

THE MOTHER LOAD

Original screenplay

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. BROOKLYN, NEW YORK - DAY

ALEX HARRIS, '30s, handsome in a nebbish kind of way, exits an apartment building holding a Starbucks' thermos. Alex admires the thermos and as he turns the corner a wet paper bag slams into his chest.

Alex looks down at his clean shirt and sees a big wet spot on it. NED GREENBAUM, '50s, stands outside his fish mart, with fish guts splattered on his apron.

ALEX

What the...

NED

Tonight's dinner.

ALEX

But I'm going to work.

NED

Not my problem. She gets bad fish and I'm stuck hearing about it for a month. It's bad for business!

Ned enters the fish mart as the MANHATTAN bus drives by. Alex runs after the bus and misses it. He looks down at the wet bag, pissed.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - DAY

A DOORMAN stands outside a luxury apartment building.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

JODI WYNN, an attractive woman in her mid-30s, sits on a reclining chair in a well-decorated office.

JODI

I don't know what keeps happening.  
Every time I meet a new man,  
something goes wrong the minute his  
mother enters the picture.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Oh?

JODI

Take John for example. He never spent the entire night with me. Every night around midnight he'd say he had to go home to walk his dog.

FLASH TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jodi steps off the elevator wearing a dress. She holds 'Happy Birthday' balloons and a small present. She stops in front of an apartment and rings the doorbell.

JODI (O.S.)

John never even had a dog. He was still living with his mother. Can you believe that?

The door opens revealing JOHN, '40s, in a bathrobe. A WOMAN in her '70s comes to the door in her flannel nightgown. She looks at Jodi and starts yelling at John. Jodi bursts into tears and runs down the hallway, leaving the balloons behind.

JODI (O.S.)

We had been dating for nine months and he never told her about me.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

TINA MARTIN, late-40s, in a classy tailored suit, takes notes from another chair as Jodi wipes her eyes with a Kleenex tissue.

TINA

What happened to your last boyfriend?

JODI

Richard? He didn't even want me attend his graduation.

EXT. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY - DAY

RICHARD, mid-30s, stands amongst a group of GRAD STUDENTS waiting to receive his diploma. Jodi distinguishes him from a distance and muscles her way through the crowd.

JODI (O.S.)  
 Richard said he was leaving for a  
 job interview afterward so he  
 didn't think I should come.

A very attractive WOMAN, '40s, stands next to Richard and  
 caresses his butt.

JODI (O.S.)  
 Only he really didn't want me there  
 because he'd invited his step-  
 mother. I later found out he had  
 been in love with her since he was  
 fifteen.

The DEAN calls Richard's name. He walks up to the podium with  
 his head held high. Jodi covers her mouth and runs back  
 through the crowd totally humiliated.

FLASH TO:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Jodi blows her nose while Tina jots everything down.

JODI  
 They're getting married next week.  
 She left his father and now their  
 moving to France to start a family.

Jodi gets up and walks over to the window.

TINA  
 There seems to be a pattern  
 developing here. You seem to keep  
 attracting men who all suffer from  
 maternal issues.

JODI  
 What? Are you saying this is all my  
 fault?

TINA  
 You seem to be a little hostile  
 today. Are you sure that isn't  
 meant for your mother?

JODI  
 How am I supposed to know what kind  
 of mother every Tom, Dick, and  
 Harry I meet has?  
 (points to window)  
 (MORE)

JODI (cont'd)

Do you have any idea how hard it is to find a man in this city who's willing to let you meet his mother? You have to be practically engaged.

Jodi sits down exhausted.

TINA

The fact remains, a man's first bond is with his mother. It's a blueprint for...

JODI

... all the relationships he leads for the rest of his life. I know that. But what am I supposed to do about it? I can't go around dating the wrong men for the rest of my life. I'm thirty-five, and I haven't had a relationship that's lasted more than twenty-two months yet.

A timer goes off. Tina rises to her feet.

TINA

We'll discuss this more next week.

Jodi wipes her eyes and heads to the door. Tina opens it and waits.

JODI

Do you really think I'm attracted to the wrong kind of men?

