"10"

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY - 1996

MICHAEL (late 70's) grey hair, his body is giving out, his voice is soft and weak, he lays in bed propped up with some pillows. A nasal cannula in his nose.

The HOSPICE NURSE walks into the room followed by CAROLINE (40's) ANGELA (14), RYAN (11) and KATIE (7).

HOSPICE NURSE
Michael, you have some visitors.

Caroline pulls a chair up along side the bed, reaches for his hand and holds it. He smiles at her.

CAROLINE
Hey dad. How are you feeling?

MICHAEL
Oh, I'm alright. Tired.

CAROLINE
Yeah?
(pause)
I've brought the kids with me.

KIDS
Hey grandpa.

MICHAEL
You're all getting big.

Caroline looks around, and notices a box on a shelf.

CAROLINE
Dad.

Pointing to the box on a shelf, she stands and walks to it.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
What's that? I remember seeing this growing up, but you were always so protective of it.

Michael looks over where she is and his voice comes to life.

MICHAEL
Oh that? Bring that here.

She takes the box over to Michael as he rests his hand on it.
MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Let me tell you about this box.
(beat)
Your mother had just passed...

FADE TO:

INT. FUNERAL HOME - AFTERNOON - 1955
MICHAEL now younger (mid 30's), dressed in a black suit, stands next his daughter CAROLINE (5) and the casket of his wife ALISON (30's).
People approach them and pay their condolences, they hug them or shake their hands. They touch Caroline's shoulders or pat her head. Michael is emotionless, the weight of everything still hasn't hit him.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT - 1955
Michael sits in his car at a redlight, lost in thought as the light shifts from red to green. Headlights of the car behind him reflect off the mirror onto his face, he is unphased.

HONK!
Michael snaps out of it, looks in the back seat, Caroline is still asleep. He drives away.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT - 1955
Michael pulls into the driveway, Caroline is still asleep in the back seat. He picks her up in his arms, holds her tight and makes his way towards the house.

INT. CAROLINE'S BEDROOM - 1955
Michael pulls the covers up over Caroline, and she slowly wakes up.

CAROLINE
Daddy?

MICHAEL
Go to sleep, sweetheart, it's ok.

CAROLINE
I want mommy.
MICHAEL
I know sweetheart, I do too. Mommy will always be with us, right?

Caroline nods.

MICHAEL (CONT’D)
Yeah, cause remember mommy's an angel watching over us now.

CAROLINE
Daddy?

MICHAEL
Yeah sweetheart?

CAROLINE
I don't want mommy to be angel, I want her to come home.

Michael tries to fight back tears and not lose it. He musters a smile and nods his head.

MICHAEL
Get some sleep baby girl.

He kisses her on the forehead and quickly walks out of the room and shuts the door behind him. He folds over, losing it.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - 1955

Michael lays in bed awake. The door to his room creaks open and he looks over, Caroline stands in the doorway.

CAROLINE
Mommy?

MICHAEL
Come here sweetheart.

She climbs up on the bed and cuddles up next to him.

CAROLINE
I miss mommy.

MICHAEL
I know baby.

He turns his head away from her, covers his face and holds his breath doing his best not to sob and her hear him.
INT. HALLWAY - MORNING - 1955

Michael stares at a family portrait as tears stream down.

MICHAEL
You said forever, you promised me.
(beat)
Now what am I supposed to do?
(beat)
What am I supposed to say?

DOORBELL RINGS, he wipes away the tears and walks to

INT. FRONT DOOR - 1955

Michael opens the door, as FRANK (30's) skirts away to his black sedan. As he reaches his car he looks back at Michael and with a half smile he gives a nod to Michael. Michael looks at him confused, he looks familiar but he doesn't know why.

Michael's attention redirects to the package sitting on the front step at his feet.

INT. LIVING ROOM - 1955

Michael sits on the couch, places the package on the coffee table and opens it.

Inside the package is a wooden box with an envelope on top. He picks up the envelope, opens it, and reads the card.

ALISON (V.O.)
Michael, my love. I wish I could walk through that door, kiss you, and tell you everything will be fine. My heart aches for what you must be feeling. But know that I love you deeply and cherish every moment we had together. I know you are probably thinking: Can I go back and change something? The answer is no. But if you could go back for a moment would you?
(beat)
So this my love is my final, parting gift to you. Forever in my heart, your loving wife.

