

A MOMENT OF SILENCE

By

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FADE IN:

INT. KIDS' ROOM - NIGHT

DERREK MORRISON (14, skinny, angry) opens his closet door. He climbs up on a chair, takes a shoebox off the shelf at the top and opens it. He takes some money out of his pocket and removes a roll of bills from one of the shoes.

Derrek adds the money to the roll and puts everything back. ANGIE MORRISON (7, curly-haired, nervous) walks into the room.

ANGIE

What are you doing?

DERREK

None of your business.

(climbs down)

How was school?

ANGIE

Great! We made clay medallions in art class.

DERREK

Your art teacher's a freak.

ANGIE

She is not!

INT. CASSIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

CASSIE MORRISON (30s, mute, tired) sits at her desk and types on her laptop. The website on the screen is a blog at 'www.amomentofsilence.com.'

CASSIE (V.O.)

Is there anything you can't say to your child? Not won't or don't, but can't?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Derrek sits on the living room floor and plays with Angie.

ANGIE

I'm hungry

Derrek sighs, gets up and walks out of the room. Angie plays with her toys.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Derrek takes some meat out of the refrigerator. He grabs a frying pan and heats up oil in it.

INT. CASSIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

CASSIE (V.O.)

It's been eight years. My little girl never even got to know him. Maybe that's a good thing. Their father wasn't a good man to know. But my son just gets angrier. What I don't understand is: why is he so angry at me?

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Meat sizzles on the pan. Derrek sprinkles salt over it. He hears a clatter from the other room.

ANGIE (O.S.)

Oww!!

Derrek turns the heat of the stove down so he can listen. He recognizes the sounds of his little sister in pain and runs out of the kitchen.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Angie holds her bleeding hand and cries. She struggles against Cassie as her mother cleans the blood off and bandages the cut. Derrek runs in. Cassie hugs Angie.

DERREK

Where were you? Aren't you supposed to be her mom? I can't be the only one looking after he.

Cassie starts to speak, but the fire alarm goes off. Angie cries louder.

DERREK

Damn it!

Derrek runs back out of the room.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Derrek grabs a towel, turns off the heat, grabs the smoking pan with the towel and shoves it to the side. He breathes heavily for a BEAT as the alarm wails, then walks back out.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Derrek turns off the fire alarm and turns to Cassie.

DERREK

Don't you have a job to get to?

Angie cries in the silence between them.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Cassie backs out of the driveway.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Derrek and Angie sit at the table and eat. Angie pulls at her bandage.

DERREK

Don't play with that.

ANGIE

It itches.

DERREK

Eat your dinner.

ANGIE

I don't like it.

DERREK

Too bad.

ANGIE

It's all burned.

DERREK

No one's making you eat it.

ANGIE

I want mommy to make dinner.

DERREK

She's not here to make your damn dinner! I made it and you're going to eat it or you're going to go to bed hungry!

Angie simpers.

DERREK  
Just eat your dinner.

INT. SMALL BAR - NIGHT

Cassie mops the floor. She stops, leans on the mop and cries.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Cassie walks through the front door.

INT. KIDS' ROOM - NIGHT

Cassie cracks open the door to check on her children. Derrek and Angie are asleep in their respective beds.

INT. CASSIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Cassie opens her laptop and logs onto her blog.

CASSIE (V.O.)  
In four hours I'll have to get up for my day job. I see my children in five-minute intervals. I only ever get to spend any real time with them when they're in trouble. I couldn't tell you the last time I was with either of them for longer than a half an hour. Does that make me a bad mother? Wouldn't it make me a worse mother if they went a single day without food on their plates or a roof over their heads? What, exactly, are the qualities of a good parent? What if you only get one?

INT. CAR - DAY

Cassie drives to work lost in thought. Her phone rings and she answers.

PRINCIPAL  
Hello, Ms. Morrison? I have your son here with me. I'm going to need you to come into school and take him home today.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Derrek gets in the car.

INT. CAR - DAY

Cassie drives Derrek home from school.

DERREK

(long beat)

It's not a big deal. It just some paint. I'm not first person to ever spray up that wall. There's paint on there older than me. Not like I even got to finish it.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Derrek gets out of the car, runs inside and slams the door shut before Cassie is able to walk inside.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Derrek runs upstairs to his room. Cassie goes to hers.

INT. CASSIE'S ROOM - DAY

Cassie opens her laptop, logs onto her work's server and proceeds to transcribe the footage from earlier.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Cassie backs her car out of her driveway.

