

THE DAUGHTERS

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. HALLWAY - LATE EVENING

Toys are laid out on the right hand side of the staircase. Photo frames can be seen along the wall, but the images in them are not in focus. At the top of the stairs, splashing water and a little girl singing 'Under the Sea' can be heard.

INT. BATHROOM - LATE EVENING

Through the bathroom mirror, the reflection of the girl (11) is visible, her almost black hair is pulled back into pigtails tied together with red ribbons. She is kneeling down on the floor next to the bathtub playing with a scuba doll. She doesn't turn around as an unidentified woman (46) walks into the bathroom behind her.

The woman's hand, an expensive looking wedding ring on her finger, strokes the back of the girl's hair. Her grip on the girl tightens and she pushes her head beneath the water. The girl struggles. She kicks and tries to scream. The woman puts her right hand into the water to keep the girl's head down.

INT. CAR - LATE EVENING

The rain is falling heavily against the windscreen, the wipers are on full blast.

MAYA (34), beautiful with dark brown locks and warm grey eyes, is turned around in the front seat watching her two girls, RENÉE (11) and ANASTACIA (6), both with deep blue eyes and almost black hair that is pulled back into pigtails with red ribbons, playing pat-a-cake on the backseat.

Her husband, LUKE (36), handsome with dirty blonde hair and blue eyes, is watching them through the rear view mirror. He laughs when Anastacia hits Renée a little too hard on the final 'can'. Renée begins to tickle Anastacia, climbing on top of her when she falls back on her seat in fits of laughter. In an attempt to bat her away, Anastacia accidentally pulls on Renée's hair causing one of her pigtails to come loose.

LUKE

That's enough girls!

MAYA

Okay, off her now.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Sit up properly and put your seat belts on, please.

The girls do as they are told and Luke returns his attention to the road. Behind him, Renée is adjusting her pigtail and tightening her red bow.

A fox begins to cross from his right so Luke slows down. The truck in the left lane slips on the wet road. Luke swerves. The car's headlights reflect in the fox's eyes before it crashes into a tree.

FADE TO WHITE.

INT. MAYA'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Maya (now 46) wakes up in a cold sweat. She is pale and thinner than she was in her dream of the car accident. Her grey eyes have lost their warmth and her hair is now lifeless and straw-like.

She reaches over to the right hand side of the bed, her fingers grabbing at the bedsheets, and finds it cold and empty. She clamps her eyes tightly shut as though remembering something she'd rather forget.

Her eyes still closed, Maya sits up in bed and pulls her knees up to her chest. A few tears fall which Maya hastily wipes off as the sound of her daughters giggling downstairs fill her ears. She opens her eyes and looks up at the clock. It's 7.11am.

Taking a few deep breaths, she throws the duvet to one side and kicks her legs off the bed. Running her hands through her brown locks, she walks over towards the window, closing her eyes so not to see her reflection in the mirror as she passes. She tugs open the curtains, letting the sunlight illuminate her bedroom. Her frail figure casts three thin shadows along the floor, one long and the other two short.

INT. HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Maya walks through the front door carrying her daughters' school bags and coats. Renée and Anastacia run in from behind her and kick off their shoes.

RENÉE
(tagging Anastacia)
TAG! You're it!

Renée's sock covered feet skid on the floor as she runs through the carpet-less hallway and into the living room as quick as she can. Anastacia giggles and follows her.

MAYA

Don't ruin your school uniform!

She hangs up their coats and bags before taking off her own shoes and walking towards the kitchen. She passes another mirror, covered in drawings by Renée and Anastacia, but takes no notice of it.

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Maya enters the kitchen and puts spaghetti on to boil. She pulls her hair into a rough ponytail before throwing together a quick and simple tomato sauce. Grabbing the phone, she dials a number and begins to unload the dishwasher, holding the phone between her shoulder and face.

CATHERINE (O.S.)

Hello?

MAYA

Hi, Mum.

CATHERINE (O.S.)

What's wrong? Are the girls okay?

MAYA

(frowning)

The girls are fine. I don't only call home when there's something wrong, you know.

CATHERINE (O.S.)

You've been dreaming about it again, haven't you.

Maya tenses up.