

MIDNIGHT CLEAR

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FADE IN:

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Rustic, full of character and charm.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

STEVE (35) carefully places a miniature BOY and BICYCLE in front of a model church. It's part of a much bigger spread -- a complete Christmas Village.

Steve touches the church's steeple with his fingertip. The inside lights flicker on, then --

The entire village lights up.

He reaches for a glass of champagne and takes a drink.

Over Steve's shoulder, an unlit Christmas Tree suddenly bursts to life in a spectacle of color.

In the adjoining

DINING ROOM

BRYN (37) diligently clears the last of the dinner plates. She disappears to another room. A dishwasher clicks on.

She joins Steve in the

LIVING ROOM

BRYN

You outdid yourself this year.

He wraps his arm around her waist.

STEVE

Coops always loved this. I wouldn't go a year without setting it up.

A RECORD PLAYER turns on. A 33 1/3 rotates. The arm lifts, slides. The needle drops onto the vinyl.

He takes her hand.

STEVE

Shall we?

BRYN

Love to.

In the b.g., a weeping string arrangement rises as Bryn and Steve settle in the center of the room.

BRYN's POV: The lights fade, giving way to twinkling stars, seemingly from out of thin air.

BRYN

This is nice.

He holds her tight, closes his eyes, smells her hair.

STEVE

Remember the first time we danced to this song?

BRYN

How could I forget? You remind me every year.

STEVE

I'm sorry. It's just... Those were great memories.

BRYN

Yes, they were.

And for a while, they dance in silence.

STEVE

Remember when we first started working together? You were a temp and I was--

BRYN

It doesn't feel like Christmas.

He stops, opens his eyes. Waits a moment. Then a moment longer before --

STEVE

What does it feel like?

BRYN

Like... dark glasses I can't take off.

STEVE

It's been seven years, honey.

They stop dancing.

BRYN

I know, but... I want to go to him,
Steve. I need to go to him. Is there
enough magic left?

STEVE

Are you sure this is what you want?

BRYN

Yeah. I just wanna make sure he's
okay. This one last time.

STEVE

You'll need to put your coat on.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Crisp winter air.

Bryn standing under a street light. Vapor trails as she
breathes, her face bright with anticipation.

STEVE (O.S.)

Are you ready.

She closes her eyes.

BRYN

Yes.

EXT. WOODED AREA - NIGHT

Bryn navigates a small expanse of brush off to the side of
someone's home. Steve close behind.

She comes to a clearing, grabs onto a fence and hops down on the shore of a big LAKE.

Hard mud beneath her shoes, she gazes out to where lights from distant houses radiate upon the shimmering water.

She paces forward. Stops, looks down. A bouquet of ROSES at her feet. She picks them up and --

A tug at her coat.

She spins around, hopeful.

But there's no one there.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Basketball, tennis courts. See-saws and swings.

Bryn meanders around a JUNGLE GYM, searching.

Another tug at her coat.

BRYN

There you are!

She giggles and gives chase.

PARKING LOT

Empty and dark except for Steve, leaning against the bumper of his car. Huddled up. Watching.

Laughter echos from the

PARK

Bryn continues her pursuit.

The form of a CHILD scurries behind a slide. She peeks around its edge. Nothing.

A single rose falls from her bouquet onto the sand.

Her smile fades. She drops to her knees, lowers her head.

PARKING LOT

Close on: Steve's face as he utters a single word:

STEVE

Mommy.

PARK

Bryn lifts her gaze. As if on springs, she leaps up and dashes across the park to --

COOPER, no more than six, a messy head of blond hair and a mischievous grin. His coat unbuttoned.

She scoops him up, swings him round under the glow of the park lights.

BRYN

Were you playing hide-and-seek with
Mommy?

COOPER

(laughing)

Yes!

She lowers the boy, looks him over.

BRYN

Who dressed you today? Your father?
You're gonna freeze out here.

COOPER

I'm okay, Mommy.

She zips his coat, straightens it out. Licks her thumb and removes a dirt smudge from his cheek.

BRYN

I know, but I don't want you catching
a cold out here.

She takes him by the hand.

BRYN

(fading)

So, do you want Mommy to push you on
the swings? Yeah...

EXT. FACILITY ENTRANCE - DAWN

Glass doors slide open.

Steve shuffles Bryn inside.

INT. RECEPTION - CONTINUOUS

Well maintained and inviting.

Seated at the reception desk is a chubby WOMAN (50s), normally affable, but not at this moment. She looks up.

WOMAN

(raised voice)

Mr. Karp! We've been looking all over
for Bryn. You must stop doing th--

A quick nod of Steve's head. She picks up the phone, even though it hasn't rung.

WOMAN

Mountain View? Who? Oh stop. You are
so not Mickey Mouse. Prove it. Yes...
Yes. Oh my God, it is you! How did you
get this number?

Steve grins playfully as he and Bryn head down a corridor.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Can I tell you a secret? You know
those little shorts you wear? I have a
pair of underwear just like them...

CORRIDOR

Pictures of adult RESIDENTS line the walls, each engaged in an array of creative activities.

They turn into a

ROOM

The light goes on.

A plant rests on a window sill. A small bowl with a Goldfish sits atop a bureau.

Steve takes her coat, drapes it across a chair.

He lowers her onto a bed, gently swings her legs up. Then rolls a blanket up to her chin.

STEVE

(whispers)

Did you see him? Is he safe?

Her eyes are closed...

BRYN

Oh yeah. He's getting so big.

... then start to open...

STEVE

I bet he is.

(then)

I miss you guys.

... and stare blankly at the ceiling.

BRYN

(softly)

We miss you... too.

He kisses her forehead.

STEVE

Good night, sweet heart.

Steve opens a door behind him, goes in. The water turns on. He emerges with a paper cup and waters the plant.

Then feeds the goldfish.

He moves to the doorway, looks back.

STEVE

I'll see you next year.

He leaves.

The light inside the room shuts off.

INT. RECEPTION

Steve passes the woman, but she pays him no mind. Still chatting up Mickey on the phone.

The doors open.

EXT. FACILITY ENTRANCE - MORNING

Steve emerges. His car awaits under an over hang. He gets in.

The car pulls away to reveal a sign that hangs on the cultured stone siding of the building, next to the sliding doors. It reads --

MOUNTAIN VIEW PSYCHIATRIC

Steve's car follows the winding path, past the fine trimmed lawns, to the street.

He signals left, and turns. Gone as the sun comes up.

FADE OUT.