

SECRETS

Written by

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FADE IN:

1

EXT. CEMETERY - MORNING

1

The well manicured cemetery is situated on green rolling hills. A small crowd is gathered around the grave of CAROLINE WALKER, late 70s, mother of Maggie.

PASTOR DANIEL, late 60s, kind face, is at the head of the grave, officiating the service. A sign language interpreter is just off to the right of the pastor.

PASTOR DANIEL

We are all here today because of Caroline's great capacity to love. It's when we lose someone that we realize not only how much we cared about them, but how much they cared about us. Even though we mourn the absence of Caroline, her love will always be with us. Let us pray. Our Father, who art in Heaven...

Heads are lowered. The prayer continues in the background. MAGGIE BENSON, late 30s, overwhelmed and distracted, is standing between her best friend SHANNON, late 30s, young for her age, and her deaf son JASON, 9, shy and sad. MRS. BERG, late 70s, a busy body, has her arm around Jason.

Maggie looks at her Mom's casket, then at her son Jason and finally at her dad's grave marker. It's adjacent to Caroline's grave and indicates he has been dead many years.

Maggie glances at the other headstones, one in particular catches her eye. "Baby Sarah." There are no birth or death dates, just an inscription: "Speak softly, a dream is buried here." Maggie is startled out of her daze by someone offering condolences.

WOMAN #1 AT GRAVESIDE

Your Mother was such a wonderful woman.

MAGGIE

Yes, Thank you.

A man approaches and shakes Maggie's hand, then rubs Jason's head.

MAN AT GRAVESIDE

Let us know if you need anything.

MAGGIE  
Thank you, I will.

SHANNON  
You OK?

MAGGIE  
Yeah, I'm good.

SHANNON  
Okay, I'll head over to your Mom's  
place. Take your time, sweetie.  
I've got someone covering me for  
the day, so we have all afternoon  
to get things done.

MAGGIE  
Thanks Shannon...

Shannon signs and speaks to Jason.

SHANNON  
You good?

JASON  
(In sign language)  
Yes.

SHANNON  
(In sign language)  
See you later alligator?

JASON  
Later.

Shannon leaves as MR. SAM KELLY, late 30s, black, approaches.

MAGGIE  
Thanks so much for coming, Sam.

MR. KELLY  
(In sign language)  
I'm headed into school. I can give  
Jason a ride to class if you like.

Maggie signs to Jason. Her signing is slow and clumsy.

MAGGIE  
(In sign language)  
Are you sure you want to go to  
school? You can stay with me  
today.

JASON

I'll go with Mr. Kelly. Today's the day the magician comes. I have to be there.

MAGGIE

Jason, slow down, I didn't understand.

Jason is noticeably upset about not being understood. He throws a minor tantrum by quickly turning away from his Mother and kicking at the grass, then signs to Mr. Kelly.

JASON

I want to go with you.

MR. KELLY

The assembly, we have a magician coming in this afternoon. He doesn't want to miss it.

Jason turns to leave. Maggie grabs Jason so he is facing her, and so he can read her lips.

MAGGIE

Grab your backpack from the car.

Jason turns away from Maggie, angry. Maggie grabs him again.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

If you change your mind and want to come home, have Mr. Kelly call me. Okay?

JASON

Fine.

Jason runs off.

MR. KELLY

He'll be all right, I'll keep an eye on him.

MAGGIE

Thank you. And thanks for giving him a ride.

MR. KELLY

That's what friends do.

Mrs. Berg approaches as Mr. Kelly leaves in the same direction as Jason.

MRS. BERG

I'll get the rest of the things from the church. Do you need anything else before I leave?

MAGGIE

No. Thanks Mrs. Berg. Just put everything in the kitchen-I'll take care of it tonight.

MRS. BERG

Will do. Are you sure you don't want help with your mother's things?

MAGGIE

No, Shannon will be there. Thanks Mrs. Berg.

As Pastor Daniel is thanking the interpreter in the background, a few stragglers offer condolences.

WOMAN #2 AT GRAVE SIDE

You've been through so much, honey, but this too shall pass.

MAGGIE

Thank you.

Pastor Daniel approaches.

PASTOR DANIEL

Ah, Maggie. You've been challenged a great deal.

Maggie slowly exhales.

PASTOR DANIEL (CONT'D)

I've known your wonderful Mother many years, and she was a tough lady. And she *raised* a tough lady.

Maggie blushes.

PASTOR DANIEL (CONT'D)

You can do this, Maggie. I'll stop in later this week, to see how you two are doing.

MAGGIE

Thanks Pastor. Again.

Maggie steps toward the casket putting on hand on it. She closes her eyes for a brief moment, taking a deep breath, then starts to walk back to her car. As she does, there's a hint of baby Sarah's tombstone.

2 EXT. ADULT CARE FACILITY - DAY 2

A single-story brick building with two park benches situated near the entrance. A woman in scrubs exits the building. On the sidewalk in front of the building, another woman in scrubs is helping an elderly man with his walker.

3 INT. ADULT CARE FACILITY - CONTINUOUS 3

The room is small. There's a twin bed along the wall nearest the door. The bed is covered in moving boxes. The closet door is open revealing a few hanging items. On top of the small dresser are framed photos and a couple of knickknacks.

In the corner is a rocking chair with an afghan folded over the arm. Shannon, looking cute in her yoga clothes, is busy taping a box closed as Maggie, now dressed in old sweats, enters with more boxes and packing materials.

SHANNON

How you doing?

MAGGIE

I'm hanging in there.

SHANNON

I've packed most of the closet. I checked all the pockets before I boxed the clothes.

Maggie chuckles to herself and shakes her head as she sets down her boxes.

MAGGIE

Of course you did. Find anything?

SHANNON

Three used tissues and two peppermints!

Shannon pops a peppermint into her mouth.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Want one?

MAGGIE

Yeah, thanks.

Shannon tosses a mint to Maggie.

SHANNON

What time do they need the room?

MAGGIE

As soon as we can clear it out.

SHANNON

Okay, this shouldn't take that much longer.

Shannon gets back to work. Maggie looks around the room, deciding where to start. She pulls out the bottom dresser drawer, sits on the floor and starts to empty it. There's a knock on the door frame. Two women in their mid-late 70s stand in the doorway and take in the scene. RESIDENT #1 is tall and lanky. RESIDENT #2 is short and round. They look like the Laurel and Hardy of senior living.

RESIDENT #1

Sorry about your Mama, honey.

MAGGIE

Thank you.

RESIDENT #2

She was a fine woman, and such a snappy dresser.

Shannon smiles, but Maggie's mood changes to anger.

RESIDENT #2 (CONT'D)

Honey, if you don't want to mess with those clothes, we can take them off your hands.

Maggie gets up and marches toward the door before Shannon understands what's going on.

MAGGIE

If you don't want to *mess* with me, you'll shuffle out of here! Now!

(to self)

Vultures!

The two older women shuffle off. Maggie and Shannon look at each other and start laughing.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

If I'm like that when I get old—promise me you'll hit me over the head with your cane!

SHANNON

Oh, I promise.

Shannon starts to put newspaper around some of the framed pictures, then hands one to Maggie.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Isn't this the photo you had in our dorm room?

It's a photo of a very pregnant Caroline Walker.

MAGGIE

Yeah. I think it's my favorite picture of Mom. She looks so happy.

Shannon nods in agreement as she grabs another box. Maggie's expression is one of emotional exhaustion. Maggie wraps the photo and grabs the next one. It's from last Christmas. A family picture in front of the tree. Caroline, Maggie, Jason and Brian. Maggie gasps. Shannon turns to see Maggie completely still, staring at the photo.

SHANNON

What is it?

MAGGIE

Can you believe this was less than a year ago?

SHANNON

Oh, Mags.

MAGGIE

When Brian died, Mom *made* me keep going. I mean, really, without her I'd still be laying in bed. And now...

SHANNON

I'm so sorry!

MAGGIE

Remember, in our high school yearbook I said my goal in life was to be surrounded by a big family?

Maggie's eyes are fixed, in a bit of a daze. She snaps out of it chuckling.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

And you wanted to have an ostrich farm?



SHANNON  
Ostriches are cool. They have  
three stomachs you know.

MAGGIE  
That's cows.

SHANNON  
No, cows have four.

Maggie's expression is caught between the silliness of the conversation and the weight of the current situation. Shannon is taping another moving box.

SHANNON (CONT'D)  
Remember when Sam said he wanted to  
go into education and we all  
thought he was kissing up?

She stacks the box on top of two other boxes and turns to look at Maggie.

SHANNON (CONT'D)  
And now he's Jason's favorite  
teacher.

Maggie is still looking at the family photo.

MAGGIE  
There's just the two of us left.

Shannon sits beside Maggie.

SHANNON  
I know. And poor Jason lost his  
Dad and his Grandma, he needs you.

A tear falls down Maggie's cheek.

MAGGIE  
Jason and I hardly talk anymore.  
And it's my fault.

SHANNON  
What? No! You're just tired.

MAGGIE  
With all that's happened in this  
past year, I haven't exactly been  
Mother-of-the-Year.

SHANNON  
That's not true. You're great with  
him.

MAGGIE

I've been so busy just trying to keep things afloat, that I haven't exactly been keeping up with my sign. (pause) I can't communicate with my own son!

SHANNON

That's what this is about?

MAGGIE

I've already lost Brian and Mom, I can't lose Jason too.

SHANNON

Mag's, come on, you'll catch up.

Shannon gives Maggie a sideways hug.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

You will. We'll figure something out. Promise. OK?

MAGGIE

OK.

Maggie grabs one of the three used tissues resting on the dresser and forces a tight smile. They go back to packing. As Shannon clears out a drawer of clothes she finds a key with a ribbon on it. She holds it up for Maggie to inspect.

SHANNON

Do you know what this goes to?

Maggie inspects the key.

MAGGIE

I've never seen it. Does it go to something here?

The both look around the room.

SHANNON

Nothing in here has a lock.

There's a knock at the door. DOROTHY, 30s, frumpy assisted living employee, with a caring face.

DOROTHY

Maggie, when you're done in here, can you stop by the front desk? I need you to sign some papers before you leave.

MAGGIE

Yeah, we're almost finished. Oh, Dorothy, do you know what that key goes to?

Dorothy steps in and takes the key from Shannon, turning it over in her hand.

DOROTHY

Hmm, no, I haven't seen this one before. It kind of looks like a key for a safe deposit box. Lots of our residents have one.

Dorothy hands the key to Maggie.

MAGGIE

Mom didn't have a safe deposit box.

Maggie and Shannon exchange glances.

DOROTHY

That's the only thing I can think of. Let me know if you need help moving these boxes.

MAGGIE

Will do. Thanks, Dorothy.

Maggie puts the key in her pocket, and zips it up for safe keeping.

4 EXT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - DAY 4

A small two-story home in an established neighborhood, nothing too fancy.

5 INT. MAGGIE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS 5

Maggie's kitchen is small but quaint. It is a welcoming, lived-in home which tends to be a gathering spot. There are a few chairs at the kitchen island, where most of their daily activities happen. Maggie puts a box on the counter and lets out a huge sigh. The kitchen is pretty well picked up, except for some flowers, plants and baked food. Mrs. Berg enters from living room.

MRS. BERG

Oh, there you are. I was just putting things away. A few people stopped by with food.

(MORE)

MRS. BERG (CONT'D)  
 I made a list so you can send them  
 a *hand-written* thank you note.  
 What would you like me to do with  
 all these flowers? I can take them  
 to the hospital or...

Maggie hasn't been listening to a word Mrs. Berg has been saying. Instead she seems lost in her thoughts, staring at nothing.

MRS. BERG (CONT'D)  
 Maggie?

MAGGIE  
 Huh? Yeah, that would be great.  
 Thank you.

Jason walks in, tossing his backpack on the counter.

Mrs. Berg speaks loudly and slowly as she signs. She exaggerates her annunciation so Jason can read her lips.

MRS. BERG  
 (In sign language)  
 How was the magician?

Mrs. Berg slowly and clumsily finger-spells magician. Maggie looks surprised, she had already forgotten about it. Jason becomes very animated. He signs back "Magic Person." Mrs. Berg tries to mimic his sign.

MRS. BERG (CONT'D)  
 (Slowly)  
 Magic person? Magic person.

JASON  
 (In sign language)  
 He was great! He red wore a  
 cape and a black hat! He had  
 a toy rabbit and then he made  
 it into a real rabbit! I got  
 to pet it afterwards! It was  
 really soft.

