

DEAR ABBY

Written by

Ashley hamilton
And
Josh Casaboun

FADE IN:

INT. GRIEF GROUP - DAY

CLOSE ON ABBY MacLeish (26). Her eyes are delicate; her face is average but pleasing.

She sits in a group circle, self-conscious, timid; she looks around the room at the other attendees.

Her fingers tap the chair (like someone with OCD). She wills them to stop.

Finally, she speaks, slowly but determined to push on.

ABBY

It's hard to move on when a catastrophe like that takes place, but I'm tired of letting my past define me.

GROUP LEADER (O.S.)

So, you think you are ready?

ABBY

Ready as I'll ever be.

The tragedy-stricken but loyal group claps for Abby.

EXT. COLLEGE DORM - DAY

Abby, curbside, stands still-- She slowly scans a piece of paper and looks towards her new world in anticipation.

INT. DORM ROOM - SAME

BECKY (18), a "Kim Kardashian" type, is talking on her cell phone.

BECKY

She's like some special needs case. No, they wouldn't give me her name, or let me change rooms.

Becky takes a drag from her cigarette.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Yeah. It's fucking weird, right?

Becky throws the cigarette out the window and sees something odd.

EXT. COLLEGE DORM - SAME

ABBY, her new roommate, walks anxiously up the sidewalk, fingers moving along the rail.

ABBY
Touch the rail, you will not fail.
Touch the rail, you will not fail.

INT. DORM ROOM

Becky - Immensely creeped out.

BECKY
Oh god, that's got to be her. What
a freak show. Just fucking great.
No, I'm heading out ASAP.

Becky hangs up, leans her astonished face against the window, and watches Abby enter the building.

INT. DORM HALLWAY

Abby re-checks the paper against the number on the door. She takes a few determined breaths and KNOCKS, a bit too loudly.

INT./EXT. DORM ROOM

Becky opens the door, phone in hand. Behind her - is a typical dorm room.

Becky's half is decked out with "cool" teen stuff - posters, collages of pictures with friends, etc.

Abby's half is barren, utterly desolate.

BECKY
Hi! I'm Becky.
(in a voice too cheerful
to be genuine)
So delighted to meet you!

ABBY
Hi. I am um ... Abigail.

BECKY
Welcome. Come in. It looked like a
prison cell at first, so I had to
decorate it.

INT. DORM ROOM

Abby enters her new room. This is a BIG STEP for her.

She cuts across the room and sets her suitcases on her bed.

Becky's text tone "Me-so-h***y" goes off. She laughs to herself as she texts.

ABBY

It's nice.

BECKY

So, what are you into? What kind of music do you like?

ABBY

I go for all kinds. I don't know. I love your decorations. They're fun.

BECKY

(sarcastic)

Yeah, fun... thanks.

Abby unpacks. She pulls out her belongings, which are drastically different from Becky's cool clothes. Becky watches, tight-lipped, then texts some more.

BECKY (CONT'D)

What's your major?

ABBY

Criminal psychology. And hopefully a minor in, uh, Criminal tech. You?

BECKY

...European lit. How old are you, like 20? 22?

ABBY

I will be 26 tomorrow.

Becky tries to be genuine. Of course, she can't.

BECKY

Well, um, happy "26th" birthday! We can do lines of blow off your AARP card.

Awkward silence. Abby's lost in thought. Becky doesn't know what else to say, so she looks at her phone.

INSERT - BECKY'S PHONE - TEXT CHAIN

BECKY: "She's so weird... And old."

BECKY: "She dresses like an Amish person, OMG."

GRACE: "It could be worse."

BECKY: "Than rooming with an 'Amish... Betty White?"

GRACE: "LOL, no, the blind date your late for"

BACK TO SCENE.

BECKY

So... I should go... I have a hot date. If you need some company, here's the remote. Knock yourself out.

BECKY TURNS ON THE TV (which is mid-commercial), snatches her purse, hands Abby the remote, and gives the mirror one last glance before heading to the door.

Abby, afraid of her unfamiliar surroundings, shouts out after Becky.

ABBY

Can you write down your number? Just like... in case... I have... questions, or something?

BECKY

Um, I guess, sure. You wanna just put it in your phone?

ABBY

Oh.... Sure... Okay, totally.

Abby searches through her stuff; finally, she comes up with a burner-type phone still in its packaging. Becky impatiently watches with raised eyebrows as Abby tries to open it.

