

ALICE

By

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FADE IN:

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Darkness consumes two NAKED BODIES, wrapped in each other, they kiss, touch.

ALICE (30's) kisses DAVID (40's) long and hard. David breaks it.

DAVID
Next weekend.

ALICE
I can't.

DAVID
Week after?

Alice shakes her head, a determined no.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Only so much we can do for an hour
in the dark.

ALICE
I like the dark.

DAVID
It's not as if I'm suggesting we
tape us, or anything. It's just a
weekend away.

Alice shifts her position.

DAVID (CONT'D)
You're not happy, walk away from
him.

Alice lets her hand fall from David's waist. A healed cut visible on a knuckle, her wedding band glints in the shadows.

ALICE
And my kids?

David has no answer. Alice moves away, the passion is obviously gone. David accepts the inevitable, moves on.

DAVID
Monday?

Alice gets off the bed, disappears into the darkness.

ALICE
Maybe.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

Alice, pale, haunted, guilty, slips from the hotel entrance, and crosses the road.

EXT. MERCER STREET - DAY

Alice checks her phone, drops it back into her bag, increases her pace.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Alice leans on her desk, chin cupped in one hand. She stares through the monitor. An occasional CLICK from a mouse. Her eyes drift down.

On the desk, a few photo frames filled with smiling kids, a boy and a girl, are grouped together like a shrine. There are none of a husband.

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

A Victorian terrace, renovated, modernised. A photo of Alice, happy, and a man, MATTHEW, adorns one wall.

Alice places car keys in a bowl on a table, carefully drops her handbag beneath it. She hangs her coat on a rack nearby, gently examines the fabric of it with her fingers as if she's never felt it before. She leans in, sniffs the coat.

She's lost in the moment, snaps back to the real world as the kitchen door opens --

Matthew, early 40's, a tree trunk, over six foot, a man with a justified superiority complex, holds the door open, glares at Alice.

A face peers around the door frame -- ANDREW, 8, grins, orange sauce smeared around his lips and cheeks. Behind him, ABIGAIL, 11, throws a look at Alice that could cut glass. Abigail unpacks more take-out food, pours it on her plate.

MATT

You're late. Again.

ALICE

My meeting over-ran.

MATT

Forget how to use a phone?

Andrew pushes past Matt, a sheet of paper clutched in his hand. He holds it up to Alice. She glances down at a picture of a happy family made from a rainbow of crayon.

(CONTINUED)

ALICE

That's great. Find some room on the fridge.

MATT

Go on, back in the kitchen.

Andrew retreats. Matt closes the door gently grabs Alice's arm, and pulls her into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Matt shuts the door, turns to Alice and --

SLAP!

A wet sound, laced with the crack of wood. Except it's Alice's cheek.

Alice reels away, covers the side of her face instinctively, eyes wide, the reality registering.

MATT

You're supposed to call.

Matt reaches for the door.

MATT (CONT'D)

They were looking forward to seeing you. They miss you. Shouldn't disappoint them.

Matt steps into the hall, rubs his palm. Alice stands there, statuesque. She quivers slightly, swallows. She hears the kitchen door open, rowdy kids, silence.

INT. BATHROOM

Alice sits on the toilet, leans over the sink, a wet flannel pressed against her face. She can't bring herself to look in the mirror.

INT. HALLWAY

Alice creeps down the stairs, enters the kitchen, closes the door.

Her voice carries through the wood.

ALICE (O.S.)

Oh no I'm fine, chicken. It's a heat rash, or something I had at lunch.

(beat)

I'm okay.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Alice rinses plates in the sink, slips them into the dishwasher. Matthew comes up behind her, squeezes her bum, gently, then harder, digs his fingers in. Alice flinches, pushes up against the sink.

MATT

I'm sorry.

Matthew kisses her neck, tenderly, passionately. Alice moves towards him, towards the pleasure --

Matthew whips his hand away, and walks out.

The tap continues to run.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alice lies in bed, faces away from Matt, as he climbs under the duvet and turns off the light.

