

Sophie's Camera

By

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**INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY**

An elementary school class in progress. Dozens of little kids sit around MRS. WARBLER, the teacher, who finishes a lesson with a digital camera in her right hand, displayed towards the class.

MRS. WARBLER  
...And what do we call the stuff in  
the front? What do we call the  
stuff that's closest to us?

Pause.

MRS. WARBLER  
The *fore*...

THE CLASS  
--Foreground.

MRS. WARBLER  
Right. The foreground.

The bell rings, and class gets up, and begins filing out the door.

MRS. WARBLER  
OK, everyone, have a nice evening!  
Be safe crossing the parking lot!  
Look both ways!

SOPHIE, A young girl of about 10, gets up, and heads for the door.

MRS. WARBLER  
Oh, Sophie - just a second,  
please...

Sophie, who was on her way out the door, pauses, turns to the teacher, who motions her to sit beside her.

Sophie takes a seat. Mrs. Warbler clears her throat.

MRS. WARBLER  
Sophie, um...

Mrs. Warbler trails off with a nervous laugh, and tries again.

MRS. WARBLER  
Sophie, do you know what tomorrow  
is?  
(beat)  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MRS. WARBLER (cont'd)  
I mean - sorry, of course you  
don't...

Beat.

MRS. WARBLER  
Um, well, I shouldn't be telling  
you this, but I know you don't like  
big crowds, so I thought I would  
see what you think...

Mrs. Warbler clears her throat, proceeds --

MRS. WARBLER  
Tomorrow is the last day for the  
teachers to vote for the winners of  
the "Rising Star Awards" for this  
year.

(beat)

Do you know what those are?

Sophie shakes her head, "No".

MRS. WARBLER  
They're for students that the  
teachers think are...

(beat)

Well, *rising stars*.

(beat)

They're doing really good work,  
Sophie.

Sophie nods. Mrs. Warbler clears her throat.

MRS. WARBLER  
...Well, I spoke about you at the  
meeting last night. About your  
photo's.

(beat)

Several times, actually.

Mrs. Warbler slides a dossier across the table, opens it,  
revealing many stunning, emotionally charged photo's in  
black and white.

There's an obvious maturity to the photo's that's unusual  
for a child of Sophie's age.

MRS. WARBLER  
The teachers were amazed.  
(beat)  
I've just - I've really never seen  
anything like it. Ever.

(CONTINUED)

Mrs. Warbler leans in, her eyes wide and bright with admiration.

MRS. WARBLER  
Where did you learn how to take  
pictures, Sophie?

Sophie shrugs, looks down at her feet, shy.

MRS. WARBLER  
I suppose God picks something for  
all of us, right?

Beat.

MRS. WARBLER  
Your Dad told me at the teachers  
conference that he doesn't know,  
either.  
(clears her throat)  
He just got back from Switzerland  
last night, right?

Sophie nods her head, "Yes".

Mrs. Warbler's gaze turns to the parking lot out the window,  
where something has her attention.

MRS. WARBLER  
(pointing)  
Oh, speak of the devil...  
(beat)  
Here he is now.

We follow Mrs. Warbler's finger to an expensive sports car  
out in the parking lot, where SOPHIE's FATHER - a middle  
aged man is idling behind the wheel, chatting on a cell  
phone.

Warbler watches Sophie exit the school and hop into the car.

The car reverses, and speeds off down the street. Sophie  
turns around and smiles at Mrs. Warbler from the window.

#### **INT. CAR - DAY**

The car ride home. There's a noticeable detachment between  
Sophie and her Father - who is still talking animatedly on  
his cell phone with one hand, and steering through traffic  
with the other.

Sophie looks out the window.

(CONTINUED)

OUT THE WINDOW --

Tree's whizz past in a blur.

SOPHIE --

Takes out her camera and snaps photo's of them.

**EXT. SOPHIE'S HOUSE - DAY**

Sophie's Dad eats dinner in front of the TV.

Sophie goes upstairs to her room.

**INT. SOPHIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY**

Sophie drops the dossier of photo's on her desk, grabs her camera and her jacket, and heads back out.

**EXT. BEACH - DAY**

Later.

Sophie, alone, walks aimlessly along the beach, snapping photo's as she goes. Waves are crashing lightly against the surf.

There's a dead fish lying on the sand, and she snaps a photo of it.

