

FAULT

by
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FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Curtains closed. A light shade of pink on the walls, stuffed animals on the bed along with --

MARY KATE (13), sleeveless top, blue dress over bare legs. No expression on her face. Her dark hair barely conceals her faraway eyes.

She stares across the room, but fixes on nothing.

Footsteps in the hall. A figure passes by the door, then reappears. It's her father, DAVID (41), t-shirt and jeans. He buckles his belt.

DAVID

Mary Kate, you gonna have some
breakfast?

She looks down, shakes her head.

DAVID

You should. Christ, you ain't nothin'
but skin and bones.

(smiles)

I'll make you something anyway. If you
wanna come out later it'll be there.

He disappears.

She takes a stuffed animal, holds it in her lap.

There's a small, faded RED SPOT on her arm, just below the shoulder. She raises her hand to touch it, then lowers it.

The faraway look returns.

FLASHBACK

INT. CAR - DAY

Mary Kate in the passenger seat, solemn, quiet.

Her mom, ABBY (37), drives. A faded bruise sits upon her cheek. Her make-up can't hide it.

ABBY

We're both in agreement on this,
right? That this is the best thing to
do?

Mark Kate shrugs.

A beat. Abby nods.

ABBY

It is.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Clean, sanitized, sparse. An eye chart on the wall, medical equipment on a rack.

DR. ADAMS, fifties, white coat, white-gloved, surgical mask.

Mary Kate sits on the table in a hospital gown. Abby nervously shifts in a nearby chair.

Dr. Adams applies an ointment to Mary Kate's arm, affixes a small bandage to it, just below the shoulder. He picks up an object that looks like a security wand.

DR. ADAMS

You might feel some discomfort, but
nothing too bad.

He presses a button on the wand. A low HUM. He carefully moves it up the bandaged area, to her neck, then finally to the back of her head.

ABBY

Are you okay, honey?

Mary Kate nods, winces.

DR. ADAMS

What this is doing is guiding the fiber optics through her arm and into the hypothalamus. At this point she shouldn't be feeling anything.

A green light blinks on the wand. Dr Adams places it on a table, takes off the surgical mask and gloves.

ABBY

That's it?

He motions for Abby to join him.

DR. ADAMS

That's it. Now, let's see what we've got.

He turns on a computer, types in a few commands. Abby joins him. He points to the screen.

DR. ADAMS

Right here. See? Learning, memory, emotions... It's all broken down into categories and sub-categories. Watch. Mary Kate, try and think of something happy. A happy thought.

The doctor waits and watches. Nothing.

ABBY

Honey...

DR. ADAMS

Okay, let's change screens.

Dr. Adams gazes at the screen for a long moment, his expression troubled. He opens his mouth as if to speak, then presses a button on the keypad.

The screen goes dark.

ABBY

Is everything all right, Doctor?

He clears his throat.

DR. ADAMS

Let's step outside for a moment.

ABBY

Honey, you get dressed, okay? I'm just gonna speak with the doctor.

The doctor goes to Mary Kate, forces a smile as he places a reassuring hand on her shoulder.

DR. ADAMS

You did fine, honey. You'll be fine.

INT. HALLWAY

Uninspired tan walls and dull red carpeting. Down the hall, on a table, sits a lonely flower in a vase.

ABBY

What is it?

Dr. Adams folds his arms, glances at Abby's bruise.

DR. ADAMS

The chip can be turned on or off just by pressing it. You'll hear a faint *click*. But...

(coughs, lowers his voice)

... once it's turned on and hooked up to C.M.S... There's no turning back. Whatever's going to happen at that point will happen. Do you understand what I'm telling you?

She puts a hand to her mouth, closes her eyes and nods.

DR. ADAMS

Are you sure? Because they *will* come for whoever is causing her emotional distress. The C.M.S. doesn't ask questions. I've seen cases before where--

She raises a hand to silence him, swallows hard.

ABBY

I'm sure.

END FLASHBACK

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Mary Kate where we left her, still on her bed clutching a stuffed animal. She puts it back with the others.

Approaching footsteps. In the doorway is David. He enters the room, kneels before his daughter, and holds out a small white box.

DAVID

I--I wanted you to have this,
sweetheart.

She doesn't take the gift. He opens the cover.

DAVID

I-I-it's a charm bracelet.
(points to it)
Here, see? This one is you, a-a-and
this one here is me. It's like... both
of us. We'll be together forever, you
and me. You're my little girl, Mary
Kate. Daddy just loves you so much.

He gently caresses her cheek, offers a smile full of yellow stained teeth.

DAVID

Understand? Here, let me just... Lay
back, honey, and...

She closes her eyes.

His head disappears between her legs.

There are no tears left. Just resignation. Acceptance.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Abby on the sofa. The TV is on, shades are drawn. She's not watching. Not really. Her old bruise has healed, but a hideous new one sits below her lip, swollen and red. Fresh.

THUMP! THUMP!

The front door splinters from its hinges. A battering ram drops to the floor. THREE MEN in black tactical gear charge in.

Two carry odd, rectangular guns. The third wheels in a gurney.

MAN #1

(to Abby)

Where's the victim? *Where's the victim?*

Abby's shaking fingertips slide along her puffed chin. She hesitantly points down the hall.

The men disappear.

Slowly down the carpeted hall...

A commotion from inside Mary Kate's room --

MAN #2 (V.O.)

In the neck! In the neck!

A dull *POP* is heard.

DAVID (V.O.)

Wait! What are you doing? You can't --
No. No!

CLICK, CLICK. Buckles being fastened.

Abby rises. Her eyes widen in horror as one of the men rushes out with Mary Kate strapped tight to the gurney.

Mary Kate crooks her head in Abby's direction, a weird sort of smile on her lips.

ABBY

Oh, God. Mary, no! No! Why are you taking her?

Man #1 emerges, close behind the gurney.

David next, loosely restrained by Man #2.

DAVID

Mary!

Abby rushes to the gurney. A strong hand pushes her back.

MAN #3

Ma'am, please stay back.

ABBY

You can't take *her!*

Mary Kate, lips trembling. Two small red marks on her neck.

MARY KATE

This is all my fault...

ABBY

No. Baby, listen to me... It's not your fault. It's his. *His!*

David stumbles after them.

MARY KATE

(fading)

No... It was my fault, Mommy. It was mine. I led him on. I...

ABBY

No, no. You don't understand...

(to the men)

She doesn't understand! He's a predator! He's a--

Mary Kate's rushed out the door.

Man #1 and #2 follow them out.

David staggers to the doorway just as Mary Kate's put into the back of an Official van. The doors slam shut. The van peels down the street.

He drops to his knees, arms outstretched. This can't be happening. He shuts his eyes tight.

Abby collapses onto the sofa, head in her hands.

ABBY

Oh, God. My baby...

In the doorway, David's eyes snap open. He understands it perfectly now. The anger inside begins to rise. His teeth clench down hard. The levee's about to be breached.

DAVID

You put that goddamn chip in her,
didn't you?

Abby raises her head, face filled with fear. She understands now, too.

DAVID

Didn't you!

From his knees, he slowly turns and fixes a cold, piercing glare upon his wife.

FADE OUT.