

Chapter 1: The Beast

There's a beast lurking. He has come to steal, kill and destroy but if that tired old phrase doesn't do it for you, how about this: he will gut, devour and leave you for dead. I know this because he did it to me. He sunk his teeth into my skin, sucking the vigor, from my body. He didn't leave a single drop of hope behind. Once described as having pizazz, I laid lifeless, just bones.

There's a beast who feasts on tiny treasures, the ones you think you don't see. There they are, all around you, glistening like gemstones. You may not even notice them if you're not paying attention, but the beast is. He's there to eat your virtues and leave you with a jagged stone, much like a tooth missing from a hungry mouth. I've got several with me right now. Reminders. I know the place where souls die.

If this doesn't sound pleasant, then wake up and make a plan, because the beast has an insatiable appetite. He prays particularly on moms because we're distracted. We overlook peace for all the chaos. We misplace kindness for getting things finished. We don't experience joy because quite frankly, who has time?

In a world where there is justification for anything, it's hard to consider learning lessons as joyful. In a world that amplifies highlights and mountain tops, we must fight to value the hard stuff and offer it up as a sacrifice to God. That's where the fruit of the spirit is found, in the hard work, sometimes in isolation and in brokenness. Unfortunately, in this we must find pleasure.

What are the fruit?

Love,

joy,

Commented [1]: Consider naming the gemstones "Fruit of the Spirit" here. That way, right at the very beginning, readers are introduced to the book's main theme.

Commented [2]: Super punchy line. It feels a little out of place here, but it would work excellently in the place you talk about losing your pizazz.

Commented [3]: This is so good! So relatable, and it has that challenging "get your you-know-what together" tone that's part of MomDentity's voice.

peace,

patience,

kindness

goodness,

faithfulness,

gentleness,

and self-control, the fruits of the spirit (Gal 5:22) You've heard of it maybe. Some of you have memorized it. But, really. What Is The Fruit Of The Spirit and how do you get it? The fruit of the spirit is literally fruits of labor. The sweet thing that is produced in you when you are led by the the Holy Spirit (John 15:2.) How about this? Let's think of the fruit as actual fruit: A prune or a plumb? A raisin or a grape? Worse yet, a dead branch, or a bushel of apples? It's your choice.

A Mind Game

Let's play pretend. You know, the kind of pretend your kids want you to play, the kind of pretend that's not real. Or is it? In this pretend game, there is nothing we can do about the obstacles of the course. We can't control or call a time out. We can't call in sick or take a leave of absence, this is The Motherhood Warrior Course and the point is ... for it to suck sometimes. But it's here that we can discover treasures beyond our wildest imagination. We can do the things we are already doing with pure joy. The mission: to grab those shiny gemstones called virtues or the fruit of the spirit before the beast has the chance to devour them.

Did you notice that I have inserted scripture from the actual Bible? James 1 I did it twice. See it now? It's fine if you don't. God's word is alive and will get in between your bones and very marrow even if you don't know it. (heb 4:12) I just did it again, but I admit that one was a little

more in your face. My point is that applying the Bible to your life doesn't have to be all Bible-y and annoying. I'm going to make it as fun as possible to help you get out of your funk.

My History < His story.

Don't you think you should know my story now? He gutted me, that beast, in case you missed it the first time. I won't make a habit of repeating myself, but that right there, requires repeating, because you should know. He enjoyed it, me not so much. But I survived, so I should tell you the tale.

After that we will get to the battle plan.

Young and ambitious, how could I have ever known my biggest strength was also my biggest weakness? I'm just human and back then, I was too young or too asleep, depending on the way you look at it. If I had been awake, I would have realized I was being stalked. But, while my soul slept, my body, the thing you see on the outside, thrived in the television news business. There was simply nothing in which I needed to be aware. Or so I thought.

Before I go on, what do I mean I was being stalked? I mean I was just doing the thing I set out to do without a clue of an invisible creature, a crafty one, that lurks. I was just doing the thing, living my life, striving to be the best. I'm no different than you, but I had a brawl with the beast and I need to tell you about it.

I loved working in TV. After several successful years, he had me right where he wanted me, the beast I am warning you about. Suddenly, I became less and less enchanted with the television news business in which I thrived. The things that had set my feet on fire as I hunted down the story of the morning, didn't do the trick any longer. The Beast had set enough small disappointments in my path, like stones leading me to discouragement, ... that lead me to quitting my job ... that led me to isolation ... that led me to destruction. It's clear now, but it

Commented [4]: I don't think it's necessary to point out that you insert Scripture. The idea that God's lessons don't have to be Bible-y is central to your theme, so I wouldn't remove it. Just maybe remove the language pointing out what you're doing.

