

BIRDIES

by

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HOPSCOTCH PICTURES
VERVE

The uplifting "BIRDIES" THEME. A catchy pop anthem.

*THE BIRDIES
YOU MAY NOT HAVE OUR EYES!
YOU MAY NOT HAVE OUR SMILE!
BUT YOU HAVE OUR HEART!
YOU HAVE OUR HEART!*

FADE IN:

A flashy YouTube opening title sequence. Made with a Mac Book, on a deadline. GRAPHICS SPLASH ACROSS THE SCREEN --

**M E E T T H E B I R D I E S !
OUR ADOPTED NEST -- LIVE! LOVE! VLOG!**

CUT TO:

MAMA BIRD (30s), Instagram chic and style for days. Flowy white things draped on her body. Countered and highlighted to precision. She vibrates with loving kindness. *A good mother.*

MAMA BIRD
*Hi Bird Watchers! Welcome to our
channel! I'm Mama Bird!*

WHIP PAN TO REVEAL -- PAPA BIRD (40s). Kind eyes, and chiseled features. *A good father.*

PAPA BIRD
(Swedish accent)
I'm Papa Bird!

They stand back-to-back, arms folded.

MAMA BIRD
And these are our Birdies.

CUT TO:

THEIR FIVE ADOPTED CHILDREN -- all different ethnicities.

The Birdie Family poses before a SLEEK MANSION, dressed in matching autumnal J-Crew earth tones. The boys have spiky hair like DAD. The girls have baby bangs like MOM.

PAPA BIRD
If you think our hands are full,
you should see our hearts!

They all hug on the lawn. They love each other so much.

CUT TO:

VARIOUS SHOTS. *The Birdies take us on a tour of their mansion. The kids have giant rooms filled with toys and video games and everything a child could ever want.*

THE BIRDIES

(singing)

*We're the Birdie family, we are a
gift from God! But we're not just a
family, we are a Birdie SQUAD!*

CUT TO:

The Birdie Family is dancing around a ten foot tall **BIRDCAGE** in the backyard. An indulgent prop. They perform an elaborate dance that involves flapping their wings...

THE BIRDIES (CONT'D)

*We'll flap our wings and we will fly
into the bright blue birdie sky!*

GZZTTT!!! The video *GLITCHES* and makes us jump.

A pixel dies and deforms their little faces. A jarring video hiccup. Finally, the video resumes in fast motion, and then catches up with itself. WE SLOWLY WIDEN TO REVEAL --

A CRACKED TABLET SCREEN THAT PLAYS THIS YOUTUBE VIDEO.

We're in a DARK ROOM. Pitch black, but for the warm glow of THE VIDEO lighting up TABITHA'S face, and reflecting in her big brown eyes. She's 13-year-old. The barrage of garish colors highlighting another acne outbreak. Transfixed by the screen. It reflects in her dilated pupils.

TABITHA

(sighs)

...Squad goals.

She has a fragile whisper of a voice.

ON THE SCREEN:

SUPER SECRET SURPRISE ANNOUNCEMENT!!!

Tabitha's eyes light-up. She clicks it.

Mama and her Birdies are gathered around the hearth.

MAMA BIRD

*Are you one of the half million
children currently in the foster
care system looking for the love
and security that only a forever
family can provide?*

TABITHA

Yes.

MAMA BIRD

Then today's video is for you.

TABITHA

Ohmygod.

MAMA BIRD

Drum roll please--

THE SMILING BIRDIES drum on their pants.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

The Birdie Family is proud to announce, in association with the Department of Child and Family Services, the first annual--

Suddenly -- THE VIDEO ABRUPTLY CUTS TO AN AD FOR BEST BUY. Showing off a hoard of brand new iPads and iPhones.

TABITHA

Crap... C'mon, c'mon!

Her leg bounces as she waits the mandatory five seconds, and then hits -- **SKIP AD.**

MAMA BIRD

--"OPEN NEST CHALLENGE!"

Tabitha leans in, until she's face to face with Mama Bird.

PAPA BIRD

The most frequent comment we receive in our comments section is "I wish I was a Birdie." Well, that dream will become a reality for one very lucky foster child.

TABITHA

What?

She drops the tablet, gasps, snaps it back up -- eyes peeled.

MAMA BIRD

Since our eldest Birdie, Nightingale, has left our adopted nest to pursue her dream of living "off the Grid" in the Alaskan Wilderness last month--

QUICK CUT TO: A short video of NIGHTINGALE (18), a spritely young lady with soulful eyes, and a kind smile, waving at the camera from shore. No make-up, dressed in flannel with a rucksack. The soaring white Denali Mountains behind her.

NIGHTINGALE

This is Nightingale, singing off!

Nightingale turns the camera off.

GZT! The video GLITCHES again. Tabitha gives it a hard whack.

MAMA BIRD

--We once again have the time and resources necessary to dedicate to a placement in need..

PAPA BIRD

That's right, we're opening our doors! A new Birdie will soon be coming home to roost.

TABITHA

Ohmygodohmy--

A HUSKY VOICE outside Tabitha's door --

MISS KETCHUM (O.S.)

Tabitha?!!

Tabitha gasps. Quickly locks the door.

MAMA BIRD

To raise awareness for World Adoption Day, we'll be welcoming YOU, one our very loyal Birders, into our adopted nest!

THE BIRDIES

From Birder to Birdie!

Tabitha covers her mouth in disbelief.

MISS KETCHUM (O.S.)

Tabitha?! Where are you?! You didn't do your chore!

PAPA BIRD

We hope this will inspire our vast network of Birders who are considering becoming adoptive parents to do the same.

The video WHIP PANS to LARK (12), a Latinx Girl with a cute speech impediment. She has spinal bifida and crutches.

LARK

The rules for the Open Nest Challenge are simple. Upload your--

--The video is interrupted by AN AD FOR GRAMMARLY! "Great Writing, Simplified!"

Tabitha groans.

MISS KETCHUM (O.S.)
Are you in the closet again?!

The doorknob jiggles. Harder. *KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!*

MISS KETCHUM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
WHAT DID I SAY ABOUT LOCKED DOORS?!

Tabitha presses *SKIP AD*. The video resumes--

LARK
--Upload your personal foster care story telling us why you'd like to join the Birdies.

MISS KETCHUM (O.S.)
OPEN IT!

ON SCREEN: *FINCH (6)*, white, convulsing with *Ritalin* vibes.

FINCH
*How'd you end up in the system?!
What are your hopes and
dreeeeeams?!*

MISS KETCHUM (O.S.)
Tabitha!

DOVE and *HAWK (12)* Cambodian twins.

HAWK
But, you better hurry!

DOVE
*Submissions are only open until the
end of the day!*

Last is BUSTARD (11). A middle eastern boy with a slight accent. He seems sad, not like the others. Trying his best.

BUSTARD
Will you be the lucky bird?

--*WHAM! WHAM!* Miss Ketchum is pounding. The door bowing.

MISS KETCHUM (O.S.)
I'm not going to tell you again!

Hemming and hawing and the *JIGGLING OF A KEYRING*. Tabitha looks back at the SCREEN:

LARK
*And if you're not already
subscribed to our channel--*

HAWK

Make sure you RING THAT BELL!

DOVE

Smash that Like button!

BUSTARD

Don't forget to tag us!

FINCH

And turn on our post notifications--

THE BIRDIES

*--SO YOU CAN BE A PART OF OUR
AWESOME FAMILY!*

MAMA BIRD

And now for the most important part--

CLICK! -- THE CLOSET DOOR UNLOCKS!

Tabitha quickly rips her headphones out and just as she stuffs the tablet under a pile of clothes--

WOOSH! The closet door flies open and the bright light of morning spills in and stings her eyes. MISS KETCHUM (50) looms above her. She's a heavy woman with two bad hips, her bloodshot eyes dancing with rage.

MISS KETCHUM

Out. Now!

Miss Ketchum grabs Tabitha by the hand, and pulls her into--

THE BEDROOM.

It's tidy, but cramped. A lot of kids have come through these doors, and you can tell. Wilting wallpaper, stained carpets. Three sets of bunkbeds. No decorations. FOSTER KIDS yelling in the HALLWAY. It's a zoo.

MISS KETCHUM

You were in there all night again weren't you?! Watching those birds!

TABITHA

...No.

KATIE (8) and NATE (10) sprint down the hallway.

KATIE

The Birdies are gonna adopt a kid!

MISS KETCHUM

No running!
 (to Tabitha)
 Alright, where's the doo-dad?!

Miss Ketchum goes on a hunt, spots the tablet sticking out from under the clothes. She snatches it. *Ah-ha!*

TABITHA

No! I need it to make my submission for the Birdies!

She grabs after the tablet, but Miss Ketchum pulls it away. Desperation pops out Tabitha's eyes. It's her lifeline.

MISS KETCHUM

No screens for a week. Not until you learn how to use it responsibly!

Tabitha is grabbing for it, and Miss Ketchum keeps it away.

TABITHA

Give it to me! It's mine!

She turns rabid, grabs after it. A tug of war ensues. The tablet slips from her grip, and flies across the room, crashing against the bureau. Tabitha MOANS. Drops to her knees before it. Another deep crack. Half the screen is just dark blue streaks of color.

Tabitha stares at the broken screen. Sees her sad reflection. MISS KETCHUM RIPS IT OUT OF HER HANDS.

MISS KETCHUM

It's like an extra limb with you.

Suddenly, Tabitha jumps to her feet, pushes past Miss Ketchum, and bolts out the door...

MISS KETCHUM (CONT'D)

No running!

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Tabitha barrels down the hallway towards AN OFFICE where Nate and Katie have joined TREVOR (15) and BOOTSIE (6), the youngest, cute level: nuclear. They sit at a crusty PC.

MAMA BIRD (ON SCREEN)

...And don't forget the most important part. Make sure you end your video by singing your very favorite song.

A title SMASHES IN: **THE CLOCK STARTS NOW!**

As the fosters CHEER, Tabitha dashes away.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

A panicked Tabitha pedals her bike like she's being chased by a rabid beast. Maneuvers through heavy honking traffic.

EXT. BEST BUY - DAY

Tabitha reaches the entrance. She wipes the sweat, pulls herself together.

INT. BEST BUY - DAY

Tabitha hurries past buzzing electronics to the Mac section. She finds the iPad display. She picks one up and logs into YOUTUBE. Clicks the RECORD ICON. Suddenly nervous.

TABITHA

Hi, Birdies! I'm Tabitha! I'm thirteen! And this is my submission for the open nest challenge. I'm basically your biggest fan in the whole world. I know a lot of people are gonna say that, but I actually am. Whenever I'm sad and scared I watch your videos so I watch them all the time pretty much.

The high-strung, mustached MANAGER eyes her like a hawk.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

I been watching your channel since I was a small kid. And you're the perfect family, even though you're all different, you're the same, cuz of how much you love each other, and that's all that matters, and that's all I ever wanted. I've been in the system my whole life and I never fit in. I've lived in ten different placements, and your channel is the only thing that got me through. All I want is a forever home, and they're just gonna keep moving me and moving me until I age out. I'm thirteen now, and it's ten times harder for teens to get adopted. I know I'm not very pretty like all of you, but I think I'm Birdie material deep down. If you could just please find it in your heart to give me a chance... you won't regret it...

(chokes up)

Mama Bird... even though we never met, you've already been more of a mom to me than anybody.

She wipes the tears on her sleeve. She looks back at Manager who disappears into the stock room.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

Oh, and my favorite song... is the Birdie Theme Song..

She closes her eyes. Like she's channeling something. Opens her eyes. And SINGS the Birdies theme... Softly at first, fragilely. A beautiful whisper...

TABITHA (CONT'D)

*You may not have our eyes...
You may not have our smile...
But you have our heart...
You have our heart...*

She sings a little louder. Her voice is a smooth whispery wooze. Delicate, like Billie Eilish on Ambien.

The OLD LADY down the aisle smiles stupidly at her. Lulled into a trance by the song. SHOPPERS gather. Drawn. Under her spell. A LOVING FAMILY, shopping for TVs. Stops and listens.

EMPLOYEES exchange looks. Cell phones rise and take aim. She sings a little louder.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

(sings)

We're the Birdie family! We are a gift from God! But we're not just a family, we are a Birdie Squad! We'll flap our wings and we will fly into the bright blue birdie sky!

The Geek Squad swoons.

GEEK #1

Beautiful.

The Manager comes out of the STOCK ROOM. Sees the commotion.

MANAGER

Oh hell no. Hey! Hey you!

TABITHA

(quickly)

If you're not already subscribed to our channel, make sure you RING THAT BELL and turn on our post notifications! And please let me be a part of your amazing family! I love you Mama Bird!

He starts jogging over. Tabitha thinks fast. Looks down at her face on the video screen. Smiles.

SHE RIPS THE IPAD OFF ITS CHAIN AND RUNS! Shoppers GASP.

MANAGER
HEY! HEY! SECURITY!

Tabitha blasts down the aisle, hugging the iPad, as overweight SECURITY GUARDS chase after her.

She hits **UPLOAD** on the iPad. THE PROGRESS BAR BEGINS -- **3%**

A GUARD JUMPS OUT OF NOWHERE -- snatches after her. She ducks under the Geek Squad table, and doubles back the other way, throws the rolling step ladder in their path.

Tabitha loses her balance, and crashes into a display of robot vacuum cleaners. A few of them turn on, and scatter like mice. She checks the iPad -- **24%**

A Guard snatches at her, but she fakes him out, and darts into the Magnolia HOME THEATER DISPLAY ROOM.

70% -- Her eyes are bugging out of her head.

TABITHA
Hurry. Hurry!

She ducks behind the plush leather sofa. A JAMES BOND movie explodes in the background. Bullets flying.

93% -- The Guards spot her, and come running. She shakes the iPad, but it doesn't help.

96% -- And as they bare down, A RED "X" cuts through the progress bar.

***upload failed* ERROR**

Tabitha's world falls apart.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
NO!!!!

The Manager comes out of nowhere and rips the iPad out of Tabitha's hands, and she collapses on the floor, destroyed. The Guards have to pull her out of there, bucking and kicking and screaming and slapping!!!

TABITHA (CONT'D)
LET GO OF ME!!!!!!

EXT. BEST BUY - AFTERNOON

Tabitha sits in the back on the police cruiser, parked in the driveway. COPS are talking to MISS KETCHUM outside of the store.

Tabitha glances at the mounted police computer up front, and this triggers a --

MEMORY FLASH: Baby Tabitha is three-years-old, sitting in the back of a cop car. Screaming tears as blues and reds flash.

A DEAD BODY carried out of an old house on a stretcher.

Tabitha sees a GLOWING COMPUTER SCREEN behind the bullet proof barrier. She stops crying instantly. Slaps at the glass. The wants that screen.

*BABY TABITHA
Birdie. Birdie. Birdie.*

BACK TO:

Tabitha takes her fidget spinner out of her pocket and starts playing with it, mindlessly. Pushing away the thoughts.

INT. MISS KETCHUM'S VAN - AFTERNOON

A livid Miss Ketchum drives Tabitha home in the rusty, sputtery van. Biting at her lip, muttering to herself. Tabitha stares out the window, watching the world pass her by.

MISS KETCHUM
Listen to me, there's something we
have to tal--

TABITHA
--I'm going to another placement.

MISS KETCHUM
I talked to Mrs. Bollinger. We're
gonna try and set you up someplace
nice. Someplace you'll... fit in a
little better.

TABITHA
How about Neptune.

Tabitha just stares ahead, playing with a fidget spinner.

MISS KETCHUM
We'll make it as easy transition.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Microwavable dinners. Miss Ketchum sits at the head of the table, riveted by People Magazine. The five foster kids stare at screens. Tabitha, screenless, stares at her plate.

BOOTSIE
My video already has 650 views!

NATE

So? Mine has 723. And 57 Likes.

BOOTSIE

Yeah, but you posted yours first.
Oh! I just got another Like! And
another one! I got two Likes!

Tabitha watches all this from across the table, just a fly on the wall, eavesdropping on the flurry of conversation. Tablets and phones are passed around like dishes of food.

NATE

That Pakistani girl with one arm
got 100 Likes already.

TREVOR

I bet she'd have 200 Likes if she
had no arms.

BOOTSIE

(pouts)
I wish I had no arms.

MISS KETCHUM

Enough! I've had it with the damn
birds. It's all a racket anyhow,
parading their kids around on the
net, and living off the proceeds.
They should be thrown in jail.

NATE

No! The Birdies get to keep the
money they make from their channels!
Right, Tabitha?

TABITHA

All their money goes into a trust
until they turn eighteen.

MISS KETCHUM

Then how do they afford that house?

KATIE

Her make-up tutorials! Duh! Tell
her, Tabitha!

TABITHA

Mama Bird brings in thirty grand a
week in ad sense alone, and that's
before promotions and sponsorships.

MISS KETCHUM

...for putting on make-up?

TABITHA

YouTube is good! It gives the
Birdies a chance in this life!
Unlike us! We're gonna age out and
die alone with everything we own in
a garbage bag!

MISS KETCHUM

Well, someone drank the kool aid.

BOOTSIE

There's kool aid?

KATIE

Oh my GOD! I just got a like from
Mama Bird herself! Look!

GASPS. The kids gather around the tablet. Tabitha is on the
outside, trying to weasel in to see.

TREVOR

Did she leave a comment? Or just a
like? She left a comment on One
Arm's page. See?

BOOTSIE

It's her. See the blue check.

KATIE

She loves me, I'm gonna win!

NATE

Tabitha only got one view.
From the District Attorney.

THEY LAUGH AT TABITHA! Bootsie doesn't get it, so she laughs
loudest. Tabitha bolts out of the room, runs up the stairs.

MISS KETCHUM

NO RUNNING!

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Blue moonlight punches through the blinds. A chorus of
snoring children, packed into bunkbeds. Tabitha is on the top
bunk, wide awake, staring at the cracks in the ceiling. Like
a giant, dead tablet screen.

