

Grace
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1

EXT. FRONT LAWN - DUSK

1

GRACE - 5, energetic, and purely happy - dances barefoot in the snow on a cold winter's day. The snow begins to fall and she just enjoys every moment, not seeming to notice the cold. An OLDER GRACE - still full of life but more mature - narrates.

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)

Emile Zola once said "If you ask me what I came into this world to do, I will tell you I came to live out loud."

Grace's mother, ELIZABETH -stern, old fashioned, and strict - stands on the porch. Her hands clenched tightly to her chest holding her sweater. She is clearly freezing.

ELIZABETH

Grace, you come in here right this minute!

Grace stops dancing suddenly and turns to see her mother with a scared expression on her face.

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)

If you ask my mother what she came into this world to do she will tell you she came to live a quiet life and protect her only child.

Grace's face saddens and she drags her feet up the porch and into the house. Elizabeth begins to scold her as they enter.

FADE TO:

2

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

2

GRACE is swinging back and forth on the monkey bars.

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)

I am not like you.

Grace's hands slip off the monkey bars and she falls to the ground, but she does not cry.

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)

I did not have an ordinary childhood.

Grace looks at her arm and starts to play with it. She pushes a little too hard and her bone pops through her skin. Another little girl stands by looking in horror.

Grace notices the girl with a blank stare. The girl points and screams.

GIRL

Witch!

Grace's eyes widen.

3

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

3

Grace's arm is in a cast and Elizabeth is getting her a glass of orange juice.

ELIZABETH

How many times have I told you to be careful Grace. You are not like everyone else. You are different.

Grace frowns and drinks the glass of juice. Orange seeps from the side of her lips but she does not wipe it away. Elizabeth frowns.

ELIZABETH

Grace! Wipe your mouth!

Grace looks at her surprised and touches her hand to her face. She looks at the juice on her fingers curiously. Elizabeth becomes impatient, grabs a napkin and wipes Grace's face herself.

4

INT. CLASSROOM -DAY

4

Grace and her classmates are sitting on a carpet facing the front. TEACHER A sits on a big chair off to the side. A LITTLE BOY A stands in front with a building of blocks in front of him. LITTLE BOY B reaches out and grabs a block.

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)

After the monkey bar incident I was pretty much left on my own...

LITTLE BOY A

This is my castle that I built myself. Thank you!

The class claps and LITTLE GIRL A stands up.

LITTLE GIRL A

This is my dress. I picked it myself. Thank you.

LITTLE GIRL A sits down.

TEACHER A

Who would like to share next?

The whole class raises their hands enthusiastically.

CLASS

Me, me, me, me, me!

TEACHER A

What about you Grace?

Grace stands. She begins to talk, but a block hits her in the head.

5

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

5

Elizabeth is helping Grace - who is now around 8 or 9 - put on her winter garments. She holds a list in her hands. She points to each item and looks at Grace closely.

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)

My mother encouraged this detachment though. She said they wouldn't understand and they would be too rough with me. After a while she adapted to my condition and became more worried about my fitting in unnoticed than she did about my health. Although, to her, the two were connected

ELIZABETH

Now, Grace, listen carefully. Once inside the classroom, you take off the coat. Then the scarf. But leave everything else on. At recess, you put the coat and scarf back on. Do you understand? You don't want anyone to think you look odd, am I right?

Grace nods and Elizabeth smiles. Elizabeth gives her the instructions.

ELIZABETH

Off you go then.

Elizabeth opens the door and they both walk out.

6 EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY.

6

Grace walks onto the playground and towards the class. She tears up the list and throws it on the playground letting the wind carry it away.

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)
What my mother didn't realize is
that I was adapting as well...

7 INT. CLASSROOM -DAY

7

Grace sits in her chair with all her winter clothes still on. TEACHER B enters the classroom.

TEACHER B
Good Morning boys and girls.

ALL CHILDREN
Good morning Mrs. Peters.

Grace looks around the classroom where all the boys and girls are not wearing any winter garments. Grace's eyes widen. She hurries out of her seat and takes off her things.

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)
With a few lapses of course.

As she walks back, a BOY sitting next to her places a thumb tack on her chair. Grace sits on it without a flinch of pain. The class begins to giggle. Tackboy whispers to his friend.

TACKBOY
She sat on it, she actually sat on
it.

TACKBOY'S FRIEND
She's so weird.

Grace's eyes begin to tear a little.

