

READY OR NOT

FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

A mantelpiece takes pride of place in this sparse, neat residence.

Adorning it are half a dozen framed photos of a smiling couple with a young girl.

The girl in the photos, ABBY, four, curly hair, stands in the middle of the room. Her hands cover her eyes.

ABBY
Eighteen, nineteen, twenty.

Her hands fall away to reveal her face beaming with excitement.

ABBY (CONT'D)
Ready or not, here I come.

The woman from the photos, JENNA, 30's, sits on the sofa reading a magazine.

JENNA
You're going to have to look hard this time, he's hiding in a really good spot.

ABBY
I'll find him. I always do.

Abby sneaks up to a cupboard, opens it. Just some linen.

ABBY (V.O.)
I love playing hide and seek with my dad.

Takes a look under the dining table. Zilch.

ABBY (V.O.)
Sometimes I don't find him straight away.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Abby opens the pantry door. Nothing out of the ordinary inside.

ABBY (V.O.)
And I might have to look in a lot
of different places.

She walks over to closed curtains, a pair of sneakers poking
out the bottom.

ABBY (V.O.)
But I always find him.

A smile breaks out on Abby's face. She rushes at the curtains
and throws her arms around them.

ABBY
I found you. I found you.

The curtains part and JACK, 30's, rugged, picks Abby up and
lifts her over his head.

JACK
You sure did, munchkin. You got
some x-ray vision that you're not
tellin' me about?

ABBY
(giggling)
No dad, I'm just good at this game.

Jack sets her back down, tousles her hair.

JACK
I'll say you are. I reckon you'll
be world champion some day.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Jack looks under the bed. Calls out loud enough to be heard
in the entire house.

JACK
Nope, not in here.

ABBY (V.O.)
And when it's my turn to hide, I
pick the best hiding spots.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

He peels back the shower curtain. Empty.

JACK
(loudly)
Wow, I was sure she must've been
hiding in here.

INT. HOME OFFICE - DAY

Abby hides under a desk, smiling broadly. She sees a pair of legs enter the room.

A hint of recognition shows on Jack's face as he sees Abby, but moves in the opposite direction. Slides open a cupboard door, a bunch of junk inside.

JACK
And not in here, either.

He walks out.

Abby tries to stifle a self-satisfied squeal of delight.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

A DOCTOR sits at his desk, pointing to some pages in a medical book.

Across from him is Jack, with his arm around Jenna. No happy faces in this room.

ABBY (V.O.)
But then dad said I was sick and we
couldn't play anymore. Not until I
got better.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - DAY

Abby lays in a bed wearing a blue hospital gown, most of her hair now gone. She's cuddled up next to a big teddy bear.

Jenna changes the flowers in a vase on the bedside table.

Jack sits beside the bed, holding Abby's hand.

ABBY
When can I come home, dad?

JACK
Soon, munchkin. Soon.

Jenna squats down and strokes her daughter's head.

JENNA

When you finish all the medicine,
okay sweetie?

Abby squeezes her teddy bear tight. Does her best to force a smile.

ABBY

I hope it's soon mom, cos I like
your cooking better than the food
here.

Jenna leans over and kisses her forehead.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - NIGHT

Abby lies in bed, hands covering her eyes.

ABBY

Eighteen, nineteen, twenty.

Pulls her hands away. Looks around the room.

ABBY (V.O.)

I don't really like it in this
place. It gets lonely.

Leans over the side of the bed and peeks under it.

ABBY (V.O.)

But sometimes I pretend my dad is
in here waiting for me to find him.

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Jack sits and types at a computer.

ABBY (V.O.)

And I imagine him at home looking
for me, too.

He looks under the desk at where Abby previously hid. A tinge of sadness creeps across his face.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

ABBY (V.O.)

Now I'm finally outta that hospital
and back at home.

On the couch, Jack places a photo of a smiling Abby into a photo frame.

ABBY (V.O.)
But it's not as much fun playing
hide and seek with dad anymore.

Jack walks over to the mantle piece. Places the framed photo of Abby next to an urn.

ABBY (V.O.)
Because now he knows where to find
me every time.

Jack picks up the urn and kisses it, as a tear rolls down his cheek.

FADE OUT.