

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ANNA

by

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FADE IN:

1 INT. NURSERY - DAY

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Images of ALPHABET BLOCKS and ZOO ANIMALS adorn the painted cinder block walls of the spacious nursery.

EMPTY COUCHES line the walls. PLASTIC TOYS lie abandoned throughout the room.

Against one wall, a low bookshelf displays well-worn copies of children's PICTURE BOOKS.

GABI (early 20's) lies on her side on a blanket in the middle of the room. ANNA (3) sits in front of Gabi, focused on the Duplo creation in her little hands.

A masterpiece in progress.

Gabi lets her fingers drift through Anna's soft hair, oblivious to the LONG SCARF wrapped around her own head.

She's content, happy.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Gabi? He's here.

Her happiness fades. She caresses Anna's cheek.

GABI

Thanks.

RAY (early 20's) shuffles toward Gabi and Anna, a brown paper GROCERY BAG in his arms. Gabi doesn't look up.

GABI (cont'd)

Hi, Ray.

RAY

Hey.

At the sound of Ray's voice, Anna scrambles to her feet, the Duplo's forgotten.

ANNA

Daddy!

Gabi's fingers linger on Anna's cheek as the toddler pulls away, rushing to hug Ray's leg.

(CONTINUED)

RAY

Hey, short stuff. Hold on, hold on.  
Let me set this down.

Ray places the bag on the floor and picks up his daughter. She wraps her tiny little arms around his neck, squeezing as hard as she can.

RAY (cont'd)

Love you too, little one.

Gabi struggles to her feet. Ray moves as if to help, but stops himself. She pretends not to notice.

Gabi and Ray regard each other for a moment. She doesn't want to talk. He doesn't know what to say.

Gabi opts to break the silence.

GABI

What's in the bag?

Ray sets Anna on the floor. She darts toward the bag, peeking inside.

Ray scans the room, finding a CHILD-SIZED TABLE. He locks eyes with Anna.

RAY

Race you.

He picks up the bag and jogs to the table. Anna races by him, thrilled. Gabi shuffles along behind them.

Anna grabs a seat, unable to contain her excitement. Ray reaches into the bag and pulls out a small box of CUPCAKES.

RAY (cont'd)

Happy birthday, Anna.

Anna squeals in delight. Ray looks to Gabi.

RAY (cont'd)

Want one?

Gabi shakes her head.

Ray holds his frustration in check. This isn't easy on either of them, but at least he's trying.

He opens the box and hands a cupcake to Anna. She attacks it, giggling.

Seeing Anna so happy brings a tired smile to Gabi's face.

(CONTINUED)

GABI

Let's get this over with, Ray.

Ray reaches into the bag and pulls out a MANILA FOLDER. He hesitates.

Gabi snatches the folder from his hands. She opens it and flips through the papers inside.

RAY

The lawyer marked everywhere you need to sign.

Ray produces an INK PEN, extends it to Gabi.

She refuses to take it.

RAY (cont'd)

Come on, Gabi. This is no time to be stubborn.

GABI

And when is that time, Ray? When?

Her voice cracks. Anna stops giggling when she notices that her mommy is upset.

Ray offers Anna a reassuring smile. He steps closer to Gabi, lowering his voice.

RAY

She doesn't belong here.

Ray holds out the pen again. Gabi throws him a look before turning her back on him.

Wrong thing to say, Ray. Try again.

He reaches into the bag and pulls out a WRAPPED PRESENT.

Anna's eyes widen.

ANNA

For me?

RAY

You finish your cupcake. This is for Mommy.

Gabi spins around, half surprised, half angry. Ray hands the present to Anna, who holds it up to her mother.

(CONTINUED)

ANNA

Look, Mommy. Daddy got you a present.

Gabi is determined to hide her anger and frustration from Anna. She accepts the gift.

Her eyes fixed on Ray, Gabi RIPS into the wrapping paper and TEARS the box open. She holds his gaze for a moment before she looks down.

Inside the box, a BLOND WIG, the hair straight and long.

RAY

I spent days trying to find the right one. It thought you might want it, you know. Until you get better.

Gabi tries to remain stoic, but he did it. He found a chink in her armor. Tears escape from the corners of her eyes.

Ray steps closer. He removes her scarf, revealing the PEACH FUZZ that covers Gabi's scalp.

He helps her put the wig on, helps her straighten it. He steps back and smiles a genuine "I really do care" smile.

He holds the pen out one last time.

RAY (cont'd)

Please.

She hesitates.

GABI

This isn't permanent.

Gabi accepts the pen.

RAY

I know.

Gabi sits in a tiny chair at the child's table. She opens the folder and signs the papers.

Finished, she closes the folder and hands it Ray.

GABI

Promise me you'll take her to the park. She's never been.

(CONTINUED)

RAY

We'll stop on the way home.

Gabi motions for Anna to come close.

She scoops the little girl up into a hug that rivals the one Anna gave Ray just moments before.

Gabi whispers into her daughter's ear.

GABI

You be good for Daddy, sweetheart.  
Okay? And remember that Mommy loves  
you. Mommy always loves you.

ANNA

Okay, Mommy.

Against every motherly instinct she has, Gabi bends down and lets go of her daughter.

Ray takes Anna's tiny hand in his.

RAY

You'll make it through this.

GABI

I know. Stubborn, remember?

Ray smiles, then turns to leave.

Across the room, a FEMALE PRISON GUARD stands by the room's single door. She signals to someone outside of the room, and the door swings open.

Gabi's tears flow freely as she watches her daughter leave.

At the door, Anna stops. She turns to wave to her mother.

ANNA

Love you, Mommy!

Ray and Anna leave, followed by the guard. The door closes behind them with a soft CLICK.

GABI

Happy birthday, Anna.

Gabi sits alone in the empty prison nursery.

FADE OUT.