

Mrs Marshall's Class

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FADE IN:

INT. MARSHALL HOUSE - BATHROOM - MORNING

KATE MARSHALL, a down-trodden woman in her early thirties, stares into the bathroom mirror without really seeing. She is applying heavy make-up to cover a BLACK EYE.

She moves onto her arms, carefully rolling down her blouse sleeves to cover the deep bruises. Once she's finished, it's only the miserable look on her face that betrays the night before.

After taking one last look in the mirror, she turns off the bathroom light and leaves.

INT. MARSHALL HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Kate arrives in the kitchen, zoning in on her handbag. She picks it up and goes to leave.

Seemingly from nowhere, a man's hand GRIPS her wrist, stopping Kate in her tracks. The hand belongs to GRANT MARSHALL (30s). He pulls her close and snarls.

GRANT

We're having lunch together today, Kate. I don't like the way you're hanging around with those idiots at your work.

Kate doesn't meet his eyes, instead staring at the floor. She's the ultimate submissive wife.

KATE

I'll be sure to be waiting.

GRANT

Good, don't forget.

KATE

I won't.

Grant lets her wrist go with more force than necessary. She hurries away, not looking back.

INT. DEPT. OF EDUCATION OFFICE - DAY

Kate sits at her desk, trying to concentrate in the busy office. She reaches across the desk for a file and suddenly grips her side with pain. She breathes through it and pulls the file over.

At the next desk a FEMALE CO-WORKER (20s) receives a

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delivery of FLOWERS. The other women in the office ooh and ahh over them. The woman reads the card and gushes to the others. Kate watches, it only makes her feel worse about her own situation.

One of the CO-WORKERS (female, 40s) walks by Kate's desk.

CO-WORKER  
Young love, huh?

KATE  
It's really something.

CO-WORKER  
I bet Grant was like that when you two were newlyweds.

KATE  
Yeah, he was.

Satisfied, the Co-Worker keeps walking. Kate can't take watching it anymore, she checks her watch, picks up her handbag and leaves - walking carefully with her injuries.

EXT. DEPT. OF EDUCATION OFFICE - DAY

Kate stands outside the building, waiting with her co-workers as they mingle around talking amongst themselves, included in the group is her boss MARTIN (40s).

Grant pulls up in his vehicle and hurries out, he's angry at seeing Kate talking with them.

GRANT  
We don't have time for this.  
You're going to make me late.

He GRABS Kate's wrist and jerks her towards the car. Her co-workers look on. As they near the car, Grant forcibly PUSHES Kate towards the car, she TRIPS and FALLS to the ground.

GRANT  
Look what you've done, get up.

Embarrassed, Kate stands up again and looks around. She sees her co-workers watching in shock and instantly looks away.

They enter the car, Grant SLAMMING his door before speeding off.

EXT. CAFÉ - DAY

Grant and Kate sit in a café, their lunch in front of them. Kate doesn't look him in the eye, she's quiet and submissive while Grant is agitated.

GRANT

You going to eat that?

Kate shakes her head and pushes the plate away.

KATE

I'm not really hungry.

Grant picks up the sandwich and eats it from her plate.

GRANT

Tastes perfectly fine to me. I make the effort to have lunch with my wife and you don't even eat anything?

KATE

I'm sorry.

Grant shakes his head and sighs.

INT. DEPT. OF EDUCATION OFFICE - DAY

Kate walks through the office after returning from lunch. As she walks through, her co-workers STARE at her. She's self-conscious as she reaches her workstation, puts her handbag away, and tries to ignore them.

INT. KATE'S CAR - NIGHT

It's night time in the city suburb. Kate stares into nothing as she drives, in a world of her own. Tears start to flow, she wipes away at them angrily. She knew that once she started, she would never be able to stop.

The petrol gauge starts to BEEP, the RED LIGHT indicates she is running low on petrol. Kate shakes her head sadly and keeps driving, this time with a sense of purpose.

EXT. LOGAN HOUSE - FRONT STOOP - NIGHT

Kate stands on the front stoop of a suburban house, ringing the DOORBELL. The tears are flowing freely now as she waits for it to be answered.

