

THE PAPERS

Written by

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EXT. MOUNTAIN HIKING TRAIL - DAY

Mountain boots covered in thick mud drag through the trail. Fat drops of rain hit moist dirt. The ground turns to sludge.

Each faltered step pounds into the earth. Long drawn out breath, patters in and out, panicked.

EXT. PARK - SAME TIME

Rain pelts down. Sports shoes squish into grass. Park goes rush to leave. The runner picks up speed.

EXT. MOUNTAIN HIKING TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

Well-manicured hands grip the bark of an old, thickset tree. A gold wedding band the only jewelry.

AILEEN (30s) petite and downtrodden, in the midst of a meltdown braces her cheek against the tree. She yanks unruly hair out of a ponytail. Rain pelts down over her, she covers her face mortified.

Her body trembles, she falls to her knees, sucking in deep breaths in the midst of a panic attack.

EXT. PARK - SAME TIME

CAMERON (30s) fit, healthy with a stony-willed determination finishes the last fifty yards at a sprint.

He bends over, clasps his knees, he eyes his wedding band. Breathless, tormented.

He twists the wedding band to his knuckle, twists it around to take it off.

He closes his eyes, looks up to the sky. Rain pelts all over his face.

EXT. MOUNTAIN HIKING TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

The panic attack over, Aileen clasps the tree trunk, stands. She clasps her wedding band, drops it in the mud. She walks away. The ring shines in the dirt.

EXT. PARK - SAME TIME

Cameron shoves the wedding band back into place, kisses the ring. He takes off in a sprint.

INT. CAMERON'S HOME - LATER

A quaint cottage home in disarray. The TV flickers on mute. Dirty washing piles scattered everywhere.

Cameron enters.

The kitchen is piled full of dirty dishes. He sighs surveys the mess, drops keys on the table and springs into action tidying the house.

He makes his way through to the--

INT. CAMERON'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

-- Bedroom. Aileen sleeps haphazardly in bed covered in mud. Chocolate wrappers, used tissues everywhere. He runs a hand over her legs in a soft caress and sits on the bed.

The clock digital clock 1PM. Slowly Aileen wakes.

They embrace, Aileen cries and holds on to him. Her fingers clasp his shirt.

Cameron glances at the empty bottle of wine with a half empty glass on the dresser next to the bed.

He murmurs to comfort her, presses his cheek to hers. Lifts her hand to kiss it, he notices the missing wedding band. He's surprised and hurt. She pulls away.

She lays back down on the bed, turns her back to him.

CAMERON

Bad day?

She nods. He runs his fingers over her hand.

CAMERON

Did you have another episode?

Aileen's body curves tighter into her position.

CAMERON

Can I help? Let me help you. Was the attack bad.

She shakes her head, with a deadpan look.

CAMERON

Where did you lose your ring? I'll  
go find it.

Aileen shrugs. He leans down and kisses her cheek. She shifts away from his touch. Devastated, he watches her for a moment. He lays on the bed, attempts to hug her.

AILEEN

Stop.

She rolls her shoulders and gets up to sit in the armchair. She stares out the window. He hangs his head confused.

He gets up and fixes the dirty bed linen.

CAMERON

Why don't you take a shower?

Aileen shows no signs of hearing him.

CAMERON

You might feel better.  
(beat)  
Sweetheart?

Cameron replaces the bed linen with fresh sheets. He straightens the bed.

CAMERON

Aileen!

She snaps out of her daze to stare at him.

CAMERON

Shower.

Aileen lifts herself out of the armchair. He kisses her cheek as she shuffles by him to the bathroom. He blinks, frustrated.

LATER

Cameron lays in bed staring up at the ceiling. Aileen curled fetal like as far away as possible from him.

He glances at Aileen concerned. He shuts his eyes.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

A fogged mirror is wiped away. Aileen stares at her reflection. She is determined, yet nervous and uncertain. She finishes applying makeup.

INT. CAR - DAY

Aileen taps her fingers across the steering wheel. She looks into the office, down at the envelope on the passenger seat of her car.

She lets out several aggrieved breaths.

AILEEN

I can do this. I can do this.

She bows her head, grabs the envelope and gets out.

INT. CAMERON'S OFFICE - DAY

CAMERON (30s) leans back in his chair. He stares at the envelope and back at Aileen.

CAMERON

What's in the envelope?

AILEEN

Divorce papers, it's time.

Furious, his fingers clench into a fist. He smiles tightly.

CAMERON

We've been through hell and back  
and you hand me this. You may as  
well have shit on me.

She cringes. Determined, hands him a pen. He ignores it. She thrusts the envelope at him. He refuses to take it. She slams it down in front of him.

AILEEN

Sign the papers.

CAMERON

No.

AILEEN

It's too difficult. It's not good  
for you, and I know as sure as  
there is hell, it's not good for me  
either.

CAMERON

A challenge comes and you run! We  
made vows, those vows meant  
something to me. Did you not  
understand a promise!

AILEEN

This is the only way, to save us  
both from more pain. You can't fix  
it, it never ends for me. Never!

Aileen slams her hand on the desk.

He gets up from behind the desk and gazes out the window.

CAMERON

This is not the answer.

AILEEN

Philip thinks it's time we  
separated. Our sessions--

Cameron pushes his chair back, stomping around his desk.

CAMERON

Phillip?! How bout you tell Phillip  
when we have an appointment as a  
couple, he's allowed to decide  
about our lives.

AILEEN

He says I should try a therapy dog.

CAMERON

Getting a dog isn't going to fix  
us!

AILEEN

You can't fix us. It's not us, it's  
me. Me!

