

Nance

By

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INT. SINGLE BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

A phone screen flashes on. PETER CLARKMAN, 19 and slightly out of shape in plain grey sweatpants and a plain grey sweatshirt, rises up with a comically large stretch of the arms and swings his feet to meet the ugly, speckled carpet.

He walks to his phone, deftly swipes away the alarm, and clicks on a floor lamp.

The floor lamp bathes the room in just enough warm light to reveal an impeccable dorm room.

Above the neatly shelved books on the desk hangs a CALENDAR. LARGE, BLUE 'X's cover all the days leading up to SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22nd.

ON CALENDAR

**BI-MONTHLY SLEEP IN DAY - 12:30am**

Peter grabs a pen from a cup full of identical pens and crosses off the day. He then sits at his desk.

PETER  
(with glee)  
Let's see--

Peter consults a small day planner on his desk.

ON DAY PLANNER

**Eat various meals at Southburn Dining Center**

**Test Tomorrow! Don't Fuck it Up!**

Peter reaches down and taps a key on his keyboard.

PETER  
Ok, Darlene. What's on the menu today?

After a cheerful 'BLOOP' NOISE his computer lights up and a synthetic female voice from deep within the uncanny valley replies:

DARLENE  
Here are your results for, "Watts Venue Today." Tasteful Chrome is headlining. Opening concert video.

Peter hangs his head and goes to sit at the desk, but the kind of INDIE POP SONG you'd hear in a Kia ad begins to play. Peter shrugs and begins making his bed.

(CONTINUED)

PETER

Guess brunch is gonna be a  
surprise! Helluva day.

Peter opens his closet door and looks down. Among the clothes and shoes there are WHITE SLIPPERS as well as BROWN, FURRY SLIPPERS and a shoebox in the corner. Peter ponders for a moment, and reaches down.

PETER

(like a Baptist preacher)  
Treat yo self!

Peter flips the lid open to reveal a PAIR FUZZY BUNNY SLIPPERS WITH ONLY THREE EARS TOTAL. Peter's face melts to deep discomfort and he closes the box.

He puts his feet in the brown slippers and a smile returns as he wiggles his toes. He stands and walks to the door.

PETER

Helluva day!

INT. SINGLE BEDROOM - DINNERTIME

Peter waltzes through the door toward his desk, covered in neat piles of notecards.

SUPERIMPOSE: 5:30PM

He sets down a plate containing one EGG SALAD SANDWICH cut into triangles, some baby carrots and a healthy dollop of cottage cheese. He goes to close the door and yells out, with a strained smile:

PETER

Just refill the filter pitcher next  
time! I hate waiting for cold  
water.

TREVOR (OS)

Life is brutal, Pete. Get used to  
it!

Peter closes the door and his eyes, venting a sigh. After a moment of silence he shakes his head and sits down to his food and study work.

There is some commotion outside, but Peter is focused as he flips from card to card, growing more and more focused and engrossed. And then, the door is nearly knocked off its hinges by loud rapping.

Peter starts, sending a cloud of notecards flying.

(CONTINUED)

PETER  
(frightened, to himself)  
I know that knock...  
(beat)  
Come in! I'm just stu--

Peter is interrupted by a loud yell as the door slams open against the wall.

NANCY CLARKMAN has arrived, dressed to the nines in tastefully flared jeans, zip up boots and a black blouse. She is in her late 30s and looks more like a grad student at a job interview than a mother.

Peter winces and turns slowly.

NANCY  
(like Oprah)  
WHO WANTS A HOMECOOKED MEAAAAAAL?

Peter grits a smile and turns around.

PETER  
Mom! Hey! I think we've actually got enough leftovers from last weekend.

NANCY  
Oh my god, there's garbage on your floor. Where is my new, organized son? I can't go back to the old model!

Peter scrambles to pick up the notecards, more annoyed than embarrassed.

NANCY  
Ah! Leave it! You've got an onion to chop. I'm making chili!

Peter's roommates can be heard whooping and cheering in the living room. Peter sighs and grabs an apron off a hook by the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Nancy, Peter and the roommates are sitting around a small table.

TREVOR is 6 feet tall, of medium build and dressed like he's just been out jogging. BARTLEY is shorter, stouter and wears typical teenager clothing with a vibrant backwards hat.