Commented [5]: What do you think about starting the chapter here, at "Young and ambitious?" And working the previous couple pages in later in the chapter? (See more about this in my letter.)

Commented [6]: Great way to add perspective and to lighten the tone: future you looks back and sees your experience differently.

Commented [7]: 2 questions. Did this happen pre-kids? And what happened specifically that disenchanted you? "Phase two" below has that gorgeous scene of you looking at your old clothes. This part, phase one, doesn't have as much detail. There are some wonderful spots for you to expand on these details. One is where you mention "small disappointments" in your path, and another is day one of stay-at-home momhood.

wasn't back then. Small things can become large things if you let them. Don't think the beast doesn't know this. But the one living inside of me is bigger than the one living in the world, I didn't know that then but now I do.

Quitting put me on the fast track to becoming a stay-at-home mom and I realized on day one that I was in trouble. The beast had cornered me. Alone with a fussy newborn, distraction, confusion and loneliness now ruled my life. Phase one of the beast's plan was almost complete. It had seemingly happened while I slept. I also just inserted more of the Bible, but there's a chance you missed it. (1Thess. 5:6 NIV) Please, don't you be asleep too.

Subtitle: Mom

It never looked like the baby blues or postpartum depression. I got up, worked out, played peek-a-boo, met other moms at the park, laughed hysterically with my husband and made dinner. It turns out depression, rejection and failure can double as a quiet little lamb with wolf skin underneath. Remember, I was asleep, just living what I thought was my life. That was some weirdo life I had, when I started spending more and more time in my closet, listening to the clothes hanging there. Since I'm airing things out to you, I'll tell you exactly what that means, even if it's a little odd. Come on into my closet and I'll tell you. Actually, I'll let them tell you. My old threads begged to be worn, retelling countless stories as I slid them to the left one by one.

Grey pants signify the story I covered at my old TV station about a police officer who accidentally ran over and killed a little girl in his car. Black pants instantaneously flash back to a fun Halloween morning live shot in Nashville. I looked down at my own humble outfit, too shy for the camera. This old thing would never experience what the others had. These slouchy black pants would never feel the confidence of nabbing the interview no other station had. These cotton pants would never detect the pressure of my notebook as I penned scripts with a fervor of

Commented [8]: For linear flow, save this "God revelation" for later. At this point in the story, "TV Courtney" is still feeling discouraged.

Commented [9]: Plot question: When did you quit, and when did you have your first kid? Did you quit because you were disenchanted, and then you had a baby after? Or was being a working mom part of what disenchanted you?

a writer on a deadline. On their best day, these pants push a baby on the swing at a park. They play rounds of peek-a-boo, relishing in the laughter of the baby, but that's about all. And this off the shoulder sweatshirt... it was brand new. It didn't retell a story, rather --it didn't have a story at all! Blank slate. A new season. The sweatshirt-without-a-story had an attitude problem though and told me I was an off duty tv person with a lifetime of spit up to clean. My clothing no longer corresponded with my identity. If my clothing could talk it would tell you all of that.

Phase one of destruction was complete. I can now imagine the beast had a walkie-talkie and made his announcement to fellow demons at the ready. It was almost time for a feast. He lured me, a sleepy, flesh draped soul, away, off the grid.

Phase two: annihilation of dreams. No hope left behind.

Allright, so I was clearly experiencing some post-partum depression, the only remedy I could see, was to go back to doing something I was good at doing, because this Mom-thing was terrifying. Lucky for me, I got a huge opportunity to do a show across the country that thousands and thousands of people watched. This position would be my ticket back to creativity, expression and inspiration! My old self! I was desperate to connect with the outside world again. You can now envision me doing the Charleston dance singing "Mama's gonna make a come back!" Boy was I wrong. That beast, he was waiting to pounce. And bless my heart. That beast sang a much different tune: mama's gonna crash and burn! I had mixed up a few letters in "the devils intention" and mistakenly thought this whole thing for "Divine intervention." My bad. I had no idea I was in the middle of a never-ending obstacle course, without a mental battle plan, some tools and a tribe, I was toast. The details of the whole saga are too boring for this book and not the point, but you can just say it involves a woman producer who had Jon Bon Jovi circa 1980 hair who actually thought I was the one not cut out for TV. Oh the irony.

