

Mantis

by

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DARKNESS. Howling winds intensify to reveal...

FADE IN:

EXT. COTTAGE. NIGHT

A small cottage in the country. Snow endlessly pours down, blinding.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

By the burning fireplace, Celia (70's); rocks back and forth, knitting a ball of yarn, completely oblivious to a calling voice...

VOICE

Mama.

A hand braces her shoulder.

ADA (35) stares into her MOTHER'S eyes, gaining her attention.

ADA

You okay?

CELIA

(weary)

Oh, yes, just dozed off a little.

Ada returns to her brothers side, CHRISTIAN (30s), who watches their mom intently.

ADA

Whats that your knitting, now?

CELIA

(grinning)

My scarf.

CHRISTIAN

Another one?

She nods.

CELIA

Can't find prettys' in this weather without one.

The siblings flash each other a confused look.

Christian takes in his surroundings. His gaze catches the SHOTGUN mounted above the fireplace.

CHRISTIAN
Mom?

CELIA
Hmm?

CHRISTIAN
Did you and dad ever go hunting?

CELIA
Oh, now and then, mostly when we
got tired of each other.
(Smiling)
Being shackled up in the woods
together can do that.

A beat.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Maybe you two can go, Ada would be
a catch.

ADA
I can't shoot a gun.

CELIA
You don't have to, your brother
can do the hard work.

Smiling at Christian.

CELIA (CONT'D)
You just have to bait 'em.

ADA
How do you do that?

CELIA
Go out, your place of choice.

EXT. CAFE. DAY

A YOUNG beautiful Celia (20s) sips on a drink staring off
into the distance. A RED scarf is draped around her neck

She's alone at her table.

CELIA (V.O)
Dress up, look beautiful.

Celia glances around the tables. She spots a couple embrace
lovingly.

CELIA (V.O) (CONT'D)
Clear your mind.

She looks away.

CELIA (V.O) (CONT'D)
And go for it.

Her gaze looks back up across the tables, this time spotting a MAN eating all alone, about the same age of Celia.

CEILA (V.O)
You'll be nervous.

Celia leaves to the mans table. Sits and doesn't say a word.

The man smiles, looking around.

CEILA (V.O) (CONT'D)
The first time I did it... I wasn't to sure of what was supposed to happen - or even how to do it.

She takes hold of his hand. Smiles.

CEILA (V.O) (CONT'D)
I still remember your father's famous words, pushing me out the door, "men are like moths under the light... be the light."

Celia whispers something in his ear.

CEILA (V.O) (CONT'D)
And he was right.

They get up and leave.

EXT. WOODS. DAY

Celia, arms interlocked with stranger, walk a trail leading to the cottage.

CEILA (V.O)
The doe's name was John.

EXT. COTTAGE. CONTINUOUS

The two head inside.

From afar, a figure watches them.

CEILA (V.O)
Your father always told me he'd be
there to protect me.

INT. COTTAGE. LATER

Celia and JOHN talk on sofa. John inches closer to her.

The shotgun over the fireplace is MISSING.

CEILA (V.O)
He told me he had it all planed
out.

EXT. COTTAGE. CONTINUOUS

The figure from earlier holds a SHOTGUN, moving toward the cottage. This is TREVOR (30s); decked out in a hunters uniform.

INT. COTTAGE. CONTINUOUS

John slips his hands down Celia's skirt. She countesses, pushing away.

CEILA (V.O)
He told me to never let them touch
me.

EXT. COTTAGE. CONTINUOUS

Trevor watches them from the window, grinning. He makes his way inside.

INT. COTTAGE. CONTINUOUS

John sits back on the couch, defeated, head pushed back on the edge.

The cottage door slowly creeks open. Trevor comes in. Shotgun aimed at Johns' head.

CEILA (V.O)
He told me to never be scared.

Celia places a hand on Johns' thigh. Talking to him.

He SHUTS his eyes.

Trevor comes closer, on foot in front of the other, attempting to silence the creaky floor boards.

CEILA (V.O) (CONT'D)
He told me to have fun.

Celia playfully hits John on the stomach. Points to the fire-place.

John has a puzzled look about his face.

CEILA (V.O) (CONT'D)
He told me to always trust him.

She smiles.

Trevor PUMPS the shotgun and FIRES.

INT. COTTAGE. NIGHT

Back to present day. Celia continues to knit, her children watch her.

Beat.

CHRISTIAN
You said... you said the doe's name was John?

