with embarrassment.

BOOKSHOP ASSISTANT
You're Patricia Lowry.

PATRICIA
(Smiles)
Don't worry. I often think I must be dead. But then I have a credit card. And these hemorrhoids.

The Bookshop Assistant swipes the card. The till sounds a blurb of rejection.

BOOKSHOP ASSISTANT
I'm sorry ... It's been declined.

Patricia looks disconsolate. She takes her card back.

PATRICIA
Just the hemorrhoids then.

BOOKSHOP ASSISTANT
I can try it again. Our machine can be-

PATRICIA
-no. No, thank you ...

Patricia walks slowly towards the door. She stops. Turns.

PATRICIA
Could you ... I'm so sorry, it's my granddaughter's birthday. She's six. Could you, do you think, see your way to letting me pay you for the book next week?

BOOKSHOP ASSISTANT
I can't. I'm sorry.

PATRICIA
-quite right.

BOOKSHOP ASSISTANT
I'm sorry.

PATRICIA
Of course.

Patricia turns again and opens the bookshop door.

BOOKSHOP ASSISTANT
You could write her something.

Patricia stops in the doorway.

BOOKSHOP ASSISTANT
I'm sure she'd love that. I would have.

Patricia smiles.

PATRICIA
The paper and pencils in the Children's Zone, may I use them?

BOOKSHOP ASSISTANT
You may.
(Beat)
But you'll have to leave if an actual child comes in.

9 INT. BOOKSHOP - EVENING

9

Bookshop Assistant is closing the shutters and turning the lights off. He moves towards Patricia, who squats at a toddler-size chair and table in the Children's Zone, scribbling intensely.

BOOKSHOP ASSISTANT
I'm closing up now.

PATRICIA
(Writing, not looking up)
What's your name?

BOOKSHOP ASSISTANT
Edgar.

PATRICIA
(Still writing)
Edgar what?

BOOKSHOP ASSISTANT
Edgar Simmons.

Patricia finishes what she's writing with a flourish. She gathers up her papers into a pile, bangs them on the toddler-table and secretes them in her coat. She stands, knocking over miniature furniture all around her.

PATRICIA
Thank you, Edgar Simmons.

Patricia is away, out of the shop in a whoosh of overcoat.

Edgar Simmons begins to tidy the Children's Zone. He sees a single sheet of paper on the toddler-table. He picks it up. It reads: "For Edgar Simmons. Proof that Patricia Lowry lives!" Beneath it is a drawing of globules with an arrow pointing from them to the text: "Patricia Lowry's hemorrhoids."

10 EXT. FLAT - DOORWAY - NIGHT**10**

Patricia arrives at the door of a little ground-floor flat. She stops. Suddenly intimidated by the sight of the little knocker and welcome mat. She pats down her hair, wipes the sweat from her face. Sniffs. Knocks.

The door is answered by a YOUNG WOMAN (mid-30s, colourful jumper and a sunny disposition that darkens the moment in lays eyes on Patricia).

YOUNG WOMAN

Mum.

PATRICIA

Evelyn.

EVELYN

What are you doing here?

PATRICIA

I got an e-vite.

EVELYN

Jason must have sent it.

(Beat)

Did you RSVP?

PATRICIA

No.

Evelyn turns in ire and walks inside the flat, leaving the door open.

11 INT. FLAT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**11**

Evelyn haphazardly collects-up the multicoloured cups and plates that cover the little room. Patricia edges in sheepishly.

PATRICIA

Where is everyone?

EVELYN

It's a six year old's birthday party. They don't run late.

JASON (early-40s, fit, avuncular and always doing his best) enters. He is still wearing his party hat.

JASON

Patricia!

Evelyn takes the cups and plates to the kitchen. She yanks the hat from Jason's head as she goes.

JASON

It's a party!

EVELYN
The party's over.

Evelyn exits to the kitchen.

PATRICIA
You didn't tell her I was coming?

JASON
You didn't RSVP.

Patricia gazes up at the big picture of Jesus.

PATRICIA
Is it very Christian, the RSVP?
"Knock and the door will be
opened to you, providing you've
RSVP'd"-

JASON
She's happy you're here.

Patricia scoffs.