8 INT. HOME HALLWAY - DAY

8

Grace is inside the house and Elizabeth is taking off her coat when she sees the thumb tack. She pulls it out and shakes her head.

ELIZABETH
Oh Grace.

Grace looks up at her mother expecting sympathy. Elizabeth sighs, puts Grace's coat back on and grabs her hand aggressively as she leaves the house.

ELIZABETH

The doctor must be able to do something!

9

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

9

Grace and Elizabeth sit in the patient chairs and DR. ABRAMS sits behind his desk with an x-ray behind him. He talks softly as Elizabeth and Grace listen.

DR. ABRAHMS

Maybe synapse malfunction?

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)

I am the perfect patient.

As the monologue continues, a montage sequence of Grace and Elizabeth going to different doctors ensues. With each doctor, there is a new x-ray, or test, and Grace and Elizabeth are a little older. Until the last sequence when Grace is 18.

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)

I have been pricked, poked, prodded, and pawed, bled, x-rayed and manipulated, opened and closed more times than I can count and I have never complained, because I can't feel anything. Literally.

Dr. JOHNS looks at little Grace and Elizabeth confused and points to an x-ray of the brain.

DR. JOHNS

Perhaps a lesion in the brain?

Grace and Elizabeth sit in another office with a new DOCTOR who just shakes his head in confusion.

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)

They don't know, though. None of them.

A new DR. BRICK passes over a journal article to Grace, who is now 18, and Elizabeth at the other end of the desk. Both look confused.

DR. BRICK

It's an upper pinch in the cervical
Vertebrae.

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)

I've always wound up a mystery, set
aside with a shrug, or, a few
times, as the subject of a journal
article. Either way, I've long
since given up on doctors and have
resigned myself to this
affliction...

10

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

10

18 YEAR OLD GRACE is standing on the porch with THOMAS - a
skater type, who thinks he is very cool, and suave. He looks
into Grace's eyes.

THOMAS

I had fun tonight.

Grace smiles and nods shyly. Grace and Thomas sit on the
porch swing, but before Grace sits she brushes off her seat
and looks carefully for any thumb tacks.

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)

By this point in my life I knew
when I was supposed to be cold...

Thomas brushes his hand over her arm but Grace does not do
anything.

THOMAS

Are you cold?

Grace smiles slightly.

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)

Or how I was supposed to act on a
date...

GRACE

Uh huh.

He leans in to kiss her and she kisses back, perfectly. She
gives no indication of not feeling.

Then Thomas begins to move his hand up her shirt. He grabs
her breast and she pays no notice.

He tries to unhook her bra but he only unhooks one snap. She does not notice. The porch light comes on and Grace draws back.

GRACE
I better go in.

Thomas smiles and nods slickly. He walks down to the street.

THOMAS
Good night Grace. We should do
this again...soon.

Grace's eyes widen and she smiles with delight. She nods and turns to the house.

11 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

11

Elizabeth is sitting reading the paper when Grace walks in. She puts it down.

ELIZABETH
How did it go Grace?

Grace takes a deep breath and smiles giddily.

GRACE
Good, really good.

Elizabeth frowns.

ELIZABETH
I don't like that boy Grace. He
will only hurt you. All of them
will.

Grace sighs and pays no attention.

ELIZABETH
It would probably be best if you
stayed home with me and not go out
on these silly dates.

Grace's bedroom door slams shut.

ELIZABETH
I left you clothes on you bed for
tomorrow.

12 INT. GRACE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

12

Grace hears an enhanced snap and looks back at her bra. Grace sighs and shakes her head as if to say, "oh fuck, not again." She looks on her bed to see her clothes laid out. Grace takes the clothes and puts them back in the closet. She takes out a new outfit and puts it on her chair.

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)

I soon realized there was more to dates than kissing. This boy stuff was proving more difficult than I realized.

13 INT. CAR - DAY

13

Elizabeth is driving a car and Grace is in the passenger seat with her head against the window. Elizabeth is talking but Grace is uninterested.

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)

By the time I got to college, my mother was at my side everywhere but class. She drove me to school, she picked me up from school. I got a part time job in her office so she could watch after me and at night we sat and watched TV together. My affliction, according to her, made it unsafe to live my life.

14 INT. GRACE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

14

Grace looks out of her bedroom to see if her mother is still asleep. She sees nothing and heads to her bedroom window. She proceeds to climb out.

