

MOTHER NATURE

"Back To Our Roots"

(Pilot)

By

Savannah Emory

(864)905-3967
Hello@savannahemory.com

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - MORNING

An average bland cream colored classroom with a white board and several markers that definitely don't work.

LAUREL GRIFFIN, 27, a PhD math student, stands at the front of the room. She's dressed minimally in a white romper, black shirt, and classic Birkenstocks.

She takes a whiteboard marker from her bag and writes out the algebra problem: $(-3 + 2i)(-3 - 7i)$, in neat legible handwriting.

She turns to back to THE STUDENTS, a group of twenty or so freshman, who would rather not be in math class at eight AM.

LAUREL

Alright guys, you know the drill.
Desks against the walls. Get into
two groups.

STUDENT #1

Uh, not this again!

The students move their desks. They set themselves into two groups.

LAUREL

Okay, I want y'all to work together
and use our machine game to solve
the problem on the board.

(beat)

Ready? Go!

The students begin to move around the classroom. Some strike wild poses being the variables and the math signs. Others pose being the numbers.

Laurel watches each group. She's in her element.

On the podium, her cell phone rings.

"Hippy Dippy Momma" appears on the caller ID. Without a look Laurel sends it to voicemail in one quick movement.

STUDENT #1

DONE!

LAUREL

Awesome guys. So what's the answer?

She points to Group A.

STUDENT #1
Seventeen plus ten i.

LAUREL
Wrong!

Laurel points over to Group B.

STUDENT #2
Is it twenty-three plus fifteen i?

LAUREL
That's correct. Group B wins this round.

Group A boos their opponents.

LAUREL (CONT'D)
Okay... okay, ready for the next one?

Laurel steps to the board and changes the problem to:
 $2(3x+4)+6$.

LAUREL (CONT'D)
Okay, Go!

The students go at it.

Her phone rings again. Laurel picks it up and begins to throw it into her bag. She notices that "Hippy Dippy Momma" on the caller ID.

LAUREL (CONT'D)
Keep working guys, I'll be out in the hall for a second.

Laurel steps to the door.

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

Laurel closes the door behind her and answers the phone.

LAUREL
What's wrong now?

INT. GRIFFIN FAMILY HOME - MORNING

On the other end of the line OLIVE GRIFFIN, 12, a tomboy, who would rather be up in a tree than inside, holds the phone up in the disorganized overly cluttered living room.

OLIVE
Momma's not waking up.

:INTERCUT AS NEEDED

LAUREL
What'd she take this time?

OLIVE
I don't know.

LAUREL
Is anyone else there? Where's
Marigold, Juniper, Willow, or
Forrest? Anyone who can check on
her?

OLIVE
I don't know where any of them are.

LAUREL
Go try and find someone.

Olive sets the phone down.

Laurel peeks in on the students.

LAUREL (CONT'D)
Great job guys, keep it up!

Olive picks the phone back up.

OLIVE
I can't find anyone.

LAUREL
Okay, I'm coming home. It's going
to take me like five hours. So, I
need you to do one thing for me.

OLIVE
Okay.

LAUREL
I need you to call 911, okay?
They're going to come and help
Momma. So I need you to promise me
you'll hang up and call right away.

OLIVE
Okay... I'm scared, Laurel.

LAUREL
Everything is going to be just
fine. Just like it always is.

Suddenly the line goes dead.

LAUREL (CONT'D)
Hello?

Laurel tries to call back, but the phone goes straight to voicemail.

AMBER (V.O.)
This is Amber Griffin, I'm probably
meditating under an oak tree or
making some beet juice, so just
leave a message and I'll get back
to you once I've returned from my
spiritual midwifery retreat.

Laurel hangs up and--

INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

Rushes back into the classroom.

STUDENT #3
That's not even possible.

STUDENT #4
Yes it is! If you would actually
pay attention in class you would
have realized that it's a trick
problem.

LAUREL
Okay guys! Class is over for today.