JASON
Tara will be so happy. It'll mean
a lot to her.

Patricia looks nervous. She perches on the sofa. Jason moves closer to Patricia.

JASON
(Whispers)
Did you pay your rent?

PATRICIA
Yes.
(Pained)
Thank you.

JASON
Can you pay your rent this month?

PATRICIA
I'm fine.

JASON
If you're not fine, I can loan
you some-

PATRICIA
-oh, spare me that face, Jason.
(At the picture of Jesus)
I can't take it from both of you.
I'm fine. I'm fine! I'm writing a
new book, actually.

JASON
 (Thinly)
 Yeah? That's great.

PATRICIA
 Ghostwriting.

JASON
 (More animated)
 Yeah? Who for?

PATRICIA
 For ... Kerri Deane.

JASON
 Kerri Deane! Wow!

PATRICIA
 It's "wow" is it?

JASON
 She's very big.

PATRICIA
 I'm sure.

JASON
 I mean she's famous.

PATRICIA
 What else could you mean?

EVELYN (O.S.)
 Jase!

JASON
 I mean ... Tara loves her. That's
 going to be a big hit..

DAUGHTER (OS)
 Jason!

Jason jumps up now. He scoots out to the kitchen.

Patricia is left alone in the little room with the big picture of Jesus. She feels uneasy. She gets up. She looks around. She inches closer to the sound of Evelyn whisper-shouting in the kitchen.

TARA (O.S.)
 Who are you?

Patricia swivels and sees her granddaughter, TARA (6 today, frowning indignantly in her party dress) staring at her.

PATRICIA
 Tara!

Patricia's face softens, then saddens, at the sight of her grown granddaughter.

PATRICIA
I brought you a present.

TARA
What is it?

Patricia takes the creased and slightly sodden pile of papers from inside her jacket. Tara does not take it.

Jason re-enters from the kitchen, followed by a reticent Evelyn.

JASON
Say thank you, Tara.

EVELYN
Beautifully wrapped.

JASON
It's a book, Tara. Grandma wrote that herself.

TARA
Why?

JASON
That's what grandma does.

EVELYN
Used to do.

JASON
Actually, Tara, grandma's going to write a book for Kerri Deane.

TARA
Kerri Deane! Really?!

Evelyn casts a quizzical look to Jason. Jason nods.

TARA
(To Patricia)
Do you know her?

PATRICIA
Well, I ...
(Seeing the admiration in
Tara's eyes)
... Yes. I do-

TARA
-is this Kerri Deane's book?

PATRICIA
It could be.

Tara grabs the pile of papers and hungrily takes them to the sofa to read.

TARA

(Reads)

Everybody knows that bees are the busiest.
But did you know that wasps are the whizziest?

JASON

That's very good, Tara.

TARA

(Turns page, reads)

And that Wendy is the whizziest wasp of all?
All day she whizzes in all the bins, having a ball.

JASON

It's really sweet, Patricia.

TARA

(Turns page, reads)

Even though the people swat and snarl,
Clever Wendy out-whizzes them all.
But 'Oh', thinks Wendy, 'I wish they'd stop
Swatting and snarling in such a strop.'

EVELYN

(To Patricia, tersely)

Thank you.

TARA

(Turns page, reads)

But then, one day, in bin that's choc-a-bloc
Wendy hears a tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock!
'Oh no', cries Wendy, 'I think it's a bomb!-

EVELYN

-What?!

Evelyn grabs the pages from Tara. But not before Tara's seen the next page ...

TARA

What's a terrorist?

12 INT. FLAT - UTILITY ROOM - NIGHT

12

Evelyn pushes Patricia inside the tiny room and slams the door. She glares, disbelieving, at Patricia. Shakes her head.

PATRICIA
It has a happy ending.

Evelyn flicks through the pages of Patricia's Wendy story.

EVELYN
Wendy kills herself.

PATRICIA
She sacrifices herself. She stings a policeman, who swats her but notices the bomb-

Patricia points to the page. Evelyn yanks the pages away in pique.

PATRICIA
It has a strong female protagonist and addresses contemporary issues. I'm told that's what children want, I thought she'd like it.