Matt puts his arm around Alice, gropes her. It's tender at first, grows rough.

Alice flinches away, but Matt holds on, pulls her closer. All of Alice's squirming does nothing. She gives in.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Alice sips from a cup. Matthew leans against the island, reads through some loose pages. The kids fly into the kitchen, grab bags, lunch boxes.

Alice leaves the cup, glances at Matthew, hustles the kids out the door.

ALICE

Let's go, come on.

Matthew never looks up.

INT. LAND ROVER - DAY

Alice at the wheel, kids strapped in the back.

A red light -- Alice adds more powder to her face from a small compact. She catches Abigail staring intently at her in the rear view mirror.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Andrew and Abigail slide from the back seats, drag themselves towards the school entrance.

(CONTINUED)

Alice leans out the drivers window.

ALICE
I'll see you at home, okay?

Andrew nods. Abigail stares at her feet. Alice notices.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Kisses?

Andrew charges over, pecks his mother on the cheek. Abigail faces away.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Aby?

Abigail stays rigid. Then moves towards the school.

ABIGAIL
Bye.

Andrew waves, follows his sister. Alice powers up the window, pulls away from the kerb.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

It's quiet as Alice strides across the marble floor, coat draped over her arm. She smiles at SERENA behind the desk -- familiar, known.

SERENA
Welcome back, miss.

ALICE
Thank you.

Serena slides a hotel business card across the counter. Handwritten on the back -- "1305, 3RD FLR"

SERENA
Lift is around the corner.

Alice glances at the handwritten scrawl, palms the card.

ALICE
I know. Thanks.

That familiar smile again. Alice leaves the lobby.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - OUTSIDE ROOM 1305

Staring at the door, Alice knocks firmly on the veneer. It opens a crack.

David, severely handsome, stands in the gap, smiles. He opens the door fully, allows Alice to step in.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

False luxury -- a second-rate realisation of no expense spared.

Alice places her coat on the nearest chair. David notices her cheek, still discoloured.

DAVID
You okay? What happened?

He caresses her cheek with a finger tip. It's delicate, precise.

Alice flinches, offers David a slight smile. She kisses David on the lips.

ALICE
I slept on it funny.

She pushes away from David, slips her suit jacket off, unzips her skirt, let's it slide to the floor.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

Alice pulls her coat over her shoulders, steps onto the street.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Alice pays for a large coffee, thanks the cashier, leaves.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Alice hugs the coffee cup, sips occasionally, window shops -- She stares at sales displays, her mind clearly far from the high street.

Every so often, she watches people. Looks away, guiltily.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Alice sits behind her desk, toys with her mobile phone. A KNOCK on her open office door frame -- David stands there, grinning.

DAVID
That eh, doctors appointment go okay?

Alice comes around the desk, pulls David inside, away from the doorway.

(CONTINUED)

ALICE
You know it did.

Workers in the bullpen outside look over, watch.

Alice gestures back outside. David nods, closes the door.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Not here.

She moves away, but he grabs her, kisses her roughly.

ALICE (CONT'D)
No! Dammit.

David lets her go.

DAVID
Why not? No one can see!

He's giddy, excited.

ALICE
They saw you come in, leering like
a bloody teenager who got his first
look at a woman's breast.
(pointing back outside)
Those people talk. Someone
upstairs has had two abortions.

DAVID
Really?

ALICE
No! That's my point.
(beat)
We're crossing a line doing
anything here.

DAVID
Line's already been crossed, Alice.

ALICE
You think?

David looks at her for a moment, relents.

DAVID
Okay. Okay.

He backs towards the door, opens it.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Okay.

He leaves, door wide open. Workers stare in at Alice. She
lets them have their gawk, then shuts the door.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Alice walks in, closes the door behind her. Only Matthew is there, sitting on a stool at the island.

Alice waits for him to say something. Nothing comes.

ALICE
Where are the kids?

Matthew takes a couple of breaths.

MATT
At my mothers. Slut.

He says it so softly, Alice hesitates -- as if she didn't hear it correctly.