LATER --

Sophie sits on a rock, overlooking the beach, scrolling through her photos on her camera. The waves coming in are slightly more intense now. When she looks up, she smiles at what she see's --

A young boy, maybe 6 or 7 years old, seemingly all alone, walking along the sand. He walks along for a long beat, then he see's Sophie watching him from far away.

The boy smiles, and waves at Sophie. She waves back. The boy resumes walking and Sophie stands up and starts taking pictures of him.

The boy bends down, and looks at the dead fish with curiosity. Sophie snaps a photo of this.

The boy continues along the sand. Then, he walks into the shallow water, starts splashing with delight, completely oblivious to a big wave coming in.

(CONTINUED)

Sophie is on her feet now, changing angles, photographing the boy with interest.

Suddenly -- a wave -- quick and intense, slams into the boys chest, knocking him down. He collapses into the sand, tries to stand up, but another wave comes crashing in, knocking him loose, submerging him under water.

Sophie removes her eye from the camera for a second, looking out at the boy with fright. There's a glimmer of concern in her eyes, as she watches the boy get taken further into the water, but instead, she places the camera back on her eye and continues snapping.

The boy is now many meters away from the shore, paddling furiously, and crying out for help.

Suddenly, from the top of the hill --

WOMAN (O.S)

Danny?

(beat)

Danny?!

A woman comes bounding over a hill, into sight. She frantically looks around the beach, lands on Sophie.

WOMAN

(frantic)

Did you see a boy? A little boy?

Sophie stutters nervously, her eyes drift out to the water, where a boys silhouette is still bobbing in the waves, far out in the water.

The woman follows Sophie's gaze, see's the boy, freezes, goes pale with fright.

WOMAN

DANNY?!

(beat)

DANNY!

Then, she starts furiously stripping off her clothing, and races at full speed into the water, just as a man comes over the hill after her.

MAN

(to woman)

Helen?! HELEN!

Sophie turns her camera, and starts snapping the man racing after his wife into the water, clumsily stripping off his pants and shirt as he goes.

(CONTINUED)

Sophie continues to photograph them, as they hit the water, and start to swim hard and fast after the little boy - who's little arms are struggling to keep himself afloat.

A long moment of The woman manages to grab the boys now lifeless body, and begin the slow paddle back to shore. The man and woman drag the boys - now lifeless body to the sand - and start to frantically perform CPR.

WOMAN

Danny?! Danny, wake up, honey!

(beat)

Wake up, honey! Please wake up.

The woman breaks down, starts crying uncontrollably, and her husband takes over, pressing his lips against the boys, then stopping every so often to give him chest compressions.

WOMAN

HELP! PLEASE HELP!

(beat)

Somebody!

There's no sign of life from the boy, though. He starts to go pale, and the husband's CPR slows down as the reality of the situation starts to settle in.

Some passerby's see the commotion and run towards the scene. Then more and more, until about a dozen people are crowded around the small scene on the beach.

The light wail of an ambulance is audible. Sophie watches the crowd, curiously.

Then, the crowd splits, revealing the boys mother - teary eyed and distraught, looking directly at Sophie. She approaches the young girl, her feet sinking into the sand as she comes closer.

The crowd watches the woman stop before Sophie, look at her in silence for a long moment, then --

SLAP!

She gives Sophie an open handed slap across the face that sends the little girl to the ground.

The crowd protests - crying variations of "No!" and "Don't do that!"

The woman's husband rushes over, restrains her before she can leap on Sophie. Some folks help Sophie to her feet.

Sophie, overwhelmed by the situation, turns and sprints away, nearly tripping in the sand as she goes.

**EXT. SOPHIE'S HOUSE - DAY**

Sophie - still in a sprint, finally makes it home, still sobbing. She enters through the front door, and collapses, sobbing on the ground.

SOPHIE'S DAD (O.S)

Sophie?

Footsteps approach.

SOPHIE'S DAD (O.S)

Sophie? What's wrong, honey?

Sophie goes racing up to her room.

**INT. SOPHIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY**

Sophie enters, and slams the door behind her. Her eyes drift to the dossier of her photo's on the table - dozens of beautifully framed and composed images of nature, people, and animals - and a sudden flash of rage crosses her eyes.

She leaps out of bed, rushes over to the dossier, and starts violently tearing all the photos up, until little bits and pieces of photographs are scattered around the room.

