

BETTY AND THE BURGLAR

Screenplay by

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INT. LIVING ROOM - STORMY NIGHT

The BURGLAR (21) breaks into the dark apartment through a window. His features are hidden by a mask and a hoodie so we can only see his eyes. He threads lightly stuffing his backpack with antique items. He tries to open the bedroom door but it's locked.

BETTY (70) is fast asleep on her rocking chair. The burglar notices how she shivers in her sleep. He reaches for the gun on his waist and pokes Betty with it.

BURGLAR

Wake up.

Lightning strikes. The burglar clumsily drops the gun. The gun fires and breaks a vase. The sound of the shot is muffled by the loud thunder.

Betty appears to wake up.

BETTY

Michael.

The burglar finds the gun and points it at Betty. Betty falls asleep again.

The burglar scratches his head and puts the gun away. He searches around and finds a small antique desk clock. The clock doesn't work but he takes it anyway. He also takes an antique makeup kit stuffing it in his pocket. The burglar accidentally knocks over an old guitar producing a loud noise.

BETTY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry Michael.

The burglar stops.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Michael please. Look at me.

The burglar turns, the mask hides his features.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Will you be staying the night?  
Like, like in the old days? It's  
pouring cats and dogs outside. Tea!  
Would like some tea? Yes, yes.  
Peppermint, your favorite. Hm?

The burglar is confused.

BURGLAR

Ok?

BETTY  
Splendid!

Betty claps and rushes towards the kitchen. The burglar takes a few steps trying to take a peek where she went. Betty's head appears under the door frame.

BETTY (CONT'D)  
Don't go anywhere!

BURGLAR  
No, no. I'm staying right here.

BETTY  
Ok.

Betty's head disappears.

The burglar overhears Betty humming in the kitchen. He notices a key chain on the empty rocking chair. The burglar takes the keys and stashes them in his pocket. He stares at the bedroom door.

BURGLAR  
How long on that tea, grandma?

The humming stops. The burglar is suspicious. He steps into the kitchen...

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

...And finds Betty standing against the sink.

BETTY  
Please don't call me that. I know I wasn't, I... I should have been a better mom. But I was never like her. Was I?

The burglar is at a loss.

BETTY (CONT'D)  
I guess I was... Please forgive me Michael. No, no. Just please stay. If not for me, stay for her. What's her... Charlene. Stay for Charlene.

The burglar decides to play along.

'MICHAEL'  
Maybe I'll stay, maybe I won't. Why should I?

BETTY

Really? Well, because you have your whole life ahead of you. You remember your grandfather, right? He went to war and died. For what? For nothing. They sent me back a medal.

Betty approaches 'Michael'.

BETTY (CONT'D)

What is this on your face?

Betty reaches for 'Michael's mask. He allows her to remove it. She can clearly see his features.

BETTY (CONT'D)

If you want to marry Charlene, it's ok. Please?

Betty hugs him.

Thunder strikes.

Betty fidgets. The loud noise of the thunder causes a reaction in her.

Betty slaps 'Michael's face.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Get out of my house.

'Michael' is at a loss.

BETTY (CONT'D)

I put a roof over your head. I took care of you, you sucked on these tits until they sagged you ungrateful little brat. Get out!

'MICHAEL'

Shhh! Stop, stop.

Betty tries to hit him again.

BETTY

Go. Go with her. Go be with that nigger.

'Michael' grabs Betty and puts his hand over her mouth.

'MICHAEL'

Shut up.

(Silence. We hear the rain pouring outside)

'MICHAEL' (CONT'D)

If you make a sound I'm gonna punch  
you in the face then I'm gonna tie  
you up and gag you.

The land line phone rings in the living room.

'Michael' and Betty stay silent. The voice machine picks it  
up.

CRAIG (ON SPEAKER PHONE)

Mrs. Livingston, is everything ok?  
C'mon, pick it up, I know you are  
in there. Do you need me to come  
down and see you?

'Michael' raises his finger at Betty's face.

'MICHAEL'

Ok, go answer. Don't you dare tell  
him that I'm here.

BETTY

You won't be living here for long.

'Michael' releases Betty. He 'escorts' her to the phone in  
the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Betty picks up the phone.

BETTY (ON PHONE)

Who is this?

CRAIG (ON PHONE)

It's Craig from upstairs. Just  
checking on you, is everything ok?

BETTY (ON PHONE)

Everything is ok. Don't call here  
again.

CRAIG (ON PHONE)

Is... Michael there with you?

Betty glares at 'Michael'.

BETTY (ON PHONE)

No. I kicked him out of my house.

