

Tanya Gaines

Marginalia
(A Cautionary Tail)

Characters:

Mama: a woman in her 50's

Junior: Mama's 30+ year-old, only child

Rex: Junior's pal

Scene 1:

Dark blue lights come up to amber to light

A projected room, small with a window

And filled with books.

Lou Reed's Walk on the Wild Side is playing.

Mama, wearing a bathrobe,
is snoozing in front of a t.v.

The late late show is playing

The Island of Lost Souls.

A door squeaks open. Junior enters wearing

A sweat suit, hoody up and zipped.

Mama startles awake.

MAMA

(worried, annoyed)

Junior, for Chrissake, I've been waiting for you all night.
Where have you been?

JUNIOR

Oh just prowling around.

MAMA

Just prowling around. That's suitably vague. You look like
something the cat dragged in.

JUNIOR

(under his breath) I wish.

MAMA

What was that?

JUNIOR

Nothing, I didn't say a thing.

MAMA

You most certainly did. Now get out of those grubby clothes -

She reaches to unzip the
hoody, but Junior backs away.

JUNIOR

I'm fine, Ma. I can manage. I'll change upstairs.

MAMA

I really want to know what you just mumbled at me. A little
clear communication with your old Mum? I'm all ears, dear.

Junior snickers.
Scratches his nose.

What is going on with you? You're out 'til all hours;
you're more secretive than ever; you're sullen: all the
features a parent cherishes in their precious spawn.

JUNIOR

Truly, Ma, there is nothing noteworthy taking
place in my life at the present moment.

MAMA

Come on, darlin', throw me a bone. A tidbit, a morsel. A
little news of the day, a bit of conversation.

JUNIOR

Ok, well you know that sock that went missing a while back?
The striped one? I found it! Under the bed, predictably.
Ok, we done? G'night.

MAMA

I don't mean to pry, dear. But, if there's
something wrong, maybe I can help.

JUNIOR

There's no help for it. . .

MAMA

What is it? New girlfriend?

JUNIOR

No, no girlfriend.

MAMA

(Cautiously)

Hm. Boyfriend?

JUNIOR

No, Ma, no boyfriend. Look, can we drop this for now? I just want to get cleaned up and then-

MAMA

Junior, what are you hiding from me? A mother knows when there is something going on with their child. And there is most certainly something going on with you. Now, please, hold forth.

JUNIOR

Ok, Ma, if you really want to know. You're not going to like it.

MAMA

Oh, baby, how bad could it be?

JUNIOR

For a long time now I haven't been feeling right. . .

MAMA

Oh, no, are you sick?

JUNIOR

No, Ma. Well, some people might say so.

MAMA

Some people. What people?

JUNIOR

You know I've never really fit in, always been marginal. And now it's absolutely clear to me that I need a change. I can't go on trapped in this body anymore -

MAMA

Oh, no!

(Begins to cry)

You want a sex change! I'll have to start buying brassieres for my 34-year-old son!

JUNIOR

What? No! God, no, Ma.

MAMA

No? So - what then? And where the hell have you been all night?

JUNIOR

It was just a gathering of . . .people . . .who . . .

MAMA

A gathering of people who??

JUNIOR

A gathering of people who like to dress up . . .

MAMA

Here we go with the dress up.

JUNIOR

People who like to dress up like animals. They call themselves Furries.

MAMA

(Laughs)

Oh, Junior, what a relief!

JUNIOR

Um, well, that's very supportive(?) of you.

MAMA

But, what do you mean about not wanting to be trapped in your body anymore?

JUNIOR

Well, that's just it -

He pulls the hoody down on one side:

A stiff fuzzy ear pops up.

Then the other side..

I don't want to just dress up anymore. I want to make it permanent.

MAMA

Make . . what . . permanent??

JUNIOR

The change. I want a complete species make-over.

MAMA

My God! I'm trying to imagine what that would entail. Has it ever been done? You're not going to be a guinea pig are you? And what about your friends, your community -the Fuzzies?

JUNIOR

Furries.

MAMA

The Furries - being with them doesn't satisfy this impulse?

JUNIOR

It's not just an impulse. I've only ever been a fringe Furry anyway. They're mostly a bunch of bozos. I want the real thing - the tail, the enhanced senses, the innocence - not this bullshit facsimile and a plush outfit! And this absurd and counter-intuitive posture. Down on all-fours is a place of balance and power, closer to the sweet earth. I want to take a real walk on the wild side.