STUDENT #2
Is this another trick?

LAUREL
No, it's not. And if you let the
man upstairs know that I let y'all
out early, then there's going to be
consequences.

STUDENT #1
Like what?

LAUREL

Oh, I don't know. Maybe like extra homework. Daily pop quizzes. Weekly tests.

STUDENT #2

NO ONE SAY ANYTHING!

The students rush out of the classroom.

STUDENT #1

Thanks Ms. G!

Laurel packs up rapidly as the classroom clears.

She tosses it over her shoulder and leaves the room clicking the lights off as she goes.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

Laurel throws her duffle bag into the trunk of her beat up 1998 Champagne colored Nissan Altima.

She takes out a to-do list and runs down it.

LAUREL

Clothes. Laptop. Laptop charger.
Legal documents.

HARRISON BROCK, 28, a tall former frat boy type turned nature adventure water guide, approaches.

HARRISON

Don't forget your allergy meds,
your inhaler, and your epipen. I
don't want to get a call from one
of the kids saying I've lost you
because you decided to go off and
hug an oak tree.

Laurel takes the stuff.

LAUREL

Geez thanks.

HARRISON

I just don't want anything to
happen to you is all.

They hug.

LAUREL

Nothing's going to happen to me.
It's just a quick trip home; three
days max.

HARRISON

You said that last time and you
ended up down there for two whole
weeks.

LAUREL

That's because Roger decided to go
off the grid halfway through his AT
hike. And I just couldn't leave
Momma and the kids to fend for
themselves.

HARRISON

They've managed on their own
before.

LAUREL

Yeah, but Roger was there last time
Momma got like this.

HARRISON

I know. Just promise me you'll be
back by the end of the week?

LAUREL

I sure hope so.

Harrison kisses her.

He opens the car door.

Laurel gets in. He closes the door. She rolls down the window
and leans out.

HARRISON

I miss you already.

LAUREL

I haven't gone anywhere yet.

HARRISON

I know. Just be careful.

LAUREL

I always am.

HARRISON

And call me when you make it across
the state line.

LAUREL

Okay.

HARRISON

And call me when you get gas.

LAUREL

Unleaded right?

HARRISON

And call me when you get bored.

LAUREL

I think I should hit the road.

HARRISON

Okay, but call me when you get there.

LAUREL

Okay, I promise.

HARRISON

I love you.

They kiss.

LAUREL

I'll call you in a bit.

Laurel gets in the car.

Laurel starts the car up.

Harrison steps back. He blows her a kiss.

Laurel smiles, she waves and drives away.

EXT/INT. LAUREL'S CAR - EARLY AFTERNOON

The Nissan Altima barrels down the highway headed south.

Laurel passes a sign for Trader's Ridge, South Carolina - 10 miles.

Laurel attempts to call her Momma. The phone rings several times, but ultimately goes to voicemail.

AMBER (V.O.)

This is Amber Griffin, I'm probably meditating under an oak tree or making some beet juice, so just leave a message and I'll get back to you once I've come back from my spiritual midwifery retreat.

Laurel tosses the phone into the passengers seat and turns up the radio.

EXT. "BACK TO OUR ROOTS" TREE NURSERY - AFTERNOON

Laurel turns into an abandoned parking lot of her parent's business. This is "Back to Our Roots" tree farm and nursery.

Tree plants and other greenery are arranged in rows, but have turned brown.

Laurel surveys the empty lot. The office building looks like it has been abandoned for a while. The handmade sign, with old faded paint and trees made out the kids handprints, hangs broken down on one side.

She continues to drive up a gravel road that leads back behind the nursery building.

EXT. GRIFFIN FAMILY HOME - AFTERNOON

Laurel slows as she nears the front of the two story wooden house that has missing shingles, broken gutters, and close by dead tree limbs hang in multiple spots onto the house.

She parks just under the overly elaborate tree house, with all the rope bridges and tube slides that could possible stay up in a three hundred year-old oak tree.

