

TEN MINUTES TILL CONFESSION

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FADE IN:

EXT.COTTAGE BY THE LAKE. NIGHT

Two cars pull up in front of a cottage: an SUV and a Lyft vehicle. RYAN STEEL, 22, exits the SUV and LU ATWOOD, 20, stumbles out of the Lyft, dropping her bag on the floor.

RYAN

Ryan.

He introduces himself and helps pick up her belongings.

LU

Thanks...

They stare at each other. Lu finds herself swaying in the direction of the cottage's door.

LU (CON'T)

We should be on our way.

She takes off. She slips as she goes up the stairs.

LU

(she tells herself)

I'm fine. I'm...

Ryan gives her a hand. They get to the door, Ryan searches for some kind of bell, finds nothing, and then knocks. TAYLOR SUTHERLAND, 22, host for the evening, answers the door.

TAYLOR

(Smiles)

Everybody's here.

FADE OUT:

INT. COTTAGE BY THE LAKE. KITCHEN- NIGHT

RYAN and LU meet JACK BARNES, 19, rich and fiercely independent and SUMMER BRONWYN, 18, sweet at first glance but can be cold blooded when she needs to be.

SUMMER is seated by the kitchen table, boredly paging through a Home magazine and Jack is over by the counter watching the rain from the window across from him. Their

attention turns to Ryan and Lu.

JACK

Now that they're here let's get
this over with, I have a flight to
catch.

TAYLOR

Skipping town makes you look guilty
Jack.

Taylor walks past Ryan and Lu. She pulls glasses out from the cupboard above the sink, then moves to the fridge and takes out a jar of orange juice. She fills the glasses accordingly, offers them the drink. Ryan declines. Lu accepts, chugging it down.

RYAN

(to Taylor)

What are we doing here?

Ryan takes off his jacket, hangs it on the chair opposite Summer, then takes a seat. He's not sure if they've met but she looks familiar.

TAYLOR

(Looks at her watch)

Ten minutes, that's all we have to
get our stories straight.

LU

(nervously)

What?

TAYLOR

Dani Best? Just because she's
missing doesn't mean she goes away.

Ryan looks at Summer. Summer looks at Jack. Jack looks at Taylor. Taylor turns to Lu. (Everybody's speech accelerates).

TAYLOR (CON'T)
Nine minutes and fifty four
seconds.

JACK
You told the detective about us?

TAYLOR
Who said anything about a
detective?

SUMMER
I thought we agreed to keep our
mouths shut.

Jack and Ryan make eye contact. Jack looks away.

JACK
A P.I came by my place. I wasn't
home. He left a number. I never
called back.

Taylor digs into her pocket and drops a business card on
the table. Ryan picks it up and reads.

RYAN
P.I. Contact no: 0045568

Ryan turns the card over.

RYAN (CON'T)
This guy doesn't have a name?

TAYLOR
He might've mentioned it when he
called but I panicked. I told him I
could get us in one room and he
could take our statements
separately.

LU
(skeptically)
And he agreed?

JACK
Sounds like a rookie.

RYAN
Or a fraud.

SUMMER
(Locks eyes with Taylor)
Or he doesn't exist.

Taylor takes another look at her watch.

TAYLOR
Clocks still ticking guys.

LU
Fine, I'll start. I barely knew
Dani. I met her through you, Taylor,
and we went out for drinks-- once.

TAYLOR
Once as in the night she
disappeared?

LU
I had nothing to do with that!

Taylor drinks from the glass in her hand then dumps it into
the sink.

TAYLOR
But we all saw Dani that night,
this P.I already knows that--

SUMMER
(knowingly)
Cause you told him or he figured
that out on his own?

TAYLOR
We're wasting time Summer.

Jack gets off the counter and joins Summer and Ryan around
the table. He sits next to Ryan, his chair facing backwards
and then he stares through Summer. She was nervous, he
could tell.

JACK (CON'T)

Friday night, ten - forty eight. I know because Dani and I were supposed to meet at ten- forty five. She was late, per usual--

LU

That can't be right, she was at the pub at ten forty five. I like to be home by eleven and so I set my phone alarm at ten forty- five so when it rings I answer it like somebody needs me and I can leave--

TAYLOR

(hastily)

Eight minutes.

LU

Right. That night Dani saw me and begged me to have a drink with her.

TAYLOR

How long did it last?

LU

We went our separate ways at eleven twenty. I offered to drive her home but Dani refused,said she had to meet a friend.

Lu looked at Jack.

TAYLOR

So what time was it again Jack?

JACK

Late.

(Beat)

We were supposed to go dancing, it was her suggestion. I don't dance but I wanted the company.

LU

Where'd you go?

JACK

Pedro's.