INT. RECEPTIONIST OFFICE - DAY

Jodi and Tina enter a crowded reception room filled with unhappy WOMEN.

TINA

It wouldn't be unusual given your background. You never had a stable relationship with your mother, and never knew your father growing up.

JODI

But how am I going to fix this? There must be some way to find out what kind of mother a man has before I start dating him. Isn't there?

All the disgruntled women look up.

TINA

If I had the answer to that  
question, I'd be a very rich woman.  
And most likely, out of work.

Jodi leaves the office upset as another woman stands up to  
take her place.

INT. LARGE OFFICE - DAY

A steamy cup of Starbucks latte sits on a desk. Alex enters  
the office and picks it up. He sees a picture of Jodi and  
Richard in the trash. The glass is broken. Alex picks it up  
carefully.

INT. OFFICE BREAK ROOM - DAY

Alex pours the Starbucks coffee into the thermos. BEN  
SHERMAN, '30s, short and stocky, enters behind him holding  
glossy photos of new models.

BEN

Finally some new blood in here.  
(kisses picture)  
Will you look at those tits? God I  
love this job. I get dibs on her.

He puts the pictures down and grabs a coffee cup.

ALEX

I think she's broken up with her  
boyfriend.

BEN

What?

ALEX

Jodi.

BEN

And that would concern us why?

ALEX

Ask Dee. Find out what's going on.

Alex tightens the lid on the new thermos and wipes it off.

BEN

Let's walk.

Ben grabs his coffee and the photos and leads Alex--

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

--down the hall.

BEN

Look, for five years you've been interested in this chick and she's never even looked at you once. It's time to move on.

ALEX

Fine. I'll find out myself.

They turn the corner passing by some MODELS wearing lingerie in a showroom.

BEN

Will you forget that stupid party. It was three years ago and she was drunk as a skunk.

ALEX

It was two years ago, and she had just broken up with her boyfriend. She was all torn up.

Alex enters the office.

INT. LARGE OFFICE - DAY

Alex puts the thermos on the desk.

BEN

Let me give you a clue. When a woman sleeps with you and doesn't remember it, it's not a good sign.

ALEX

Look who's talking. It happens to you every night.

Alex leaves the office.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

They walk down the hall.

BEN

What makes you think she'd be interested in you? She's never had a relationship that's lasted more than six months.

ALEX

That's because she hasn't been dating the right men.

BEN

And who would that be? You?

Alex's cell phone rings. It's MOTHER. He answers the phone.

ALEX

What? Ma, Ma, Ma...

They enter Alex's---

INT. ALEX'S OFFICE - DAY

--small office.

ALEX

I am not coming home early! Who cares about the damn fish?

Alex's cell phone rings again. It's MOTHER. Alex answers it.

ALEX

Now stop calling me at work. You want to get me fired?

Alex hangs up the phone.

BEN

What in God's name is that?

Ben sees the wet bag sitting in a bucket of ice on Alex's desk.

ALEX

Don't ask.

BEN

I won't.

Ben dumps the pictures of the models on Alex's desk and storms off. Alex sits down and looks at a picture above his desk. It's of him and Jodi at a Christmas Party. Alex turns on his computer and smiles.

INT. STARBUCKS COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Jodi sits alone at a table sipping her latte. DEE GREENFIELD, '30's, dressed stylishly in black, waves at her through the window. She makes her entrance and sits with Jodi.

DEE  
I'm starving. I thought we were having lunch today?

JODI  
How can you think about food? My life is falling apart.

DEE  
Don't tell me your mother is back?

Dee takes a swig of Jodi's latte. Jodi looks up in protest.

JODI  
What?

DEE  
You're always like this when she's back. Either that, or you just got through seeing your therapist.

Jodi lowers her head, even more agitated.

DEE  
God, I hate Thursdays. When are you going to get rid of that shrink and find a real therapist? Like a man? Has she ever been married?

JODI  
She thinks I'm attracting the wrong kind of men.

They get up and head toward the door.

DEE  
We all are, sweetheart. That's why we live in New York. To have our pick of them.