EVELYN
No you didn't. You didn't. You did what you do.

PATRICIA
I thought she'd like it.

EVELYN
No. You tried to upset her because that's the only way you know to make people think about you.

Beat. Patricia is hurt by this.

Jason pokes his head around the door.

JASON
Everything alright in here?

EVELYN
How is she?

JASON
Fine now. We had to check all the bins. Which took a while because the recycling is so complicated round here. Is it the same where you are, Patricia?

EVELYN
 Patricia's just leaving.

13 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

13

Patricia walks dejectedly down the damp street. Jason comes running after her.

JASON
 Patricia. Tara's asking if you can get Kerri Deane to do her a birthday video.

PATRICIA
 A what?

JASON
 Like a Cameo. She'll know what it is. It would mean a lot to Tara. It would go a long way.

Jason hands Patricia back the Wendy the Wasp pages.

JASON
 That's Tara's mobile number on the front.

PATRICIA
 She has a mobile?

JASON
 Just pay-as-you-go.

Patricia looks at her pages, written over with her 6-year old granddaughter's mobile number.

JASON
 It will take time, with Evie. You know that right?

PATRICIA
 Of course.

14 INT. PATRICIA'S FLAT - NIGHT

14

A tiny flat, choc-a-bloc with piles of bags and boxes: this is the house of a hoarder. The only clear space in the room is a desk with paper and professional drawing equipment.

Patricia takes the empty pasta pot from her pocket and rinses it out. She places it with at least forty other identical empty pasta pots.

Patricia turns on the artist's lamp at her desk.

Piled behind the desk and obscuring the only window are posters and boxes full of *Guttersnipes* merchandise: the *Guttersnipes*, we see, are gruesome but friendly green goblins. Atop it all is a human-size stuffed *Guttersnipe* with glasses. Patricia stares at it.

PATRICIA

Don't you start.

Patricia takes a bottle of budget vodka from the bottom draw of her desk and pours a coffee-cup full. She drinks.

Patricia puts the *Wendy the Wasp* pages on her desk. Stares at *Wendy*. Patricia begins to draw.

15 INT. PATRICIA'S FLAT - MORNING

15

Patricia is passed out at her desk. She wakes, flinches with hangover.

As her eyes adjust she sees the drawing she did last night. It's *Wendy the Wasp* flying merrily away from London exploding in a ball of flames. *Wendy's* caption reads: "Balls to the lot of you then."

PATRICIA

Right on, sister.

Patricia looks down to the *Wendy the Wasp* pages. She sees *Tara's* mobile number. She takes a deep breath.

Patricia looks at the bespectacled *Guttersnipe* looking at her.

PATRICIA

I don't want to hear it.

Patricia stands.

16 INT. RESTAURANT (BERNHARDT'S) - DAY

16

Patricia sits alone at a bafflingly trendy restaurant. She stares at the QR code on the table. She tries to press it. Patricia tries to get a rushing WAITER's attention. Fails. Another WAITER zooms past, Patricia gets up to follow, but they're gone.

Patricia returns to her table and finds two children sitting at it: a BOY (11, surly and gangly, reading a book) and a GIRL (7, bright-eyed and impish, staring at Patricia).

PATRICIA

I'm sorry. I'm waiting for someone.

BOY
 (Without looking up)
 I know. Kerri Deane. She's
 outside.

Patricia looks through the restaurant window. She sees KERRI DEANE (30s, bleached hair, fake-tan and jewelry belying her dressed-down hoodie and jeans) pacing back and forth on the pavement, remonstrating into her mobile phone.

PATRICIA
 (To the children)
 Who are you? Her agents?

BOY
 You don't need to talk to us.

GIRL
 I'm Cherry.

PATRICIA
 Hello Sherry.

CHERRY
 Cherry. He's Patton.

PATRICIA
 I'm Patricia.

Silence. Cherry stares at Patricia, then whispers in Patton's ear.

PATTON
 No.
 (Cherry whispers)
 No! I'm not asking her that.

CHERRY
 (To Patricia)
 Is your anus bleached?

PATRICIA
 Not as far as I know.

CHERRY
 Why not?

PATRICIA
 Should it be?

CHERRY
 I'm going to have my anus
 bleached.