RYAN

I was at Pedro's. I didn't see Jack or Dani, but I saw you.

Summer meets Ryan's gaze.

SUMMER

I work there. We dance but it's not a dance club if you know what I mean.

TAYLOR

Is that the company you meant Jack?

JACK

It's starting to feel like I'm on trial here.

TAYLOR

Get your story straight and you wouldn't be.

Ryan slapped the table.

RYAN

Midnight! Dani and I had an argument.

SUMMER

I thought you said she wasn't at Pedro's--

RYAN

At home. My home. She showed up tipsy, wanted to talk about our future.

LU

Impossible, she wasn't the settling type.

RYAN

And you'd be the better judge of character after thirty five minutes of drinks.

Lu drops her gaze.

RYAN (CON'T)

Dani did most of the talking-- cursing to be precise. Getting dumped was something she needed adjusting too. She wasn't in the right mind to take herself home and I was...I told her she could sleep on the couch. She said no, she had a friend on the way-- a gentleman...

Ryan's eyes fall on Jack.

RYAN (CON'T)

She said he'd take care of her.

JACK

Sure- I showed up. I saw you--

RYAN

You said hello.

JACK

You said you were high--

RYAN

Sleep deprived, not the same.

Taylor joins the table and sits between Ryan and Jack.

TAYLOR

We're not here to point fingers--

SUMMER

Nine o'clock, Hoodlums Park. Dani
and I took a walk.

LU

Who goes walking at nine o'clock in
the night?

JACK

Whores.

Taylor playfully slaps Jack's arm.

SUMMER

Dani wanted to talk. She said she
couldn't do it over the phone
because she was being watched.

TAYLOR

Did she have proof?

SUMMER

(ignores Taylor)

I told her to meet me here after
work.

JACK

Here as in this cottage.

Summer nods her head.

SUMMER

She said...

(Looks at Taylor)

You'd kill her.

TAYLOR

Figure of speech not a matter of
fact.

JACK

(smugly)

Is that what you meant Summer?

Summer dares to speak but Taylor cuts her off.

TAYLOR

Dani owed me money. Money I owed some people, people you don't mug off when they become impatient. Whenever I brought up the money, Dani changed the subject. She started avoiding me and my calls altogether. And so I showed up at her apartment--

RYAN

That night?

TAYLOR

No.

SUMMER

No.

Taylor and Summer make contact.

TAYLOR (CON'T)

The night before. She pretended she wasn't home.

RYAN

And who were these people you owed?

TAYLOR

Unless you want to settle the debt they mean nothing to you.

All eyes are on Ryan.

RYAN

I'm only asking because they could be the reason Dani's dead.

LU

(fidgety)

No one said anything about death.

RYAN

I expect the worst, saves me a lot of time.

JACK

Or you know something we don't?

RYAN

You should talk, you were with her last.

SUMMER

No. I was.

Summer's talking to the group but talking at Taylor.

SUMMER

I finished work. My landlord kicked me out, left my belongings out on the terrace, and so I needed a place to stay that night. But since none of my friends answer their phones after one a.m.--

RYAN

(To Jack)

You spent forty-five minutes driving her home? She lived three streets down from me.

TAYLOR

If it's that close why didn't you walk her home?

Taylor keeps an eye on the clock.

JACK

Whatever, we went somewhere and I dropped her off somewhere else.

LU

I thought I recognised you! You were at Hunters, the twenty four hour outdoor restaurant.

JACK

(mockingly)

That was way past your bedtime.

LU
I live around the corner.

TAYLOR
What were you doing out there?

LU
Getting some air.

JACK
(sheepish grin)
Really?

SUMMER
Dani was here! The last time I saw
her she was here with Taylor.

Lu joins the table and sits between Ryan and Lu. All eyes
are on Taylor.

LU
Did you ask us over so we can help
with your cover story?

TAYLOR
Yeah, I wanted to know who saw me
kill Dani and dump her in the lake.

(beat)
I'm kidding.

JACK
I believe you... even if you
weren't.

TAYLOR
Oh come on, I'm not a killer! Dani
came by clearly intoxicated, and
was crying about how she was being
followed. She even accused me of
being behind it!

RYAN
Were you?

TAYLOR

I paid a debt collector not a hired gun.

Taylor turns to Summer.

SUMMER

I wasn't following anyone. I came here because I needed a place to stay.

JACK

Hotels too posh for you Summer?

LU

(murmurs)

At least she doesn't pay for company.

JACK

And you'd have to be working a corner not living near one to know that?

RYAN

Times up!

Ryan points to Taylor's watch.

RYAN

Forget the story, let's hear the truth. Which one of you killed Dani Best?

Summer suspects Taylor. Taylor suspects Jack. Jack suspects Lu. Lu 'looks' guilty.

END.