(CONTINUED)

TREVOR  
 (burping)  
 Jesus, Mrs. Clarkman, you should  
 come over more often!

BARTLEY  
 Yeeaaaahhh, we eatin'!

An uncomfortable silence follows Bartley's outburst. Peter shifts restlessly, nearly half a bowl of chili in front of him. The rest have finished and are digesting.

NANCY  
 Thank you, Trevor! You can't live  
 off that slop at Southstein!

PETER  
 (with a groan)  
 Mom, it's Southburn and it's really  
 not that bad.

NANCY  
 I don't care what the hell it's  
 called, it isn't your mother's home  
 cooking! And you can call me Nance.

Peter picks at his food while Nancy beams.

NANCY  
 Let's talk about tonight,  
 gentlemen.

TREVOR  
 Yeah, what are we up to, guys?

Bartley looks down, scrolling through something on his phone.

PETER  
 I'm going to bed. Big test  
 tomorrow. It's at like, two  
 o'clock-- well, it's at two thirty  
 but I need to get settled early and  
 maybe run a few last minute things  
 by the TA --but I'm waking up early  
 to brush up on the vocab. Ancient  
 Chinese Dynasties names really  
 don't stick in the ol' noggin'.  
 Right guys?

TREVOR  
 Sure, Pete.

Trevor turns to Nancy.

TREVOR (CONT'D)  
Where are you staying?

NANCY  
I'm crashing here! Couch looks good  
to me!

Peter nearly chokes on a spoonful of chili.

PETER  
No, no. No you aren't.

TREVOR  
C'mon, dude. It's way cheaper than  
a hotel.

Nancy, bolstered by Trevor's support puts a hand on her forehead, feigning shock.

NANCY  
(hurt)  
My own son! How could you do this  
to me?  
(mischievously)  
Besides, I'm not planning on  
driving after tonight, boys.

Trevor hi-fives Nancy. Bartley does a little dance, still scrolling.

PETER  
(hopelessly confused)  
You're going out with them?

NANCY  
Nope. WE'RE going out with them.

She reaches into her backpack sized purse and produces two bottles of liquor.

NANCY  
And we're going out with style.

TREVOR  
Jesus Christmas! This is great  
stuff!

BARTLEY  
(distracted)  
Ballin' ouuuuut.

Peter is stunned. He tries to speak but stands up and begins rapidly clearing the table.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

It's gonna be fun! Right?

Bartley leaps to his feet, holding his phone above his head.

BARTLEY

(triumphant)

Found the address! There's a party  
on Cranbrook! And it's open, my  
daaawwgs.

Everyone, even Nancy winces, but hi-fives go around as Peter finishes grabbing his armful of dirty dishes. He looks his mother in the eye.

PETER

No, it really won't. I'm doing the  
dishes and going to bed.

He scurries off to the kitchen and puts the dishes in the sink. He begins to rinse a glass.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The same glass is now filled with clear, fizzing drink. Peter is holding the glass, looking down at it angrily. Trevor and Bartley are finishing their drinks, gulping them down. Nancy is preparing shots.

PETER

Mom, I'm not going to drink it. I  
didn't plan for this.

Nancy looks over her shoulder and sighs.

NANCY

Be right back, boys. Help yourself  
to more snacks, but save those  
shots for when I get back!

Trevor and Bartley exchange a look of amazement and reach for some Chex Mix.

Nancy beckons her son to the hallway leading toward his bedroom. Peter sets his drink down and follows. He tries to sneak past her but she stares him down.

PETER

Mom, just let me go to bed. I can't  
just drop everything tonight.

Nancy looks Peter in the eyes with motherly love.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

You can, and you will. Loosen up,  
budrow. I'm paying for all this.  
You should be thankful for that.  
And you should be thankful for the  
car I let you take. Now go, have  
fun.

(beat)

I insist.

Peter's face drains of color. He looks down, seeming to  
literally weigh his options with his hands. He looks up,  
upset, but defeated.

PETER

I'll go. But I'm not changing.

Nancy looks down at Peter's slippers and attempts a  
supportive nod while suppressing a laugh.

PETER

Comfortable clothes for  
uncomfortable plans.

NANCY

Beats heels.

