

Iniquity

written by

Rena Frazier

PO Box 6312, Brandon, FL
813-299-6601
Rena@renafrazier.com

BLACK SCREEN

TITLE: Iniquity

Sizzle. Pop. Metal scraping. Someone is cooking.

MADELINE

What're we doing today, girls?
Thrifting? PPM?

FADE IN

INT. KITCHEN/DINING ROOM - DAY

MADELINE AYERS, early 40s and a buttoned-up bohemian, is standing at the stovetop with a spatula in her hand and a bottle of seasoned salt in the other. She's making eggs in one skillet and turkey bacon in another.

Next to her, sitting on the countertop, is CLARA AYERS, Madeline's stylish preteen daughter. Madeline sets the seasoned salt down and adjusts her glasses, then looks at her daughter.

CLARA

(excited)

I vote for pajamas, popcorn, and movies! Annndddd - there's a new horror movie out! Can I please, please, please watch it? Please! I'm basically a teenager, and Jackie's parents let her.

(looking offscreen)

Back me up on this, Mish.

MISHA AYERS, late teens and straight-laced, is placing three table settings on the dining room table.

MISHA

Nope. Leave me out of it.

Clara rolls her eyes. Madeline and Misha look at each other. Madeline winks. Misha smiles.

MADELINE

I don't know, hun. Maybe. I guess it depends on-

MISHA

Mom, there's something on your plate.

Misha rubs the plate on Madeline's place setting.

MADELINE

It's fine. Don't worry about-

CHIME. CHIME. CHIME.

Special notifications on all of the cell phones sound off nearly simultaneously.

The mood changes instantly.

Everyone is still, their smiles fade.

It is completely silent for a beat.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

I'm *really* tired of those notifications.

MISHA

The Essence Assessment?

MADELINE

Essence my ass.

MISHA

(sheepishly)

I don't know. I think it's kinda important to know.

MADELINE

(surprised)

To know what?

MISHA

You know, whether someone is good or evil.

MADELINE

Mish! Really? You think our government can actually tell us whether someone is good or bad. The idea that anyone can measure a person's soul is ridiculous.

MISHA

I mean, it's never been wrong from what they say.

CLARA

Oh, I bet Roger, in my math class, he would be IE if he took the test. His farts stink so -

MISHA
(overlapping)
-Oh my gosh, Clara, that's not what
it's about.

CLARA
-bad, they're deadly! He has to be
rotten to the core.

Madeline lovingly grabs Clara's chin.

MADLINE
(laughing)
You are so silly!

Misha laughs.

Offscreen, the television plays a high pitched test tone.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Attention. This is a recorded
message from the State Commission
on Public Safety. New validated
test results for the Essence
Assessment are available on the
government website. The Essence
Assessment keeps our nation strong,
our values clear, and our
neighborhoods safe. Visit the
Essence Assessment website for
regional results.

Madeline rolls her eyes, and wipes her hands on a dish towel.

MADELINE
Just ridiculous.

BZZZ. BZZZ. Misha and Clara receive texts.

Misha grabs her phone from the table.

After a beat, Misha looks up at Madeline, alarmed.

MISHA
Mom?

Madeline turns off the stove and doesn't look up.

MADELINE
Yeah hun?

MISHA
(confused)
I just got a text from the school.

MADELINE

On a Saturday? Does your advisor ever let you rest?

MISHA

No, mom. It says that I have a parent that tested "IE?" And I can't go back to school until I'm tested?

Madeline looks up.

MADELINE

(disbelief)

They must've got the wrong number.

(a beat)

But that sucks! I can't imagine what that family's about to go through.

MISHA

No, you're right. Mr. Jay sent me Mark's test scores last week. I just hope it's not one of my friends.

Clara looks up at Madeline, confused.

CLARA

I just got the same text.

MISHA

(concerned)

Mom...did you take the Essence Assessment?

MADELINE

(confused)

No.

(indignant)

No! I would never...it has to be a mistake.

MISHA

(sympathetic)

Yeah. Yeah - of course. I know you wouldn't.

Madeline, now clearly concerned, walks over to her purse on the counter and pulls out her laptop. She opens it and navigates to the Essence Assessment website.

"Essence Assessment" and "New Results Near You" shows across the top. Underneath are rows with four columns: Name, DOB, Location, EA Result.

Madeline scrolls down, passing all "IV: Inherent Virtue" results, until she sees her name:

Madeline B. Ayers; 10/01/1984; 5505 Kane St., Danderville, FL; (in bold red) **IE: Inherent Evil detected.**

Madeline's eyes widen.

MADELINE
(in disbelief)
I don't understand

Misha walks up behind Madeline and sees the results on her laptop.

MISHA
(quietly, voice shaking)
They have our address?

MADELINE
(overlapping)
I never did it, so I don't -

Madeline winces and grabs the side of her head - a sudden, pounding headache.

She sees the quick flash of a black sigil seared into the cover of a book.

Her eyes fly open.

Misha is staring at her.

MISHA
Mom? Are you ok?

MADELINE
(confused)
Yeah, yeah. I'm ok.

Misha hugs Madeline.

MISHA
We'll get this sorted out. It has to be a mistake.

CLARA (O.S.)
(scared)
Mom?

Madeline looks up. A look of fear slowly takes over her face.

INT. PLAYROOM - DAY

Clara, phone in hand, is standing next to a couch in front of a row of three windows. The blinds are open and pulled up.

Two people are standing outside looking in the window, staring at Clara. One is filming with a phone - the VOYUER NEIGHBOR. The other - SMILING NEIGHBOR - is slightly smiling.

Madeline rushes into the room, frantic. She stands on the couch and starts closing the first set of blinds.