INT. MISS KETCHUM'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Tabitha sits before the humming old dinosaur of a computer.
Clicks on the Birdie home page. She scans the BIRDIE
CHANNELS. Each with a THUMBNAIL IMAGE of the smiling Birdie:

Lark's Shopping Hauls and Unboxings
Finch's Toy Reviews
Bustard's Gaming Channel
Hawk and Dove's Pranks & Challenges
Nightingale's ASMR Lullabies
Mama Bird's Beauty and Make-up Tutorials

She clicks MAMA BIRD'S MAKE-UP TUTORIALS. 15,987,375 views.

IN THE VIDEO: *THE BEAUTY ROOM*. All the make-up in the world. The backdrop is sparkly and pink. Mama does Nightingale's make-up, applying eye shadow with the precision of a surgeon. She's a far cry from the crunchy, flanneled girl in Alaska.

MAMA BIRD

*My beautiful Nightingale, is
 glamming out hard today with a Mama
 Bird Special! This was one of our
 most requested videos. Nothing
 makes me happier than doing make-up
 for someone I love.*

NIGHTINGALE

*Remember, Birders, you are
 beautiful whether you choose to
 wear makeup or not. Don't feel
 pressured to wear it just because
 we do. You do you, boo.*

Mama Bird dips her brush in the pallet and gets to work. Doing her make-up with love.

MAMA BIRD

*I like to say "Make-up doesn't hide
 who you are, it highlights it."*

Tabitha peels away from the screen, and looks in the mirror.

Gazing at her acne covered face. Another outbreak. She sighs.

CUT TO:

Tabitha is asleep at the keyboard, her face sending a hundred "Zs" into the Google search bar.

INT. BEST BUY - NIGHT

It's late, and they are closing up shop. The GEEK SQUAD employee from before is watching Tabitha's recording on the iPad. It makes the hair on the back of his neck stand up. A dopey smile creeps across his face. It's so beautiful.

He makes sure no one is looking, and hits UPLOAD.

EXT. MISS KETCHUM'S HOUSE - DAWN

A few days later. The lawn is littered with plastic toys. A sun bleached Fisher Price graveyard.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Desperate, Tabitha pounds on the bathroom door.

TABITHA
Are you almost done, I have to pee!

We hear THE BIRDIES THEME playing muffled inside.

KATIE (O.S.)
Use the boy's!

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Tabitha runs to the boy's bathroom, doing the *pee pee dance*.

TABITHA
Hurry up!

NATE (O.S.)
I'm in here!

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Tabitha pees in the bushes. A bird CHIRPS. Staring at her from its perch in the tree. The bird files away.

BOOTSIE (O.S.)
Tabitha!

She looks up and sees Bootsie hanging out the window, waving. Squats down lower into the bushes.

TABITHA
Can I have some privacy please?!

BOOTSIE
You went viral!

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Tabitha and the foster kids are gathered around the laptop. Trevor hits play and watch --

Tabitha's adoption plea, singing at Best Buy, stealing the iPad. Running from the guards. It has 1,287,8476 views.

NATE
Holy shit.

MISS KETCHUM
...language...

Tabitha takes out her fidget spinner and starts playing with it, nervously.

BOOTSIE
Is that really you singing?

TABITHA
...Yes.

KATIE
You're pretty good.

She smiles. But not for long -- *DING DONG! DING DONG!* They exchange looks.

BOOTSIE
Who's that?!

TABITHA
Am I in trouble?

MISS KETCHUM
Probably!

Miss Ketchum slaps the laptop shut, silencing the song. Starts mindlessly cleaning up the clutter. But it's no use, so she gives up. *DING DONG! DING DONG!*

MISS KETCHUM (CONT'D)
Hold your horses!
(to the kids)
Alright, upstairs.

They all hesitate. *KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK!* The kids bound upstairs and gather at the landing.

Miss Ketchum grabs her cane, and waddles down the hallway. The kids grip the landing bannisters like baby prisoners, trying to get a look at the obscured visitors. They see movement at the door and hear Miss Ketchum hurling muffled questions and insults.

FAMILIAR VOICES in the foyer.

LARK (O.S.)
Hi, everybody! Welcome back to our channel!

The foster kids are shocked.

TREVOR
Holy--

They all sprint down the stairs to find --

THE BIRDIE FAMILY FANNED OUT IN THE FOYER! They're dressed in similar clothes. Papa Bird holds the camera on a selfie stick, capturing everything. Always.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
It's really them.

BOOTSIE
They're with the social worker!

MRS. BOLLINGER, a severe looking social worker, behind them.

MISS KETCHUM
What is this?

LARK
We're at an undisclosed location in the Golden State of California where we will introduce our Bird Watchers to the newest member of the Birdie Bunch!

Everyone is stunned. Miss Ketchum starts puffing up her hair in the mirror. The camera making her nervous.

TABITHA
...what?

TREVOR
The Birdies are in our living room.

LARK
But first, smash that Like button!

Bustard jumps into the frame, flapping his arms like wings. He's gained weight since last we saw him in the opening.

BUSTARD
And don't forget to like and sus--
subscribe.

MAMA BIRD (O.S.)
Subscribe, sweetie. Annunciate.

They turn to see -- MAMA BIRD!

Glowing, and trailed by an aura of motherliness. As she enters, the room lights up somehow.

KATIE
Mama Bird... IRL!

BUSTARD
Like and suh-scribe... sub...

MAMA BIRD
 (spots her)
 Tabitha!

TABITHA
 It's really you...

Papa WHIPS the camera to capture Tabitha's priceless reaction.

MAMA BIRD
 Come here, kiddo.

Mama Bird opens her arms for a hug. Uncut joy breaks across Tabitha's face, as she winds up and runs at Mama Bird, crashing into her arms for a deep and loving embrace.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
 The moment I saw you, I knew I was yours. And you were mine.

TABITHA
 Me?!

KATIE
 Her?

MAMA BIRD
 You've won the open nest challenge!

Tabitha nearly faints. Frozen in shock. Jaws drop all around.

NATE
 Oh, wow!

Mama touches Tabitha's face, gently.

TABITHA
 Mama Bird...

MAMA BIRD
 Baby Bird.

Tabitha is at a loss for words. Choking up. The Birdies watch keenly. Exchange looks.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
 How'd you like to join our family?

TABITHA
 You mean forever?

MAMA BIRD
 A forever home. Fost-to-adopt.
 We'll be your new foster parents
 until the judge gives us the okay.

TABITHA
Yes, yes, yes!

PAPA BIRD
*That's the moment right there.
Beautiful.*

BUSTARD
(whispering)
Subscribe. Subscribe.

MISS KETCHUM
ALRIGHT, CUT THE SHIT!

Papa lowers the camera. A spell is broken. The plastic smiles fall from the Birdies' faces. Mama's eyes pop with anger.

FINCH
Mama, that lady swore!

DOVE
She's a troll!

MISS KETCHUM
This ain't going out live is it?!

PAPA BIRD
No, we edit everything.

MISS KETCHUM
You can't be filming fosters! It ain't allowed! Tell 'em, Bollinger.

MRS. BOLLINGER
Actually--

PAPA BIRD
Please calm down, miss.

MISS KETCHUM
I'll get in trouble here! I signed NDAs! There's privacy concerns!

PAPA BIRD
I'd appreciate it if you didn't raise your voice to my wife.

MRS. BOLLINGER
Let's all take a breath here--

MISS KETCHUM
Give it to me!

Miss Ketchum reaches for the camera. Mama bird jumps up.

MAMA BIRD
Don't touch that please.

The severity of her voice makes everyone freeze.

BUSTARD
 (whispering)
*Like and subscribe, like and
 subscribe--*

Mama Bird thaws. Paints on a smile.

MAMA BIRD
 I'm sorry, Miss Ketchum. Jeanie,
 isn't it? Can I call you Jeanie?
 Filming is allowed. We have special
 permission from Walter.

MISS KETCHUM
 ...Who?

MRS. BOLLINGER
Judge Simmons. The Birdies are
 doing a great service. Adoption
 rates have skyrocketed since they
 started their channel. Do you
 watch, Jeanie?

MISS KETCHUM
 No, Bollinger, I don't.

MRS. BOLLINGER
 I'm a birder myself.

Mrs. Bollinger takes out an envelope and hands it to Miss
 Ketchum who seems sad and small now.

MRS. BOLLINGER (CONT'D)
 Here's the paperwork. Isn't this
 wonderful? It's so rare for a child
 in the system to find a happy
 ending, especially the older ones.

Papa starts filming again as Mama kneels down before Tabitha
 and takes her hands.

MAMA BIRD
 Time to spread your wings and fly.

She leans in and WHISPERS into Tabitha's ear.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
*You can cry now if you want to.
 They'll love it.*

This permission breaks the logjam in her heart. Tabitha
 bursts into tears. Horrible and happy. Everything she's been
 holding in for so long. Joy and rage and love.

TABITHA
 This is the best day of my life.

PAPA BIRD
The day ain't over yet!!!

INT. JAGUAR SUV - DAY

Mama at the helm of the luxury vehicle, sipping her latte through a metal straw. Papa twisting around in the front, filming everything -- All the time -- No matter what, as Tabitha, in the back by the window, rattles off her fangirl love, like machine-gun fire.

TABITHA
--And, oh man, the sibling prank war videos are friggin' hilarious! The time you put the green food coloring in Hawk's toothbrush and turned his mouth green. That was so funny I literally almost peed.

DOVE
Thanks. The trick is to be funny without being mean spirited.

TABITHA
I love your shopping hauls, Lark. And Finch's toy reviews, too! And I even love Bustard's gaming channel, even though I'm not a gamer--

LARK
Hey... Where is Bustard?

Mama Bird looks back. Her eyes bug out of her head.

Bustard is not in the car. She slams on the brakes, the KIDS LURCH FORWARD.

INT. MISS KETCHUM'S HOUSE - DAY

The foster kids walk to the living room. They turn to see --

Bustard hiding behind the couch. Peeking over, nervously. They exchange looks. Miss Ketchum enters, punches her hips.

MISS KETCHUM
What in the--

DING DONG! The DOORBELL RINGS.

CUT TO:

Bootsie answers the door. It's Mama. She smiles.

MAMA BIRD
Where is that silly goose?

Bustard shudders.

EXT. HIGHWAY - VARIOUS - DAY

Driving fast. A blur of trees, pastures, and grazing cows.

Mama watches Bustard in the rearview. Tabitha smiles at him, and hands him her fidget spinner. He takes it and plays with it, and for the first time -- we see him crack a smile.

DING! DING! DING! The entire family looks down at their Apple watches to check their new notification. They all exchange worried looks.

MAMA BIRD
We dipped again.

A thick silence hangs over the car.

CUT TO:

LATER.

Heavy honking traffic. A CATCHY POP riff plays. The Birdies sway in their seats, and moving in unison as they sing. Papa films. Tabitha beams.

THE BIRDIES
*A new Birdie's coming home to nest!
Our favorite Bird who we love best!*

MAMA BIRD
Take the solo, Tabitha--

TABITHA
*Our Birdie family's a gift from
God! We're not just a family, we're
a squad--*

The hair on the back of Mama's neck stands up. Pupils dilate. Gooseflesh spreads down her arm. She shivers.

HAWK
She sorta sounds like Nightingale.

TABITHA
That's where I learned to sing.
Watching her.

MAMA BIRD
Don't stop, Tabitha.

Tabitha nods, and keeps singing --

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The shiny SUV turns off on to an endless stretch of dirt road. Thick forest squeezes it like a vice.

TABITHA (O.S.)
*You may not have our skin! You may
 not have our hair! But you have our
 heart! You have our heart!*

Pop jumps out, and unlocks a rusty GATE that leads to an even dirtier dirt road. Posted signs everywhere.

"PRIVATE PROPERTY."

INT. SUV - THE BIRDIE ESTATE - DAY

They reach the end of the road and come to a stop before a formidable wrought iron fence. An ornamental bird nest sits on top of the gate.

Beyond the fence, up on a hill -- THE BIRDIE MANSION. A sprawling Palladian-style estate, lit up magnificently.

TABITHA
 It's even bigger in real life.

Papa presses a button, and the gates swing open, dramatically. Tabitha takes in the new world as they pull up to the house. The lawn is covered with toys and games. A bouncy castle on the lawn. An infinity pool in the backyard.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
 Wow.

Dove is sound asleep on Hawk's shoulder. So he turns to Papa's lens, and puts a shooshing finger to his lips.

HAWK
 (whispers)
 Sibling Prank War Initiated.

Hawk SCREAMS BLOODY MURDER right into Dove's ear, jolting her awake. She smacks her head against the window. Everyone bursts out laughing, Mama clapping, and Tabitha loves it the most, convulsing with laughter.

HAWK (CONT'D)
 Hashtag Sibling Prank War!!!

DOVE
 Hey, Hawk. Guess what? You were adopted.

They all laugh. Papa gets it all on camera. The gates SMASH CLOSED behind them.

EXT. THE BIRDIE ESTATE - DAY

A SIGN HANGS OVER THE HOUSE -- **WELCOME HOME, TABITHA!!!**

The kids hop out of the car, and jump around. Papa Bird is always filming, like the camera is an extension of himself. Mama takes Tabitha's hand.

MAMA BIRD
It's good to be home, isn't it?

TABITHA
This is the greatest thing ever.

She smiles warmly, and touches her cheek. Tabitha shudders at her loving touch. Hope flutters in her big brown eyes.

MAMA BIRD
Go on in and get yourself settled.

TABITHA
Okay, mama. Is it okay that I call you that?

MAMA BIRD
I wouldn't have it any other way.

LARK
Rotten Egg challenge! Last one in has the least views!

They all run inside screaming with glee. Bustard is the last one in, as usual. He kicks the ground.

PAPA BIRD
Coming, my love?

MAMA BIRD
Yes, yes. I'll be right there.

Papa goes inside. Mama just sits on the stoop. Stares at the fiery sun, at the little fluttering birds. Mindlessly picking the raw skin around her fingernails.

PAPA BIRD (O.S.)
Everything okay?

Papa levels the camera at her. She hides her hands.

MAMA BIRD
Perfect.

PAPA BIRD
Are you sure, love bird?

He touches her gently, she recoils as if from a hot flame.

MAMA BIRD
I just need a minute. Don't miss her reaction shots please.

PAPA BIRD
Jag älskar dig!

He blows her a kiss, and films his way back into the house.

INT. BIRDIE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Tabitha enters, awe-stuck. Takes it all in. Papa Bird filming her reactions. The house is big. Antiseptic luxury. The very opposite of Miss Ketchum's house. Looming over everything are electronic leaderboards in the living room, above the fireplace.

VIEW TOTALS: 12,574,756,7565

SUBSCRIBERS: 7,185,7657

Tickticktickticktick-- The subs and views are plummeting. Losing thousands at a time.

Underneath the leaderboard, there's a mysterious RED BUTTON. There's a sign above it that reads: "**THE FULL BIRD**"

A photo of NIGHTINGALE hangs in a frame above a shrine. Webby Awards. Shorty Award. Gold Status Creator Award.

So many PET BIRDS in elaborate cages peppered throughout the house. Cockatiels, cockatoos, lovebirds, Budgerigars. A constant barrage of tweets, chirps, and squawks.

A YELLOW CANARY flies around the living room.

A GIANT ABSTRACT MURAL of the YouTube logo covers a wall. Tabitha notices keno lights and bounces hanging from rafters built into the ceiling. More like a film set than a home.

MAMA BIRD (O.S.)
*Tell the Birders what you're
 thinking right now!*

They all turn to Mama Bird, who is looming in the doorway. Backlit against the setting sun. Papa sticks the camera in Tabitha's face and goes Dutch.

TABITHA
 It's like I'm living inside of
 YouTube!

The all laugh. Papa Bird whips the camera around showing off the space as he walks with Tabitha. They pass a wall-sized aquarium filled with multi-colored tropical fish.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
 That's where Hawk took his first
 steps by the aquarium. That's where
 Lark did her Back to School skit...

As she moves through the house, Papa films.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
 Mama's kitchen. *Super Nacho Time!*
 The floor is lava challenge, the
 mystery wheel of soda. And that's
 where Hawk and Dove's epic sibling
 prank war started when Hawk put the
 bird doo in Dove's shoe, which is
 an all time Birdie classic.

Suddenly, she stops. Gets a little somber...

TABITHA (CONT'D)
 This is where Nightingale said her
 goodbyes... right here. It was the
 saddest thing I ever saw...

Mama Bird finally steps out of the shadows, and the smile
 falls off her face.

MAMA BIRD
 (melancholy)
 We don't mention Gale on camera
 anymore.

TABITHA
 We don't?

Papa lowers the camera. Again, the spell is broken.

PAPA BIRD
 It's alright, you didn't know.

MAMA BIRD
 She emailed us this morning from
 Nome and she has asked us to
 refrain from mentioning her in our
 videos. She's trying to stay
 anonymous out there in the boonies,
 and doesn't want the extra
 attention. We respect her wishes.

Mama stares at the painting. Wipes a pesky tear.

TABITHA
 Oh, okay. No problem.

BUSTARD
*Like and subscribe. Like and
 subscribe. Like and--*

MAMA BIRD
 Don't stop filming. The camera
 stays on, please and thank you.

PAPA BIRD

Right, mama.

Papa starts filming again. Mama comes to life, jumps to her feet a little too quickly.

MAMA BIRD

What was your favorite Birdie moment this year, Tabitha?!

Tabitha looks at the lens. Nods, and lays it on thick:

TABITHA

I have so many great memories in this house! I feel like this is where I've always lived. Cuz I sorta always have. I know this house by heart, cuz I come here every single day to see you. And now you see me, too. My whole life I felt homesick for a place I never really been 'til right now.

The yellow canary lands on her shoulder. They laugh.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

Hello, Eric. Nice to finally meet you in person. Chirp chirp!

ERIC flies away.

PAPA BIRD

That's the moment right there.

LARK

She's a natural.

HAWK

She's gonna get a billion Likes.

MAMA BIRD

Let's give Tabitha the FULL BIRD!

The Birdies gasp. Jump to their feet, and stand at attention.