ALICE
What?

Matthew looks up.

MATT
They're at my mothers. Slut.

This time, it's perfectly clear. Matthew slips off the stool, moves around the island, stalking her.

MATT (CONT'D)
Tarting yourself up in the car.
Who is he? Or she?

It clicks --

ALICE
Aby.

Matthew slams his palm down on the counter top.

MATT
In front of your daughter!

He's on her before she has time to blink.

Matthew hits Alice hard, his anger let free. Alice bounces off the fridge, knocks magnets and photos to the floor.

Another SMACK, Alice drops to the ground. Her arms up, but useless under Matthew's strength, his smothering attack.

Andrew's drawing of a happy family floats to the floor, a quiet observer as Matthew continues to beat Alice in the background.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Matthew opens the fridge, doesn't notice Andrew's drawing crushed under his feet. His knuckles are dappled with blood. He pulls out a beer, slides back onto the stool and takes a long drink.

Alice lies on the floor, in the corner, shaking, held up by the cabinets. Slowly she brushes damp sticky hair from her face, tries to stand. She slips back to the ground.

Matthew glances over, has another drink.

Alice manages to kneel, pulls herself up using the counter as leverage.

Alice staggers to the door, pulls it open, stumbles into the hall. She grabs her coat and bag, flees out the front door.

Matthew stays at the counter, drinks.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

Alice shuffles along slowly, head low, fearful. She stops, groans -- a sudden pain hitting her. She leans against a wall, searches her coat pocket.

Alice pulls her hand out, clutching a used tissue. Something small falls from her pocket. She peers down at the ground -- the hotel business card.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Alice drags herself through the revolving door.

Serena, at reception, sees her, is about to smile, when she sees her face, a bloody mess.

Serena races around the desk, wraps an arm around Alice.

ALICE
I just need a room.

SERENA
You need help.

Serena waves the PORTER over. He sprints to her side when he catches sight of Alice's state.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Tea, and a brandy. In the bar.

The porter runs on ahead. Serena guides Alice towards the bar.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Alice cradles a glass of brandy in shaking hands. The tea sits on the table, cold.

Serena gently wipes blood from Alice's face with a towel and water.

Blood drips to the table, running from Alice's nose suddenly.

ALICE
Sorry. I'm sorry.

SERENA
Shush. For what?

Serena holds the towel to Alice's nose.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Not your fault.
(beat)
You're not going to tell me this
was a door?

Alice squeezes her eyes shut --

ALICE
The one at home.

Alice finally breaks down.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

Alice sits on the bed, wrapped in a blanket. The door opens slowly, admits Serena and two PARAMEDICS.

They gently assess Alice, indicate her cheekbone, speak to her softly. Serena stands to one side, biting a finger nail.

Alice nods her understanding. The paramedics help her stand and lead her out of the room.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Alice is folded into an uncomfortable plastic chair, clean blanket over her shoulders. Her face is now a patchwork of tape and stitches.

Noises filter through to her -- Doors creak open, hard shoes hit tiled floor, medical equipment beeps its position.

Alice looks down at her hands, rubs them together, tries to wipe caked blood from them, as if seeing it for the first time -- trembling, panicked fingers.

A shadow falls over Alice.

(CONTINUED)

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Alice?

Alice looks up into a young, friendly, almost pubescent face. Alice blinks. GARDA BRENDAN smiles down at her.

BRENDAN

Can I sit?

Alice nods.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

This is my colleague, Sandra.

A young female Garda steps up.

SANDRA

Hi.

ALICE

Hi.

BRENDAN

We were told you might want to talk to us. You've been through the mill.

Alice rocks forwards and back, nodding vaguely with her whole body.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

We can speak here, or go into a private room, if you like? Wherever you feel comfortable.

Alice stares at the far wall.

SANDRA

Can I get you anything, Alice?

It takes Alice a moment, but she looks up at Sandra, shakes her head.

BRENDAN

Maybe a tea.

(to Sandra)

Get us all a tea. Sweet.

