

LIFE AFTER

1st Place Winner of the Carolina Film & Video Festival
Screenplay Competition

2nd Place Winner of the Austin Women's Film,
Music & Literary Competition

2nd Place Winner of the Writer's Place
Short Screenplay Competition

2nd Place Winner of the Wood Hole
Short Screenplay Competition

3rd Place Winner of the Vail Film Festival
Short Screenplay Competition

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FADE IN:

NIGHT

MAGGIE's (early 30's) deep-set eyes are accented by the near black circles as she stares straight ahead at nothing. Paralyzing fear radiates from her wide motionless eyes, which are swollen and glossy but there are no tears. Her hair is wet and matted down around her face while her breathing is slow and controlled.

Maggie sits in shadow with scarce rays of moonlight filtering in and throwing eerie shadows across her face.

A CREAK of a door is heard and then a soft THUD but only Maggie's eyes dart to her left without her head moving. Her eyes then instantly move forward and she squeezes her eyes shut. She breathes to calm herself and then slowly opens her eyes again.

Maggie's hands now clutch the table so that her knuckles are white.

She closes her eyes for a moment then opens them slowly. Her breathing remains constant even though all of her muscles are tensed.

Maggie slowly closes her eyes again and opens them.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Maggie's eyes sparkle with happiness and joy and her makeup - flawless. She sits at the kitchen table wrapping a present. Think "June Cleaver".

The kitchen is brightly lit with twisted white crepe paper on the ceiling and a "Happy Birthday" banner. The counter tops are white and Maggie's muted tones makes her almost blend into the room. Heavenly.

Maggie hums along to the song on the radio as she happily finishes up her present with the last bit of tape on the side. It's perfect.

Maggie smiles, gets up and places the present among 20 others on a side table next to the kitchen door. She goes to the oven and checks the cake, which still needs some time to bake, then pours herself a glass of wine from an already opened bottle on the countertop. She leans back against the sink and smiles as she surveys the room.

DAVID (early 30's) enters the room. He's dressed in a freshly pressed shirt and pants (muted tones) and his face is glowing. Loving life in general and seeing his wife makes him

smile even wider.

DAVID
This is beautiful.

David walks to Maggie and kisses her on the cheek.

MAGGIE
(sweetly)
For now. Give it five minutes.

DAVID
Five minutes?

MAGGIE
All of your sins will come crashing down
on this family.

She kisses him on the cheek sweetly and walks toward the present table and starts to rearrange the presents neatly.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Maggie sits at the table. Her shirt is torn, the "Happy Birthday" banner is ripped in half and the crepe paper is dotted with red and carelessly hanging down.

The once white kitchen now looks grey and dingy. The once pretty present table is smashed and presents are ripped apart and dolls and stuffed animals broken or split open lay everywhere.

Maggie lets out a long steady breath.

Maggie's fingers slowly release their grip from the sides of the table and she places her palms on the table away from her.

MAN
(V.O. Whispered)
Don't move a muscle.

Maggie stops moving and sucks in a quick breath.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Maggie rearranges the presents with a smile on her face.

DAVID
My sins?

MAGGIE
I certainly didn't bring this upon the
family.

DAVID
I'm not the one with unrealistic expectations. I did what I could to make this family work on YOUR level.

MAGGIE
You wanted the same things.

DAVID
I could have done it on my own but it would have taken twenty years. This made it happen now.

Maggie turns to face David.

MAGGIE
Is it going to be worth it? I mean, for what's about to happen, is it worth it?

DAVID
Well, if I knew then what I know now, no. But what's after that?

MAGGIE
I don't know because I'm still sitting in that chair petrified.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Maggie continues to stare straight ahead.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

David walks to Maggie but she turns her back and continues to arrange the presents. David puts his arms around her waist and nuzzles her neck.

DAVID
Lets not fight. Not now.

Maggie gives in, leans against him and smiles as she enjoys his hug.

DAVID (CONT'D)
It might help if you remembered how this actually happened.

Maggie's smile disappears into a small sad frown.

David kisses her softly at the nape of her neck.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Maggie sits in the chair in the dark. She slightly nods,

breathes then closes her eyes tightly then slowly opens them.

INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

Maggie's eyes sparkle with happiness and joy and her makeup is slightly faded and smeared. Her face glistens from the heat of the oven but she doesn't notice or care. She sits contentedly at the kitchen table wrapping a present.

The kitchen is softly lit with pink twisted crepe paper on the ceiling and a "Happy Birthday" banner. The kitchen is almost spotless, as if just cleaned, with a couple of icing containers and baking supplies randomly on the counter. Maggie's dressed in the same outfit but with a hint of color.

Maggie hums along to the song on the radio as she happily finishes up her present with the last bit of tape on the side. The wrapping is a bit wrinkled so she takes a moment to smooth it out with her hands.