Mama runs over and -- **WHAMM!!!** Smashes the RED "FULL BIRD" BUTTON and -- **AROOOOOOOOOGGGGGGGAAAAAAA!!!!** AIRHORNS SCREAM as all the lights die in the house! RED LIGHTS FLASH DEMONICALLY. A BOOMING VOICE EXPLODES THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE--

DEEP VOICE

THE FULLLLL BIRD!

AROOOOOOOOOGGGGGGGAAAAAAA!!!! And then -- "SURFIN BIRD" blasts on the soundsystem as the stage lights in the rafters **WHIRRRR TO LIFE** for a brilliant neon light extravaganza in synch with the song, and complete with lasers.

**A-well-a everybody's heard about the bird!
B-b-b-bird, bird, bird, b-bird's the word!**

"THE FULL BIRD!" Flashes on all the flatscreen TVs.

Papa films as they break into an elaborate CHOREOGRAPHED DANCE. Mama and her Birdies dance their hearts out, shaking their tail feathers and flapping their wings. Tabitha hesitates.

MAMA BIRD
C'mon, Tabitha! You know the moves!

And she does. She joins in, never missing a beat, and dancing her heart out.

TABITHA
Woooooo!

MAMA BIRD
(dancing)
I'm so HAPPY!

PAPA BIRD
That's right, Mama!

Caged birds SCREAM and SHRIEK and BEAT THEIR WINGS.

B-b-b-bird, bird, bird, b-bird's the word!

And Mama dances like hell. The kiddos struggle to keep up, all of them in-synch, like her little dancing clones, and as she just works herself into a wild-eyed frenzy.

The song ends, and they all pumps their fists in the air.

MAMA BIRD
NOW LET'S! CREATE! SOME! **CONTENT!**

BIRDIES
Yayyyyyy!

"SURFIN' BIRD" continues over--

VIDEO POV

-- The Birdies are running through the house, the camera chasing them. Mama opens the door to the BALL PIT ROOM. She does a backflip into the sea of neon balls and vanishes below. The Birdies follow, Tabitha plugs her nose and dives in. They erupt from below and play!

-- "Mystery Wheel Swimming Challenge" at the pool, Tabitha spins a wheel of fortune. Lands on "Cannon Ball." SPLASH!!!

-- The Birdies jump in the bouncy castle. Mama does a flip.

-- The Birdies steer dune buggies across the estate. Pedal to the metal, Tabitha tries like hell to catch up to Mama, seizing with laughter. The sun falls behind the mountains.

-- It's night now. The Family is doing the limbo in the living room. "How low can you go? How low can you go?" Tabitha gets low and dances under the stick.

DONG. DONG. DONG. A cuckoo clock strikes EIGHT. An ornamental bird springs out of the little door -- CU-CKOO. CU-CKOO.

Papa lowers the camera, plunging us into--

REALITY

Everyone freezes. Finch knocks over the stick. Smiles falling off their faces. Mama's eyes flash with anxiety.

PAPA BIRD

Mama. I'm sorry. That's a wrap.

MAMA BIRD

What? It can't be eight already...

PAPA BIRD

It's eight, love bird. See?

Mama deflates. The Birdies look nervous. Mama does too.

DOVE

We can keep going!

HAWK

I'm not tired!

LARK

Me either!

PAPA BIRD

I have to get editing now. Remember what we talked about? Work life balance. We need to do better.

MAMA BIRD

But we were... we were just getting to the good part.

PAPA BIRD

You know how the Birders get if we miss our deadline.

MAMA BIRD

(pathetically)
Ten more minutes?

PAPA BIRD

Last time you told me... you said, "Papa Bird, I'm gonna ask for ten more minutes, and don't you give in to me, you said, you say 'no mama' and you get up there and get editing.' Don't you give in. That's what you said.

MAMA BIRD

I was kidding.

PAPA BIRD

Mama.

MAMA BIRD

But we have a new Birdie tonight. *Pics or it didn't happen.*

PAPA BIRD

I'm sorry, Mama. That's a wrap! Make sure you kiddos load all your content to Dropbox for Papa so he can edit you allllll up.

Bustard fingers his fidget spinner. Tabitha watches as -- Papa turns the camera off. It whirrs and dies, and so does Mama, like the cap has been placed on the lens of her soul.

PAPA BIRD (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, love bird. *Kärleksfågel.*

He goes to her and wraps her up. Tries to kiss her, but she recoils. He plants a kiss anyway.

PAPA BIRD (CONT'D)

Such a kidder. Welcome home, Tabitha.

He grabs his gear and hurries upstairs, a little too quickly.

TABITHA

Night, Papa! Thank you!

He's already gone. They're alone with her. And now it's eggshells. Tabitha's grin falls off her face when she sees Mama. Something different about her now. The way she stands. She seems smaller, naked without the loving look of the lens.

She plops down in her chair, suddenly completely spent.

MAMA BIRD

Birdie cuddle.

She opens her arms, expectantly. The Birdies exchange worried looks. And then they hug Mama. Bustard stands back.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
How much do you love me, Birdies?

BIRDIES
(rote)
*We love you more than all the
"likes" in the world!*

MAMA BIRD
Yes. And what about you, Bustard?
How much do you love me?

He stands before her. She opens her arms to him.

BUSTARD
Um, more than all the "likes" in
the, uh, universe pretty much.

She hugs him tight. A little too tight.

MAMA BIRD
Is that all?

She lets go of him abruptly. Her eyes turn cold. Spooked, he drops his fidget spinner. The Pet Birds SHRIEK and CRY in their cages. Getting louder.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
You gave me quite a scare back
there, kiddo...

BUSTARD
I know that and I'm very sorry.

MAMA BIRD
(darkening)
"A good birdie stays close to the
flock."

She circles him like a prize pony.

BUSTARD
I didn't, uh, even realize you were
even gone until it was too late.

Tabitha narrows her brow. Her Birdie brothers and sisters stare at their shoes.

MAMA BIRD
What did you say to that old troll?

BUSTARD
Nothing.

MAMA BIRD
Nothing at all?

BUSTARD
I didn't say anything.

MAMA BIRD
Haven't I been a good mother?

BUSTARD
You're the best mother.

MAMA BIRD
Don't you like it here?

He nods. She stares him down.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
I'm afraid there has to be a
consequence.

Bustard bows his head. The caged birds SCREECH and BEAT their wings against the bars, like they're some sort of avian barometer for her mood. Tabitha senses the tension, steps in.

TABITHA
He didn't mean it, mama! You know, Bustard. He's forgetful. Remember when he spun the chore wheel and had to clean the cages and he forgot to close them, and the birds got out? Remember what you said?

MAMA BIRD
(softening)
"He'd forget his head if it wasn't screwed on his neck."

TABITHA
It's the adopted nest! Of course he likes it here, it's the greatest place on planet earth!

Mama takes a deep breath.

MAMA BIRD
(to Bustard)
Just please be more mindful, dear. The world's a dangerous place. You're an influencer, and that makes you a target. If anything ever happened to you, I'd never forgive myself.

She hugs him again. He breathes relieved.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
I love you so much it kills me.

BUSTARD

I love you too, mama.

MAMA BIRD

Now let's get your views up, huh?

Bustard nods. Mama looks up at the SUBSCRIBERS, dropping like flies. *Ticktickticktickticktickticktick...* She chews on her bloody fingernail. Tries like hell not to.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

The Birdies will show you to your room, Tabitha. Goodnight, my loves. I'm so happy you're home.

TABITHA

Me too, Mama.

She kisses her on the head. Birds *SQUAAAAAK!!!!* Mama walks down the long dark hallway to her bedroom, a little dazed. Slams the door.

All at once, the Birdies breathe a sigh of relief.

LARK

C'mon! Let's get you oriented!

INT. STAIRS - NIGHT

The Birdies move up the grand staircase like little soldiers. Lark rides in the stair lift, her crutches in her lap. Upstairs, the walls are lined with framed family photos.

Tabitha watches Bustard branch off. He shoots her a look, and then sulks into his own bedroom.

INT. TABITHA'S BEDROOM - DAY

It's a teen girl's dream. Everything pink and fluffy and matching. Cool art on the wall. A Peloton bike. A massive flat screen. A vanity, and high tech vlogging set up -- green screen and movie lights before a Macbook Pro on a sleek desk. A common nightingale sings in a lavish pink cage.

TABITHA

Wow!

She opens the closet and sees the clothes. So many amazing things. All for her. She bursts into tears.

FINCH

We're not filming you.

TABITHA

What?

FINCH

You don't have to cry, no one can see you. No one's watching.

TABITHA

It's just I've never had my own room before...

DOVE

You mean they're real tears?

The Birdies are standing before her now. Fanned out.

TABITHA

I know this room. It was Nightingale's.

FINCH

Here's your orientation packet.

Finch takes a packet off the desk, and hands it to Tabitha.
ON THE COVER: The BIRDIES hugging on the lawn. One of the children is a cutout with a question mark for a face.

FROM BIRDER TO BIRDIE! WELCOME TO THE NEST
THE GOOD BIRDIE CODES OF CONDUCT & FAMILY GUIDELINES

LARK

But there's a rule that's not in the packet. The most important rule.

Lark nods at Dove, goes into the hallway to check. All clear, so she shuts the door.

LARK (CONT'D)

It's best to stay away from Mama when she's in a burnout.

TABITHA

Burnout?

FINCH

YouTube Burnout.

DOVE

She gets sad sometimes. It's getting worse since Gale left.

TABITHA

But, I've never seen her burned out before. She always has "a smiling face and a happy heart."

DOVE

She only gets it at night. After eight. When the camera's off.

FINCH

People think being a YouTuber is all fun and games, but it's not. It kinda burns you out sometimes. Cuz if you miss one single day, the Birders turn into nasty old trolls and unsubscribe.

LARK

She'll be her old self tomorrow. She's the best mother in the world when the camera's on!

DOVE

We're very lucky birds.

TABITHA

I know Gale had to follow her passion, and live off the land, but I think it was, like, kinda mean to take her money and walk away from this channel as soon as she turned eighteen. After everything Mama did for her. She was mama's favorite.

LARK

Plus our channel lost two million subs in one night when she left...

DOVE

You'll have to pick up the slack. Just remember, you're not adopted yet, you're still a foster, so make sure you keep those views up, and everything will be fine.

It almost sounds like a threat.

TABITHA

But... no. Mama said this is my forever home.

DOVE

(smiles)
Nothing is forever!

Tabitha nods, a little spooked.

LARK

Birdie Cuddle!

The Birdies all give Tabitha a great big hug.

DOVE

I'm just next door. Here's my cell. Text me if you need anything.

She hands Tabitha a scrap of paper.

TABITHA

Thanks.

FINCH

We're so happy you're here! You'll really round out the cast.

HAWK

Call time is at six-thirty AM. The early bird gets the worm!

With that, The Birdies leaves, shutting the door behind them.

Tabitha goes over to the bed. Sees her welcome gifts sitting on the bedspread. A brand new iPad. iPhone 11 Pro. A Canon Power Shot G7. A handheld tripod. And a note from Mama Bird.

To our new Birdie:

ELECTRONICS ARE OUR INSTRUMENTS -- WE MUST KEEP THEM IN TUNE!

And a series of cards. WELCOME TO: *Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok*. With instructions. She quickly opens the iPad. Runs her hand across the sleek, perfect screen. She sees her reflection.

And the reflection of NIGHTINGALE STANDING BEHIND HER.

She screams, and drops the iPad, whips around. It's only Nightingale's face on a framed BIRDIE POSTER.

NIGHTINGALE'S ASMR LULLABY CHANNEL! GOLD STATUS CREATOR

She's wearing a purple wig. Two hearts stamped on her cheeks. Smiling wide with her arms folded. Cartoon Sheep jumping over a fence behind her.

The bird CHIRPS in its cage. Shrill. Tabitha looks down at the iPad. The screen is cracked. *Already*.

TABITHA

Shit.

INT. MAMA BIRD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A dark room. Mama Bird sits before the cold glow of THREE GIANT COMPUTER SCREENS. She scrolls through the Birdie videos, lost in the happy times. She knows them by heart.

And then she does a horrible thing. She knows shouldn't, but she does it anyway. She scrolls down to the COMMENTS SECTION.

Unsubscribe -- no Gale!!!

*This channel sucks without Gale -- unsubscribing
I see why Nightingale peaced.*

MAMA BIRD IS NUTS!!!!

Mama starts DELETING these comments, one by one. Scrubbing the trolls. A purge of negativity.

HELP!!! CAN'T SLEEP WO GALE'S LULLABIES!!! Delete.
Call Child Protective services on these nuts. Delete.
I wish MAMA BIRD WENT TO ALASKA!!! Delete
BUSTARD'S A FAT ARAB BITCH!!!! Delete
THIS IS A SWEATSHOP! CHILD LABOR! Delete
THE BIRDIES SUCK NOW!!! Delete.
Kill yourself Bustard Delete.
MAMA BIRD IS A TERRIBLE MOTHER!!!!

The deep sadness in her eyes gives way to anger.

INT. TABITHA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tabitha is curled up in her comfy new bed, fast asleep.

BUSTARD (O.S.)
Like and subscribe, like and
subscribe, like and subscribe, like
and subscribe...

She snaps awake. Her ears perk.

TABITHA
 H-hello?

BUSTARD (O.S.)
AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Tabitha creeps down the empty hallway. Listening.

BUSTARD (O.S.)
Like and subscribe, like and
subscribe, like and subscribe, like
and subscribe...

She turns and sees Bustard's door cracked open. He's in his race car bed, tossing and turning and talking in his sleep.

TABITHA
 Bustard?

BUSTARD
 LIKE AND SUBSCRIBE, LIKE AND
 SUBSCRIBE, LIKE AND--

She runs in there, and sits on his bed.

TABITHA
 Bustard, you're dreaming.

Bustard's eyes SNAP OPEN and he gasps, shooting horrible looks around the room.

BUSTARD
What?! What?!

TABITHA
It's okay! You were sleeping, you
were sleep talking --

Bustard finally SNAPS OUT OF IT. Looks around.

BUSTARD
I was having nightmares!

He gives her a hug, and won't let go.

TABITHA
It's okay, Bustard.

BUSTARD
Farhad. My name is Farhad. I hate
Bustard. They're not even a cool
bird. They look like a turkey on
stilts.

Bustard starts to whimper. Tabitha rubs his back.

TABITHA
Everything's okay now...

BUSTARD
No it's not. I'm so scared. If I
don't get my views up soon, there's
gonna be a "consequence."

TABITHA
No, no, views don't matter! Not to
Mama. She always says that YouTube's
not about views or subscribers or
Likes or any of that junk. It's about
connection. It's about family. She
never had any photos of herself
growing up, and that's why YouTube is
like one giant living photo album, so
we'll never miss a moment out our
childhood!

BUSTARD
None of this is what you think.

Tabitha shudders.

BUSTARD (CONT'D)
Don't get me wrong. I love Mama.
She saved me from that hell. They
made us dig tunnels in Iran. Terror
tunnels they called them. Little
children are prized diggers cuz of
our nimble bodies.

(MORE)

BUSTARD (CONT'D)

Mama flew all the way to Tehran to adopt me. She was so kind and nice and pretty and... She gave me this big, beautiful house and family and let me play all the games I want...
(sighs)

But I don't have nightmares about the tunnels. I have nightmares about the views.

Bustard bursts into tears.

BUSTARD (CONT'D)

What if I'm not Birdie material?

Tabitha hugs him and he cries on her shoulder.

INT. CLOSET - NIGHT

Tabitha is curled up in her massive walk-in closet, watching a video. The cracked iPad splays light across the ceiling. The battery is at 2%.

IN THE VIDEO: Nightingale is wearing full-glam make-up, heart stamps on her cheeks, and the purple wig. She stands before a green screen. She musters up all the love she has to give, and sings a LULLABY. Behind her, CARTOON SHEEP jump over a fence. Her voice is soft and fragile, like Tabitha's.

NIGHTINGALE

HUSH LITTLE BABY DON'T SAY A
WORD... MAMA'S GONNA BUY YOU A
MOCKINGBIRD...

Nightingale smiles so big it tickles her ears.

But Tabitha sees -- A tear falls down Nightingale's cheek, smudging the heart stamp and making it bleed.

Suddenly, the screen dies, plunging us into darkness.

INT. MAMA BIRD'S BATHROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

The lights are off in the cavernous bathroom. Mama Bird sits at the massive vanity in the dark, her face in a bowl of ice. She stays under a *little too long*. She finally rips her head out, and sucks in a massive gasp, whipping her hair back. She grabs her concealer.

INT. TABITHA'S CLOSET - DAY

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK. Tabitha snaps awake. Sits up. Quickly hides the cracked iPad just as --

WOOSH! The door swings open! Mama Bird looming over her. A glowing beauty in the soft spot of the sun. Hair done. Make-up perfect. A sight to behold.

MAMA BIRD

What are you doing in the closet?

TABITHA

I'm sorry! It's just... where I go sometimes...

Mama Bird climbs into the closet with her. Cuddles up to her. It's very cozy, and Tabitha is touched.

MAMA BIRD

Oh sweetie bird, I understand.

TABITHA

You do?

MAMA BIRD

Growing up, this was your safe space, wasn't it? The closet.

She looks over and sees -- Papa Bird standing in the corner, filming everything. He shoots them a thumbs up.

PAPA BIRD

I'm not here.

MAMA BIRD

You were hiding from your mother, weren't you?

TABITHA

I don't like to talk about that.

MAMA BIRD

She was a bad mother?

Tabitha glances at Papa's camera. Fixes her hair.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

She chose drugs over you. And you feel very sad about it.

She looks back at Mama Bird and nods again.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

She knew just where to put the bruises so no one would see them.

(off Tabitha's look)

I read your file, sweets. We're more alike than you know. It's the Albatross around our necks so to speak. Abuse and neglect. We all have that in common, I'm sad to say. All of your new brothers and sisters. Even Papa. Right Papa?