MRS. BERG (CONT'D)  
 Great. Red coat.  
 (Realizing)  
 Cape. Cape. Hat. Toy  
 rabbit. Real rabbit. Pet.  
 Soft.

Jason grabs an apple off the counter and skips to his room. Mrs. Berg is smiling.

MRS. BERG (CONT'D)  
 I only caught a part of that, but I  
 think he really liked it.

MAGGIE  
 How did you know about the  
 magician?

MRS. BERG

It's all he's been talking about  
for weeks!

Maggie looks embarrassed. Shannon arrives, walking into the kitchen as if she lives there. She's carrying a pizza in one hand and a bottle of wine in the other.

SHANNON

Thought it was time for something  
other than a casserole. And you  
can't have pizza without something  
to wash it down, am I right Mrs.  
Berg?

MRS. BERG

You girls go ahead. It's been a  
long day.

(To Maggie)

Your Mom would have been very proud  
of how you have handled everything.  
Good night, dear.

MAGGIE

Thanks, Mrs. Berg.

As Mrs. Berg grabs her purse from the counter, Maggie pulls the key from her pocket.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Ah, we found this key in Mom's  
things. Any idea what it might go  
to?

Mrs. Berg's stops, glowering.

MRS. BERG

Oh, for Heaven's sake, I'm sure  
it's nothing, just throw it away.  
You have enough to concern yourself  
with.

Mrs. Berg grabs some flowers and hurries out the door. Shannon is working her way around the kitchen, knowing where everything is kept. She opens the wine bottle with the ease of a bartender. Maggie sits at the counter.

MAGGIE

That was weird!

SHANNON

Even for Mrs. Berg.

MAGGIE

Shannon!

Shannon grabs two wine glasses, sets them on the island and starts to pour the wine.

SHANNON

Maybe your Mom had a secret.

MAGGIE

Hmm. If Mom had a secret, I bet Mrs. Berg knows what it is.

SHANNON

What makes you say that?

MAGGIE

They've known each other since they were kids.

SHANNON

So. We've known each other our whole lives, and there's lots of stuff you don't know about me.

MAGGIE

Sure there is.

6 EXT. GRADE SCHOOL - DAY 6

A single story 1920s brick building with a huge playground and grass field.

7 INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS 7

An old metal desk is at the front of the classroom covered with papers waiting to be graded. One chair is adjacent to the desk. There are brightly colored construction paper cutouts on the bulletin boards and about 30 student desks in neat rows. Sam (Mr. Kelly) is grading papers. Maggie knocks on the door frame.

MR. KELLY

Hey Maggie, thanks for coming.

Maggie walks in and sits in the chair next to his desk.

MR. KELLY (CONT'D)

How are you doing?

MAGGIE

Good, well, you know. What's up?

MR. KELLY

Look, Maggie, I know the timing isn't great, but I wanted to make you aware of something.

Maggie shifts in the chair, then sits a little taller.

MAGGIE

OK.

MR. KELLY

Jason made a comment a couple days ago that has me concerned.

MAGGIE

What did he say?

MR. KELLY

He said...

MAGGIE

Sam. What?

MR. KELLY

He said when he goes home, there's no one for him to talk to.

MAGGIE

Oh.

MR. KELLY

Please, don't misunderstand, there's no judgment here, you've done a great job with him.

MAGGIE

Right now it doesn't feel that way.

MR. KELLY

Remember the day you brought Jason home from the hospital? You were so determined. Your little boy was going to have every opportunity all the hearing kids had.

MAGGIE

I remember.

MR. KELLY

And Brian was so freaked out we almost had an intervention.

MAGGIE  
(Chuckles)  
I remember that too.

MR. KELLY  
It's not unusual for a deaf child from a hearing family to feel a little isolated from time to time. It usually happens when their sign advances at a quicker rate than the rest of the family.

MAGGIE  
And he's signing so fast. At first I could keep up, but now...

Maggie's has a defeatist expression, she stares at her hands in her lap.

MR. KELLY  
Maggie look at me.

Maggie looks up, embarrassed.

MR. KELLY (CONT'D)  
It's normal.

MAGGIE  
What should I do?

MR. KELLY  
There's a couple options. I've noticed Jason likes hanging out after school so he can play with some of the other deaf students.

MAGGIE  
Yeah, but the whole reason we got him into this school is so he integrates with both deaf and hearing kids. I want people to see him as much more than just deaf.

MR. KELLY  
Like it or not, people will most likely identify Jason first and foremost, as deaf. Think about it. If I'm seen walking down the street, people will identify me as a black man, and that's who I am. But if they see me signing, they no longer see my race or gender, all most people will see is a deaf person.



MAGGIE

But he's just a little boy.

MR. KELLY

I'd like to suggest getting him involved in an after school program. Maybe a sport? Anything where he is a part of something bigger. You can also look at getting him a tutor to help him with his homework.

MAGGIE

Wait. He's falling behind?

MR. KELLY

Jason's a bright kid, but he is struggling with reading. Just a little. He doesn't seem to have the same excitement for learning that he had before Brian died. And now that he's lost his Grandmother, well, I think we need to get ahead of this.

MAGGIE

Oh.

MR. KELLY

And to help him, and you, with your social calendar, what do you say the two of you come to dinner Friday night? Lily's brother's in town. It'll be low key. I promise.

Maggie begins to refuse, shaking her head no.

MR. KELLY (CONT'D)

It'll be like old times. Bring Shannon, she'll keep the conversation moving.

Maggie lets out a little laugh.

MR. KELLY (CONT'D)

I'm not sure what's on the menu, but I can promise you, it won't be a hot dish.

MAGGIE

That sounds nice, thanks Sam.

MR. KELLY

Great, I'll see you then. And Maggie, things find a way of working themselves out. They always do.

8 INT. MAGGIE'S KITCHEN - EVENING

8

Maggie and Jason are gathering his school papers from the counter and putting them in his backpack. Maggie zips it up and hands it to Jason.

MAGGIE

(In sign language)

Put it by the front door for tomorrow morning.

Jason grabs the backpack and throw it as hard as he can.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

Maggie picks up his backpack. Jason runs up the stairs to his bedroom. We hear the door slam. Maggie sets the backpack by the front door and starts walking toward the stairs. The phone rings. Maggie takes a deep breath, turns and answers the kitchen phone.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Hello.

OLDER WOMAN (O.S.)

Hi, may I speak to Brian Benson?

Upset, Maggie hangs up the phone and stares at it, then collapses in the kitchen chair. Shannon gives a quick knock on the door and comes right in. She's carrying a salad.

SHANNON

Hey girl. I know you said you were fine, but I thought I'd check on you anyway.

MAGGIE

Oh, hey.

Maggie gets up, walks over to the refrigerator and starts pulling out the various foil covered dishes brought over after the funeral.

SHANNON

I love you girl, but this is the last macaroni and hamburger casserole I'm eating.

Shannon stops and looks at Maggie.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Everything all right?

Maggie takes a deep breath.

MAGGIE

Yeah, this will just take a minute. I thought you had a date tonight?

SHANNON

I do.

Shannon unwraps the salad and finds the salad tongs in the cupboard. Maggie is lost in thought.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Maggie, what are you thinking about?

MAGGIE

Am I a bad Mother?

SHANNON

What!?! No!

MAGGIE

I feel like everyone knows my son better than I do.

SHANNON

OK, that's nonsense. You need some rest.

MAGGIE

You, Sam, even Mrs. Berg knew how excited Jason was about the magician.

SHANNON

Uh, you were planning a funeral, and taking care of your Mom's estate. Geez, Mags, Give yourself a break.

MAGGIE

Plus, he's signing so fast now that I have to keep asking him to slow down.

SHANNON

So, we'll get some help.

MAGGIE

"We'll?"

SHANNON

Yeah. I can take some lessons with you. We can make up signs and have our own secret language. Remember when we used code words around your mom and Mrs. Berg? It drove them crazy!

MAGGIE

A secret language, huh?

SHANNON

Come on, it'll be fun.

MAGGIE

Really? You'd do that?

SHANNON

Yeah, well, until my dance card fills up. Then you're on your own.

Shannon starts setting the table, she knows this kitchen better than her own.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Want me to grab Jason?

MAGGIE

No, I'll get him.

9

INT. MAGGIE'S 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

9

Maggie walks down the hall to Jason's room. There is a sign with his name, in sign language, on the door. Maggie stops and puts her ear against the door but doesn't hear anything. She tries to open the door, but something is blocking it. A shoe. She takes a deep breath, leans her shoulder into the door and gently pushes.

10 INT. JASON'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

10

Maggie steps into the room, looks around and sees a huge mess. Jason is sitting on the floor with a LEGO creation.

MAGGIE  
(In sign language)  
Dinner's ready.

JASON  
(In sign language)  
OK.

Jason places his last couple of Legos as Maggie straightens up his bed and notices a photo of Brian and Jason under the pillow. Maggie taps Jason on the shoulder and shows him the photo. Jason's face falls.

MAGGIE  
Are you missing your daddy?

Jason nods his head yes, and sits on the bed next to Maggie.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
Me too. I think I have something  
that will make you feel better.  
It's worked for me.

Maggie reaches under her collar and pulls out Brian's dog tags. She takes a look at them and then pulls the chain over her head.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
Would you like to be in charge of  
these from now on?

Jason nods his head yes. Maggie puts the chain over his head and tucks the tags into his shirt.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
There, now you can keep a part of  
Daddy near your heart.

Jason grips them through his shirt, with one hand cupped over the other. Maggie gives Jason a sideways hug and kisses the top of his head. Then turns his chin so he is looking at her.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
Now, go wash up.

Jason runs out of the room. Maggie sits on the bed for a moment, then gets up and leaves the room.

11 INT. MAGGIE'S LAUNDRY ROOM - MORNING 11

Maggie takes the last towel out of the dryer and hears her cell phone buzz. She pulls it from her back pocket. It's a text from Jason that just says "Backpack?" Maggie slams the dryer shut, grabs the basket and starts to the kitchen.

12 INT. MAGGIE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS 12

Jason is sitting at the counter doing his homework. Maggie comes in, sets down the laundry and shows him her phone.

MAGGIE  
(In sign language)  
What's this?

Jason just shrugs his shoulders and goes back to his homework. Maggie taps his paper.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
Look at me.

Jason gives Maggie a 'here it comes' look. Maggie calms herself.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
I know I'm signing slow. And I know that makes it hard for you, but I'm going to get better at it. I promise. OK?

JASON  
(In sign language)  
OK.

MAGGIE  
No more texting when we're in the same place. Got it?

JASON  
Got it.

MAGGIE  
Your backpack's by the front door.

Jason slides off the bar stool and goes to the front door. He sees a figure through the window and pulls back the shade to see Pastor Daniel. Jason opens the door. Pastor Daniel signs slowly.

PASTOR DANIEL  
 (In sign language)  
 Hi Jason, it's good to see you. Is  
 your Mom home?

Maggie comes to the door.

MAGGIE  
 Hi Pastor Daniel, come in.

Pastor Daniel talks to Maggie, but does not sign.

PASTOR DANIEL  
 Is now a good time?

MAGGIE  
 Sure.

Pastor Daniel gives Maggie a knowing look.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
 (In sign language)  
 Pastor Daniel has something to ask  
 you.

PASTOR DANIEL  
 We are preparing for our Christmas  
 program and wanted to know if you  
 would like to help?

Maggie repeats in sign and word.

MAGGIE  
 Do you want to help Pastor Daniel  
 with the Christmas pageant?

JASON  
 (In sign language)  
 Is it already Christmas?

MAGGIE  
 No, Christmas isn't for several  
 weeks. Do you want to help?

JASON  
 What would I have to do?

MAGGIE  
 What would you *have* to do? Jason,  
 I think you mean "What would I *get*  
 to do?"

JASON  
 What would I "get" to do.

PASTOR DANIEL  
Well, we need help making some  
props, mostly snowflakes, and  
painting the sets. Are you  
interested?

JASON  
OK.

PASTOR DANIEL  
Great! Oh, and one more thing. We  
have a young soloist performing,  
and we'd like you to sign the words  
to the song. Would you be willing  
to do that as well?

Maggie signs to Jason

MAGGIE  
Can you sign a song while someone  
sings it?

JASON  
(Hesitates)  
Will there be a spotlight on me?

MAGGIE  
(To pastor Daniel)  
He wants to know if there will be a  
spotlight on him.

Maggie and Pastor Daniel share a slight smile.

PASTOR DANIEL  
Do you want a spotlight on you?