After a beat, the door swings open and CASEY LOGAN (30s) stands there. Concern quickly spreads across her face.

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KATE

I can't do it anymore Casey. I can't go home.

CASEY

Oh, Honey.

Casey wraps her arms around Kate and guides her inside.

INT. LOGAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Casey and Kate take a seat on the lounge in the living room, Casey doing all she can to console her friend. The place is a mess with toys scattered everywhere. Three very energetic KIDS run around on a sugar high.

From behind Kate, JACK LOGAN (30s) enters the room. He sees the tears, kids, and drama and quickly retreats. The women don't notice.

KATE

I don't know what I'm going to do.

CASEY

We'll help you. All you need to do is stay strong. Did something happen?

KATE

I fell over. Everyone at work saw him push me. I'm so embarrassed, I don't know how I'm going to face them.

CASEY

They'll understand. Grant is just a monster.

KATE

Grant. He's going to find me.

CASEY

Kids! Go bother your father.

The kids run out, pushing and teasing each other as they go.

CASEY

Sorry.

(beat)

He can't hurt you anymore. I promise. This has been going on for a long time, hasn't it?

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KATE

How did you know?

CASEY

I'm your best friend Kate, it's not something you can hide for too long. All the bruises, the excuses. I just wish I had been able to help you.

KATE

Whatever you said, it wouldn't have made any difference.

Casey nods and gives her another hug.

KATE

Can I stay here?

CASEY

Sure, for tonight, I'm sure we can find you somewhere to sleep in this mess.

Kate was kind of expecting more of a hospitable welcome. For a moment, it's awkward in the silence.

CASEY

How about a cup of tea?

INT. MARSHALL HOUSE - NIGHT

Kate, Casey and Jack enter the Marshall household. The women walk warily, Jack carries a BASEBALL BAT against his shoulder as if it were a rifle.

KATE

He's not home, it's his night for indoor cricket.

CASEY

Good. Pack everything you can and let's get the hell out of here.

They hurry through into the BEDROOM. Kate pulls out a large SUITCASE and the women quickly stuff it full of clothes and shoes.

Jack stands guard at the door, bat at the ready. He takes a few practice swings, hitting a VASE and almost sending it flying. He looks around, making sure the women didn't notice. Casey has, she gives him a warning look.

Kate stops as she sees a PHOTOGRAPH of her wedding day. She looks at it sadly before turning it down and getting on with it. She zips the suitcase and takes one last look around.

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KATE  
I'm ready.

CASEY  
Are you sure?

KATE  
Positive.

Jack picks up the suitcase and leads the way out. He looks like a general leading out his troops.

INT. LOGAN HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is in darkness as Kate tries to get some sleep on the lounge. She tosses and turns. The house is packed with toys, it's clear there is no room for her.

Pulling out her MOBILE PHONE, she checks the screen. Twenty-six missed calls from Grant. She turns it off, her hands shaking.

Kate pulls the blankets up to her chin and tries to go to sleep.

INT. DEPT. OF EDUCATION OFFICE - DAY

Kate waits in her boss's office, she's nervous and anxious as she sits. It's not too long before Martin enters, he's surprised to see her.

MARTIN  
Kate, what can I do for you?

KATE  
I need a transfer. Somewhere far away from here.

MARTIN  
It's rather sudden.

KATE  
I need a change, it's really important. Martin, please, do you have anything?

MARTIN  
We're the Department of Education, a government organisation. With all the cut backs lately, we're lucky we've still got these jobs. There's nothing, I'm sorry.

Kate's hopes are dashed, she gives him a pleading look. He shrugs, sorry.

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KATE

I still have to leave. I'm  
resigning, effective immediately.  
I have to.

MARTIN

I understand. Where will you go?

KATE

The last place I have left.

Kate stands sadly, she shakes Martin's hand and hurries away.

INT. BUS - DAY

Kate sits on a crowded bus as it flies down a deserted highway. An ELDERLY WOMAN sits next to her, sound asleep and snoring loudly. She starts to lean against Kate, causing her to push the woman back upright. The woman doesn't wake, just snorts a little louder.