He shoots them a thumbs up.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

The way they treated him at the Allmänna Barnhuset. It makes me sick to my stomach...

Papa bows his head, swimming in memories.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

This is the glue that binds us. We are all survivors.

TABITHA

Do you mind if we talk about something else?

MAMA BIRD

It's not good to keep these things bottled up.

She plays with Tabitha's hair. Tabitha loves it.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

Do you mind if I tell you my backstory?

Mama takes a deep breath. Peeks at the camera. She's ready.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

After mommy died, I got lost in the system. There are some wonderful fosters out there, but I was dealt a bad hand. A bad Mama. She supplemented her disability income by taking in placements, and then neglected and abused us. She starved us, and burned our little hands on the stove when we talked back. I missed my mommy so much. I couldn't sleep without her lullabies. Every night, I would cry so loud it would scare the other children. They thought the devil was loose in the halls. She would gag me, and chain me to the bed at night. But that wouldn't stop me from crying. I cried until I lost my voice. And then cried without it... I'll never forget, I was lying in bed, and I heard a voice through my tears. So soft and strong. It was my mommy's voice...

Mama has to stop a moment. She's getting emotional.

TABITHA

...She told you you'd grow up to be a good mother. A protector of lost kiddos.

(MORE)

TABITHA (CONT'D)

You would build a nest, and surround yourself with baby birds. You would give your placements all the things you never had. Your children would be seen and heard and loved. And they would want for nothing. The way you wish it had been for you...

MAMA BIRD

You really are my number one fan.

Tabitha glows.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

This is what I was put on this earth to do.

TABITHA

I used to hide in the closet when I was a little kid and watch your videos. They calmed me down. They told me my first word was "Birdie."

Mama glances at Papa to make sure he got that. He nods.

MAMA BIRD

(to Tabitha)

You never have to hide from me, you know that don't you?

TABITHA

I know, Mama.

MAMA BIRD

A closet's kind of like a womb. If you really stop and think about it.

TABITHA

It's my favorite womb in the house.

MAMA BIRD

That's cute. You should tweet that. You need to start thinking about these things. Insta, too. Have you explored the accounts we made you?

TABITHA

Oh, um. Not yet. But I will!

MAMA BIRD

Unfortunately, Tabitha, your homecoming video didn't perform as well as we'd hoped.

TABITHA

It didn't?

MAMA BIRD

You're not connecting yet which is odd considering your viral status. We're still losing subs at an alarming rate.

TABITHA

I'm sorry.

The nightingale flutters in its cage. Mama helps Tabitha up. They start scanning the wardrobe. Papa gets a better shot.

MAMA BIRD

Don't worry, you'll catch on. You have so much to offer. But, we need to make a few adjustments. You need to start playing the part. Look. This will look so cute on you.

She grabs a bow sleeved tunic dress from the hanger. Earth tones. She drapes it over Tabitha. She keeps glancing at the lens, a little nervous.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

I had acne too when I was your age.

TABITHA

Yeah right, you're perfect.

MAMA BIRD

So are you.

TABITHA

Yeah right.

Tabitha feels Papa's prying lens.

MAMA BIRD

You're not seeing what I see. Would you like me to show you what I see? When I look at you?

TABITHA

You mean...?

MAMA BIRD

How about a Mama Bird Special.

Tabitha squeals with glee. Hugs Mama Bird, so happy.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

We can live stream the reveal! A special "Birdie Cast," that should give us the bump we need. *Tabitha, Tabitha*. We're going to have to do something about that name. It sounds like a cat's name.

Papa smiles as he films. Zooming in on Mama, studying her with the lens. CLOSER. An obsessive gaze. Tabitha is crying.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

TABITHA
Nothing. Everything's right.

MAMA BIRD
Let's get those views up.

INT. THE BEAUTY ROOM - DAY

All the make-up in the world. Mama Bird does Tabitha's make-up before A CAMERA mounted on a tripod. She is applying Tabitha's eye shadow with the precision of a surgeon. The backdrop is sparkly and pink.

MAMA BIRD
Our new Birdie is glamming out hard today with a once in a lifetime Mama Bird Special! Nothing makes me happier than doing make-up for someone I love...

TABITHA
Mama? Can I say something? Remember, Birders at home -- you are beautiful whether you choose to wear makeup or not. Don't feel pressured to wear it just because I do. You do you, boo.

Mama kisses her on the head. Tabitha shudders with love.

MAMA BIRD
Very good.

She dips her brush in the pallet and gets to work.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
I'm going to be using my Marc Jacobs Beauty highliner gel eye crayon eyeliner... link below.
(winks)
Papa will edit that in later.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The Birdies are waiting patiently. Papa Bird live streams Lark with a mounted iPhone.

LARK
Good morning, Bird watchers!
Welcome back to our channel!
(MORE)

LARK (CONT'D)

It's the moment you've all been waiting for -- we're coming to you live on YouTube for the big reveal of Tabitha's epic "Mama Bird Special" makeover, and she still hasn't seen it yet. Are we ready Birdies?!

BIRDIES

YEEEEAAHHH!!!!

The shouting makes Bustard jump. He's on edge. Eyes blood-shot. Face pale. Like he hasn't slept a wink. Eric the Canary flutters through the house.

Lark hits PLAY on the iPad. "YELLOW" BY COLDPLAY IS PUMPED THROUGH THE SPEAKERS... Glowing proud, Mama Bird appears at the top of the stairs with Tabitha.

MAMA BIRD

The transformation is complete. I'd like to introduce you to my masterpiece --

Tabitha appears -- glowing like Mama, her perfect make-up concealing her acne. Full glam, and smokey eyes. She looks beautiful in her tunic dress, her hair done with baby bangs and beauty waves. A completely different kid.

Everyone explodes with adulation and applause.

FINCH

Wowwwwww!

DOVE

She's a glamazon queen!

LARK

On fleek!

Bustard stares at the floor. Hawk nudges him. He snaps out of it, and smiles, reflexively.

Tabitha moves gracefully down the stairs like Cinderella, or Rachel Leigh Cook, and into the living room.

PAPA BIRD

It's time for the big reveal!

A stand-up mirror in the living room, covered by a velvet blanket. Lark and Dove usher her to it. All very affected.

Mama Bird eyes the subscribers on the wall, bites her lip.

Tickticktick... the subscribers are going up!

6,765,7899

The Birdies fan out around Tabitha, hold her shoulders, rub her back, and giggle excitedly.

PAPA BIRD (CONT'D)

One, two, three--

Lark pulls the blanket off the mirror, and Tabitha sees herself for the first time. She's so beautiful.

MAMA BIRD

Meet the real you!

She bursts into tears. She can't believe it.

TABITHA

Oh my god!!!! WHO IS THAT?!

She laughs and cries and laughs again. Lark and Dove are tearing up. Mama comes up behind Tabitha.

Tickticktick-- UP AND UP!

MAMA BIRD

The fairest of them all.

TABITHA

Birdie Cuddle!

Tabitha gives her a squealing hug.

PAPA BIRD

That's the moment right there.

MAMA BIRD

Tell them how you feel. All the Birders watching at home.

Mama Bird points to Papa's iPhone. She looks at it. She looks at her new family. Overwhelming joy...

TABITHA

My whole life... No one noticed me. No one knew I was there. Even my bio mom neglected me. And now... for the first time, like, ever in my life... I feel like you see me.

Tabitha looks at Mama, making sure she's on track. Mama nods like -- *very good*. So Tabitha lays it on thick.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

And I feel like I see myself. The me inside that I never knew was there. I got millions of people in my new perfect family. All my dreams are coming true... I look in the mirror and I think, this is me! The real me! This is Tabitha!

MAMA BIRD

No. Tabitha no longer exists.
You're a Birdie now. You need a
Birdie name and a Birdie channel.

TABITHA

This is so freaking awesome!

MAMA BIRD

From the moment I heard you sing, I
knew you had the gift of the cradle
song. Growing up we called it "the
tingle." It's something born in
you. It's very rare. Mommy had the
gift. She would perch on my bedside
at night, and sing me a lullaby,
and it was like magic, all the
worry would melt away, and I'd be
out like a light. Nowadays we call
it ASMR. Autonomous sensory
meridian response, one of the most
popular trends on YouTube. The
dulcet tones of your voice produce
a natural calming effect on the
prone. You're a born mother. You'll
sing the worried world to sleep.

TABITHA

...I will?

MAMA BIRD

And now for the finishing touch.

She produces a wrapped gift, hands it to Tabitha.

TABITHA

For me?

MAMA BIRD

Go on. Open it.

Tabitha smiles. Rips it open. Whatever's inside makes her
face fall. Mama smiles so big.

LARK

What is it?!

Tabitha takes out-- NIGHTINGALE'S PURPLE WIG. The Birdies
gasp. Papa lowers the camera.

MAMA BIRD

Put it on, sweetie bird. Don't miss
this, Papa.

He keeps filming. Tabitha is frozen. Confused. She looks
over, and notices the framed portrait of Nightingale is gone.
And so is her shrine.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

Go on.

TABITHA

Um, no thank you, I'm okay.

MAMA BIRD

What? Come now, put it on.

The wig trembles in her hand. *Ticktickticktick*-- the subs are rising really fast now, and the *ticks* are keeping time with her beating heart.

7,165,7193

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

I'll help you.

Mama takes the wig, and plants it snugly on Tabitha's head. She whips out a stamp liner, and adds a heart stamp to her cheekbone. Tabitha is a statue. Shivering.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

Uncanny.

Tabitha turns, and looks in the mirror.

She looks a hell of a lot like Nightingale.

Tabitha turns, and looks in the mirror. She looks back at Mama and sees the dull pain in her eyes.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

I would like to present to the world, the newest member of the Birdie Bunch. Our New Nightingale!

She clicks on her iPhone. The new channel pops up on all the flatscreen TVs around the house.

NEW NIGHTINGALE'S LULLABIES

Tabitha's face has replaced Nightingale's on the THUMBNAIL.

Caged birds SCREAM and SHRIEK and BEAT THEIR WINGS. The Birdies exchange worried looks. Bustard's eyes bug.

PAPA BIRD

Kärleksfågel.

(gingerly)

Oh, Mama. Maybe we should take a little break, yah?

He lowers the phone. Mama has her eyes on the rising subs.

MAMA BIRD

Keep streaming.

PAPA BIRD
Yes, but maybe we should--

MAMA BIRD
THE CAMERA STAYS ON!

Papa swallows his opinions, and keeps filming. Mama Bird touches a button on her Apple Watch and -- *GZZZZZ* -- a massive screen is lowered from the ceiling like a monolith.

FAMILY ANALYTICS

Mama Bird -- 80,576,744
Lark -- 15,645,890
Finch -- 2,783,128
The Twins -- 1,387,589
Bustard -- 304,438

Mama Bird taps on her phone. *DING!!!* A new name appears last:

***New* Nightingale -- 0**

Tabitha looks at her new name in lights.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
Welcome to the board, Gale.
(off her look)
What's wrong? Don't you like it?

TABITHA
It's not that... it's just that...

MAMA BIRD
The nightingale's song is
considered to be the most beautiful
sound that the world ever produced.

TABITHA
But...

Tabitha doesn't know what to say. Bustard plays with his fidget spinner. Papa hides behind his iPhone. Spooked.
Tickticktickticktick...

8,418,121

Mama approaches Tabitha and touches her face.

MAMA BIRD
Sing a lullaby for us, sweetie.

TABITHA
I don't think I know how.

Mama cues up "ROCK-A-BYE BABY" on her iPhone. It blasts through the house.

MAMA BIRD

Repetitive, predictable lullabies
 remind the baby of the motion they
 experienced in the comfort of their
 mother's womb. A baby can't
 understand your words, but they can
 understand your song.

Tabitha listens to the music, feels it in her gut.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

Wrap me up in your voice, and tell
 me you love me with your song. Give
 me the tingle...

Tabitha opens her mouth, but nothing comes out...

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

Like warm sand being poured all
 over you, trickling over your head
 and down into your shoulders! Like
 goosebumps on your brain!

Finally, Tabitha she shakes her head -- no.

TABITHA

I don't think I want to right now.

The Birdies gasp. *Defiance.*

Tabitha takes off her wig.

The subs INSTANTLY start going down... *ticktickticktick--*

Mama and Tabitha have a stare-down. The love falls out of her eyes. They are bottomless pools of inky black.

She's suddenly a gothic statue. Stares. Blinks. As if she's glitching. The Birdies study the patterns on the carpet.

7, 654, 744

Papa lowers the iPhone. Tinkers with it, nervously. Muttering. The burnout rises and vibrates. *THE BIRDS SQUAWKING AND SCREAMING.* The vein pulsing in Mama's forehead, the blood humming in her veins. A vomit of rage percolates in her throat. She's about to let it spew when --

PAPA RAISES THE iPHONE AND LEVELS IT AT MAMA.

She stops. Stares down the lens like it's the barrel of a gun. Suddenly, she swallows her rage. It tastes so sour.

6, 698, 325

She paints on a gasping smile. Shakes away the darkness, and returns to planet earth. Back in character!

MAMA BIRD

(chipper)

You know what, sweetie bird? You're absolutely right. We're all very tired. It's been a long couple days and you're still getting the lay of the land here, let's not overdo it!

(smiles)

We'll take a little break.

Mama spins on her heels, and we catch a glimpse of her bugging eyes as she marches down the hallway to her room, picking at her skin.

PAPA BIRD

Hold on, love bird! Wait for Papa!

Papa chases her, leaving Tabitha alone. The door SLAMS behind her. The Birdies fan out, their eyes narrowing.

LARK

You shouldn't have done that.

Tabitha drops the wig. THUNDER. Look out the window at the hematoma clouds.

EXT. BIRDIE ESTATE - NIGHT

It's raining now. The wind screams. Lightning pulses.

The bouncy castle holds on for dear life. WOOSH! A hard gust of wind slowly lifting the tethers out of the grass...

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

DONG. DONG. DONG. The cuckoo clock strikes EIGHT. The little bird emerges from its door. CU-CKOO! CU-CKOO! It retreats back into the bowels of the clock.

INT. TABITHA'S BEDROOM - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Tabitha stands before the mirror, washing her make-up off, like she's contaminated, and can't get it off fast enough. She looks at her old self in the mirror. For the first time, relieved to see her acne.

INT. TABITHA'S CLOSET - NIGHT

It's dark, but for the cool glow of the screen on Tabitha's face. She lies on the closet floor, scrolling through the Birdies homepage. She finds her new homecoming video --

TABITHA'S HOMECOMING! *VERY EMOTIONAL*

It only has 15,000 views. A lot of nasty comments.

*The new birdie sucks
PIZZA FACE!
TABITHA IS BORING
I miss gale!*

Tabitha shudders. Scrolls down, down, down, through cheerful clickbaity thumbnails, ten years of daily Birdie content.

It takes a minute, and her finger is tired by the time she gets to one of first videos --

**ADOPTION DAY -- MEETING OUR NEW BABY
VERY EMOTIONAL *BRING TISSUES***

She clicks it. The video starts:

MAMA BIRD is twelve years younger and a completely different woman. JC Penny chic, her hair is brown, no make-up, pure love pops out her eyes. Papa Bird films.

*MAMA BIRD
I'm so excited. The agency doors
are right behind us, and we're
going to meet our new baby girl.*

UPLIFTING MUSIC PLAYS, as we cut to Mama Bird walking through the doors of the adoption center. There is a photographer there snapping pictures as they usher YOUNG NIGHTINGALE (5) out of the waiting room. She sees MAMA and does a giddy love dance and she runs into Mama's Arms and Mama wraps her up, and won't let go. Bursting into tears.

*YOUNG NIGHTINGALE
MAMA!!!!!!*

*PAPA BIRD (O.S.)
That's the moment right there.*

DING! A TEXT COMES THROUGH FROM **BUSTARD** --

Hi.

Tabitha texts back:

*Hi!
You good?
Hundo P.
Cool.
What's up?
nm, u?
nothing*

Undulating ellipses. And then Bustard texts:

i'm scared

INT. BUSTARD'S ROOM - EVENING

Bustard sits on his bed, shaking with fear. Tabitha sits with him, rubbing his back.

BUSTARD

Get those views up, get those views up. I can't get 'em up, I tried!

TABITHA

Maybe you can try something new.

BUSTARD

I tried everything! I can't get 'em up, people hate me! I'm not good enough to be a Birdie, I'm not likable and relatable like you, I don't have a good personality.

TABITHA

You have a great personality, Farhad!

BUSTARD

I'm ugly and fat cuz I can't stop eating and I have a stupid accent.

TABITHA

I love your accent! It's so you!

BUSTARD

The analytics don't lie! I can't get my views up! Will you show me how to go viral?! Will you?!

TABITHA

I don't know how I did it, I wasn't trying to go viral--

BUSTARD

(crying)
That's probably why you did!!! IT WAS ORGANIC!!!!

TABITHA

Stop it, Farhad!

BUSTARD

I'm just low-key thirsty.

TABITHA

Who cares about stupid old views?! My new video didn't do that good either--

BUSTARD
IF I DON'T GET MY VIEWS UP THERE
WILL BE A CONSEQUENCE!!!

TABITHA
I love watching your videos! I
don't even like games at all, but I
love you so much I tune in every
day just to see how you're doing,
cuz you're one of my best friends
even though we never met!!

BUSTARD
I CAN'T!!!

WHAMMM!! Bustard slams his head against the headboard.

BUSTARD (CONT'D)
GET!!!

WHAM! Harder.

TABITHA
Stop! You're so talented, and--

BUSTARD
MY!!!

WHAM! Harder!

TABITHA
STOPPPP!!!!

She tries to stop him, but--

BUSTARD
VIEWS!!!

WHAMM!!!

BUSTARD (CONT'D)
UP!!!!

TABITHA
YOU'RE HURTING YOURSELF!!!

Blood stains the head board. She grabs him and holds his
bleeding head, and he bursts into tears.

