

Mother...American Heritage Dictionary,

noun

- I. A female that has borne an offspring.

She gives birth. It was in February, on the first. I hear it was in a snowstorm. My grandfather, flies a small plane to Charlottesville to see me, excited about my birth. My father is an architect. She once worked in New York on the runway. Tall, stunning, and beautiful.

I am a teenager.

Her closet is filled with sweaters, shelves and shelves of sweaters on the left. The walk-in closet is white wood paneling, real wood, not the cheap plastic wood.

Bags of dresses on the right in which evening clothes are enshrouded like butterflies, ready to shed their cocoons and take flight.

Sacred dresses.

I never touch them.

On the evenings when she went out, she always started in the bathroom, putting on her eyes and red lipstick. Sometimes I would sit and watch her ready herself for the evening. I could only dream about ever looking like her. I felt so plain and boring. I didn't wear makeup and I hated wearing dresses. Most of the time I was in jeans and at the barn.

After her face was done, she would go into her bedroom and shut the door. I would sit down and wait for her to emerge. She would come out of her room bearing an aroma of rich flowers, slightly sharp around the edges, and looking more than beautiful.

Bedecked in gold and either diamonds or pearls, she looked like a queen. Before leaving for the evening, Dad would drape either her fur stole or fur coat around her tall, slim body and they would leave for an evening of sophisticated entertainment.

It all sounds so wonderful, so *normal*.

It's not.

It never was.

Always a drink in her hand.

Sophisticated entertainment was a party with friends.

Lots of booze and a little bit of food.

In time, she skipped the beautiful dresses.

Parties were free booze.

Dad doesn't go.

Pictures in the hallway tilted helter-skelter.

Asleep on the toilet

mothered

1. to give birth to; instigate and carry through

She instigated, and she carried through;

Three girls

A lifetime of division, friction, anger, hurt, pain

2. to watch over, nourish and protect

No watching over

Controlling

No nourishing

Feeding

No Protecting

Punishing

3. A woman having some of the responsibilities of a mother: a house mother

I went to Villa Maria in seventh grade, a Catholic boarding school.

Sister Anna was our housemother

More like a house witch.

Long bulbous nose with a hair growing out it.

Flat out mean and ugly.

*"Sister Anna is really mad!
She's been mad since yesterday.
She isn't paying any attention to us!
Every time she comes in a room, it becomes silent
'cause everybody is scared they're going to get into trouble!
It snowed and we didn't have school."
-February 1, 1972*

mother(2)

n. a stringy slime composed of yeast cells and bacteria that forms on the surface of fermenting liquids. It is added to wine or cider to start production of vinegar. Also called "mother of vinegar". [Probably from MOTHER, partly from association with afterbirth]

Mother is the bottom gunk in non-filtered vinegar. It makes more vinegar. When I lived in Switzerland, there was a jug, made of grey pottery. The mouth of it was quite wide. The liquid inside was dark and aromatic. Whenever we had leftover wine, it went in there. The mother made it into vinegar. I have always wanted a mother, and to make vinegar. Now I have one, a mother for apple cider vinegar. The organic, non-filtered apple cider vinegar sold at health stores, Trader Joes and Whole Foods, has a mother. But I still need a mother.

Vinegar, bitter, acidic, not drinkable

Slimy, bacterial fermenting

Starts the vinegar

Mother

Yes, she was our mother.

We are the vinegar. ▲