PATTON
 No you're not.

CHERRY
 I am!

PATTON

You don't even know what an anus
is!

Cherry starts typing into her phone. Patton grabs it from
her.

PATRICIA

You know, Cherry, I don't know if
anus bleaching is a very good
idea.

CHERRY

Why?

PATRICIA

What if the bleach got in your
insides? Then the doctors
wouldn't be able to see anything
in the x-rays. So they couldn't
tell if you were ill.

Patton looks quizzically at Patricia.

CHERRY

And then you die?

PATRICIA

Well ...

CHERRY

Will mummy die?

PATRICIA

Well ...

GIRL

Mummy's anus is bleached!

KERRI (O.S.)

-Cherry!

Kerri Deane is rushing into the restaurant.

KERRI

Stop telling people that!

(To Patricia)

It's not. She just saw a stupid
article, now she's obsessed.

(Extends a costume-jeweled
hand to Patricia)

Kerri.

PATRICIA

(Shaking Kerri's hand)

Patricia.

Kerri pulls two iPads from her bag and gives them to the
children. Cherry grabs hers eagerly.

PATTON
I'm reading.

KERRI
(To Patricia)
He loves to read. He loves *The Guttersnipes* don't you, Pat?

PATTON
When I was like, five.

PATRICIA
(To Patton)
What are you reading now?

Patton lifts up his book: *Jude the Obscure*.

PATRICIA
Ah. "Because we are too many."

Patton smiles, but buries it immediately in his surl.

KERRI
What's that?

PATTON
You wouldn't understand.

KERRI
(To Patricia)
We're having a mum's-an-idiot day today, I'm afraid.
(To Patton)
Actually, we're having a mum's-an-idiot couple of years, aren't we?

Kerri's phone rattles on the metal table: "Zane". Kerri cancels the call and puts her phone in her pocket.

CHERRY
Daddy!

KERRI
It wasn't.

CHERRY
It was!

KERRI
It wasn't! Just ... play on Instagram.
(To Patricia)
I'm sorry, Patricia.

PATRICIA
Are you eating? I tried to order but they kept pointing at this squiggle on the table-

Kerri's phone buzzes in her pocket.

CHERRY
It's daddy-

KERRI
-it's not!

PATRICIA
Please, take it.

KERRI
No. Go on. Please.

The phone continues to buzz. Kerri looks increasingly harried.

PATRICIA
Perhaps you could tell me what type of book you'd like to write?

KERRI
Yeah. Of course. I actually ... I wrote down some ideas.

Kerri pulls out her phone. Taps. Hands the phone to Patricia who squints at the screen and reads.

PATRICIA
What is a "Doomduff"?

KERRI
He was a monster that my mum used to tell me stories about. He lived in our walls. It was actually just the dodgy plumbing. Well, it was *actually* my mum's way of talking about her undiagnosed bipolar. But I really liked the stories.

Kerri's phone starts to rattle and buzz in Patricia's hand.

KERRI
Jesus! I'm so sorry-

Kerri grabs the phone from Patricia's hand to cancel the call. She sees the screen: "Penny - PVA". She stops.

KERRI
It's my publicist.

PATRICIA
Take it.

KERRI
I have to take it.

PATRICIA

Take it.

Kerri gets up to answer the call.

KERRI

(On phone)

Penny ... I know it's his day but he was two hours late ... Tough! ... What do you mean he's coming here? Here here? How does he know where I am? ...

Kerri looks around the restaurant for whoever snapped her there. Patton gathers his book and the iPads, he puts them in his mother's bag.

PATRICIA

You're leaving?

Kerri hangs up the phone. Upset.

KERRI

(To Patricia, collecting bags and children)

I'm so sorry, Patricia. It's ... it's a day. Could we reschedule?

PATRICIA

I think I'd prefer not to. If it's all the same to you.

Beat. Kerri stares, hurt by this. Nods.

KERRI

Fine.

Kerri turns, ushers the children away. Kerri stops and walks back towards Patricia.

KERRI

Why?

PATRICIA

Excuse me?

