

21,000 secrets that, combined, equal the entirety of our family history

by maguire wilder

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“she hopes for nothing except fine weather and a resolution. she wants to end properly, like a good sentence.” -Zadie Smith, *The Autograph Man*

Characters

Mom
2, 3, and 4. Triplets.

Notes

/ indicates the previous line interrupts.

Notes on style

this play is a collection of lists inside of lists inside of lists. trust the form. trust the language.
realism makes me sleepy.
the siblings in this play should probably feel like really good magicians. or ted talkers.
thank you.

Setting

a hospital room with a hospital bed and a chair and an IV bag and that horrible antiseptic smell that for some reason feels like home.

i used to have perfect bladder control.
 even when i was a baby, I never peed the bed.
 except for when i had my children.
 when i had my children, i didn't just peed in my bed, i pooped in my bed.
 i ripped my vagina wide open, and i pooped the bed.
 and i held each one on my chest.
 and i cried.
 and i pooped in my bed.
 and after that, i pooped the bed a lot.
 the kids would cry
 and i would wake up
 and instead of going to get them—
 Because i couldn't.
 for some reason i couldn't make myself get out of bed.
 I couldn't make myself get out of bed; and I pooped.
 every night until each one was 6 months old.
 And i wondered in my head
 would they poop the bed?
 would my baby girl poop the bed after she had children?
 would my baby boys clean up their wife's poop after she had kids?
 I wanted to do it right.
 I wanted to be good.
 I needed to be good.

A list of side effects after pregnancy:

1. Abdominal pains
2. Hemorrhoids
3. Hormonal shifts
4. Sore nipples and breasts
5. Stitches in your vagina
6. Constipation, although apparently i didn't understand that
7. You can bleed a lot.
8. Postpartum depression, I definitely—

ALL 21,000 secrets that, combined, equal the entirety of our family history.

2 I always loved those sandwiches you made with just one piece of bread folded in half.

3 I always loved the way you ate marshmallow fluff with a knife.

4 I always loved the way you kept your poorly cut cheese in plastic bags in the fridge.

2 I always loved the way you love Grandma's German chocolate cake.

3 I always loved the way you'd order too much meat at any steak restaurant. But never the steak. Always the chicken because you loved cows so much you refused to eat any. And whenever we'd go to a steak restaurant, you'd always tell them that cows were gentle creatures and they shouldn't slaughter them for food. And that *you* had cows when *you* were younger, so how dare they suggest to you that cows should die. And they'd say, "Ma'am this

is a steak restaurant” and you’d say “I know but you make damn good chicken. Bring me one of each chicken plate.” And then you’d get the meat sweats.

4 I always loved that you burn yourself on the George Foreman — every. single. time. I thought you would’ve figured that out by now.

2 I always loved how you use the same blueberry muffin recipe even though it never turns out right.

3 I always loved how you’d never watch a movie without popcorn.

4 I always loved how you’d never eat popcorn without butter.

2 I always loved how you’d bring your own stick of butter to the movie theatre and ask them if you could borrow a knife.

3 I always loved your passion for preserving fruit, every jar labeled in the corresponding fruit’s Crayola color.

4 when you decide to love...you

when you decide to love.

3 I always loved when you would walk on my back and get the pop immediately.

2 I always loved when you would smile really big, ear to ear.

3 I always loved when you would, I always loved

2 I always loved when you’d eat corn with your back teeth, basically shoving the entire thing down your throat.

I always loved

4 I always loved.

3 I always

2 I always loved

3 I always

4 I—

shift.

4 Most of the time I only eat one meal a day.

I wonder what you’d say if you knew that.

I remember all of it.

I need you to know that I remember all of it.

the friendship bracelet making parties

the late-night-week-night-let-us-bring-you-a-homemade-donut runs

the dinner dates to restaurants we were NOT dressed appropriately for

the Sunday back to back movies. I remember how you always used to buy a ticket for every single one, even though no one, not a single soul, would care if we just went from theater to theater.

I remember all of it.

sneaking me into strip clubs so i could see the pretty girls dance

baseball games wearing a Mets jersey and a Yankee baseball hat. I hated baseball.

the giant red bag you'd take with you on trips and bring back full of yummy little stolen goodies.

POPCORN! From Chicago!

A GEMSTONE! From the Smithsonian Gift Shop in Washington, DC!

HEMP NECKLACES! From Denver, Colorado!

I remember.

I don't remember. **MOM**

4 You don't remember anything.

You know how we talk shit about dad?

Dad and I talk shit about you. We laugh about your porn choices. You've never bothered to ask about mine.

When I was 9 I thought you and dad were going to get a divorce.

I'm really glad you didn't because then you could've remarried, and that would mean that I would've had a stepfather. Which would be really awkward. Because I watch a lot of stepfather porn. Stepfather/stepdaughter porn, I mean. And stepdaughter/stepmother porn. Not just stepfathers. What do you think that would look like? Probably just stepfathers, jacking each other off. A cir-cle-jerk, as they say in the porn biz. Or not.

How would I know? I don't do porn.

- 3 I always loved the way you'd keep tissue boxes in the backseat of your car. and the way you drove a giant yellow truck. And the way you let me paint sunflowers on the side in the summer even though the rain would always wash them away, and I'd just have to repaint them.

