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# MOTHERHOOD UNBIDDEN

By Beth Dotson Brown

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# MOTHERHOOD UNBIDDEN

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3W / 1M

## Setting:

*A dining room in a middle class home.*

## Characters:

**Grace Kinkaid;** *a nervous woman in her late 30s or 40s who is recently married and uncomfortable in her role as stepmother.*

**Agnes Kinkaid;** *the 19-year-old stepdaughter who lives away at college. She comes home once a week for a family meal and doesn't like Grace.*

**Benny Kinkaid;** *the stepson in his early 20s who lives in town and has a good relationship with Grace.*

**Kimberly LaCoyne;** *Benny's girlfriend who recently graduated from high school and is somewhat immature.*

# MOTHERHOOD UNBIDDEN

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*(AT RISE: Grace is setting the dining room table. Agnes walks in.)*

AGNES

What's for supper tonight, Grace?

GRACE

*(She says this almost as a question, as if seeking approval.)* Lasagna. With salad, rolls and a chocolate pudding cake for dessert.

AGNES

*(To herself)* Lasagna. Again.

GRACE

*(She hears Agnes' comment but doesn't acknowledge it, just busies herself with the table. As they talk, she has a nervous habit of pressing her fingernails into the flesh of her arm.)* Benny will be here with his new girlfriend, Kimberly. You haven't met her yet, have you Agnes?

AGNES

No, but Dad tells me she's a boppity little teenager. Benny needs a woman.

GRACE

Why do you say that?

AGNES

Why do I say what?

GRACE

That Benny needs a woman.

AGNES

Because he's a slob and he's so unfocussed and just generally doesn't know what the heck is going on in life. He doesn't need some teenager who hangs out at the mall and giggles with her friends. He needs a woman.

GRACE

Your brother is an intelligent young man. We'll have to rely on him to make good decisions.

AGNES

*(Sarcastic)* Rely on him to make good decisions. Right!

GRACE

How were classes this week, Agnes?

AGNES

Classes. Challenging I would say. But the drive here was more so. I wish they would finish that road construction so I don't have to drive through it every week when I come down.

GRACE

Then I hope they'll finish it soon.

AGNES

Yeah, right. Listen, Grace, since Dad's not home yet I'm going next door to see if Gina is there. She used to be a good friend of mine. Not that you would know that since you're so new to the family, but she is.

GRACE

*(Nods and begins to pace. Agnes exits.)* How am I ever going to connect with that girl? Is there something wrong with me? I wish Agnes didn't dislike me so much. But I don't think there's a thing I can do about it. She's as stubborn as her father. *(GRACE stops and smiles.)* But I was lucky there. He was stubborn about not giving up on me. *(She smiles at her hand with her wedding rings. Then she frowns.)* But maybe I was right and he was wrong. Maybe I can be his wife but not a good stepmother to his children. Nothing in my life has prepared me for someone like Agnes. *(BENNY and KIMBERLY walk in, their arms around one another.)*

BENNY

How's it going today, Grace?

GRACE

*(Smiling at him fondly.)* Fine. Very fine.

BENNY

*(Walks over to give her a hug.)* You remember Kimberly, don't you?

GRACE

Surely. Hello.

KIMBERLY

Hi Grace.

BENNY

Do you need some help, Grace? I might not cook but I know how to set a table.

GRACE

Oh, no, I'm fine here.

BENNY

Kimberly, do you want something to drink?

KIMBERLY

Yeah. (*BENNY exits.*)

GRACE

(*Setting the table then nervously moving the pieces around, looking more at them than at KIMBERLY.*) What is this job you told us you just started, Kimberly?

KIMBERLY

Officially, I'm a stock clerk at the store. But I'm hoping that soon I'll be a cashier, then I could have more people to talk to every day and I would like that.

GRACE

Are they giving you the training you need?

KIMBERLY

Oh, sure. They've been great about that. And they told me I did well the very first time I ran the cash register. I never thought I was good with numbers, but the machine does it all for me.

GRACE

Will you go to school in the fall? College?

KIMBERLY

No, I never really liked school. I mean, the friends were great and some of the stuff we got into, but studying is not something I'm in love with. Besides, I can make decent money at this job and maybe move up to be a store manager some day. Then after that, who knows.

GRACE

(*She stops to really look at KIMBERLY.*) What is it that you would really like to do, if you could have any job in the world?

KIMBERLY

(*Grinning.*) I would really like to be a choreographer for MTV. I mean, that would just be the ultimate I think. But, that's not likely to happen since I'm not planning to leave this place. So next in line is to get married. I would be an awesome wife.

GRACE

(*Swallows hard, disturbed by the wife goal*) So you're a dancer?

