

KEEPSAKES

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EXT. COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS, 1952 - NIGHT

The lights of the MIDWAY sparkle in the crisp autumn night, as the SQUEALS of laughter and excitement from the carnival rides fill the air.

CLAIRE (18) in a pink poodle hoop skirt and cat-eye glasses watches as SHAWN (22), slicked back hair and bomber jacket, narrows his steely gaze and takes a pitcher's pose. It's clear we're in a different time.

He breathes in deep, winds up, and THROWS a softball toward his intended target.

BAM! Three milk bottles BLAST off the table with a direct hit at the sweet spot of the triad, leaving the table bare. The 1950's midway BARKER reaches for a KEWPIE doll.

BARKER

Another winner! A doll for your doll.

Claire claps with excitement and kisses Shawn's cheek before taking her prize.

SHAWN

A Kewpie for my cutie.

CLAIRE

My hero.

Claire looks down at the doll, rubs its ceramic cheek and caresses its hair. We focus in on the doll's face. Claire's finger tracing the cheek until-

CUT TO:

INT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE, PRESENT DAY - CONTINUOUS

Claire, now 84, opens her eyes. She stands alone in an office in front of a shelf lined with KEWPIE DOLLS.

She holds the much AGED Kewpie doll in her left hand, its ceramic cheeks faded with time, cracked and worn. As she holds the doll, she RUBS a worn turquoise BRACELET around her left wrist with her right hand.

She closes her eyes again, clutches the Kewpie to her chest, and sways slowly back and forth. She brushes the hair off her face to reveal a SCAR. Lost in her own world.

INT. ST. LOUIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES - DAY

The 'hive' of cubicles buzzes as phones ring while case workers and crisis managers attend the lines.

DEANA PRESTON (African-American, burnt out at 29), does her best to maintain calm while she deals with another unhappy CLIENT in front of her. Every day is filled with them.

DEANA

Yes ma'am, I understand, but if the forms weren't submitted proper-

The emotionally distraught client interrupts her.

CLIENT

Paperwork ain't gunna get my kids off the street.

DEANA

I understand, ma'am, but actually, that's what I-

CLIENT

I already filled out the forms! Now why can't you help me?

Deana takes a deep breath while she types into her computer.

DEANA

I'm very sorry ma'am, I'm sure you did. But they aren't in the system.

CLIENT

Well your system is broke. And so am I!

The client collects her things and stomps out of the cubicle.

Deana looks at the clock on the wall. It reads 10:15.

She buries her head in her hands.

DEANA

Lord, give me strength.

A voice in the neighboring cubicle pipes up. It's MICKI REE, her colleague and only source of sanity in this place.

MICKI (O.S.)

I'd settle for a strong drink.

DEANA

Pee break?

Micki, (Asian, 28) with short pink hair and about ten ear piercings, pokes her head around the corner.

MICKI
That'll do.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

They sit in neighboring stalls. But from under the doors, their clothes are still in place. This is their quiet place. Usually.

DEANA
Every day it's the same thing. We come in trying to make a difference and all we end up with is being bombarded by unhappy people we can't help.

Micki takes a drag from her e-cig, exhales into the air vent.

MICKI
Speak for yourself. I like unhappy people.

DEANA
Seriously, what happened to our dreams? I mean, I went to college to help people, maybe even get out of this place. Instead, I can barely afford to take care of my mama, let alone go anywhere. Closest I've got is Travel Channel.

MICKI
Don't forget the Housewives. Last week they went to Bermuda, so I drank rum and cokes in their honor.

Micki takes one last pull from her vape, stands, flushes and exits the stall. Deana joins her at the sinks.

DEANA
I wish I could just get away from all this bad news and hopelessness.

Micki rinses her mouth and spits into the sink.

MICKI
Sounds like my date last night.

Deana chuckles. Lightens up a bit.

DEANA
(sarcastically)
Let's go make a difference!

MICKI
At least until lunch.

They leave the ladies room while another WOMAN enters. We hear her from inside.

WOMAN (O.S.)
Who's been smokin' in here? I saw
you two...I'm reporting you!

Micki and Deana giggle and hustle down the hallway.

INT. ST. LOUIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES - LATER

Deana completes a report, then staples it inside a case folder. She closes the folder and slides it inside the bulging 'OUT' box which hangs along the cubicle wall.

The piles of folders on her desk have almost disappeared. A small victory for the home team, and she feels pretty happy about it. Yay!

That is until a shy but relatively cute intern, PETE HEDLEY (28), approaches with a cart overrun with folders. He stops in front of Deana's cubicle.

PETE
Ummm, hey there, Deana.

