

(Name of Project)

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EATING FROM THE CARTON

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FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

(PRESENT)

It is the bedroom of a young female, with a fluffy pink bedspread and posters on the wall.

The shades are drawn and the room is in darkness.

A digital clock on the night stand reads 4:18.

SARA HARDEY, 12, lies asleep in bed, breathing softly.

The bedroom door is flung open and SANDY HARDEY, 39, stands illuminated in the doorway. Light streams into the room.

Irritated, Sara squirms in her bed, avoiding the light. She grunts.

SARA
(muffled by her pillow)
I set my alarm.

Sandy's face is still in darkness. She does not step into the room.

SANDY
(dreamily)
Get up now.

Sara flips over and glances at her clock. She buries her head deeper under the comforter.

SARA
Mom. It's too early.

Sandy wrings her hands in the doorway.

SANDY
(hoarsely)
Get up and get packed.

Sara is still bundled in the comforter and half-asleep.

SARA
What? Why?

Sandy brushes her hair from her eyes.

SANDY
Your grandmother died twenty minutes ago.

Sandy nods and leaves, closing the bedroom door behind her.

Sara slowly sits upright in her bed and flips on a lamp. She takes a deep breath.

INT. KITCHEN TABLE - LATER THAT MORNING

The table is littered with cereal boxes, bowls and spoons.

Sandy sits at the head of the table. She stares blankly ahead.

Sara SCRAPES at her bowl.

Next to her, DANIEL HARDEY, 14, peels a banana.

Across the table, CHRISTINA HARDEY, 8, SLURPS her orange juice.

Several suitcases are piled on the floor at one end of the table.

The family is silent and gloomy.

SARA
So. Which one was it?

The sounds of breakfast stop suddenly.

The three children look to their mother.

Sandy clears her throat.

SANDY
Grandma Hardey. You're father's
mother.

SARA
Oh.

The children continue with their breakfast.

EXT. MINIVAN - LATER THAT DAY

A beige minivan, carrying the Hardey family travels down a lone highway. It is now midday, with a dullish, gray sunlight streaming into the car.

INT. MINIVAN - CONTINUOUS

Sandy drives the minivan distractedly.

Christina sits next to Sandy, looking out the window.

Sara and Daniel are in the backseat. Sara reads a novel.
Daniel plays a hand-held video game.

The wheels grind against the highway and Daniel's game CLICKS
and POPS with enthusiasm.

Sara turns a page in her book.

SANDY

I talked to your father before we
left this morning.

Daniel's game SNAPS electronically.

SANDY (CONT'D)

He got there about an hour ago.

Sara flips a page in her book.

SANDY (CONT'D)

He sounded good.

Christina presses her finger to the window and makes a
smudge.

Sandy frowns.

SANDY (CONT'D)

He sounded good.

Sandy clears her throat and shakes her head.

SANDY (CONT'D)

You know, death is a part of li---

DANIEL

I'm hungry.

Sara looks up from her reading.

SARA

Me too.

CHRISTINA

I have to go to the bathroom.

Sandy nods.

SANDY
Okay. We'll get off at the next
exit.

EXT. MINIVAN - EARLY EVENING

The minivan rolls through a smallish town and takes a left.

EXT. MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

The Hardey minivan slows to a stop outside a shabby twelve-room motel. The paint is cracked and peeling. The shrubbery is untended. The pool is full of fetid, yellow water.

GEORGE HARDEY, 45, stands outside the motel waiting for his family. His face is hard and lined, he looks as if he hasn't slept in days.

Sandy climbs out of the driver's seat and embraces her husband. They hold each other tight as the children slowly exit the minivan.

George hugs each of the children awkwardly as Sandy watches him, worried.

GEORGE
(hoarsely)
I got two rooms.

DANIEL
I'm not staying with Sara.

Sara throws him a look.

SARA
I'm not staying with Daniel.

SANDY
You two knock it off. We'll split
up boys and girls. Okay?

George nods wearily and begins to unpack the car.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - THAT NIGHT

The Hardey family is crowded into one room and sprawled across both double beds. They are eating fried chicken, mashed potatoes, and biscuits from paper cartons.

It is a surreal family dinner scene as the television throws a bluish glow upon the room.

Daniel hops up from the bed and heads for the outside door.

Sandy looks up from her dinner.