CAMERON

Give up, right? It's okay not to  
try, we're not good for each other,  
is that it? If you just tell me how  
you feel, tell me!

AILEEN

I can't.

CAMERON

Why?

AILEEN

I don't know.

CAMERON

I'm your husband. No judgement.  
I've always known about it, but I  
can't work out what to do.

Her forehead drops against his chest, she pushes her hand  
against his chest, his arms wrap around her.

CAMERON

It doesn't change how I feel.

AILEEN

Cameron please, just, sign.

CAMERON

Once we talk about it, it won't  
feel so painful. This is what I  
think of this shit.

He grabs the envelope, rips it open, and walks to the  
shredder. Aileen jumps on him, snatching the papers. She  
shoves him away.

AILEEN

You don't get it!

CAMERON

So fucking tell me.

She takes in several aggrieved breaths. Cameron's eyes watch  
her concerned, he steps closer, she holds up her hand, he  
steps away, angry and helpless.

She slides the papers across the desk in front of him. He  
looks down at them and back at her, he shakes his head.

AILEEN

You don't know anything about what  
I'm going through, how it feels,  
the constant battle!

CAMERON

No I don't! I'm no mind reader!

AILEEN

You can't fix this nightmare I'm  
stuck in Cam, you can't! You can't!  
I can't keep living in this  
darkness while you wait for me.

CAMERON  
I'm living in the dark with you.

She looks right up at him, their eyes connected as if for the very first time.

CAMERON  
Did you sleep with someone else? Is that why you're depressed? Just tell me, I can handle it?

AILEEN  
Fuck you.

Aileen slams the envelope against his chest and storms out. Cameron flicks the envelope away.

INT. PUB - NIGHT

Fingers slide an envelope back and forth on the bar. The pub is empty. The BAR TENDER wipes the bar down.

Cameron mulls over a full glass of whiskey. He finally halts movement of the envelope.

CAMERON  
You got a pen?

The Bar Tender holds out a pen for Cameron. Reluctant, he takes the pen, rips open the envelope and places the pen against paper to sign.

The document shows no signature at Aileen's name. He writes vigorously, slips the paper back into the envelope.

CAMERON  
For Aileen, when you see her.

Cameron slides the envelope towards the Bar Tender. He taps his glass for another drink.

Next to his stool, two suitcases.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Two suitcases at the door. A cozy cottage kitchen, clean and charming.

ROBBIE (60s) a hulking man with a deep wisdom despite his gruff exterior and LENORE (60s) cuddly in appearance with a shrewd determination, eat breakfast.



Cameron enters. His hair ruffled, eyes bloodshot with dark circles. He gets a glass and drinks some water. He stares out the window, lost.

Cameron shakes his head.

CAMERON

I won't stay long, I'll get myself  
set-up in a new place.

LENORE

Stay as long as you need.

Robbie gestures for Lenore to give them privacy. Lenore passes Robbie, squeezes his shoulder. Robbie touches her hand. She exits.

ROBBIE

Fight with Aileen?

CAMERON

She wants a divorce.

Robbie's eyes widen.

CAMERON

I don't know how to help her, dad.  
She won't even try, she made the  
decision. I don't want this.

ROBBIE

Give her some time.

CAMERON

Time? I'm going crazy in my fucking  
mind, what... how... fuck! I can't  
change a thing about this shit...  
Did I do this to her?

ROBBIE

It's not your fault.

CAMERON

How do I help? What do I do?

ROBBIE

Listen to what she needs. Aileen  
loves you.

Cameron attempts to speak, the intense emotion overwhelming. He hangs his head.

CAMERON

I don't know, anymore, dad.

Cameron breaks down. Robbie comforts his son.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Cameron jogs around the field. He stops drinks deeply from a bottle of water, splashes it across his sweaty face.

He approaches a park bench, beneath a tree, he halts on seeing Aileen sitting on the bench. A torn piece of paper in her hand.

She looks down at the paper. Written on it, under Cameron's signature: *I'll let you go, because you need me to and love you always from afar, if I have to.*

She gazes up at Cameron.

AILEEN

Why did you have to write that?

Cameron shrugs.

CAMERON

So this would happen.

He gestures to her and himself.

AILEEN

I don't want to hurt you.

CAMERON

I hurt, when you hurt, that won't change, ever.

AILEEN

I don't want that.

CAMERON

Not your choice. I admit I fucked up bad. Trying to fix everything.

AILEEN

It's not up to you, other than to be there.

He joins her on the bench.

CAMERON

I'm sorry.

AILEEN

So am I.

He is tense, unsure, angry. He reaches for her hand but draws away, lets out a frustrated breath.

CAMERON

What is it, Aileen? What are we going to do?

AILEEN

You shouldn't have to be with me.

He runs his hand through his hair.

CAMERON

For fu--

AILEEN

You don't want this.

CAMERON

Don't decide for me. I make my own choices. You don't get to decide.

AILEEN

What if I need more than just you to help me? More than Philip... you don't want...

CAMERON

I'll do whatever it takes to help you. You need a Therapy dog, let's sort one out. Honesty is what I need from you and I'll use these to hear you.

He taps his ears.

AILEEN

I hurt all the time. I feel up and down, so low and sometimes, I don't know how to stop it. You didn't sign up for this wife.

He brushes her cheek, his thumb caressing the dark circles under her eyes.

CAMERON

No, you are more than the wife I signed up for.

AILEEN

Cameron, it's--

CAMERON

If I have to hold you up I will but  
you don't let go.

She covers his hand, he notices her wedding band back in  
place. He kisses her ring finger.

CAMERON

Is it over, are we done?

AILEEN

I never left.

They kiss, hug tight, cheek to cheek.