CRAIG (ON PHONE)

Ok. Just, please keep it down, ok?  
It's a little late in the nigh-

Betty hangs up the phone.

BETTY

You know the way out.

'MICHAEL'

Listen, mom... Is everything ok?  
Because a minute ago you were  
asking me to stay, now you want me  
to go.

BETTY

You remind me more and more of your  
father. Everything is just a joke  
to you, isn't it? Look at you.  
You're twenty years old and what  
are you doing with your life?

'MICHAEL'

I don't know. Why don't you tell  
me.

BETTY

You had a talent. My own son was  
the best student I've ever had. I  
couldn't believe it. You were a  
genius. But you threw everything  
away. And why? Because you wanted  
to be an engineer, and then you  
wanted to be a lawyer, and now you  
want to marry this waitress who can  
give you nothing but trouble.

'MICHAEL'

Interesting. Are you saying that  
you actually care about me?

BETTY

You could do so much better. I've  
seen her type before, she wants you  
to feel pity for her and she wants  
you to save her. She sees the  
potential in you and she is right,  
you are so much better than she  
could ever have hoped for. But she  
can't be saved, Michael. You think  
you're gonna lift her up, but it is  
she who's gonna bring you down.

(MORE)

BETTY (CONT'D)

And when she's done with you, she's gonna take everything you have with her.

'MICHAEL'

Ok, ok. If this means that much to you, I won't see her again.

Betty is dumbfounded.

'MICHAEL' (CONT'D)

Ok, mom? I promise. I won't see her again. Do I get to stay now? I'm serious.

BETTY

Don't play with me Michael.

'MICHAEL'

Do you care about me, mom?

BETTY

Of course, more than anything in the world.

'MICHAEL'

Then, can I stay here with you?

BETTY

Well, yes. You can stay as long as you want. Until you get on your own feet, I mean, but, but, that can wait. I am so... I'm so happy Michael.

'MICHAEL'

I'm happy too mom.

Betty approaches 'Michael'. She's holding up tears.

BETTY

Everything is going to be ok, you know? We're gonna be fine. I believe in you. If you want to be a lawyer, it's ok, or businessman, whatever you want. Just don't take too long to make up your mind. Right?

Betty gently caresses 'Michael's face. He appreciates it.

'Michael' sighs.

'MICHAEL'

It's getting late mom, perhaps we should take you to bed.

BETTY

Early bird gets the worm.

The teapot is boiling in the kitchen.

BETTY (CONT'D)

What's that noise? Are you making tea?

'MICHAEL'

Oh, yes. Peppermint. My favorite.

BETTY

Your favorite.

'MICHAEL'

Would you like some? Wait here, I'll get it.

BETTY

Of course. No, wait let me help you.

'Michael' makes his way into the kitchen followed by Betty.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME STORMY NIGHT

Betty notices the gun resting on 'Michael's waist.

BETTY

Michael.

'Michael' studies the stove looking for the right knob. The pitching noise gets louder.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Why do you have a gun?

'Michael' turns abruptly and knocks over the teapot.

Betty fidgets. The loud noise of the teapot falling causes a reaction in her.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Oh my god, you stupid child, get out. Did you burn yourself? What were you thinking, I told you not to use the stove if you don't know how to use it. Go get some towels.

'Michael' doesn't know what to do. He opens a drawer.

BETTY (CONT'D)  
Look at this mess.

Betty collects the teapot. She glares at 'Michael'.

BETTY (CONT'D)  
Micky, what are you doing? That's not where we keep the towels. Where do we keep the towels Micky?

'MICHAEL'  
Shh. Calm down.

BETTY (SCREAMS)  
Don't you 'shh' me Michael Livingston Green. Where do we keep the towels? Where do we keep the towels?

Betty sinks to her knees.

BETTY (CONT'D)  
I can't do this shit anymore. I can't do this. Fuck. Fuck shit, fuck my life. I won't sell my jewelry though. No. I would rather starve.

Betty recomposes herself.

BETTY (CONT'D)  
I'm ok. I'm ok... Ok.

Betty stands.

BETTY (CONT'D)  
Did you pack your lunch?

Betty taps on 'Michael's' backpack.

BETTY (CONT'D)  
Good. Here, let me give you some money. Where's my purse... Ok, c'mon. You're gonna be late for school. Have you seen my guitar?

Betty pushes 'Michael' around. They are back in the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Betty looks at her image in the mirror.

BETTY

Oh my god.

Betty fixes her hair. She opens a drawer.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Micky, did you take my makeup kit?  
Micky, where did you put it? It's  
not funny. Let me see your pockets.

'Michael' realizes his pockets are full of contents including the key chain, a gun and the makeup kit as well. He decides to confess to avoid being searched.

