

ALONE

by

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FADE IN:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Hints of Christmastime adorn the kitchen. MIXING BOWLS and INGREDIENTS litter every counter, a feast in the making.

COLE (early 40's) stands with his back to the stove, overwhelmed. He takes a deep breath, raises his APRON over his head, ties it behind his back.

Cole reaches into the refrigerator, produces a TEN-POUND TURKEY. He sets it in a pan on the stove, stares at it.

He snaps out of his reverie, weaves his way to the LAPTOP on the kitchen table. He searches: HOW TO COOK A TURKEY.

He scans the results, trying to keep his cool. He returns to the oven, sets the temp, then sets the timer. FOUR HOURS.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

NATALIE (early 40's) is immersed in her iPad. Onscreen are the words: BREWING YOUR FIRST BEER. Behind her, the pot, tubing, bucket, and bottles of a HOMEBREW KIT.

GRACE (O.S.)

He's gonna screw it up.

Natalie looks up. Her daughter, GRACE (mid-teens) stands across the room, arms folded. She's not happy.

Natalie returns to her iPad.

NATALIE

I don't care. I'm not going up there.

Grace glances upstairs, concerned.

NATALIE (cont'd)

(muttering)

Stupid idea anyway. Who cooks a turkey for Christmas?

Grace glares at her mom.

GRACE

We could have had turkey for Thanksgiving if you hadn't gotten drunk and-

(CONTINUED)

NATALIE
Shut your mouth.

Uncomfortable silence. Natalie never takes her eyes from her iPad. Grace storms upstairs.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The timer on the oven reads THREE HOURS. The kitchen is significantly messier than it was an hour ago.

Cole is frazzled, his apron filthy. He stirs a simmering pot of corn with one hand, pours canned cranberries into a bowl with the other. Somewhere, a timer begins BEEPING.

Grace watches from the doorway.

GRACE
Dad?

Cole ignores her as he searches for the beeping timer. He opens the microwave. The beeping stops.

Cole removes a bowl from the microwave, fumbles, drops it on the floor. The bowl SHATTERS, sending ORANGE MUSH everywhere.

COLE
(furious)
God dammit!

Grace takes a step into the kitchen.

GRACE
Dad, can I-

COLE
I don't need any help. I can do this. Alone.

His fury dissipates as quickly as it appeared. Grace stops short. Her lower lip trembles, but she doesn't cry.

Grace leaves without another word. Cole grabs a dishtowel and starts cleaning up his mess.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

The refrigerator door stands open, revealing rows of DATE-LABELED BOTTLES. Natalie reaches for one, cracks it open, drinks deep.

A smile of pure satisfaction crosses her lips.

Natalie closes the refrigerator door, revealing Grace.

GRACE

Why won't you go upstairs?

NATALIE

(defensive)

And do what?

Natalie takes another deep drink from the bottle. She brushes by her daughter, begins to fiddle with a set of tubes and clamps.

GRACE

You're afraid, aren't you?

The bottle drifts down from Natalie's lips. She doesn't know what to say.

GRACE (cont'd)

You can't hide down here forever.

NATALIE

Watch me.

Natalie takes another drink. Grace heads back upstairs.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Cole stands at an empty table, PLATES and SILVERWARE in his hands. He sets a place at the head of the table.

Grace watches him from the doorway.

Cole walks to the next chair, hesitates. He glances at the basement door. Defeated, he starts toward the kitchen without setting out any other plates.

GRACE

(pleading)

Daddy, please...

Cole stops, looks over his shoulder at the table. He considers, then returns to the table to set places for his wife and daughter.

Grace allows herself a tiny smile.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Natalie slumps in a recliner, three RECENTLY EMPTIED BOTTLES on the table beside her. She takes a drink, working to empty the fourth.

Grace appears before her.

NATALIE

What?

Grace SLAPS the bottle out of her mother's hand. It CLATTERS to the floor. The two women stare each other down.

Natalie stands, straightens her skirt, and SLAPS Grace across the face. Grace doesn't flinch.

GRACE

Are you done feeling sorry for yourself?

Natalie's expression softens.

GRACE (cont'd)

You need to come upstairs. You owe it to him.

Grace turns, walks to the basement steps, stops.

GRACE (cont'd)

You owe it to me.

Grace walks upstairs. Natalie doesn't move.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The oven timer counts down 3... 2... 1... BEEP!

Cole turns off the heat, opens the oven door. He waves away the steam and stares at the turkey, his expression unreadable.

He slides the turkey out of the oven. Perfection.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Grace sits alone at the table, a feast set before her.

Cole hesitates in the doorway, holding the turkey.

Natalie appears in the basement door. She exchanges a glance with Grace, then takes her seat at the table.

Grace places her hand on the table. Natalie reaches out and takes Grace's hand in her own.

Cole takes in the scene before him, forces a smile.

He enters the room, places the turkey on the table, takes his seat. He bows his head, closes his eyes, begins to pray.

BEGIN MONTAGE

Natalie gets drunk at a party, argues with Cole.

Natalie climbs into her car. Cole calling after her. Grace gives her dad an apologetic look, climbs in with Natalie.

Natalie's car drifts across the yellow line. HEADLIGHTS bearing down them. A TRUCK HORN blasts.

Darkness. Screeching metal. Breaking glass. Screaming.

Cole in the basement, destroying the homebrew kit in a fit of rage. He breaks every bottle, pushes the refrigerator on its side. Spent, broken, Cole sobs.

END MONTAGE

Cole finishes his prayer, opens his eyes.

COLE
(to himself)
I miss you.

Cole lifts his head.

Grace's seat is empty. On her plate, a FRAMED PHOTO of Cole's little girl. Natalie's seat is also empty. Their WEDDING PHOTO rests on her plate.

Cole picks up the carving knife and begins his holiday feast.

Alone.

FADE TO BLACK