From a front window HAZEL GRIFFIN (10, the youngest child, dressed in elaborate nature princess attire), throws toys through the window and into the yard.

Laurel steps out of her car just as Olive rappels down from the tree house in a rock climbing harness.

Laurel screams and jumps back against the car.

LAUREL

Why would you do that?

OLIVE

It's the fastest way down.

LAUREL
You could have taken the ladder.

OLIVE
That's no fun.

LAUREL
Then make it fun. Now hop on down.

Olive struggles to unhook the harness from the rope.

OLIVE
Um... A little help, please?

Laurel helps Olive down to the ground.

LAUREL
Did they already take Momma to the hospital?

OLIVE
Nope. Marigold said Momma was fine.
And that I needed to leave her
alone and go play outside *or else*.

LAUREL
So she just left Momma alone?

Olive shrugs.

LAUREL (CONT'D)
Where's *your* sister?

Olive points to the house.

INT. GRIFFIN FAMILY HOME LIVING AREA - SAME

Laurel enters. Olive follows closely behind. Laurel lets the screen door slam behind her. Olive waits then opens it and mimics the action. The screen door slams shut and rattles the ancient house.

Hazel is about to throw out the gigantic pink Barbie doll house out the window. She freezes mid throw when she makes eye contact with Laurel.

HAZEL
Hi, Sissy!

Hazel lets the doll house fall to the floor in front of her.

She jumps over it and runs to hug Laurel.

Laurel hugs her back.

LAUREL
Where's Marigold?

Hazel shrugs.

Laurel goes over to the TV. She reaches beside it and unplugs the internet router.

Throughout the house complains ensues from the OLDER KIDS.

WILLOW (O.S.)
WHAT THE HELL?!

FORREST (O.S.)
SniperChase69 can you hear me?
Hello! Does anybody hear me? Hello!

JUNIPER (O.S.)
Don't do this to me!

Laurel sits down on the couch.

Olive and Hazel join her, mostly for safety but also to get the best view for what is about to go down.

JUNIPER GRIFFIN (19, a former homecoming queen turned semiprofessional fashion YouTuber), rushes down the hall.

JUNIPER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I'm going to *murder* who ever broke
the internet. It's not funny!

Juniper enters.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)
How am I supposed to reach all my
followers if you idiots keep
breaking the internet?

She sees Laurel.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)
When did you get here?

She swings her hip to the side and just stares at her older sister.

Laurel smiles. It's definitely been awhile.

LAUREL
Nice to see you too, Juniper.

WILLOW GRIFFIN (16, a total nerd in every way), enters.

WILLOW
Really guys! I'm never going to be
able to find my spot down that
Princess Leia Reddit tunnel. It was
my last hope!

She bumps right into Juniper.

WILLOW (CONT'D)
Why are you just standing in the
middle of the...

Juniper points to Laurel. Laurel waves.

WILLOW (CONT'D)
Oh!

FORREST GRIFFIN (18, a hottie with a swimmers body and thinks
he's a white boy rapper), enters. He wears extremely short
soccer shorts, no shirt, and a snap back hat turned around
backwards.

He's grown up. Much more than Laurel was expecting.

FORREST
Taking the internet away is whack,
man! It's like a basic human right!

LAUREL
It's not, but okay!

FORREST
Hey, sista... sista!

Forrest pushes past his other sisters and hugs Laurel. He's
slightly taller than her now and Laurel notices.

LAUREL
You need to stop growing up.

FORREST
Cha. You're just jelly cause I'm
taller now.

He goes to sit on the opposite couch. Willow follows and they
fight over the many throw pillows that cover the basic
couches.

LAUREL
Where's she at?

The stairs begin to creak behind them.

MARIGOLD (O.S.)
I swear if the two of you aren't
outside, I'm getting the belt! I
told you that Momma needs to sleep
it off.

Hazel hides further into Laurel's side.