EXT. BIRDIE ESTATE - NIGHT

WOOSH!!! A hard gust of wind rips the bouncy castle from its
tethers! It skips across the grass, heading for the fence. It
catches on the ornate spikes and is sucked up into the stormy
sky, deflating as it flies over the trees... over the
world... shriveling up and dying as the storm steals it away
and LIGHTING EXPLODES!

INT. THE BIRDIE HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is spooky in the dark. Lit only by the subscribers glowing red on leader board. *Ticktickticktickticktick...*

4,987,472

We see the ornate green door to Mama's room as we move down the long dark hallway. See the smiling pictures on the wall. And the horrible MOANS emanating from within.

MAMA BIRD (O.S.)
MOMMMMMMMYYYYY!!!!

VARIOUS BEDROOMS

-- Dove and Hawk lie in their beds, listening to Mama cry. Dove leans over and looks at her brother, who shares her worry. THUNDER.

MAMA BIRD (O.S.)
Nooooooooooooo!!!

Dove quickly gets up and locks the door. Hawk hurriedly stacking furniture against it.

-- Bustard is wearing a FULL VIRTUAL REALITY OUTFIT. Haptic body armor suit, VR boxing gloves, and headset. He's dripping with sweat, taking out his frustrations out on Floyd Merriweather in the ring. Hiding from Mama's SCREAMS...

MAMA BIRD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
AhhhhhhHAHHHHhh!!

-- Lark stares at the ceiling. Wide-eyed. Lightning flashes. Her dresser is in front of the door.

MAMA BIRD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
UhhhgghhhHHGHGOHGOODDDDDDDDDDDDD!!

-- Finch leans against his door, trying to plug his ears with his pillow.

MAMA BIRD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
MOMMMMMMMYYYYYYY!!!!

-- Papa Bird is in his CRAMPED QUARTERS, half the size of the Birdies' rooms. It looks more like a servant chambers. The walls are lined with photos of Mama Bird, a little shrine to her. No pictures of Birdies. He's on his laptop. Looking at old honeymoon photos of him and Mama Bird on Facebook. They were so in love. So happy.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!

He sighs. Touches his heart.

PAPA BIRD
Vi kommer att vara okej i slutändan. You'll be okay, my love, I promise.

He kisses her face on the screen. And then he closes the laptop, hugs it like pillow and falls asleep.

INT. TABITHA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tabitha is sound asleep. AN EXPLOSION OF LIGHTNING wakes her with a start. She sits up, and gasps when she sees --

The PERSON standing at the end of her bed.

Backlit by the light from the hallway.

TABITHA
 H-hello?

TABITHA SCREAMS AS THE PERSON RAISES A MACHETE--

--And steps into the wet moonlight. It's only Mama, gripping a CAMERA ON A SELFIE-STICK.

We finally see her without make-up. We see the scars from the picking, the fresh pocks and smeared blood dribbling down from the pustules on her forehead.

MAMA BIRD
 I was filming you dream.

She lowers the selfie stick.

TABITHA
 Mama?

MAMA BIRD
 What's this?

She holds up Tabitha's cracked iPad.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
 Look at what you've done. Didn't you read the codes of conduct?

TABITHA
 It just slipped through my fingers.

Mama caresses the screen like it's a poor wounded animal.

MAMA BIRD
 It breaks my heart to see technology mishandled.

TABITHA
 I promise it won't happen again.

Mama sits on the edge of the bed. Sitting a little too close. Her face bleeding.

MAMA BIRD

You've ruffled my feathers, sweetie bird. I gave you a channel, and a name. That's a very special thing. Don't you want to be a Birdie?

She runs her hand through Tabitha's hair, lovingly.

TABITHA

Yes, Mama, I was just confused.

Mama rips her hand away.

MAMA BIRD

I thought you were my number one fan. I thought you loved me.

TABITHA

I do love you.

She pokes Tabitha in the shoulder with the selfie stick.

MAMA BIRD

Do you?

TABITHA

Yes, yes... so much... I just... I want to be my own Birdie. I don't want to be the new Nightingale. I want to be the new me.

Mama cocks her head.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

...I was thinking I could be Raven. Cuz Ravens are the smartest birds. They're smarter than dolphins. And I was thinking, maybe... I could do a review vlog. Like my favorite things. "Raven's Raves." Maybe if I rebrand, I could still be me and get more views.

Tabitha looks in the abyss of Mama's eyes. And then --

MAMA BIRD

Would you like to see my prized possession?

Mama pulls a bronze medallion out from under her shirt.

GUINNESS BOOK OF WORLD RECORDS.

It catches the moonlight and reflects in Mama's swollen eyes.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

For most Consecutive Daily Video Blogs Posted On YouTube. I've made 3,751 consecutive videos, and I've never missed a day. Did you know that? 3,751 days is over ten years. I've never missed a single day in ten years. Don't you think that maybe, I know what I'm doing?

TABITHA

I haven't missed a day either. I've seen every video...

MAMA BIRD

I always posted on time for you, didn't I? I was always there when you were sad, or scared, or lonely... you could always count on Mama Bird, couldn't you? Now I have to know that I can count on you.

(smiles)

You're not a Birdie yet. You're still a foster. You haven't been adopted. You have to prove to me that you're Birdie Material.

TABITHA

I was born to be a Birdie.

MAMA BIRD

Prove it, dear. Mama needs help. I need to know you can be consistent for me, my love. Consistency is key. YouTube is like a shark. If you stop, you die.

THUNDER.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

Nightingale. There's something you have to know, and you must promise me that what I'm about to tell you will stay between us. Can you keep a secret?

Tabitha nods, holding back tears.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

You're not like the rest. You're special.

TABITHA

I am?

MAMA BIRD

You're the most talented, the most beautiful perfect little birdie I've ever seen in my entire life. You're a fucking superstar, girl. You remind me of me...

Mama Bird touches Tabitha's face and smiles. Tabitha glows. It's like Mama's words an opiate, washing over her.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

Because you are my Nightingale. It was never her, or anyone else. It was always you. It was who you were born to be. And she was the temporary Nightingale, holding your place for you. While the universe conspired to bring us together.

Mama hangs the medallion around Tabitha's neck. Her eyes half mast, like she's under a spell.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

We've lost another hundred thousand subs since breakfast. We just go down and down and down. I can feel them slipping right through my fingers, like sand draining from an hourglass, like time running out, and every sub we lose, I feel like I'm losing a piece of me, too, and I can't sleep at night. The nightmares are coming back, and I feel every single sub we lose, I can feel it right here--

Mama pounds her sternum, a little too hard.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

Like a knot, twisting and twisting and-- I can't breathe. I can't sleep. It can't go on like this. Help. I'm asking you for help. You're the only one who can pull us out of this free-fall... I need to sleep. Mama needs to sleep.

Her eyes dancing deliriously as she rises to her feet.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

Will you? Will you help your family get their views up?

Tabitha thinks about it, and then she nods. Hypnotized. And suddenly filled with a sense of purpose.

TABITHA

Yes, Mama. I will help you.

MAMA BIRD

Will you be a good Nightingale?

Suddenly, Tabitha takes on Nightingale's affectation --

TABITHA

Yes, Mama. I'll sing the worried world to sleep.

DING! Mama gets a notification on her Apple watch. She checks it. Her eyes pop with pain. She looks out the window. The rain is trying to break in.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

MAMA BIRD

...they just took away our gold status...

AN EXPLOSION OF THUNDER that lingers in the air as --

Mama throws her head back and screams with the storm. Loud, painful screams from her depths. She holds her head in sorrow. She starts picking wildly at her face.

Tabitha jumps out of bed, and goes to Mama.

TABITHA

Mama. Stop. We'll get it back.

She rubs her back and hugs her. They are face to face, Mama's blood smearing on Tabitha's cheek as she cries.

Suddenly -- Mama is a terrified five-year-old girl.

MAMA BIRD

IF WE LOSE ANY MORE SUBS, I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'LL DO!!!

TABITHA

It's okay, it's just a little burnout, it will pass. You'll be your old self again tomorrow. We're gonna hit diamond status in no time. Only 400 channels in the history of YouTube have gotten there, and we're next. You'll see, in a little while we're gonna have more followers than God!

MAMA BIRD

(calming)
Promise?

TABITHA

I promise.

MAMA BIRD

*Born not from our flesh. But born
in our hearts. You were longed for
and wanted and loved from the
start.*

(smiles)

Family is so much more than blood.

Mama Bird touches Tabitha's face. Her picked finger is bleeding and a tiny bit of blood smears her cheek. The nightingale beats its wings against the cage.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

Oopsie!

Mama Bird grabs the tissue hidden up her sleeve like an Ace, gives it a lick, and wipes away the blood. Tabitha closes her eyes, shuddering at Mama's soft touch. *She feels the love.*

With that, Mama sulks out of the room. Stops at the door. Suddenly, a chipper smile breaks across her face. She's her old self again. Even more jarring with the weeping sores.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

(merrily)

Door open or closed?

TABITHA

Oh-open.

MAMA BIRD

Sleep tight. And remember. There's no force on earth more powerful than a mother's love.

And with that, Mama is gone. *THUNDER!*

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tickticktickticktickticktick... Melting away...

SUBSCRIBERS -- 4,185,7657

INT. TABITHA'S CLOSET - NIGHT

Tabitha is curled up, watching Nightingale's old videos. The storm rages outside.

NIGHTINGALE

*ROCK-A-BYE BABY... IN THE
TREETOP... WHEN THE WIND BLOWS...
THE CRADLE WILL ROCK...*

Tabitha tries her best to parrot Nightingale's voice.

EXT. BIRDIE HOUSE - THE NEXT DAY

The sun peeks out from behind a cloud. A sickly pall hangs over the wet grass and settles around the house.

INT. MAMA BIRD'S BATHROOM - DAY

The massive mirror is cracked now. Maybe from her fist. Mama Bird sits at the vanity with her head in the bowl of ice. She finally rips her head out, and sucks in a gasp, whipping her hair. Her face is a scabbed and bruised and festering.

CUT TO:

VARIOUS SHOTS.

-- Mama wears a protective cloth mask. Like Hannibal Lector's second face. She ties a plastic tourniquet around her arm. She finds a juicy vein, and stabs in the needle. Blood swirls through winding plastic tubes.

-- Mama sticks her blood sample in what looks to be a high tech microwave. It hums to life, and starts to spin, separating the blood into platelet rich plasma.

-- *DING!* She grabs a jar of numbing cream, and smears it all over her face like grease.

-- She fills a syringe with her treated blood and inserts it into a large, humming NEEDLE GUN. She starts injecting her face with her own blood, prick by painful prick. Her face a smear of crimson, like a ravenous beast. This is a "vampire facial."

INT. TABITHA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Mama Bird enters, and the room gets brighter. She's her old happy self again -- made up, hair done, and pretty as a picture. The scars and scabs are well hidden.

MAMA BIRD
Knock, knock!

She smiles when she sees Tabitha on the edge of the bed. Full Nightingale make-up. Purple wig snug. Heart stamp on her cheek. She's ready.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
Look at you. Raring to go!

TABITHA
The early bird gets the worm!

Mama smiles, baring a mouthful of bleached teeth.

CUT TO:

LATER.

Tabitha stands before the green screen. Her pet nightingale is freaking out in its cage. Papa mans the camera, Mama sits on Tabitha's bed, watching like a hawk. She cues the music.

The Birdies are watching through the cracked door. Tabitha feels it. Her eyes flutter as she sings. It's so soothing it's almost medicinal.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
*ROCK-A-BYE BABY... IN THE
 TREETOP... WHEN THE WIND BLOWS...
 THE CRADLE WILL ROCK...*

It hits Mama instantly. She sounds exactly like Nightingale.

Goose-flesh spreads. The hair on her neck stands erect. Pupils swell. And THE TINGLE -- a high frequency tone. *The bell rings in her brain.*

PAPA BIRD
 Is it the tingle, mama?

The TONE grows louder, and she's vibrating.

MAMA BIRD
 ...Nightingale.

The PET BIRD QUIETS. The music lulling it into silence.

PAPA BIRD
 That's it, it's working!

Mama sways, letting the opiate of her voice wash over her. Tears stream down Mama's face. She feels it in her soul.

Dove starts to fall asleep as she listens. *WOOSH!!!* ERIC THE CANARY flies into the room, and lands on Tabitha's shoulder. Perches there. Perfect!

PAPA BIRD (CONT'D)
 That's the moment right there!

TABITHA
*WHEN THE BOUGH BREAKS... THE CRADLE
 WILL FALL...*

PAPA BIRD
 Is that good, mama?

MAMA BIRD
 She's home... she's home...

Mama's eyes flutter with love. She's a little girl again.

TABITHA
 AND DOWN WILL COME BABY... CRADLE
 AND ALL...

Her eyes woozy, as if she's in a trance.

MAMA BIRD
 I missed you so much...

Tabitha parrots Nightingale's speaking voice perfectly.

TABITHA
 I missed you, too.

MAMA BIRD
 We're the perfect family again! And
 everything is so perfect!

She goes to Tabitha and wraps her up in a hug. She so happy.

TABITHA
 I love you.

MAMA BIRD
 I love you, too. You've always been
 my special little bird.

Tabitha glows proud. The Birdies burst through the door and
 join the hug.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
 BIRDIE CUDDLE!

Papa joins in, too.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
 (smiles)
 NOW LET'S!! MAKE!! SOME!!
CONTENT!!!

BIRDIES
 YAYYYYYYYY!!!!

MUSIC CUE: "FLIGHT OF THE VALKYRIES." ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ--

EXT. SKY - DAY

An army of Amazon Prime delivery drones soaring over the
 world. Down below, nothing but dense, old growth forest.

ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ!!!!!! And then a clearing. The fence
 slithers across the land like a snake. Beyond it... THE
 BIRDIE ESTATE. The drones start their decent.

EXT. BIRDIE ESTATE - YARD - DAY

Papa films the Birdies run across the grass retrieving pretty brown boxes from the drones, like an easter egg hunt. They fight over packages.

CUT TO:

Ticktickticktickticktickticktick... The leaderboard stops ticking. A hiccup. And then it starts again the other way --
THE SUBS RISING! Hundreds of thousands at time! Up, up, up!

SUBSCRIBERS -- 4,585,7657

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

-- *"BIRDIES RIDE BIRD SCOOTERS THROUGH THE HOUSE!! *LOL**

Mama and the Birdies scream through the house on their scooters, Bustard crashes into the wall. Mama is in the lead. Papa is chasing them down with the camera.

-- All the while, we see the SUBSCRIBERS ticking up:

5,100,321

-- *Tabitha is recording her new lullaby.*

*TABITHA
 TWINKLE, TWINKLE LITTLE STAR, HOW I
 WONDER WHAT YOU ARE...*

Mama bursts into the room, waving her phone --

*MAMA BIRD
 We got our gold status back!*

Tabitha squeals and jumps into Mama's arms.

-- *Tabitha basks in the likes, comments, and rising subs. Glued at her phone, constantly refreshing the endless stream of virtual love. She needs another hit. On the leaderboard, her name climbs up the family rankings. Ding! Ding! Ding!*

-- *A framed portrait of Tabitha goes up in the same spot Nightingale's portrait was.*

-- *Mrs. Bollinger, the social worker arrives. Tabitha takes her on a tour. Showing off her school work, her amazing rooms, singing Mama's praises. Mrs. Bollinger taking notes.*

-- *Screaming with glee, Mrs. Bollinger and The Birdies jump on the bouncy castle in the yard. Mrs. Bollinger does a flip. Everyone cheers. Mama and Papa clap.*

*BIRDIES
 Go Bollinger Go! Go Bollinger Go!*

Later, they all take a selfie together at the stoop.

-- The Family films elaborate choreographed TIKTOK DANCE MEMES. Tabitha is really getting into it.

-- "ZZZZZZ... AMSR LULLBY EAR TO EAR GENTLE TINGLE -- SINGING YOU SLEEP WITH RELAXING MUSIC! *NEW*"

TABITHA
HUSH LITTLE BABY DON'T SAY A WORD,
MAMA'S GONNA BUY YOU A MOCKING BIRD.

Tickticktickticktick...

6,924,911

-- "LARK'S NO BUDGET CHANEL HAUL *with MOM'S CREDIT CARD :)*"

Lark is sitting before her webcam, surrounded by TWENTY BLACK BOXES BAGS FROM CHANEL, piling up around her.

LARK
...Mama let me do a "no budget" at
CHANEL and I DID SOME DAMAGE!!!

-- "THE MOST IMPORTANT ADVICE FOR IMPROVING IN FORTNITE!"

Bustard gives a droning commentary as he navigates the game.

BUSTARD
In Fortnite, "Meta" is a word that
means, like, um, the most effective
tactic available. Like, the Meta
refers-- oh shit I just died.

-- Thousands of "THUMBS DOWN" on Bustard's video.

-- Tabitha is giving Bustard pointers on how to present himself on camera. Showing him how to not be so uptight.

-- Tabitha posts sponsored content. Checking her metrics online. Her phone is blowing up. Hundreds of thousands of likes. And the comments section is full of love.
Tickticktickticktick...

7,324,911

-- We're at a BIRDIE MEET AND GREAT AT THE MALL! An EXPLOSION OF SHRILL JOY! COPS are there to corral the pimple-laden, braced-faced throngs. Stand back! A sea of phones snap and flash and post and live stream behind barricades.

Tabitha and Mama Bird step out of the mall, holding hands. The Birdies follow, and fan out around them.

CHAOS! They hurry through the GAUNTLET OF SWOONING SCREAMING FANS towards the waiting SUV. They're rabid and grabbing after Tabitha and Mama, trying to touch them, AND EVERYONE STARTS CHIRPING! It sounds like a deranged bird sanctuary.

A red-faced GIRL faints dead. Tabitha is loving it, and Papa is filming it all as Tabitha and Mama are DEVoured BY THE THROGS OF SCREAMING, LOVETHIRSTY FANS!

8,204,991

-- DINNER TIME! The Birdies eat the most glorious home-cooked meal. Mama bringing out course after course. Tabitha stuffs her face. Cake and ice cream, too.

Suddenly, Dove stabs a piece of cake into Hawk's face, and smears it all over.