INT. KIDS' ROOM - NIGHT

Derrek gets out of bed and dresses himself. Angie wakes up.

ANGIE

Mom said you're not allowed to go anywhere.

DERREK

I don't care.

(heads to the door)

And keep your mouth shut about it.

Derrek leaves. Angie snuffles.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Derrek sneaks out of the house. He walks down the street.

A light flashes at the end of the block.

Derrek double-times it to the corner.

His friends KEVIN and COURTNEY wait for him. Courtney carries a plastic bag.

KEVIN

What took you so long?

DERREK

Man, I'm grounded because of your stupid ass.

KEVIN

Did mommy get mad?

DERREK

Fuck you.

KEVIN

Least she can't yell at you, right?

COURTNEY

Would you two shut up? You're going to wake up the neighborhood.

Courtney pulls out a bag of weed and rolls a joint. She lights it up, inhales and passes it around.

COURTNEY

When's your mom get home?

DERREK

Usually around four or five.

KEVIN

So we got some time then.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Cassie sprays and wipes a television screen. The BAR OWNER walks in. He looks surprised to see her.

BAR OWNER

Oh, hey. I forgot you were supposed to be in here tonight.

The bar owner kneels at the safe behind the bar. He takes out stacks of bills, locks the safe and stands back up.

BAR OWNER

Talk about a slow night. Guess that makes your job easier, huh?

(beat)

What time you usually finish up?

(beat)

What? Did I offend you or something?

(beat)

Yeah, okay. Go ahead and be a bitch.

The bar owner walks out. Cassie rubs her forehead and sighs.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The kids continue to smoke.

COURTNEY

What's your mom do, anyway?.

DERREK

She's a transcriptionist.

COURTNEY

The fuck is that?

DERREK

She watches movies and writes down what people are saying.

COURTNEY

Why?

KEVIN

It's for deaf people, stupid.

COURTNEY

Don't make me kick your ass again.

KEVIN

Yeah, whatever. Hey, but doesn't she have some night job, too? What's with that?

DERREK

Can we talk about something else?

KEVIN

Like what?



DERREK  
Fucking anything!

KEVIN  
Calm down, man. It was just a  
question.

DERREK  
Don't you ever shut the hell up?

Derrek picks up a rock and angrily throws it. The rock goes  
through a window. A dog barks.

KEVIN  
Oh, shit, dude!

DERREK  
Oh, man...

The lights turn on in the house and the front door opens.

COURTNEY  
What are you idiots doing? Run!

They all run off.

HOMEOWNER  
I know you! I know where you live!

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Derrek runs inside and sprints up the stairs.

INT. KIDS' ROOM - NIGHT

Derrek throws off his clothes and jumps into bed.

ANGIE  
Where did you go?

DERREK  
I didn't go anywhere.

ANGIE  
But--

DERREK  
The hell did I just say?

ANGIE  
You smell funny.

Derrek hears Cassie's car pull up. He listens as she gets out, enters the house and runs up the stairs. Cassie throws the door open, grabs Derrek by the arm and pulls him out.

DERREK

Hey! What are you doing, you crazy bitch? Let go off me!

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Cassie pulls Derrek out of his bedroom and down the stairs.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Cassie drags Derrek down the street to the neighbor's house with the broken window. She knocks on the door. The neighbor opens it. He looks down at the half-naked Derrek.

INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cassie pays the neighbor while Derrek sits on the couch and rubs his arms to keep warm.

NEIGHBOR

Thank you. I know it's not your fault, but someone's got to pay for that window. Kids, right?

DERREK

The fuck would you know?

NEIGHBOR

You should count yourself lucky your mom cares so much. Your friends' parents sure didn't.

DERREK

Yeah, lucky me.

Cassie leaves and Derrek follows her out.

INT. CASSIE'S ROOM - DAY

Cassie types at her laptop

CASSIE (V.O.)

Every day feels harder than the last. Is it really getting harder? Or am I just losing patience? Do other parents feel this way all the time? Is this the way it's supposed to be? I can't tell anymore. It's like I'm losing perspective. He

(MORE)

CASSIE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 gets angrier and I get more tired  
 and everything just goes around in  
 circles. I know it's not my fault,  
 but that's not how I feel. How does  
 he feel? Does he miss his father?  
 Does he blame me? I wish I could  
 ask him. I wish he would answer me.

Cassie closes her laptop and starts to change for work.

INT. KIDS' ROOM - DAY

Derrek listens to Cassie get ready.