JASON  
Yes.

Maggie and Pastor Daniel look at each other, pleasantly  
surprised.

PASTOR DANIEL  
I think we can arrange that.

JASON  
Then, yes.

Maggie gives Jason a sideways hug.

PASTOR DANIEL  
Really? That's great news.



MAGGIE

Did you finish your homework?

Jason shakes his head no. Maggie kisses him on the head.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Go.

Jason goes back to his homework. Pastor Daniel starts to leave.

PASTOR DANIEL

I'll let you know the schedule as soon as we have one.

MAGGIE

This means a lot to me, thank you.

PASTOR DANIEL

No, thank you. It's a great idea. I just wish I would have thought of it.

MAGGIE

Shh. That's our little secret.

PASTOR DANIEL

Keeping secrets is one of my specialties.

As Maggie closes the door behind Pastor Daniel, the phone rings.

MAGGIE

Hello?

OLDER WOMAN (O.S.)

Hello, may I speak to Brian Benson?

Maggie hangs up, grabs her laundry basket and in a huff, leaves the room.

13

INT. MAGGIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

13

Jason is showing Mrs. Berg a card trick at the kitchen counter. Jason fans out the cards. Mrs. Berg draws a card from the deck, looks at it and then puts it back in the deck. Jason folds the cards back into a neat stack. He shuffles the cards and starts to flip them over one at a time. He stops at the Jack of Hearts. He questions himself, then taps on the card.

JASON  
 (In sign language)  
 Jack of Hearts?

Mrs. Berg looks Jason for a moment, then smiles.

MRS. BERG  
 Yes, it's the Jack of Hearts! How  
 do you do that?

Jason is smiling, very happy with himself. He gathers the cards for a new game. Mrs. Berg gets up, opens the cupboard, grabs a mug and pours some coffee. She does this with the fluidity of having done it a hundred times before. She then opens the refrigerator door and pulls out a near-empty container of vanilla creamer.

She shakes the container before emptying the last bit into her coffee. She grabs a pencil out of the drawer and adds 'Coffee Creamer' to the grocery list posted on the refrigerator. Then checking the flavor on the container, 'vanilla', she adds the word 'hazelnut.'

Maggie enters kitchen wearing a blouse and pencil skirt, looking a bit more professional.

MRS. BERG (CONT'D)  
 You look nice.

Mrs. Berg puts the empty creamer container in the recycle bin. Maggie is putting her earrings on.

MAGGIE  
 Thanks for coming over on such  
 short notice. I would have asked  
 Shannon, but she has a date.

MRS. BERG  
 Another first date I take it?

Maggie grabs her bag, then kisses Jason on the head.

JASON  
 Bye, Mom.

MAGGIE  
 (In sign language)  
 Be good!  
 (To Mrs. Berg)  
 Thanks again, I shouldn't be too  
 long.

Mrs. Berg pulls the grocery list off the refrigerator and hands it to Maggie.

MRS. BERG  
As long as you're out.

Maggie grabs the list, opens her purse, and finds the key with the ribbon. She pulls it out and has another look at it.

MRS. BERG (CONT'D)  
You still have that thing? Why don't you throw it away?

MAGGIE  
(Frustrated)  
I'll see you, Mrs. Berg. There's leftover chicken in the fridge for lunch.

Maggie turns and leaves. Mrs. Berg starts cleaning an already clean kitchen.

14 EXT. BANK - DAY 14

The building is multi-story and made of glass, with a drive through and lots of parking.

15 INT. BANK - CONTINUOUS 15

Maggie and BANK CLERK #1, male, mid 30s, in great shape, dressed in a suit and tie, are sitting in a cubical on either side of a modern desk. There's a computer on the corner of the desk, and several pamphlets in acrylic holders. The banker's business cards face Maggie and are within her reach. The ribboned key is placed on the desk by a man's hand.

BANK CLERK #1  
Well, you're right. It looks like a safe deposit key, just not one of ours. All our keys are silver.

They both stand up and shake hands.

MAGGIE  
Thank you for your time.

Maggie starts to leave and the bank clerk calls her back, picking up one of his business cards from the holder on the desk. He hands it to her.

BANK CLERK #1  
Take my card, in case I can help you with anything else. You might want to try State Bank.  
(MORE)

BANK CLERK #1 (CONT'D)  
 They've been around for as long as  
 I can remember, they may have  
 issued gold keys.

MAGGIE  
 Thank you. I will.

16 EXT. MR. KELLY'S HOME - EVENING 16

Mr. Kelly's home is a single story, modest, teacher's salary  
 type of house. Yellow light is glowing from the inside.

17 INT. MR. KELLY'S DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 17

The dining room is furnished with what appears to be a  
 lovely, inherited dining set with a few mismatched chairs.  
 It is a warm and friendly environment. Sitting around the  
 table are Maggie, Shannon, Jason, Mr. Kelly, his wife LILY,  
 late 30s, girl-next-door type, Lily's brother RODNEY, mid  
 30s, athletic, handsome, THERESA, a college-aged, pink-  
 haired, tattooed and pierced student. Jason is seated next  
 to Theresa and can't stop staring at her.

JASON  
 (Signing to Theresa)  
 Please pass the potatoes.

Mr. Kelly is watching Jason and passes the potatoes.

MR. KELLY  
 More potatoes for Jason.

JASON  
 (To Theresa)  
 Thank you.

Mr. Kelly smiles at Jason, who is still looking at Theresa.

MAGGIE  
 Lily, this is so nice, thank you  
 for having us. And I gotta tell  
 you, Jason doesn't usually ask for  
 seconds.

LILY  
 I'm glad you came. Plus, I wanted  
 Rodney to meet a few people before  
 he moves here.

RODNEY

When you say "moves here" does that mean you want me to move in with you and Sam?

LILY

(Laughing)

No! You are not moving into this house! I had to keep an eye on you all through high school, my baby-sitting days are over.

RODNEY

OK, I see how you are. That's fine. Every night after dinner, I'll go back to my own place. You won't hear a peep from me again until breakfast.

Everyone is laughing and enjoying the sibling rivalry. Theresa is signing everything for Jason. Sam catches Maggie's eye and gives a little head tilt toward Jason and Theresa. They both give a slight smile. Lily throws her napkin at Rodney as she gets up.

LILY

You have your choice of apple or pecan pie. I hope you saved room.

RODNEY

Who wouldn't want to live here?

Rodney looks around the table. He locks eyes with Shannon.

RODNEY (CONT'D)

Am I right?

Shannon blushes. Rodney looks up at Lily, and flutters his eyes.

RODNEY (CONT'D)

Can I have a little of both?

Shannon gets up and follows Lily to the kitchen.

SHANNON

Both sounds good. Let me help.

The attention is now turned to Theresa, still signing for Jason.

MAGGIE

Theresa, you sign beautifully.

Theresa has just put a fork full of food in her mouth and cannot respond.

MR. KELLY

Theresa's going to be my teacher's assistant this semester. She's getting her interpreter's certificate.

MAGGIE

Do you know many deaf people?

THERESA

(In sign language)

Actually, no, I just think it's such a beautiful way to express yourself.

RODNEY

I hope you get paid well to be around my brother-in-law all day.

Everyone laughs.

THERESA

Actually, it's not a paid internship, so I'm trying to pick up odd jobs that still allow me to complete my studies.

MAGGIE

What kind of odd jobs are you looking for?

THERESA

Seriously, anything that pays. I can baby-sit, run errands, clean offices...

Lily and Shannon return with pie.

JASON

I got a job.

Everyone stops what they're doing, and look at Jason.

MR. KELLY

(In sign language)

You got a job? What's your job, Jason?

As Jason signs, Theresa interprets.

JASON  
I'm going to help Pastor  
Daniel paint the sets for the  
Christmas program.

THERESA  
I'm going to help Pastor  
Daniel paint the sets for the  
Christmas program.

Mr. Kelly looks to Maggie for confirmation. She raises her  
eyebrows.

MAGGIE  
(In sign language)  
Tell them what else you're going to  
do.

JASON  
I'm going to sign a song  
while someone is singing, and  
they're going to put a  
spotlight on me and  
everything.

THERESA  
I'm going to sign a song  
while someone is singing, and  
they're going to put a  
spotlight on me and  
everything.

RODNEY  
That's amazing. Can I come?

LILY  
Can we all come? I'd like to be  
there.

Jason is now smiling and embarrassed to have all this  
attention.

THERESA  
Mr. Kelly, can I get some extra  
credit if I help Jason with his  
song? I mean if it's all right  
with you, Mrs. Benson.

MAGGIE  
If it's good with Sam, it's good  
with me.

MR. KELLY  
I think we can arrange something.  
Jason, how does that sound to you?

JASON  
Good.

THERESA  
Then it's settled.

LILY  
OK, who wants apple?

FADE TO:

18 EXT. STATE BANK - MORNING 18

The old four-story brick building sits on the corner of the town's main street.

19 INT. STATE BANK - CONTINUOUS 19

The interior of the bank has not been updated in many years, to the point that it's decor is charming once again. There are sepia-tone photos on the wall of the bank, back in it's infancy.

Maggie is sitting at an old wooden desk. There are bookshelves behind the desk and tchotchkes everywhere. The ribboned key, along with legal papers are spread over the desk top.

Bank Clerk #2, male, mid 60s, in a worn loose-fitting suit, sits behind the desk clicking through computer screens. With each new page, he looks over the top of his glasses then up again. He clicks off the screen and starts to neatly compile the papers and hands them back to Maggie.

BANK CLERK #2

Again, I'm sorry for you loss, Mrs. Benson. Your Mother was always such a cheerful lady.

MAGGIE

Thank you.

BANK CLERK #2

As her beneficiary, I'm surprised she didn't tell you about the safe deposit box. But one thing I've learned over the years, people have reasons for doing the things they do, even if it doesn't make sense to the rest of us.

Embarrassment crosses Maggie's face. The banker pushes Maggie's ribboned key towards her as he holds up a second key for the dual lock.

BANK CLERK #2 (CONT'D)

Well, we each have our key. Are you ready to clear its contents?

MAGGIE

Yes, thank you.



20

INT. BANK VAULT - CONTINUOUS

20

The bank vault has floor-to-ceiling numbered boxes, varying in size. Each box has a two-key lock. Maggie stands at a table inside the bank vault, looking at the box that has been pulled for her. She looks around and sees that she is alone.

Maggie gets a chill and rubs her arms. She fumbles with the box, not sure how to open it. She runs her hands along the sides, takes a deep breath, then flips the top open.

Inside she finds a few loose items and takes them out one at a time. A passport, which she flips through quickly. A man's watch. She takes a closer look at the watch, remembering, then slips it on her arm. It hangs loose.

Maggie then opens a pink jewelry box. Inside is an old, silver locket. She pries it open with her thumbnail, but there are no photos inside. The safe deposit box is empty now, except for manila envelope that is stuck tight against the bottom. Maggie wiggles the envelope loose.

As she pulls out the contents, a photo falls from between the papers onto the table. It's a copy of the photo we saw at the care facility, a very pregnant Caroline. She picks up the photo, smiles, then sets it back on the table. She starts to look at the papers, confusion floods her face. But we never see what the papers are.

She is now flipping through them rapidly. She drops the papers on the table then presses both palms against the tabletop, arches her back and exhales deeply.

21

INT. MAGGIE'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

21

Maggie's home office is a mess. There are realtor signs leaning against the wall and several piles of papers on the desk and floor. The bookshelf behind her desk is cluttered with books and knickknacks. Among the clutter is a triangle folded and framed American flag.

Maggie is sitting at her desk, Shannon is sitting across the desk, slouched with her feet on the seat of her chair. Maggie hands Shannon a manila envelope. Shannon opens the envelope and starts looking at the paperwork. She sits up. Her eyes get wide.

SHANNON

What does this mean?

MAGGIE

It means, Mom wasn't my real mom.  
(pause) I don't mean that, I mean  
Mom wasn't my birth mom, she  
adopted me right after I was born.

SHANNON

These are your adoption papers?

MAGGIE

Apparently.

Maggie gets up and comes around to the front of her desk.  
She pushes a pile of papers aside and sits on the edge of her  
desk in front Shannon, pointing to some lines on the papers.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

But look right here, the  
information about my birth mom is  
redacted.

SHANNON

Whoa. Wait, what about your birth  
certificate? Shouldn't that have  
the correct information?

MAGGIE

You would think so, but there's no  
indication that I was ever anyone  
else's child.

SHANNON

But how?