The bus starts to slow, approaching a town. They pass a sign - WELCOME TO JUNDAH. Kate looks pensively out the window, deeply lost in her thoughts.

Jundah is a tiny little town in the outback of Queensland, a population of just over one hundred people. The main street is quaint, surrounded by the vibrant red of the outback.

As they reach the town, Kate pays more attention. Outside in the streets are CHILDREN of both Caucasian and Aboriginal heritage running wild. They chase each other, throw things at each other, and generally cause chaos. They make faces at the bus as it passes.

Kate watches the children, wondering what she's gotten herself into.

INT. HUGHES HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

CHARLIE HUGHES (60s) and DAISY HUGHES (60s) sit in their living room watching television. It's a homely place, a lonely FAN making the only other sound in the room.

The DOORBELL sounds, making them both look at each other in surprise.

DAISY

I wonder who that could be.

CHARLIE

Why don't we find out?

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DAISY

It better not be that Davey boy again. If he leaves another big pile of poo out there, I'm going to tell his mother.

CHARLIE

And then make him eat it.

They get up and go to the front door, both wary and curious at the same time. Charlie opens the door, the minute they see Kate and her suitcase, they burst with happiness.

CHARLIE

Katie! You've finally come to visit your parents!

DAISY

Kate, honey, what a wonderful surprise. Why didn't you call?

They envelop her in a group hug, making it difficult for Kate to speak - or breathe.

KATE

It was a last minute thing. Can I stay for a while?

DAISY

Of course you can. Come in, come in.

Charlie picks up the bags as they usher Kate into the living room and into a chair.

CHARLIE

Is Grant with you?

KATE

I've left him.

CHARLIE

He was busy with work, huh?

KATE

No, I've left him, for good.

Her parents exchange a knowing glance.

DAISY

Do you want to talk about it?

KATE

Not really.

CHARLIE

Good enough for me. I'm glad to have you here Katie Bear. When you're ready, we'll be here to listen.

KATE

Thanks, Dad.

DAISY

How long do we get you for?

KATE

I don't know. I was hoping I could work in the garage or something? I can't fix cars but I can answer phones.

Daisy and Charlie exchange a guilty and awkward look.

CHARLIE

The garage hasn't been doing too well, Luv. I'm sorry.

Again, it's wasn't the answer Kate was hoping for. She tries to recover.

KATE

That's okay. I'm sure I'll find something.

DAISY

Of course you will, I'll make up your room. Are you hungry? We have plenty of leftovers from dinner.

KATE

Thanks, I'm starving.

They leave for the kitchen, her parents flanking her sides with their arm around her.

EXT. JUNDAH MAIN STREET - DAY

Kate walks the streets of Jundah, RESUMES in hand, and professional suit on. She enters stores and then returns again, growing more anxious with each step.

She spots the SCHOOL and is inspired, hurrying along now.

INT. JUNDAH PUBLIC SCHOOL - CORRIDOR - DAY

Kate walks around the empty school corridors, exploring. She sees the children's paintings and projects taped to the walls, it seems innocent enough.

Suddenly a FRAZZLED WOMAN rushes past her. Her hair is a mess, her clothes covered in mud. She can't get out of there fast enough. Kate watches, mesmerized.

FRAZZLED WOMAN

Get out while you still can. Save yourself. They're monsters. Monsters, I tell you.

The woman runs off. ROBYN ELLIOTT, an ambitious and focused woman in her twenties that only looks out for herself, steps out of her office.

ROBYN

What do you want?

Unfazed by her less-than-warm welcome, Kate extends her hand.

KATE

Hi, my name is Kate Marshall, I was wondering if you have any jobs going?

ROBYN

Can you teach?

KATE

(unsure)

I've got a Bachelor of Education?

ROBYN

You any good at crowd control?

KATE

I've dealt with my share of monsters.

ROBYN

Sounds good enough to me. There's your classroom, get to work.

Robyn points to a door and returns to her office, SLAMMING the door. Kate walks carefully.