KERRI

Why? I don't talk to lots of people like you, but I thought I was really fucking nice and obviously I did something that got your twat in a twist. So when I go and meet all the other writers I have meeting with - proper, famous ones by the way - I want to know what not to say so they don't look at me like you're looking at me.

PATRICIA

I take books very seriously, Ms. Deane. You don't seem to be a serious person.

KERRI

Is that right?

PATRICIA

Everybody listens to you, but you want to say nothing.

Kerri nods. She digs into her bag and pulls out an old hardback copy of *The Guttersnipes Go Forth*.

KERRI

Oh really? What does this say?
 (Reads from *The Guttersnipes Go Forth*)
 "'Yum yum,' said Old Grumblesnipe, 'curdled milk goes down like silk! It makes such a rumble in my tum-tum'". What are you saying there, Ms Lowry?

CHERRY (O.S.)

Daddy!

Kerri turns and sees ZANE BARRON (30s, artfully-shaven head and designer tats) waving in the restaurant window at the children. Behind him are paparazzi.

Cherry tries to run out to him. Patton holds her back. Zane enters the restaurant. Kerri marches towards him.

KERRI

No! No fucking way. Not today! No way!

Kerri pushes Zane out of the door. It spills out into the street: a huge commotion, shouting, flashing lights. Visible amongst it is Kerri hitting Zane with her copy of *The Guttersnipes Go Forth*.

Patton holds Cherry back calmly.

PATTON

(To Patricia)
 Nice to meet you.

Patton holds Cherry's hand and walks her out, into the commotion rolling down the street.

Patricia alone at the table. Other diners try to get photos of the commotion outside with their phones. Some contrition moves across Patricia's face. She pushes it away.

17 INT. COFFEE-SHOP - MORNING**17**

A trendy coffee-shop. Patricia in line. She reaches the angular-haired BARISTA at the counter.

PATRICIA
Water, please.

The Barista plonks a bottle of mineral water down.

BARISTA
Two fifty.

PATRICIA
Tap water.

The Barista huffs.

PATRICIA
It's the law.

As the Barista turns, Patricia grabs as many packets of sugar, sweetener and milk as she can, stuffing them into her coat pockets.

The Barista sees her and begins remonstrations. But Patricia's phone rings.

PATRICIA
I have to take this.

Patricia makes a hasty exit, answering the unknown number.

18 EXT. HIGH-STREET - MORNING**18**

PATRICIA
(On phone)
Who?

TARA (O.S.)
It's Tara.
(Beat)
Your granddaughter.

Patricia is stopped dead at the sound of her granddaughter's voice.

PATRICIA
Tara.

TARA (O.S.)
Jason told me to call you to ask if you got Kerri Deane to do my birthday video.

PATRICIA
Oh, Tara. I don't know if ... I can.

TARA
But you said.

PATRICIA
I know. But grandma might have been showing off a bit. I don't really know her-

DAUGHTER
-you do. I saw you with her. In the news. They said you were a dish-devil.

PATRICIA
'A disheveled older woman'. Yes. They did.
(Beat)
It's just, we're not really friends.

TARA
But I told all my friends that you were friends.

PATRICIA
I'm sure you did.

TARA
They called me a liar.

Beat. Patricia bows her head. She knows what she has to do.

PATRICIA
Then we'll have to prove them wrong, won't we Tara?

19 **EXT. KERRI DEANE'S FLAT - NIGHT**

19

Patricia approaches a pillared marble doorway. She buzzes. An indistinguishable voice answers.

PATRICIA
It's Patricia ... Lowry.

Beat. Buzzer noise.

20 **INT. KERRI DEANE'S FLAT - NIGHT**

20

Kerri opens the door. She looks tired.

KERRI
Disheveled older woman.

PATRICIA
Ms. Deane.

21

INT. KERRI DEANE'S FLAT/HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

21

Kerri Deane's kitchen is all granite and chrome. A marbled breakfast bar occupies the middle of the room, behind which Kerri sits. Patricia remains standing.

PATRICIA

I brought you this.

Patricia pulls Guttersnipe toy from her pocket. She slides it across the granite island towards Kerri.

PATRICIA

It's quite rare. They had to recall them. Choking hazard. But, I thought you probably wouldn't try and put it in your mouth.

KERRI

What do you want, Patricia?