Commented [10]: This is one of my favorite parts. It has beautiful imagery that demonstrates memories. For even more impact, I think you can amp up your emotional reaction. When you heard those things from your clothes, what emotions did you feel? Did you have physical reactions, like curling up in a ball on the floor? A second idea—to set the scene of you in your closet, what other things did your senses pick up? Dust or mustiness? Was it quiet, with your newborn asleep and the sounds of the house and the world muted?

Commented [11]: This paragraph is another great example of future you looking back with a humorous tone.

We could go into all the ways I disagree with the email of her feedback that landed in my inbox like a bomb. But we won't. Just know, the email forced me back to what I was running from: "just a mom." I wouldn't get the job I knew I was supposed to get. A white flag replaced the identity I grasped with two hands. I surrendered to it, more a life sentence than a gift or an honor of the highest title. At this point I had no idea mom's rule the world.

Depression, humiliation, rejection. It's all difficult, I felt like a CD ejected from the player; tossed aside and labeled : "Became Mom. Lost Edge. Next." I imagine that beast laughed a violently insane laugh, that of a maniac. Phase three was complete. He had stolen what I thought was everything.

Total Destruction

Confidence. Boldness. Creativity.. Getter-of-dreams. All of that died a gruesome death at the hands of a beast who is always ready for an ambush. Without what I thought I was, my short stint in motherhood was marked by one thing: identity loss. I know I'm not alone here when I say I had not yet met the mom God had created me to be. Completely dejected, I returned back to life but I was anything but settled. I was the aftermath of a large hurricane with no help in sight, debris from an awful storm. My guts were exposed.

I searched for a piece of myself that wasn't absolutely shredded. I found some old stories I had written, old journal entries and papers for school, things that built me. Without creating something for others to enjoy, I was nothing.

Maybe I had looked at things all wrong my entire life. Approval by someone else's perception of me was the lowest, the dumbest thing ever! I want to shake my new-mom-self! Looking back I could have flipped this whole situation on its' head. But, I never would have come up with this story for me and for you. I had to walk every step of the depression, humiliation and rejection

until I could build another version of myself using a different foundation. But I still began again with the only tools I knew how to use: pen and paper. Maybe all was not lost. But, being pruned hurts and at that point I still had no idea what that even meant. (John 15:2 NIV)

Sticky Middle

I wonder if somebody had told me I was in the middle, and I'm not talking about middle age, or even in the middle of Motherhood but:

In the middle of failure and success.

In the middle of rejection and acceptance.

In the middle of mom and identity.

In the middle of prune and bloom.

In the middle of lost and found.

It can feel like the desert, that place, The Middle. And even if a rescue plane tried to pick me up, I wouldn't get in. Because getting on that plane meant I would have chosen to be the opposite of what I had been. It's a one-way flight to the new me. And I wasn't ready. I hadn't become her yet.

In that moment and for years to follow, I couldn't tell you who I was, not even after re-reading hundreds of old writings. I was lost. What did I stand for? What made me special? Who do I want to be? Who did God Create me to be? All I knew is that I was done. I lost my big chance. The old me was gone and I would never see her again. And the beast laughs. I had been dragged away by my own desire, into the hands of one who wanted *the* last laugh. (James 1:14 NIV)

If I had been on a real-life warrior course for moms (not the pretend one I'm presenting you with,) I would have been demolished. Without a plan and a way to pull myself back together, I'd have to course correct many times until I got it right again. That beast is cruel, He took the goods

Commented [12]: Since the previous paragraphs and the ones that follow talk about being **IN** the middle, and this section talks about being on the other side, consider moving this farther down or deleting it.

after the gutting a few more times until I found the tools I'd need to survive. What do you do when you're utterly desperate? I cried out to a God I hardly knew despite the fact I was saved, had been baptized and went to church regularly. Ever been there? Have you ever been naked in the shower crying silently into walls that echo heartbreak? I know you have, it's a totally human thing to do.

Transformation

We talked earlier about how words have power. God knew He made me a little hardheaded, a bit stubborn. Sound like anyone you know? Well, unless something truly dramatic happened He knew I'd never pick up the Bible for fun. If I didn't pick up the Bible, I definitely wasn't learning about *producing* virtues, or the fruit of the spirit whatever that was. I mean, come on, that's boring. He knew, because he made me, that I'd have to let go of who I thought I was to make sure that I started producing those sorts of things-- things I knew absolutely nothing about. He knew the thing I loved the most, would also have to be the thing that cut me to the core. He knew He would have to make me weak, so He could show me His strength. Wait a minute, the older and wiser version of myself chimes in, did He fulfill his scripture in me? Did He just prune, like with a sharp object, something to make something else grow? (John 15:2 again) I had literally just crashed and burned, did He just throw something into the fire that wasn't producing good fruit? (John 15:6) Did He let the devil have his way with me for a little while (James 1:15) because He knew it was the only way to reduce me to a season of servanthood? He took away the glitz, the glam, the earthly fulfillment of being able to create and write so that I had no choice but to return to my core, the one He created. Lord have mercy, this was too much for my brain to comprehend.