MAGGIE

I don't know. But I'm going to  
find out.

Shannon flips through the papers then looks in the envelope  
and pulls out the photo of Caroline, pregnant.

SHANNON

But what about this?

Maggie shrugs her shoulders.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Do you think Mrs. Berg knows  
anything?

MAGGIE

Don't you?

FADE TO:

22

INT. MAGGIE'S KITCHEN - MORNING

22

Maggie is in the kitchen making pancakes, drinking her coffee. Jason is sitting at the counter. The doorbell rings. Jason sees a light flash indicating there is someone at the door, excitedly jumps up and runs to the front door. Maggie sets out another plate.

Moments later, Jason leads Theresa into the kitchen.

THERESA

(In sign language)

Good Morning, I hope I'm not too early.

MAGGIE

(In sign language)

You're just in time for breakfast.

JASON

(In sign language)

We're having pancakes.

THERESA

You're having pancakes? Are you having one pancake or a stack?

Maggie sets down her spatula and repeats the sign.

MAGGIE

Is this how you say stack?

THERESA

Yes, stack.

MAGGIE

I love it. Stack.

JASON

With syrup!

THERESA

There's syrup? I'm in!

MAGGIE

They're almost ready. Jason, go wash up please.

Jason leaves the room as Theresa drops her bag at her feet and sits at the counter.

THERESA

Thanks so much for letting me help Jason with his song.

MAGGIE

No, I should be thanking you. I was wondering...would you be interested in tutoring me, say, twice a week for a couple of hours? I mean, when Jason's not around. I'll pay you.

THERESA

Sure, but you already know how to sign.

Maggie sets up place mats, napkins and silverware.

MAGGIE

Not as much as I'd like. Oh, and would it be all right if Shannon joined us?

THERESA

Yeah, that would be great.

MAGGIE

Can you keep this just between us?

THERESA

No problem. It's our little secret.

Jason comes bounding back into the room and sits right next to Theresa. Maggie serves a plate of pancakes to each of them, then hands Theresa the syrup.

MAGGIE

Here you go. A stack of pancakes and syrup. Enjoy!

THERESA

Thank you!

Jason sees Theresa say thank you, then repeats.

JASON

Thank you.

Jason is staring at Theresa. Maggie waves her hand in front of Jason to get his attention.

MAGGIE

Jason, Pastor Daniel never told me which song you're signing.

JASON

It's a surprise.

Maggie looks at Theresa.

MAGGIE  
A surprise? You're going to tell  
Theresa, but not me?

JASON  
(Giggle)  
Yes.

MAGGIE  
All right then. You two have about  
an hour before I take you to the  
church for rehearsal.

THERESA  
Wanna get started?

JASON  
OK...  
(To Maggie)  
Mom! Don't watch.

MAGGIE  
Don't watch? Oh, yeah...the  
surprise. Do you want to practice  
in your room so I can't see you?

JASON  
Yes.

MAGGIE  
All right.

Jason hops off his chair, excited to get started. Maggie  
cuts him off at the side of the island.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
Wait. Finish your pancakes first.  
And on second thought, use *my* room.  
Your room is a mess!

FADE TO:

23

INT. MAGGIE'S CAR - MORNING

23

Maggie shuts off the engine, but keeps one hand on the  
steering wheel and the other on the keys, still in the  
ignition. She is looking around, as if she can't decide what  
to do next.

Maggie looks over at the manila envelope sitting on the  
passenger seat.

She quickly pulls the keys out of the ignition, grabs the envelope and her purse, and gets out of her vehicle.

24 EXT. MRS. BERG'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 24

Mrs. Berg's neighborhood looks like it could be very close, if not the same neighborhood as Maggie's. Smaller homes, but all very well-kept with cute little yards. Maggie knocks on the front door, but waits for Mrs. Berg to let her in.

MRS. BERG

Well, Maggie, I wasn't expecting you, is everything all right?

MAGGIE

Yes, may I come in, please?

Maggie starts to enter before Mrs. Berg can say anything. Mrs. Berg is taken aback.

25 INT. MRS. BERG'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 25

Mrs. Berg's home is spotless and minimal. The furniture is set up in a way that hints to her not having much company. A single chair faces the television. A little table to the right holds a candy dish and a remote control.

MRS. BERG

Can I get you some coffee, dear?

MAGGIE

No, thank you.

Maggie is fidgeting.

MRS. BERG

What is it, dear?

Maggie hands the manila envelope to Mrs. Berg.

MAGGIE

What do you know about this?

Mrs. Berg sits down on a love seat against the wall and pulls out the papers.

MRS. BERG

Oh.

Mrs. Berg pats the seat beside her.

MRS. BERG (CONT'D)  
Have a seat, dear.

Maggie reluctantly sits beside Mrs. Berg.

MRS. BERG (CONT'D)  
Did I ever tell you about the time  
your mom and I were in high school  
and I had a crush on a boy named  
Clyde?

MAGGIE  
No, but...

MRS. BERG  
He was scrawny and had a bit of an  
acne issue, but I thought he had  
the most beautiful green eyes.  
Everyone knew I liked him. One  
day, in world history, I saw him  
fold a note and pass it. I just  
knew it was a love note meant for  
me. I started to feel a little  
dizzy. I was wiping my sweaty  
hands on my skirt when I realized  
the note was getting passed to  
Kathryn Buckmeier! I was beside  
myself. Later, when everyone went  
to gym class I snuck away and took  
the note from Kathryn's desk. When  
I opened it I saw that Clyde had  
drawn a picture of a hippo and put  
my name on it. I was so upset I  
went home. It ruined my perfect  
attendance record.

MAGGIE  
But, wha...

Mrs. Berg pats Maggie on the shoulder.

MRS. BERG  
My point is, dear, sometimes it's  
better to mind your own business  
before you get hurt.

26 INT. MAGGIE'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

26

Maggie's office is still a mess. Now there are key-locks,  
measuring tapes and flyers spread across her desk. Maggie is  
at her computer, Shannon is sitting in the chair across the  
desk from Maggie studying a document.

SHANNON

I don't get it. This birth certificate has both your name and Caroline's name on it, but if you were adopted, does that mean this was falsified?

MAGGIE

You would think. (Pause) Or does it mean it's a real birth certificate, just not mine?

SHANNON

I'm not following.

MAGGIE

What if my birth certificate is still out there?

SHANNON

OK, one more time?

Maggie pushes some papers aside and finds another document on her desk.

MAGGIE

These papers clearly state I was adopted. Which means there's a birth certificate with my birth mother's name on it. It's just not this one.

SHANNON

Is there any way to access *that* birth certificate?

Maggie pulls her chair closer to the desk and starts typing on her computer.

MAGGIE

It says here, 'When a child is born, an original birth certificate is issued showing date of birth, time, parents' names, etc. When a child is **adopted**, along with finalization papers, an *amended birth certificate* is issued replacing the birth parents' names with those of the adoptive parents.

SHANNON

But what about....



MAGGIE

Wait, there's more... The original birth certificate is then placed with other adoption records and the file is sealed by the court. This file is generally not available to the adopted person... ever.

Shannon holds up the birth certificate at which she's been looking.

SHANNON

So what you're saying is this is an amended birth certificate?

MAGGIE

I believe so, and because my case is sealed, I may have reached a dead end.

SHANNON

Did you ask Mrs. Berg?

MAGGIE

No.

SHANNON

What are you waiting for? If anyone knows what really happened here, she does.

Maggie scuffs at the idea, then starts to straighten her desk.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Seriously, ask her. She's your only connection to the truth. What's the worst-case scenario? She refuses to tell you anything?

Shannon hands the birth certificate back to Maggie.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

That's pretty much where you are now.

MAGGIE

I'm afraid of *what* she might tell me.

SHANNON

What do you mean?

MAGGIE

I mean I'm not sure I want to know what's really going on.

SHANNON

Well, then you need to think about that. Because if you're not ready for the answers, you probably shouldn't be asking the questions.

MAGGIE

I know.

SHANNON

Then take some time. But not too much time. Mrs. Berg isn't getting any younger.

MAGGIE

Shannon!

SHANNON

Or kinder.

MAGGIE

Really?

SHANNON

Just sayin'.

Maggie's office phone rings, as she answers it Shannon mimes that she has to leave. Maggie signs 'thank you', then 'I love you.' Shannon sees herself out.

MAGGIE

Yes, I'll have those papers ready for you later today.

Maggie finds the papers she's referring to, and puts them front and center on her desk.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

And Jess, thanks for sending flowers for my Mom. (Pause) Jason? OK I guess. I think he just needs time. Right, thanks again.

Maggie hangs up the phone and as soon as she does, it starts ringing again. It's the same woman who has called before.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Hello?

OLDER WOMAN (O.S.)  
 Hi, this is Judy Sanders, is Brian  
 Benson in?

Maggie freezes, tears coming to her eyes.

OLDER WOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Hello, Hello?

FADE TO:

27 INT. MAGGIE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

27

Maggie's living room is on the small side, with a couch and couple of stuffed chairs. The rocking chair and afghan from her mother's place are now next to the fireplace.

Theresa is sitting in one of the stuffed chairs, her legs comfortably crossed in front of her. Maggie is adjacent to her on the couch. Theresa is giving Maggie a sign language lesson.

THERESA  
 (In sign language)  
 Okay, for instance. There is no  
 sign for shepherd?

MAGGIE  
 (In sign language)  
 Why not?

THERESA  
 I'm not sure why not, there just  
 isn't. Sign isn't English  
 translated, it's its own language.

MAGGIE  
 Then why call it American Sign  
 Language?

THERESA  
 Well, we have ASL or American Sign  
 Language; there's also BSL,  
 British Sign Language, and many  
 others. People think it's an  
 international language. It's not.  
 Different countries have different  
 sign languages.

MAGGIE  
 But we aren't the only country with  
 the word shepherd.

(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

So how do we identify a shepherd?  
Not that it will come up a lot.

THERESA

It's one of those things that's not  
a word, but a concept. They're  
sheep-guardian-persons.

MAGGIE

Really?

THERESA

Really.

MAGGIE

Seems kinda silly.

THERESA

Silly like when people say things  
are hard, when they mean they're  
difficult?

MAGGIE

Yeah, something like that. This is  
much harder, I mean, more difficult  
than I ever thought it would be.

THERESA

I like the challenge. It's partly  
why I find sign so fascinating.

Theresa checks her phone for the time.

THERESA (CONT'D)

Oh, shoot, I need to get going.

Theresa grabs her backpack and the two of them get up and  
walk through the kitchen.

28

INT. MAGGIE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

28

Theresa drops her backpack between her feet, grabs her faux  
animal print fur jacket and starts to put it on. Maggie is  
staring off, wringing her hands.

THERESA

Don't worry, you'll get it.

Theresa throws her backpack over one shoulder.

THERESA (CONT'D)

I thought Shannon was going to join  
us?

MAGGIE

Yea, no, she had a date.  
Priorities you know.

THERESA

OK. I gotta get to class. Same  
time Thursday?

MAGGIE

Ah, sure. Thanks.

THERESA

No, thank you Mrs. B.

MAGGIE

Theresa, please, it's Maggie.

THERESA

Got it, Mrs. B.

As Theresa starts to the front door, Mrs. Berg comes in with a potted plant and sets it in the sink. Mrs. Berg sees Theresa and can't help but to stare.

MAGGIE

Theresa, this is Mrs. Berg, an old  
family friend.

Theresa puts out her hand to shake.

THERESA

Another Mrs. B. I'll call you Mrs.  
B 2. It's a pleasure. Nice  
philodendron. Sorry, I've gotta  
run. See you Thursday.

MAGGIE

Thursday.

Theresa lets herself out. Mrs. Berg watches to make sure Theresa has closed the door before she says anything.

MRS. BERG

(Pointing her thumb at the  
door)

It looks like the circus left town  
and someone missed the bus.

Maggie is noticeably hurt by the comment.

MAGGIE

Mrs. Berg, I'll have you know  
Theresa is a smart young woman who  
is trying to make something of her  
life. In fact, she is tutoring  
both Jason and me, so you can  
expect to see a lot more of her.

MRS. BERG

Tutoring Jason? On what? How to  
look like a hoodlum?

MAGGIE

Mrs. Berg!

Maggie's office phone rings.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I have to get that, I'm sure you  
can see yourself out!

MRS. BERG

Well!

Maggie goes to her office while Mrs. Berg spins on her heel  
and leaves.

29 INT. MAGGIE'S HOME OFFICE - CONTINUOUS 29

Maggie moves quickly to her desk to answer the phone before  
it goes to voice mail. She is standing when she picks up the  
receiver mid-ring.

