

God's Nursery

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FADE IN:

EXT. CEMETERY ROAD - MORNING

A LIMOUSINE, HEARSE, and convoy of cars glide past headstones and blossoming cherry trees.

A SMALL BOY, three, stands hand in hand with his MOTHER watching reverently as the parade of cars drift by.

INT. LIMOUSINE - MORNING

AZRIEL and BRANDON HERBERT, mid-twenties, ride holding hands, dressed in black - very somber.

AZRIEL (V.O.)
Life... life is sometimes harsh,
sometimes sad, but never this painful.
Never.

The limo stops at the curb. Azriel's door pops open.

JOHN MARCUS, a forty-something priest, stands clutching a bible close to his heart. He assists Azriel out of the limo.

AZRIEL (V.O.)
This very moment is never anything a
mother could ever prepare for. A
moment like this will test your
faith... test your will to live.

She dabs tears away.

EXT. CEMETERY LAWN - MORNING

Brandon and Azriel cling tight to each other. Both half step toward four month old BENJAMIN TAYLOR HERBERT'S funeral.

A tear runs down Brandon's stoic face. John Marcus and a precession of mourners follow.

AZRIEL (V.O.)
It's this very moment that rips at
my heart and tears at my soul. It's
this moment that I hate, don't
understand, and know I will carry
like a wound from battle with me for
the rest of my life.

INT. HEBERT HOME - DINING AREA - NIGHT

Brandon and Azriel finish dinner. With a spring in her step and a smile on her face she collects the dishes.

AZRIEL

Do you notice anything different about me?

BRANDON

Beautiful as ever.

AZRIEL

Beautiful yes, but do I glow?

Rubs her belly.

BRANDON

Are you telling me...

AZRIEL

Yes. Yes. Yes.

Shear excitement from Brandon - grabs the dishes from her.

BRANDON

Let me. You need to rest. You're gonna be a mommy... I'm gonna be a daddy.

Helps her rest on the couch like a delicate flower.

Azriel laughs - He scurries away whistling a nursery rhyme.

EXT. CEMETERY LAWN - MORNING

Teary eyed mourners amble toward Ben's funeral.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - BABY SECTION - DAY

Azriel rifles through racks of baby clothes, holding up one outfit after the other.

Brandon nods in approval at some, sticks his tongue out at others in disapproval.

Both laugh and smile.

INT. CHECKOUT COUNTER - DAY

Brandon unloads baby clothes onto the moving counter.

Azriel grabs and rubs her stomach.

AZRIEL

Brandon! Little Ben just kicked.
Here give me your hand.

Grabs his hand - pushes it into her pregnant belly.

BRANDON

There it is! I felt him.

A kiss and hug.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

MOMS, DADS, GRANDPARENTS, AUNTS, UNCLES, and COUSINS mull about chit chatting and laughing.

Brandon strides in feeling an inch taller, beaming bright with a dozen red roses.

Azriel is worn out from child birth. Ben sleeps on her chest. She strokes his soft head.

Soft kisses for Ben and Azriel.

BRANDON

Can you believe it? My little boy
is perfect.

AZRIEL

Look he has your nose.

AZRIEL'S DAD

Lets get a picture. Every one gather
close... C'mon hurry up. Scootch
in.

Azriel's Dad swoops the visitors around Azriel, Brandon, and Ben.

AZRIEL'S DAD

Okay shhhhh. On three say cheese.
One, two, three, cheese.

Snaps the shot. A bright flash.

EXT. GRAVE SIDE - FUNERAL - MORNING

Everyone is seated. Brandon and Azriel sit prominently in the front row. She dries her tear soaked face.

John Marcus stands at the podium - delivers a eulogy.

JOHN

For all that gather to remember the short life of Benjamin Taylor Herbert his loving mother and father thank you.

Pause - closes his bible.

JOHN

We could look up the heavens and scream why. We could do that. It seems like the right thing to do. But I tell you it is not. We may not understand why... We may never understand why. Look over at Azriel and Brandon, they surely didn't do anything to deserve this pain. They did nothing, yet here we are... gathered together to bury a son... an infant. Instead find it in your hearts to embrace faith and believe that Ben now belongs to God's nursery.

John turns and lifts the casket lid.

AZRIEL (V.O.)

That's when I came face to face with reality. My own baby boy lying dead inside that coffin.

EXT. GRAVE SIDE - CASKET - MORNING

Azriel passes by the coffin. We only see the lid.

AZRIEL (V.O.)

This is my nightmare. The one that will cling to my mind from this moment forward until my own death.

She hesitates - takes a deep choked up breath and then moves on.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - CRIB - NIGHT

Azriel winds a chime toy. Music plays. Ben lies on his back.

AZRIEL

Good night little Ben. Sweet dreams. Mommy loves you.

She tucks him with his blanket, kisses him on the forehead.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Azriel bounds straight up out of a deep sleep, gasps, then stares at the clock. It reads 3:03am.

AZRIEL
Brandon. Brandon!

She nudges him with a sharp elbow.

BRANDON
What. I'm awake. What's wrong?

AZRIEL
(pointing)
Look at the time.

BRANDON
Just after three. What's wrong?

AZRIEL
I haven't heard Ben. It's past two.
He's usually fussy and raring to eat
by now.

BRANDON
I'm sure he's just tired... and
traumatized from the doctor's visit.
Go back to sleep.

AZRIEL
Maybe... I just need to make sure he's
okay. I'll be right back.

She springs out of bed. Brandon rolls over - back to sleep.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

His Door creaks open. She flips the light on.

AZRIEL
Ben. Wake up.

No response. Tip toes to the crib, gives it a shake. His mobile springs to life with music.

Ben lies on his stomach - blanket pulled over his head.

Azriel pulls the blanket off.

AZRIEL
Oh Ben. You're gonna burn up under
those covers.

Picks him up, realizing he's cold, stiff, and blue.

She screams hysterically - sprints out of the room clutching a lifeless Ben to her chest.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

PARAMEDICS, POLICE, and FIRE FIGHTERS buzz around frantically.

Ben lies blue and lifeless on the carpet.

A PARAMEDIC, stops delivering CPR. Steals a glance at his watch.

PARAMEDIC

Time of death 4:11am.

Azriel leaps off the couch hysterically. She falls to the floor face to face with Ben and the Paramedic.

AZRIEL

No! He's not dead. Help him he needs your help! Please. Please help him!

Brandon collects his wife, tearing her away from Ben and the paramedic.

A FIRE FIGHTER snatches up Ben, wraps him in a blanket and bolts out the door.

Azriel goes from hysterical to hyperventilation.

BRANDON

(shock)

Azriel... Azriel. Did they say he was dead? He's not dead. No. No. No. Not my son.

EXT. GRAVE SIDE - FUNERAL - MORNING

Brandon, Azriel, and John stand over Ben's open casket.

AZRIEL (V.O.)

It was so surreal. My little Ben lying dead at only four months old. The doctors didn't know why. They had no explanation how my Ben could have died so suddenly. The experts called it Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Oh, they had theories but no concrete reason why. Other than... it just happens. As parents we are

(MORE)

AZRIEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
left with little more than a few
short memories and an empty crib.

Azriel places a small teddy bear next to his head. Brandon
lays an autographed baseball by little Ben's folded arm.

AZRIEL
Good bye Ben. Mommy and Daddy will
always remember you. We will always
love you. And one day we will claim
you as our son from God's nursery.

Brandon pulls the casket lid shut with a definite thunk.

Five seconds of black.

FADE OUT: