

Full-Time Mommy

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Book club at Hanna's. The women sat in her cathedral living room, a council of nine, or ten, or--twelve, maybe?-- and the boisterous laughter of too many bored housewife tropes bounced off the high ceilings. Each clutched a well-worn copy *Sweet Possession* in one hand and a crystal-stemmed glass in the other. I couldn't stop thinking about horses. Did Hanna own horses? How many horses? Why did this bitch have horses while I still had a lease on my car?

"Sue? Sue, are you listening?" I broke out of my beautiful reverie.

"I'm sorry, what?" I may have drooled a little.

"Do you have any suggestions for what we should read next?" Hanna's glass was tipping, and her margarita-rocks-no-salt was about to shatter on the marble floor. She caught it, giggled, and hiccuped.

"Something steamy!" crooned one of the others.

"Oh," I faltered, let out a few ums and ers, distractedly, "We could do *Memorias De Mis Putas Tristes*. It's like *Lolita*, but I think it's a little sexier. Especially if you read it in Spanish." The moms stared at me, horrified.

"Wasn't that a good impression of Diane? She's so pretentious." I added, hastily. Some let out cautious giggles, but most just stared, glassy drunken eyes unable to refocus themselves. "How about *Fifty Shades* again? It's so like our lives."

I drove my stupid, shiny Volvo home after dropping off some of the faceless mothers who couldn't handle another DUI. The kids were already in bed. Courtney or Tiffany--or whatever parents are naming their teenage babysitters these days--greeted me at the door.

“You need to be here for them, more.” She said, a tad too judgmental for a girl whose livelihood depended on getting paid under-the-table by the likes of me. I had nothing to say to her. She gave me a scathing look and ran back across the street.

I sunk into the moth-bitten couch and forced open my laptop. Email upon email reminded me: “Don’t forget! Your St. Augustine’s Application is due in two weeks!”--”ONE WEEK!”--”THREE DAYS!”

I cursed the vengeful God that would force me to seek letters of recommendation to make sure that my four-year-old hung out with the right four-year-olds, and sent another message to Hanna. My meal ticket. And that bitch with her horses knew it, all too well.

Each week was the same: I’d go to her house, politely refuse any food or drink, pretend to be really into S&M and emotional abuse, and beg her for her signature on the bottom of a page. She always put it off. My degree rotted away somewhere while I stood on my hind legs for a piece of hot dog from the trash.

The next morning, I woke up two hours before the kids to beat my hair into submission and steam a knockoff Chanel suit. In no time, a demon choir sang, “mommy”, and I prepared my cloven-footed cherubs for their day at the Sunny Land Childcare Center.

I bumped into one of the book club minions-- Clara?-- at day care, and we exchanged “pleasantries”. She was clearly vying for a recommendation, too, and as we said our goodbyes, Clara shook my hand and her hand brushed against my sleeve. Invisible fishhooks yanked up the corners of her Botox mouth as her hands found themselves stroking the fabric on my arm.

“Oh, Sue, Honey,” she simpered, “this does not feel like genuine Chanel! Someone was taking you for a fool. I’d just die if the other ladies found out! Wouldn’t you just die?” She wanted to just kill me. I would’ve been offended if the feeling weren’t mutual.

“Clara, Sweetheart,” I said, she may have mumbled “it’s Elizabeth” under her breath, “Coco Chanel was literally a Nazi. I can appreciate her taste, but I’ll never support her estate.”

I felt myself let out a gentle, haughty chuckle, said a quick goodbye, and stress-ate six McDonald’s hash browns in my car. My phone erupted with messages from Hanna. She finally called.

“I never once thought I would have to call you, Susan!” Hanna said prissily. I couldn’t bring myself to respond. She wasn’t looking for that.

“Elizabeth Newton just gave me a call and told me that you were in knockoff Chanel at the daycare this morning.” She had this way of making all of her statements sound like she was interrogating me. You were wearing knockoff Chanel? Reganomics isn’t real? She continued without hesitation. How did she even know I was on the line?

“She said you said something about Nazis? I just don’t think we can have that. I definitely don’t think they want that at Saint Augustine’s. Anyway, I gotta run.” With her absolutely repellant toodle-oo, I was back at square one.

Idling in the McDonald’s parking lot, I sank back into my seat with my hands on the wheel. Both of my children were going to end up stripping, hooking, or both. Just like their mom.