Finally, shall we play a game?

Commented [13]: This section is great. It has the humble, heartfelt side of your voice.

So. I've made it a game. Shall we?

You're a mom on a never-ending obstacle course. You have to carry your entire family through each one. You also must spot these brightly colored gemstones during life's obstacles otherwise, you lose. What do you lose? That's up to you. For me, *not* finding the fruit of the spirit cost me my identity. The beast has employed a demon by the name of MomGuilt to attack us. She is hungry for failure. MomGuilt's appetite is fueled by our very own struggle. She will exhaust, distract and rob us of worthiness. Our mission is to secure one fruit of the spirit on each obstacle. If we don't find the treasure, we receive a heavy jagged stone we must carry with us throughout the entire course. MomGuilt's success is based on how many failures we carry with us. The beast wants the rocks to wreak havoc on our lives because if we are focused on how heavy they are, we are not looking for a fruit of the spirit. Ain't that about right? He who comes to steal, kill and destroy, He who comes to distract, devour and leave you for dead tries to take all that's good in this life and replace it with darkness and confusion.

Your Turn

So now that you understand the game somewhat, it's time to play.

For me, growing pains hurt. And I became someone new without being quite ready.

Transformation had started but I needed more information. Where do we turn when we are depressed or rejected or struggling at life itself? We turn to God and we begin asking all sorts of questions and if you're anything like me, sometimes turning to the Bible can be frustrating, let alone the cool thing to do. But when you're trying to find the thing you were created for, there's no better place to go, it just takes quite a bit of digging. Lucky for me, I already had a pen and paper in hand, it seems like I was born this way. I just didn't know how to use them to explore the person He created me to be. Isn't that what you're after too?

Commented [14]: For simplicity—to focus on the meaning of the journey rather than on the logistics of the journey—can you simplify your description of the Motherhood Warrior Course into just a couple sentences?

When we create an identity in this life that holds tightly to earthly standards, we run the risk of losing it. What do we focus on *now* in this period of heart break? When it's too early to create a new identity, we must focus on what we are producing before we can step back and see the whole picture, which for us, in this book, is our Mom-Dentity™, the Mom God created you to be.

The first and most basic thing we can and must do is to keep God before our minds. This is the fundamental secret of caring for our souls. Our part in thus “practicing the presence of God” is to direct and redirect our minds constantly to Him. In the early time of our “practicing” we may well be challenged by our burdensome habits of dwelling on things less than God.

But these are habits—not the law of gravity—and can be broken. A new, grace- filled habit will replace the former ones as we take intentional steps toward keeping God before us. Soon our minds will return to God as the needle of a compass constantly returns to the north. If God is the great longing of our souls, He will become the pole star of our inward beings.

—Dallas Willard

Commented [15]: The quote is really good at summing up this chapter, but also the whole book. Maybe make it an epigraph on its own page before chapter 1 starts?

MomDentity Developmental-Edit Suggestions

Hi Courtney,

Thank you so much for entrusting the first five chapters of your book with me. I can see that fiction-nonfiction blend you talked about, and I think it's one of the things that gives this book unique appeal. The obstacle scenes are particularly strong. The imagery, the narrator's feelings and flaws, and the big lessons learned in small moments are so fantastic.

In this document, you'll find global feedback on the first five chapters and chapter-specific ideas. In the chapters themselves, you'll see notes in the margins for scene-specific suggestions and spots where some of these global ideas apply. So, here we go!

Global Suggestions

End-of-Chapter Reflections (Point of View)

In the reflections, I love that the narrator expresses frustration over what she's supposed to learn, like in chapter 2 when she tells Paul she doesn't like having to feel joyful about mothering. There's also a great progression in how the narrator closes each reflection section. By chapter 5, she's starting to figure out what the treasures actually are and to feel hopeful about gaining a different perspective.