Deana dreads this moment every day.

DEANA
Picking up only, right?

Pete empties her 'OUT' box and places the stack in his cart. For a moment she looks as if she's dodged the bullet.

Her smile disappears when he picks up a large stack of files and PLOPS them on her desk.

PETE
Don't kill the messenger?

Pete half waves as he pushes the cart away. Deana looks at the fresh stack of files and pulls off the top one.

It's THICK. The top reads PRIORITY: CLAIRE KELLEY. She opens it up to find a note stapled to several forms reading:
URGENT: PERSONAL SITE VISIT - TODAY!

DEANA
Perfect. Just perfect.

INT. DEANA'S CAR - DAY

Deana drives her beat-up Hyundai slowly through the upscale Clayton neighborhood, past the manicured lawns and rich landscaping of the affluent two-story, brick-faced colonials.

She slows down and peeks through the passenger window as she pulls up curbside to make sure the address is correct. But by the look of the place, she already knows it is.

The yellowed grass overrun with weeds creeps over the edges of the sidewalk.

EXT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

She gets out and grabs her clipboard with credentials, then navigates the weed-ridden walkway up to the front door and RINGS the doorbell.

A moment passes as she waits. She takes in her surroundings. Notices the rusted gutters overflowing with old leaves, stained from numerous leaks. RINGS again.

Deana looks at the house across the street and notices a curtain open and a WOMAN'S FACE peers toward her. The woman watches Deana briefly, then disappears behind the curtain.

Deana turns back around and peeks through the front window panes when the door SPRINGS open.

Claire stands there, eyes questioning.

CLAIRE
H-help you?

DEANA
Miss Claire Kelley?

Claire nods.

Deana smiles and begins her carefully practiced salutation verbatim, unemotional and dispassionate.

DEANA (CONT'D)
(flashes credentials)
Hello, my name is Deana Preston
with the Department of Health and
Human Services and I need to ask
you a few questions.

(MORE)

DEANA (CONT'D)
 I promise I won't take up too much
 of your time. May I come in?

Deana holds her hand out to shake Claire's, and Claire looks at it. Then at Deana. Leaves her hanging for a moment.

Then she takes her hand and squeezes it while rubbing the turquoise BRACELET on her wrist. Claire pauses a moment, smiles wide, releases her hand, then waves her inside.

DEANA (CONT'D)
 Thank you, I-

INT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Deana walks in to the foyer and then turns into the-

FAMILY ROOM

-and is immediately faced with wall-to-wall bookshelves PACKED in every nook and cranny with tchotchkes, souvenirs, mementos and keepsakes.

DEANA
 -won't be- Oh...my...god.

Deana wanders around slowly as she gathers her first impression of the OVERLY CLUTTERED family room.

It's borderline hoarding and a cleaning nightmare. Just about every free space on tables, bookshelves, and countertops has something UNIQUE on it.

Claire closes the door in the foyer. A PILE of mail rests at her feet as she picks up the letters and places them on a desk OVERRUN with bills and notices. Claire looks at the bills, then at Deana, then shuffles into the room.

Deana moves toward one of the bookshelves stocked with MEMORIES of the past. She walks past a shelf of SNOW GLOBES, each neatly MARKED with a different date.

Antique road signs on one wall, pewter figurines on a table, Hummel porcelain collections on a shelf. Native American figurines next to a second TURQUOISE BRACELET. It's as if she stepped into a souvenir museum.

She continues past unique ROAD SIGNS hanging from her wall. "WALL DRUG, SOUTH DAKOTA". "SEE ROCK CITY". "BURMA SHAVE". Some rusted, some pristine. All eclectic.

Claire gets to her favorite parlor chair and sits down, then waves Deana over. She rubs the bracelet on her wrist as she pushes the first words out of her mouth.

CLAIRE
P-Please sit.

Deana snaps out of it as she takes in the spectacle of almost every square inch of shelf and cupboard space consumed by a trinket of some kind from all around the world.

DEANA
Have you been to all these places?

She turns and finds Claire seated, smiling at Deana admiring her souvenirs. She nods.

DEANA (CONT'D)
I've always wondered what it would be like to see the world. Maybe someday.

Claire grins and RUBS her turquoise bracelet. Nods.

DEANA (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, I promised not to take up too much of your time. I just have a few questions. May I?

Deana sits across from Claire and gets on with it.

DEANA (CONT'D)
Miss Kelley, there have been concerns amongst your neighbors and I just needed to come and verify that you were okay-

Deana notices Claire's incessant RUBBING of the turquoise bracelet on her wrist.

DEANA (CONT'D)
That's a very pretty bracelet.

