

RIVEN

Written by

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EXT. LAKESIDE CABIN - DAY

CLAIRE BARBER, late 30's, in a summer dress, relaxes by the lake with FOUR WOMEN of similar ages. Raucous laughter, glasses filled with rosé. She rubs sunscreen into REID BARBER, 7, in swim trunks.

A group of CHILDREN play in the lake a distance from the shore. Reid squirms.

REID

Mom.

CLAIRE

Just let me get your face, Reid.

She spreads sunscreen along his cheeks.

REID

Thanks, mom.

He darts toward the lake. The other children whoop.

CLAIRE

There's still a bunch on your nose!

He dives off the dock.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Brat.

The other women laugh.

STEVE BARBER, early 40's, tosses JUNIE BARBER, 3, in the air. She giggles. He passes her to Claire, kisses her.

STEVE

Next brat.

Claire takes her with a smile, pops open the sunscreen. Steve strolls to FOUR MEN chatting around a grill.

At a distance, the children in the lake splash and laugh.

Meat sizzles. Women chortle. Claire tops up her rosé. From the lake, a YOUNG BOY'S YELL is barely heard.

YOUNG BOY

Reid!

Fun continues on the shore as more CHILDREN YELL.

CHILDREN

Reid!

Claire's head whips toward the lake. A smattering of children are now on or near the shore. Reid is nowhere to be seen.

YOUNG BOY
(toward the water)
Reid!

Claire hands Junie to another woman and runs to the lake. Steve notices. Children nervously step out of the water.

YOUNG BOY (CONT'D)
(to Claire, in panic)
He was right behind me.

Claire speeds past him. The water laps at her thighs.

CLAIRE
(with growing terror)
Reid! Reid! ... Reid!

She moves deeper into the water, screaming his name. The lake stretches out before her, still and silent.

She hits an invisible wall, tries to move forward and again, hits it. Fists raise and she POUNDS against it, screaming.

REID (O.S.)
Mom.

CLAIRE
(with sudden hope)
Reid!

Reid's VOICE MORPHS into Junie's.

JUNIE (O.S.)
Mom.

INT. BARBER HOUSE - STEVE AND CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Claire's eyes shoot open. She is thin and haggard -- the beautiful woman from the lakeside is gone. The POUNDING continues. Junie stands beside the bed.

JUNIE
Mom, I want fruit candy.

Claire sits up, looks out the window.

EXT. BARBER HOUSE - DAY

JOHN, 50's, in a cheap suit, POUNDS a "For Sale" sign into the front lawn.

INT. BARBER HOUSE - STEVE AND CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Claire drags herself up.

INT. BARBER HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Claire hands Junie a fruit candy. She toddles off. Steve, in business casual, packs documents into a bag. He looks worn.

STEVE

She hasn't had breakfast yet.

Claire pours coffee into a mug. He sighs.

STEVE (CONT'D)

(calls)

Junie!

John enters through the front door, loud and perky.

JOHN

Okay, so, the first viewing is the day after tomorrow, at four.

STEVE

Sign looks great, John.

JOHN

Thank you. So, we just want to make sure the house is as organized as possible, including the spare room.

CLAIRE

Reid's room.

JOHN

Sorry?

CLAIRE

My son, Reid. You need Reid's room to be organized.

JOHN

Right. Reid's room ...

Claire walks out with her coffee.

INT. BARBER HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Light and Steve's voice fade as Claire approaches a door.

STEVE (O.S.)
I apologize. It's been a hard year
for all of us ...

INT. BARBER HOUSE - REID'S ROOM - DAY

The door creaks open into a typical boy's room: a plush dinosaur on the bed, soccer trophies on a dresser, cleats strewn haphazardly on the floor. Photos on the wall.

Empty cardboard boxes lean against the wall. Claire grabs one. She picks up the plush dinosaur. It stares back at her.

Behind her, Steve appears in the doorway.

STEVE
You know he didn't mean anything by
that.

CLAIRE
(without looking up)
I know.

STEVE
It's been eight months, Claire.

She nods.

STEVE (CONT'D)
It'll be better once we're in a new
home.

He leaves. WATER SOUNDS and CHILDREN'S LAUGHTER from the lake bubble up as she stares at the dinosaur. It draws her in.

QUICK FLASH

Water ripples from where her thighs disappear into the lake.

