

THE SILENCE

Adapted by

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Based on the novel by Sarah Rayne
First published by Severn House in 2013

FADE IN:

EXT. EDINBURGH - SUNRISE

The sun is rising over Edinburgh, illuminating the view from Carlton Hill. The streets are quiet except for the birds singing. The squirrels chase each other up and down trees in Prince's Street Garden.

INT. MARGERY WEST'S HOUSE, EDINBURGH - SUNRISE

MARGERY WEST is watching the reds and oranges paint the sky over Arthur's Seat from her writing desk in front of the window. Her pen softly tapping on the oak wood. After a moment, she continues the letter she has begun writing, the words 'Dear Emily' already on the page.

MARGERY (V.O.)

It seems that after all these months Stilter House can finally be sold. At last! I had begun to think those solicitors were deliberately dragging matters out.

She shoots a rather annoyed glance at a pile of letters on the right hand side of the desk.

MARGERY (V.O.)

I think that before we put the old place on the market it would be as well to get the furniture removed. Aunt Charlotte had several very nice things, and I wondered whether we could ask Brad's widow to take a look at them. You remember her? She recently moved to Oxford and has a small antiques shop there.

She opens one of the desk drawers and takes out a Filofax from which she pulls a photograph of BRAD WEST, NELL WEST and their daughter BETH WEST. She looks at the photograph and smiles sadly, running her fingers over Brad's face.

MARGERY (V.O.)

I daresay Nell has found things difficult since Brad's death and family is family. It would be nice if we could put a little business her way...

The sound of someone playing piano, Chopin's Nocturne Op. 9 No. 2, begins to play over the scene.

MARGERY (V.O.)

I don't think we need to worry over what Charlotte used to say about the house. She was always a touch eccentric and given to imagining she saw things.

Margery stares at the words she has just written. She shakes her head in disapproval and finishes her letter.

A black and white photograph herself, EMILY WEST and CHARLOTTE WEST standing in the gardens of Stilter House is in a frame on the right hand side of her desk. As Margery finishes her letter, we notice a small shadow creep through the French Windows.

MARGERY (V.O.)

And even if there was ever anything in her stories, and nothing will ever convince me there was, Nell would only be there for a day or two...

INT. STILTER HOUSE, MUSIC ROOM - EARLY MORNING

CREDITS OVER.

Chopin continues.

The music room is high ceilinged with deep bay windows through which sunlight is pouring. A small figure of a boy, ESMOND, is sitting atop a pile of cushions at the baby grand piano, silhouetted against the French windows. His head is tilted to the side in concentration as he plays. Just as his face is about to come into view, the music stops abruptly and the boy disappears.

'THE SILENCE' appears on the screen. END CREDITS.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

EXT. MOTORWAY SERVICE AREA - EARLY MORNING

Nell and Beth are sitting at a table outside a cafe enjoying breakfast. Beth nods towards an elderly couple walking towards their car hand in hand. The man is holding a tray of coffee and a packet of pretzels. The lady looks down at the gift bag in her hand and smiles softly.

BETH

Well they're going to visit their grandchildren in Scotland.

NELL

What makes you think that?

BETH

(nodding)

There's a stuffed bear in that bag.

Nell smiles and shakes her head. She takes a sip of her coffee before picking up her phone and dial's her boyfriend's number. His phone goes to voicemail.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Hello, you've reached Michael Flint. I'm unable to come to the phone right now but if you leave your name and number, I'll get back to you as soon as possible.

Nell waits patiently for the beep, watching Beth stuff a heap of beans on her hash brown before devouring it.

NELL

Michael, it's me. Beth and I have decided to stop for a second breakfast before we cross over into Derbyshire. We're over halfway there. How's Wilberforce? Have you had a chance to send him off to Aunt Tabitha in Eggnog Village yet? I'll ring again as soon as we arrive. Talk soon!

Nell hangs up and smiles at her daughter, now finishing the last bit of her orange juice.

NELL (CONT'D)

Ready to go?

Beth nods and gets up to leave.