DERREK  
 I'm not paying for that asshole's  
 window! I didn't even do anything!

He hears Cassie leave the house and looks over at Angie.  
 Angie stirs in her sleep. Derrek gets up, lays down next to  
 her and holds her until she calms down. He gets a text  
 message and checks his phone.

The message is from Kevin: "www.amomentofsilence.com"

Derek gets out of his sister's bed and heads to the hallway.

INT. CASSIE'S ROOM - DAY

Derrek walks in, sits down at his mother's desk and opens  
 the laptop. He logs onto the website and reads her posts. He  
 peruses the positive comments of support, some of which  
 speak negatively about him.

Derrek shuts the laptop, picks it up and throws it against a  
 wall. He stomps on it repeatedly until it's in pieces.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Cassie unlocks the door and walks inside. She heads  
 upstairs.

INT. CASSIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Cassie enters and sees her laptop smashed on the floor.  
 Derek walks into the room.

DERREK  
 How could you say those things  
 about me? You have no right telling  
 the world our business like that.  
 That's our private family business.

(MORE)

DERREK (cont'd)  
And what was all that shit you said  
about Dad? Dad's not even here!  
He's not here because he couldn't  
put up with your stupid ass another  
day. And I'm starting to get why.

Derrek storms away. Cassie sits on her bed and cries.

INT. KIDS' ROOM - DAY

Derrek wakes up to find Angie's bed empty.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Derrek walks out of his room. He knocks on Cassie's door.

DERREK  
Mom?  
(beat)  
Mom, you in there?

Derrek opens the door a crack. The room is empty. He heads down the stairs.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Derrek grabs a bowl, a box of cereal and some milk. He prepares breakfast and sits down. He sees a NOTE, picks it up and reads as he eats.

CASSIE (V.O.)  
My son. Where do I start? What you  
said last night really hurt me. And  
what hurts me more is how you said  
it. I hate the way you talk to me.  
I can hear the blame in your voice.  
You think it's all my fault. But  
it's his fault, too. He's the one  
that left. I'm the one that stayed.  
I don't really expect you to know  
any better. I just wish you'd  
listen to me. I'm your mother.  
Please know that I love you and  
that you could never do anything I  
couldn't forgive. But I can't be  
around you right now. And I don't  
want you around your little sister.  
Do you know you scare her  
sometimes? And sometimes you scare  
me, too. I've taken Angie to work  
with me today. We'll see you later  
tonight. I love you and I hope you  
still love me.

Derrek points the note back down. He gets up and heads back to the stairs.

INT. DERREK'S ROOM - DAY

Derrek opens his closet. He climbs up and pulls the shoebox off the shelf. He opens it, takes the money out of the shoe and puts the box back.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Cassie pulls into the driveway. She gets out of the car, goes around to the back and takes Angie out.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Cassie unlocks the door and she and Angie walk inside.

CASSIE  
Go and get ready for bed.

ANGIE  
Okay!

Angie heads upstairs. Cassie puts her coat in the closet and follows her up. She sees Angie through the bathroom door as she brushes her teeth. Cassie checks inside the kids' room, but Derrek isn't there, so she goes into her bedroom.

INT. CASSIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Cassie sees a new laptop sitting on her desk. She walks up to it and touches it. Derrek knocks lightly on the open door.

DERREK  
It's not as good as the old one.  
But it's all I could afford.

Cassie holds back tears.

DERREK  
I'm sorry, Mom. I know it's not  
your fault. He left. I get it. But  
I can't do this. I can't take care  
of you and Angie.

Cassie kneels down in front of him.

CASSIE  
You don't have to.

DERREK

Yes, I do. I do have to. And it makes me angry. I can't help it.

Cassie takes Derrek's hands.

CASSIE

It's not your fault. None of this is your fault.

DERREK

Who's fault is it, then?

CASSIE

No one. I know you need someone to blame. But I can't give you that. All I can do is try to make your life as good as I can right now.

DERREK

Don't you hate him?

CASSIE

He's gone. He doesn't matter any more. The only thing I care about in this world are you and your sister.

DERREK

But you never talk about him. You tell me that and I don't know how to react.

CASSIE

Do you want to know about him?

DERREK

He's my father.

CASSIE

Alright, I'll tell you. But you have to give me your word that you're going to start trying harder. Okay? Be patient. This is hard for all of us.

DERREK

Okay. I promise.

Cassie smiles and hugs Derrek as a tear rolls down her cheek. Derrek hugs her back.

END