

GRIEF

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Remote, winding road. Thick trees on either side. Rain falls.  
The headlights of a modest sedan pierce the gloom.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

HENRY (30) drives, squinting through the rain. A pleasant, friendly-looking family man.

His wife in the passenger seat. AMANDA (30). Pretty. She stares out the window as dark trees fly by.

In the back seat, EMMA (8) works diligently in a coloring book.

COUNTRY MUSIC plays on the radio.

Emma glances at the radio.

The station suddenly changes. POP MUSIC blares.

HENRY  
What the hell?

AMANDA  
Language.

HENRY  
It did it again. I'll take the whole car back to the dealer if I have to.

Henry changes it back to COUNTRY. Emma GIGGLES.

Amanda turns around in her seat.

AMANDA  
Whatcha working on?

EMMA  
Tinkerbell. I'm making her dress blue this time.

AMANDA  
Can I see?

EMMA  
Not until I'm done.

AMANDA  
Come on! Just a peek?

EMMA  
No!

Amanda stretches, but the seat belt prevents her from getting a full view.

Amanda sighs. Quickly unclips the seat belt. Free, she leans into the back seat.

AMANDA  
(with a smile)  
Now, show me.

Emma playfully covers the book. Smiles at her mother.

The headlights of an oncoming vehicle appear out of nowhere in the front window.

Emma opens her mouth to scream...

...as Amanda simply smiles at the little girl, oblivious.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

The sounds of a HORRIFIC CAR CRASH fade in the distance.

A hand jots notes on a yellow legal pad. FLASHES of words: Grief. Loss. Depressed. Delusions.

Emma brings crayon to coloring book. Her strokes are careful. Deliberate.

DR. FREEMAN watches her.

DR. FREEMAN  
Tell me about your dad.

Emma shrugs.

EMMA  
He's nice.

DR. FREEMAN  
He is. He's a very nice man. How has he been feeling?

EMMA  
I dunno.

DR. FREEMAN  
Does he ever talk about her?

EMMA  
Sometimes.

DR. FREEMAN  
Have you seen him cry?

EMMA  
Sure. At the funeral.

DR. FREEMAN  
What about after the funeral? At home, when it's just the two of you.

EMMA  
Yeah... sometimes, when he thinks I'm not looking.

DR. FREEMAN  
How does that make you feel... seeing your daddy cry?

Another shrug.

EMMA  
I dunno.

DR. FREEMAN  
Don't you think that crying is normal when something bad happens?

EMMA  
I guess.

Dr. Freeman sighs. Writes on the pad.

DR. FREEMAN  
Your dad says you don't cry very much.

EMMA  
Why would I?

DR. FREEMAN  
It's a sad thing for a little girl to lose her mom.

EMMA  
I didn't lose her.

DR. FREEMAN  
You didn't?

Emma stops coloring. Stares at Dr. Freeman.

EMMA  
I already told you... she's still  
here. I can see her.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT - BEGIN FLASHBACK

TITLE: "One week ago."

Rain falls on a modest house. All is quiet.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE EMMA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Henry stares at a picture on the wall: Him, Amanda and  
Emma... in happier times.

He smiles through eyes that fill with tears. Gently touches  
the picture.

Behind the closed door to Emma's room, he hears a VOICE.

He leans against the door. Yes, definitely a VOICE. Hard to  
make out. Muffled. Sounds like Emma talking to someone.

He opens the door--

INT. EMMA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

--and finds Emma sitting on the bed. Perfect posture.

She slowly turns to Henry.

EMMA  
Hi Daddy.

HENRY  
Who were you talking to?

EMMA  
Mommy.

He goes to her. Kneels at her feet. Tenderly brushes hair  
away from her face.

HENRY  
Oh baby... I miss her too.

EMMA  
Why do you miss her? She's right  
there.

Henry looks. The room is empty.

HENRY  
Emma, she's gone.

EMMA  
But she--

HENRY  
--Listen to me. She's gone... and  
she's never coming back. Whatever  
you saw, it's all in your head.

EMMA  
She's real.

HENRY  
It's your imagination. Like when  
you play with your dolls.

EMMA  
I know what imagination is.

HENRY  
That's enough!

Emma flinches.

Henry reacts to his own outburst. He wraps his arms around  
her. Kisses her forehead.

HENRY  
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to yell.

He pulls back the covers.

HENRY  
Time for bed. It's late.

She crawls in. Turns away from him.

HENRY  
Good night. I love you.

She doesn't reply.

He walks to the door.

EMMA

(soft)

She's here, you know. Protecting me.

HENRY

And she always will be.

INT. HENRY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Henry lies in bed, staring at the empty space where his wife used to sleep. He touches the pillow. Smiles.

He removes his wedding ring. Places it on the bedside table.

Eyes close.

All quiet. Until...

...a soft VOICE. A woman... talking. Whispering something. Far away.

Henry's eyes snap open. He sits up.

HENRY

Hello?

Nothing but silence.

Then... out of the corner of his eye... a strange sight: his wedding ring floats into the air. It hovers above the table for a moment, then drops back down.

Henry LAUGHS as his eyes fill with tears.

HENRY

Amanda... it is you. I miss you. Oh God, I miss you.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE HENRY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Emma leans her ear against the door. Listens. Smiles.

Quietly, she tip-toes back to her room.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY - END FLASHBACK

Dr. Freeman taps pencil against paper.

DR. FREEMAN  
So his ring just floated up in the  
air?

EMMA  
That's what he told me.

DR. FREEMAN  
And you believe him?

EMMA  
Why would he lie?

DR. FREEMAN  
I'm sure your father saw the ring  
float up into the air. I'm just not  
convinced your mother was the one  
that made it happen.

EMMA  
Then how did it happen?

Dr. Freeman throws his pencil at Emma.

The pencil STOPS, mid-air, inches from her eye.

DR. FREEMAN  
How long have you known you could  
do... that?

The pencil spins. Floats. Then falls, gently, into her lap.

EMMA  
Since I was little. I mostly just  
change the stations on Daddy's  
radio. I couldn't really move  
objects until--

DR. FREEMAN  
--your mom died.

EMMA  
Yep.

DR. FREEMAN  
Do you think it's a good idea to  
lie to him?

EMMA  
It makes him happy... to think that  
she's watching over us. I want him  
to be happy.



Dr. Freeman glances at the pencil.

DR. FREEMAN  
Can I have it back?

EMMA  
Are you gonna tell him?

DR. FREEMAN  
I'm not allowed. Doctor-patient  
confidentiality.

EMMA  
Thanks. I like you.

Emma closes the coloring book. Stands.

EMMA  
Can I go home now?

DR. FREEMAN  
Of course. Do you want to come back  
next week?

EMMA  
Will you have more coloring books?

DR. FREEMAN  
Of course.

The pencil floats across the room... into Dr. Freeman's  
waiting hand.

EMMA  
I'll see you next week.

FADE OUT.