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)

I don't remember exactly when, but I realized that my affliction could let me live my life greater than others if given the chance to. I was tired of being tied up and so I snuck out to go to a college party.

15 INT. GRACE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

15

Grace enters her bedroom leaving the door open. She quietly takes off her shoes and begins to unbutton her top. Elizabeth walks by carrying a glass of water and looks in on Grace. Grace takes off her top and her breast is bruised. Elizabeth stops dead in her tracks and walks into the bedroom. She walks up to her daughter and gently touches her face and bruised breast.

ELIZABETH
(softly)
Grace?

Grace sits on her bed and covers her breasts. Elizabeth sits down next to her. Elizabeth takes her head and puts it on her shoulder. Grace begins to tell her what happened.

16 INT. PARTY - NIGHT

16

Grace enters fresh and excited. She walks through the crowd of people.

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)
It was noisy and crowded and dark.

WARREN - like Thomas in spirit, but dressed much classier, and very drunk - makes his way over to Grace with 2 beer bottles in his hands. He hands one to Grace. Grace smiles in acceptance.

WARREN
Hey! I've heard about you!

Grace looks at him confused.

WARREN
Can you feel this?

Warren grabs Grace's breast and squeezes and twists. Grace does not budge. Warren's friends begin to laugh and Grace looks at all of them.

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)
I didn't have time to think.

Grace takes the beer bottle and breaks it across his face. The glass shatters slowly and falls to the floor. Warren's friend looks at her in terror.

FRIEND

We were just having some fun!

Grace's eyes widen in terror.

17 INT. GRACE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

17

Elizabeth shakes her head and sighs.

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)

I was kicked out of college after that.

ELIZABETH

Oh Grace.

Elizabeth pulls her daughter a little closer.

ELIZABETH

Why don't you listen to me. I am trying to save you from all of this!

Grace sighs. Elizabeth strokes Grace's hair.

ELIZABETH

(Softly)

You could die, Grace. And you wouldn't even know.

Grace's eyes tear.

GRACE

I won't die. I want to live.

ELIZABETH

I am the one making sure that you do live.

Grace sighs. Elizabeth pulls Grace's head off her shoulders and looks her in the eyes.

ELIZABETH

I love you Grace. You know that right?

Grace nods hopelessly.

ELIZABETH

Okay, well, you can start working for me full time from now on.

Grace gets confused.

ELIZABETH

No more associating with people I
don't know. No more sneaking out.
No more going out.

18 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

18

Elizabeth puts down breakfast and Grace comes down the stairs
in her pyjamas.

ELIZABETH

Grace! We have to be at work in
half an hour! Hurry up.

Grace sits down to her oatmeal and is about to take bite.
Elizabeth grabs it from her. She puts her finger in the
bowl and tastes it.

ELIZABETH

Okay.

Grace sighs and takes a bite.

ELIZABETH

I left clothes in the bathroom for
you to wear today.

Grace puts her head in her hands.

ELIZABETH

Grace! C'mon.

Grace looks up at her mother for a moment as she fiddles with
different things in the kitchen. She slowly gets out of her
chair and walks upstairs.

19 INT. HALLYWAY - DAY

19

Elizabeth knocks at the bathroom door. The shower is running
and steam comes from under the door. Elizabeth's voice is
louder than normal to override the shower.

ELIZABETH

Grace! We are going to be late!
Are you in the shower? Is it too
hot? Can you hear me? Grace!?

Elizabeth slowly opens the bathroom door. The window is open
and Grace is halfway out.

Steam fills the room so there is a fog between them. For a moment, before the smoke clears, Elizabeth sees % YEAR OLD GRACE halfway out the window. Elizabeth and Grace stare at each other a moment. 18 year old Grace has a guilty expression on her face. Elizabeth's face is less clear. She looks at her daughter intensely. Elizabeth finally speaks.

ELIZABETH

(softly)

Call me when you get there...and be safe.

Grace smiles slowly, nods and continues out the window. Elizabeth turns off the running water and turns to see the note on the mirror. It reads: I understand what you had to do, please understand what I have to do.

Elizabeth looks out the window as the wind blows lightly into the bathroom.

20

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - DAY

20

Grace sits at the back of the bus surrounded by all different types of people. She looks around a little frightened at first, leans back and slowly smiles.

OLDER GRACE (V.O.)

I didn't know where I was going or what I was going to do but I knew I would call my mother when I got there.

FADE OUT.