Michael lays the card on the table and pulls the old wooden box out. He pushes the cardboard box onto the floor and sits the wooden box on the table as he looks it over curiously.
Michael opens the lid of the wooden box and looks inside. There is an old key, a key hole, and a white display with the black number "10". He leans back, thinks for a moment, picks up the key, puts it into the hole, and turns it.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - NIGHT - 1946

Michael (20's), changes a tire on the side of the road. He pauses for a moment, confused.

Alison stands behind him on the side of the road unbeknown to Michael.

ALISON (O.S.)
Michael, we're going to be late to the dance.

Michael immediately spins around.

MICHAEL
Alison?

Alison stands there hands on her hips. As Michael slowly stands in shock.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
How?

Michael grabs her and pulls her close to him, then lets go, steps back, and holds her face.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Tell me this is real.

ALISON
(nervous chuckle)
Are you ok? You look like you've seen a ghost.

MICHAEL
Oh my God, you're here.

Michael pauses and looks around, not daring to let go of her.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Where's Caroline?

ALISON
Who?
MICHAEL
Caroline, our daughter.

ALISON
(worried)
Michael, you're scaring me.

Michael turns and looks around.

MICHAEL
Did I die too?

ALISON
(appauled)
Excuse me? This isn't funny.

MICHAEL
You died, but you're here, so did I?

Michael turns around and everything is black, Alison is gone, the car is gone, just blackness.

ALISON (V.O.)
I know you are probably thinking: Can I go back and change something? The answer is no.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING (LATER) - 1955

Michael wakes up on the couch with a jolt. He looks around the room and rubs his eyes. There's the box on the coffee table with the lid closed. He opens it and the indicator inside the box displays "9".

EXT. GRAVEYARD - AFTERNOON - 1955

Michael kneels beside a fresh grave. It's raining, and a mixture of water and tears stream down his face as he pounds the ground with his fists.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER - 1955

Michael leans on the counter, drinking a bottle of water as he looks into the living room at the box on the coffee table.
INT. LIVING ROOM - 1955

Michael looks the box over for a moment, opens it and holds up the key. Inserts the key into the hole and turns it.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. MICHAEL’S CAR - AFTERNOON - 1947

Michael drives on an old county highway, passing cars as fast as he can. He finally catches up with the car he was chasing and flashes his headlights at it.

INT. ALISON’S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Alison is in her car when Michael's car comes speeding up behind her, flashing his lights. She is clearly distraught. She pulls to the shoulder. Michael follows.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Michael jumps out of his car and runs up to her's. He flings opens her door and squats down next to her.

MICHAEL
Come with me.

ALISON
To Tuscon?

MICHAEL
Yes, to Tuscon.

ALISON
No, I have the job at the museum.

MICHAEL
I can't live my life without you. I did it during the war, and I said I'd never do it again.

She touches his arm reassuring him.

ALISON
It'll be fine. We weren’t meant to be.

MICHAEL
No! We ARE meant to be.

(beat)

Marry me.
ALISON
What just like that? One minute you're telling me you're moving to Tuscon. We're over. Now it's marry me?

MICHAEL
I love you, I do.

ALISON
I love you too, but I can't.

MICHAEL
(interrupting)
I don't care. I don't care about any of it, if it's not with you.

ALISON
I don't,

MICHAEL
(interrupting)
I'll give up everything, because nothing else matters.

ALISON
Michael.

MICHAEL
I love you.
(beat)
Marry me.

Alison gets out of the car and they embrace and kiss.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. LIVING ROOM - 1955

Michael slowly wakes up on the couch. He opens the box sitting on the coffee table. The display says "8". He grabs the key and looks at it.

FADE OUT:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - 1955

Michael sits on the edge of the bed, it's quiet, and he's alone. He opens the box, the display reads "6".
MICHAEL
All these plans we had for our
life, things we were going to do.
(beat)
We were going to grow old together.
Now I'm just growing old alone.
(beat)
And this bed is empty without you.

He grabs the key, puts it in the key hole and turns it.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING - 1949

Michael is asleep. Alison slides her hand over his shoulder
and onto his chest as she pulls herself close to him, he
snuggles into her, still not fully awake. Alison pulls
herself up and kisses him on his cheek.

ALISON
I love you.

