

Daddy's Girl
by
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FADE IN:

- 1 INT. GIRL'S BEDROOM - MORNING 1
Small brown hands hold a clock.
MAY, an eight-year-old livewire, fidgets in bed, counting down the seconds.
MAY (O.S.)
Three...two...one...
6:00am on the clock.
A cloud of duvet flies through the air.
- 2 INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY/STAIRS - CONTINUOUS 2
RUNNING FOOTSTEPS on wood.
May races down the stairs in her pyjamas.
She leaps in the air, clears the last four steps.
THUD: she's at the bottom.
- 3 INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY/KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS 3
May skips along the hallway and into the kitchen, humming.
She stops in her tracks: a man's jacket hangs on the back of an empty chair.
May bites her lip.
- 4 A golden retriever yawns in its basket. 4
A chair SCRAPES across the tiled floor as May drags it to the back door.
She climbs up on the chair and pulls back the bolt.
May gets down and opens the door.
The dog heads outside.

4 EXT. GARDEN - LATER 4

FLIP-FLOP of wellies around May's thighs as she crosses the unkempt garden to a swing.

A white cloud forms as she breathes.

The dew-covered web of a harvest spider stretches across the frame of the swing.

May blows out hard. Her white breath sends vibrations through the glistening web.

Through it May sees the dog sniffing something.

She FLIP-FLOPS over to him.

Green-blue feathers stuck in damp clumps.

May crouches down to look at the starling. Its eye is covered with a milky film.

She picks up a twig and pokes the bird.

The eye moves.

A grey-white maggot wriggles out.

5 INT. KITCHEN - DAY 5

A grey-white cooked oat flake on a spoon.

May stirs it back into the rest of her porridge.

She looks at her placid brother, ZAK, six, tucking into his porridge contentedly

...at MUM, in her dowdy dressing gown, drawing deeply on a cigarette

...at the man's jacket on the empty chair at the end of the table.

May scoops up a spoonful of porridge and tips it surreptitiously on the floor.

The dog, waiting, gobbles it up.

DOORBELL.

A whirlwind of children.

6 INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

6

May pushes past Zak to reach the front door first.

She opens it to reveal GRANDMA, 60, a hatchet-faced old bird.

May sees Grandma's claw rise to comb a strand of hair from May's face. Then Grandma is past her and enveloping Mum.

May climbs up the outside edge of the stairs, hanging onto the banisters.

At the top she looks down on two heads - shiny black against silver - as Mum clings to Gran.

May sees Mum's shoulders shake. She reaches out a toe and touches Grandma's shoulder.

MAY

Can we go now?

Grandma looks up, and May sees Mum's teary eyes.

7 INT. CAR - DAY

7

A small mouth set in anger.

May, arms crossed, fumes in the back of a moving estate car laden with beach gear and the dog.

Next to her Zak clutches a battered teddy wearing a black eye patch. May reaches over and tugs the patch off.

Zak whines.

May puts the eye patch on and pulls a scary face.

Zak giggles.

May's one uncovered eye sees Mum's two pained eyes upon her in the rearview mirror.

MAY

I spy with my little eye...

May swings her head sideways: Grandma is glancing at Mum with concern.

Gran's age-spotted hand presses a button. Radio Two blares.

MAY (CONT'D)

(shouting over the
music)

..something beginning with E!

She looks pointedly at Zak.

8 EXT. BEACH CAR PARK - DAY 8

The SLAM of a car door.

May runs to the sea wall, still wearing an eye patch.

A vast expanse of silver sand lapped by a distant muddy sea.

May smiles as the sea breeze caresses her face.

A SNAP as Mum pulls the eye patch off her.

May clasps her smarting ear.

9 EXT. BEACH - DAY 9

May cartwheels across the beach, mirroring the big wheel behind her.

She turns over and over, as neatly as a gymnast.

May, upside down, spies a length of seaweed. She stops.

10 EXT. BEACH - LATER 10

The seaweed is moving.

May laughs as she is tugged along the beach by the dog on a seaweed lead.

Her eyes are closed as she is pulled this way and that.

A SPLASH and a GASP.

May is pulled fully clothed into the sea.

A SHRIEK as her bottom SLAPS against the cold water.

11 EXT. SEA - DAY 11

Slim brown arms breaststroke through flinty water.

May flips onto her back and floats, eyes closed.

Her T-shirt billows out around her.

Water laps her ears, muffling her grandma's cries.

GRANDMA (O.S.)
 (muffled)
 Out... now!

May sinks a little lower in the water, blocking out the sound completely.

12 EXT. BEACH - DAY 12

Blue shivering lips.

May's wet T-shirt is pulled off over her head, revealing a goose-pimpled brown chest.

Grandma plucks at May's wet pants, trying to peel them off, but May holds onto them.

MAY
 Is it time to go yet?

A rough towel rubs May's hair...

Reddens her chest...

And then Mum's scratchy wool jumper is pulled over May's head, down over her chest, covering her wet pants.

13 EXT. BEACH - DAY 13

May wanders along the high-water mark in Mum's huge jumper, carrying a yellow bucket.

She crouches down by a clump of brown swollen seaweed, her hair falling in wet rats' tails round her face.

May spots something in the seaweed.

May pulls it free: a long, thin razor shell. She turns it over: it's whole.

The delicate hinge opens to display a mother of pearl lining.

