

Claire

ACT ONE

~~TITLE OVER: TODAY~~

~~EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS - EVENING~~

~~A nasty storm pummels the landscape with ice and snow.~~

~~A black dot moves across the vast whiteout, like a lone ant crawling through an ocean of flour.~~

~~CLOSER: the dot is actually a beat up station wagon towing a U-haul trailer up a winding mountain road.~~

~~INT. STATION WAGON - EVENING~~

~~Meet the Brenner family.~~

~~Behind the wheel: LUKE, 40's, a rugged handsomeness, diminished by the exhausted, drained look in his eyes. He glances up at the rearview:~~

~~In the backseat, his two daughters: CLAIRE, 16, angsty-hipster in I-hate-my-dad mode, and ELLIE, 10, small for her age -- born deaf -- born a fighter.~~

~~We soak in the silence, until:~~

CLAIRE

...Well?

LUKE

Well what?

Claire shakes her head -- pissed.

LUKE (CONT'D)

What else do you want me to say?

CLAIRE

You're such an asshole Luke.

Whoa. Looks like we came in at a bad time.

LUKE

Luke? What happened to dad?

CLAIRE

Good question...

Ouch. A tense moment, then:

Isaacson and Soulier
Casting - 'STAY'
start

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LUKE

We've been having this same conversation since we left and nothing's changed--

CLAIRE

Well then change it.

Luke takes a deep breath.

LUKE

Claire. You have to trust me on this. We had to leave.

CLAIRE

Why?

LUKE

Because... we just did.

We get the sense that Luke wants to tell her the reason, but right now he's holding back.

CLAIRE

That makes a whole lot of fucking sense.

LUKE

Hey -- language.

Claire looks out her window.

LUKE (CONT'D)

I'm trying my best here.

CLAIRE

Well, your best sucks.

Silence for a moment. But Claire's not done.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Why can't you just ask for your job back? Tell them you weren't thinking clearly or something.

LUKE

It's not that simple.

CLAIRE

Do something else then. Get a different job.

A beat. Luke is silent.

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CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Megan's dad lost his job. But he didn't pack up his family in the middle of the night and move them across the country.

(in a smaller voice)

Mom would have never made us leave.

This stings both of them.

LUKE

That's not fair.

A charged beat. The silence is loud. Claire's trying to keep it together. Luke takes a deep breath. Then:

LUKE (CONT'D)

My entire life was back there -- I hate this just as much as you do.

But we had to leave.

(beat)

And this -- this could be a chance for us to start something new... start over.

CLAIRE

I don't want to start over. I want to go home.

stop!

Claire stuffs earbuds in her ears. This conversation's over.

Luke watches her for a moment. Feels like such a fuck up. He shifts his gaze to his other daughter Ellie who sits wrapped in a blanket.

Luke signs to her: I love you.

Ellie signs back: I love you, too.

A quiet moment. Luke glances at the empty passenger seat next to him, almost like he's expecting to see someone... but the seat is empty.

And the absence of a mother in this car is suddenly heart-wrenching -- an open wound still bleeding this family.

This is the first time Luke's been on his own in eighteen years. Not enough time for him to pick up the pieces. Not enough time for him to figure out how to be a dad. But he's trying.

Luke focuses on the road -- at least what he can see of it. White snow blankets everything. They could be anywhere.

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SC II

INT. RESTAURANT - MOMENTS LATER

The two suited detectives, KELLER and AIDEN, 30's, watch their prisoner eat oatmeal with his hands -- like a starving animal. The prisoner's handcuffs rattle with each bite.

KELLER

You've had enough.

KELLER takes the bowl away. The prisoner looks up through the frayed openings of his long, black hair. His eyes are empty. His teeth a faded yellow.

Luke approaches from behind.

LUKE

Excuse me. Sorry to bug you.
Either of you have cell service?

Keller and Aiden glance at one another. Then back to Luke.

KELLER

No.

LUKE

Yeah, I figured. Thanks anyway.

Luke glances at the prisoner and the prisoner stares right back. A tense moment. Until:

KELLER

Anything else?

Luke breaks eye contact, glances back at KELLER. Shakes his head. Doesn't like this group. Something unsettling about all of them. Luke leaves.

INT. FIFTH FLOOR CORRIDOR - AFTERNOON

Alison moves down the corridor. An eerie silence. Eyes scanning the room numbers.

Passes rooms: 526... 527... 529... she stops. Turns back. Scans the room numbers again.

There is no room 528. Strange.

INT. LOBBY - AFTERNOON

Claire looks through old text messages on her phone, the name MOM at the top of the screen. Buried emotion surfacing in her eyes as she reads...

4/9

start
2

Jake sits down next to her. She puts the phone away. Hides the emotion.

JAKE

Hey.

CLAIRE

Uh. Hi.

Claire's not in the mood for this.

JAKE

Sorry about earlier.

CLAIRE

What?

He holds up his camera.

JAKE

Wasn't trying to creep you out...