'MICHAEL'

Here. I took it. It was just a  
joke.

Betty pulls his ear.

BETTY

It's not funny little man. You have  
to stop acting like a brat. Or do  
you want to end up like your  
father? Do you want to end up like  
your father?

'MICHAEL'

No, never.

BETTY

Go get my guitar right now!

'Michael' goes pick up the guitar he had knocked over before. Betty applies make up on her face. She also does a couple ballet twirls and practices singing.

BETTY (SINGING) (CONT'D)

Oooooohhh, aaaaaahhhh La, la, la  
la, la, laaaaaaa.

'Michael' hands the guitar to Betty. She clears her throat and sings to the mirror. She plays the guitar which is completely out of tune and has only two strings.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Good morning children. It's a  
beautiful morning to play. Who is  
ready to play? 'Meeeee!'

Betty turns to 'Michael' who is staring at her.

BETTY (CONT'D)  
C'mon Micky. You haven't been practicing have you? Here play something.

Betty hands him the guitar.

BETTY (CONT'D)  
C'mon now, you've got to practice. What good is talent for if you don't practice?

'Michael' shyly plays the two strings a couple times. Betty applauds excitedly. He stops playing.

BETTY (CONT'D)  
What's wrong?

'MICHAEL'  
You're gonna be ok mom.

BETTY  
Why are you just standing there. C'mon, you're gonna be late for school.

'MICHAEL'  
Because it is two in the morning.

Betty looks outside the window. It's dark out. She doesn't understand.

'MICHAEL' (CONT'D)  
You woke me up in the middle of the night. You just got a little confused. You're tired. C'mon, let me help you to bed. Here, I have the keys.

'Michael' produces the keys he had taken before and opens the bedroom door.

BETTY  
No. You're going to be late for school.

'Michael' takes Betty by the arm and directs her towards the bedroom door.

'MICHAEL'  
I like your pajamas.

Betty notices she's wearing pajamas.

'MICHAEL' (CONT'D)  
C'mon. Early bird gets the worm.

They enter the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

'MICHAEL'  
Come lie down.

'Michael' places his backpack on the floor.

BETTY  
Micky, I should be the one putting  
you to bed.

'MICHAEL'  
That's nice mom.

Betty lays on the bed.

BETTY  
I'm sorry I have been a little  
stressed lately. Since that  
worthless father of yours left-

'MICHAEL'  
I can be a lot of work for only one  
person.

BETTY  
No, it's not your fault. You are  
only a child- I mean, a teenager.  
Almost a man grown. Do you remember  
when I used to tell you stories?  
How did it go... Once upon a time  
there was a boy named 'Touch'.

Betty touches 'Michael's nose.

BETTY (CONT'D)  
And he had the most special gift,  
he could feel people's feelings and  
all he had to do was touch them.  
But Touch lived in a dark place and  
the people around him were angry  
and evil. Whenever Touch touched  
them he would feel these horrible  
feelings. In time he was becoming  
just like them, full of envy and  
hatred.

(MORE)

BETTY (CONT'D)

He started to hurt people, ignore them and not care for them any longer. All that Touch wanted to do was to be alone, but even then he felt sad. He needed to get out of there. So one day he escaped. The boy named Touch went out into the world on his own and vowed to never return to that dark place that had once been his home. But what he didn't realize was that he had the power to change people, but to do that he needed people to change him first. And so he went... In his journey he...

Betty can't remember the story. 'Michael' remembers a story of his own.

'MICHAEL'

Up in the sky there was a little star, and she emanated the most beautiful light in the whole universe. Around the little star the other stars were all bigger and stronger, but none of them were as beautiful as the little star.

BETTY

I don't remember this story. Who told you this?

'MICHAEL'

My... You did, a long time ago.

BETTY

Hum.

'MICHAEL'

Yes... So, when the magical travelers of the universe came to visit, it was the little star they all wanted to see. She had always been their favorite. The big stars got jealous of the little star and came up with a plan. They decided to put all their energy to shine so bright that the little star became almost invisible. And when the magical travelers of the universe came by, the big stars were the only ones they could find. The little star was left alone. Nobody paid her any attention.

(MORE)

'MICHAEL' (CONT'D)

She tried really hard to radiate as bright as the big stars did, but she ended up losing all her energy. She felt weak, her beautiful light started to fade, and one day she disappeared.

Betty has fallen asleep.