MAMA

But, Junior, you weren't raised in the wild. You have no practical skills - how will you survive out there? What about comforts and conveniences - are you willing to give up regular meals? Hot baths? A warm, soft, cozy bed? Drugs and alcohol?

JUNIOR

He ponders, briefly, chin in hand.
To Hell with it! What is all that compared to freedom, complete autonomy? Not to mention

maintaining a healthy population of
Non-humans! I want to remember how to truly
appreciate warmth, and food. And - and I want
to remember. . . And I want to forget. . .

MAMA

Junior! How are you going to pay for this? It
must cost a fortune. And what kind of ghoul
even does this sort of thing?

JUNIOR

I know a guy who knows a guy. And it doesn't
cost as much as you might think.

MAMA

Well Hell's bells. You've always done pretty
much as you pleased, so I don't suppose the
expense, or difficulty, or just plain goddamn
weirdness of it will stop you.

JUNIOR

And speaking of that, I need to do it soon.
My friend Rex and I made a pact to do it by
St. Francis of Assisi's Feast Day. Paws for
the Cause!

Junior raises his hand up in a gesture of allegiance.

Lights dim. Junior exits.
Mama follows him off slowly.

An offstage voice announces:

NINE MONTHS LATER . . .

SCENE 2:

Lights come back up.
Knock on the door.
Mama enters to open the door.
Rex enters.

MAMA

Oh, hello. You must be Rex.

REX

Yes, Ma'am. Pleased to meet you.

MAMA

Junior will be right down. Junior! Your visitor is here! Junior!?

Junior enters, and is,
to all appearances,
a large feline.
He reaches out to shake
Rex's hand.

MAMA

I'll leave you boys to yourselves.

Mama exits.

JUNIOR

Hey, Rex, you old dog! How are you? Long time no see. You haven't changed a bit.

REX

Junior, man, long time. I'm doin' good, man, doin' good. Dude, look at you -

Rex strokes Junior's arm.
Look at that fine outfit. That must have set you back a brick or two.

JUNIOR

Outfit? What outfit?

REX

This fucking awesome set of threads -

Rex pulls Junior's cheek.

JUNIOR

Ow! Hey, motherfucker, this is no outfit.
This is the genuine article, the real deal,
the cat's ass.

REX

What?! You gotta be shittin' me. What the - ?

JUNIOR

Backing away.

Rex, you - I -

REX

You maniac! You did it!

JUNIOR

Yes, I did it, as per our agreement. Clearly
you did not.

REX

You didn't actually expect me to go through
with it? It's just plain nuts!

JUNIOR

What about our pact? The courage of your
convictions? And what about the deadline?

REX

The deadline?

JUNIOR

St. Francis' Feast Day - the Blessing of the
Beasts?

REX

Jesus, Junior, I have a life. I can't just
walk away from it.

JUNIOR

You chickened-out. So predictably human.

REX

Wait, weren't you going to go live out in the wilderness in the state park or something? But you're still here in your Mom's house, wearing clothes, no less.

JUNIOR

It's that girlfriend of yours, isn't it? I bet you got her pregnant. And I bet it was an "accident"! Talk about nuts. Traitor!

He growls and hisses.

REX

(Looks ashamed)

Well, what about it? Yeah, she thought it was cool, at first, but then, ya know, she got all creeped out. She said, "If we have babies they'll be monsters." Ya know? So what's your excuse?

JUNIOR

It's complicated.

REX

No! Really? Isn't everything?

JUNIOR

Look, my Ma's always been good to me. Better than I deserve. She's getting older, and I owe it to her to see her through. I had to stay.

REX

Wow! So, what about this?

Gesturing up and down at Junior's body.

JUNIOR

I work three days a week at the interpretive center in the park. It brings in a few bucks.

REX

That's even more nuts!

JUNIOR

Yeah, well, isn't everything?

REX

Mm. Well, Junior, good luck with that. I better get going. I gotta go home and do my shift with *my* junior.

JUNIOR

Heh! Yeah, pal, good luck with *that*!

They clasp hands. Rex exits.
Mama enters.

MAMA

Did your friend leave already?

JUNIOR

Friend? Huh! Yeah, he's gone.

MAMA

Oh. Well, dearie, don't let that putz bother you. I have some lovely Bristling sardines - your favorite. And the late late late show is just about to start. . . . Come,

She pats the sofa next to her as she sits down.

Sit next to your ol' Ma.

He sits languidly next to her.
She opens the can and extracts
a shiny over-sized sardine which she offers to him.