CLAIRE

Well, you take pictures of people without them knowing, that's what happens.

JAKE

I wasn't taking pictures. I was just curious.

CLAIRE

About what?

JAKE

About you.

CLAIRE

Okay, that's even creepier...

Jake drinks her in, she's beautiful. Claire turns away, tries to end the conversation.

JAKE

So... where are you from?

Claire can't believe he's still talking.

CLAIRE

(bored, monotone)
Duluth.

JAKE

Cool.

5/9

CLAIRE
Are you always this awkward?

JAKE
Sorry.

Jake looks down, fidgets with his camera. He's just trying to be nice. Claire feels a bit guilty. A beat, then:

JAKE (CONT'D)
Wanna see something weird?

Jake plays a video on his camera -- Claire watches --

LCD SCREEN: a handheld shot out of a hotel window. The camera zooms in on a frozen lake -- the cross of a church tower is just visible poking up out of the ice.

Claire leans in...

CLAIRE
What is that?

The video ends.

JAKE
Wanna see? I'll show you. C'mon.

Claire can't believe she's actually about to follow him. But she does.

JAKE (CONT'D)
I'm Jake by the way.

They disappear. Ellie remains sound asleep on the chair.

INT. FIRST FLOOR CORRIDOR - AFTERNOON

Luke moves down an endless, empty hallway. Hears MUSIC. Classical. Violins. Drifting down the corridor. Luke follows the sound, which leads him to:

A door -- larger and older looking than all the others. Luke opens it into:

INT. BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

The same ballroom from the teaser. But now it's empty. Covered in dust. Unused. The music is gone.

Luke explores. Moving his hand across an ornate banister. Studying the dust on his fingertips.

stop 2

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ACT FOUR

INT. OLD NISSAN - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

start
3

Rain pours. Sarah pulls into the parking lot of a school. Claire waits under an awning. Sees her mother, races over, climbs inside. Shuts the door. Shakes off the rain. Sarah puts the car in gear, pulls out onto the rain-slicked road.

SARAH

How was school?

Claire keeps her head down. Seems upset.

SARAH (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

CLAIRE

Know that final I studied for...

SARAH

Mr. Neely's class?

Claire unzips her backpack. Hands over the graded final. Sarah glances at a giant red "A" is scribbled at the top.

SARAH (CONT'D)

You got an "A?"

A smile breaks across Claire's face, it was an act.

CLAIRE

You and dad promised if I aced this test I'd be ungrounded.

SARAH

I said we'd talk about it.

CLAIRE

You said promise.

SARAH

I said talk.

A beat. Claire's reflecting on something, then:

CLAIRE

She deserved it.

SARAH

Deserve has nothing to do with it. You did something wrong and you're being punished for it. That's how this works.

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CLAIRE

Admit it, she did deserve it
though. You're secretly impressed.

SARAH

You spray painted a teacher's car.
I'd hardly call my reaction
impressed.

Claire studies her mother's face.

CLAIRE

There! You just smiled.

SARAH

I didn't smile.

CLAIRE

Yes you did.

SARAH

Maybe I grinned.

CLAIRE

You're impressed.

This isn't just a mother/daughter relationship. We sense the
friendship and respect between them.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Well, while you and dad talk about
giving me my life back -- can I
borrow the car this weekend?

SARAH

This weekend, for what?

CLAIRE

Nolan's throwing a... get together.

SARAH

A get together. Like the last one
where the neighbors called the cops
because of the music and dad showed
up with his deputy and--

CLAIRE

That was one time. And no, not
like that. It's gonna be like
eight of us max. And his parents
will be home.

Red light. Sarah brakes. Wipers working like crazy against
the rain.

8/9

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

I haven't done anything in almost a month. I'm a total shut in. Boo Radley got out more.

stop 3

The light turns green. Sarah pulls through the intersection.

SARAH

I'll let you can take my car, but only if dad says--

SMASH. -- Sarah's head hits the steering wheel as the left side of the car implodes -- glass and metal fly through the air -- Claire's body is whipped sideways, held in place by the seatbelt.

A BLACK SUV HAS PLOWED INTO THEIR CAR

Both vehicles skidding -- the rain-slicked ground fueling their momentum --

Sarah's car spirals toward a guard rail and careens off the road -- plummets into a ravine -- rolls and eventually comes to a stop in a river of mud.

We are upside down with Claire, still belted in. Cuts on her face. She's bleeding. Her vision blurry.

She musters strength to turn her head. Sees her mom who's also belted in, hair hanging in her face. Not moving.

CLAIRE

...Mom...

Sarah remains motionless. Claire's eyes flood.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Mom!

Claire's vision -- blurring in and out -- suddenly sharpens into focus. And she's looking past her mother now, out through the shattered window...

Standing at the top of the ravine is a person in a SKI MASK staring down at her -- a terrifying sight.

AND WE SLAM BACK TO --

INT. CORRIDOR - AFTERNOON - **PRESENT**

Claire moves down the hallway with a purpose. Jake tries to keep up.

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