

MOTHERLY LOVE, OR THE LIES OF A CELL

Setting: Suzanne Chapin's Long Island Estate, 1999 through 2020

Characters:

Suzanne Chapin	40ish in 2000, a molecular biologist and doctor. Blue bloodish.
Maria Rivera	Mid 20's in 1999, housekeeper to Chapin family. Mexican. Raven black hair.
Lily Rivera	Age 5 in 2000, Maria's daughter.
Ann McGiver	Early 30's in 2000, a molecular biologist. A Scot with a thick brogue, bright red hair, and a penchant for sexy dressing.
Clair O'Shea	19 in 2000. Working class, a handy-gal. A brunette.
MariAnn O'Shea	Born 2001. She has a streak of bright red hair exactly the shade of Ann's.
Lucinda Lacks	Late 20's in 2000. African-American. A veterinarian.

Non-speaking Characters

3 puppies	Identical, brown, with a little white patch under their chin.
3 puppies	Identical, brown with white blotches throughout.
1 dog	Live. (cameo)

Notes

Six adult actors play all parts except that of MariAnn as young girl who is played by a child actor. As a teenager, she is played by the actor who plays Maria. Costumes are used as appropriate to Lily and MariAnn's ages.

The Mothers of Invention: *Motherly Love* plays before the play opens
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFQbERB2DAM>.

Newspaper headlines reporting the cloning of Dolly the sheep appears at the beginning of Act I.

Additional newspaper headings of scientific advances appropriate to their year denote the passage of time.

Dialogue in brackets [Spanish or Scot dialect] is spoken accordingly. Words which context does not make intelligible are translated in brackets.

Scene 1. Suzanne Chapin's laboratory, 2020.

A laboratory hood. A microscope and a computer sit on a desk. Three identical puppies are sleeping in their respective cages. DR. SUZANNE is sitting at a computer immersed in her reading, but looking up anxiously at LUCINDA, who is listening to the pups' chests, each in turn. ANN is at the lab bench pipetting a solution into petri dishes. All three wear lab coats.

ANN

(to Suzanne) I dunno if I should see him again. He's a handsome one. He probably has plenty of other birds. Thing is, he refuses to put a frenchie on his banger.

SUZANNE

(distracted) Mmmm.

ANN

[He's huir uv a charmin.'] [He's very charming].

SUZANNE

(impatient) What?

ANN

Charmin' he is. And [guid in the scratcher]. [good in bed].

SUZANNE looks over at LUCINDA who nods her head in approval as she puts one of the pups back in its cage.

ANN

Pity to give that up, [don't ye 'hink?] [don't you think?].

SUZANNE goes back to reading.

ANN (cont'd)

Are ye listening to what I'm sayin'?

SUZANNE

Uh huh.

ANN

Here is me blethering away and all ye do is watch Lucinda check [uir] [our] perfect puppies.

SUZANNE

She gets to make the call of “perfect.” (beat) You’re being foolish letting that go on. Does he have a discharge?.

ANN

What? Ugh. No. [Dae ye hink I’m insane? Ah wooldn’t stain fur ‘at.] [Do you think I’m insane. I wouldn’t stand for that.] Ah ne’er hud thes problem wi’ onie ay th’ others.] [I never had this problem with anyone else.]

SUZANNE

I’d get documentation of his HIV status if you’re intent on seeing him.

ANN

Yeah, [Ah suppose yoo’re reit.] [I suppose you’re right.]

ANN returns to pipetting into a petri dish, SUZANNE continues reading and taking notes. Lights flash in the laboratory hood. ANN puts some solution onto a slide and goes to the microscope.

ANN (cont’d)

Another triple.

SUZANNE

Good. Keep going.

ANN

They soundin’ good over there, are they, Luce?

LUCINDA

So far. One more.

LUCINDA listens to the last pup, gives it a kiss.

LUCINDA (cont’d)

Clear as a bell.

ANN

Knew it.

High fives LUCINDA and ANN. LUCINDA picks up her phone and begins to dial.

SUZANNE

What are you doing?

LUCINDA

I've got a buddy works over at CBS. She'll know who to get this to.

SUZANNE

Absolutely not. No. No. No. Hang up. Right now.

LUCINDA puts the phone down.

LUCINDA

What's the problem?

SUZANNE

We need to establish verifiably that they're clones. That means a peer-reviewed journal before we go out to the public.

LUCINDA

We've got living, breathing puppies. From the cell of a dead bitch. This will break the breeding world way open.

SUZANNE

This is not about commercial opportunities. How many times do I have to say that to you. Yes, we've cloned a species that's never been cloned before. But you don't just call the papers and do a picture spread. The New Zealand team cloned a cow way ahead of Kita's group. They put it out in the media, created a hoopla...What happened, Ann. Tell her.

