

THE CAPE

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM- EVENING

The faint glow of a television is the only light in the room. A little girl, KIMMY, 8, sits atop a frayed and worn down couch with her border terrier, BANDIT, who chews ravenously on the arm of the couch.

The living room is a disaster area that appears to have been hit by a tornado with stacks of newspapers mounting on the outdated shag carpeting. Garbage is strewn around the periphery of the coffee table and recliner, as if a dumpster were overturned.

From the kitchen, glass SHATTERS and Kimmy's MOTHER SCREAMS in fright. Meanwhile, Kimmy's eyes are glued to the television screen where she observes the show Jackass- entranced by people completing various insane stunts. Kimmy's concentration is broken by the sounds of Bandit WHINING. She takes a chicken nugget from her pitifully small meal and guides it to Bandit's mouth as he aggressively gobbles it up.

FATHER

(O.C. and Screaming)

How fucking hard is it? Are you stupid? Is that it?

Kimmy hoists herself from the couch and wanders past the kitchen.

INT. HALLWAY- SAME

As Kimmy makes her way through the house she peers into the kitchen just in time to see her FATHER submitting a vicious blow to her mother's face. Her mother falls to the floor instantly and a frightened gaze washes over Kimmy's face as she quickly breaks for her room. Her mother SOBS heavily.

FATHER

(To the mother)

Oh, quit your acting and get up!

INT. KIMMY'S ROOM- A MOMENT LATER

Kimmy SLAMS the door shut and scurries onto her bed. She slips a hand underneath her pillow and whips out a comic book with a superhero clad in a cape on the front cover. Kimmy flips through the story, the pages curled and torn at the edges from overuse. Her eye is drawn to the bright red cape that keeps the hero safe from harm.

A siren BLARES from outside and Kimmy cautiously cracks open her bedroom door to see the commotion.

INT. HALLWAY- CONTINUOUS

Her mother SNIVELS as she attempts to speak with a POLICE OFFICER.

There is a massive bruise on the left side of her face that she tries to cover up every few seconds. Her father is being escorted out the front door by the OTHER OFFICERS and into the back of a squad car.

EXT. MR. REILLY'S HOUSE

Across the street from Kimmy's house, MR. REILLY, 40s, with soft features and kind eyes, watches the commotion from his front porch with concern.

INT. KIMMY'S LIVING ROOM

Her mother smiles and waves to Mr. Reilly, trying desperately to maintain a semblance of normalcy in a moment of chaos. Mr. Reilly barely lifts a hand in response and instead focuses on Kimmy whom he spots through the bay windows of the living room.

INT. KIMMY'S ROOM- SAME

Kimmy SLAMS the door as fear overwhelms her. She retreats to her bed where the comic book rests on her mattress. She once again observes the hero on the cover with tears forming and slowly flooding her cheeks.

Anger jumps from her skin and she snatches the comic, RIPS the cover off and leaves its carcass to rot on her floor. She climbs into bed, gazing out into the darkness and slowly slides her sheet over her shoulder, tying it into a knot over throat.

FADE TO:

INT. KIMMY'S ROOM- MORNING

Sunlight graces her face and wakes Kimmy from her slumber. She still sports her bedsheet which resembles a makeshift cape. Kimmy cracks open the door, just enough to peer into the kitchen. Silence.

INT. LIVING ROOM- SAME

The room is immaculate. What was once a landfill has now been clear of all debris. Kimmy sees that the bottles of alcohol that once populated the kitchen table are no longer there. Muffled LAUGHTER makes its way to Kimmy's ears from outside.

As she gazes at the front lawn she sees her mother, smiling and GIGGLING, as she takes a large handful of leaves and places them in a pile shes gathered on the lawn.

Suddenly, Kimmy sees a pair of feet descending from a ladder pressed against the front of the house. As he reaches the ground, Kimmy realizes it is her father. He walks over and kisses his wife on the cheek where her bruise previously existed.

EXT. FRONT LAWN- A MOMENT LATER

Kimmy tentatively approaches her parents.

FATHER  
(Cheerfully)  
Hey! There's my little angel.

MOTHER  
Did you come to help us?

A smile washes over Kimmy's face.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT LAWN- LATER

Kimmy's father tosses her into a pile of crisp autumn leaves. She BURSTS INTO LAUGHTER as her mother tosses more leaves on her. The three of them chase each other around the lawn with pure enjoyment.

INT. MR. REILLY'S LIVING ROOM- SAME

From across the street Mr. Reilly observes Kimmy's adventures with curiosity. From his perspective we see that she is running around by herself, LAUGHING and jumping in the leaves.

EXT. FRONT LAWN- SAME

Kimmy lies on her back GIGGLING. When she opens her eyes and sits up she sees that her parents aren't there.

She stands up and makes her way toward the house as her cape lies on the lawn.

INT. LIVING ROOM- A MOMENT LATER

Much to her dismay, Kimmy sees that the living room is back to its normal state, so strewn with trash that the scent is palpable. She notices that the kitchen is a museum of glass bottles, most empty, some with shallow pools of whiskey lying stagnant at the bottom. Bandit lies weakly on his side and is breathing heavily. His ribs are cutting through his skin. Kimmy grabs him a small snack and feeds it to him.