Claire looks down at it, closes her eyes slowly, then opens them and smiles back, nodding.

DEANA (CONT'D)
Do you live here alone?

Claire nods again, this time her smile disappears.

DEANA (CONT'D)
It says here you have no immediate family? No children or siblings?

Claire shakes her head 'no'.

DEANA (CONT'D)
You have lived here your whole
life, is that right?

Claire nods, then points to the keepsakes around the room.

DEANA (CONT'D)
Of course...when you weren't out
seeing the world.

Claire chuckles.

CLAIRE
T-That's right.

Deana picks up the stutter in Claire's speech.

DEANA
I'm sorry, I notice you have a
speech pattern issue. Is that from
a stroke or ongoing health problem?

Claire waves her off. Points to the SCAR on her forehead.

CLAIRE
A-Accident. L-long time ago.

DEANA
Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that.

Deana scribbles notes on the paperwork, while Claire watches.

CLAIRE
W-what are the forms for?

Deana bluffs poorly.

DEANA
Um..well, it's standard paperwork
for wellness visits that we have-

CLAIRE
W-wellness?

DEANA
Yes, to make sure you are okay and
safe to stay in your home.

Claire's face turns serious as she thinks for a moment. She gets up suddenly, walks toward the bookshelf, and reaches for a particular SNOW GLOBE.

DEANA (CONT'D)
May I help you with that?

Claire brings it over and shows it to her. A boat at the base of a large waterfall. It reads NIAGARA FALLS, 1958.

Deana's eyes go wide.

DEANA (CONT'D)
Oh, wow. I bet it was beautiful.

CLAIRE
V-Very. A-And wet!

Claire chuckles. Her eyes narrow onto Deana with intent.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Y-You want to go?

DEANA
Very much so, but I never have time-

Claire takes the snow globe in her left hand and holds it out to Deana. Deana reaches out to take it, but Claire holds FIRM. She RUBS her BRACELET with her right hand and-

EXT. MAID OF THE MIST DECK, 1958 - DAY

Instantly, the deafening ROAR of Niagara Falls hits Deana squarely as she is face to face with a full one-hundred eighty degree panorama of POWER.

Deana is paralyzed with excitement and marvel, as she stands on the deck of the boat ferrying tourists toward this wonder of the world. The mighty falls getting closer and closer.

She turns and sees a YOUNG MAN (28) holding hands with a beautiful woman with blonde, flowing hair, a familiar face, and a SCAR on her forehead. Smiling. The woman's eyes pierce her own.

Claire (24) WINKS at Deana, then turns her gaze back toward the mighty falls.

Deana follows her gaze as they approach this continuous wall of water, the NOISE drowns out everything around her. Waves of mist SLAM into her body and face. Wave after wave. SOAKS her to the bone.

Deana jumps back, scared-

INT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE, PRESENT DAY - CONTINUOUS

-as Deana RELEASES the snow globe, shocked and startled. And dry as a bone.

DEANA
What...just happened?! HOW?!

Deana sees Claire's SCAR and takes another step back.

DEANA (CONT'D)
Was that...you?

Claire nods and smiles.

CLAIRE
W-wet, huh?

Deana can't catch her breath, as she looks at Claire, then the snow globe, then back at Claire. She can't wrap her head around what just happened.

DEANA
I...I have to go.

Deana grabs the paperwork and hurries out.

Claire looks down at the snow globe. Then out the window at Deana as she rushes to her car.

INT. DEANA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Deana sits in her car, eyes still wide.

DEANA
What the hell-

She pulls the keys from her purse and starts the car. She looks back up at the house and sees Claire watching her. Smiling. Waves.

Deana peels out and drives away.

INT. DEANA'S APARTMENT - LATER

Deana walks in to her tiny, plain two-bedroom apartment, frantic and confused.

DEANA
Mama? You home?

A television BLARES in the neighboring room. Deana's mother, RUTH (57), haggard and sickly from years of alcohol and drug abuse, sits in a housecoat staring at her shows.

RUTH
Did you get my pills?

Deana tosses her coat over a dining room chair as she enters the room.

DEANA
Shoot mama, I forgot-

Ruth goes off on a RANT.

RUTH
Goddammit Deana! I told you my head was hurtin' again and I can't do nothin' without my pills! Can't concentrate on my shows!

Deana sits on the couch beside her.

DEANA
I'm sorry, mama, I rushed home because you aren't gunna believe this. I had to make a site visit-

RUTH
I can't pay attention to you and my shows. Especially with my head hurtin' cuz you don't have my pills.

DEANA
But mama...