Michael opens his eyes, she nuzzles under his arm and lays
her head on his chest. He wraps his arm around her and takes
a deep breath, just taking it all in.

MICHAEL
God, I loved this.

ALISON
Yeah? Me too.
(beat)
Lock this one away safe in the
memory bank?

MICHAEL
(chuckles)
The memory bank, yeah.

ALISON
And when we are old, senial and
can't remember anything one of us
will tell the other these stories.

They kiss.

MICHAEL
These are definitely the ones I
want to keep.
(beat)
These are the ones I can't forget.
Michael looks at her, wondering if he should say this.

MICHAEL (CONT’D)
This, and when the baby is born.

Alison sits up quickly, surprised.

ALISON
How did you know? I was going to tell you tonight.

Michael smiles at her.

MICHAEL
And she'll be a beautiful girl, just like her mommy.

ALISON
Whatever that name is, that's what we'll name her.

MICHAEL
Caroline.

ALISON
Really? You know that right off the top of your head. I'll have to check you on that.

MICHAEL
Check it.

ALISON
Anyway it doesn't matter because we agreed a boy first.

MICHAEL
Hey, it's out of my hands.

Alison grabs her pillow and hits him with it.

MICHAEL (CONT’D)
Beautiful and stubborn, just like her mamma.

He grabs his pillow and hits her back, all out pillow fight.

BACK TO PRESENT
INT. MICHAELS HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - DAY - 1968

Michael opens the door and enters the house, thirteen years have passed since Alison’s funeral and Michael shows his age, his hair has turned grey and his eyes look tired.

MICHAEL
(yells)
Caroline?

CAROLINE (O.S.)
I'm coming dad.

Caroline steps out into the hallway, she's eighteen now and beautiful. She slings a backpack over her shoulder as she walks down the hallway.

MICHAEL
Hey sweetheart. I've got the car packed. You got everything?

CAROLINE
Yeah.

Caroline kisses her dad on the cheek.

CAROLINE (CONT’D)
Thanks dad.

Michael opens the door.

MICHAEL
I'll walk you out.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS - 1968

Michael and Caroline stand at the car. They embrace, then he reaches into his pocket and pulls out a necklace with a key charm on it and holds it up.

MICHAEL
This was your moms. She would say, the best memories are locked away in the heart, and love is the key that unlocks them.
(beat)
She wanted it passed to you, when the time was right, and I can't think of a more right time.

He puts the necklace on her neck, she grabs the charm and looks at it.
CAROLINE
It's beautiful.

They embrace again and then Michael grabs her face and kisses her on the forehead. He opens the door to the car, as Caroline gets inside and starts it.

MICHAEL
I'm proud of you sweetheart.

CAROLINE
I love you dad.

MICHAEL
I love you too, baby girl.

He taps the hood and waves as she pulls out of the driveway.

INT. MICHAELS HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - 1968

Michael grabs the box off a shelf and sets it down on the coffee table in front of him.

MICHAEL
Well baby she's off to Baylor, she says she's going to be a curator just like you.

Michael sighs and opens the box the display reads "4".

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
We were supposed to send her off together.

Michael grabs the key, inserts it into the hole and turns it.

CUT TO:

INT. ALISON'S OFFICE - DAY - 1951

Alison sits in her office at the museum. Artifacts and antiques are on the walls. She sits at her desk looking over the box and the key, then pauses to make a note.

Michael KNOCKS on her open door, holding baby Caroline in his arms. Alison looks at him and puts the key away, closes the box, and pushes it to the side of the desk.

ALISON
Hey my loves!
MICHAEL
Hey momma, we wanted to stop by and surprise you.

He points to the box on the desk.

MICHAEL (CONT’D)
What's that?

ALISON
That, is an artifact that we just got in. It's called a Baruch box.

MICHAEL
What's a Baruch box?

Alison takes Caroline from Michaels arms. She answers Michael but talks to Caroline in a playful, baby voice.

ALISON
(to Caroline)
It comes from an ancient tribe known as the Baruch, yes it does. And there's a lot of lore around it, yes there is. Really fascinating stuff, yes it is.

Alison kisses Michael. He eyes the box. Alison nuzzles Caroline.

Frank knocks on the door, he walks in with some papers.

ALISON (CONT’D)
Come on in. Frank this is my husband Michael.
(beat)
Frank is a conservator here at the museum.