MAGGIE

Maggie Benson.

OLDER WOMAN (O.S.)

Mrs. Brian Benson?

MAGGIE

Yes.

30 INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION 30

31 INT. CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - CONTINUOUS 31

JUDY SANDERS, Mid 50s, a no-nonsense woman, drably dresses in  
practical, but professional attire, and sits behind a desk in  
a gray, no-thrills office.

JUDY SANDERS

This is Judy Sanders from the women's prison in Rollins, we've been trying to get a hold of your husband Brian for some time now. He left this as an alternate number. I'm sorry it's taken so long to get back to you, but we've never had a case like this.

MAGGIE

I don't understand, what's this about?

JUDY SANDERS

Now, I know Brian wanted it to be a surprise, and I hate to ruin it, but we need to take care of this as soon as possible, since there are others waiting.

Maggie sits behind her desk, holds the phone in place with her shoulder and starts to organize her piles.

MAGGIE

I'm sorry, Judy is it?

JUDY SANDERS

Yes.

MAGGIE

Judy, I have no idea what you are talking about. My husband, Brian, died 9 months ago.

JUDY SANDERS

Oh, honey, I'm sorry, I had no idea. How's Jason doing?

Maggie stops organizing her desk, giving Judy her undivided attention.

MAGGIE

Jason, um, how do you know about Jason?

JUDY SANDERS

Jason is the reason we've worked so hard to find just the right fit.

MAGGIE

I'm sorry I still don't know what you're talking about.

JUDY SANDERS

*I'm* sorry Mrs. Benson, let me back up. I'm the counselor in charge of the K-9 Correctional program. Our inmates train dogs as part of their rehabilitation process. About a year ago Brian came to see us about a dog for Jason.

Maggie picks up a framed photo of Brian and Jason from her desk and starts to cry.

JUDY SANDERS (CONT'D)

Mrs. Benson?

MAGGIE

I don't know what to say.

JUDY SANDERS

As I'm sure you know, a dog can be a little boy's best friend, someone to play with, to share all their secrets with. And Jason's new buddy is here waiting to meet him.

Maggie places the photo back in it's spot.

MAGGIE

Now? Are you saying there's a dog waiting for us now?

JUDY SANDERS

Why, yes. I wanted to give you more notice but I couldn't get a hold of you.

MAGGIE

Can I think about it?

JUDY SANDERS

Mrs. Benson, I promise you, this dog was meant for Jason. You won't be disappointed.

MAGGIE

OK. We're getting a dog...

(To self, warming up to the idea)

We're going to have a dog.

(To Judy)

Can we pick him up this weekend?



JUDY SANDERS

Yes. This weekend is perfect. We have adoption pickup Saturday between 10:00 and Noon. I'll send you some information on what you need to do when you get here. It's important that Jason comes with you.

MAGGIE

I understand. We'll see you then. Thank you, Judy.

JUDY SANDERS

No, thank Brian.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

32 EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING 32

Maggie and Jason drive up to Shannon's multi-unit condo. Jason is sitting in the backseat behind Maggie. Shannon is ready and waiting on the sidewalk as they pull up.

33 INT. MAGGIE'S VEHICLE - CONTINUOUS 33

Shannon hops into the car, puts her coffee mug in the cup holder and signs hello to Jason. Jason is beaming.

MAGGIE

Thanks for coming with us.

Shannon puts on her seat belt.

SHANNON

Are you kidding! If I'm lucky, this will be my only chance to see inside a prison. It's kind of exciting!

(In sign language)

(To Jason)

This is exciting!

JASON

(In sign language)

Yes.

SHANNON

I hope you know how to take care of her-or him?

They start to drive away.

JASON

They will teach me when I get there.

SHANNON

They'll teach you there? You're so lucky! I wanted a dog when I was a kid, but my Mom wouldn't let me have one.

JASON

Mom said it's a gift from Dad.

SHANNON

A gift from Dad, huh?

Shannon raises her coffee mug to her mouth as she speaks to Maggie, trying not to move her lips too much so Jason can't read them.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

I thought you were the one who wanted to get Jason a dog, but Brian thought it would be too much for him.

Maggie shrugs.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Yes. Your Dad was always full of surprises, and this surprise proves how much he loved you.

JASON

And Mom.

SHANNON

And your Mom.

Shannon glances at Maggie, who has a tear rolling down her cheek.

34

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

34

Maggie drives down the road past a sign that reads 'CORRECTIONAL FACILITY AHEAD. DO NOT PICK UP HITCHHIKERS.' Maggie and Shannon share a glance.

CUT TO:

35 INT. MAGGIE'S VEHICLE - CONTINUOUS 35

Shannon checks a printed map.

SHANNON

It should be this next right.

36 EXT. ROAD APPROACHING CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - CONTINUOUS 36

The correctional facility is miles from any other buildings. It's a large structure with a tall chain-linked fence and a small yard to one side. Constantine wire tops the fence. Maggie's vehicle approaches the check point. Jason becomes very animated, tapping Maggie's shoulder.

JASON

Look! Soldiers! Just like Dad.

Maggie is watching Jason from the rear view mirror.

SHANNON

What did he say?

MAGGIE

Soldiers. Like Dad.

SHANNON

Oh.

Maggie smiles at Jason's reflection in the rear view mirror. Shannon turns around and taps Jason's knee to get his attention. Shannon smiles and signs.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

We're here! Are you ready?

JASON

Ready.

37 EXT. CORRECTIONAL FACILITY CHECKPOINT - CONTINUOUS 37

Maggie stops at the security checkpoint. An armed guard is standing between the small shack and Maggie's car.

GUARD

Good morning, Ma'am. Papers.

Maggie and Shannon provide their driver's licenses and some paperwork to the guard.

MAGGIE

Here you go. We have an  
appointment with Judy Sanders.

The guard looks at the driver's license photos, then at Maggie and Shannon. He gives Jason a little nod. Jason smiles shyly. The guard then looks at the paperwork and compares it to his clipboard. He hands the paperwork and their driver's licenses back to Maggie.

GUARD

Have a good day, Ma'am.

MAGGIE

Thank you.

The red spikes of the speed bump lower as the arm of the barrier gate raises. The guard waves them through. Jason waves to the guard as they drive through.

38

INT. CORRECTIONAL FACILITY WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

38

Maggie, Jason and Shannon wait in plastic chairs in the gray, cinder block room. It's bare but for a few posters reminding guests that the room is under 24 hour video surveillance. A door buzzes and clicks as Judy Sanders enters the waiting room.

JUDY SANDERS

Good morning, I'm Judy Sanders.  
It's so nice to meet you in person.

All three of them stand. Judy and Maggie shake hands.

MAGGIE

It's good to meet you.

JUDY SANDERS

And you must be Jason.

Jason just smiles as they shake hands.

JUDY SANDERS (CONT'D)

(To Maggie)

He looks a lot like his Daddy.

MAGGIE

Wait. You met Brian?

JUDY SANDERS

Yes, when he came to fill out the  
adoption papers.

(MORE)

JUDY SANDERS (CONT'D)

He was here for quite some time.  
We were all so sad to hear what  
happened.

MAGGIE

Thank you. This is my friend,  
Shannon.

JUDY SANDERS

Welcome. The trainer is getting  
her ready right now. I'll be right  
back with them both.

Judy leaves the way she came. Again the door buzzes and  
clicks to let her through.

SHANNON

(To Maggie)

Hear that? She said 'her'. It's a  
girl! Congratulations! I'm going  
to buy you something pink.

MAGGIE

You're so weird!

SHANNON

(To Jason)

Are you going to let me go on walks  
with you?

JASON

If you want.

SHANNON

Oh, I want.

The door buzzes and clicks open again. In walks Judy with a  
woman, the INMATE, 30s, covered in tatoos, in an orange  
jumpsuit. Beside her is a yellow lab. The inmate waits to  
take her cues from Judy. Judy never addresses the inmate by  
name, but communicates with her in a friendly, yet  
professional manner.

JUDY SANDERS

When you're ready.

The inmate nods as she and the dog approach Jason. The  
inmate signs "sit" to the dog, and the dog obeys.

INMATE

(In sign language)

Hi Jason. I'm the one who trained  
your dog.

Maggie and Shannon look at each other, stunned to see the trainer signing.

INMATE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry it took so long, but I had to learn how to sign, so I could train your dog in sign language.

JASON

Wow!

INMATE

I had to give her a name, so she knew when I was calling her, I hope that's OK?

JASON

Yes, what's her name?

INMATE

Her name is Snap.

JASON

Snap! Like the sign for dog.

INMATE

(Laughing)

Yes, like the sign for dog.

The inmate looks at Maggie.

INMATE (CONT'D)

Snap knows all her commands both verbally and by sign, so no matter who tells her to do something, she'll understand.

MAGGIE

Thank you.

INMATE

(To Jason)

Would you like to pet your dog?

JASON

(Looking at Maggie for approval)

Yes, please.

INMATE

Come on then.

Jason starts to pet Snap.

JASON  
She's so soft!

INMATE  
Yes, she is soft. Well, she just had a bath. Are you ready to learn the commands?

JASON  
Commands?

The inmate finger spells commands, then gives the sign for commands.

INMATE  
Commands. How to talk to Snap so she knows what you want.

JASON  
Yes, please.

SHANNON  
I better pay attention, this dog probably knows more sign than I do.

INMATE  
All right. It's going to be your job to take care of her, and the number one thing you have to do is make sure she is safe...

The inmate, Jason and Shannon go over some simple commands while Maggie and Judy Sanders look on.

JUDY SANDERS  
(To Maggie)  
Like I was telling you on the phone, until Brian came along we just taught the K-9 companions basic behavioral skills. Now we are training *service dogs* for the visually impaired, those in a wheelchair and we have our first PTSD companion.

MAGGIE  
Did Brian know Snap would be able to read sign?

JUDY SANDERS  
It was Brian's idea. He was determined we train a dog that would understand Jason, no matter how long it took.

MAGGIE

This is amazing. I just can't believe she would do all this for Jason. She's never even met him.

JUDY SANDERS

Mrs. Benson, these inmates know what *not being understood* feels like. And when they end up in here, they value being given a second chance. All our K-9's come from shelters. It's *their* second chance, and with the power of an education, or what we call puppy kindergarten, the dogs get a new lease on life.

SHANNON

What do the women get out of it?

JUDY SANDERS

Well, from the K-9's they get unconditional love. Many of the inmates haven't had that kind of a relationship in a very long time, if ever.

SHANNON

Then, how can they give them up?

JUDY SANDERS

It's never easy, but they know they are making a difference in the life of the dog, and the life of the family who adopts him. And as soon as the dog finds a home, the inmate has the opportunity of saving another one.

SHANNON

It's just so wonderful.

JUDY SANDERS

We think so, too.

39

INT. MAGGIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

39

Jason and Snap are sitting together in the backseat, both in seat belts. Jason taps Shannon on the shoulder. Shannon turns to see him sign while Maggie watches in the rear view mirror.



JASON

Which ones were the bad people?

SHANNON

Which ones were the bad people? I don't know what you mean, Jason.

JASON

At the prison, which ones were the bad people.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

At the prison, which ones were the bad people.

Shannon looks at Maggie, Maggie talks while driving and Shannon signs for her.

MAGGIE

We didn't see any bad people.

JASON

I thought bad people had to go to prison?

SHANNON

You thought bad people go to prison?

A glance is exchanged between Shannon and Maggie.

MAGGIE

When people go to prison it's because they did something bad. It's their consequence. It doesn't mean they're a bad person.

JASON

Oh. I liked the lady who trained Snap.

MAGGIE

I like the lady who trained Snap too.

SHANNON

Me too.

Snap lays down and puts her head on Jason's lap. They both look exhausted from their big day.

MAGGIE

Look how happy he is!

SHANNON

You did this. Brian may have made the call, but this is all you, my friend.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

40 INT. MAGGIE'S KITCHEN - MORNING

40

Maggie is putting dishes in the dishwasher when Mrs. Berg comes in with a stack of greeting cards.

MRS. BERG

Good morning, dear.

MAGGIE

Mrs. Berg, good morning.

MRS. BERG

I have some thank you cards for you to sign.

MAGGIE

I'm sorry?

MRS. BERG

Thank you cards, you know, for the Pastor and Dorothy, and some of the helpers at your mom's care facility.

MAGGIE

Mrs. Berg, I, I can write my own thank you cards.