I notice that some reflections are in second-person POV, where the narrator instructs readers. This feels like "future Courtney" talking, so the time shift is a little confusing. It also has a more authoritative tone instead of the "coming alongside you to figure this out together" tone because it tells readers how to apply the lessons to their own lives. I think if you recast these sections into first-person—so it's the narrator speaking about her own epiphanies when she's in the now, sitting in bed after a tough obstacle—it will easily clear up these points. You'll see comments in the chapter margins for where this comes up.

Lava Cave (Plot and Setting)

The lava-cave scenes are the most fictional part, and fiction is SO HARD! I always feel like nonfiction is easier because you're shaping something that already exists. With fiction, you have to build it all from scratch.

Currently, the lava scenes tend to be more informative than narrative. MomGuilt appears and tells the moms what to expect in the next obstacle. Focusing on creating a narrative arc in each scene, like in chapter 5, will keep the pace up and keep pushing readers forward. In each lava scene, what conflict can the narrator experience? How does overcoming that conflict change her as a person?

Another thing that can be amped up is the setting. You have fantastic visual descriptions of the tiny hole in the ceiling and the burning smell, but what other sensations can the narrator experience when she's in the cave? Are there terrifying screams? Are the moms packed wall to wall so she feels claustrophobic and a sense of chaos? How does the narrator react in her thoughts and behavior to these stimuli? This will give readers a greater sense of the physical setting (what the lava cave is like) and the emotional setting (fear, unease).

Here's a wilder idea: What do you think about not transporting the narrator to the lava cave at all? Maybe MomGuilt can appear to the narrator when she's in her lowest, most depressed spot—like the closet with the work clothes—and scare the crap out of her at pivotal moments of her motherhood journey? You could even reorder the chapters chronologically as they occurred in your life (I think it would be ok if the fruits of the spirit weren't in biblical order) to help the book flow like a novel. Logistically, this could make sense because chapter 1 starts as the narrator is a new mom. If the whole story happens in the narrator's "real" world, maybe Fanny Pack Girl could be placed by a real person (or people) you encountered in real life who you always compared yourself to? Anyway, I know this is a big idea that would change a lot, so feel free to discard it if it doesn't feel right.

MomDar (Characterization and Pacing)

The narrator shines when her mind pummels her with thoughts of guilt, shame, and failure. Sometimes MomDar delivers these thoughts to her, and sometimes MomGuilt hisses these thoughts in the narrator's ear. For simplicity, what do you think about eliminating MomDar from the story altogether? If all those thoughts can come from the narrator and MomGuilt, both characters will have increased depth.

Sometimes MomDar slows the pace at the beginning of obstacles because beeps and images accompany the delivery of information. If MomDar is taken out, consider having all this information come to the narrator in a single moment: She quickly identifies where she is, when she is, and how old her children are. That way, the logistics of the scene are set quickly and readers can dive into the action.

MomGuilt (Characterization)

The MomGuilt character is so nasty! The idea of guilt personified can help readers identify guilty feelings within themselves and understand that those feelings are something they need to actively work against. That's a fantastic, helpful lesson.

To help readers get that visceral reaction to MomGuilt that the narrator has, consider adding more sensory things to the narrator's reaction to her. What is unexpectedly disgusting, horrific, or repulsive about MomGuilt's appearance and behavior? When MomGuilt makes the narrator feel scared or angry or ashamed or guilty, what kinds of thoughts and sensations does the narrator experience?

There are also some moments when MomGuilt's behavior is confusing to the narrator, like when MomGuilt almost gags on words or grabs her throat. This feels confusing to me as a reader as

well. I think the Bible-y explanation could be that God's Word drives out Satan. But can you explain or dwell on MomGuilt's behavior a little to indicate the deeper meaning behind it?

Fanny Pack Girl (Characterization)

The idea of Fanny Pack Girl is fantastic. She's that perfect-seeming mom we compare ourselves to. She's got it all together. She achieves every goal and checks them off her list on her journey to supermomdom. Fanny Pack Girl is an essential part of the narrator's journey.

Fanny Pack Girl's dialogue is so perfect that she sounds ethereal and angelic. That makes me wonder if she's actually an angelic figure rather than a "normal" mom going through the course. If she's indeed a real mom, can you show some of her pain and imperfections to help her seem more human? The narrator can still overlook these imperfections because she has a distorted view, but readers will see them and know that the narrator just isn't seeing reality.