Peter walks back to the living room, picks up the drink and  
downs it as Nancy looks on with a proud smile. She does an  
unflattering mom dance/shuffle back to her seat. Looking up,  
she gets a glimmer in her eye and says:

NANCY

Now. Who's up for another shot  
before we hit the road?

EXT. SUBURB STREET - NIGHT

Bright lights flash through the windows of a rocking house.  
Loud music and a steady stream of people in and out of a  
side door indicate a party of epic scale.

Weird outbursts of trumpet, trombone and saxophone drift  
down from the roof, along with an occasional rain of  
cigarette ash.

NANCY

(in awe)

THIS is a band party?

BARTLEY

We go hard, Mrs. C.

(CONTINUED)



She gives a reluctant nod of approval to Bartley's reassurance. He is wearing his marching band hat and a gold track suit. He looks very drunk and very excited.

PETER

Looks kinda full. Maybe I'll just call it quits.

Peter, still dressed in all grey sweatclothes and bunny slippers, starts to walk towards the sidewalk, but Trevor and Bartley flank him and follow.

Meanwhile, Nancy wanders tipsily toward the fire escape, eager to check out the informal trio on the roof.

TREVOR

Dude, easy. How can you not appreciate how thoroughly rad this is? Your mom is a SAVAGE.

BARTLEY

Dude, you look SICK. It's like Kanye got really pissed off and watched *Donnie Darko*. Oh, shit! You got the *Reservoir Dogs* slippers, too!

Peter just rolls his eyes and stops, not turning back towards the house.

TREVOR

(sheepishly)

Besides, dude. She's super excited about tonight. I think she really wants to party with you.

PETER

Too bad it isn't mutual.

Trevor shifts uncomfortably. Peter turns to face him.

PETER

It's embarrassing, man. I grew up with her. She was a fucking disciplinarian!

TREVOR

She loves you, dude. Great cook, too!

Peter laughs knowingly and without humor.

PETER

Yeah, she is now. I ate 100% frozen food in high school.

TREVOR

But I thought--

PETER

Nope! She worked nights. And mornings. Thank god I've got her old busted PT Cruiser. Taking the bus everywhere sucked.

Trevor looks like he doesn't know what to say, but manages an awkward:

TREVOR

Oh.

(beat)

I'm sorry.

Peter sighs and walks towards the fire escape, reluctantly looking for his drunk mother.

NANCY (OS)

Hell yeah I was a gymnast in high school! Watch this!

Peter looks up and sees his mother on the lowest platform of the fire escape. He looks relieved until she climbs up and begins to walk on the railing. Peter runs forward.

PETER

Wait, don't!

NANCY

These boots were made for tightrope walkin'!

Peter watches in horror as she begins to wordlessly belt the tune of "These Boots" while teetering above a ten foot drop. Just as she reaches the part of the song that goes "walk all over you" she loses her footing.

The music quickly fades away as Peter lunges forward. Nancy catches herself, barely, by grabbing the platform. Peter is beneath her, deciding if he can catch her when she drops.

She lands, with a yelp, in his arms as they tumble to the ground.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY  
I'm fine! I'm fi--

As she goes to stand, she winces and grabs at her lower back. Peter looks genuinely worried until:

NANCY  
Damn, that hurts. I need another drink!

The roof trio cheers but Peter is unconvinced. Trevor and Bartley are standing closeby and are visibly concerned. Bartley is swaying from side to side, but his jaw hangs open with worry.

TREVOR  
Let me help you up!

Peter stretches his arm out but Trevor grabs Nancy and helps her up. Peter sighs and awkwardly scrambles to his feet.

PETER  
Now can we go home?

Trevor ignores him.

TREVOR  
(to Nancy)  
You good?

NANCY  
Yeah! Fine!

PETER  
Fuck this. I'm taking her home.

Trevor looks sheepish but unwilling to intervene. Peter takes his mom and helps her toward the sidewalk.

NANCY  
I didn't get to go inside!

Peter doesn't respond, just guides her slowly down the road, leaving Trevor and Bartley standing in the yard.

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

Peter helps his mother lean up against the plexiglass bus stop enclosure. Both are actively avoiding eye contact. Peter starts to pace at the edge of the road until he hears his mother groan softly. Peter stops and looks up, disgruntled.

(CONTINUED)

PETER

Mom, just don't throw up on the bus. Let's not put a cherry on this shit sundae of a night.