MRS. BERG

I know you can, but I didn't want too much time to pass, plus, I'm sure you're busy.

Maggie hastily signs the cards.

MRS. BERG (CONT'D)

Jason said something about that girl, oh, what was her name?

MAGGIE

Theresa? What about her?

MRS. BERG

Oh. I didn't quite catch it all.  
But he seems to be taken with her.

As Maggie signs each card, Mrs. Berg grabs it, puts it in an addressed, stamped envelope and licks the flaps closed. It becomes a bit of an assembly line.

MAGGIE

I think he might have his first  
crush.

Mrs. Berg stops mid-lick.

MRS. BERG

Crush? Oh my. Normally I wouldn't  
think it was a good idea, you know,  
someone like that, influencing a  
young mind.

Mrs. Berg finishes sealing the last envelope and shuffles them into a neat stack, then stuffs them into her purse.

MAGGIE

Someone like what?

MRS. BERG

Maggie, honey, the girl has pink  
hair! And tattoos!

MAGGIE

And a brilliant mind, and a heart  
of gold!

Maggie places the last dish in the dishwasher, grabs cube of detergent, drops it in the dispenser, presses a couple of buttons and closes the door. Mrs. Berg backs out of Maggie's way.

MRS. BERG

Hold your horses dear, I said  
normally. But... I think she is  
good for him. Well, just the other  
day I saw her playing catch with  
Snap and him. Had to look twice.  
He seemed (pause) happy.

Maggie stops what she's doing and looks at Mrs. Berg.

MAGGIE

I think he is.

MRS. BERG  
Maggie, what I'm trying to say is,  
I might have been wrong.

Maggie grabs the dishcloth from the sink and starts to wipe  
down the counter.

MAGGIE  
Oh, Mrs. Berg. I'm sure Theresa  
can take care of herself.

MRS. BERG  
Not just about her. Seems I might  
have been wrong about a couple of  
things lately.

Maggie stops cleaning.

MAGGIE  
Oh?

MRS. BERG  
Maggie, I know you want to know  
more about those papers you found.

Maggie looks shocked.

MAGGIE  
I didn't "*find*" them, Mom *left* them  
for me.

MRS. BERG  
You're right dear, you're right.  
And I've thought long and hard  
about it. Your mother would never  
have saved all those papers if she  
didn't want you to have them  
someday. I just wish Caroline  
would have said something to me.  
Just goes to show you, you think  
you know someone, but you never  
know everything.

MAGGIE  
Mrs. Berg, what are you saying?

MRS. BERG  
I'm saying, it's time you learn the  
truth.

Maggie is at the cemetery at her mother's grave.

MAGGIE

Oh, Mom. I miss you so much. And I'm so lost. What happened? And how did you keep your secret for so long? I'm scared, Mom. What if I find her, my *birth Mom*? That's so hard to say out loud. And what if I like her? I think that's what I'm most scared of. No one could ever replace you Mom, no one.

After a few moments, she walks over to the gravestone we saw earlier. "Speak softly, a dream is buried here." She runs her fingers across the words. Her heart breaks.

42 EXT. CITY AND COUNTY BUILDING - DAY 42

The building is a historic landmark, with imposing marble columns and many stairs leading to the entrance. Maggie carries her folder up the steps.

43 INT. COUNTY RECORDS OFFICE - CONTINUOUS 43

The office has florescent lights, gray carpet and low ceiling tiles. There are rows of short wooden cabinets containing various research catalogs.

There is a RECORDS CLERK, 60s, frumpy and tired, sitting at a desk along the wall. Above her is a sign, hanging by chains from the ceiling, with the words "Records Clerk" in block letters.

RECORDS CLERK

We can confirm these records, but in order to get the full adoption papers, you need to file a petition with the adoption agency. Sometimes they will reach out to the birth mother, providing they have the last known address, and see if she is open to meeting you.

MAGGIE

I see.

RECORDS CLERK

Many adoptees are interested only in their family medical history, and not in reconnecting to their birth Mother, or Father, if known. It's a long shot, but right now it's your best option.

MAGGIE

Thank you.

44 INT. MAGGIE'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

44

Maggie's office is much more organized than the last time we saw it, although there are still a few stacks of papers. She checks the phone number then dials. Maggie listens to the recorded message, then...

MAGGIE

This is Maggie Benson, um, my maiden name is Maggie Walker. I was born 2-6-1979 at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Hospital in Wessington. I'm looking for my birth mother. If you have any information, you can contact me at this number. I will also e-mail you with all of this information. Thank you.

Maggie hangs up the phone, she looks both scared and excited.

45 INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

45

Maggie and Shannon sit on opposite ends of a worn-leather love seat in one of those quirky, locally owned and operated coffee shops. The walls are covered with the art-of-the-month art. As people walk in and out of the shop, a little bell rings above the door. Shannon is on a rant, almost as if she is talking to herself.

SHANNON

I don't know. At what age should I expect a guy to have it more together than I do? I mean, I'm fun, I could pass for cute. Is it too much to ask that he no longer live with his parents? It would be different if he were helping them, but that's not the case. I mean... Really? At this rate I should start collecting cats. I don't mind cats.

MAGGIE

I got some information.

Shannon snaps out of her monologue, suddenly aware of her surroundings.

SHANNON

Information about what? Your papers? Seriously? Why are we talking about cats? Spill.

MAGGIE

Actually, Mrs. Berg came through for me.

SHANNON

Mrs. Berg? The Mrs. Berg I know? Older, set in her ways, knows a little bit more than we do about everything?

Maggie gives Shannon a stern look. Shannon sits tall, giving Maggie her full attention.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

OK, I'm listening.

MAGGIE

You know that picture I like so much, the one of Mom when she was pregnant?

SHANNON

Yeah.

MAGGIE

Well, obviously she is pregnant, just not with me.

SHANNON

Okay...

MAGGIE

Mrs. Berg told me that Mom's baby was stillborn.

Shannon reaches to comfort Maggie, but Maggie continues.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Not long after, there was a young woman, a teenager, who delivered... well, me. Only this girl knew she was not prepared to be a mother. Her parents had disowned her for embarrassing the family, and she felt she had no option but to put her baby, *me*, up for adoption.

SHANNON

Maggie, I'm so sorry.

MAGGIE

My mom wanted a baby so badly, and this young girl couldn't...

Maggie looks around the coffee shop, trying to hold back her emotions.

SHANNON

Wait. You're saying *that* teenage girl is your birth mom, and your real mom—I mean Caroline, adopted you? How did they know about each other?

MAGGIE

I'm not sure they did. I don't know. There's so much I don't know.

SHANNON

How do you feel about it?

MAGGIE

A bit numb. It's a lot to take in.

SHANNON

So now what?

MAGGIE

I have a call and an e-mail in to the adoption agency. If they can locate my birth Mother and she's interested in meeting me, they'll set it up. Until then, nothing.

SHANNON

What do you hope happens?

MAGGIE

I don't know. Honestly, being a mother I can't understand how anyone could give up their child. That said, I can't imagine what I would have done if I had Jason as an unwed teenager. And poor Mom, losing her baby the day she delivered? It's more than I can wrap my head around.

SHANNON

But why didn't she tell you that you were adopted?



MAGGIE

You know what, it's the one thing I'm not questioning. Think of all the pain that would bring up for her. What if I couldn't understand why my birth mom didn't keep me? I mean really, what good would have come out of it?

SHANNON

What good is coming out of it now?

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

46 EXT. CHURCH - DAY

46

The church is a large, single-story building with a marquee on the front lawn that reads, "Church shopping? We're open Sundays." Maggie drives to the church entrance, hops out of her vehicle and opens the car door for Jason. Jason jumps out and Maggie hands him his backpack. He throws it over his shoulder.

MAGGIE

(In sign language)

Have fun! I'll pick you up as soon as you're finished. Text me, OK?

JASON

(In sign language)

OK.

Snap is waiting for her command to get out of the vehicle. She is wearing her new dog tags. They are identical to Brian's military tags. Maggie grabs Snap's leash and hands it to Jason.

JASON (CONT'D)

Come.

Snap leaps out of the vehicle. Jason and Snap run into the building. Pastor Daniel approaches.

PASTOR DANIEL

Well, hello Maggie.

Maggie is signing as she speaks to Pastor Daniel.

MAGGIE

Pastor Daniel, Hi. How's Jason doing?

PASTOR DANIEL

He's doing great. And that dog!  
The other day I saw Jason reading  
to him. I mean, I think that's  
what he was doing, he had a book  
open and was signing to Snap, then  
turning the page. Anyway, the dog  
just sat there (pause) listening!

MAGGIE

He's pretty amazing.

PASTOR DANIEL

As are you.

MAGGIE

Me? What?

PASTOR DANIEL

You're signing, even though Jason  
isn't here.

Maggie looks down at her hands, then tucks them to her side,  
embarrassed.

MAGGIE

Oh, I didn't even realize I was  
doing that. I'm trying, but it's  
tough.

PASTOR DANIEL

You think signing is tough, try  
Latin.

Pastor Daniel turns and walks into the church. Maggie stands  
there for a moment, very proud of herself. There's a bit of  
a spring in her step as she gets back in the vehicle.

47 INT. MAGGIE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

47

Maggie, Shannon and Theresa are practicing signing. Theresa  
is cross-legged in the chair and Maggie and Shannon sit  
together on the couch.

THERESA

(In sign language)

OK. You two are doing great.  
Turtle.

They sign turtle.

THERESA (CONT'D)

Weirdo.

They sign weirdo and laugh.

SHANNON

I know I'll be using that one a lot!

Theresa continues to sign as she gives them instructions.

THERESA

I have a mission for you.

Shannon repeats the sign, checking to make sure she did it right. Maggie watches and repeats the sign with Shannon.

SHANNON

Mission? What kind of mission?

THERESA

A way to practice signing when Jason and I aren't around.

MAGGIE

OK, how?

THERESA

Sign to music, just like Jason is for the pageant.

MAGGIE

I don't want to sign in front of anyone.

THERESA

You don't have to. You can practice while you're sitting in your car or when you're home alone. Just pick a slow song, a song you really like.

MAGGIE

A *really* slow song. Like a ballad?

THERESA

Or maybe a Christmas song? That's how I practiced when I first learned to sign. There's something calming about it. Kinda gets you out of your head.

SHANNON

I'm in. That sounds kinda fun.

MAGGIE

Wow, some things never change.

SHANNON

What?

MAGGIE

You're such a suck up!

SHANNON

Oh yeah?

(In sign language)

You're a weirdo.

They laugh at how childish they are being.

MAGGIE

Sign to music, huh? I guess it would make me practice more.

THERESA

It's just a thought. No pressure. Well, maybe a little bit of pressure.

They hear the front door open.

48

INT. MAGGIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

48

Maggie walks into the kitchen, Shannon and Theresa are close behind. Jason and Snap run in. Pastor Daniel right behind him.

MAGGIE

(In sign language)

Hey, I told you I'd pick you up.

PASTOR DANIEL

That's my fault. I thought I'd give them a lift, save you the drive.

JASON

(In sign language)

Mom, can everyone stay for taco Tuesday?

MAGGIE

Can everyone stay for taco Tuesday? I don't see why not.

PASTOR DANIEL

Oh, I don't want to intrude.

SHANNON

I want to intrude, count me in.

THERESA  
 (In sign language)  
 I love tacos.

MAGGIE  
 (To Pastor Daniel)  
 Please stay.

PASTOR DANIEL  
 So here's a secret. I too love  
 tacos!

JASON  
 Yea! I'm going to go feed Snap  
 Taco Tuesday kibble.

THERESA  
 (Laughing)  
 You're feeding Snap Taco Tuesday  
 kibble?

MAGGIE  
 (Laughing)  
 You do that.

THERESA  
 I'll set the table.

Shannon folds her arms and taps her index finger against her  
 chin.

SHANNON  
 What wine goes with tacos?

PASTOR DANIEL  
 Um....I can say grace?

MAGGIE  
 Works for me.

49 INT. MAGGIE'S KITCHEN - EVENING

49

Maggie, Shannon and Theresa are cleaning up the dishes.  
 Pastor Daniel walks into the kitchen.

PASTOR DANIEL  
 I just checked in on Jason and  
 Snap. That is the cleanest kid's  
 room I think I've ever seen.

THERESA  
 I know. Right?

MAGGIE

It use to look like we lived in  
tornado alley.

PASTOR DANIEL

Really?

MAGGIE

Then, the other day I went into his  
room and it was spotless. Well,  
spotless for a 9 year old.