BECKY

(annoyed)
No, it's okay. I'll just... here.

Becky writes a number down and quickly leaves.

Abby is ALONE in this foreign world, terrorized by her thoughts.

She bolts to the window, looking for Becky, and sees her with her date: a man who seems frightfully familiar.

She PRESSES her hands to her eyes, shakes her head, then looks again. Nobody's there.

ABBY
Breathe, Abby, breathe.

(O.C.) A NEWS BULLETIN - "BREAKING NEWS - COMING UP NEXT" pops onto the TV, continues to play in the background throughout.

Abby anxiously unpacks.

She pulls out several bottles of PRESCRIPTION PILLS and LINES THEM UP PERFECTLY on her night stand.

She unpacks an old QUILT, a homely SWEATER, and a stack of PICTURES.

She grabs a pill bottle and swallows several pills.

Abby holds the pictures tightly and steels herself as she prepares to go through them. Finally, she does.

INSERT: PICTURE #1

A BIRTHDAY CAKE that reads "HAPPY 8th Birthday, Abby!"

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - Eight-year-old Abby leans over the birthday cake. Her parents finish singing "Happy Birthday", and Abby blows out the candles, very happy.

CUT TO:

PRESENT - Abby has a moment of reminiscence, then turns to the second picture.

INSERT: PICTURE #2

Eight-year-old Abby is proudly displaying her NEW TEDDY BEAR.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: Abby sits amidst wrapping paper and boxes. The party's over; she hugs the new teddy bear as she watches her parents yell at each other.

CUT TO:

PRESENT - Abby forces herself to confront what's coming. She turns over the third picture.

INSERT: PICTURE #3

An Olan Mills-type family portrait from when she was eight. There's a burnt-out hole where her father's face used to be.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: Abby, horrified, clings to her teddy bear as her father repeatedly stabs and punches her mother. BLOOD SPLATTERS across the apartment, on Abby, and on the bear.

CUT TO:

PRESENT: Abby, surrounded by her baggage, barely holding on, shoots her eyes across the room to Becky's "happy" side.

Still determined to move on, she makes a choice.

She fills the TRASH CAN to the brim with the MEDS, the FAMILY PICTURES, random trinkets, and her grief journal.

Abby raises her arms like she has just won a marathon. This is a cathartic rebirth, and she's proud of herself.

She grabs the TV remote and turns up the volume. She smiles at some happy commercial music. When it ends, the NEWS BULLETIN hits the screen with a PICTURE.

ABBY'S EYES GO WIDE.

REPORTER ON TV

You may remember the case from 2001 when authorities found human heads and intestines in MacLeish's freezer. He's alleged to have murdered and cannibalized his wife and 12 other women. Dubbed the "Dear Abby Killer" for the many letters he'd sent his daughter, Abby, while on his 16-week run from the law. If you see him, or his daughter, please call Crime Stoppers right away.

The ROOM SPINS.

Abby struggles for balance. She careens around the room, knocking things over, until suddenly her eyes roll back into her head and she PASSES OUT.

Black screen: We hear nothing but a HEARTBEAT.

INT. DORM ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Abby's eyes POP OPEN.

She's in bed, under the covers. She blinks a few times and looks around the room. EVERYTHING IS PERFECT.

Her MEDS ARE LINED UP ON THE DESK.

Her CLOTHES ARE PUT AWAY IN THE CLOSET.

Her QUILT IS FOLDED AT THE FOOT OF THE BED.

Abby slowly pulls off the covers and stands, astonished, at the organization. Everything is as it should be, except:

On Becky's bed, there's a GIFT-WRAPPED BOX.

It's big enough to hold a basketball--or a human head.

She tiptoes over to the package, terrified of what might be inside. She removes the lid, nauseous and weak-kneed.

Inside the box is THE TEDDY BEAR from Abby's eighth birthday, with the blood spatter and all. Beside it, A NOTE.

After a moment, she pulls out the bear and holds it close.

She also takes out the note and reads:

INSERT: NOTE

NICK MACLEISH (V.O.)

"Dear Abby
I'm sorry that I've missed so many
of your birthdays. I promise that
it will not ever happen again.
Love, DAD.
P.S. Don't forget to take your
meds."

Abby trembles with fear as she connects the dots and takes it all in.

Suddenly there's a rough KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK at the door.

Abby's eyes dart toward the door.

SMASH TO BLACK.