Frank and Michael shake hands.

FRANK
Nice to meet you.

MICHAEL
Same here.

Michael points to Alison.

MICHAEL (CONT’D)
She must keep you busy.
FRANK
She keeps things interesting that's for sure.
(beat)
Anyways, I just wanted to drop these off.

Frank puts the papers on Alison's desk.

FRANK (CONT’D)
Do you want me to take a look at the Baruch box?

ALISON
Um, not right now, I'll bring it over to your office a little later.

Frank nods and excuses himself. Alison returns her focus to Caroline.

ALISON (CONT’D)
Hey sweetheart, are you having fun with daddy today?

FADE OUT:

INT. BEDROOM - AFTERNOON - 1996

Older Michael lays in his bed, with the box next to him closed. Caroline is still holding his hand, Katie sits on the edge of the bed.

The HOSPICE NURSE walks into the room.

HOSPICE NURSE
How ya doing Michael?

MICHAEL
(sighs)
I'm tired.

HOSPICE NURSE
Well why don't you get some rest.

CAROLINE
Yeah dad take a nap, we'll be right out in the living room, we aren't going anywhere.

Caroline leans over and kisses Michael on the cheek, Angela and Ryan follow suit.
CAROLINE (CONT’D)
I love you, dad.

MICHAEL
I love you too, baby girl.

ANGELA
Love you grandpa.

MICHAEL
I love you too, sweetheart.

RYAN
Love you grandpa.

MICHAEL
I love you, buddy.

Caroline, Angela and Ryan makes their way to the door.

MICHAEL (CONT’D)
(to Katie)
Hey sweetheart.

He caresses her cheek, holds her chin, and looks her over.

MICHAEL (CONT’D)
You're a spitting image of your grandma Alison. Did you know that?

KATIE
You tell me that everytime grandpa.

MICHAEL
Oh? Well then it must be true.

Nurse puts her arm around Katie and leans down next to her.

HOSPICE NURSE
Katie, why don't we let grandpa get some rest. OK?

KATIE
Alright.

Katie kisses him on the cheek.

KATIE (CONT’D)
Bye grandpa.

MICHAEL
I'll see you later, sweetheart.
Katie walks out of the room, pausing to look one more time at her grandpa from the doorway.

HOSPICE NURSE
Can I get anything for you? Some fresh water or anything?

MICHAEL
No, I'm fine thank you.

The nurse reaches down for the box. Michael puts his hand on top of it stopping her.

MICHAEL (CONT’D)
You can leave it.

HOSPICE NURSE
Alright. I'll be right out there if you need anything.

Michael nods to her. She exits the room, and shuts off the light on her way out. A bedside lamp illuminates Michael and the box.

He places the box on his lap and opens it, pulls pictures out and lays them off to the side. Michael reaches in and pulls out the key and looks at it one more time. The display shows "1", Michael puts the key into the hole and turns it.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. PARK - AFTERNOON - 1948

Alison (30’s) sits on a blanket underneath a shade tree. There is a picnic basket with finger foods, and fried chicken. Alison smiles at him and they kiss.

MICHAEL
You know what?

ALISON
What?

MICHAEL
From the moment I laid eyes on you I knew I was going to marry you.

ALISON
So you don’t regret it.

MICHAEL
Not for a million years.
ALISON
Good, cause you don’t have a choice.

Michael pushes the hair away from her forehead as he caresses the side of her face.

MICHAEL
Let's do this forever.

ALISON
I’m game.

MICHAEL
I don’t ever want to be without you.

ALISON
You never will be.

Michael smiles at her and they kiss.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. BEDROOM - DAY (LATER) - 1996

Michael lays in his bed, the box rests open on his lap, the display shows "0". The pictures and letters are at his side.

Michael has a smile on his face, he exhales one long last time and his body relaxes.

Katie stands in the doorway looking in. She walks into the room quietly and stops along side the bed.

KATIE (whispers)
Grandpa?

She closes the lid on the box and picks it up. Sits on the chair next to the bed, rests it on her lap and re-opens it.

Inside of the box, the key is in its place and the display reads "10". She picks up the key and looks at it, puts the key in the hole and turns it.

CUT TO BLACK:

KATIE (V.O.) (excited)
Grandpa!

ROLL CREDITS