*DOVE
Hashtag sibling prank war!*

Hawk gasps, and chucks his MILK in her face, and she screams.

*HAWK
Food fight!!!*

Mama isn't afraid -- she hurls a fist full of pie at Dove, and she falls out of her chair. Food rains and sprays the walls. Beautiful chaos. Mama wipes the smear of cake from her face. Papa gets it all on film.

*PAPA BIRD
That's the moment right there.*

DONG. DONG. DONG. The cuckoo clock strikes EIGHT. The little bird emerges from its door.

Everyone freezes, mid food fight, to stare at that horrible little wooden bird -- CU-CKOO! CU-CKOO! It retreats back into the bowels of the clock.

PAPA LOWERS THE CAMERA, PLUNGING US INTO --

REALITY.

Mama's eyes flash with anxiety. She wipes the smear of chocolate off her face. Birds SQUAWK. Guards rise.

*PAPA BIRD
Eight PM. That's a wrap.*

Mama glares at Papa -- His silly accent. It makes her sick.

*PAPA BIRD (CONT'D)
Tomorrow we'll be filming
Nightingale's first music video,
and it will be a long day.*

He points to the massive GREEN SCREEN in the living room. Movie lights and a video village set-up.

PAPA BIRD (CONT'D)
 "Five Little Ducks!" Are we all clear on our choreography?

BIRDIES
 Yessss, Papa!!

Mama starts picking at her temple.

MAMA BIRD
 It's time for family analytics.

Bustard's eyes widen in fear.

EXT. BIRDIE HOUSE - NIGHT

A full moon looms over the house. Crickets chirp.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A fire burns in the hearth. Mama stands there, staring at the leaping tongues. Chewing her lip, and sipping from a wine glass. Every so often she picks at the skin on her face.

The Birdies enter solemnly, and sit cross-legged on the floor with their iPads screens.

MAMA BIRD
 Nightingale will be our team leader tonight.

TABITHA
 Me? Wow, lit. Thanks.

She takes the iPad and sits in the massive throne like chair before the fireplace. The Birdies fanning out before her.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
 Let's see where we're at...

The leaderboard looms over them:

FAMILY ANALYTICS

Mama Bird -- 104,532,567
**New* Nightingale -- 92,869,789*
Hawk & Dove -- 9,987,589
Lark -- 25,645,890
Finch -- 13,128,589
Bustard -- 938,899

Mama stares at the fire, it plays on her face. Tabitha scrolls through the iPad.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

Okay, so, our subs have risen by five million in the past few weeks.

MAMA BIRD

Thanks to you. You're a YouTube sensation, Nightingale. Your transformation video demolished all of our previous view records. Not to mention your two million valid watch hours.

TABITHA

Yes, and I just beat the old Nightingale's *going away video*. We might even be getting Diamond Status soon. We're not too far off!

MAMA BIRD

Fifty grand per sponsored post, that's quite the college fund, young lady. And that means the rest of you are going to have to work a lot harder now that Nightingale has set the bar so high for us...

Tabitha blushes. The Birdies glare at her, simmering.

LARK

Yea, but I had more views than Hawk and Dove last month, so how come I'm so low up there?

DOVE

It was a fluke. You got sympathy views cuz of your spinal bifida.

LARK

That's not true!

DOVE

If I had a hunchback and did a video about it, I'd be Diamond Status already!

LARK

(jumps to her feet)
Liar! Liar! Take it back!

MAMA BIRD

Sit down.

She sits down. Dove folds her arms and bristles.

TABITHA

Actually, Lark was smart to make a storytime about her struggles with Spinal Bifida. The metrics tell us that vulnerability is super on-trend. Maybe you can do a video about how you grew up in a tool shed, Dove. People love that stuff.

Dove narrows her brow.

MAMA BIRD

Where are we at with Bustard?

Tabitha looks up his analytics.

TABITHA

Well, unfortunately. He's gone down another forty-five percent.

Bustard plays with his fidget spinner.

MAMA BIRD

How are we gonna get those views up, kiddo?

BUSTARD

I'm trying real hard to.

MAMA BIRD

Let's look at our short term goals.

Bustard fumbles with his iPad as he pulls up his notes.

BUSTARD

(reading)

Some ideas I have is to use better keyword titles, richer and more descriptive keyword titles. I think part of the problem is my thumbnails aren't very, um... I will make better more, like, clickbaity thumb--

MAMA BIRD

Ah, ah. We don't say "clickbait!" It's gauche.

BUSTARD

More *eye-catching* thumbnails. Another idea is that I thought I'd have Nightingale appear as a guest.

TABITHA

I don't do collabs actually. Right, Mama?

BUSTARD

Oh.

TABITHA

Sorry, no offense, it's just that
Mama says it would be confusing to
my brand.

Mama gives her an encouraging nod.

BUSTARD

Oh, okay. Sorry.

MAMA BIRD

Brand identity is a fickle food.
You can't do an ASMR video game
crossover, they're two very
different content categories.

TABITHA

Well, that's not totally true,
according to the drop off times,
more people are falling asleep to
Bustard's videos than to mine.

Mama Bird explodes with laughter. Slaps her knee. Tabitha
glows, so proud of her killer joke.

Bustard bows his head in shame.

MAMA BIRD

Let me ask you a question. Do you
even like gaming, Bustard?

BUSTARD

Yes. It's my passion.

MAMA BIRD

Could have fooled me. You know,
sometimes I wonder if you're birdie
material at all...

The birds start to SQUAWK and FLAP in their cages. Bustard
trembles. He's sweating pretty bad.

TABITHA

He could pivot.

Everyone looks at Tabitha.

MAMA BIRD

Say more.

TABITHA

Well, maybe he could find something
else on trend...

BUSTARD

But... Gaming's the only thing I'm good at...

TABITHA

Expand your horizons, take some chances. There's a lot of content out there nowadays and you have to ask yourself, how can I cut through the clutter? Be brave! Don't play it so safe. I mean, think outside the X-box for a change...

This hits Bustard hard. He can't even look at her.

MAMA BIRD

(laughs)

You're on a roll tonight with your quips. You should tweet that.

She takes out her phone and tweets: ***Bustard should think outside the X-Box for a change! #zzzz***

People start instantly retweeting her.

BUSTARD

(to Tabitha)

But... You said that, like, YouTube's about family, not views...

Mama Bird and Tabitha exchange looks.

TABITHA

It is about family. That's all it's ever been about. Cuz if you really stop and think about it... YouTube is the family business. If we were farmers, I bet Mama would expect us to wake up at the crack of dawn and muck the stalls. Right, Mama? But lucky for us, we're YouTubers, so I guess we just gotta keep those views up.

MAMA BIRD

That's my girl.

Tabitha glows. Bustard chucks his fidget spinner into the fire. It melts and burns.

Suddenly -- ***DING! DING! DING!***

They all look up at the leaderboard. Tabitha's views increase, sending her rising in the ranks.

She passes Mama --

Nightingale -- 112,899,589

Mama Bird -- 104,532,567

Tabitha smiles and blushes, batting her eyes.

TABITHA

Oh wow! Papa must have uploaded my new lullaby. It looks like I'm number one now. Cool!

Her smile fades when she sees the Birdies staring at her in abject horror.

She looks at Mama. Craning at the board with her mouth agape. Fist clenched. Gripping her wine glass, and shaking with anger. She slowly turns and locks eyes with Tabitha.

The wine glass EXPLODES in her hand. She squeezes the shards of glass in her fist. Blood and wine and spills down her sleeve. Pet birds jump about and beat their wings.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

Mama, you're hurt!

Mama sucks in a breath, like the wind was just knocked out of her. She leans against the wall for balance. Blood gushing. She drops the glass.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

Mama, are you okay?!

Tabitha goes to her, touches her back, but Mama reels away. Looks at Tabitha like she's evil incarnate. Like she's afraid of her. She backs away, trying not to make any sudden moves.

Mama backs towards the hallway, never breaking eye contact, blood smears the wall as she feels her way.

MAMA BIRD

(chokes)

Mama needs some m-m-me time.

Mama turns and sprints down the hallway towards her room -- **WHAMM!!!** She slams the door behind her. Silence.

TABITHA

What happened?

LARK

No one's ever gotten more views than Mama before...

FINCH

I guess she doesn't like that.

Tabitha looks horrified.

TABITHA
...I didn't know.

INT. MAMA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mama stands before her mirror, trying frantically to make herself look cute.

MAMA BIRD
Leave me alone, leave me alone--

She puts on her mauve Fedora hat, makes a duck face, hides her bloody hand, and snaps a selfie. Hands trembling, she posts the picture on Instagram with the caption:

Still got it! #Birdielife #blessed

A little blood smears across the screen, and she cleans it off. Collapses on her bed. Blood stains the sheets. Taking deep breaths. Trying to ward off a panic attack.

She looks down at her phone. Blowing up. A flood of LIKES. She lets them wash over her. Each one blossoming in her gut like a warm flower. Calming, she collapses on the bed and breathes in the validation. It's good.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
Don't. Don't you dare--

But she does. She scrolls down to the comment section.

*EW! UGLY AND OLD!
you don't got it
No one likes you cow - sad
kill yourself, bitch
UNSUBSCRIBE!!*

The spell is broken. She lowers the phone, and starts to bawl like a newborn. She looks over at the mirror. Sees herself staring back. She looks so stupid in that hat. She pulls it off her head, jumps to her feet, and ATTACKS THE MIRROR, raining down blows until it SHATTERS, and her knuckles bleed. She grabs a shard of glass off the floor, and grips it tight.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

THE SCREAMS start wafting out of Mama's room. The Birdies fan out around Tabitha. And darken.

HAWK
Don't mess this up for us, Tabitha.

TABITHA
What? But, I--

DOVE

--Mama is very fragile right now,
and we need to try our best not to
upset her.

There's a "The Shining" Twins vibe there.

TABITHA

I'm trying, I am--

LARK

--Try harder.

DOVE

We can't let her burn out.

FINCH

We have to be there for her. Like
she was there for us.

DOVE

We're very lucky birds.

LARK

My foster mom made me live in the
tool shed, because I was different.

HAWK

Me and Dove were sold on the dark web.

FINCH

When I was three, the cops found me
wandering down a highway twice in
one week.

HAWK

I'm not going back into the system.

DOVE

I'm never going back there.

HAWK

You better make this right.

Bustard gets up and BOLTS up the stairs. Pet birds SQUAWK.
Mama screams.

EXT. BIRDIE HOUSE - NIGHT

Mama's screams are louder and horrible. They infect the
silent night. She screams like a banshee born in hell.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It's empty and silent. Except for Mama's screams, and --
Tickticktickticktickticktick...

SUBSCRIBERS
8,585,7657

The rise has slowed, they're only jumping hundreds at time now, instead of thousands.

MAMA BIRD (O.S.)
 AHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!

INT. BUSTARD'S ROOM - NIGHT

Bustard's computer lies in a heaping pile in the corner. Trashed. Cracked. The keyboard split in two.

He is staring out the window, at THE POOL. He is still gripping his mouse. It's not connected to anything.

BUSTARD
*Like and sup-scribe. Like an sub--
 Like and sub-cribe...*

Steam rises from the heated water. It's calling him. He can't look away. And Mama screams and screams.

INT. TABITHA'S CLOSET - NIGHT

Tabitha is curled up on the floor with the iPad, watching Mama Bird do her make-up. THIS VIDEO has 23 million views:

MAMA BIRD
*Our new Birdie is glamming out hard
 today with a once in a lifetime
 Mama Bird Special! Nothing makes me
 happier than doing make-up for
 someone I love.*

TABITHA
*Mama? Can I say something?
 Remember, Birders at home -- you
 are beautiful whether you choose to
 wear makeup or not. Don't feel
 pressured to wear it just because I
 do. You do you.*

Mama kisses her on the head. Tabitha shudders with love.

BACK TO:

Tabitha LIKES Mama's video, leaves a comment:

"Mama Bird is the best of all by far."

She refreshes the video. Over and over. Trying to get Mama more views. 23,134,801 -- Refresh!

23,134,802
 Refresh

23,134,803
Refresh

23,134,804
Refresh

She sighs. This is going to take a long time.

WOOSH! THE CLOSET DOOR SWINGS OPEN!!

Tabitha SCREAMS! Mama is standing above her. Backlit by the night. Holding her selfie stick, filming. No make-up. Face covered with scars from picking.

MAMA BIRD
Are you hiding from me, kiddo?

TABITHA
No!

MAMA BIRD
What are you watching?

TABITHA
Just you... like always.

MAMA BIRD
You look frightened.... Are you afraid of me?

TABITHA
No! Of course not!

Mama climbs into the closet again. Filming.

MAMA BIRD
It's okay to be afraid, it's wise to fear the creator...

TABITHA
Please don't be mad at me, mama.

The smile falls off Mama's face. She starts picking. The nightingale stops singing in it's cage. *Like it knows.*

MAMA BIRD
No.

She turns the camera off. Powers it down. It whirrs and dies. Her smiles powers down, too.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
You can't call me that anymore.

TABITHA
Can't call you what?

MAMA BIRD
You're not my daughter.

TABITHA
 What?!

Mama snuggles up beside her. Too close.

MAMA BIRD
 As long as the camera's on, I will love you with all of my heart. But the camera's off now, Tabitha.
 (smiles)
 You need to understand. You are my content. I am your creator. You are my raw clay for molding. You're not my Nightingale, you are my parrot. Understand?

Tabitha is horrified. Teeth chatter with fear. The nightingale chirps like it's going mad.

TABITHA
 You don't mean that...

MAMA BIRD
 What do you want from me?

TABITHA
 What?! I don't want anything!

MAMA BIRD
 You want my channel. You want my subs. You want my views.

TABITHA
 No, I don't care about that!

MAMA BIRD
 You don't love me. You never did.

TABITHA
 I love you so much.

MAMA BIRD
 You tricked me! You want my Birdies. That's what you want. You want to take them away from me. You're a troll...

TABITHA
 No! I didn't mean to get more views than you, it was a mistake!

MAMA BIRD
AFTER ALL I'VE DONE FOR YOU! AFTER ALL I'VE DONE!

Mama grabs Tabitha, but instead of hurting her, she hugs her close, strangling her with love. Spit flying as she screams:

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
 THIS IS HOW YOU REPAY ME?! YOU
 NAUGHTY BIRD! I'LL CLIP YOUR WINGS!
 I'LL CLIP YOUR WINGS, YOU NAUGHTY
 BIRD!

Hugging her so tight she can't breathe. Suddenly, she lets go. Tabitha sucks in a breath, and bursts into tears.

Mama smears her tears away.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
 Save it for the cameras, dear.

Tabitha notices a symbol that has been freshly carved into Mama's arm. A *crude thumbs up Like button*. It bleeds. Mama climbs to her feet.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
 I'm afraid there has to be a
 consequence.

TABITHA
 Please...

Mama walks to the birdcage, where the nightingale is flipping out. Squeaking and screaming.

She opens the cage, and removes the little bird from its perch, cradling it with love.

MAMA BIRD
 Pretty bird.

The nightingale tweets and sings and--

WHAMMM!!!! CRUNCH!!! MAMA SMASHES IT AGAINST THE DESK!!!

The squawking stops instantly.

WHAMM! WHAMM! WHAMMM!! The crunch of bones, the splatter of blood, and Tabitha is screaming.

Mama drops the dead bird on the carpet. Blood oozing from its decimated little body. Broken wing twitching spastically.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
 You flew too close to the sun. And
 it won't happen again.

Mama smiles at Tabitha, wiping the blood on her pants like it's only a bit of dust.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

The costumes arrived for your music video. They're just perfect. Be up and ready early tomorrow morning...

(smiles)

We've plateaued at eight million subs. We're going to have to do something truly spectacular to get that Diamond Status...

Mama crosses the room, making her way to the door.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

Oh, and don't even think about calling Mrs. Bollinger, or that old troll, or running away like your ungrateful sister. That will never happen again. We donated another five million to Child and Family Services. These budget cuts really are a travesty. It's the children who suffer. I think they're starting to depend on us...

She opens the door, turns back and smiles.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

It turns out you are Birdie Material after all, Tabitha. You are consistent. Reliable. And you'll never leave this nest. This is your forever home.

And with that, she's gone. The first rays of morning punch through the blinds and make the dead bird glow on the carpet.

TABITHA

It's not her, it's the burnout,
it's not her it's the burnout, it's
not her it's the b--

And then something catches her eye out the window --

IT'S BUSTARD.

Walking on the roof. He's dressed like a ninja.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

Bustard?!

A blast of wind, and Bustard slips a little as he moves past the window, and out of sight.

Tabitha gasp, and runs to the window. Throws it open.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

Bustard?!

ON THE ROOF --

The sun explodes over the distant mountains beyond as Bustard navigates the steep, sharp angles of the roof. He talks to his CAMERA on a selfie stick as he walks.

BUSTARD

I'm Bustard THE STUNT BIRD! Welcome to my new and improved channel! STUNT BIRDZ USA! I'm going to be doing a bunch of wild and crazy death defying feats for you guys, so don't forget to smash that Like button!

He jumps and does a little karate kick. A loose shingle falls. The roof is slick.

TABITHA

Bustard! Get inside! What are you doing?!

BUSTARD

I'm rebranding like you said!

He keeps climbing up the roof.

TABITHA

I didn't mean it like this!

BUSTARD

(horrified)

I'm not playing it so safe!

Suddenly -- Mama Bird grabs Tabitha by the arm and JERKS HER INSIDE!

MAMA BIRD

NEVER INTERRUPT A BIRDIE WHEN HE'S MAKING CONTENT!

Her horrible bleeding face. Tabitha reels back as Mama grips her wrists and blocks the window.

TABITHA

Make him stop!!!

Tabitha rips away -- glares at Mama. Hates what she sees. And then she runs out the door.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Tabitha flies down the hallway, knocking on everyone's doors.

TABITHA

Wake up! Wake up! You have to help me! Bustard's gonna break his neck!

The Birdies emerge, wiping the sleep from their eyes.