Patricia, almost visibly, swallows her pride.

PATRICIA

My grand-daughter, she's a big fan, of yours. It was her birthday recently. She asked me to ask you for a video message. If that's something you ... do.

Kerri stares at Patricia.

KERRI

You must love her a lot to come and beg me for this.

PATRICIA

I wouldn't say 'beg'.

KERRI

I would.

Kerri gets up and walks out of the kitchen.

KERRI

I need a ring light.

Kerri exits. Patricia is left alone amidst the granite and chrome. Her eyes are drawn, reluctantly, to the Guttersnipe toy, staring at her with its hazardous eyes.

Patton marches in and plunders the fridge.

PATRICIA

How's *Jude the Obscure*?

PATTON

I finished it. I thought it was trite.

While he critiques Hardy, Patton's eyes are drawn to the Guttersnipe on the counter.

PATTON
Is that Gobbersnipe?

Patton smiles. He reaches for Gobbersnipe.

PATRICIA
Careful. They recalled him. His eyes were a choking hazard to young children.

PATTON
That's cool.

Kerri, holding a ring light, watches her son smile from the kitchen doorway. Patton sees her, puts Gobbersnipe back down and his smile away. Patton leaves with armfuls of food. Kerri watches him go.

PATRICIA
He's very bright.

KERRI
Give us your phone.

Patricia slides her phone across the counter to Kerri, who sets up the ring light.

KERRI
Come here.
(Beat)
Come here!

Patricia moves around to Kerri's side of the counter. Kerri holds the phone up, moves Patricia uncomfortably close to her, moves the ring light.

KERRI
What's her name?

PATRICIA
Tara.

KERRI
(Recording)
Hiya Tara, babes. I hear it was somebody's birthday. It's me, Kerri Deane, with your gran. I wish my gran was as cool as yours. My gran smelled of wee and didn't make any sense. But your gran is brilliant and only smells a little bit of wee. Happy birthday, darling.

Kerri blows a kiss. Stops recording. Kerri hands the phone back to Patricia.

PATRICIA
Thank you.

KERRI
It's nothing.

PATRICIA
Not to me. Thank you.

Kerri nods. Patricia turns and makes a slow exit.

KERRI
How did you get him to smile?

PATRICIA
Who?

KERRI
Patton. How did you get him to smile?

PATRICIA
I told him that Gobbersnipe's eyes were a choking hazard.

Keri moans despairingly and sinks her head into her hands.

KERRI
Oh God! What is that? He's so weird.

PATRICIA
He has a darkness. I rather like it. He reminds me of me, actually.

Kerri moans despairingly again, sinking her head further into her hands.

KERRI
That doesn't make me feel better, Patricia.

PATRICIA
No. It wouldn't.

KERRI
He thinks I'm an idiot. And, you know, he's right. He's right. But I thought my mum was an idiot. And I was right. But it made me really messed up for so long. I just thought if I could write a book, like a really good book, with you, then he wouldn't have to be so weird and angry.

Patricia, moved by Kerri's candor, sits back down at the kitchen island.

PATRICIA

Kerri, on behalf of the weird and angry, I would say that you are extremely weird and angry. And, that your weird and angry son knows that. He doesn't hate you because you're different from him, he hates you because he doesn't know how he's different from you yet.

Kerri looks up from her hands at Patricia.

KERRI

Patricia, can we reschedule?

Beat. Patricia smiles.

PATRICIA

I'd like that.

(Beat)

But I want to make it clear that I'm not writing a book about the Doomduff.

KERRI

We'll talk.

22 **EXT. BUS-STOP - NIGHT**

22

Patricia waits alone at the bus-stop. She takes out her phone and plays Kerri's video message. She takes a deep breath.

Something is scuttling around in the foliage behind the bus stop. Patricia doesn't turn around. She takes another deep breath. She knows what it is.

A life-size GOBBERSNIPE walks out of the night and sits next to Patricia at the bus-stop. She doesn't look at him.

PATRICIA

Can't you leave me be?

GOBBERSNIPE

We're worried about you,
Patricia.

The bus arrives in the front of shot. Patricia gets on and sits down. The bus departs. The bus station is empty.

END