May puts it carefully in her bucket.

Next to the seaweed May sees a large footprint. She measures her own brown bare foot next to it: so small.

She strides along in the man's footprints. A smaller set lies nearby.

A seagull SCREECHES above May's head.

She watches its wings tilt into a glide as it drops towards the beach.

It lands near a sandcastle. A barefoot dad digs a moat around it with a toddler.

May stares at them, at the footprints that lead to them. She turns and flees.

May's feet grip at soft, loose sand.

She runs past the sleeping dog and stops by a blanket.

MAY
When can we go?

Mum stuffs a sandwich in her mouth.

Grandma hands May a plate of food.

14 EXT. BEACH - LATER

14

A segment of orange is popped into May's open mouth. She chews and smiles.

MAY
Orange.

Her eyes are closed.

A sigh from Mum.

Zak selects a discarded crust of bread from his plate.

May opens her mouth and he puts it in. May grimaces as she chews.

MAY
A slimy slug.

Zak giggles.

Zak shoves the end of the sandy seaweed dog lead into May's open mouth.

May spits it out and leaps onto her laughing brother.

Sand flies from her feet into the food... and into Mum's eyes.

A cry of pain.

May looks up at Mum's screwed up eyes, her gaping, anguished maw.

Gran's lips are set in a grim line, her eyes accusatory.

May runs for the dunes.

15 EXT. DUNES - DAY 15

May's fingers plait coarse blue-green grass.
Right over centre...
Left over centre...
A sharp intake of breath.
Blood seeps from a grass cut on her finger.
May sucks the blood away.
She's hidden in the dunes.
Through the grass, May spies her family heading for the car,
laden with beach gear.
May jumps up.
Mum clutches her chest, alarmed.
May shrieks with laughter.

16 INT. AMUSEMENT ARCADE - AFTERNOON 16

A dingy porcelain princess in a prize cabinet.
May leans against the cabinet, watching people flock to the
fairground opposite.
Zak leans against her, sucking his thumb.

BINGO CALLER (O.S.)
(bored)
Two fat ladies, eighty-eight...

May glances at Grandma: she's covering eighty-eight on her
bingo card, licking her lips in anticipation.

A THUMP.

May turns to see a lad in a Rooney England shirt hitting a
fruit machine.
A coin clatters out. He grabs it and wanders off.

BINGO CALLER (O.S.)
Two little ducks, twenty-two...

May looks at Mum and Grandma - they're engrossed. She
sidles over to the fruit machine.
A LITTLE THUMP. Nothing happens.

May THUMPS harder. A coin falls out. May's eyes light up.

17 EXT. FAIRGROUND - AFTERNOON 17

Distorted 80s pop music.

May drags Zak through a crowded fairground.

She stares in wonder at the gaudy stalls...

the spinning waltzer...

the big wheel...

18 EXT. FAIRGROUND/DODGEMS - AFTERNOON 18

Heavy metal music.

Flashes of electricity on a moving metal pole.

May drives a dodgem.

THUMP as she careers into another car.

A JUDDER as they are smashed into from behind.

May laughs ecstatically.

Zak clings to her, paralysed by fear.

May spins the car around crazily, hitting car after car as hard as she can.

Her eyes are closed.

A crescendo of music as everyone crashes into her.

Darkness as the car and music fade to a halt.

May opens her eyes: Zak is gone.

Pinchy fingers pull at her arm.

May beams.

MAY

Is it time to go?

Grandma hauls her out of the dodgem and clips her ear.

Tears spring to May's eyes. Through them she sees Zak crying in Mum's arms.

19 INT. CAR - EVENING 19

Silence as Grandma hunches over the wheel, carrying the family along darkening roads.

May watches her mother's stricken face.

She loops the plaited dune grass around her wrist. The grass is dry and faded now.

Her hand wipes condensation from the car window, exposing the grey city.

She cranes her neck to see where they are: Grandma is turning into a car park. She slows to go over a speed bump.

May opens the door and leaps out of the moving car, almost tripping.

She races towards a building, her mum's gasps of horror fading into the night behind her.

May runs up steps to automatic doors bathed in light. They draw apart, inviting her inside.

20 INT. HOSPITAL/CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS 20

Patients, doctors, nurses zip by as May runs along a corridor. She's panting.

May stops and bites her lip; she's outside a ward.

She tiptoes in.

21 INT. HOSPITAL/WARD - CONTINUOUS 21

May stares at a jaundiced old man; he leers at her.

She passes a middle-aged man propped against a pillow dribbling from his open mouth.

She stops at the foot of the next bed.

A young, athletic man sits on the bed in his coat, a small suitcase by his side.

May looks curiously at his heavily bandaged eyes.

She clambers up onto the crisp white sheets. The man flinches.

May gently touches the bandage at the side of his eyes.

He reaches out blindly.

May takes his outstretched hand and puts it against her cheek.

He smiles.

May hugs him hard, her face pressed against his broad chest.

22 INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT 22
Two hands clasp each other, one large, one small as May leads her daddy out of the hospital.
Mum and Zak follow behind with the suitcase.

23 EXT. HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS 23
May pauses at the top of the stairs to the car park, searching for the car.
Grandma pulls up down below.
May looks up at her patient and smiles.

MAY
Nearly there.

May guides her father down the stairs and into an unseen world.