EXT. BIRDIE HOUSE - ROOF - NIGHT

Tabitha and the Birdies run out of the house, and spot Bustard on the roof filming himself.

TABITHA

Bustard!

Papa trails.

PAPA BIRD

Bustard, get down! If you fall,
they'll shut us down so fast it
will make your head spin!

BUSTARD

(to the camera)

Today I'm going to scale to the top
of the chimney and jump off into
the pool! I'm a professional, so
don't try this at-- oops!

He slips, nearly falls, but catches himself. They all scream.

PAPA BIRD

Bustard, come down at once or there
will be a consequence!

Bustard smiles through uncut fear.

BUSTARD

It's okay, Papa! I'm not afraid!

HAWK

Don't be an idiot!

LARK

Bustard!

BUSTARD

I'm gonna get the most views!

He starts towards the chimney, petrified. Suddenly --

MAMA BIRD (O.S.)

*Good job, honey! Good pivot! Stunt
content is always on trend!*

Mama pokes her head out of the window. Smiling big and wrong.
Make-up smeared, mascara dripping, and she's filming Bustard.

PAPA BIRD

Mama stop! We can't afford an
accident!

BUSTARD

I'm gonna jump in the pool, mama!
I'm gonna go viral for you!

She hangs out the window for a better shot. Manic and exploding with enthusiasm.

MAMA BIRD
I got another angle, sweetie bird!
Mama won't miss a thing!

LARK
Mama, don't say that!

PAPA BIRD
He's going to break his neck!

BUSTARD
I'm gonna get you Diamond Status!!!

MAMA BIRD
I know you will, baby bird!

PAPA BIRD
Something's wrong with mama!

LARK
She's in a burnout!

TABITHA
She's fucking nuts.

Tabitha turns and runs back into the house.

MAMA BIRD
Don't forget to engage your
viewers!

BUSTARD
(to the camera)
Here I go, guys! Leave a comment
down below and tell me what my next
stunt should be!
(smiles)
Like and subscribe!
(gasps)
Mama! I did it! I said it!

MAMA BIRD
That's my boy!

Bustard swells with pride, and starts to scale the chimney.

INT. BIRDIE HOUSE - DAY

Tabitha runs up the stairs, skipping steps.

INT. TABITHA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Tabitha enters. Mama is hanging out the window filming.

MAMA BIRD
 Danger is your middle name, love!

TABITHA
 Stop it!

Tabitha tries to pull Mama Bird inside.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
 Tell him to get inside!

Tabitha grabs Mama by the shirt, and pulls her back in.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
Now! Tell him!

Mama lowers the camera, and looks at Tabitha with her cold dead eyes.

MAMA BIRD
 You're a troll.

TABITHA
 You're crazy!

Tabitha leaps on Mama, she screams and Tabitha kicks her and slaps her. Mamma grabs her by the shirt and pushes her into the closet. *WHAMMM!!!* Slams the door and locks it.

INT. CLOSET - DAY

Tabitha screams and starts slamming the door with her feet, but it won't budge.

MAMA BIRD (O.S.)
*You know what we do with trolls,
 Tabitha? We delete them.*

Mama Bird goes back to encouraging Bustard.

She remembers -- She grabs her iPad, sitting on the floor. She clicks a contact, and FaceTimes Dove.

Dove answers, worried.

DOVE
Gale?

TABITHA
 Dove, you gotta help me, Mama locked me in the closet, and I gotta help Bus--

--GZZZTT. The feed dies.

Connection Lost.

Suddenly -- *BLINNNNGGGG!!!!* Incoming FaceTime Call. She answers. *It's Mama's horrible picked and festering face.*

MAMA BIRD
You shouldn't have done that.

Mama hangs up.

Parental lock activated.

BLING! Her wi-fi dies. The bars vanish on her phone service.

EXT. BIRDIE HOUSE - YARD - DAY

Papa runs across the lawn with the ladder, muttering in Swedish. Bustard is climbing up the chimney, hugging it tight as his little feet slip.

EXT. ROOF - DAY

Bustard finally reaches the top of the chimney, it's barely wide enough for both of his feet. So high up now.

He looks up at the pool below. Further than he thought. He holds out his selfie stick.

BUSTARD
Look at me! Look at me!

Mama climbs out on to the roof for a better shot.

MAMA BIRD
A bird's eye view, honey!

Papa starts climbing up the ladder on to the roof--

PAPA BIRD
I'm coming, Bustard!

BUSTARD
I'm not afraid! Birdies can fly!

Mama kicks Papa's ladder with him on it.

He falls and **HITS THE GROUND HARD**. He moans. The Birdies swarm him and try to help him.

LARK
Papa! Papa!

BUSTARD
I can fly! I'm the best Birdie! I'm
the best Birdie!

Tears falls down his terrified face.

MAMA BIRD
Look at my brave bird!

Mama is picking her face, and pulsing with sweaty joy.

INT. TABITHA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Dove enters the room. She sees Mama through the window, on the roof. Facing away. She creeps across the carpet, quiet, unlocks the closet, and frees Tabitha. Puts a finger to her lips. *Shhhh*. They creep out of the room together.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

They hurry down the hallway.

DOVE
It's all burnout now! There's no
mama left!

TABITHA
I have to get on the roof.

EXT. ROOF - DAY

Mama films Bustard standing on top of the chimney, looking down at the pool. Trying to work up the courage to jump.

BUSTARD
You can do it. You can do it.

His foot slips a little and pebbles rain down into the pool.

MAMA BIRD
Go on and jump, baby! Do it for the
Birders, all your wonderful fans!

TABITHA (O.S.)
Bustard! Stop!

He looks at Tabitha, she's climbing out the opposite window. They are on opposite sides of the roof, perfectly symmetrical with Mama, like the angel and the devil.

MAMA BIRD
You jump in that pool, Bustard!

TABITHA
Don't listen to her! Please come
down! Please!

He looks at Tabitha. Listening. Trying to balance himself.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
I don't want you to get hurt!
You're my little baby brother now,
you're my family!

BUSTARD

This is the family business! I'm thinking outside the X-Box!

TABITHA

You could die!

BUSTARD

Good! That's what everyone wants, isn't it?! I'm the worst Birdie and everybody hates my guts!

TABITHA

Not me! I love you so much! I never had a brother before! I just got you, and I don't want to lose you now! Please! I'm sorry for what I said, I'm sorry if I made you feel like you weren't good enough. That was Nightingale talking, but I'm not her anymore. I'm Tabitha, and I think you're the coolest!

He takes a breath. Starting to come to his senses.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

Farhad. Come down.

He sees the love in her eyes. He sees her reaching for him. He nods.

BUSTARD

Okay... I'm... I'm coming down...

Starts to climbs down. Tabitha breathes relieved.

MAMA BIRD

No! A good Birdie finishes what he starts!

TABITHA

Shut up!

MAMA BIRD

Rules are rules for a reason! Consistency is key! Consistency is key! Consistency is--

TABITHA

--Fuck consistency! And fuck you!

MAMA BIRD

FINISH YOUR CONTENT, BUSTARD! OR I'LL SEND YOU BACK TO THE TUNNELS WHERE YOU BELONG! AND YOU'LL BE THE STAR OF AN ISIS BEHEADING VIDEO, WHICH ALWAYS RACK UP THE VIEWS!

Bustard gasps, and -- SLIPS.

Everyone screams. Papa jumps to his feet.

But Bustard falls backwards instead -- *WHAPPP!!!!* He hits the roof back-first and slides down Mama's side, tumbling and pinballing towards her.

TABITHA

Mama!

But she doesn't try to save him. Just films him roll right past her feet, down the roof, towards the edge and --

WHOOOSH!!! Bustard flies off the roof in SLOW MOTION.

Papa running to catch him.

Bustard flying.

Tabitha's mouth falling open.

The Birdies are running for him.

Mama filming, smiling.

Papa extends his arms, running...

Bustard flying. Falling. Running. Filming.

Bustard flaps his arms. A *Hail Mary*. But he can't fly after all, and Papa he can't get there in time --

WAHMMMM!!!! Bustard hits the ground hard -- *CRACK!!!*

He SCREAMS so loud it scatters the birds in the trees.

His arm is bent back in an impossible direction.

The Birdies surround him.

PAPA BIRD

Give him space!

Tabitha runs out the door, towards them.

DOVE

He's alive! He's okay!

Mama films her screaming boy. Pale and grinning like Robert Blake in "Lost Highway." Her flowing white things flapping in the wind. She turns it on herself, suddenly coming alive.

MAMA BIRD

HI, BIRD WATCHERS! IT'S MAMA BIRD
HERE WITH ANOTHER, UM-- FUCK!

(MORE)

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
 (as if glitching)
 HI, BIRDERS! WELCOME BACK TO MY
 CHANNEL! YOU'LL NEVER--
 (take three)
 HI, BIRD WATCHERS! YOU'LL NEVER
 BELIEVE WHAT JUST HAPPENED, BUSTARD
 IS A SILLY GOOSE, HE LITERALLY FELL
 OFF THE ROOF! WHAT WAS YOUR
 FAVORITE BIRDIE MOMENT THIS YEAR?!
 (gasping)
 Don't forget to smash that Like
 button! Smash that Like button!
Smash that Like button!

Papa locks eyes with Mama up there. She levels her camera at him. Tabitha puts her hand on Papa's shoulder.

TABITHA
 Papa... Pull the car around. We
 have to get him to the hospital.

PAPA BIRD
 She's not gonna like that.

TABITHA
 Papa. Now.

Finally, he nods. Jumps to his feet, and runs off. Tabitha kneels next to Bustard.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
 Where'd she go?

They look back up at the roof. Mama is gone.

Papa pulls the SUV up. He hops out.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
 Bustard, can you walk?

BUSTARD
 (wheezing)
 I can do it. I can do anything.
 Danger is my middle name.

He cries out as they help him to the car. Tabitha opens the door for him.

MAMA BIRD (O.S.)
DON'T LEAVE MEEEEEE!

Mama is barreling out of the house in a dead sprint.

TABITHA
 Hurry!

PAPA BIRD
För fan i helvete!

They get Bustard in the back. And pile into the car.

Mama on their tail, gripping her selfie stick like a weapon -- slicing the air like its a sword, the wind whipping through her hair, her face a mask of horror, her blood-curdling SCREAMS wafting across the world...

She bears down and SWINGS the stick -- *CRASHHHH!!!* The window EXPLODES, showering the screaming children with glass.

INT. JAGUAR SUV - DAY

Papa stomps on the gas. *VROOOOOOMMM!!!!* Tires squeal as they tear down the driveway. Horrified, wiping away the glass.

TABITHA
Seatbelts!

They all buckle in.

MAMA BIRD (O.S.)
NO! NO! DON'T LEAVE ME!

Tabitha looks back and sees Mama chasing them down, her eyes are like hot marbles.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
PLEASE!

WOOOOOSH!!! They speed towards the gate. Papa hits the clicker button. The gate opens.

TABITHA
Faster, Papa!

He glances at Mama in the rearview -- Running and screaming, arms flailing.

MAMA BIRD
DON'T LEEEEEEAAVVVEEEEE MEEEE!

Suddenly -- *REEEEEEEEEE!!!!!!* He slams on the breaks. They all lurch forward.

TABITHA
Papa?

He hesitates. Looking at Mama in the mirror. Running at them, screaming in pain, holding out her arms, screaming for Papa.

PAPA BIRD
I can't.

TABITHA
What?!

PAPA BIRD
I can't leave her.

TABITHA
Papa, drive!

PAPA BIRD
She needs me.

TABITHA
She's out of her mind!

PAPA BIRD
She wouldn't hurt a flea! She's
just a little tired is all!

DOVE
Go, go, go!

PAPA BIRD
We're all a little tired, we all
just need to calm down.

LARK
Papa, something's wrong with her!

PAPA BIRD
She'll be her old self in the
morning, like always! We'll go on a
family vacation, and decompress! We
won't even film it!

HAWK
Pleeeeeease go!

Mama is getting closer. Screaming, and swinging her stick.
The Birdies are screaming.

PAPA BIRD
I'm sorry... I can't leave Mama
Bird... I can't... she's my family.

He closes the gate -- THUMPPPPP! Mama is bearing down.

MAMA BIRD
WHAT ABOUT MY DIAMOND STATUS???!!!!

PAPA BIRD
It's okay, Mama!
(opening the door)
We're not going anywhere! We're
never leaving!

Suddenly, Tabitha leaps across the seat and SLAMS ON THE GAS.
Papa starts screaming in Swedish as they rocket forward, Papa
fighting Tabitha and she's no match, until--

DOVE
Birdie Cuddle!

All the Birdies pile on Papa, and hold him back with their hugs as -- *WHAMMMMMM!!!!*

They crash through the gates, turning them into a heap of twisted metal and flying sparks, and Tabitha takes the wheel as Papa tries to fight the Birdies' suffocating love, but they're rabid and hold him so tight he can't breath because he's no match for their embrace!

Lark starts beating Papa mercilessly with her crutch.

BUSTARD
Do you know how to drive?!

TABITHA
No! Do you?!

They fly down the narrow dirt road, with trees blurring past.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Mama takes out her cell phone and pulls up the JAGUAR app.

INT. SUV - CONTINUOUS

DING!!! MAMA'S HORRIBLE BLEEDING FACE POPS UP ON THE DASH DISPLAY --

MAMA BIRD
(to Tabitha)
*GIVE ME BACK MY BIRDIES YOU
MOTHERLESS FUCK!*

BLING!!!!

SUV POWER DOWN* *SYSTEM OVERRIDE

THE STEERING WHEEL LOCKS! Tabitha gasps, as the CAR SKIDS TO A JARRING STOP-- TOO FAST! *REEEEEECHHHHH!!!!*

THE SUV SPINS OUT, CAREENING FOR A DITCH --

The Birdies lurching forward, as the SUV FLIPS!!!!

Somersaulting through the air IN EXTREME SLOW MOTION.

Up is down and down is up and --

The seatbelt-less Birdies are screaming, tumbling like laundry in the dryer, hair standing on end, cell phones on the ceiling as they flip and flip and flip and --

And we catch a glimpse of Mama filming the car crash as-- Tabitha is launched through a windshield like a missile.

CUT TO:

BLACK

THE SOUND OF HEAVY BREATHING.

Tabitha opens her eyes. Dusty morning light cuts through the canopies. Her eyes adjust and she scans the scene. It's bad.

Birdies scattered around THE WOODS. Thrown from the vehicle.

Lark's crutches are strewn in the leaves. Dove moaning. Lark bleeding. Finch stirring, unconscious.

Hawk doesn't look like he's moving at all.

Bustard, the only one wearing a seatbelt, is hanging upside down in the flipped and smoking SUV. Crying. Scared.

Tabitha in and out of consciousness. Blood in her eyes.

She hears footsteps, and sees Mama wandering amongst the wreckage like a wraith. She grips her selfie stick a little too tight. Her face is slack as she stands over Papa Bird who is leaning against a tree, battered and bloodied and trying like hell to breathe.

Tabitha fights sleep, struggling to keep her eyes open. She watches as Mama lifts her camera and films Papa. He stares up at her, eyes pleading, and then spikes the lens.

PAPA BIRD

Help me... Megen, help me...

MAMA BIRD

You want to take my Birdies, too.

PAPA BIRD

No... I would never... I... love you... I...

Blood oozing from his gut. Pooling around him. He looks a little like that dead bird. Mama is silent. Staring.

PAPA BIRD (CONT'D)

I've loved you... Since... the moment I saw you... on my screen...

(a stab of pain)

And I heard your sad story, and I heard my story in yours, and for the first time in my life, I knew I wasn't alone. I'm your number one fan. I scrolled to the comments section, and wrote "first." And you liked my comment and...

(a bloody smile)

I was the first Birder, Megen. Me.

He grabs her ankle. Clutching it. Desperate. Choking.

MAMA BIRD
Thanks for watching.

She raises the selfie stick like a bludgeon and brings it down hard on his face.

WHAMMM! WHAMM! WHAMM! WHAMM! Harder and harder, like a mad conductor, his blood powders her cheeks like blush.

And the camera she's killing him with is recording his death.

Blood splatters the lens as she caves in his face. Finally, Papa Bird gurgles and dies. His face is a mask of mangled flesh.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
That's the moment right there.

Tabitha passes out cold.

CUT TO:

BLACK SCEEN.

YOUNG MAMA BIRD (O.S.)
Sing, Nightingale...

FADE IN:

GRAINY HANDICAM FOOTAGE... PAPA BIRD films YOUNG MAMA BIRD and Young Nightingale on the couch in a neat, but cramped apartment. HE ZOOMS IN on their smiling faces, Mama has dark circles under hopeful eyes.

MAMA BIRD
Go on and sing. You can't let your fans down...

YOUNG NIGHTINGALE
HUSH LITTLE BABY DON'T SAY A WORD... MAMA'S GONNA BY YOU A MOCKINGBIRD...

WE SLOWLY WIDEN TO REVEAL THE CRACKED TABLET SCREEN THAT PLAYS THIS YOU TUBE VIDEO.

We're in a DARK ROOM. Pitch black, but for the warm glow of THE VIDEO lighting up BABY TABITHA'S face, and reflecting in her big brown eyes. She's three-years-old, and the tablet is her blanky. It's the same one she had in the opening.

"Mama Bird's MOMMY TIPS. 10/23/11"

This video has 400 views, and 200 of them are probably Baby Tabitha's. She coos, under the hypnotic spell of the lullaby.

The tablet battery is at 1%. The screen dies, killing the love and plunging Baby Tabitha into darkness. She cries out, frightened.

BABY TABITHA

Birdie!

Tabitha pushes open the door to reveal -- **A NIGHTMARISH HOARDER HOUSE**. A backlit jungle of stuff stacked at severe angles. Piles of clothes, trash. The skeletons of broken shelves buckling under the load. Leaning towers of newspapers hunched like ghosts in the dark.

Baby Tabitha emerges from **THE CLOSET** in her dirty onesie, clinging to the dead tablet. It's heavy and she struggles. She navigates through a path of stuff stacked taller than she is. Past a spoon, bent and burnt on the carpet.