Humor (Voice and Tone)

One of MomDentity's hallmarks is going through motherhood with both authenticity and humor. There are wonderfully funny moments, like the narrator realizing she's acting like an idiot. But overall, I think the book needs to dial up the humor to find balance. This could be challenging if you rely on a point-of-view shift ("future Courtney" interrupting "present Courtney's" narration with a different perspective). So you may lean more on pointing out your own flaws, exaggeration and hyperbole, or unexpected and illogical connections. Or whatever feels natural to you!

Chapter-Specific Suggestions

Chapter 1

The closet scene is a beautiful demonstration of who you were before and after the depression hit. It's my favorite part of the chapter. I notice that pre-depression Courtney is described only in positives. Was part of your depression that you had this black-and-white view—that pre-mom life was great and post-mom sucked? This may be something to clarify to add depth and realness to the character. Or if you didn't have a black-and-white view, show some of pre-mom Courtney's imperfections.

Another idea: Consider starting the chapter with your personal story rather than the explanation of the beast and fruit. Since the rest of the book is a narrative, it makes sense that chapter 1 could start as a narrative too. And starting with a personal story always sucks readers in.

Chapter 2

The narrator's specific thoughts wonderfully demonstrate her emotional states during the obstacle. There's guilt, shame, and isolation: "I don't hear stories like this from my friends." Depression: "This is what I have to do? Over and over again?" Frustration: "I always wound up with a dirty shirt and a screaming child." This gives her depth and realness. And relatability, because every mom thinks those things, and readers will feel seen and understood.

The most dramatic part of the flight is when the narrator has to get Hudson off the plane. Here's a pacing idea to amp up the drama. Currently, there are a few spots when the narrator stewes on her anxiety about deplaning. Consider condensing those spots so the deplaning has more impact. You could also amp up the narrator's emotional reaction to the poop diaper. How does dealing with that (with three wipes, when she's not allowed to get up for a while) stretch her nerves even more—so when she has to deal with Harper, she's already near her breaking point?

The Bible reflection at the end focuses more on joy than love. Maybe rework that passage to talk about love instead. One idea is to explore the narrator feeling like she belongs on TV, not in motherhood, and how it connects to the biblical idea of love. How does the narrator process it all immediately after the airplane incident, and how does that set her up for the next obstacle?

Chapter 3

The scene with the dinner, the computer, the boogers, and the pee does a hilarious job building chaos and stress. The narrator bounces from one thing to the other, tallying up the things she forgets to finish before dealing with the next thing. This all builds to a horrible epiphany: that she becomes the version of herself she's most ashamed of.

As the chaos builds in that scene, can you play with sentence structure and syntax to pick up the pace? Maybe use shorter sentences and harsher sounding consonants to get readers going faster and faster—until the beautiful, slower-paced climax where time stands still and she realizes she's failed.

Chapter 4

This chapter does a fantastic job of showing how Satan tries to distract us by feeding us lies. Like how you wrote: "A little bit of truth laced with a little bit of lies." This is so spot-on, a really important lesson for moms to hear, and you demonstrate it beautifully with the paddleboard scene.

Two ideas for setting to amp up the paddleboard scene. First, to set the scene when the narrator first arrives on the beach, consider adding more sensory experiences: what smells, tastes, and tactile sensations does the narrator experience? Second, when the narrator is on the paddleboard, can you add more noise to contrast the supernatural silence later? Does the wind roar in her ears? Are her children all yelling or talking a lot?

Chapter 5

The beach scene is so well done. It's funny, embarrassing, and heartfelt. You do a great job of showing the narrator putting herself in bad situations and knowing it but not being able to do anything about it. That gives her a lot of humility, and it puts the humor and the pain right next to each other, which is exactly the MomDentity voice.

Something this chapter could develop more is the narrator's relationship with her mom. She feels like she has to impress her mom, and her mom also seems like she won't express her true

discomfort to her daughter. Why is this dynamic the way it is? How did it emerge as the narrator grew up? How does it shape her as a mother now?

Final Thoughts

This book so perfectly reaches out to Christian-ish moms who want something for their faith but don't want something too Bible-y. It's relaxed, funny, and real. It's nonthreatening. I think everybody gets frustrated when they feel like God is teaching them something, and your vulnerability in showing how you've gone through that tells reader's that's OK. Also, I appreciate that you talk about missing your pre-mom life and that your profession is part of your identity. That's something I experience and it's one of the many things Christian women don't talk about a whole lot.

Anyway, start looking through the margin comments, and as you go, know that you can take whatever is helpful and leave anything that isn't. It's your book—kind of you in a book. I hope these suggestions are helpful and that they help you shape the book into the best version YOU want it to be!