BACK TO SCENE

REID (O.S.)
Mom?

Claire gasps, eyes shutter open.

Reid stands before her in swim shorts and a white t-shirt.

CLAIRE

Reid?

(with pain)

... You're not real.

REID

Maybe I am. I'm not sure.

He looks at himself, shrugs.

CLAIRE

You're not. You ...

REID

Died?

He tries to touch something, goes through it, smiles.

JUNIE (O.S.)

Mom, I'm hungry.

Claire's head whips to Junie at the door.

CLAIRE

Not now, Junie.

She looks back to find Reid gone. Hope vanishes.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Ok. Come on.

She scoops up Junie and exits with sudden exhaustion.

INT. BARBER HOUSE - STEVE AND CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Steve unbuttons his shirt as Claire crawls into bed.

STEVE

You didn't pack much today.

CLAIRE

I got busy.

STEVE

With what?

Claire fluffs her pillow and lays down.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Claire, we have to. Viewers are coming in two days. You'll feel better when we're in a new home.

CLAIRE

Maybe.

INT. BARBER HOUSE - REID'S ROOM - DAY

Claire sits on Reid's bed, waits. Nothing happens. Finally, she rises and tosses the soccer cleats in a box.

REID

What're you doing, mom?

Reid stands before her.

CLAIRE

Packing. We're moving to a new house.

REID

Why? I like this house.

CLAIRE

I like it too. But we need a new house. A house that doesn't have --

REID

-- Me?

She freezes.

CLAIRE

No. Of course not. I'm packing all your toys so they can come with us. You too.

REID

I don't think I can leave.

CLAIRE

How do you know?

REID

Just a feeling.

INT. BARBER HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Junie toddles past Reid's room where Claire talks to nothing.

CLAIRE

We'll find a way.

INT. BARBER HOUSE - STEVE AND CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Claire crawls into bed. Steve stuffs clothes into a drawer.

CLAIRE
What if we stayed?

STEVE
Stay where?

CLAIRE
Here, Steve. I think we should stay.

STEVE
You know we can't do that. If we stay we'll never be able to ...

CLAIRE
What? Forget?

STEVE
That's not what I meant.

CLAIRE
It's what you were about to say.

STEVE
I'm exhausted. The viewers are coming tomorrow. Let's talk after.

Steve crawls into bed and turns out the light.

INT. BARBER HOUSE - REID'S ROOM - DAY

Claire and Reid sit on the floor laughing as they look through a stack of photos. Empty boxes clutter the floor.

CLAIRE
Remember when you tried baseball?

REID
And Aaron fell on his butt.

He laughs. She grins and flips to a new photo.

REID (CONT'D)
(re: the photo)
You look happy. You haven't looked happy for a while. Same with dad.

CLAIRE
You've been watching us? How long --

Light fills the room. Steve stands at the door, hand on the light switch.

STEVE

Who are you talking to? Where's Junie?

CLAIRE

Uh, I'm not sure.

STEVE

Weren't you just talking to her?

CLAIRE

She's probably playing in her room.

STEVE

She's not. What's going on in here if you aren't talking to her?

CLAIRE

You won't believe this but Reid's ghost is here.

REID

Hi, dad.

CLAIRE

Come say "hi".

STEVE

That's not funny. Where's Junie?

CLAIRE

Donno. You can't see Reid?

A THROAT CLEARS. John and TWO VIEWERS stand at the doorway.

JOHN

Uh, it's four o'clock.

STEVE

John, have you seen Junie?

JOHN

No, but the backdoor was open.

STEVE

What?

(to the viewers)

I'm so sorry folks. We'll have to reschedule. I need to find my daughter.

VIEWER #1
It's fine. We can help.

STEVE
Thank you.

The viewers and John disappear around the corner in a hurry.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Claire, are you coming?

CLAIRE
No. Someone needs to watch Reid.

STEVE
Claire, our daughter is missing!

CLAIRE
So, go! I'll watch Reid.

STEVE
He isn't real. Our daughter, Junie,
is real. Please, Claire.

CLAIRE
(to Reid)
Don't worry. I won't leave you
again.

Steve takes her in, broken. Then, he leaves.

EXT. BARBER HOUSE - NIGHT

Steve, John, and the Viewers fan out from the house with flashlights. They call Junie's name.

Through the window, Claire sits alone in Reid's room. She continues looking through photos, laughing by herself.