

PORTRAIT OF A DEAD MAN

Written by

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INT. KITCHEN- DAY

Mona walks into the kitchen and sets the casserole down on the counter. Her hands are shaking and her eyes look frantic. It is the first indication that she has any emotion at all. Mona closes her eyes and grips the granite, trying to steady her breath in time with the ticking of the clock.

The sound of breaking glass disrupts the silence. Mona opens her eyes to see the casserole dish completely shattered on the floor.

MONA

Shit.

Mona bends down, scooping as much glass as she can into her shaky hands. A shadow seems to fall over her, slowly pulling into focus.

WE SEE Ned Mason as if he had just walked out of his portrait, very young and very rough looking. He glares down at his daughter with withering disapproval.

Mona tenses, sensing something off. She pops her head up, but the kitchen is completely empty. The image of Ned has disappeared, evaporated into the air like a bad dream. Nothing more than a memory.

Mona hurriedly cleans up the rest of the mess and pours herself a glass of water. She takes a sip, her eyes darting around the room as if she is trying to catch someone watching her.

Mona cautiously sets the glass on the table. After a long pause she grabs another trash bag and walks down the hall.

The glass slowly slides across the counter by itself.

INT. NED'S BEDROOM - DAY

Mona walks into her father's bedroom with the trash-bag. The windows are wide open, and the sun is starting to set.

The bedroom is nothing short of a disaster. Ned's bed is still unmade, trash lines the floor, and half-empty bottles of liquor cover the entire space. Mona kicks one of the bottles out of her way. She grips the bag tightly and starts cleaning up.

Above the dresser is a large, antique looking mirror. Mona stops cleaning for a moment to stare coldly at her reflection.

She wipes the bags under her eyes with her fingers and pulls at the skin around her jaw. There is a clear look of disdain and disgust on her face.

Mona sighs and reaches for one of the dresser drawers, but she freezes before she can touch the wood. Her hands shake. She IMAGINES hearing her father's voice.

NED (V.O.)

You little bitch! What are you doing in here?!

The sound of footsteps thundering up stairs echos through the room, but it's unclear whether it is real or in Mona's head. Mona turns to see Ned standing in the doorway, a crazed look in his eyes and a bottle of whiskey in his hand. As Ned takes an angry step towards her the memory vanishes, but the door slams shut in real time.

Mona falls back into the dresser. She takes in shallow breaths, her eyes darting around the room like a cornered animal. Her hands shake feverishly. A heavy silence fills the space.

MONA

(to herself)

Steady, Mona. Steady.

Mona shakes her head and pulls her hair out of her face. She resumes her cleaning, but her eyes keep flicking nervously back towards the dresser.

After tossing a few more beer bottles into the bag, Mona stands up. She glances hesitantly at the mirror. In the reflection she sees Ned standing directly behind her, a tall and menacing shadow. He reaches out for her and Mona screams.

The glass shatters.

Mona falls to the floor as broken glass rains down on her. She back peddles away from the dresser, out into the now empty room.

MONA (CONT'D)

SHIT!

All at once the drawers to the dresser are thrown open. Mona stands up, grabbing her head and trying to block out what is happening around her.

The lights start to flicker rapidly. Mona HEARS her father's voice echo through the room.

NED (V.O.)
 Look at yourself. Pathetic! WEAK!
 You've been a stain on this family
 since the moment you were BORN!

Mona shakes her head. She opens her eyes to see Ned standing in front of the dresser like something out of a dream.

MONA
 (on the verge of tears)
 I'm hallucinating. This isn't real.

Ned laughs loudly, his eyes practically glowing with white hot rage.

NED
 It's high time you learn that your
 actions have CONSEQUENCES!

Ned takes a swig from a bottle of whiskey and stares her down.

NED (CONT'D)
 What kind of father would I be if I
 didn't teach you that?

Ned throws the bottle. It narrowly misses Mona's head and smashes into the wall behind her.

Mona lunges for the door. She throws it open and sprints down the hallway. Ned steps into the doorframe to watch her, a menacing silhouette against the strobing lights.

INT. MONA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mona tears into the next room, slamming the door and locking it. She stumbles across the floor, pressing herself up against the far wall. A sharp banging echos through the room as if ten people are pounding their fists against the door at once.

MONA
 God damn it Mona, wake up! WAKE UP!

The banging continues. Mona HEARS Ned's voice as if it's all around her.

NED (V.O.)
 YOU CAN'T HIDE FROM ME GIRL!

MONA
 You're DEAD! I buried you! You're
 GONE!

Mona's hands shake violently.

MONA (CONT'D)
(whisper to herself)
You have to be gone.

The banging grows louder. Mona screams out. For the first time, she looks around the room. Her breaths start to slow as she realizes where she is.

It is a perfectly preserved child's bedroom, draped in pink lace and piles of stuffed animals. Mona detaches herself from the wall. She picks up one stuffed elephant with stitches running all along its stomach.

In a FLASH, we see a MEMORY of Ned tearing the stuffed animal apart. He drops the remains onto the floor.

BANG. An invisible fist hits the door.

Mona makes her way over to the desk. She runs her fingers along a thick crack in the wood.

In a FLASH, we see a MEMORY of Ned slamming his fist down onto the surface and splitting it.

BANG.

Mona bends down to look under the desk. The little girl from the picture is crouched underneath, a YOUNG MONA (around 10). Young Mona rocks back and forth, wiping tears from her cheeks. She stares deep into eyes of her older self.

YOUNG MONA
It get's better... right?

BANG.

The door to the room finally gives way. The lights blink rapidly and a non-existent wind fills the space, sending stuffed animals hurdling into the air.

Mona stands up in the midst of the chaos, a newfound determination blazing in her eyes. She lets a raw, untempered scream escape her lips.