SANDY
Where are you going?

DANIEL
To the bathroom.

SANDY
You can use ours. You don't have
go next door.

DANIEL
Yours is broken.

Sandy stops eating abruptly.

SANDY
Since when?

DANIEL
I don't know. This afternoon.

Daniel shrugs and exits the room.

Sandy and George exchange a look.

Sandy stands and exits to explore the bathroom.

Sara watches her father while Christina watches the television.

Off screen, a toilet handle JIGGLES and SCRATCHES.

SANDY (O.S.)
Dammit!

INT. BOYS' ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Daniel is snoring raucously in one bed.

George lies awake, staring at the ceiling, in the other.

INT. GIRLS' ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Sandy sleeps soundly in one bed, lightly snoring.

Christina is snuggled up to Sara in the other bed, both dead to the world.

EXT. MOTEL - THE FOLLOWING MORNING

The streaming sunlight does little to improve the shabby facade of the motel.

Sandy exits one motel room, wearing only a towel, and rushes a few feet and into another room.

INT. GIRLS' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is in complete disarray. Suitcases are thrown open on the unmade beds and clothes are everywhere.

Sandy stands in her towel in the doorway and surveys the chaos. She sighs.

Sara appears from the bathroom in jeans and a sweater and flops on the bed. She picks up her novel and begins to read.

SANDY

Sara, honey, get dressed. We have to be there in an hour.

SARA

I don't want to go. I don't have anything to wear.

Sandy begins to pick through the clothes on one of the beds.

SANDY

I brought that black dress for you. Wear that and your black flats and some stockings.

Sara leafs through her book.

SARA

I don't have any stockings. You didn't bring any.

Sandy frowns at the heap of clothes on the bed.

SANDY

Yes I did. I know I did.

CHRISTINA (O.S.)

Mom!

SANDY

What?

CHRISTINA (O.S.)

Will you braid my hair?

Sandy, still dripping wet, looks frantically from Sara to the bathroom, sighs, and goes to help Christina.

SANDY

(to Sara)

Just get dressed.

SARA

I need to take a shower.

SANDY

Ours is broken. Go next door.

Sara throws down her book.

SARA

God! Just forget it then.

Sara begins to sort through the clothes on the bed.

INT. BOYS' ROOM - AT THE SAME TIME

Daniel and George, both fully dressed in dark suits and shiny shoes, lay on their respective beds watching television.

EXT. MOTEL - LATER THAT MORNING

Daniel and George exit their room and stand next to the minivan, waiting for the girls. George checks his watch.

Sandy, Sara, and Christina exit their room in single file. All three are wearing simple, black frocks. Sandy and Sara are bare-legged.

SANDY

We have to stop at a drugstore. I forgot to pack panty-hose.

The family begins to pile into the car.

GEORGE

There's no time. We're late already.

INT. MINIVAN - CONTINUOUS

George drive with Sandy next to him. The children are in the backseat.

Sandy points out a drugstore on their right.

SANDY
There? See it? Pull over here.

GEORGE
Sandy, please. There's no time.

SANDY
(snippy)
I can't go to a funeral without stockings, George. It's just not done.

GEORGE
(with rising anger)
Great. This is great. Any other errands you need to run? Shall we stop by the post office also? I need stamps.

Sandy rolls her eyes.

George glares at Sandy.

EXT. FUNERAL PARLOR - PARKING LOT - DAY

The parking lot is littered with cars, including the Hardey minivan.

George, Daniel, and Christina stand outside the minivan listening to the struggle raging within.

Elbows and hands SLAP the windows and muffled YELPS can be heard from inside the car.

George checks his watch again.

Daniel plays with a pebble on his shoe.

Christina toys vainly with her long braid.

Another round of CRIES erupts from the interior of the car and the passenger door slides open.

Sandy climbs out, followed by Sara. They are both now wearing black stockings.

Sandy adjusts the waistband of her stockings and smooths the front of her dress. She nods.

The family strides across the parking lot and into the funeral parlor.

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The Hardeys enter the plush, muted lobby, and stand, at a loss.

A small MAN, in a dark suit approaches them, as if from thin air. He shakes George's hand.

MAN

Mr. Hardey. So nice to see you again.

George nods. His face has gone blank and pale.