Dee eyes an attractive MAN, '30s, sitting alone as Jodi gets up. They depart Starbucks and --

EXT. MADISON AVENUE - DAY

--proceed down the street.

JODI  
Well, I'm going to do something  
about it. Every man I date has  
mother problems.

DEE  
At least you get to meet the  
mothers. I'm lucky if I get to meet  
their dogs.

They pass by a WOMAN with a small Poodle taking a dump.

JODI  
From this day on, I'm not dating  
another man, until I meet his  
mother first.

DEE  
And how do you expect to do that?  
By taking out an ad on the  
Internet?

They enter the same fashion building on Madison Avenue.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

They head for the elevators and wait with another WOMAN.

DEE  
I've got a news flash for you,  
sweetie. Nobody gets to meet the  
mother before taking the plunge.  
That's just how it works.

JODI  
Well, that's not good enough.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Jodi and Dee stand in the elevator, shoulder to shoulder with  
the other WOMAN and MODELS.

JODI  
A man's first bond is with his  
mother. It's the blueprint for all  
the...

DEE  
... relationships he leads for the  
rest of his life. I know. I watch  
Dr. Phil too.

(MORE)

DEE (cont'd)  
But how is that going to help you  
not fall in love with the wrong man  
again?

The woman and models look up.

JODI  
Well then I will take out an ad.  
There must be at least one man out  
there who has a normal relationship  
with his mother. And if there is,  
I'm going to find him.

DEE  
And you think you're going to find  
a man like that on the Internet?

The elevator comes to a stop. Dee and Jodi get off. The  
woman and models open their cell phones and start dialing.

WOMAN  
(into phone)  
I want to meet your mother. Yes,  
today!

MODEL  
I don't care where she lives! Get  
her on the next flight or I'm done!

INT. INTERNATIONAL INTIMATES, INC. LOBBY - DAY

Jodi and Dee approach the RECEPTIONIST, '20s. A showroom  
filled with mannequins wearing lingerie serves as a backdrop  
behind her.

JODI  
(to receptionist)  
Do I have any messages?

DEE  
You're going to attract every  
lunatic out there.

Ben and Alex parade into the lobby. Alex sees Jodi and moves  
to greet her but Ben yanks him back.

BEN  
We're getting lunch!

ALEX  
I just wanted to tell her about  
the. . .

BEN  
She has coffee!

Ben shoves Alex into the elevators as Dee spots Ben. They exchange hostile looks.

DEE  
Dick.

BEN  
Ho.

Ben pushes the elevator button as Alex eyes Ben.

ALEX  
What was that about?

BEN  
Too many beers.

The elevator doors close as the receptionist hands Jodi her messages.

RECEPTIONIST  
(hands her messages)  
Your mother called. She wants you to call her as soon as you can.

JODI  
But she's still in France.

Dee slithers off as Jodi grabs her.

JODI  
Where do you think you're going?

DEE  
I'm getting a salad.

JODI  
I can't do this without you.

Jodi starts down the hallway dragging Dee by her coat.

DEE  
But she's not even my mother!

INT. LUNCH DELI - DAY

Alex and Ben sit at a table, eating lunch as Ben watches a MODEL nibbling on a carrot.

BEN

Did we get her head shot?

ALEX

She seemed rattled, didn't she?  
You'd better talk to Dee when we  
get back and find out what  
happened.

BEN

Will you get off that? You're  
starting to sound like a broken  
record. Besides, I'm not talking to  
that bitch. She never called me  
back after we did it.

ALEX

You slept with Dee? When did that  
happen?

Alex puts money on the table and stands up.

BEN

It was a moment of weakness, okay?  
She asked me out and then she had  
the gall not to call me. She made  
me feel like a piece of meat.

He finishes his burger.

ALEX

So why didn't you call her?

BEN

She's the one who made the first  
move, man. It's her job to follow  
up.

ALEX

Where did you get this from?  
Jugg's Magazine?

Alex pays the bill and rises. They exit the restaurant--

EXT. MADISON AVENUE - DAY

--and head back toward the office next door. They enter the  
building.