BENNY

(*He walks in and hands KIMBERLY a pop can.*) She's great. She was on the dance team in school and she's shown me some of her routines. I've never seen anyone dance like that. (*KIMBERLY giggles and kisses his cheek then whispers into his ear. GRACE looks down at the plates, embarrassed at their physical intimacy, and begins moving things again.*)

GRACE

I am sorry but I don't know much about dancing and MTV. Does that mean that if you went on to college you could study it further? Because with an education and some experience, maybe MTV wouldn't be just a dream.

## KIMBERLY

I don't know. I think something like a zillion girls try out for college dance teams. And I don't think they let you major in it. So I'll just be content to stay here with Benny and if it happens in the future, then it does.

## BENNY

Grace, I'm really sorry but we need to check something out before supper and we sure don't want to miss your lasagna. It smells awesome!

## GRACE

*(Smiling at him.)* That's okay. You go. *(BENNY and KIMBERLY exit. GRACE goes back to working on the table.)* The lasagna will be ready *(she looks at her watch)* soon. The salad and bread are prepared. The dessert is in the refrigerator. I could get out some salad dressings, but I don't know what Agnes will like. *(She starts to pick at her fingernails.)* She doesn't seem to like anything I do or say. If only she were more like Benny. He makes it easy to be a new mom at my age. But Agnes, goodness, I know she's 19 and maybe not quite as mature as Benny, but she's so hard to get to know. *(GRACE fluffs the flowers on the table and hums to herself. BENNY comes to the doorway of the room.)*

## BENNY

*(Unsmiling, very sober. He stands on the other side of the room from her.)* Grace, something's happened. *(GRACE begins to move toward him and he puts up his hand and shakes his head no, looking at the ground.)* No, I have to go out. I just . . . I don't know... Kimberly will tell you. *(KIMBERLY walks in from behind BENNY and he leaves. KIMBERLY looks like she's been crying.)*

## GRACE

Come in, please, Kimberly. Is something the matter?

## KIMBERLY

*(She pulls in a couple of jagged breaths before she looks at GRACE.)* It is. I mean, wow is it ever.

## GRACE

*(Walks over to her slowly and tentatively touches her arm, then offers her a seat. They both sit, facing one another. GRACE takes a deep breath then takes KIMBERLY'S hands.)* It's okay to tell me, whatever it is.

## KIMBERLY

*(She takes in another ragged breath as she maintains eye contact with GRACE. She licks her lips before she speaks.)* I'm pregnant. With Benny's baby.

## GRACE

*(GRACE squeezes KIMBERLY'S hands, then jerks them away. She stands up and begins to pace around the table. She almost whispers, as if to herself.)* Pregnant.

KIMBERLY

*(Watches GRACE.)* My parents are going to be so mad that I'm afraid they're going to kick me out. And I don't know anything about babies. I never even babysat for kids before. It's, like, not something I thought I would ever have to worry about. I mean, dancers don't do this, don't have babies when they're teenagers because it destroys their bodies. I don't know what I was thinking but I didn't think I could get pregnant this easy. *(GRACE continues to pace.)* I don't know what I'm going to do, Grace. Benny is freaked about telling his dad and he wanted us to tell you two together but then he said maybe we should tell you first, maybe you would be more understanding. I know my parents will say I'll have to quit my job and go on welfare and be poor for the rest of my life. They'll be so embarrassed. *(She begins to cry.)*

GRACE

*(Stops pacing and looks at the girl. Kimberly's body shakes as she cries. GRACE clasps her hands together and closes her eyes, as if meditating then returns to her seat.)* I would be more understanding?

KIMBERLY

*(KIMBERLY nods then GRACE sits down and puts her arms around KIMBERLY and rocks her. When GRACE pulls back, KIMBERLY wipes away her own tears then she looks at GRACE.)* Will you help me?

GRACE

What kind of help do you need, Kimberly?

KIMBERLY

*(Shrugs.)* I don't know anything about having a baby or raising children. And Benny says you're the best so I was hoping you could help me.

GRACE

*(Brightening.)* Benny says I'm the best?

KIMBERLY

Yeah. The best everything. The best cook. The best housekeeper. The best listener. The best kind of mom anyone could hope to have.

GRACE

*(Stands up and speaks away from Kimberly.)* The best kind of mom anyone could hope to have. . . *(GRACE turns toward KIMBERLY.)* We actually have something in common, you and I. Who would have ever thought I would be here making a meal for a family? Could you go into the kitchen and get the salad, Kimberly?

KIMBERLY

Sure. *(She exits.)*

GRACE

A baby. Benny's baby. And me hardly prepared to be a stepmother. *(KIMBERLY walks in with the salad and puts it on the table.)* All those years of living alone, working every day making accounts balance then going home to the solitude.

KIMBERLY

It sounds boring.

GRACE

I really didn't mind it. But this, this is nice, too. It's mostly just Chuck and I. The kids don't come over that often. But I like it when Benny comes. I can see why some women like having a son. (*GRACE sits down.*) Some of life's unbidden surprises are really quite good. (*A timer sounds on the oven.*) Would you mind to go get that, Kimberly?

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