ANN

Aye. [Nae a body believed them. When we gart Dolly in Edinburgh in '96 we gart sure tae pit it in th' scientific literature first off. That's hoo ye gie th' credit.]
[Nobody believed them. When we made Dolly in Edinburgh in '96 we made sure to put it in the scientific literature. That's how you get the credit.]

LUCINDA

Why would anyone have a question? Look at the markings.

She holds up two of the puppies.

LUCINDA (cont'd)

They're identical to each other AND to their mother.

SUZANNE

Who happens to be dead and unavailable for corroboration.

LUCINDA

How long till we get it out through one of the science rags?

SUZANNE

Now that you've checked them and we have the all clear we'll get right on it. Ann, did you take my edits to the methods section?

ANN

Aye.

SUZANNE

Good. Other teams will be nipping at our heels. We' should send the manuscript to *Science*.

ANN

They accept less than 10% 'o submissions. We need to go fer something accessible. *Acta Genetica Sinica*. They all reid 'at ower at th' NIH.

SUZANNE

This is a scientific breakthrough. It deserves to be/ in a prestigious

ANN

Jest get it out fer christsake.

LUCINDA

How long does it take to get it in print?

ANN

Depends on the reviewers. Coods be a couple of months, coods be six. [Ye ne'er ken] [You never know]. If its rejected/it'll

LUCINDA

My loans are bleeding me dry. I need to see some money from this.

SUZANNE

You should be in another line of work then. We're scientists here.

LUCINDA

Fine for you with your nice estate and your laboratory/ but I'm trying to

SUZANNE

I've been paying your salaries out of my own pocket since the grant ran out. That's 2 months already. Do I hear thanks for that?

LUCINDA

Thanks.

ANN

[Settle doon ye two! We're in guid shape, are we not? Min' whit we've accomplished, we shoods be celeratin', nae arguin', right?] [Settle down you two. We've in good shape are we not? We should be celebrating, not arguing, right?]

SUZANNE and LUCINDA nod. A silence.

LUCINDA

I have an idea. I was just thinking....I heard that....well...

ANN

[Spit it it 'en.] [Spit it out, then.]

LUCINDA

Disney is looking for pups for a new show that's in development and I was thinking/ what if

SUZANNE

You're out of your mind if you think/ that.

ANN

[Hear 'er it, Suzanne]. [Hear her out, Suzanne.]

LUCINDA

There's a whole lot of money to be had that could see us through till you get that paper published. You know that Jack Russell Terrior on Frazier....

ANN

Aye. He's [braw]. [fine.]

LUCINDA

Yeah. He is. And, the owners get 10 K each episode he or one of his doubles are on.

ANN

[Dae they noo?] [Do they now?]

LUCINDA

Fact. Disney is looking for a weird combination. A Bichon Frise and Sheltie mix. Bizarre. Nobody does that. No accounting for taste. Anyway, their plan is to get a lot of breeders working on it. That's going to take a couple of generations at least, to get something they like the looks of. And IF they got what they liked, they'd need to figure out how to get a couple or three who looked enough alike to substitute for each other in case number 1 dog gets sick or dies or something. If we can make identical ones right off the bat....

ANN

[We coods dae it way faster.] [We could do it way faster.]

SUZANNE

That's not what we do in my laboratory.

ANN

[Ah woods jist need tae] [I would just need to] fuse the tissues together. I'll have a cross section of cells to put in an oocyte to make the embryos. If we cood get a few surrogate bitches we coods produce a dozen or so pups within....I dunno, maybe four months? What do ye think, Suzanne?

SUZANNE

We are breeders of dogs. And even if we were, we have zero experience mixing DNA in cloning. That's never even been done.

LUCINDA

We'd make a ton of money. I'm thinking 200 thou, if we could give them three identical dogs made to their specifications.

ANN

Whoa. We coods dae it. [At woods keep us in business till we gie a grant in here.](#) I can fuse anything that won't walk out of the dish. I'll take a set of genes from each breed. With 10-15 pups, there should be three that looked right for Disney.

LUCINDA

Designer dogs. Wouldn't that be a scientific contribution, Suzanne?

SUZANNE

It makes a mockery of science. And, it's unethical.

LUCINDA

(innocent) Cloning them, or selling them?

SUZANNE

Selling them! Cloning is critical to progress. It will create therapeutic breakthroughs that will benefit diseased animals, and, one day, diseased humans.

ANN

Ah agree. [But ye do ken th' Vatican cam efter us an' th' Brits took awa' uir fundin' once Dolly cam along.] [But you do know the Vatican came after us and the Brits took away our funding once Dolly came long].

SUZANNE

Because the whole scheme was dreamed up by a biotech businessman. Which is precisely why you keep business out of this.