Then, she collapses into the corner of the room, and continues sobbing.

FADE OUT.

OVER BLACK:

The loud chatter of a packed auditorium.

PRINCIPAL (O.S)

Alright, everybody. I'm very proud to announce - alright, everyone, settle down, please...

FADE IN:



**INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM - DAY**

The next day.

A short and pudgy man - the PRINCIPAL of the school - stands before a microphone, in front of hundreds of elementary school students. Mrs. Warbler stands nearby with a smile, trying to find Sophie in the crowd.

PRINCIPAL

Alright, settle yourselves, please.  
We're going to get these first  
awards handed out very shortly...

A big banner reading "Rising Star Awards" is draped behind them.

Mrs. Warbler tries to find Sophie in the crowd, but can't. She taps the Principal on the shoulder and whispers into his ear.

MRS. WARBLER

Give me one minute...

The principal nods, and Mrs. Warbler makes a brisk walk out of the gymnasium.

**INT. CLASSROOM - DAY**

Mrs. Warbler enters in a haste, picks up the phone, and dials a number.

It rings. Then, someone picks up --

MRS. WARBLER

Sophie? Hello?

(beat)

Sophie, honey, is that--

SOPHIE'S DAD (O.S)

--Don't call this house again.

MRS. WARBLER

Wh - Hello?

SOPHIE'S DAD (O.S)

I know who you are. You're that  
teacher.

MRS. WARBLER

Excuse me?

(CONTINUED)

SOPHIE'S DAD (O.S)  
You're the teacher that gave her  
the fucking camera.

Mrs. Warbler raises an eyebrow. She can't quite speak.

SOPHIE'S DAD (O.S)  
Wasn't bad enough her mom and me  
just went through something -  
something bad, and now you gotta'  
do this?

Pause.

SOPHIE'S DAD (O.S)  
Encouraging her to take those  
fucking pictures all the time. What  
the hell is the matter with you?  
(beat)  
Well, she's not taking no more  
pictures anymore. Ever.

MRS. WARBLER  
I don't understand, what--

SOPHIE'S DAD (O.S)  
--Don't you fucking call again!

*Click.*

Mrs. Warbler - stunned, shocked, confused, just stands there  
for a moment.

The faint sound of applause and cheering is audible from the  
auditorium down the hall.

**INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - DAY**

Mrs. Warbler quietly makes her way back onto the stage,  
moments later.

The principal gives her a subtle look, like "*Is everything  
OK?*"

Mrs. Warbler nods to assure him, trying desperately to hold  
back tears.

She looks out at the sea of young students seated around the  
auditorium - suddenly a unsure of herself and her place in  
this massive gathering.

We hold on her, faking a smile, a bead of sweat forming  
across her brow.

(CONTINUED)

## PRINCIPAL

...This Rising Star Award is for the student that demonstrated the most commitment and passion to an art form.

(beat)

This years winner is a talented little photographer that seemed to have blossomed under the tutelage of Mrs. Warbler. Her photo's show a maturity and skill well beyond her years, and...

(beat)

...I'm - I'm proud to announce the winner of the Rising Star Young Artist Award goes to...

(beat)

Sophie Gailer.

Applause. Seconds pass, and no Sophie.

## PRINCIPAL

(looking out at the crowd)

Sophie? Is Sophie here?

(beat)

Sophie?

Applause fades.

## PRINCIPAL

It appears Sophie couldn't be here today, so, her teacher, Mrs. Warbler, is accepting it on her behalf.

Mrs. Warbler fakes a smile, grabs the award, and tries to feign excitement, but as we linger on her face, we can see she is noticeably hurt and confused.

**INT. MRS. WARBLER'S CAR - DAY**

After the school day. Mrs. Warbler drives home, looking somber and stressed.

**INT. MRS. WARBLER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Mrs. Warbler is browsing a news site on her laptop, with a glass of wine.

She's scrolling quickly, until she stops on a dime, suddenly, on a photo of the young boy flailing in the water, and a headline reading "BOY DROWNS AT SHIPTON BEACH".

(CONTINUED)

Mrs. Warbler cocks her head, and suddenly suspects from the distinct framing or composition that it's Sophie.

She looks back at the award, resting beside her, then back at the photo.

Then, she closes the laptop.

FADE OUT.