We hear the buzz of FLIES as Baby Tabitha approaches her BIRTH MOTHER, in dull red hair in nightgown, slumped in a sofa. Her face is lost in shadow. The tablet charger wrapped snugly around her arm like a makeshift tourniquet.

BABY TABITHA (CONT'D)

Mama? Can I have the Birdie?

Tabitha holds up the dead tablet for her mother. Pushes it at her, but it's too heavy and she drops it.

BABY TABITHA (CONT'D)

Birdies, Mama... please.

Frustrated, she tugs at her Mother's dangling tourniquet, causing her to lurch forward, into the dull moonlight...

She's long dead. Blue eyes pop against her waxy gray flesh.

Tabitha stares at her mother's face. Not afraid... not yet... just curious... confused... unable to process...

Finally, she just turns and waddles back to the safety of --

THE CLOSET

Where she shuts the door forever, and curls up in laundry basket, trying her best to keep the song alive...

BABY TABITHA (CONT'D)

Huh... ill... bebe... Dun say
wor... mam gonnann by by... mockab-
a-rrrrrrr...

She sings herself to sleep.

INT. BASEMENT - REALITY

TABITHA SNAPS AWAKE, opens her eyes. It's dark down here in the basement. Filled with BIRD AND WATERFOWL TAXIDERMIES perched on branches and in decorative nests. Frozen in mid-flight. Hundreds of boxes of bizarre, and inexplicable YOUTUBE VIDEO props and a store of unopened Amazon packages.

Tabitha sits up, and looks around. She sees the bars, and realizes she's sitting in the GIANT HUMAN-SIZED BIRDCAGE from the title sequence. An indulgent prop. She sees her brothers and sisters sitting in the cage with her.

They are all wearing elaborate DUCK COSTUMES with hoods that have eyes and beaks.

DOVE

You're awake.

Their cuts and scrapes have been and mended. And covered with make-up. They look good as new, a Mama Bird special!

Tabitha extends her fabric wings. Bustard's left wing has been modified to fit the makeshift splint on his broken arm.

TABITHA

How long have we been down here?

LARK

I don't know.

HAWK

(looking at the costume)
Why are we wearing these?

TABITHA

(gulps)
"Five Little Ducks."

FINCH

I'm scared.

TABITHA

Everything's gonna be okay.
(to Bustard)
Are you okay, Bustard?

BUSTARD

It hurts... it hurts...

TABITHA

We're gonna get out of here. We're gonna get you to the hospital.

They all huddle and hug. A Birdie Cuddle.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

Listen to me. No matter what happens, we'll always stick together. If we stick together, nothing bad can happen, because we're a family, and we'll always have each other's backs.

FINCH

I'm happy you're my sister.

It makes her smile. FOOTSTEPS.

Tabitha tries to squeeze through the bars, but they're too tight. She rams her shoulder against them. No avail.

LARK

Shhhhh. She's coming.

Lumbering down the stairs. Mama emerges into the dull light, with a smile is so big it boxes her ears. She's her old beautiful self again. Her hands are smeared with green paint. Freshly spray painted GREEN SHACKLES slung over her shoulder.

MAMA BIRD

Hello, Birdies! I hope you had a good rest!

They all moan and stir.

DOVE

(horrified)
You killed, Papa!

MAMA BIRD

(huffs)
Don't be silly. It's almost five PM, we have to get cracking on Gale's new music video if we're going to make our deadline!
(jumps for joy)
NOW LET'S!! MAKE!! SOME!!
CONTENT!!!

She chucks the shackles on the ground before them.

EXT. BIRDIE HOUSE - AFTERNOON

The sun looms over the soaring mountains.

INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

The Birdies are shackled to the green cinderblocks before the massive GREEN SCREEN.

Tabitha stands stiffly, sweating under the hot stare of lights. The duck costume is stifling. A boom mic hangs over her head like the Sword of Damocles.

TABITHA
(singing)
Five little ducks went out one day
Over the hill and far away...

The Birdies, in so much pain, do a choreographed duck waddle dance. It's hard to do with shackles on, but they do their best. Bustard is ghost white, and sweating, his arm has swelled to twice its size.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
(singing)
Mother duck said, "Quack, quack,
quack, quack." But only four little
ducks came back--

Mama looks up from behind the camera. The deadly selfie stick at the ready.

MAMA BIRD
 No, no. That's not right.

TABITHA
 Mama, it hurts, it hurts to sing...
 I think I hurt my ribs bad...

MAMA BIRD
 You're going to have to do better
 if we're gonna get Diamond Status.
 You know that, dear.

BUSTARD
(whimpering)
 My arm... my arm...

LARK
 I think I'm bleeding bad.

MAMA BIRD
 Oh, don't you start, too!

Her duck costume is soaked in blood.

FINCH
 Please, Mama! Please! This thing is
 hurting my foot!

MAMA BIRD
 We have to upload on time, we have
 to make our deadline. Consistency
 is key. Consistency is key.
 Consistency is key.

Mama Bird is adjusting the green screen graphics. There is a cartoon pond and hills behind them. The shackles have been keyed out. She starts to pace, chipper, gripping the stick so tight it whitens her knuckles.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
Consistency is keeeeeeey!

TABITHA
 Please, just let us rest...

MAMA BIRD
 Not until you give me the tingle.

Mama starts to music over. Tabitha and the Birdies try again. But they're so exhausted and dragging.

TABITHA
*Five little ducks went out one day
 Over the hill and far a--*

MAMA BIRD
*NO! I'M NOT GETTING THE TINGLE! DO
 YOU SEE THE HAIR ON THE BACK OF MY
 NECK STANDING UP?! DO I LOOK
RELAXED TO YOU?!*

The pet birds start to ruffle in its cage. Their song is a sick SQUAWK. Mama groans and chews on her fingernails.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
 This is so, so FRUSTRATING!

Dove's eyes roll back in her head, and she faints.

LARK
 Dove!

The Birdies go to Dove and help her up.

MAMA BIRD
 Oh, don't be such a drama queen.

TABITHA
 She needs water!

MAMA BIRD
 If at first you don't succeed, try,
 try again!

Dove shakes it off.

DOVE
 It's okay, it's okay...

Tabitha is starting to sweat off her make-up, under the sizzling stare of the lights.

MAMA BIRD

(dark)

Again.

She starts the music.

TABITHA

Five little--

MAMA BIRD

No... No, that's not right...

Tabitha swallows her song. The Birdies start crying.

FINCH

Please, mama!!

The pet birds are going crazy, doing backflips off their perches and pin-balling around.

A pool of urine gathers at Finch's feet, his costume soiled, and he cries and cries. Mama turns and looks at herself in the monitor. She's looks so pretty.

MAMA BIRD

I'm feeling the frustration in your voice, Nightingale. It just won't do. How can you expect to relax your audience if you're not relaxed yourself? Take a heart-focused breath, count to five. And relax.

Tabitha locks eyes with Mama.

TABITHA

No.

MAMA BIRD

What?

TABITHA

I won't do it.

Tabitha takes off her wing and throws it at her feet.

MAMA BIRD

What did I say about talking back?!

Mama charges and -- *WHAPPPP!!!* Slaps Tabitha across the face. She reels back in pain, holding her cheek. And then THE PERFECT ASMR VOICE FLUTTERS THROUGH THE HOUSE.

NIGHTINGALE (O.S.)

*Five little ducks went out one day,
over the hill and far away...*

Mama freezes. Under a spell.

QUICK SHOTS: *The hair on the back of Mama's neck stands. Her pupils dilate. Gooseflesh spreads down her arm. The Tingle.*

NIGHTINGALE (CONT'D)
Mother duck said, "Quack, quack, quack, quack." But only four little ducks came back...

She turns to find THE REAL NIGHTINGALE standing there. In flannel. Rucksack on.

MAMA BIRD
 Gale?

And then she softens.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
 My baby... my baby's home!!!

Mama runs at Nightingale with open arms, but stops dead in her tracks when Nightingale lifts her iPhone like a gun--

NIGHTINGALE
 (chipper)
 Hey, YouTube Live! It's me, Nightingale, home from Nome, to show you all just how much of a burnt-out bitch Mama Bird is IRL!

MAMA BIRD
 What? What are you--

Tabitha films the shackled Birdies.

NIGHTINGALE
 Don't worry, the police are on their way.
 (to the phone)
 Make sure you smash that dislike button and un-fucking-subscribe! Let's shut this bitch down!

MAMA BIRD
 NO!!!!!!

NIGHTINGALE
 Say goodbye to your precious subs!

WAILING, MAMA RUNS HER DOWN--

Nightingale chucks the phone at Mama's head -- *THWACK!!!* It hits her square in the nose, and it explodes, blood streaming down her face and staining her shirt.

MAMA BIRD
 MY CHANNEL!

Mama leaps through the air, and belly flops on top of Nightingale, pinning her down. She claps her hands around her throat. Squeezes good.

The Birdies scream! Helpless and shackled.

BUSTARD
(screaming at the phone)
SEND HELP, BIRDERS! SEND HELP!

Tabitha is pulling at her shackles, trying desperately to move her cinderblock, and save her sister. But it's no use.

And as the color drains out of Nightingale's trembling face, Mama looks up at the leaderboard. Nightingale sees it, too, and she is horrified. *It can't be...*

The subs are rising. Higher and higher!

9,587,389

DOVE
They're going up...

TABITHA
No. No, No!

Higher... Mama bird picks up Nightingale's phone and leans it against the chair. She gets the shot framed, live streaming.

9,887,389

Mama clamps down harder. Veins throbbing in Nightingale's forehead, blood vessels popping in her eyes like little crimson fireworks.

Instantly, there are thousands of Likes and comments.

First!
Holy shit she's killing her!
This is amazing!
BITCH IS BATSHIT!!!!
LOL!!!!!!!!!!
Best Vid ever!
Gale's getting pwned!
MURDER!!!!
Are you kidding?
This is insane!
I LOVE YOUTUBE!!!!

And Mama glows in the warm red glow of the leaderboard.

Ticktickticktickticktick... And she feels every tick where it counts.

Suddenly, Eric the Canary lands on Tabitha's shoulder.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

Eric--

The bird flies into its metal birdcage that hangs on a black iron pool. She starts reaching for the cage. Pulling her cinderblock.

Nightingale is turning purple. Slipping away. The veins throbbing in her forehead. Tears streaming down her face.

The Birdies screaming and screaming. Pulling at their shackles. Tabitha reaches for the Birdcage. Straining at her chains. Her fingers tickle the stand. So close. And then --
DING!!!

10,085,7657!!!!

They've just surpassed ten million subs.

MAMA BIRD

OHHHHHH MYYYY GOODDDDDDD!!!!

Mama shudders, orgasmically and this triggers --

WHAAAAAAAAAAA-- AIRHORNS! Matching Mama's screams.

An automatic laser light show begins, spewing colored lights around the room. Mama throws her hands into the air, and Nightingale sucks in a massive breath, desperate for life--

MAMA BIRD (O.S.) (CONT'D)

**WE DID IT! WE DID IT! OH MY BIRDIES
ISN'T THIS WONDERFUL?!**

"DIAMOND STATUS CREATORS!" pops up on all the TV screens throughout the house. **"SURFIN BIRD"** blasts on the system.

**A-well-a everybody's heard about the bird!
B-b-b-bird, bird, bird, b-bird's the word**

It's scoring Mama's screams, and it's a horrible harmony.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)

(dark, and calm)

But a good birdie finishes what she starts--

And as Mama clamps down harder. The life drains from Nightingale's eyes...

She looks up at the leaderboard... Her name has just surpassed Nightingale's in the family analytics.

Mama Bird -- 194,532,567

***New* Nightingale -- 152,899,589**

She squeals with delight.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
Look! Look! I'm the best Birdie!

But then A SHADOW falls over her.

TABITHA (O.S.)
But you're the worst mother.

Mama whips around and -- WHAMMMMMMM!!! THE METAL BIRDCAGE
CRACKS HER ACROSS THE SKULL.

Mama reels forward. Tabitha is gripping the pole like a
baseball bat. She falls on top of Nightingale like a snipped
marionette.

Nightingale rolls off, trying to catch her breath, grabbing
at her throat, desperate for life.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
Gale!!!

Mama is dizzy. Nightingale rises to her feet. Seething.

NIGHTINGALE
(raspy, still choked)
Close your eyes, Birdies. This is
gonna be rated R.

They all turn away, no peeking.

Nightingale lifts the Birdcage by the pole. Stands over her
mother. She lifts it high above her head. And Tabitha has to
see. She opens her eyes as --

WHAMMMMM!!! NIGHTINGALE BLUDGEONS MAMA WITH THE IRON BASE OF
THE STAND -- BLOOD SPRAYS!!! Mama's skull implodes. WHAM!!!

***A-well, a bird, bird, bird, well-a bird is a word
A-well, a bird, bird, b-bird's a word***

WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! Wrecked, Tabitha falls to her knees. Eric
perched on her shoulder. She's crying and screaming, and
exorcising all of the trauma that has been trapped inside her
all these years, *the foster homes, the abuse, the false
promises*. Crying her eyes out, and it's a beautiful purge.

MEMORY FLASH: *Baby Tabitha driven away from the Hoarder house
in the cop car. Blues and reds spray.*

Nightingale collapses on her ass, and drops the weapon.

Tabitha looks up and sees -- Mama, with a massive head wound,
crawling away from Nightingale, across the floor on her hands
and knees like an infant, leaving a trail of blood and gore.
She's not angry, she's terrified.

Clinging to the last morsels of life. Staring at Tabitha with emptying eyes, blinking desperately.

She reaches for Tabitha.

MAMA BIRD
 (sucking wet breaths)
 ...Mommy...
 (weakening)
 Mommy...

Mama Bird crawls into Tabitha's lap, and she finds herself cuddling up together, holding Mama Bird's bleeding, broken gurgling head. She rubs Mama's damp red hair.

MAMA BIRD (CONT'D)
 ...Mommy? ...Mommy?

Tabitha and Nightingale lock eyes. Nightingale nods, as if giving her permission.

Instinct kicks into high gear. Tabitha starts to rock Mama Bird. And she sings her to sleep. It's born in her.

TABITHA
*Rock-a-bye, baby, in the treetop...
 When the wind blows, the cradle
 will rock...*

With the last of her strength, Mama Bird hands Tabitha her purple wig. Tabitha hesitates, but what the hell, a dying wish. She puts it on.

Nightingale hobbles over. Lies down beside them. She joins Tabitha in song, her raspy voice a perfect ASMR trigger.

TABITHA & NIGHTINGALE
*When the bough breaks, the cradle
 will fall... And down will come
 baby, cradle and all...*

It's a perfect duet. The hair on Mama's neck stands erect. Gooseflesh spreads down her arm. And the life is slowly draining from her eyes as her daughters sing her to sleep.

Suddenly -- *GZTTTT!!!!* Words flash on the flatscreens.

ACCOUNT SUSPENDED!

Ticktickticktickticktick. The subs start to go down.

9,432,246

Plunging down. Losing millions at a time.

4,371,432

Hemorrhaging subs...

21,192

Until there are no subscribers left.

97

Just a big fat goose egg --

0

And Mama is dead.

Tabitha lets her go, lays her stiff body down gently.

DOVE

Is she...

Tabitha nods. The Birdies bow their heads.

LARK

...poor Mama.

Lark and Dove hug and cry a little. Tabitha takes off the wig and hurls it across the room. She gets the keys from Mama's pocket, and unshackles herself.

She throws the keys to Lark, who goes to work on the Birdies. Nightingale wipes Mama's blood off on Tabitha's duck costume. And then helps her up. She's still catching her breath.

TABITHA

I'm Tabitha.

NIGHTINGALE

I'm... Mary...

Nightingale holds her tender throat.

TABITHA

Mary... so pretty. Nice to meet you in real life, sister.

NIGHTINGALE

You too.

DOVE

I'm Jenny.

HAWK

I'm Mike.

FINCH

I'm Sam.

BUSTARD
 (in great pain)
 I'm Farhad.

LARK
 I was actually already Lark.

They all sort of laugh, but it's hard and it hurts.

They smile and size each other up...Like they're seeing each other for the first time...

NIGHTINGALE
 I've been watching every day. I could tell she was getting worse, and I came as soon as I could. I knew I had to do something...

TABITHA
 Thanks for watching.

NIGHTINGALE
 Thanks for saving my life.

TABITHA
 Birds of a feather.

NIGHTINGALE
 No more bird puns, please.

TABITHA
 Sorry.

NIGHTINGALE
 You're safe now. I promise. Nothing's bad is gonna happen to you again, I'll make sure of it.
 (to the Birdies)
 You got me now. I'm here for you.

Tabitha hugs her. And she feels so safe in her arms. They Birdies join in for a Birdie Cuddle.

NIGHTINGALE (CONT'D)
 There's something I always wanted to do...

Nightingale climbs to her feet.

CUT TO:

The Children run through the living room freeing all the pet birds from their cages, opening all the windows and doors. A symphony of perfect birdsong as the birds fly through the house, and fly out the windows and doors...

EXT. LAWN - DAY

The Children watch the pet birds fly away into the sky--
They all hold hands. A perfect family.

DOVE

Look.

She points to the sky, where a fleet of THE THUNDERING POLICE HELICOPTERS cut through the clouds... Coming to the rescue... And, yes, they look like giant metal birds.

LARK

How was Nome?

NIGHTINGALE

Terrible WiFi.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

SIRENS in the background. Police on their way... Moving through the house... Past Mama's dead body... Down the dark hallway to **HER BEDROOM...**

Through the door... Mama's room is plain and tidy... The bed is made...

There's a small altar by the window... Unlit candles... And at the center of the altar...

An old photo from the 80s. An engraved wooden frame reads: *Mommy & Me*. A YOUNG WOMAN with a kind smile, tattoos and streaks of purple in her hair. She's sitting next to a YOUNG MAMA BIRD, THE HAPPIEST LITTLE GIRL IN THE WORLD.

Together forever.