MAN (CONT'D)

You have a lovely family. We're all set up and ready to begin. Your seats are reserved, right up front. Follow me, please.

The man opens the large oak doors on one side of the lobby.

George is frozen.

Tenderly, Sandy takes his hand and smiles up at him. They walk slowly through the doors, clinging to one another. Sandy turns her head towards the children.

SANDY

It's okay. Just follow me.

Daniel, Sara, and Christina cluster together and follow their parents through the oak doors and into the unknown.

EXT. FUNERAL PARLOR - PARKING LOT - LATER THAT DAY

Daniel, Sara, and Christina sit on the curb in front of the funeral parlor. They sip from grape juice boxes and watch traffic on the nearby highway.

DANIEL

Dad cried.

SARA

I know.

DANIEL

It was weird.

SARA

Yeah.

Christina sips her juice box.

CHRISTINA

That didn't look like Grandma.

SARA

No.

DANIEL

I'm hungry.

SARA

Go back inside. There's a ton of food in there. Casseroles and stuff.

DANIEL

I don't want to go back in there.

CHRISTINA

Me neither.

Sara brushes her hair from her eyes.

SARA

We'll just stay out here for a while, then.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Again, the Hardey family is sprawled across the room eating dinner. This time, they munch on Chinese food from the carton; egg rolls and soy sauce packets are passed around the room.

There is no conversation, only the SLURPING of noodles and the MURMUR of the television can be heard.

EXT. MOTEL - THE FOLLOWING MORNING

George is packing up the Hardey minivan, slowly and sadly. He pauses for a moment and looks around. He sighs and resumes packing.

Sandy exits her motel room and hands George a small bag. He smiles at her. They share a moment alone.

Daniel exits his motel room and breaks the pair apart.

DANIEL

I want to sit in the front seat.

GEORGE

No. Your mom's going to sit up front.

Daniel pouts.

Christina exits her room and climbs into the backseat.

CHRISTINA

Can I play your video game, Daniel?

DANIEL

No.

George closes the back gate of the minivan.

SANDY

Where's Sara?

CHRISTINA

In the bathroom.

Sandy sighs.

INT. GIRLS' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sandy looks around the empty room.

SANDY

Sara?

Sandy walks to the bathroom door and knocks.

SANDY (CONT'D)

Are you in there?

SARA (O.S.)
Yeah.

SANDY
You okay?

Sara opens the bathroom door a crack. She is seated on the toilet.

SARA
Mom?

SANDY
Yeah?

SARA
I think I got my first period.

Sandy sighs.

SANDY
Oh, Jesus.

EXT. MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Sandy marches out to the minivan. The entire family is strapped in and ready to go. All the car doors are open.

George honks the horn at her jokingly.

SANDY
I need my bag.

George gets out of the car.

GEORGE
What?

Sandy throws open the back gate of the minivan.

SANDY
I need my bag.

The back of the car is a neat stack of suitcases, all assembled like a pyramid.

George looks at his handiwork with pride.

GEORGE
Which one?

Sandy points to a small pink bag on the bottom of the stack.

SANDY
That one.

GEORGE
That one? Why? It's all the way
on the bottom.

SANDY
I just need it, *George*.

In the minivan, Daniel and Christina perk up at the sound of this argument.

GEORGE
Why, Sandy?

Sandy throws her hands up.

SANDY
Because Sara got her period! Okay?

Embarrassed, George begins to struggle with the bags.

In the car, Daniel giggles.

CHRISTINA
What did she get? I want one, too.

Sandy stifles a laugh and George goes red.

INT. MINIVAN - LATER THAT DAY

George is driving with Sandy next to him.

The children are in the back seat.

Sara, very pale, reads her novel calmly.

Sandy glances at Sara.

SANDY
Sara?

Sara does not look up from her book.

SARA
What?

SANDY
Today is a very important day.

Sara colors.

GEORGE

Sandy.

SANDY

It is. My little girl is a woman
now.

Sandy sniffles.

SARA

Mom.

Daniel turns up the volume on his video game.

Christina is brushing her hair.

SANDY

I just. I can't believe---

Sandy bursts into tears and begins crying hysterically.

George removes one hand from the steering wheel and pulls
Sandy to his side. He comforts her with one arm and drives
with the other.

Sara smiles, in spite of herself and continues to read her
book.

FADE OUT.