RUTH
Don't 'But mama me'. I need my pills. But you don't care about that. You don't care that your mama is sittin' up here all alone, head about to bust. You just forgot.

DEANA
No, it's just-

RUTH
It's just this. It's just that. It's just something, I know what. Now get my pills and let me watch my shows in peace.

Defeated, Deana leaves her.

DEANA

Yes, mama.

Deana walks down a small hallway and into her-

BEDROOM

- and closes the door behind her. Dejected. Alone.

She stares in the mirror. Touches her face, her blouse. Shakes her head.

DEANA (CONT'D)

Impossible.

INT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE - DAY

Claire shuffles through the family room slowly dusting off a shelf of porcelain figurines, stops momentarily to pick one up, closes her eyes, rubs her bracelet and blasts off.

As she sways slowly, her facial expressions say everything. Smiling, chuckling, arms outstretched like she's flying.

Her eyes open, and the smile fades. Her arms come down. She puts the figurine down, then continues to dust the shelves as if nothing happened.

The mail slot OPENS through the front door and several LETTERS fall to the floor in the foyer. The noise startles Claire and summons her to the door.

She shuffles through the mail; bills marked PAST DUE, home association OVERDUE notice, a RED envelope marked URGENT.

She rubs her BRACELET as she holds the envelopes.

CLAIRE

Remember. Remember.

As she places the envelopes on the desk and walks off, several letters slip off and fall onto a LARGER heap of unopened mail in the corner. Letters stamped FINAL NOTICE and OPEN IMMEDIATELY litter the pile.

EXT. ST. LOUIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES - DAY

Deana sits with Micki on the bench in the smoking area at work, pleading her case.

DEANA

I swear, Micki, it happened.

Micki raises her eyebrows. Exhales vapor rings.

MICKI
Day dreaming again?

DEANA
One moment I was in her living room
and the next I was getting drenched
at Niagara Falls.

MICKI
Drenched?

DEANA
I could feel the water on my face.
And suddenly I was back! My ears
were ringing from the roar of the
falls. How can you explain that?

Micki deadpans her.

MICKI
I can barely explain why I get up
in the morning. But I know that
it's gotta be in your head.

Deana shakes her head.

DEANA
That doesn't explain me feeling
soaked on the boat!

MICKI
Subliminal hypnosis.

DEANA
She didn't say anything!

MICKI
She sounds nuts. So do you.

DEANA
I don't know, Micki. It seemed
so...real.

MICKI
Have her take you to the beach next
time. Hell, I'd go to the beach!

Micki puts away her e-cig. Deana sits up straight.

DEANA
That's it!

MICKI
What's it?

DEANA
I'll take you with me!

MICKI
Ha! Forget it.

DEANA
No, listen. I bugged out of there so quickly I didn't get a signature for the paperwork anyway. You can come with me and see for yourself.

Deana looks at her with pleading eyes.

MICKI
Don't give me that puppy dog look.

DEANA
It'll get us out of work early.

Now she's sold.

MICKI
Lead with that next time.

Deana claps her hands and hugs her.

INT. ST. LOUIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES - LATER

Deana walks down the busy aisle holding an oversized folder toward the office of her boss, CLIFF MELTON. She KNOCKS.

CLIFF (O.C.)
Yeah, come in.

Deana opens the door and enters. Cliff (49, but could easily be ten years older what with the bad comb-over and the twenty-five extra pounds around his middle) waves her in.

DEANA
Mr. Melton, I just wanted to tell you I'm finishing up the Kelley case file today, but I need to go back for a witness visit.

CLIFF
The Kelley case? Which one...oh yes! Good, good. Witness visit?

Deana hands him the file to look over.

DEANA

I made some notes from my first visit, but with these types of cases, the forms need a witness for verification.

CLIFF

Of course. I got another call this morning from the City Council about this one, so someone has a bug up their butt about it, and I'd like you to keep their foot out of mine.

He points to a poster on the wall that reads "CASE CLOSED!"

CLIFF (CONT'D)

They're really pushing us to close our cases faster, so the sooner you get it done, the better.

DEANA

Understood. I just wanted to tell you I was taking care of it this afternoon with Micki Ree.

CLIFF

Good. Get it done today.

Deana nods as she exits.

DEANA

You'll have the completed file tomorrow. Thanks.

Deana closes the door and turns to Micki. Gives her the thumbs up. Micki pumps her fist.

MICKI

Yes!

INT. DEANA'S CAR - LATER

They drive through the upscale Clayton neighborhoods slowly, taking in the manicured lawns and ornate landscaping.

MICKI

Think the Kardashians live nearby?

Deana chuckles.

DEANA

I know, right?