Maggie smiles, gets up and places the present among five others on a side table next to the kitchen door. She then goes to the oven and checks the cake which still needs some time to bake then pours herself a glass of wine from an opened bottle on the countertop. She leans back against the sink, wipes her forehead with a dishrag and smiles as she surveys the room.

DAVID (early 30's) enters the room. He's dressed in a slightly wrinkled shirt and pants (hints of color) and he smiles at Maggie.

DAVID

This is beautiful.

Maggie smiles and David softly kisses her cheek then pours his own glass of wine.

MAGGIE

How'd you get her to settle down?

DAVID

We struck a deal. She's quiet in her room for ten minutes while mommy and daddy finish up in the kitchen. If she can do that then she gets to open one present tonight.

MAGGIE

(smiles)

I give her two minutes before she's out of her room snooping.

DAVID
While in her party dress!

The couple share a quick small laugh.

DAVID (CONT'D)
My love, to us.

They toast and drink.

MAGGIE
I love you.

DAVID
Do you still doubt me?

MAGGIE
(smiles)
No. For the first time I feel comfortable
in this... situation.

Maggie goes to David and puts her arms around his neck.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Thank you.

The couple embrace and they fall into a loving kiss.

Maggie breaks away laughing, for if she didn't laugh, she'd
cry.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

MAGGIE
I can't do this.

DAVID
Please, try.

MAGGIE
You're dead!

DAVID
This is our last moment together. Enjoy it.

MAGGIE
(laughing)
She's dead. I can't enjoy this when... I
want to cry but I can't. I want to hate
you but I can't. I can't do anything.

David goes to her and holds her.

DAVID
Just stay a little longer. Give us this
and then...

David looks her in her eyes and kisses her.

DAVID (CONT'D)
I love you. This was my choice.

Maggie pulls away and goes to the present table. All twenty presents look perfect and beautiful. She plays with a ribbon on a present then sighs.

MAGGIE
What do I do?

David looks at the clock.

DAVID
We don't have much time. You don't want that to be
your last memory.

Maggie turns to face David with words on her lips but she says nothing.

Silence as they stare at one another.

Maggie can't stand the distance between them, her eyes well up and she rushes to David. They embrace. Her grasp is tight as she buries her face in his chest.

MAGGIE
(desperate)
Don't leave me.

DAVID
I came back, didn't I?

The clock on the wall ticks away.

The couple doesn't move. Maggie's knuckles are white as she grasps onto his shirt harder.

The second hand moves slowly around the clock.

The door to the kitchen is kicked open and Maggie looks up to David with pleading eyes.

INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

SLOW MOTION

Maggie and David are kissing in the middle of the kitchen when the door is kicked open and the couple separate in

shock/terror as they watch the guns waving in front of them. Maggie starts to scream a silent scream.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

MAN 1 & MAN 2 are never clearly seen. They are two daunting dark figures with guns.

Maggie continues to stare up at David as the two men wave around their guns threateningly and yell at the couple, yet unheard. The men seem to be moving in fast forward as the couple are in real time. The men oblivious to their actions.

DAVID

Go back. Don't remember this.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Maggie sits at the table. Her eyes dart around the room. She slowly turns her head to the window.

The moon is shining in on her. The curtains are blowing in the slight breeze. Maggie catches a red spot on the curtain and she closes her eyes again and faces forward.

She squeezes her eyes shut again.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Maggie is in David's arms as the two men run around and continue their muted yelling and screaming at the couple. One man is destroying the presents as the other yells at David.

DAVID

I said to go back.

MAGGIE

I can't. You're here.

INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

The men grab Maggie and toss her into the kitchen chair. MAN 1 grabs her hands and puts them palms down onto the table.

Maggie's eyes are wide with terror.

MAN 1 (O.S.)

Don't move or...

The Man 1 shows her the gun.

Maggie sits, tears streaming down her face.

The Man 2 grabs David and forces him to his knees and stands

behind him with a gun to his head.

MAN 2 (O.S.)
Do you know why I'm here?

David nods 'yes'.

MAN 2 (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Good. Is there anyone else here?

David shakes his head 'no'.

Maggie sees the kitchen door start to open. Through the crack she sees the pink frilly dress her young daughter is wearing.

Man 2 sees the door start to open and without hesitation he aims his gun at the door.

GIRL (O.S.)
Mommy?

GUN BLAST.

Maggie's mouth is agape staring ahead with tears flowing more freely but she remains silent.

Man 1 goes to the door and presses it open to find a little girl laying on the floor dead.

MAN 2 (O.S.)
Damn.
(to David as he points the gun toward
Girl)
Did she deserve that?

David's mouth hangs open in shock as she stares at his dead daughter beyond the kitchen door. He's motionless, speechless.

The man points his gun at Maggie and lightly kicks David to get his attention.

MAN 2 (O.S.)
Does she deserve it?

David looks to Maggie then to the man and shakes his head 'no'.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Maggie and David are still holding on to one another in the middle of the kitchen as the men move around them. They move so fast that they are blurred but emit no sound.