Both neighbors simultaneously shift their gaze from Clara to Madeline.

Madeline freezes when they make eye contact. They speak in an eerily calm tone.

VOYUER NEIGHBOR

We can see you.

SMILING NEIGHBOR

(eerily calm tone)

Do you remember now, Madeline?

Madeline stares at the neighbors, wrestling with their words.

She closes the first set of blinds.

The neighbors move to the second window.

As she is pulling down the second set of blinds, she stops.

Someone is tying a black sigil around the post of her mailbox. They turn toward the house.

They make eye contact with Madeline and bow their head.

Two more people are walking slowly down the street towards her house, carrying the same sigils.

Madeline winces and has another split second flashback, this time of bloody hands held out in front of her.

She comes to and gasps.

Madeline quickly closes the second set of blinds.

CLARA

Mom, what's going -

Madeline whips her head quickly toward Clara.

MADELINE
Stay away from the windows!

Clara jumps back, startled.

MISHA (O.S.)
(gasps reflexively)
Mom!

Madeline grimaces, immediately regretful.

She closes the third set of blinds.

Distracted, she doesn't see the person who is walking around to the side of her house.

As Madeline walks towards the kitchen, Clara intently scrolls on her phone, walking behind her ...

MADELINE
I'm so sorry, Clare Bear. I just...
I don't know what's happening. I
need a moment. To think. Ok?

INT. KITCHEN/DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Clara shoots a panicked look at Misha.

Madeline catches it.

MADELINE
What is it?

Clara shakes her head, not wanting to say.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
(irritated, pointing to
Clara's phone)
What does it say, Clara?

CLARA
Nothing... really. It just says....

MISHA
Clara, what does it say?

CLARA
I was just scrolling and...it says-
(reads from her phone)
Individuals with Inherent Evil
detected may deny their results.
(MORE)

CLARA (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Keep your distance.

Madeline frowns.

MADELINE
(sincerely)
Hun, I wouldn't lie to you.

She walks towards Clara and holds her arms out to comfort her.

Misha looks at Madeline, tears forming in her eyes, then grabs Clara's arm and subtly pulls her away.

Madeline is shocked and hurt.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Mish, it's me.

Misha looks past Clara. She won't make eye contact with Madeline.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Look at me. Please.

Misha doesn't move, her hand remains in front of Clara in a protective gesture.

Madeline melts.

DING DONG.

The doorbell rings. All three turn their heads towards the living room.

Silence.

A beat.

DING DONG.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Do not unlock or open that door.
You understand me? Do not open it.

Misha doesn't move, a scared Clara nods.

BZZZZ. BZZZZZ. Madeline's phone vibrates in her purse.

She walks towards her purse on the countertop.

Suddenly-

A worn leather medical bag.

A sigil burned into its leather.

Blood.

Thick, bubbling black liquid.

Then-

Her purse.

She stares.

The girls watch at her in terror, witnessing her mental struggle.

BZZZZZ. Her phone vibrates again.

She cautiously grabs her phone from the purse and looks at the screen. Immediate relief.

She looks at her girls and mouths "stay here" with a firm look.

She answers the phone and walks to the hallway as she talks.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
 (into the phone)
 Hey Dory, they listed me as IE!
 (listening)
 Remember what? I don't know what
 you're talking about.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Madeline leans with her back against the wall, exasperated, out of sight of the girls in the kitchen.

MADELINE (CON'D)
 (desperately)
 Look - can you come pick us up?
 (listening)
 Now. Please.
 (listening)
 Five minutes?
 (a beat)
 Thank you, thank you, thank you.
 I'll see you in a minute.

Madeline hangs up the phone and smiles. She rests her head back on the wall, relieved.

DING DONG. DING DONG. DING DONG. DING DONG.

The doorbell rings in frantic succession.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
(to herself)
What in the hell?

She straightens up and starts to walk towards the doorway back to the kitchen.

CHIME.

Someone in the kitchen receives another government notification.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Shit!

Madeline stops and rubs her face, overwhelmed.

BEEP, BEEP, BEEP.

SECURITY SYSTEM (O.S.)
FRONT DOOR.

Madeline's breath quickens and panic takes over her face.

MADELINE
Misha?
(a beat)
Clara?

Silence.

Madeline slowly walks to kitchen/dining area.

INT. KITCHEN/DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She peeks around the doorway into the kitchen. The girls are gone.

She sets her phone down on the table, where there are still three place settings.

The front door slams shut.

She jumps.

A floor board creaks in the living room.

She spots the knife block on the kitchen counter.

She grabs a paring knife.

Another flashback of her hand holding, in the same manner, a sigil-branded dagger covered in a black syrupy substance.

She comes to, disoriented, and stumbles backwards, still holding the paring knife.

She recovers, looks into the living room.

No one is there.

She walks further in.

INT. LIVING ROOM/FOYER - CONTINUOUS

She stands, paring knife at her side, looking at the foyer.

The front door is closed and bolted from the inside.

Behind her, there are three quiet knocks on the sliding glass door that leads from the living room to the back patio.

As Madeline slowly turns around, she has several quick flashbacks in succession:

--Running in grass.

--The bloody sigil branded medicine bag.

--Heavy breathing in a dark room.

--Washing off bloody hands in a blood filled sink.

She faces the sliding glass door and sees ...

seven neighbors staring at her stoically, including Voyeur Neighbor and Smiling Neighbor.

The Smiling Neighbor tilts his head.

She looks back at the dining room table.

The three place settings jarringly change to two, eliminating Madeline's.

Madeline looks down at her hand and sees the dagger.

As she raises her head, she looks past the camera.

MADELINE
(devastated, remembering)
No.

CUT TO BLACK.

Roll credits.