BEN

At least I'm not living with my  
mother.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

They approach the elevators as Alex smiles. Ben looks at him.

BEN

What?

They get into the elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Alex presses the button and looks straight ahead.

BEN

Don't tell me you actually moved  
out? When the hell did this happen?

INT. INTERNATIONAL INTIMATES, INC. - DAY

They exit the elevators and brush by a group of MODELS.

BEN

Was it that apartment in Soho?

They continue down the hallway together. Ben dogs Alex.

BEN

The loft in Park Slopes?

Alex steps into his office.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Alex sits at his desk as his cell phone rings. It's MOTHER.

BEN

Then which one was it?

ALEX

(answers phone)

What? I said I'm busy! Now stop  
calling me at work!

Alex hangs up the phone. Ben's mouth opens wide.

BEN

Don't tell me it was that apartment  
down the hall from your mother?

Alex turns on his computer.

ALEX  
It's a start, okay?

BEN  
What the hell is that going to  
accomplish?

Dee walks by holding two salads.

DEE  
Dick.

BEN  
Slut.  
(to Alex)  
You are hopeless, man.

Ben exits the office as Alex looks at an ad of a model on his computer. He glances at the picture of Jodi above his desk and dusts it off.

INT. JODI'S OFFICE - DAY

Ben walks past the door and sees Jodi holding her thermos. She speaks on the phone as Dee sits across her from the sofa, biting her nails.

JODI  
You met him in Milan?

DEE  
Great. She's on husband number  
seven and I still can't get a  
second date.

JODI  
Richard?

Jodi looks at Dee, concerned.

DEE  
You didn't tell her about him?

JODI  
He's out of town, Mother. Dee? Why  
of course she'd love to come.

Dee rises frantically.

DEE  
I would not! I'm washing my cat  
tonight.

JODI  
We'll see you at eight.

Jodi hangs up the phone.

DEE  
That's not fair. The last time I had dinner with your mother I was depressed for six months. She's the only woman who's been engaged more times than I brush my teeth.

JODI  
Speaking of which, I need to get busy placing that personal ad.

Jodi sits at her desk and powers on the computer.

DEE  
You're not actually going to put that crappy ad about meeting a man's mother on the Internet? You can't even talk to your own mother.

JODI  
I told you, I am dead serious about this. Why can't you be supportive?

DEE  
Supportive yes, crazy no.

Jodi sips her coffee as she hits the search button.

DEE  
I've been on those sites for years. If there was a normal man out there I would have met him. Why do you think I'm still single?

Dee leaves the office.

JODI  
And bring me a salad.

Jodi reads: Perfectmate.com. She sips her latte and smiles.

EXT. MADISON AVENUE - DAY

It's raining cats and dogs in New York. PEOPLE enter and exit the fashion building with umbrellas.

INT. SHOWROOM - DAY

Alex hangs some lingerie samples on the walls that are covered in grids. Ben enters with a stack of new catalogues.

BEN  
I thought you were finishing that  
Vogue ad?

ALEX  
I did.

Ben sees another thermos on the table and sighs.

BEN  
Right. Like that's gonna work. You  
keep her coffee hot and she doesn't  
even remember she slept with you.

Ben places the catalogues at each seat around the desk.

ALEX  
It wasn't like that okay?  
(hangs up more bras)  
She's not like other women.

BEN  
You got that right. Dee is so  
stupid she actually thinks she's  
going to find a man on the  
Internet.

Alex looks up.

ALEX  
What?

BEN  
Hang bras, okay?

Alex accosts Ben.

ALEX  
Did you talk to Dee?

BEN  
No. And it's none of your business.  
Why can't you just be normal and  
hate your boss?

Jodi and Dee make their way into the showroom. Alex looks up embarrassed and takes a seat at the table.

Dee, Ben and the other EMPLOYEES sit down as Jodi notices another thermos in front of her seat. Ben and Dee exchange heated glances. Dee gives him the finger as Ben mouths off an 'insult'.

JODI

Okay, people. We have another new catalogue coming up and some of our regular buyer's are already looking elsewhere. Any ideas?

