

“I feel like we are helping each other grow up,” I said. “I am grown,” my Mother responded as she shut her bathroom door on me. Reopening the door, I said, “It’s just strange to think that you’ve led this whole life and I don’t seem to know about any of it.”

At thirteen, my mom and I took a trip together to Los Angeles, California. It was considered a trip to celebrate her freedom from a marriage that was anything but free. I had been begging to move there my entire eighth-grade year, and in an attempt to please me, she booked an airbnb. We found ourselves there for the next month, January, it was a good month. She told me the story of her, my, our birth. I’ve always been afraid of pregnancy— I could never understand how women knew they weren’t about to make a huge mistake. I remember asking her how she knew. “When I saw you, whatever that whole risk feeling was got boiled away,” she said. I cried then. It was the first time I felt like my mom was taking me seriously and really listening to me. February marked the month of me only being able to sleep in her bed. My room might as well have been rented out. I never wanted to leave her side, she was my best friend. We used to fight from the sudden switch from friend to mom; I needed a warning before I was becoming a child once more. She said, “I’m either funny or I’m mean and I can’t be both.” I so desperately wanted to prove that I understood her. In May she took me in my fourteen year old body to a club where I was to observe *real culture*. She spent the whole night telling everyone who she was, except me. I fell asleep at the bar, those days I could sleep anywhere. An indefinite amount of time later she grabbed me by my shoulders and said, “Wake up Juliette. We are the most modern people we have ever been. Don’t take that for granted.” The next night as we ate tuna sandwiches, the only food she made that was edible, she told me she thought I was ready, I had seen stuff now, and she was rewarding my patience. I had finally done my due diligence. That was the night I learned all about my Mother, about her upbringing in New York City, her days as an actress, all the men she had once been with. I knew to never doubt the woman for a moment. “If you one day tell people about me, make it a loving portrait.”