THERESA

What happened?

SHANNON

Snap happened.

MAGGIE

Jason said Snap liked having room  
to lay down wherever he wanted.

PASTOR DANIEL

So he keeps his room clean for his  
dog?

MAGGIE

Hey, I don't care who he keeps it  
clean for, but I gotta tell you  
Pastor, Snap is a Godsend!

PASTOR DANIEL

I believe he is, I believe he is.

Theresa gets up and pushes her chair back under the table.

THERESA

Well, I gotta get studying. Thanks  
so much for the tacos, they were  
delicious.

SHANNON

I'll walk out with you, thanks  
again Mags. See you, Pastor.

Theresa and Shannon grab their stuff and leave.

PASTOR DANIEL

I should get going, too.

MAGGIE

Pastor, do you have just few more  
minutes?

PASTOR DANIEL

Sure.

MAGGIE

I want to talk to you about my mother.

PASTOR DANIEL

Of course.

MAGGIE

Ah, not Caroline. My birth mother.

PASTOR DANIEL

Oh.

MAGGIE

I'm sure Mom confided in you about what happened the day I was born.

PASTOR DANIEL

She did.

MAGGIE

I'm just so confused, Pastor. I mean, I've tried to understand why she didn't tell me. I convinced myself I was OK with it, but, the more I think about it, the more I feel... I don't know, betrayed?

PASTOR DANIEL

How so?

MAGGIE

I always thought my mom was supposed to help me find my place in the world, not stand between me and the truth.

PASTOR DANIEL

And did she?

MAGGIE

Did she what?

PASTOR DANIEL

Help you find your place in the world?

MAGGIE

Well, yes, but...

PASTOR DANIEL

Maggie, I appreciate how difficult this must be, but your mother could not have loved you more than she did, and your birth mom? Well, try to put yourself in her shoes. Nothing about this is easy. You may never understand why either one of them did what they did, but, to me, it seems like you come from not one, but two pretty tough women, you'll get through this.

MAGGIE

I just want to know more.

PASTOR DANIEL

I know you do Maggie. But you need to be okay if you don't.

Maggie grabs his coat and sees him out.

MAGGIE

Thank you Pastor.

50 INT. MAGGIE'S HOME OFFICE - CONTINUOUS 50

Maggie sits behind her desk and fires up her computer to find an e-mail from the adoption agency. She sits up straight and her eyes scan the words quickly. Maggie gives a long exhale as she slumps back in her chair and clicks off her computer.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

51 EXT. DOWNTOWN - MORNING 51

Maggie and Shannon are walking past the shop windows filled with a combination of sale displays and Christmas scenes.

SHANNON

So what does the e-mail mean?

MAGGIE

It means, the agency has contact with my birth mom.

Shannon stops short.



SHANNON

What! That means she's alive!  
That's great news. When are you  
going to meet her?

Maggie takes a step before realizing Shannon isn't keeping up, she stops and turns back to face Shannon. Shoppers continue to move past them.

MAGGIE

Alive, wow, it never even crossed  
my mind that she might not be  
alive. Thanks Shannon.

SHANNON

Sorry. I'm not helping.

They start walking again.

MAGGIE

There's more to it. My birth Mom  
is open to learning about me, but  
not open to me learning about her.

SHANNON

What? That's odd. Why?

MAGGIE

I don't know. I've been running  
the scenarios.

SHANNON

What *exactly* did they say?

Maggie pulls her phone out of her jacket and clicks through it until she finds the e-mail.

MAGGIE

(Reading)

It says, 'There is hesitation on  
the part of your birth mother  
concerning the release of any  
information at this time.'

Maggie clicks off her phone and puts it back in her pocket.

SHANNON

Okay. So think about it. She just  
found out that a child she had a  
lifetime ago is now looking for  
her. She needs a little time to  
take it all in, just like you did.

MAGGIE

I thought about that. Maybe she's got a new family and doesn't want them to know about me, or maybe she's ill... or just not a good person.

SHANNON

Or... maybe she's afraid of what it is you want from her?

Maggie grabs Shannon's arm to make her stop walking.

MAGGIE

Wait. What?

SHANNON

If it were me, the first thing that comes to mind is... you want money, or... a kidney.

Maggie rolls her eyes and starts walking again.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Maggie, she doesn't know you! She doesn't know your situation.

MAGGIE

This is a big mistake. I feel like I'm on this emotional roller coaster and maybe it's time to get off.

SHANNON

Hang on a minute.

Shannon sits on a bench and Maggie follows.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

How about this? Just give her some time to digest the fact that she has a daughter who is interested in meeting her. She *might* be afraid of disappointing you.

MAGGIE

Disappointing me? I just want to understand what happened.

SHANNON

The agency told her about you and Jason and what your intentions are, right?

Maggie nods yes.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

So, give her some time to decide if meeting you is what she wants.

There's a silence. Maggie's frustration is showing.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

What's going on?

MAGGIE

Why would Mom do this to me! Why would she leave me those papers if she didn't know for sure my birth Mom would want to get to know me? I'm so mad at her for not telling me, for sending me on this wild goose chase.

SHANNON

And for dying?

MAGGIE

What?

SHANNON

Are you mad at her for dying?

MAGGIE

Shannon!

SHANNON

It's perfectly normal. You're allowed to be mad. I think it's even one of the grieving steps.

MAGGIE

I don't know. Maybe. We've just had so much taken from us this year, I don't know if Jason can handle another disappointment.

SHANNON

Jason? Jason doesn't even know what a birth Mom is.

MAGGIE

OK, I don't know if *I* can handle another disappointment.

SHANNON

I get that. But in the end, which is worse, learning she doesn't want a relationship with you or knowing you had this opportunity and didn't take it?

MAGGIE

Ugh! It's so difficult! I mean, I know you're right, I can't *not* try. I can just do my part and if she isn't interested in meeting me... us, then... at I least tried.

SHANNON

You're sure?

MAGGIE

No! No I'm not sure.

Maggie gets up from the bench.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

But I'm going to e-mail the agency before I lose my courage.

52

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

52

Maggie is sitting in her parked car waiting for Jason and Snap. She's signing to a Christmas carol on the radio as Mr. Kelly approaches. She turns down the radio and rolls down the window.

MAGGIE

Hey, Sam.

MR. KELLY

Hey. I just wanted to let you know Jason's reading has really improved. I mean it's *really* improved. I'm not sure what you're doing, but keep doing it.

MAGGIE

I have him read his homework to Snap. And that crazy dog sits there like she's hanging on every word.

MR. KELLY

Maggie, that's brilliant. I bet that would help some of my other students as well.

MAGGIE

Just don't let them read Old Yeller.

MR. KELLY

It's not just his reading, he seems much happier lately.

MAGGIE

That's funny, Mrs. Berg said the exact same thing.

MR. KELLY

Well, from what I remember, Mrs. Berg is always right.

MAGGIE

Oh my gosh, you're just as bad as Shannon.

MR. KELLY

How is that little firecracker?

MAGGIE

Shannon? Oh, she's good.

MR. KELLY

Since she's been dating Rodney we hardly ever see either one of them.

MAGGIE

What?

MR. KELLY

Oops. I thought you knew. Ah, man. Don't say anything. Lily already thinks I'm the town crier... just because I let it slip to her mom that she was pregnant before Lily had a chance to tell her herself.

MAGGIE

Lily's pregnant?!?

MR. KELLY

I did it again, didn't I? I'm going to leave before I get myself in anymore trouble. Bye, Mags.

MAGGIE

Congratulations! I'm so happy for you. And I promise, your secret's are safe with me.

Sam walks away from the vehicle, past Jason and Snap as they approach the car. Sam gives Snap a quick pet, then rubs Jason's head.

53

INT. MAGGIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

53

Maggie comes in with bags of groceries and sets them on the counter. Mrs. Berg and Jason are sitting at the kitchen counter. Jason is trying to do a magic trick with a coin. Snap is laying at Jason's feet gnawing on a candy cane-shaped rawhide.

MAGGIE

(In sign language)

Look Jason, I got ingredients to make the cookies. Mrs. Berg, would you like to help?

Maggie starts to unload the groceries.

MRS. BERG

Oh, I don't know. I will just end up eating more of them than I should.

JASON

(In sign language)

They're cookies for Snap.

MRS. BERG

Did you say you're making ginger snaps?

MAGGIE

No, he said we're making cookies for Snap. They're dog treats for Snap's stocking.

Maggie pulls out a cookie cutter shaped like a dog bone.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

See?

MRS. BERG

Well, if ever a dog deserved his own stocking, it's that one.

JASON

Do you know what you're getting Snap for Christmas?

MRS. BERG  
 (In sign language)  
 Do I know what I'm getting Snap for  
 Christmas? Did I draw Snap's name?

JASON  
 (Laughing)  
 (Jason hides the sign so  
 Snap can't read it)  
 I'm getting him a new ball.

MRS. BERG (CONT'D)  
 You're getting him a round  
 thing?

MRS. BERG (CONT'D)  
 Oh. I got ya. Hmm. I'll have to  
 add Snap to my list.

JASON  
 OK. But you don't have a lot of  
 time.

MRS. BERG  
 You're right, I don't have a lot of  
 time. Thanks for reminding me.

Jason leaves the room. Snap picks up his rawhide and follows  
 close behind.

MAGGIE  
 I heard back from my birth mom.

MRS. BERG  
 Oh?

MAGGIE  
 She's open to learning about us,  
 but not ready to share anything  
 about herself.

MRS. BERG  
 That's a good start.

MAGGIE  
 Is it?

MRS. BERG  
 I think so. Did you tell her about  
 Jason?

MAGGIE  
 Yes, I mean I told her about Brian  
 dying last year, and that it was  
 just Jason and me now.

MRS. BERG  
 Did you send her a picture?

MAGGIE

I did. The one from last Christmas, with all of us.

MRS. BERG

Maggie. What is it?

MAGGIE

What's what?

MRS. BERG

There's something you're not telling me.

Maggie is finished unloading the groceries and folds her grocery bags, setting them on the counter.

MAGGIE

To be honest, I'm having second thoughts.

MRS. BERG

I see.

MAGGIE

It's just that, well, I couldn't have asked for a better childhood. Mom sacrificed so much for me. It wasn't until I had Jason that I truly understood just how much.

MRS. BERG

Dear, I'm not sure what one thing has to do with the other.

MAGGIE

I feel like I'm being disloyal to all she did for me.

MRS. BERG

Maybe that's exactly what Caroline was trying to avoid.

MAGGIE

What do you mean?

MRS. BERG

My guess is she didn't want to put you in this situation. Now you're feeling guilty for wanting to know more about your birth Mother.

(MORE)



MRS. BERG (CONT'D)  
 Maybe all that time, Caroline  
 thought she was protecting you,  
 and... probably herself, from all  
 these "feelings."

MAGGIE  
 Wow, I never thought of it like  
 that. (Pause) Mrs. Berg, what if  
 you write my birth Mom a letter?

MRS. BERG  
 What?

MAGGIE  
 You can tell her that you've known  
 me since day one, and that you and  
 Mom were best friends for over 50  
 years. It might make her feel a  
 little more comfortable.

MRS. BERG  
 I guess I could. Are you sure  
 that's something you want me to do?

MAGGIE  
 I am. All the information's on my  
 desk.

MRS. BERG  
 If you're sure.

Maggie nods her head yes and Mrs. Berg gets up and goes to  
 the office. The doorbell rings.

54 INT. MAGGIE'S FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS 54

Jason and Snap run out from his room to answer it. When he  
 opens the door all he can see is a tree. He starts to  
 giggle.

MAGGIE  
 I'm in the kitchen!

55 INT. MAGGIE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS 55

The tree walks into the kitchen. Jason is running around the  
 tree trying to see what's going on. Snap is bouncing and  
 barking. Theresa sets it down and comes into view.

MAGGIE  
 Theresa! What?! How?

THERESA

(In sign language)

I noticed you hadn't gotten a tree yet, and this one was at school, but with classes done for the semester, it was just going to get thrown out, so... I rescued it!

JASON

Do we get to keep it?

THERESA

You can keep it if your mom says it's OK.

MAGGIE

Sure, it's OK. We'll move it into the living room and get it some water.

JASON

Can we decorate it?

Mrs. Berg comes from the office to the kitchen.

MRS. BERG

What do we have here?

JASON

We have a tree! It's a Christmas tree for us!

MRS. BERG

I see that!

JASON

Do you want to help decorate?

MRS. BERG

Do I want to help decorate? No, no, you go ahead. I've got something important to do.