BEN

We just got this back. It's a knock off from Victoria Secret.

Ben hands Jodi a bra sample. The bra cups have red tassels on them.

BEN

It's a blow out in France.

Jodi drops it into the trash as Dee smiles.

JODI

Then leave it there. Anyone else?

Jodi glances over at Alex.

JODI

Alex?

Alex stares up at the catalogue with a picture of Jodi on the inside cover. He suddenly...

FLASH TO:

EXT. PARK AVENUE - NIGHT

The city is covered in snow. PEOPLE enter and exit the Waldorf Astoria Hotel which is decorated with Christmas wreaths and lights.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - NIGHT

EMPLOYEES are dancing and drinking at the International Intimates annual Christmas party. Jodi wears a couture evening gown and drinks near the bar as Dee dances with a MAN, '50s. Alex spots Jodi alone and approaches her.

ALEX

Enjoying yourself?

JODI  
I hate holidays.  
(finishes champagne)  
Almost as much as I hate men.

The bartender refills Jodi's glass as Alex watches.

ALEX  
Where's John? Didn't he make it?

JODI  
(continues drinking)  
Why don't you ask his mother?

ALEX  
What?

Alex's cell phone rings. He looks at the caller ID which reads: MOTHER. Alex answers the phone.

ALEX  
(into phone)  
What? No, I'm not coming home. I'm  
at a party.

Alex hangs up the phone irate as Jodi looks up.

JODI  
Girlfriend?

Jodi spills her drink and Alex catches it. He puts it on the bar.

JODI  
I'm going to be sick.

ALEX  
We'd better get you a cab.

JODI  
So what's your mother like?

She leans against Alex's shoulder as he escorts her toward the lobby.

JODI (O.S.)  
Alex, are you with us?

FLASH TO:

INT. SHOWROOM - DAY

Alex snaps back into the present. He looks up as his cell phone RINGS. Ben shakes his head knowingly. Alex leers at the cell phone. It's his MOTHER.

ALEX  
I'll be right back.

Alex gets up and exits the showroom. Jodi is unnerved by his sudden departure.

ALEX  
(into phone)  
What?

Jodi watches Alex yelling in the lobby through the glass.

ALEX (O.S.)  
How many times do I have to tell you, don't call me at work? I'm in a meeting!

JODI  
Let's move onto sleepwear, shall we?

EXT. PARK AVENUE - NIGHT

Dee and Jodi exit a cab, wearing dresses.

DEE  
Tell me you didn't put your picture on there?

JODI  
Of course I did.

They enter a high rise apartment building as the DOORMAN opens the door for them.

DEE  
Have you gone mad?

INT. LOBBY ENTRANCE - NIGHT

They draw near the elevators and Jodi pushes the button.

DEE  
And you actually think this is going to work?  
(MORE)

DEE (cont'd)  
What's going to happen when he  
wants to meet your mother?

They walk into the elevator.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jodi presses the button to a door.

JODI  
It's not my mother I'm worried  
about.

DEE  
That poor man.

Jodi gazes at Dee.

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - NIGHT

The doorbell RINGS as JUDITH WYNN-TAYLOR-FRANKS-ABERGAST-BANKS-RUTLERS, age unknown, opens the door. She wears designer clothing and is covered in jewels, including a new engagement ring.

JUDITH  
Sweetheart. How are you?

Jodi and Dee breeze into the apartment. Judith kisses Jodi's cheek.

JODI  
Fine, mother.

Dee spots the ring followed by Jodi. They exchange stunned 'looks'.

JUDITH  
(kisses Dee)  
Dee. And how have you been? Any new  
prospects yet?

Dee pinches Jodi's arm as RICARDO, '40s, appears in the hallway in a tailored suit.

RICARDO  
Chiao.

DEE  
Actually, I...

JUDITH  
This is Ricardo. Isn't he adorable?  
We met on the cruise.

Ricardo approaches Judith. He kisses her hand with the diamond on it.

RICARDO  
Bellissimo.

JUDITH  
We spent the entire week in his  
cabin.