Sandra moves off up the corridor.

ALICE

I can't say anything.

BRENDAN

Why is that, Alice?

ALICE

I can't, I just can't.

(CONTINUED)

BRENDAN

If you want to say something, say
it. We're here for you now.
Anything at all. Okay?

Alice nods. Murmurs something. She rubs her hands again.

ALICE

I can't. I cheated.

She waits for judgement.

BRENDAN

That doesn't justify his actions.

Alice shakes her head.

ALICE

I started it... after he started.

Brendan places a hand on her shoulder, just for comfort, no
pressure.

ALICE (CONT'D)

He'd use it against me.

Brendan nods, understands.

BRENDAN

I think he's already used enough
against you, don't you?

Alice sniffs, wipes her nose in a worn tissue. Brendan takes
a clean packet from his pocket, offers one to Alice. She
gladly takes it.

ALICE

Thanks.

She scrunches the tissue into a ball in her bloody fist.

ALICE (CONT'D)

(softly)
It's the little things.

Alice rubs her other shoulder.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Matthew clutches Alice's shoulder tight, painfully. Her hair
is grabbed, tugged.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - PRESENT

Alice lets her hand drop from her shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

BRENDAN

My mum's husband, I guess my dad,
he always went for the body. Under
the clothes. Invisible scars.
Everything hidden. I was eleven by
the time he ended it. I saw it all
like a bad dream that kept
recurring every night.

(beat)

I can't imagine what it was like
for her, fully awake.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Matthew punches Alice in the gut, drops her to the floor.
She gasps for breath, eyes wide.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - PRESENT

Alice starts to cry.

BRENDAN

It's dangerous for everybody when
the scars become visible.

ALICE

I'm terrified for my kids.

She leans against Brendan, nestles in. He puts his arm
around her, holds her.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Matthew helps Alice off the floor, hugs her, holds her,
comforts her. Kisses her forehead. She's in too much shock
to resist the sudden closeness.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - PRESENT

Alice whimpers in Brendan's arms, turns towards him, face
against his neck.

Brendan shifts his position. Alice moves with him, pushes
her lips closer to his --

BRENDAN

Okay, hold on there, Alice.

Alice pulls away as Sandra returns with the teas.

Brendan turns to Sandra.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

It's okay, she's just upset.

(CONTINUED)

ALICE

God, what am I doing, I'm sorry,
I'm so sorry. My god.

Alice stands up fast, drops the blanket. She wipes her face, smears tears and blood, flinches as pain shoots through her cheeks.

BRENDAN

It's okay, you did nothing wrong.

ALICE

I have to go.

Alice turns, accelerates down the corridor, bursts through the doors at the end.

INT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - DAWN

Alice walks past a bleary eyed family -- GRANDPARENTS gathered around a young COUPLE with a newborn baby swaddled in the mothers arms. Even this early in the morning, they can do nothing but smile at the new baby in their life.

The grandfather records the moment on a tiny video camera. Preserved for ever.

Alice slows, turns and looks back, drinks in the happiness, just for a moment.

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE

Alice steps out onto the ambulance bay, wipes tears from her face.

The main doors slide shut behind her.

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - EARLY MORNING

It's deserted, as Alice climbs the steps to the platform, arms wrapped around herself, trying to be invisible.

She walks right to the edge, toes out over the tracks, as the rumble of an oncoming train grows.

The train WHIPS by as Alice pulls her feet back.

INT. COMMUTER TRAIN - MORNING

Alice lies against the window, rocks as the carriage rattles along.

The sun rises over Dublin bay as the train crosses the river.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Alice enters quietly, sees Matthew sitting at the table, drinking coffee. He glances up at Alice, looks away.

ALICE
Can't look at me?

She places her handbag on the counter beside the door, opens it, slips her keys inside.

MATT
I can look at you fine.

ALICE
Then look at me.

Matthew put his cup down, frowns over it at Alice.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Look at me.

Matthew actually looks at her. Sees the damage.

MATT
I didn't realise it was that bad.