MARIGOLD GRIFFIN (23, a Twenty-First century Hippy in both
appearance and lifestyle), enters with a woven belt in hand.
She's not going to do that much damage, but the visual is all
she needs.

She bumps into Juniper and pushes her further into the living
room.

MARIGOLD (CONT'D)
Who did it?

She looks around the room.

Laurel holds up the router.

MARIGOLD (CONT'D)
Well, it looks like *Momma number*
two has finally returned.

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

The kitchen is gross. The trashcan is overflowing.

The sink is overly full and water drips onto the dishes from
an ancient 1950s faucet that came with the house when their
parents inherited it.

The dog's food bowl is over filled.

A foul smell has over taken the room.

Marigold enters.

She turns the faucet off and the water sputters to a stop.

She rummages through the cabinets, that are mostly empty
except for a half empty bag of chips, stale saltines, and a
few cans of Vienna sausages.

Laurel follows. She takes the room in. It's too dirty for her
OCD tendencies.

MARIGOLD

I don't know why you just decided to come down here? We're totally fine.

She starts to clean, but then remembers she's not there to be the housemaid.

LAUREL

If you're "totally" fine, then why did Olive call me this morning?

MARIGOLD

I honestly don't know.

LAUREL

She's ten, Marigold.

MARIGOLD

She's twelve.

LAUREL

Exactly, twelve. She's not twelve?

MARIGOLD

I think I how old she is. I'm here remember.

Marigold slams her hand on the vinyl 1950s counters that are in desperate need of an update. She turns to face her big sister.

MARIGOLD (CONT'D)

Look, Momma's just coming down from one of her Oxy highs like she always does.

LAUREL

Are you sure about that?

MARIGOLD

Yes! We've been doing this for fifteen years.

LAUREL

I know. But Olive said it was different this time.

MARIGOLD

We've both be through this like a thousand times before.

Laurel isn't convinced.

MARIGOLD (CONT'D)
If you don't believe me, then go
check for yourself.

Marigold points down the darkened hallway.

Laurel gives her an all-right-asshole look.

MARIGOLD (CONT'D)
Gah, you're getting on my last
Christian nerve!

LAUREL
I thought you converted to
Buddhism?

Laurel exits into--

INT. MOMMA'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

Laurel enters the Bohemian-styled bedroom.

She finds AMBER GRIFFIN, 54, who's claim to fame is that she
was a toddler at the original Woodstock, rummages through her
bedside table.

LAUREL
Momma, hey, what are you looking
for?

The drawer slides out from it's spot and falls to the ground.
Several orange prescription bottles fall out onto the ground
in front of both of them.

AMBER
I just need a little more...to help
with the pain.

Laurel tries to get Amber's attention, but she's a little out
of practice and struggles to get her to turn away.

LAUREL
Momma, it's me. Laurel.

AMBER
Laurel left me, just like Roger
did.

LAUREL
I didn't leave like Daddy did.

AMBER
I can't. I can't do this anymore.

LAUREL
Can't do what, Momma?

AMBER
I can't. I can't raise all these
kids with no one helping me.

LAUREL
You have help.

Amber screams.

She pushes away from Laurel and heads towards the bathroom.

Laurel goes after her. She grabs Amber's arm.

Amber tries to pull away. She slaps Laurel in the face.

Laurel raises a hand ready to hit Amber back.

Marigold stands in the doorway. She's watched the entire
thing.

MARIGOLD
Slapping your Momma is supposed to
just be a saying, Laurel.

Laurel drops her hand. She steps across the room.

AMBER
No one helps me around here. They
all just want me to do everything
and I can't.

Marigold hands Amber a glass of juice.

MARIGOLD
Here. Drink some of this.

Amber does as she's told and drinks it. She sits back down at
the top of the bed.

Amber slowly comes out of her haze.

AMBER
Babies, I can't do it all by
myself.

MARIGOLD
We know. Just get some rest. I'll
make things better.