INT. HALLWAY- SAME

As she ambles past her parent's bedroom, there is no sign of life. Approaching the bathroom, Kimmy sees the door is ajar and attempts to peer through the slit. All she can spot is the shower curtain and hears a light MOAN emanating from inside.

Her fingers press on the edge of the door, slowly unveiling...

INT. BATHROOM- SAME

Her mother slouched against the opposite wall- her head leaning against the back of the toilet. If she's conscious then she's hiding it well. Her eyes are shut tight but her head twists like a coiled snake. The bruise is back and darker than ever.

The room is a junkie's paradise. A spoon etched with burn marks dangles on the sink. A used needle keeps close company with Kimmy's mother as it's perched right by her toes. Kimmy notices the track marks on her mother's arm and GASPS.

Her mother's eyes come unglued to catch a glimpse of Kimmy staring back at her.

MOTHER  
(startled)  
Get out!!

She SLAMS the door in Kimmy's face.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MR. REILLY'S LIVING ROOM- SAME

VOICES from a news program emanate from the TV. Mr. Reilly enters the living room, a cup of tea in hand. He rests in a chair, hunched over.

His living room is sparsely decorated and the only photographs displayed are of a younger Mr. Reilly with an attractive woman draped under his arm. An urn rests on the mantle directly to the left of these pictures.

He quietly sips his tea, letting his eyes wander back and forth from the TV to Kimmy's house.

He blows on his tea and desperately tries to focus on the television screen, but his attention is being pulled in the other direction. He finally sets his drink down and springs up from the chair.

INT. KIMMY'S HOUSE- MOMENTS LATER

A couple of KNOCKS on the door and Mr. Reilly pushes it open as it was slightly ajar. He proceeds with hesitation, his eyes darting around the room.

MR. REILLY

Hello?

EXT. KIMMY'S HOUSE- CONTINUOUS

Emerging from the side yard is Kimmy, pacing with purpose to the front of the house, her cape clutched in her hand. She stands at the base of the ladder and scans it from the bottom to the top.

INT. KIMMY'S HOUSE

As he passes by the kitchen Mr. Reilly takes note of the sea of bottles and the shattered glass covering the floor.

He hears the same MOANING coming from the bathroom and TAPS on the door.

MR. REILLY

Hey, it's Mr. Reilly from across the street. Is everything alright?

The MOAN is even louder. Mr. Reilly slowly turns the knob and enters. He jumps back in shock and raises a hand to his mouth. He scatters away toward the front door.

MR. REILLY (CONT'D)  
Kimmy?! Kimmy, where are you?

EXT. ROOF

Wind whips Kimmy's hair as she finishes tying the cape around her neck. She gazes at her quiet street from the roof of her house.

Kimmy unfolds a page from the comic book. It depicts a scene where the superhero stands on the roof of a building- looking in on a family having dinner in the apartment. Kimmy retrieves the rest of the comic book from her back pocket where it was folded up. The pages are torn and mangled.

She releases the comic and lets the wind take hold of it. Several of the pages separate from each other and float over the neighborhood.

FATHER (O.C.)  
Kimmy! What are you doing?

Startled, she looks down to see her father. She ignores his plea and instead closes her eyes, extends her arms outward into a 't-shape', and takes a deep breath.

FATHER (CONT'D)  
Wait! Just wait a second... I know what's been going on.

Kimmy lowers her arms and gives him her attention.

FATHER (CONT'D)  
It's not right... You don't deserve this.

She turns her head from him.

FATHER (CONT'D)  
But as hard as it is to believe sometimes, things will get better. You just have to trust me.

He waits for her response with baited breath. Finally, she tilts her head back in his direction.

KIMMY  
I can't.

She throws her arms out in an attempt to fly and leaps from the roof.

FATHER  
Kimmy, no! Stop!

The cape is stripped from her shoulders and she tumbles through the air without control. Just as she is about to hit the ground a pair of arms snatches her up. She opens her eyes to see Mr. Reilly standing where her father just was seconds before. He clutches her tightly- pale and out of breath.

EXT. FRONT LAWN- SAME

MR. REILLY  
(to himself)  
Oh, thank god.  
(to Kimmy)  
Don't you ever do that again! Do  
you hear me?

Kimmy nods in complete amazement. He sets her down and wipes the sweat from his brow.

MR. REILLY (CONT'D)  
(beat)  
You alright?

Once again, Kimmy nods back.

MR. REILLY (CONT'D)  
Good... good.

With baby steps, Kimmy dawdles up to Mr. Reilly and embraces him as a tear runs down her cheek. Caught off guard, he takes a second and returns the gesture. He gently cradles her head.

MR. REILLY (CONT'D)  
It'll be alright. I promise.

The camera PANS to the pile of leaves where the cape sits. A gust of wind blows the leaves over the cape, completely covering it.

FADE OUT.