CELIA
Yes.

CHRISTIAN
Deers can't have names-

ADA
Tell us more about dad.

Christian glares at Ada.

CELIA
Your father was a cynic.
(scuffs)
He believed everyone to have sort of ulterior motive. Even me.

ADA
I remember how you'd always go on about him as kids.

CHRISTIAN
Yeah, he seemed real great. Wish I met him.

CEILA
If only you could.

Beat.

ADA
How'd you meet him anyway? I
always forget this part.

CEILA
It's okay sweetie, you're never too
old for a story.

Celia looks up attempting to recall the story.

CELIA
Well... there's really two parts
to this story. I don't want to
bore you getting through all the
details.

ADA
(smiling)
That's the details are the best
part.

CELIA
I guess I can start with my
fathers death, he had heart
problems which eventually lead to
heart failure.

CHRISTIAN
That run in the family?

CELIA
My father's side, unfortunately.
But don't worry you wont be
getting any of that for a while.

Christian grins.

CELIA (CONT'D)
So, some time after his death it
turned out he had a will - no one
knew of this, not even my mother.

Christian leans in, engrossed.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Maybe he did this to protect
himself or... he just liked
secrets. you never knew with him.
He didn't like people in his
"affairs".

ADA
What did he leave you?

Gesturing;

CELIA
All of this. I moved in, left all
the drama behind and haven't
looked back since.

EXT. COTTAGE (PAST). DAY

Celia trudges forward to the cottage carrying luggage
through the snow.

CHRISTIAN (V.O)
I take it not everyone was happy
with their cottage.

INT. COTTAGE. CONTINUOUS

CELIA
No one was, no one got anything.

ADA
Besides you?

CELIA
Mm-mm.

The sibling contemplate this.

CHRISTIAN
Okay, there was tension between
your family and you got out on the
good end, why is that?

She shrugs.

CELIA
Can't say I remember too much
about that.

ADA
Is that all he left you?

CELIA
Yes.

INT. COTTAGE (PAST). DAY

Celia opens a brief case filed with MONEY. A handwritten letter sits on top.

CHRISTIAN (V.O)
No explanation for anything?

INT. COTTAGE. CONTINUOUS

Attempting to recall:

CELIA
Now that you mention it... I reckon there was some letter bestowed to me.

Ada crosses her eyes at Christian.

CHRISTIAN
Come on, tell me what it said.

CELIA
(scuffs)
I ain't no memory bank, son.

INT. COTTAGE (PAST). CONTINUOUS

Celia tosses the letter and grabs a fist-full of cash.

INT. COTTAGE. CONTINUOUS

CHRISTIAN
And that's all? A sorry I walked out on you letter?

ADA
Hey, mom, what about that hunting story? You never finished tellin' it.

CELIA
What story? I've never gone hunting... not that I remember.

She stops knitting and wrestles with the thought.

CELIA (CONT'D)
(confident)
No, no, no, that can't be right.

She starts back threading the needle through the yarn.

Christian checks his watch:

CHRISTIAN
(sighs)
Shit.

Ada and Christian stand.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
We gotta get back in town. It's
getting dark out.

CELIA
You're leaving?

ADA
Yeah, but we'll be back tomorrow,
okay?

CELIA
Watch the roads. Come back soon!

Ada plants a kiss on her forehead and catches up to
Christian heading out the door.

SIBLINGS
BYE!

INT. CAR. LATER

Christian and Ada stare at the cottage, stationary.

CHRISTIAN
Ah, fuck this.

He fumbles with the keys, starting the car...

ADA
One more time. One more time and
we can leave!

CHRISTIAN
Just like the last few fucking
times you said that? She ain't
remembering shit!

He pulls back on the hand brake and looks out the rear view
mirror.

In an instant, Ada grabs the wheel.

ADA
Just think for a second, okay?

She gets his attention.

ADA (CONT'D)

If we back out, we risk her
forgetting everything, and who
knows what she'll leave out!
Another try, and we're gone.

Christian tosses his head back, sharply exhales.

CHRISTIAN

Say... say, she doesn't even have
the money -- spent it all?

ADA

(annoyed)

She's gone into inexplicable
detail of she buried it, made sure
nobody knew, covered her tracks.
She has it!

CHRISTIAN

I'm so tired of these stories.

ADA

We'll get it this time.

She leans over to kiss Christian right on the LIPS.

CHRISTIAN

Alright, "Ada".

FADE OUT: