

MALLORY

By

Chloë Johnson

Copyright (c) 2022 This screenplay may not be used or reproduced for any purpose including educational purposes without the expressed written permission of the author.

Chloehjohnson01@yahoo.com

FADE IN:

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

MALLORY (15, white, short and stocky) sits alone on the bench of a bus stop on the side of an empty road. There's not much around in terms of scenery or people, just the bench and the long road that stretches out horizontally in front of her.

It's hot outside. MALLORY sits with her shoulders hunched against gusts of dry, dusty wind. Her thin, red hair blows across her face. She does nothing to brush it out of the way.

She holds the straps of a worn black backpack on her shoulders in a tight grip. Everything she has on (a faded maroon hoodie, dark brown corduroys, and beaten up runners) is at least five years old and two sizes too big.

A transit bus approaches and pulls up to the stop. MALLORY stands.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

MALLORY hesitates for a moment after boarding, looking at the other passengers. Five other people occupy the bus, all minding their own business. There's a businessman leaning with his head against the window. A woman with messy hair and messy clothes rocking a sleeping baby. A homeless man in back who takes up two seats in his row, dead asleep. Or maybe dead. And a 20-something guy on his phone.

MALLORY takes an empty seat in front, close to the door. The bus pulls away from the stop. She holds the backpack on her lap tightly and rides in silence, staring out the window. The camera focuses on her reflection staring back at her blankly. She looks haggard and worn, like she spent the day pushing through brambles uphill. No emotion shows on her face, just a haunted dullness in her green eyes.

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

MALLORY stands on the sidewalk in front of a modern, two-story, quiet neighborhood house. There's a brand new Toyota Highlander in the driveway and the garage door is half open. After standing

for a moment looking at the house, her backpack on one shoulder, she ducks under the gap in the garage door and enters the house.

INT. ENTRYWAY - CONTINUOUS

A door CREAKS open and MALLORY slowly steps into the entry hall from the garage. There are muffled voices laughing from upstairs, two of them, and a TV can be heard nearby.

MALLORY quietly and slowly makes her way down the entry hall, past the kitchen and into the living room. Everything is clean and tidy, furnished as though by a stager preparing for an open house viewing.

The camera idles on the professionally done family photos on the walls as she passes: A happy little family of three - mom, dad, and daughter.

MALLORY stops in the living room and watches the TV silently.

A middle-aged, female NEWSCASTER stands in front of a ramshackle house with an overgrown yard that's taped off - a crime scene.

NEWSCASTER

...no family or pets. Early this morning he was found shot through the chest two times at close range in his own living room.

A headshot of the man being spoken about takes over the screen. Mid-30's, solidly built, white, sun-worn skin, scruffy.

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

No evidence was found and the authorities have yet to name any suspects....

A girl's voice from the stairs cuts in and MALLORY turns abruptly to look.

EVA (O.S.)

Yeah, I'll go get it.

EVA (10, the girl from the family photos) rounds the bend at the bottom of the stairs and sees MALLORY. She stops in her tracks and stares, her hand still on the banister. MALLORY and EVA lock eyes. A moment passes where neither of them move. There's something about both of their faces that looks very similar.

EVA

Mooooom!

EVA hurriedly spins back around and runs up the stairs. MALLORY chases, much faster, and catches her half way up. Before EVA can make a sound, MALLORY grabs her ankle and yanks as hard as she can.

EVA falls hard, hitting her temple with a loud THUD *CRACK!* on the hardwood stairs. She lays still. Blood pools on the step. MALLORY continues up the stairs past her, not bothering to look at the gory scene below her feet.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL - CONTINUED

As MALLORY emerges at the top of the stairs, a door opens, revealing KATE (mid-30's, glamorously beautiful, red hair the same as MALLORY'S).

KATE

Eva, did you s-

KATE sees MALLORY and gasps mid-sentence. She doesn't move. MALLORY walks calmly toward her. She stops a couple yards away and takes off her backpack, unzipping it.

KATE

Who... Who are you?

MALLORY pulls out a handgun from her backpack. She points it at KATE who raises her hands and backs into the master bedroom. MALLORY follows.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

MALLORY closes the door behind her, the gun still pointed. KATE backs up until the backs of her knees hit the edge of the king-size bed and she sits. The comforter on the bed is ruffled

and manicure supplies are scattered across the spread. The top of a long dresser is covered in expensive scarves, jewelry, and makeup. Designer clothing is spread haphazardly across the floor.

MALLORY replies with an emotionless tone,

MALLORY
My name is Mallory.

KATE
(whispering to herself)
Mallory...

She recognizes the name, and she's startled, then confused.

KATE
How did you find me? W-why are you
here?

MALLORY
Why do you think I'm here, Kate?

MALLORY drops the backpack on the floor and crouches down to dig through it. Her eyes lower to the backpack but the gun still points at KATE.

KATE strains to look passed MALLORY toward the closed door.

KATE
Where's my daughter?

MALLORY
You mean my sister? The one you decided
not to trade away?

MALLORY pulls out two pieces of paper folded together and stands back up. She tosses the papers at KATE who catches them clumsily. She unfolds them with shaking hands - a birth certificate with MALLORY'S name and a separate document covered in written text, signed by KATE, titled "EXCHANGE AGREEMENT"

KATE gasps when she recognizes the papers and her face goes white.

KATE

Mallory, I made an agreement with those people years ago. They promised me that...

MALLORY

You gave me up when I was two months old! Don't tell me about an agreement. You traded my life so you could live yours more...

She eyes the room full of expensive things disdainfully.

MALLORY (CONT'D)

...Comfortably. You and your deadbeat ex-boyfriend. Right?

KATE doesn't respond. She's shaking and tears start to fall from her eyes.

MALLORY (CONT'D)

(yells)

Right?!

KATE nods her head quickly, almost imperceptibly.

KATE

(Whispers shamefully)

Yes.

Angry tears stream down MALLORY'S face and the hand holding the gun starts to tremble.

(Beat)

Anger and grief floods MALLORY'S face, then she stills. Her hand stops trembling. Her face clears and a hint of a smile plays on her lips. She finally has a little bit of closure.

MALLORY

My life wasn't yours to give away... Mom.

MALLORY cocks the gun.

KATE
No, please, no...

MALLORY
(Emotionless, stoic)
A life for a life.

MALLORY shoots two times in quick succession. KATE falls back onto the bed, blood spouting like a fountain from her abdomen and chest. She lays still, dead, her green eyes wide open. The papers still in her limp hand start to absorb the pooling blood.

MALLORY digs out an old-school phone from her backpack and snaps a picture of KATE'S dead body. She opens up a chat under the contact MOTHER and sends the picture.

Above the picture of KATE is another picture of a man shot twice in the chest, lying dead on his couch. The same murdered man who was on TV.

A red heart pops up below MALLORY'S messages. MOTHER'S response.

INT. BUS - EVENING

MALLORY sits on another bus in the same seat as last time, hugging the backpack to her chest and staring out the window as before. She's in a busy city now. She watches the stores, apartment complexes, and cars pass by through the window. Evening has nearly passed and night is setting in.

The bus slows and pulls to a stop. MALLORY stands. The door SWISHES open and she climbs down the steps.

An older Latino boy, CARL (17), is waiting for her there. He stands awkwardly, as if unsure how to be inside his own body. He's dressed in shorts and a hoodie, hand-me-downs like MALLORY'S.

MALLORY stops in front of the boy as the bus pulls away.

CARL
How did it go?

MALLORY looks off to the side. She breathes out inaudibly, and her shoulders sag as tension slides away.

CARL

Come on. Let's get back home. Everyone is waiting.

CARL puts his arm around MALLORY protectively and they walk off down the street.

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

MALLORY stands beside MOTHER (60's, tall, broad, straight-backed) at the head of a dining room table in a large, dingy room. MALLORY holds herself differently, tall and more confident; comfortable. They both wait patiently for the four older teens (including CARL) to settle themselves around the table.

MOTHER puts her arm around MALLORY'S shoulder and pulls her close.

MOTHER

My once family gave me up. But I took my life back, just as you all did. Today, Mallory joins the rest of us. She got to make her choice.

A life for a life.

As if by habit, everyone repeats:

TEENS (ALL)

A life for a life.

MOTHER smiles down at MALLORY and addresses her directly,

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I couldn't be more proud.

MOTHER pours herself a glass of water and raises it.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

To Mallory.

The kids pick up their own glasses.

KIDS (ALL)

To Mallory!

Everyone clinks, some standing to reach across the table.

MALLORY looks up at MOTHER and smiles genuinely for the first time. MOTHER cups her chin.

MOTHER

I'm very proud of you, my girl. Real families never abandon each other, and I hope you choose me to be yours, just as I've chosen you to be mine.

MALLORY closes her eyes as MOTHER kisses the top of her head, then she walks to the only empty chair left at the table and sits, a big smile on her face.

FADE OUT.