DAVID
Don't do this. Close your eyes and forget.

MAGGIE
I can't. Every time I close my eyes I see
that damned... curtain!

DAVID
You need to find the strength to get up
and leave here.

MAGGIE
I can't.

DAVID
I'll show you. Okay?

Maggie doesn't move.

David pushes Maggie away to look in her eyes.

DAVID (CONT'D)
They're gone. It's just you and me.

The men that were once rushing around are now gone.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Okay?

Maggie nods.

DAVID (CONT'D)
You have to promise not to look down.

MAGGIE
But...

DAVID
(firm)
No, promise.

Maggie nods again.

INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

MAN 2
Want to say anything?

David shakes his head.

MAN 1
For someone who made a lot of money with
his big mouth he sure is quiet now.

MAN 2

Not even to your wife? Tsk tsk, where's the love anymore?

Man 2 cocks the gun behind David's head.

Man 1 slaps his hands down around Maggie's on the table, which startles her.

MAN 1

(to Maggie)

Look straight ahead and don't move a muscle.

Maggie nods.

Man 1 smiles a sickening grin and slowly releases her hands.

A GUN BLAST goes off. Maggie's arms reflex as she covers her ears with her hands.

David is heard slumping to the floor.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

David is sitting Maggie down in the chair.

Maggie smiles weakly and nods. David kisses her forehead softly and smiles.

DAVID

Get out of the chair and stand facing the window.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Maggie sits at the kitchen table. She looks toward the window.

DAVID

(O.S.)

It's okay.

Maggie slowly moves her chair back and tentatively gets out of her chair towards the window. She stands erect and looks out again at the moon trying not to stare at the spot on the curtain.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

DAVID

Now turn left and walk slowly.

Maggie begins to turn and looks down at the white floors.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Don't look down, love.

Maggie looks up again and takes slow steps.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Maggie takes slow steps. David's body can be seen laying on the floor in a pool of blood on the opposite side of the table.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

DAVID
Now, turn left again towards the door.

Maggie is motionless.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

MAGGIE
I can't go to the door.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

DAVID
It's fine, baby. No one is there. Just spilled books. Come on.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Maggie is near tears but none fall.

MAGGIE
I...

DAVID
(O.S.)
Please.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

DAVID
Just a few steps. Slow.

Maggie takes one very slow step.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Maggie steps towards to door. Another slow step. David's arm lays in her path.

DAVID
(O.S.)
There's a couple of books in your way
just step over them.

Maggie slowly lifts her leg and begins to pull it over his
arm ("books"). Her toe brushes his arm.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

DAVID
A little higher, babe.

Maggie lifts her leg higher over a stack of books (his arm)
on the floor.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Maggie sets her foot down on the other side of David's arm.
She lifts her other leg and places it on the floor next to
the first.

Maggie sighs in relief and now stands in front of the kitchen
door.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Maggie stands in front of the door. The room is quiet.

David's come up behind her and hugs her tight.

DAVID
See that's easy. This is the hard part
but you can do it. There's the small
loveseat blocking the door. You just need
to push hard and open the door wide.
Okay?

Maggie nods.

MAGGIE
Can we stay here for a moment?

David hugs her again.

DAVID
You'll be fine. Just know that I love
you.

Maggie smiles.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Now push on that door.

Maggie places her palms on the door, breathes in...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

... exhales.

Maggie slightly pushes on the door but it's not budging.

Maggie's daughter lays blocking the door along with books and other debris.

Maggie pushes harder.

Her daughter's body begins to move along the floor and frees the door.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

DAVID

A little harder babe. The sofa is almost free.

Maggie pushes harder and the door gives way and Maggie now stands with the sun blazing through from the other room upon her.

David stands in front of her in the sunlight smiling.

DAVID (CONT'D)

You're free, baby. You made it.

Maggie enjoys the warmth of the sunlight.

MAGGIE

What now?

David smiles.

Maggie's Daughter runs up to David and pulls on his shirt.

DAUGHTER

Come on Mommy! Daddy!

DAVID

We'll see you later, okay?

The Daughter runs off and out the main door to the house.

David smiles one last time at Maggie and follows his daughter.

INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

Man 1 grabs Maggie's hands from her ears and slams them down

on the table.

MAN 1

I told you not to move.

Man 1 draws his gun and shoots Maggie point blank in the temple. Maggie slumps forward and her head hits the table, eyes wide, looking towards the window and the spot on the curtains.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Maggie smiles and tears finally fall from her eyes.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The deceased Maggie is slumped over the table. Her hands are still palms down on the table and the moon is lighting her pale face and eyes.

In the kitchen, which is now behind Maggie as she stands in the doorway, lays David on the floor, Maggie slumped onto the table and her Daughter just outside the kitchen door.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Maggie cries but wears a smile and happily follows David and Maggie out of the house and into the light.

FADE TO BLACK.