I don't remember anything. **MOM**

- 3 And every time it rained and I had to start again you took pictures of me like it was the first time, every time? There are so many of those pictures now. And the flowers only got better and more detailed. I graduated from sunflowers to roses for your 40th birthday. Roses to daisies on your 45th. Always with that pale yellow background. Until one day you came home and your car was painted black. And I asked you, I said,

What happened to your car?

I don't remember. **MOM**

- 3 And you said,

I painted it black.

And I said,

Why?

And you said,

I got tired of the yellow.

And I said,

Well, how will I paint it in the summer?

You won't.

And you walked away.

That was the first of the things you started to redo.

I used to sneak into dad's closet and steal his safety pins.

Until you redid it and I couldn't find them anymore.

So I'd have to go to school with my way-too-big pants unpinned.

And one time I was running to geometry they fell down and I cried and I didn't tell you I cried and I didn't tell you that I went into his closet and tore down all of his clothes and broke the rack.

And when you asked what happened I said,

Fuck off.

And you said,

LANGUAGE!

I don't remember. **MOM**

And I said,

It was the dog.

And you believed me. Even though we've never ever had a dog. Not even one.

2 Sorry I asked you for so many pets.

You really shouldn't have given me that guinea pig.

Do you remember when I'd walk it on a leash? OR actuallyyy, it would walk me. It was so strong yet so small. And the rabbits. Which I also attempted to walk on the leash. Petunia and Buttercup. They both died in the garage on a hot summer day. R.I.P. Petunia and Buttercup. You are missed everyday. But not really, there were other pets. I mean, none of them mine. All other people's, like our neighbor's, or a stranger's, orrr, or or or a or a class pet at school! I tried to walk all of them. Mr. Steven's cats! Barnard's stupid dog! Fish! Okay, never fish. But, bearded dragons, yes. Hamsters, yes. Rats, yes. HORSES, no. Too big. Horses are animals that gay people love. Every gay person has to love horses in childhood because it says so in the Being Gay Handbook. That being said, I never tried to walk a horse. Maybe I didn't like them at that age because I was repressed...Frogs? Walked. Butterflies? Walked, don't ask me how. CHICKENS! CHECK! GEESE! NOPE. That...would be dangerous. COWS, ALSO NOPE. similar to horses, a cow is too big to walk. No one in walking distance had a cow, and neither did we. not like you did when you were younger. Although I did drive a few miles to go cow tipping with my friends sophomore year. It's not as fun as it looks. It's actually kind of sad. I never told you that because I thought you would get mad. You just, you loved cows so much. They were different from other animals for you, I think.

I have a confession: I think I killed Co-Co-Nut the Guinea Pig.

I probably could have told you that; you didn't really care when Co-Co-Nut the Guinea Pig died.

I think probably because he wasn't a cow...It just makes me wonder I think.

A human is an animal that is not a cow.

Scientifically.

A human is an animal.

A human is not a cow.
You only love animals that are cows.
Is that explanation enough for me? I don't know. Do you?

I don't remember. **MOM**

3 Bullshit. Yes you do.

I think you're remembering it all wrong. **MOM**

4 Let's just
Let's try again

I always loved the way you'd bring home holiday themed napkins for the wrong holiday because they were on sale.

I always loved how you wore pants that were way too big for you.

I always loved the big ring you wore on the middle finger of your left hand so you could flick off the driver in front of you.

I always loved the way you told me your vibrator was a back massager even long after I asked you if I could borrow it.

I always loved the way you'd talk like you were from the deep south even though you're from/nowhere near Alabama.

3 I always loved throwing up my birthday cake because you made it using expired milk.

2 I always loved hitchhiking home from school because you forgot to pick me up.

Or because the car ran out of gas.

Or you were stuck at work when you didn't even have a job

Or you ran over a cat in the road and had to take its carcass home to skin it/ and collect its fur

3 I always loved when you missed my high school graduation because there was a cow having a baby a few miles/up the road.

When you threatened that policeman with a baseball bat and I just sat, in the backseat, screaming, begging them to let you stay with me

I don't know what you're talking about **MOM**

4 When you came to my first grade Christmas party with that homemade pretzel-M&M-Hershey Kisses snack

3 When you stopped at Kroger to buy a bag of chips for that Christmas party and saw the tray of homemade pretzel-M&M-Hershey Kisses sitting in the open trunk of that woman's car and you grabbed them and ran

4 When you took us all to California and we toured the Warner Brothers Studio

2 When you missed your court date because we were in California seeing where "Pretty Little

Liars was filmed.”

That was a wonderful trip. Really just beautiful. **MOM**

4 You remember?

Mhm. Oh yes. All of it. I remember all of it. We saw Zac Efron leaving his house. **MOM**

4 What else do you remember?

Our puppy Bruno and his toys. The old white slab in the bathroom. The day I went to Paris for fun on a whim. **MOM**

3 We never had a puppy.

Yes we did. And he would run and jump and play? With that one bone that was made of elk antler? And you, you called him Little Davey Crocket because you loved the Little Davey Crocket autobiography. And you would slide your little sock down your foot and he would come and grab it and pull it off. And you, you would let him sleep next to you on your pillow every night even after he peed on it. And I, I would— **MOM**

Blackout.
End of play.