ANN

Ay. But we'd be cloning from two sets of DNA! That wood be cutting edge work. We shooods do it fur th' science alone. [Ah say gang fur it. Why not make the extra dosh?] [I say go for it. Why not make the extra money?]

LUCINDA

And we'd get to see our girls on TV. That'd be cool.

SUZANNE

If that's what you value Lucinda you'd do better/working for

ANN

Oh, get aff yer high cuddle, Suzanne. We'd create a true chimera composed of two genetically distinct cell lines. If it works, we'd have a second paper following directly on the heels of the first. (to LUCINDA) [Hoo fest can ye gie me some tissue to work with?] [How fast can you get me some tissue to work with?]

LUCINDA

I've got a friend who's a high-end groomer for full breds. I could get docked tails from her for the cells.

SUZANNE

Do you not understand that it is valuable work we do in this laboratory?

LUCINDA

Do you not understand you need money if you're going to further the science?

SUZANNE

If I give my consent to do this, it is never ever to be described or discussed as a commercial venture. It would be a one-time experiment where commercial aspects happen to be aligned with our scientific mission. To support that mission. Are you both clear about that?

LUCINDA

Sure.

ANN

Aye.

SUZANNE

What would you tell Disney about their lineage?

LUCINDA

Let me worry about that. You get working on the scientific papers. I'm off to find some tails.

LUCINDA exits. SUZANNE paces.

SUZANNE

We'll be laughing stocks if this gets out.

ANN

Keep yer heid, Suzanne. There'll be no more science if we don't get some dosh in here. We'll keep it tae oorselves.

SUZANNE pats the back of her pants. There's blood.

SUZANNE (cont'd)

Damn.

ANN

What?

SUZANNE

Damn, damn, damn.

ANN

What?

SUZANNE

I'm bleeding. I was sure it took this time. My breasts are swollen, I've been sick every morning this past two weeks. All for nothing. Again.

ANN

Ye ken it's a long road that's no goat a turnin'.

SUZANNE

(very irritated) What?

ANN

It's an auld Scottish expression/ that

SUZANNE

I get that.

ANN

Ye shouldn't be losin' heart.

SUZANNE

This is my third try.

ANN

Aye. [Ah ken.] [I know.]

SUZANNE

You think it's a walk in the park getting your eggs harvested and planted? Harvested and planted. Harvested and planted. I can't do it anymore. I won't.

ANN

[Cood be it's a goid thing. Wee ones take up a lot of time.] [Could be it's a good thing. Little ones take up a lot of time.] Detracts from the work.

SUZANNE

I want to have the chance to shape a young mind. Open her eyes to science. To leave a legacy.

ANN

I suppose if it was a chip off th' auld block.

SUZANNE

Someone to carry on our work. The important work we do here.

ANN

[Mebbe. Still, wooldn't catch me daein' aw yoo've bin daeing'.] [Maybe. Still, wouldn't catch me doing all you've been doing.]

A knock on the door and CLAIR sticks her head. She brings dog food.

SUZANNE

(impatient) What is it Clair?

CLAIR

I came to feed the pups. That okay?

ANN

Go ahaid.

SUZANNE hangs up her lab coat.

CLAIR

And Dr. Suzanne? I told Lily about the new pups. She's been on me to come and see them. I thought I'd bring her down later. Maria's still not feeling well and/ I thought

SUZANNE

Do you know if she's vacuumed the living room?

CLAIR

(a trace of attitude) I took care of it. (beat) Can I bring Lily down to see the puppies?

SUZANNE

If you take responsibility for supervising her.

CLAIR

I will. She's very well behaved, Dr. Suzanne.

SUZANNE

See to it that she is.

SUZANNE exits abruptly.

CLAIR

What's up with her?

ANN

[She's aw upsit. She jest had th' painters in] [She's all upset. She just got her period.]

CLAIR

Huh?

ANN

Got her monthlies. No wee one on the way.

CLAIR

Huh. I didn't think she wanted anything like that. I mean what with the lab and everything.

ANN

Aye. Probably a blessin'. [Thinks she wants tae ge pregnant but ah dornt see 'er as first rate mammy material. (beat) Weel I should be oan mah way noo tay.]

[Thinks she wants to get pregnant but I don't see her as first rate mother material. (beat) Well I should be on my way now too.]

ANN gets up, takes off her lab coat under which lies a very sexy outfit.

CLAIR

Wow. Where are you going?

ANN

Ah hae a date wi' a special bloke.

CLAIR

Have a good time.

ANN

[Ye tae. An' gang aheid an' brin' th' wee one doon tae see th' puppies.] [You too. And go ahead and bring the little one down to see the puppies.]

ANN sashays out. CLAIR feeds the dogs, murmuring to them as she does so.

End Scene 1