'MICHAEL' (CONT'D)

Where the little star once stood there was emptiness, and the big stars had all the attention to themselves. But without the little star, less and less visitor came to see them. The big stars couldn't shine so bright all the time and started to get weaker. The big stars felt guilt and shame and finally grief for the little star they made disappear. And out of their grief a black hole was born in the emptiness. And all the light from the big stars was sucked into that hole. The big stars became smaller and smaller, the hole became bigger and bigger. Their whole system was being forgotten. And one by one they all disappeared. The last dying light was finally sucked into the hole. But at this point the hole got so big that it burst. Giving birth to millions of new stars all of them just as beautiful as the little star had once been.

'Michael' stands, picks up his backpack and approaches the dresser. He uses Betty's keys to open a drawer. Inside he finds two army medals.

Thunder strikes.

'Michael' turns to look at Betty. She's asleep.

Michael uses a different key to open a different drawer. Inside he finds a jewelry box. He opens it and takes the jewelry on his hands. He looks at his image in the mirror.

'MICHAEL' (CONT'D)

I'm sorry mom. I'm sorry.

'Michael' stuffs his jacket with the jewelry.

A lamp flickers. 'Michael' turns. Betty is pointing a shotgun at him.

BETTY

Hands up.

'Michael' puts his hands up. The jewelry is caught in between his fingers.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Don't move. Old Betty is gonna open up some holes in you if you move. You're going to slowly reach for your gun and put it down.

'Michael' complies.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Kick it over. Toss me that necklace, slowly.

'Michael' complies.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Your jacket, take it off and throw it over here.

'Michael' tosses the jacket. Betty checks the pockets and finds more jewelry.

BETTY (CONT'D)

These have been in my family for two hundred years, you little prick.

'MICHAEL'

I'm sorry.

BETTY

How old are you?

'MICHAEL'

I'm twenty one.

BETTY

Youth is really lost isn't it? Does your mother know you're here?

'MICHAEL'

No. I'm out in the world on my own.

BETTY

You don't know? How about the same place where you left her?

'MICHAEL'  
What about Michael?

BETTY  
Give me one good reason for me not  
to shoot you dead right here and  
now.

'MICHAEL'  
He's dead isn't he?

BETTY  
Yes, he's dead. That's what the  
medal means.

'MICHAEL'  
I'm sorry he died. It's not your  
fault.

BETTY  
Nice try. But my son has been dead  
for twenty years and I'm over him.  
So I ask you again... Give me one  
good reason for me not to shoot you  
to pieces.

'MICHAEL'  
My mom told me a story once, about  
a boy named 'Touch'. I'm like the  
boy in the story. I ran away. I  
abandoned my family and vowed to  
never go back. But I want to go  
back. Please, just put the gun down  
and let me go home.

Betty puts the gun down.

BETTY  
Who told you this story?

'MICHAEL'  
My mom.

BETTY  
No. You're lying. Tell me the  
truth.

'MICHAEL'  
You did. You told me this story.

BETTY  
No.

'MICHAEL'

Yes. You thought I was your son.

Betty points the gun at 'Michael' again.

'MICHAEL' (CONT'D)

You're a good mom, you know? Much better than my own. But I must be leaving now, she probably wishes for me to come back every single day.

'Michael' slowly walks away.

BETTY

Stop.

'Michael' doesn't stop.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Stop!

Betty points the gun at the mirror and fires. Shards fly all over the place. 'Michael' ducks on the ground.

The loud noise of the gunshot and shards cause a reaction in Betty.

BETTY (CONT'D)

They're here. The enemy is here.

(We hear a war song)

BETTY (CONT'D)

Michael! Where are you?

'Michael' finds his handgun on the ground. He crawls towards the door which is ajar. Betty spots him and opens fire. 'Michael' is hit but manages to leave the bedroom. Betty follows in pursuit.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

'Michael' stumbles trying to make his way to the window, but he's hurt and needs to take a rest. He hides behind a closet.

BETTY

Michael! I'm gonna save you  
Michael!

The window is close by. 'Michael' takes a peek and can't see Betty anywhere. He slowly makes his way towards the window. 'Michael' steps on the broken pieces of a vase.

Betty spots him. 'Michael' turns. They both point their guns at each other at the same time.

Betty is shot. She falls by a wall facing up. Above her the window is open and she can see the sky clearing outside. Many stars start appearing. Amongst them there's one star in particular that calls her attention. It's a tiny little star that seems to turn on and off and emanates the most beautiful light.

The door bell starts ringing. There are knocks on the door followed by loud bangs. The noises become louder and louder.

The loud noises cause many reactions in Betty. She starts blinking and shivering uncontrollably.

CRAIG (40) breaks into the apartment. He looks over one corner and finds the burglar laying dead in a pool of blood. Craig finds Betty and knells next to her. On Craig's touch Betty stops shivering. She looks deep into his eyes.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Michael. You're back.

THE END