NANCY

(unsteady)

Watch the lang--

(belches)

Watch the lingua--

(swallows audibly)

Don't say swears!

Nancy sighs and shuffles to the corner to keep herself upright. Peter turns and faces his mother, no longer containing his dismay.

PETER

You threatened to take the car back if I didn't do shots with you! I wasn't even going to stay up late tonight!

NANCY

Well, obviously I can't take the car if I'm in no condition to drive.

Peter throws his mother a glare. In the distance the squeak and hiss of a bus stopping at the stop down the road draws Peter's attention.

PETER

Come on. Lets just go home.

NANCY

I think that's your bus. I'm going back to the party.

PETER

Mom, you can barely stand.

NANCY

Helluva night, yeah?

Peter looks at her incredulously.

PETER

You threw your back out!

NANCY

This old gal's got a little life left in her, yet. I've done this before.

(CONTINUED)

(wincing)  
This isn't my first late night.

Peter looks overwhelmed and steps up to face his mother.

PETER  
(coldly)  
Oh, yeah, mom. All those 3am  
formula bottles.

Nancy takes a deep breath and composes herself, visibly ignoring the remark.

PETER  
(like a smartass)  
Mom, you know that "bottle service"  
isn't just when you get a  
babysitter to feed your kid while  
you're off partying, right?

Nancy sighs and turns to Peter, hands open at her sides. She looks him in the eye.

NANCY  
Gosh, Petey, it must really suck to  
have responsibilities that keep you  
in on a beautiful fall night. I  
never went out. You think I had the  
money for a babysitter? It was just  
you and me, budrow!

PETER  
What's your excuse now?

Peter looks down, ashamed.

NANCY (CONT'D)  
So I'm sorry you had to spend a few  
hours out with your mother. At  
least your roommates know I'm just  
trying to have fun.

PETER  
I can't fail tomorrow.

NANCY  
(exasperated)  
Peter, you're brilliant. I thought  
college would loosen you up. What  
are you worried about?

Peter sits down, back against the glass. Nancy walks over to him and puts a comforting hand on his head. Or maybe she's steadying herself.

(CONTINUED)

PETER

Yeah. I'm putting the work in but I can't do it half way! I can't fuck this up.

NANCY

You're that worried? You're--

PETER

--brilliant, I know. The smartest kid alive, and finally showing it. But--

(quieter)

I just don't know. I've got to stay in control.

NANCY

In control of what?

Peter looks straight up, breathing deeply, as if to fend off tears.

PETER

I know you think I'm so smart but this is real.

NANCY

(genuinely)

It's real, but you can handle it. I've seen that calendar on your wall. Your kitchen is pristine. You're even making your bed! You're nailing the real life part of this. And it sounds like you're trying to do more than your best with classes, but kid--

Nancy exhales angrily and wrestles her heels off her feet and tosses them in her bag.

NANCY

I don't know.

PETER

Maybe I'm just burnt out.

Peter takes off his slippers and hands them to his mother.

Nancy chuckles and sits, sliding the slippers on. The bus stops, but she waves it on as her son keeps staring at the stars.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

You said it better than me, budrow.  
Just don't burn out.

(beat)

I'm not a mind reader. If you want  
space or help or anything, you just  
ask.

Peter keeps staring up, rubbing his eyes.

NANCY

Busses every ten minutes, right?  
We'll be back by two thirty. Best I  
can do, but you gotta move.

PETER

Sorry if I said anything mean.

NANCY

I needed to sober up.

Peter lets out an amused burst of air and looks at his  
mother.

PETER

Space would be nice. I mean, this  
whole Chef Nance thing is great,  
but you've seen my schedule. I'm a  
planner, mom. I plan. Maybe you  
could call the day before?

NANCY

Call you every day. Check.

Peter is almost visibly upset at the apparent  
miscommunication but cracks a smile upon seeing his mother  
was only joking.

Nancy looks at her watch.

NANCY

Where are the boys? I can't believe  
we left them.

Peter puts his arm around his mom.

PETER

They can handle themselves. Lets go  
home.

NANCY

Ok.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NANCY (cont'd)  
Can we talk some more? I feel like  
I'm missing out on something more  
important than partying here.

PETER  
(content)  
Yeah. I think I am, too.

FADE TO BLACK