Ricardo kisses Jodi's hand, then Dee's.

RICARDO  
Chiao. Chiao.

JODI  
Does he speak any English, mother?

JUDITH  
Of course he does. Ricardo, say  
something to the girls in English?

RICARDO  
Bellissimo.

A FEMALE SERVANT appears in the hallway.

SERVANT  
Dinner is served.

JUDITH  
Shall we?

They approach the dining room. Dee looks at Jodi, incensed.  
Jodi sighs in return.

EXT. PARK AVENUE - NIGHT

Jodi and Dee go out of the building. Jodi tries to hail a cab.

DEE  
Remind me to slit my wrists when I  
get home.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Dee and Jodi sit in the back of the cab. A few moments later the cab drives off.

DEE  
Did you see the size of that rock?  
How can he afford that selling  
shoes?

JODI  
You think he bought it?

They peer out the window and catch sight of a happy COUPLE strolling by and kissing.

DEE  
You think they know something we  
don't?

JODI  
I wonder what their mothers are  
like?

DEE  
I have a confession to make.  
Promise me you won't get mad. Okay?

JODI  
I'm too depressed.

DEE  
I slept with Ben.

Jodi's eyes widen.

JODI  
What?

DEE  
You said you wouldn't get mad.

JODI  
Ben Sherman? From the office?

The cab driver sneaks a peek at the two women as they drive through Central Park.

DEE  
It was a mistake, okay? Don't tell  
me you've never made a mistake  
before?

They both look out the windows.

JODI  
God, I hate men.

DEE  
Can you imagine what his mother is  
like?

They exchange facial expressions and stare out the window,  
even more bummed out.

INT. JODI'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Jodi sits at her desk, staring blankly at her computer. Dee  
barges in with two large dress boxes.

JODI  
I don't understand it. I've had  
that ad on there for days and I  
haven't even gotten a response. Do  
you think it's my picture?

DEE  
Trust me sweetie, it's not your  
picture.

Dee puts the boxes on Jodi's desk and opens one up.

JODI  
What is that?

Dee pulls out a long pink chiffon gown.

DEE  
She can't be serious?

Jodi opens the other box and pulls out the same dress.

JODI  
She thinks I'm going to be her  
bridesmaid. Again.

DEE  
We already wore these. She's  
slipping.

Ben makes his way into the office. Jodi and Dee acknowledge  
his presence immediately.

JODI  
What is it, Ben?

BEN  
Computer problem. I need to back up  
your hard drive.

Ben goes over to Jodi's desk.

JODI  
What?

BEN  
Some virus going around.  
(sits down)  
Didn't you get the e-mail?

JODI  
No.  
(to Dee)  
Did you?

DEE  
I don't read e-mails with his name  
on them.

BEN  
That's cause I don't send you any.

Ben takes out a CD disk and slips it into Jodi's computer.  
Jodi tries to hide her screen with her dating profile.

JODI  
Can't this wait till later? I have  
personal stuff on here.

BEN  
Only takes a sec.

Ben hits the button and starts backing up the hard drive.

DEE  
I bet that's what you say to all  
the models.

BEN  
(eyes Dee's dress)  
Prom night?

Dee hides the dress as Ben pops the disk out and heads for  
the door.

BEN  
I think we're done here.

DEE  
Crouching fiber.

BEN  
Hidden Ho.

Ben departs the office and--

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

--slaps the disk into Alex's waiting hand. Alex slips Ben a crisp twenty dollar bill. They part ways.

EXT. BROOKLYN - NIGHT

The same apartment building as opening.

INT. ALEX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alex sits at his desk typing 'Perfectmatch.com' on his laptop. We hear BANGING on the window.

ALEX  
Go away! I'm busy.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Will you open this window, or do I have to break it?

ALEX  
I'm working!

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Do I have to call the Super again?

Alex sees Jodi's face appear on the screen.

ALEX  
Bingo.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
(through glass)  
Fine. I'll open it myself.

MARION HARRIS, '60s, stands on the fire escape in her bathrobe with hair curlers on. She takes off her shoe as Alex stands up.