ALICE
You didn't realise?

MATT
No, I didn't.

Matthew stands, moves towards her.

ALICE
Stop. Enough.

Matthew holds out a hand.

MATT
Come on...

ALICE
You're near enough to talk.

MATT
Okay.

Alice takes a loud breath, wipes her hair back from her face.

ALICE
Where are the kids? Are they here?

MATT
Upstairs. In bed.

(CONTINUED)

ALICE
It's a school morning.

MATT
I gave them the day off.

ALICE
You can-- you can't just do that.
I should bring them.

Matthew takes a step closer.

MATT
My mother's coming over, mind them.
Again. It's all arranged.

ALICE
What? Why?

MATT
You were out.

ALICE
No. Tell her not to come.

MATT
You tell her. Tell her about the
other guy you spent the night with.

Alice's eyes widen.

ALICE
The other guy was a cop who sat
with me in the emergency room. The
room you fucking put me in!

Matthew reaches her, grabs her shoulders. Pushes her across
the kitchen against the counter.

MATT
Enough! You'll wake the kids. Do
you want them to see you like this?

Matthew shakes her.

ALICE
Do you?

Matthew's disarmed. For a moment at least.

MATT
I'll get my mother to take the kids
for a while, or mov--

ALICE
NO! You're not taking my children!

Alice pushes his arms away, lunges back.

(CONTINUED)

ALICE (CONT'D)

No!

Matthew SMACKS her hard across the cheek, opens up the taped wound.

Pure rage takes over. Ragged punches slam into Alice, body blows, glances to the head.

She grabs at the counter top, desperately searches for a weapon of any kind. But nothing falls to hand.

Alice SCREAMS as one blow hits real hard. Another yelp as the onslaught continues.

Alice's hand grabs a jar, but she can't get a grip. It slide over the edge, SMASHES on the tiled floor.

Another couple of hits --

The kitchen door blasts open.

Andrew and Abigail stand there, innocently unaware.

Matthew looks up to them, breathes hard.

MATT

Your mother fell.

Alice pushes Matthew's weight away, climbs to her feet, reopened wounds drip and ooze blood.

ALICE

No. I didn't.

She faces her children. She grabs a towel, wipes away the blood as best she can.

Alice pushes Matthew out of the way, grabs her bag, and guides the kids into the hall.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I'm okay. I'm okay. Come on.

The kids look back at their father, not frightened -- like they're watching a stranger disappear.

MATT

Bring them back here!

Alice doesn't turn or acknowledge him. She walks out the front door, leaves it wide open.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Alice has her arms wrapped around the kids in the back seat. It's a bright morning. Sunlight fills the interior.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Alice places her bag on the counter, opens it.

INT. TAXI - PRESENT

Alice hugs Abigail tight, glances at her.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Alice drops her keys into the bag, props her phone up over the edge, it's camera facing out.

INT. TAXI - PRESENT

Alice caresses Andrew's shoulder, stares ahead.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The camera phone sits silently, watching the kitchen. Vague shapes pass in front of it.

INT. TAXI - PRESENT

Pulling up outside a building.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The screen of the phone, blinking RED DOT in the corner, focused on recording every second of Matthew beating Alice.

EXT. TAXI - PRESENT

Alice has her arms around the kids. Through sliding doors, Garda Brendan emerges, blankets draped over his arm. Shock flickers across his face as he sees Alice.

A medical team run out behind him, attend to Alice.

She's returned to the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL - PRIVATE ROOM - DAY

Andrew and Abigail keep a vigil beside Alice's bed. A couple of cheap toys are scattered around.

Brendan enters, sits down beside Alice. She smiles, passes over her phone. Brendan takes it, nods. He pats Andrew on the head as he leaves.

(CONTINUED)

Alice turns to her kids, touches Abigail's face.

Brendan stops at the door, looks back. Alice glances over at him as he steps out and pulls the door.

ALICE

Leave it open.

Brendan tips his head at Alice, leaves.

Alice lies there, free, safe.

FADE OUT.

THE END