MAGGIE

OK. I'll get the ornaments from the garage. Can you stay and help us, Theresa?

THERESA

Are you kidding? I'd love to. I was afraid I wasn't going to get to decorate a tree this year.

MAGGIE  
Aren't you going home?

THERESA  
No. I waited too long to book a flight, and now...it's just too expensive.

MAGGIE  
Then come have Christmas with us. It's just Jason and me.

JASON  
And Snap.

MAGGIE  
And Snap.

THERESA  
I was hoping you'd say that. Yes, I'd love to come.

MAGGIE  
It'll be pretty low-key, but we'll have fun. How about you, Mrs. Berg?

MRS. BERG  
Oh Maggie, you know I always go to my sister's place. Thanks for asking, though.

MAGGIE  
All right, come on Jason, help me find our Christmas decorations!

Jason follows Maggie out of the kitchen. Snap follows closely behind, wagging his tail.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

56 EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - DAY

56

The church marquee has been changed to say, "Christmas Pageant, this Saturday 7:00 PM. It's our gift to you." Maggie is dropping off Jason and Snap.

MAGGIE  
(In sign language)  
It's your last rehearsal. Have fun!

JASON  
(In sign language)  
Bye, Mom.

Mr. Kelly approaches vehicle.

MAGGIE  
I wasn't expecting to see you here.

MR. KELLY  
I've got a couple of students in  
the pageant I wanted to check on.

MAGGIE  
Jason still hasn't told me which  
song he's doing.

MR. KELLY  
Really? I know.

MAGGIE  
Tell me!

MR. KELLY  
I've ruined enough surprises  
lately. This one I'm keeping.

MAGGIE  
Fine. I won't try to get it out of  
you.

MR. KELLY  
Thanks.

MAGGIE  
You'll probably spill it without me  
even trying.

MR. KELLY  
OK, OK. I'm going to go before I  
prove you right.

MAGGIE  
We'll see you at the pageant  
tomorrow night?

MR. KELLY  
We'll be there.

57 INT. MAGGIE'S HOME OFFICE - DAY 57

Maggie's office is even cleaner than the last time we saw it. Maggie is working when the phone rings, she checks the caller ID.

MAGGIE  
Hi, Lily, how are you?

58 INT. LILY'S KITCHEN - DAY 58

Lily is wearing an bandana on her head and standing at the kitchen sink, ringing out a rag. There is a bucket on the counter.

59 INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION 59

LILY  
Hi, Maggie. I'm looking for Sam, you haven't seen him have you? He isn't answering his phone.

MAGGIE  
Yeah, I just saw him at the pageant rehearsal. He probably turned his phone off. Is everything OK?

LILY  
No, a pipe in the basement just burst. I turned off the main water valve, but I don't know how we're going to get a plumber here before Christmas.

MAGGIE  
Is there a lot of damage?

LILY  
Not too bad, no. We got lucky. Well, except for the pipe bursting thing. I doubt we'll have water anytime soon.

MAGGIE  
You can pack a bag and come stay with us until you get it fixed.

LILY  
Maggie, it's Christmas!

MAGGIE

Bring your Christmas to our house.  
We'd love to have you. Plus, I may  
have over done it in the food  
department.

LILY

You realize it's not just Sam and  
me, Rodney's here too.

MAGGIE

The more the merrier!

LILY

You're the best! Thank you. I'll  
run by the church and let Sam know.  
Thank you Maggie. I mean it.

The doorbell rings, Shannon comes in without waiting for it  
to be answered.

MAGGIE

Don't even think about it.

SHANNON (O.C.)

Mags?

Maggie covers the receiver with her hand.

MAGGIE

I'm in here.

Maggie uncovers the receiver, speaking again to Lily.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Great, I'll see you when you get  
here.

Maggie hangs up the phone as Shannon walks in and plops down.

SHANNON

Hi.

MAGGIE

Hi. What's up?

SHANNON

I just talked to my Mom, and she  
said she just got invited to her  
boyfriend's cabin for Christmas.

MAGGIE

You're Mom has a boyfriend?

SHANNON

With a cabin! Can you believe it!

MAGGIE

Good for her.

SHANNON

So can I crash your Christmas?

MAGGIE

I'd love it if you crashed our Christmas!

SHANNON

Really? Great! I'll bring the eggnog. (Wink) OK. I'm going to go back to my place and get ready for the pageant. See you there?

MAGGIE

(Laughing)

Bye, Shannon.

60

INT. CHURCH - EVENING

60

The church is decorated with lights and poinsettias everywhere you look. The pews are trimmed with red ribbons and to the right of the makeshift stage, there's an orchestra warming up. Lily, Sam, Maggie, and Theresa are in their seats. Shannon and Rodney come in together, but make a production of acting as if they just ran into each other in the entry.

SHANNON

Look who I found!

MAGGIE

Hi, Rodney! I'm glad you could make it.

RODNEY

I wouldn't miss it.

Rodney squeezes Shannon's hand as they take their seats. Maggie notices, but doesn't say anything.

THERESA

Where's Mrs. Berg?

MAGGIE

I don't know, save her a seat, she said she'd be here.

There is a montage of musical numbers. Light go up and down, the audience claps. Mrs. Berg's seat remains empty. Pastor Daniel walks to the mic stand at the center of the stage.

PASTOR DANIEL

Christmas touches all our senses.  
 We get to taste sugar cookies, we  
 see the beautiful lights, we hear  
 wonderful carols, we smell the pine  
 scent of the Christmas tree and we  
 touch the paper and bows. But  
 tonight, we hope you will also feel  
 the spirit.

The lights dim. A spotlight comes up on a GIRL, 10 years old, in a red velvet christmas dress. The room becomes silent. The girl begins to sing a cappella.

GIRL

*Said the night wind to the little  
 lamb  
 Do you see what I see  
 Way up in the sky little lamb  
 Do you see what I see  
 A star, a star  
 Dancing in the night  
 With a tail as big as a kite  
 With a tail as big as a kite*

Maggie and company are smiling, enjoying the performance. Shannon catches Maggie's eye and mouths, "she's good!" Then a second spotlight comes up. This one is shining on Jason, with Snap sitting proudly beside him. The girl continues to sing, as Jason signs the words to her song.

GIRL (CONT'D)

*Said the little lamb to the  
 shepherd boy  
 Do you hear what I hear  
 Do you hear what I hear  
 A song, a song  
 High above the trees  
 With a voice as big as the sea  
 With a voice as big as the sea  
 Said the shepherd boy to the mighty  
 king  
  
 Ringing through the sky shepherd  
 boy*

Jason and the girl check with each other to make sure they are in rhythm.

A full orchestra slowly builds, as does a full gospel choir.



GIRL (CONT'D)

*Do you know what I know  
 (do you know what I know)  
 In your palace warm mighty king  
 Do you know what I know  
 (do you know what I know)  
 A child, a child  
 Shivers in the cold  
 Let us bring him silver and gold  
 Let us bring him silver and gold*

As the song concludes, the audience raises to their feet. Clapping and cheering. There's not a dry eye in the house. The little girl looks over at Jason, who is bent over petting Snap.

61 INT. CHURCH FOYER - CONTINUOUS

61

The crowd spills out with the buzz of wishing each other a Merry Christmas. The little girl is clumsily signing to Jason, who is blushing. Maggie, Shannon, Sam, Lily and Rodney are standing to the side, looking on.

SHANNON

You know how every year there's that one moment when you think, "Now that's Christmas!?"

MAGGIE

Yeah...

SHANNON

I just had mine.

RODNEY

Me too. Maggie, you should be so proud.

MAGGIE

I am! And just look at him, I think he's pretty proud of himself. I can't imagine a better Christmas gift.

Theresa walks over and hands Maggie her jacket.

THERESA

I can head over to your house and get the hot cider started.

MAGGIE

Thanks Theresa. We'll be right behind you.

Pastor Daniel walks towards the group.

PASTOR DANIEL  
Well, was he able to surprise you?

Maggie looks at Sam. Sam raises his palms.

MAGGIE  
You mean Jason? Yes. I had no idea what song he'd be signing.

PASTOR DANIEL  
It's impressive. I know a few adults who have a hard time keeping a secret, let alone a little boy.

Lily jabs her elbow into Sam's ribs.

MAGGIE  
Thank you for letting him be a part of the pageant. I think it was really good for him.

PASTOR DANIEL  
I think it was really good for all of us, so thank you for suggesting it.

62

INT. MAGGIE'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

62

The tree is lit and the stockings are hung on the fireplace, including a bone shaped stocking labeled "Snap." There's also Rodney's athletic sock and it's construction paper label, attached by a safety pin.

Maggie, Shannon, Sam and Lily are all sitting around the tree, visiting. Jason is sitting on the floor playing the shell game with Snap, putting a bone-shaped treat under a cup, then rotating it with two others. Snap watches intently. Theresa is passing out mugs of cider.

Rodney is looking at the collection of everyone's Christmas ornaments on the tree. He locates an ostrich ornament and spins it around in his fingers, confused. Shannon grabs the photo from last year's Christmas. The same one we saw at the beginning of the story, with Maggie, Jason, Caroline and Brian. She walks over to Maggie with the photo.

SHANNON  
I can't believe this was only a year ago.

MAGGIE

I know. Brian and Mom would have loved tonight.

SHANNON

Remember what you said to me when we were packing up your Mom's place? That all you ever wanted was to be surrounded by a big family?

Shannon looks around the room.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Well, looks like you got your wish.

The doorbell rings and everyone continues going about what they are doing, not noticing.

MAGGIE

I've got it.

63

INT. MAGGIE'S FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

63

Maggie goes to the front door to find Mrs. Berg and one other woman, a bit younger than Mrs. Berg.

MAGGIE

Mrs. Berg, we were worried about you, I thought you were going to be at the church!

MRS. BERG

I was, Dear, but something important came up.

Mrs. Berg shuffles a little, trying to present her guest. The two ladies step inside. There's a silent pause. Mrs. Berg take a deep breath and tries to compose herself. Maggie looks from Mrs. Berg to the woman and back again.

MRS. BERG (CONT'D)

Maggie, I'd like you to meet your birth Mom.

MAGGIE

What? Wha...how?

MARGARET, mid 50s, and older version of Maggie, is nervous as she holds out her hand to shake Maggie's. Maggie throws her arms around Margaret's. Margaret is pleasantly startled.

MRS. BERG  
Maggie, this is Margaret.

MAGGIE  
Margaret? Mom named me after you?

As Margaret signs, she also speaks, although it is guttural.

MARGARET  
(In sign language)  
I'm so happy to meet you.

Maggie looks at Mrs. Berg, confused.

MAGGIE  
(In sign language)  
You know how to sign? But how?

MRS. BERG  
Margaret was just 16 when she had you, so not only was she a young girl, she was a young, deaf girl. And she was afraid she wouldn't be able to raise a hearing child.

MARGARET  
I wanted to keep you. I did, but I couldn't. I thought about you all the time. I wondered how you were doing, if you were happy. I hope you can understand?

MAGGIE  
I do understand. I'm just so happy to meet you!

Maggie is signing what Mrs. Berg is saying, so Margaret isn't missing out on any of the information.

MRS. BERG  
When I wrote Margaret and told her what a good boy Jason is, and that she shouldn't worry about communicating with him, because if I could, well...

MAGGIE  
When I wrote to the adoption agency, I didn't even mention Jason being deaf. I guess I forgot.

MARGARET

Knowing that you both could read sign gave me the courage to meet you.

MAGGIE

But, did Mom know?

MRS. BERG

Your Mom gave you every bit of information she had. There's no way she could have known.

MAGGIE

Mrs. Berg, I don't know what to say. Thank you for this.

MARGARET

She was very convincing. She even had a driver pick me up.

MRS. BERG

Actually, that was Pastor Daniel's doing, I just put in the request.

MAGGIE

Driver? You live near here?

MARGARET

Just three hours away.

MAGGIE

All this time, we've been so close...

MRS. BERG

Well, she's here now, Dear. That's all that matters.

MAGGIE

I'm sorry, can I take your coat?

Margaret takes off her coat, she is dressed almost exactly like Maggie. They both stare at each other. Maggie hugs Margaret again.

MARGARET

Merry Christmas.

MAGGIE

Merry Christmas!

64 INT. MAGGIE'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

64

Maggie leads Margaret and Mrs. Berg into the living room where everyone is gathered.

MAGGIE

Hey everyone. I have someone I  
want you to meet...

FADE TO BLACK.